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Devastating inferno ravages Paris Notre-Dame Cathedral

Spire, roof of centuries-old landmark collapse • Macron tweets 'emotion of a whole nation'



PARIS: This combination of photographs shows the Notre-Dame Cathedral (left) on June 26, 2018, and (right) the steeple of the landmark cathedral collapsing as it is engulfed in flames yesterday. — AFP

PARIS: A colossal fire swept through the famed Notre-Dame Cathedral in central Paris yesterday, causing its spire to collapse, quickly followed by the entire roof, and raising fears over the future of the nearly millennium-old building and its precious artworks. The fire, which began in the early evening, sent flames and huge clouds of grey smoke billowing into the Paris sky as stunned Parisians and tourists watched on in sheer horror.

The cause of the blaze was not immediately confirmed but the cathedral had been undergoing intense restoration work to help the 850-year-old gothic masterpiece better deal with the tests of time. The flames and smoke plumed from the spire and roof of the cathedral, visited by millions of people a year. Deputy Paris mayor Emmanuel Gregoire told BFM TV the spire "collapsed inwards" and that workers were scrambling "to save all the artworks that can be saved".

A spokesman for the cathedral told AFP that the wooden structure supporting the roof was being gutted by the blaze. "Everything is burning," the spokesman for Notre Dame, Andre Finot, told AFP. The fire service said the blaze could be "potentially linked" to ongoing renovations.

President Emmanuel Macron cancelled a major televised policy speech he was due to give yesterday evening over the "terrible fire ravaging Notre-Dame". He was to head to the scene in person, the Elysee announced. In a tweet he expressed the "emotion of a whole nation" on seeing Notre-Dame ablaze. "Like all my compatriots I am sad to see a part of us burn this evening" he said, expressing solidarity with "all Catholics and all French people."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called Notre-Dame cathedral a "symbol of European culture" as the blaze raged. Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo in a tweet described it as a "terrible fire". Vast clouds of grey-white smoke billowed

round the cathedral as yellow flames still licked the top of the building. There was no immediate indication of any casualties in the blaze.

"The Paris fire service is trying to control the flames," Hidalgo wrote on Twitter, asking residents to respect the security cordon thrown up around the site. A spokesperson for the cathedral said the fire, which comes as French Catholics prepare to celebrate Easter, broke out at around 1650 GMT. Fire trucks could be seen speeding through Paris towards the scene on the Ile de la Cite - an island in the Seine at the heart of Paris. The Paris police department in a tweet called on residents to avoid the area and to "make way for rescue vehicles".

US President Donald Trump in a tweet said: "So horrible to watch the massive fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Perhaps flying water tankers could be used to put it out. Must act quickly!" Hundreds of people gathered on the bridges of Paris downriver to witness the scene, some filming the images with their smartphones, an AFP reporter said. "Basically the whole rooftop is gone. I see no hope for the building," said witness Jacek Poltorak, watching the fire from a fifth-floor balcony two blocks from the southern facade of the cathedral, one of France's most visited places.

The cathedral had been undergoing intense restoration work which last week saw statues lifted from the top of the cathedral. Built between the years 1163 and 1345, Notre-Dame is one of the most popular tourist sites in Paris, drawing around 13 million people every year. The cathedral also features in Victor Hugo's classic novel "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame". The spire, like the rest of the gothic edifice, had been undergoing the 11-million-euro (\$12.4-million) overhaul financed by the French state to repair damage inflicted by time, pollution and the weather. — Agencies

Amiri Diwan takes over Entertainment City project: Report

KUWAIT: The Amiri Diwan has taken over the project to renovate the Entertainment City which has been closed since July 2016, a local daily reported yesterday. Quoting a letter it says was sent from the Cabinet to Kuwait Municipality, Al-Qabas said that the Diwan will take over responsibility of completing and following up the project from the Touristic Enterprises Company, which has been criticized for failing to push the project forward.

TEC has also faced accusations of mismanagement and wasting large amounts of funds on studies to develop the theme park that never came to fruition, according to a State Audit Bureau report released in December 2017. The Amiri Diwan is credited for completing a number of major projects it had taken over during the past few years, including Al-Shaheed Park, the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center and the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

Later yesterday, opposition MP Mohammad Al-Mutair tweeted that if the report is confirmed to be true, he will file to grill the "prime minister and his government" because this presents a "clear proof of the government's mismanagement".

Dubai Expo to give \$33bn boost to UAE economy

DUBAI: Dubai's Expo 2020 global trade fair is expected to give the United Arab Emirates an economic boost of over \$33 billion, consultants Ernst and Young said in a study released yesterday. Next year's mega-event would add 1.5 percent to UAE's gross domestic product per year over the period that started in 2013 and runs until 2031, said EY partner Matthew Benson. Major new construction projects and other impacts of the six-months extravaganza would create some 50,000 jobs yearly over the same period, he told a press conference.

The city-state of Dubai, one of the UAE's seven sheikhdoms, has long become a favorite tourist attraction, valued for its safety and known for its luxury resorts and opulent shopping malls, one of which boasts an indoor ski slope.

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MP warns govt over labor law

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Rapporteur of the National Assembly's health and labor committee MP Osama Al-Shaheen yesterday warned the government of a serious political confrontation including grillings over the controversial amendments to the labor law in the private sector. Shaheen said the committee received a letter from Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqel saying the government totally rejects the amendments to the labor law, even though the committee agreed to maintain annual leave at the original 30 days instead of 35.

Dakar Rally moving to Saudi desert

PARIS: The Dakar Rally will be held in Saudi Arabia from 2020, organizers announced yesterday, offering contestants an "unknown landscape and uncharted terrain". "After 30 years of discovering the beauty of Africa and a decade of adventure exploring the spectacular landscape of South America, a new chapter in the history of Dakar will be written as the world's biggest rally makes its Middle East debut in Saudi Arabia," ASO said in a statement.

The Dakar has been held in South America since 2009. The gruelling multi-stage rally was previously held in Africa but was relocated after terrorist threats in Mauritania in 2008. Dakar director David Castera described the relocation to Saudi Arabia in a five-year deal as "a voyage into the unknown". "By going to Saudi Arabia, it is of course that aspect that fascinates me," Castera said. "I'm convinced that such a feeling will be shared by all the riders, drivers and copilots. As the director of the event, it's a massive challenge to be faced with a blank page with limitless possibilities." Castera said Saudi Arabia offered up

The lawmaker said although the committee adopted the 30-day annual leave, it also insisted that "rest days", which include Fridays and Saturdays for companies that adopt a two-day weekend and public holidays, will not be counted among the annual leave. Shaheen said the amendments to the labor law were approved in the first reading unanimously without any objections by the government or MPs, and moves against the amendments began later.

He said that the other amendment calls for paying Kuwaitis in the private sector full end of service indemnity without any deduction towards social security, and this amendment applies with retroactive effect from 2010 when the new labor law was issued. He said lawmakers are insisting on the retroactive effect of this amendment as a way of paying full rights to Kuwaiti employees.

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"a monumental geography, made for the most audacious itineraries". "We are spoilt for choice. Sports, navigation, a will to surpass oneself. All these aspects will naturally be glorified on this territory made for rally-raids." Details of the race will be presented at a news conference in Riyadh on April 25. This year's rally, held entirely in Peru, was won by Qatari driver Nasser Al-Attiyah, now a three-time champion, in a Toyota.

Saudi Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal Al-Saud, chairman of the Islamic kingdom's General Sports Authority, said hosting the Dakar was part of Riyadh's wider economic and social plan. "The vision and guidance of our leaders have made our dreams and ambitions limitless and have set the sports scene in the kingdom on a remarkable success route," he said.

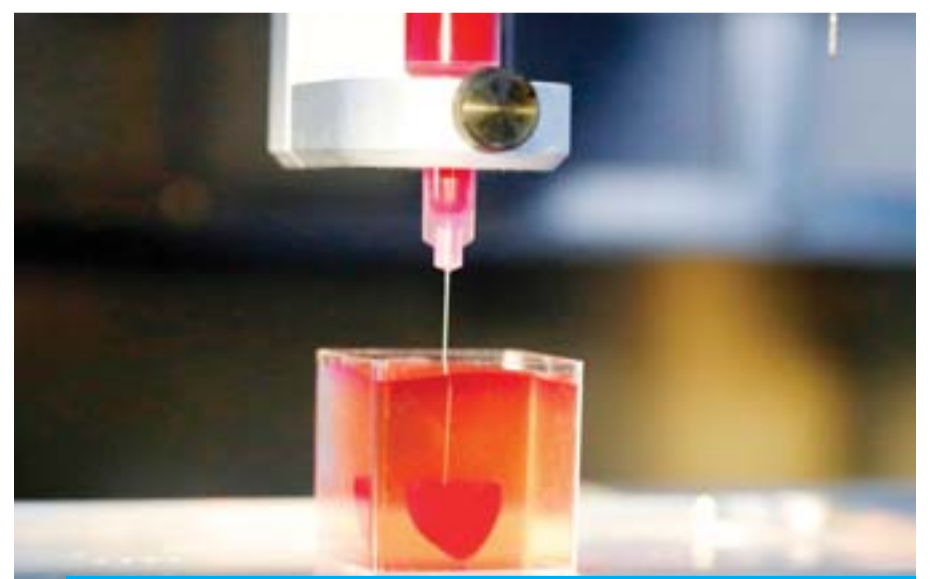
"Today we are thrilled to announce that Rally Dakar, an event with a huge global appeal is coming to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East for the first time. Our country is extremely passionate about sport and our strategic goal is to feed that appetite as we move further towards achieving Vision 2030, of which sport is a basic pillar."

Vision 2030 is a blueprint drawn up by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz aimed at creating a "strong, thriving and stable Saudi Arabia that provides opportunity for all" by

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KUWAIT: A schoolgirl speaks during the annual 'Student Parliament' session at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)



TEL AVIV: This photo taken yesterday at the University of Tel Aviv shows a 3D print of a heart with human tissue. — AFP

3D heart with human vessels, tissue unveiled

TEL AVIV: Scientists in Israel unveiled a 3D print of a heart with human tissue and vessels yesterday, calling it a first and a "major medical breakthrough" that

advances possibilities for transplants. While it remains a far way off, scientists hope one day to be able to produce hearts suitable for transplant into humans as well as patches to regenerate defective hearts. The heart produced by researchers at Tel Aviv University is about the size of a rabbit's.

It marked "the first time anyone anywhere has successfully engineered and printed an entire heart replete with

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Local

Amir receives credentials of newly appointed ambassadors



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Nepal to Kuwait. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Afghanistan to Kuwait.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the credentials of the newly-appointed ambassadors of Nepal, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Lesotho, and Mauritania. The ceremony was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan and Director of His Highness the Amir Office Ahmad Al-Fahad, and Head of Amiri Protocol Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Nasser Al-Jabri where he presented to His Highness Munira Sulaiman Al-Huwaidi on the occasion of her appointment as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri and ministry undersecretary Munira Al-Huwaidi.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Lesotho to Kuwait.



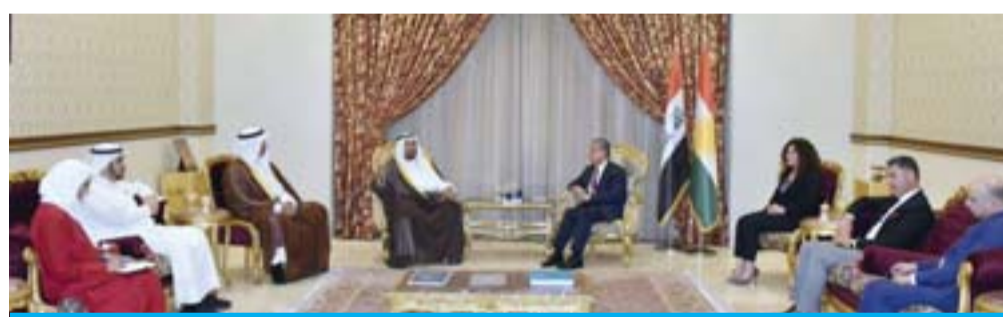
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Mauritania to Kuwait.



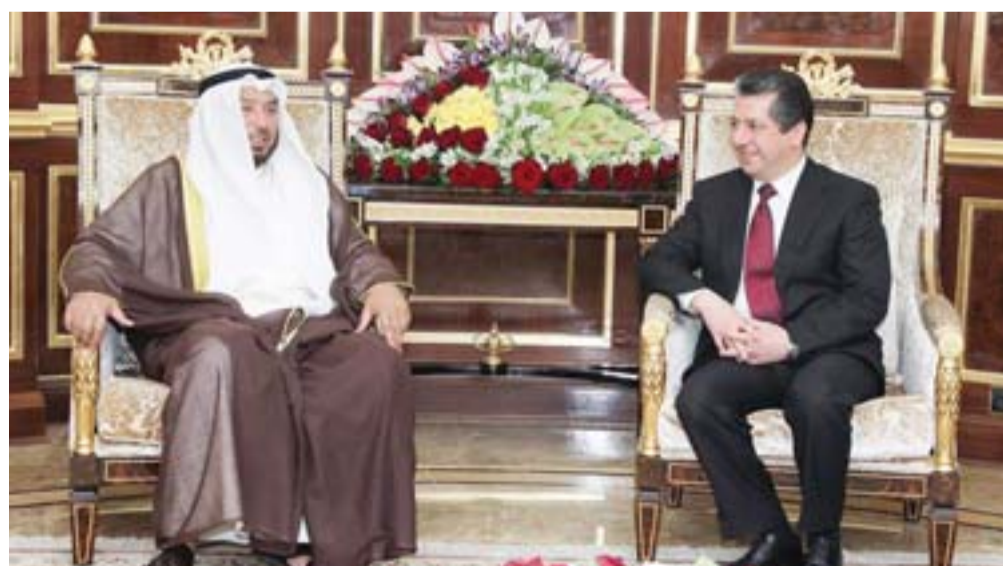
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Ukraine to Kuwait.

Kurdish officials praise Kuwait's humanitarian role

IRBIL: Officials in the Kurdistan region of Iraq praised on Sunday the pioneering role of Kuwait in providing humanitarian assistance to displaced people and refugees in their country. This came during a meeting with a delegation of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) headed by Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq, who is currently visiting the region to meet the competent authorities and inspect the projects implemented by Kuwait for the displaced Iraqis, in addition to the implementation of pledges of non-governmental organizations at the Kuwait International Conference held in February 2018. The Kurdistan Region needs the help of the international community and the Iraqi government to help displaced people and refugees, especially in the fields of education, health and psychological treatment, a statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government quoted Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani as saying. Barzani stressed the need to increase assistance to displaced people and refugees in the Kurdistan region by institutions and charitable organizations, and the international community. According to an official statement, the Minister of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government Karim Sinjari hailed the leading role of Kuwait and its humanitarian organizations in assisting Iraqi displaced and Syrian refugees in the region. Sinjari said that the assistance provided by Kuwait has contributed significantly to alleviate the suffering of the displaced and facilitated the task of the provincial government. The Kurdish foreign relations official Falah Mustafa praised His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, who has always been a close friend to the people of Kurdistan, and who played a role in the past few years in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees, and displaced residents in the Kurdistan region.



IRBIL: Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani meets with delegation of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) headed by Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq.



International Islamic Charitable Organization's Secretary-General Abdullah Al-Maatouq meets with President of the Security Council of Kurdistan Region Massrour Barzani. — KUNA photos

IDPs' camps

A statement issued by the Security Council of Kurdistan Region said that Maatouq and his accompanying delegation met with the President of the Council, Massrour Barzani, in the presence of the Kuwaiti Consul General in Irbil, Dr Omar Al-Kandari, where Maatouq pointed out the assistance provided by the IICO to internally-displaced persons' (IDPs) camps.

According to the statement, Maatouq noted that the organization provides assistance to those in need, especially children who have lost their parents. He expressed thanks to the Kurdistan region, which welcomed the displaced

from the rest of the Iraqi cities and refugees from neighboring countries. Barzani stressed the readiness of the Kurdistan region to provide the necessary facilities for any charitable work, praising the efforts of the IICO for its humanitarian work. "The Kurdistan region, despite the heavy burden on its budget and the war against the so-called Islamic State (IS), has welcomed displaced people and migrants, as well as refugees from neighboring countries," he added.

The two sides also discussed the mechanism of expediting the provision of aid and securing the necessary and primary requirements by the relevant international bodies and charitable institu-

tions to refugee camps and displaced people in the Kurdistan region, the statement said. IICO has provided much assistance to displaced Iraqis throughout Iraq and diversified its aid. It also organized an international conference, in February 2018, over NGOs' support of the humanitarian situation in Iraq, on sidelines of International Conference Reconstruction of Iraq that was held in Kuwait in the same period. IICO is considered as one of the most important charitable organizations in the Arab and Islamic world, which works in the humanitarian aspect. It was established in Kuwait in 1984 and aims to address poverty, illiteracy eradication and disease. — KUNA

Kuwaiti FM receives Tunisian Speaker



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the Speaker of the Tunisian Assembly of the Representatives of the People Mohammad Ennaceur. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday received at Bayan Palace the Speaker of the Tunisian Assembly of the Representatives of the People Mohammad Ennaceur. Attended the meeting were Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tunisia Ali Al-Dhafiri and several senior officials at the ministry of Foreign Affairs. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khedhr meets with the Chairman of Pakistan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Hayat. — KUNA

Army Chief meets Pakistani Chairman of Joint Chiefs Staff

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khedhr met yesterday with visiting Chairman of Pakistan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Hayat, discussing issues of mutual interest. The meeting tackled issues of common interest mainly military aspects, and ways to develop and enhance them.

Defense Ministry said in a statement. Meanwhile, Lt Gen Khedhr praised the deep relations between the two friendly countries. The meeting was also attended by members of the Military Defense Council and senior officers from both sides. General Hayat arrived in the country Sunday for an official visit. — KUNA

Kuwait discusses privatization of North Shuaiba Power Plant

Sharq workshops to be evacuated to eliminate 'environmental harm'

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of State for Economic Affairs Maryam Al-Aqeel briefed the Cabinet yesterday about privatization of the North Shuaiba Power Plant, part of the state's quest to privatize services. During the Cabinet's weekly meeting chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Aqeel also talked about a feasibility study to privatize major workshops in Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW). Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement. He said Aqeel mentioned studies regarding the telecommunication sector in the Ministry of Communication. Meanwhile, Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf briefed the cabinet about progress in implementing the 2018 national strategy against money laundering and terrorism financing, which would contribute positively on assessment by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and MENAFATF.

The Cabinet, on another issue, assigned the Public Authority for Industry to allocate the former location of the slaughter house in Industrial Shuwaikh Area for owners of workshops in Sharq, who should vacate their premises. This step, said Saleh, followed fire incidents which caused harm to environment. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet about a recent visit by Tunisian Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita to co-chair the higher committee meeting, which resulted in the signature of six cooperation agreements over investment, foreign trade, higher education, culture, environment and Islamic Affairs.

Amir's award

In the meantime, the Cabinet congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah over the World Bank's award for his support of socio-economic development and peacemaking on regional and global scales. The Cabinet underlined that the award reflects yet another world recognition to His Highness the Amir's enormous humanitarian initiatives to support development, as well as His Highness the Amir's ongoing endeavors to alleviate the suffering of those in need, wishing His Highness the Amir everlasting health and prosperity. World Bank Group announced on Friday an exceptional award handed to His Highness the Amir in recognition of his support of economic and social development worldwide, and global peace.

Measures in Sudan

The Kuwaiti government also hoped measures underway in Sudan would pave way for security and stability in the country. Furthermore, the government hoped that the measures would honor "legitimate" aspirations of the Sudanese people. It urged the Sudanese people to observe the country's interest in a drive to maintain Sudan's unity, sovereignty and independence. Sudan's Military Council is running the country following the removal of long-time President Omar Al-Bashir on April 11, at the request of protesters. The Council is approaching the protesters to name a civilian to head a government. Thousands of Sudanese people have been staging a sit-in in front of the army headquarters in Khartoum to demand execu-



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting yesterday. — KUNA

tion of the revolution's demands.

Separately, the Cabinet praised the Saudi Interior Ministry's achievement to thwart a terrorist operation in Qatif province. Saudi authorities announced earlier this week that it thwarted a terrorist attack, plotted by four fugitives in the eastern Qatif region, noting that the security forces seized a number of weapons and explosives in the suspects' vehicle.

The Cabinet also condemned in a statement a recent terrorist attack that took place in Sheikh

Zwaid in Sinai, Egypt, which resulted in the death of a number of police officers and the wounding of a number of innocent civilians. Four policemen, including two officers, were killed, in addition to three civilians, among them a child, in a suicide bombing targeting a police force in Egypt's northern province of Sinai last week. The Cabinet stressed rejection to these criminal acts that have claimed the lives of innocent people in violation of all humanitarian laws, norms and values. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem poses for a group photo with male students following the annual 'Students Parliament' debate yesterday.

Kuwait's chief lawmaker honors students after annual debate

KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday honored a number of students who had participated in the annual 'Students Parliament' debate earlier in the day. Amid

a lavish ceremony attended by education ministry officials, Kuwait's top lawmaker awarded the students with certificates and plaques for their impressive performances, the parliament's 'Al-Dostour'

news service said in a statement. Separately, Ghanem held talks yesterday with the head of the Central Agency for Illegal Residents' Affairs Saleh Al-Fadhala. — KUNA



A student speaks during the annual 'Students Parliament' debate at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A student speaks during the annual 'Students Parliament' session.



Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem poses for a group photo with female students following the annual 'Students Parliament' debate yesterday.

Drug dealer says he works for central prison inmate

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Drugs Control General Department arrested a man yesterday with 39 kg of chemical, 50,000 Captagon tablets, 4 kg of shabu, 250 gm of hashish and a pistol. The arrest was made during a raid on the suspect's Kabd farm. He said the drugs belong to a central prison inmate and he works on his behalf. He added that the inmate's brother receives the money. The brother's house in Oyoun was raided, but he was not there. Drugs were also found in the house. The suspect and his brother are bedoons.

Municipality crackdown

Kuwait Municipality said Ahmadi safety department carried out a field tour on companies and plants in the outer areas of the south of Kuwait to make sure about the validity of safety and storage licenses. The tour resulted in issuing three citations worth KD 126,000 for the use of state property and having storage areas without licenses.

Suicide attempt

An Egyptian girl was rushed to Mubarak Hospital after slashing her wrists when her family restricted her movements because of her behavior, reported

Al-Rai. The girl's mother called for help, so police and paramedics rushed her to hospital in critical condition. Investigations are ongoing.

Driving under the influence

A citizen was arrested under the influence of drugs after a chase, during which he caused two traffic accidents. Al-Rai reported yesterday. Patrolmen noticed him in Hawally and asked him to pull over, but he sped off instead, hit a car and continued to drive, before finally giving up after colliding with another vehicle. Police found hashish and shabu with him. He was taken to the Drugs Control General Department.

14,828 unemployed citizens registered in Service Commission

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) said the number of the unemployed citizens according to the latest statistics reached 14,828, with between 8,000 and 9,000 holding intermediate and elementary school certificates. CSC argued that many of those registered in the employment system have very old data, adding that they were contacted several times to renew their data, and in case they do not do so, their applications will be frozen. Meanwhile, it added that many applicants were interviewed but they did not wish to join jobs in the oil sector for many reasons, including the worksites being in remote areas.

Suspects fight

Two suspects facing drug trafficking charges were involved in a fight inside the holding cell during a court hearing yesterday. The fight began when the judge read the charges, followed by prosecutors' demands for stiff punishment against them. The suspects accused each other. Separately, the cassation court sentenced a Saudi man to three years in jail followed by deportation for blackmailing a Kuwaiti citizen and forging indecent pictures of him. In other news, Nuwaiseeb customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle 130 kg of betel leaves hidden in vehicle decorations.

News in brief

Kuwait to boost northern crude output

KUWAIT: The first phase of heavy crude oil production at a northern Kuwaiti oil field, known as south Al-Ritqa, is expected to reach 11,000 barrels per day (bpd) in August, Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) said yesterday. The project aims to ratchet up heavy crude output to 430,000 bpd from 60,000 bpd through multiply phases by January, Fatama Al-Kandari, who oversees project planning at KOC, said amid a panel discussion organized by the Kuwaiti oil ministry. Boosting heavy crude output in Kuwait's northern Ratqa area is a major part of a 2040 strategy the ministry has formed, she explained, saying the project is unlike any other endeavor the company had undertaken. — KUNA

KD 240m bonds issued

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Central Bank (CBK) said yesterday it issued KD 240 million (\$792 million) worth of bonds and Tawarruq. The issue is valid for three months with a return rate of three percent. CBK said in a statement. Kuwait's central bank issued the same value of bonds and Tawarruq earlier this month, with a similar return rate. — KUNA

Citizens praise embassy

KHARTOUM: Kuwait's embassy in Khartoum on Sunday received a number of Kuwaiti citizens upon arrival in Khartoum from the southern Sudanese state of Sennar and completed necessary measures to ensure their return to their country. "The Kuwaiti ambassador in Khartoum, Bassam Al-Qabandi and his staff, were in constant contact with us throughout the day from Sennar province, 500 kilometers south of Khartoum, to the capital Khartoum," Turki Fahad Al-Dhuwayan said. Mohammad Rashed praised the efforts exerted by the embassy and local authorities, while Nayef Mohammad Nasser said that the ambassador and the members of the embassy provided them with all necessary assistance to ensure their safety and comfort. — KUNA

Local

Kuwaiti Minister affirms significance of 'green' and 'blue' economies

Reducing environmental risks, investing in water resources

CAIRO: Kuwait's Minister of State for Economic Affairs Maryam Al-Aqeel stressed the importance of thinking seriously about making the transition to the so-called 'green' and 'blue' economies and their various sectors. Aqeel, also Chairperson of the Arab Labor Organization (ALO), made her remarks on Sunday in her opening speech at the 46th Arab Labor Conference in Cairo. The event kicked off earlier with participation of representatives of the three main production parties in Arab states, including governments, employers, and workers.

Developing further 'green' and 'blue' occupations is essential for securing cleaner, safer, and eco-friendlier future, she said, adding the green economy aims to reduce environmental risks and achieve sustainable development. The blue economy is based on investing in water resources, establishing a good management for water resources, and protecting seas and oceans through applying of sustainability criteria, said Aqeel. The green economy relies immensely on knowledge in environmental economics, in addition to addressing the interdependence and co-evolution of human economies and natural ecosystems, she added.

Labor issues

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti minister said the annual Arab Labor Conference is an opportunity for the three production parties to meet and communicate again, adding the event provides them the opportunity to consult and discuss labor issues. The event will discuss a number of key issues in the region such as solving the current high unemployment, reviewing modern modes of operation resulted from the recent rapid technological developments, known as the

Fourth Industrial Revolution, said Aqeel. The conference will also address requirements of meeting such advanced technological developments and the impact of doing so on Arab operation and labor markets, she said, adding the participants will also discuss sustainable development issues.

The Kuwaiti senior official mentioned her presidency of the 90th session of ALO's Board of Directors, held in Cairo between March 2-3, expressing utmost gratitude and appreciation to Kuwaiti ex-minister of state for economic affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh for her significant efforts while chairing ALO's 89th session.

ALO's 90th session saw high coordination on a number of subjects and issues that will be included for subjects in the 46th edition, she noted, expressing hope the ongoing conference reaches the appropriate resolutions for those issues. The organization has also discussed several other subjects during the March sessions such as implementing previous resolutions and reviewing ALO's 2018 activities report, in addition to addressing a number of financial and technical issues, including regular committees reshuffle, added Aqeel.

ALO also reviewed a number of other technical reports regarding Palestine and the occupied lands, the committee on freedom of association, and a memorandum to ALO's Director-General on perceptions of holding the first meeting of Arab group at the forthcoming 108th Session of the International Labor Conference, slated for July in Geneva, she added. The 46th conference's agenda includes honoring a number of top Arab businesspersons for their seriousness, diligence, and persistence at work, in addition to their strategic insight and



KUWAIT: Participants at the 46th Arab Labor Conference in Cairo pose for a group photo. — KUNA

wise thinking, good behaviors and attitudes, said the Kuwaiti minister. Furthermore, the event will also hold a special session to expose the negative actions of Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people and the right of the Palestinian people to have Jerusalem as their capital.

Labor legislations

Meanwhile, Kuwait Trade Union Federation's (KTUF) president Salem Al-Ajmi called Sunday for new legislations that would serve interests of employees and create jobs in the Arab countries. He was speaking on fringes of ALO's conference.

Aljmi said there was an agreement among laborers on need of free movement among Arab countries, linking Arab market with the European one, and applications for the disabled. The ALO conference featured participation of representatives of governments, employers and employees. — KUNA

Priceless jewelry embellishes decorative arts exhibition

KUWAIT: Classical collection of jewelry and trinkets have embellished the decorative arts exhibition held in the Avenues Mall yesterday. The Italian embassy in Kuwait is celebrating the Italian national day with the presence of the Italian Ambassador Giuseppe Scognamiglio by showcasing the unique jewels displayed especially for this event. — KUNA



Al-Babtain's Prize concludes poetry contest for youth

KUWAIT: Foundation of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's Prize for Poetic Creativity concluded yesterday its competition for the preservation and reading of poetry in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The ceremony was held under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi in the presence of the Secretary-General of the Foundation Abdul Rahman Al-Babtain and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Educational Research and Curriculum Salah Dabshah. The first place was achieved by Gala Al-Enzi from Nacila Primary school for girls, while the second

place was earned by Khalid Al-Mutairi from Sulaiman Al-Mutawa School in Mubarak Al-Kabeer. Third place was shared by student Saba Al-Nusairat from Atekeh Bint Zaid School, and Mohammed Farid from Abdul Wahhab Al-Qurtas School after competitions involving 39 students from different schools in Kuwait. The competition was part of the Foundation's efforts to raise awareness of the importance of the role of Arab poetry, in addition to installing the artistic and aesthetic sense towards the Arabic language. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Winners are honored during the ceremony. — KUNA



Ministry signs MoU on medication barcode system

KUWAIT: Kuwait Health Ministry signed yesterday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a non-profit organization that works on barcodes on a project to monitor drug and medical consumables through a barcode to ensure its safe use and patient safety. In a press statement, Assistant Undersecretary for Food and Drug Control at the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Bader said the system signed with the non-profit GS-1 Foundation is working on tracking medicines and medical supplies accurately through barcode from the manufacturer through the stores and pharmacies until it reach the patient. He said that the system aimed at combating counterfeit medicines, and facilitates drugs withdrawal when needed. The system will also ensure quality, safety and security through traceability, and reduce costs by eliminating errors and administrative costs, he added. — KUNA

KRCS launches annual Ramadan charity campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Sunday launched its annual Ramadan charity campaign to distribute the Ramadan food basket to 150 needy families registered in the Society's records. In a statement, KRCS Director of the local aid department, Maryam Al-Adsani said that the association organizes annual charity campaigns to distribute food baskets on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan for the needy families in Kuwait. The distribution of aid will continue even during the holy month to include 5,000 families registered with the Society's records, she added. She noted the Ramadan basket includes various items like rice, sugar, flour, cooking oil and some food. Adsani stressed the society's keenness to continue the implementation of humanitarian projects to reach all families, pointing out that KRCS seeks to promote the noble values by providing the opportunity for the good people to support those in need. — KUNA



Be better equipped to address national security threats through cybercrimes, says advisor

CITRA hosts 'Best Practices in Cyber Investigations' seminar



KUWAIT: A group photo of participants in the 'Best Practices in Cyber Investigations' seminar, organized by the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA). — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Jill Rose of the US Department of Justice and Resident Legal Advisor at the US Embassy in Kuwait.



The US Embassy's Deputy Head of Mission Larry Memmott.

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Cybercrime is a rising threat - with a stroke of a fingertip, a criminal can wreak havoc for businesses, people and governments around the world, said Jill Rose of the US Department of Justice and Resident Legal Advisor at the US Embassy in Kuwait. She was speaking during a seminar entitled 'Best Practices in Cyber Investigations' organized by the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) yesterday.

"They are sophisticated, so we must be equally sophisticated to keep out intrusions and bring them under the fold of the law to stop them from destroying our norms," she said. Rose pointed out that it is of great importance for GCC countries to come together regionally to begin coordinating to share information and expertise to address the issue. The seminar also aims to encourage them to join the G7 24/7 Network.

"The G7 24/7 Network is an international cooperative network of over 80 countries that assist one another in the investigation of crimes committed over the Internet or through digital means. Through the 24-7 Network, member countries assist one another, preserve electronic evidence across borders and respond

to other urgent requests. It is incredibly helpful in sharing information internationally, secure evidence and quickly respond to hackers," Rose added.

Investigative challenges

In his opening remarks, the US Embassy's Deputy Head of Mission Larry Memmott noted the cyber world consistently creates investigative challenges, both by virtue of its rapid evolution and because it is an expansive field in which bad actors can operate. "Social media platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for the free exchange of ideas. This is a good thing, but many users do not realize that these same platforms allow malicious actors to deceive them by launching vast influence operations," he said.

"Your role is critical because malicious use of technology cannot be deterred without clear consequences. There must be a credible system in place with the capacity to impose punishment for committing fraud,

hacking into information systems, stealing data and disabling computer systems," Memmott added. He said it is yet impossible to employ criminal enforcement tools without first identifying the perpetrators - whether they are ordinary criminals, transnational organized criminal organizations, or hostile nation-state officers.

"There are no borders in cyberspace. This poses challenges for police and for prosecutors investigating incidents of cybercrime which involve suspects, victims and crimes spanning multiple countries. This workshop provides an opportunity for your colleagues from the US to share their experiences with these challenges and provide some insight into overcoming the impediments of complex cyber investigations," he said.

Memmott suggested to defeat malicious actors, all sectors must collaborate. "We must share information. And pertinent to this gathering, we must educate ourselves to be better equipped to address the national security threats posed to each



GCC encouraged to join G7 24/7 Network



A general view of the audience.

of our countries by these criminal elements. It is my sincere hope that this seminar will enhance your capabilities and open a continuing dialogue between you and your American colleagues. It is critical that you remain in touch with us after this seminar to continue the mutual learning process and to coordinate on best practices," he added. Vice Chairman of CITRA Khaled Al-Kandari also welcomed participants at the cyber-crime seminar.



Hadi Clinic signs a cooperation agreement with one of the largest hospitals in Germany



Mr. Fahad Al-Mailam with Professor Ulrich Mayor



Mr. Fahad Al-Mailam and Dr. Faten Al-Mailam with the German Delegation

Hadi Clinic sealed a cooperation agreement with a major hospital (Unfallkrankenhaus) in Berlin, in line with the strategy developed by Hadi management which aims at providing health care services of international standards, thereby constantly meeting the medical needs of Kuwaiti Citizens and expatriates of other nationalities.

The agreement was signed by the General Manager of Hadi Clinic, Mr Fahad Al-Mailam, and Professor Ulrich Mayor from Unfallkrankenhaus Hospital, during a cooperation ceremony that was attended by senior medical and administrative staff from both sides.

The aim of this agreement is to transfer to Hadi Clinic the German expertise in advanced complex surgical operations, including neurosurgeries, endoscopic spinal surgeries and advanced endoscopic-orthopaedic surgeries such as knee, femur, shoulder, elbow and ankle replacements and reconstructions. Furthermore, the deal also focuses on the latest laparoscopic and plastic surgeries, thereby enabling our patients to undergo advanced complex surgeries of the highest quality without the need for them to have to travel abroad for such treatments.

In addition, Hadi Clinic and Unfallkrankenhaus Hospital have future plans for exchanging experiences in the remaining medical specialties, with particular emphasis on patient safety. This shall involve organising structured training programmes for both medical and nursing staff so as to enhance the depth and breadth of services that patients will receive at Hadi Clinic.

The Deputy General Manager of Hadi Clinic, Dr. Faten Al-Mailam, emphasised that the vision of Hadi revolves around providing the best therapeutic means through adopting the latest and most effective techniques in medicine. She further elaborated that this partnership deal falls within the framework of Hadi's strategic goals, which aims at making Hadi Clinic the region's leading healthcare organisation and beacon of excellence that our patients deserve.

Mr. Fahad Al-Mailam, Hadi General Manager explained that the signing of this deal was an important milestone in Hadi's relentless journey towards quality healthcare provision of over 43 years, during which the hospital spared no effort or expenditure in regularly updating its expertise and equipment for the sake of maintaining the safest and highest quality of medical care.

International

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2019



Too many travelers, too few planes: US 'summer dilemma'

HRW calls for arrests in South Africa after attacks on foreigners

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LAGOS: Abandoned shipwrecks lay in Lagos' waterways, Nigeria. Dozens of abandoned shipwrecks and barges in Lagos waterways, coastal waters and on the shores of its beaches have turned its 850 kilometer coastline into a marine cemetery, damaging the environment and aesthetics of the coastlines. — AFP

Ghost ships of Lagos, a haven of crime

Scores of shipwrecks turn Lagos shoreline into a marine cemetery

LAGOS: The two men in the motorized wooden canoe look around warily as they leave a towering shipwreck in the Lagos lagoon, with the barrels of oil on board barely concealed under rags. The rusting hulk of iron and peeling paint has been battered by the elements and is half submerged in the water. Sprouts of green shoots on deck indicate how long it has been abandoned. But on closer inspection, the wreck is a working storage facility for stolen or "bunkered" oil, as it is known in Nigeria. "Oladele", a 30-year-old who did not want to publicize his real name, has plied the waters on his boat since he was 15.

He says it's not the only wreck that stores illegally imported oil brought into the port by the huge tankers delivering petrol and gas, then sold on in neighboring Benin and Togo. "Every ship does it. They will declare 10 tons but bring in 12," he said. "We will store them in the tanks, deep inside the wrecks, then at night usually, it will be picked up." Middle men could typically make at least \$80 to \$200 (70 to 180 euros) a trip for several years. "It's big business," he said.

Marine cemetery

Scores of shipwrecks in Lagos' waterways, coastal waters and on the shores of its beaches have turned parts of its shoreline into a marine cemetery. In Kiri-Kiri, the lagoon corridor, scores of wrecks and discarded ship scrap provide useful cover to hide illicit goods

and barrels of oil and gas.

From there, the waters offer an easy route up the Lagos coast to Benin and beyond. Expensive scrap metal culled from unmanned wrecks can be sold for thousands of dollars. Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer, churning out about two million barrels a day. But a lack of fully functioning refineries means crude is exported, processed and then imported for use. Much of it is shipped through the narrow marine corridor into Lagos. Hundreds of ships wait for days on the horizon of the Gulf of Guinea to get into the port and discharge their goods.

On the way in and out they pass the skeletons of scuttled and abandoned ships, some of which have capsized because of the effects on the tides of the wrecks. Yet there are also suspicions that amidst lax marine regulation, companies treat Lagos' waters as a ship refuse site, avoiding incurring the expense of disposing of old vessels. Experts say the wrecks act as groynes, halting the flow of sand downshore and accelerating erosion. Lack of regulation on the waters has also helped illicit activity thrive, turn-

ing the ghost ships into hideouts for sea criminals.

Small groups of former crew lounge on several of the wrecks, lodging in dim, disused cabins, keeping watch for anyone seeking to strip the ships of valuable scrap. One crew member, who asked not to be identified, said he and three others had worked shifts to stay in the cabin all day and night for 15 months since the ship capsized. Copper and bronze and the brass from the ship's propeller could be sold for as much as 20,000,000 naira (\$55,000), he said. "People will come and steal valuables that are still here," he added.

The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, which polices the country's waterways, says it is proactive in removing the likely hundreds of wrecks but concedes that removing them is expensive. Taibat Lawanson, a professor of urban planning at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), said the price of removal was prohibitive. "Because removing them is so costly, neither the state government nor the federal government takes enough responsibility for their removal," he said.

Small groups of naval officials, some with uniformed

T-shirts, others topless in the sun, bask on the upper decks of confiscated ships. Tunji Adejumo, a landscape architect and ecologist at UNILAG, says the navy has become the main monitoring agency on the coastline. "Yet even still, many of these shipping companies are able to avoid culpability for leaving their wrecks in the water," he said. "These shipwrecks hurt the aesthetics of the coastline. They degrade over time, dumped there but rarely dealt with. And they have serious environmental effects."

Night-time curfew

In Lighthouse Beach, a mostly quiet get-away lined by large beach houses, a wreck at the very end of the shore has been a landmark for visitors for years. In parts of the waterways, scuba-diving and spearfishing capitalize on the wrecks aesthetics and the aquatic life it attracts. Yet many of the wrecks, below sea level and invisible above it, present numerous dangers. A 6:00 pm curfew exists for commercial boats, which is imposed in part to prevent accidents.

White flags are hoisted on few of the below-the-water wrecks to warn approaching craft but most have no visible warning signs, meaning riders have to remember where they are. "It can be dangerous riding the boats at night," said Oladele. "But the curfew also protects all these crazy activities that you would see if you travelled here after dark." — AFP



Hideouts for sea criminals

Classified note confirms 'French arms' in Yemen

PARIS: French weapons are being used by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in Yemen, according to a classified military note revealed yesterday which contradicts public statements from France's government. The note from the French military intelligence service, published by new investigative media outlet Disclose, concluded that the UAE and Saudi Arabia had deployed French weaponry from artillery to ships in their war against Houthi rebels.

Under pressure for years by rights groups over the sales, the Paris government has always insisted that the arms are only used in defensive circumstances to deter attacks by the Houthis. France, the third-biggest arms exporter in the world, counts Saudi Arabia and the UAE as loyal clients in the Middle East and has resisted pressure to stop the arms trade - unlike Germany, which has suspended sales.

Rights groups have regularly accused Paris of being complicit in alleged war crimes committed in Yemen where around 10,000 have died and millions have been forced to the brink of starvation. "The government can no longer deny the risk of complicity in war crimes," the head of Human Rights Watch in France, Benedicte Jeannerod, wrote on Twitter in response to the revelations yesterday.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia, which own billions of dollars' worth of weapons bought from the United States,



SANAA: Yemenis gather around the coffins of schoolchildren during a funeral in the capital Sanaa. Yemeni rebels held a mass funeral for children killed in an explosion near two schools in the capital Sanaa. — AFP

France and Britain, intervened in 2015 to support the Yemeni government against Houthi rebels, which are backed by rival Iran. The UN calls the situation in the war-torn country the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Experts have concluded that all the warring parties have violated international humanitarian law.

The classified French intelligence note - provided to the government in October 2018, according to Disclose - said that 48 CAESAR artillery guns manufactured by the Nexter group were being used along the Saudi-Yemen border. Leclerc tanks, sold in the 1990s to the UAE, have also been used, as have Mirage 2000-9 fighter jets, while French missile-guiding technology called DAMOCLES might have been deployed, according to the assessment. — AFP

Deadly storms push through East Coast

NEW YORK: Tornadoes, wind gusts of up to 70 mph and pounding hail remained threats yesterday from eastern New York and into New England, as the remnants of a deadly weekend storm push out to sea, the National Weather Service said. "This is an ongoing threat," said meteorologist Brian Hurley at the NWS Weather Prediction Center in Maryland. "It's halfway through the eastern states now. By daybreak it'll be cutting through New York City, eastern Virginia and into Boston by 7 or 8 (am)," he said.

The weekend storm brought tornadoes that killed at least five people, including three children, in the US South, officials said. The massive storm system sped from Texas eastward with dozens of twisters reported as touching down across the South from Texas through Georgia into Pennsylvania. More than 134,000 homes and businesses were without power yesterday in Virginia and Pennsylvania, according to the tracking site PowerOutage.US, with thousands more outages reported in North Carolina, Michigan, Maryland and New York.

The affected areas will get heavy rains, winds with gusts of up to 70 mph (110 kph) and the possibility of hail, the NWS reported. "There are short spin-ups, pockets of heavy rain and damaging winds that can still hit before this pushes off shore," Hurley said. Nearly

2,300 US flights were canceled by Sunday evening, more than 90 percent of them at airports in Chicago; Houston, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Pittsburgh; Columbus, Ohio and a dozen major airports on the Eastern Seaboard, according to FlightAware.com.

But no major flight delays were reported on the east coast. The storm's cold front brought snow to Chicago on Sunday, with 1 to 3 inches (2.5-7.6 cm) reported in central Illinois. Two children, siblings aged 3 and 8, were killed on Saturday when a tree fell on the car in which they were sitting in Pollok, Texas, said a spokeswoman for the Angelina County Sheriff's Department.

A third child, Sebastian Omar Martinez, 13, drowned late on Saturday when he fell into a drainage ditch filled with flash floodwaters near Monroe, Louisiana, said Deputy Glenn Springfield of the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office. In another storm death nearby, an unidentified victim's body was trapped in a vehicle submerged in floodwaters in Calhoun, Louisiana, Springfield said. In Mississippi, Governor Phil Bryant said one person was killed and 11 injured over the weekend as tornadoes ripped through 17 counties and left 26,000 homes and businesses without electricity.

In addition, three people were killed when a private jet crashed in Mississippi on Saturday, although Bryant said it was unclear whether it was caused by the weather. Soaking rains could snarl the morning commute on the East Coast before the storm moves off to sea. "The biggest impact rush hour-wise probably will be Boston, around 7 to 8 o'clock in the morning, and around New York City around 5 or 6 o'clock, before sunrise," NWS meteorologist Bob Oravec said. — Reuters

International

Global taskforce tackles cybersex child trafficking in the Philippines

New taskforce track down the exploited girls

MANILA: The tip-off came from the FBI: details of an arrest in the United States, the accused's social media profiles, and a host of photographs showing young Filipina girls engaged in sex acts. Led by police in the Philippines, a new global anti-child sex abuse taskforce started dissecting the US citizen's digital footprint in order to track down the exploited girls.

"Those images were very sexually explicit ... disturbing," said William Macavinta, the Filipino police general heading the unit that launched this year to combat cybersex trafficking - a form of modern slavery where children are abused over webcam. "It was clear that we had to move fast to extract the children," said Macavinta, whose country is considered by campaigners to be the epicentre of the fast-growing trade.

Three weeks later, British and Australian cops assembled with their local counterparts one evening just before dusk, and raided a slum located on fishing docks in the capital, Manila. The taskforce did not find the alleged local offender but rescued five girls - aged 10 to 13 - who had been groomed and directed to perform sex acts over livestream by the American.

Tens of thousands of girls in the Philippines are estimated by charities to be trapped in the sex trade, with a growing number abused online for global clients due to the country's cheap internet, high standard of English and widespread poverty. The Southeast Asian nation received about 60,000 reports of online child sexual exploitation last year - up a third on 2017 - said a US investigator working in the Philippines with the International Justice Mission (IJM) - an anti-trafficking group.

From Australia and the United States to Britain, major nations are boosting efforts to stop their citizens fuelling an illicit business believed to be spreading across Southeast Asia. But obstacles are aplenty. Many victims are exploited by their own families and unable or afraid to speak out, while the encrypted nature of modern technology from messaging to video call apps makes criminals tough to track, according to police.

"This hidden crime is very difficult to shut down," said Macavinta, citing strict privacy laws that make it tough for police to monitor suspects and make arrests without a warrant. "Referrals from foreign law enforcement - that's how we know these things (online child sex abuse cases) are happening."

'Cunning, clever, desperate'

The Philippine Internet Crimes Against Child Center (PICACC) was launched in February and is home to officials from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA), as well as representatives from the IJM. The taskforce has also forged links with authorities in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. "Historically, there hadn't been a lot of cooperation," said Richard Stanford, a police detective heading up the Australian contingent, adding that different nations and local agencies had previously been working on cases "in ignorance of each other".

Every report of online child sex abuse - raised in the Philippines or abroad - now goes to the taskforce, where experts in online forensics, criminal investigation and child protection work hand-in-hand to track down offenders

and their victims. Stanford said Australia had a moral and legal responsibility to tackle the crime in the Philippines, having provided a "disproportionate number of paedophiles to Southeast Asia".

And a 2017 Australian law preventing the country's more than 23,000 convicted paedophiles from travelling abroad could in fact accelerate the rise of cybersex child trafficking, he said. "Good intention (with the law) - but it means there'll be a corresponding increase in online sexual abuse," Stanford added. "We are looking at predators ... very, very cunning ... extremely clever, desperate ... who go to great lengths to achieve their ends," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Britain this month said it would give 3 million pounds in aid funding to the NCA to investigate British paedophiles who travel to "high risk" foreign countries such as the Philippines. Filipina senator Loren Legarda has urged other nations to get tougher on predators who watch abuse online by amending their laws to enact harsher punishments. The Philippines' anti-trafficking legislation carries the threat of life in prison.

Catch in the act

No data exists on the number of child victims of cybersex trafficking, but at least 784,000 people in the Philippines - or one in 130 - are estimated to be trapped in modern-day slavery, found the Global Slavery Index by the Walk Free Foundation. Police say the crime is growing and has been fuelled by factors ranging from well-established money wiring services to affordable, high-speed internet coverage across the country. At least half of the

population had internet access as of 2016, up from a quarter in 2010, according to World Bank data.

Abusers can earn up to \$100 per show in a country where about a fifth of its 105 million people live in poverty - earning less than \$2,000 a year - government figures show. All but a few cybersex trafficking cases involve children being abused by their relatives or family friends, and half of the victims are aged 12 or younger, police and the IJM said. "Reporting on them is not natural, culturally" said the US investigator, a former SWAT team member who declined to be identified due to his involvement in ongoing operations. "Some of the children, they don't even understand that this is wrong."

The trade has grown quickly in communities rife with crime, where it is seen as less risky than selling drugs, he added. The international command centre took on 33 new cases during its first month in action, adding to a backlog of hundreds of investigations brought to the table by the various agencies. But police say they are often hamstrung by laws stating that abusers must be caught in the act to justify an arrest, or be notified when an arrest warrant is issued during investigations.

While most operations to rescue children are a success, their exploiters often escape, as was the case with the recent operation in the fishing dock slum, according to investigators. The alleged offender - a 17-year-old girl - was not found during the raid and is likely abusing others, officers said. "The most effective method is to catch them in the act of committing the crime," said the US investigator with the IJM. "But that's not always possible. It's very challenging." — Reuters

Halal ink: Muslim-majority Indonesia set for elections

JAKARTA: Dipping their fingers in halal ink to prevent double voting, Indonesians cast their ballots tomorrow in a bitterly contested presidential election, with the main rival to incumbent Joko Widodo already threatening to challenge the result over voter-fraud claims. The Muslim-majority nation's biggest-ever polls - with more than 190 million voters and 245,000 candidates vying for the presidency, parliament and local positions - is largely a referendum on Widodo's infrastructure-driven bid to rev up Southeast Asia's largest economy.

But, looming in the background, two decades of democratic gains are at risk of being eroded, analysts said, as the military creeps back into civilian life under Widodo, and his trailing rival Prabowo Subianto, a former general, eyes reforms that harken back to the Suharto dictatorship. If he loses, Subianto's camp has already warned it will challenge the results over voter-list irregularities. "It's high stakes in this election," said Evan Laksmana, a senior researcher at the Jakarta-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies. "We simply don't know what (Subianto) would do if he won and we don't know if the institutional constraints in place would contain him."

Halal ink

Voting starts at 7:00 am local time yesterday in eastern-most Papua and ends at 1:00 pm at the other end of the country in Sumatra. Ballots will be cast at more than 800,000 polling booths across the volcano-dotted country, from the tip of jungle-clad Sumatra and heavily populated Java island to beach paradise Bali and far-flung Sumbawa. Voters will punch holes in ballots - to make clear their candidate choice - and then dip a finger in Muslim-approved halal ink, a measure to prevent double-voting in a graft-riddled country where ballot buying is rife.

A series of so-called "quick counts" are expected to give a reliable indication of the presidential winner later. Official results are not expected until May. Most polls show the 57-year-old Widodo holding a double-digit lead over Subianto, 67, setting up a repeat of their 2014 contest, which Widodo won despite an unsuccessful court challenge over his narrow victory. The race has been punctuated by bitter mudslinging between the two

camp, religion-driven identity politics and a slew of fake news online that threatens to sway millions of undecided voters.

'Pragmatism over principle'

Widodo campaigned on his ambitious drive to build roads, airports and other infrastructure, including Jakarta's first mass-rapid-transit system. But his rights record has been criticized owing to an uptick in discriminatory attacks on religious and other minorities, including a small LGBT community, as Islamic hardliners become more vocal in public life. "(Widodo) has chosen pragmatism over principle on issues of Islamism and pluralism," said Dave McRae, a senior lecturer at the University of Melbourne's Asia Institute. Widodo, a practicing Muslim, blunted criticism that he was anti-Islam by appointing influential cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate.

But victory for Widodo and Amin - known for his disparaging views towards minorities - could be the latest knock to Indonesia's reputation for moderate Islam. "There is a longstanding track record of very conservative views," Kevin O'Rourke, an Indonesia-based political risk analyst, said of Amin. "It's inevitable that will affect policy making." Subianto - joined by running mate Sandiaga Uno, a 49-year-old wealthy financier - has run on a fiery nationalist ticket.

He courted Islamic hardliners, promised a boost to military and defense spending and, taking a page from US President Donald Trump, vowed to put "Indonesia first" as he pledged to review billions of dollars in Chinese investment. Subianto's presidential ambitions have long been dogged by strong ties to the Suharto family and a chequered past. He ordered the abduction of democracy activists as the authoritarian regime collapsed in 1998, and was accused of committing atrocities in East Timor.

Widodo's own cabinet is stuffed with Suharto-era figures, and he raised eyebrows by agreeing to give civilian government jobs to military brass. But "there is no grand design for Jokowi to bring back military rule", Laksmana said. Subianto, however, is a military man keen to roll back reforms that ushered in direct presidential elections, analysts said. — AFP

Nurse kidnapped by IS 5 years ago 'may still be alive'

GENEVA: A New Zealand nurse believed abducted with two drivers by Islamic State militants in Syria in 2013 may still be alive, the International Committee of the Red Cross has revealed for the first time in an appeal for news of her whereabouts. Louisa Akavi was snatched along with Syrian drivers Alaa Rajab and Nabil Bakdounes while travelling in a Red Cross convoy delivering supplies to Idlib, in the northwest of the country.

Armed men stopped their convoy on October 13, 2013, and abducted seven people, four of whom were released the following day. The ICRC said it believed they were abducted by the Islamic State group (IS). "Our latest credible information indicates that Louisa was alive in late 2018," the group said Sunday in a statement from Geneva. "The ICRC has never been able to learn more details about Alaa and Nabil, and their fate is not known."

New Zealand said it disagreed with making the abduction public but did confirm it had dispatched a special forces unit to Syria to search for Akavi. "This has involved members of the NZDF (New Zealand defense force) drawn from the Special Operations Force, and personnel have visited Syria from time to time as required," New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters said yesterday. "This non-combat team was specifically focused on locating Louisa and identifying opportunities to recover her."

"The efforts to locate and recover Louisa are ongoing, and there are a number of operational or intelligence matters the government won't be commenting on," he said. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern expressed disappointment at the information released by the ICRC and refused to answer questions at her weekly press conference yesterday. "It absolutely remains the government's view that it would be preferable if this case was not in the public domain," she said.

'Compassionate humanitarian'

Peters said information about the kidnapping had not



GENEVA: This combination of undated handout photographs shows (left to right) Syria's Alaa Rajab, New Zealand's Louisa Akavi and Syria's Nabil Bakdounes at undisclosed locations. — AFP

been previously released for fear that any publicity would place the hostages at greater risk, and New Zealand media outlets which knew Akavi had been taken hostage agreed not to publish the story. "In these situations the priority must be the safety of the hostage and we received clear advice that any publicity would place Louisa at even greater risk," Peters said. "The government is very grateful for the cooperation of media outlets over many years in respecting this advice and undertaking not to publish ... and we thank them for their principled approach." ICRC operations director Dominik Stillhart said it was an "extremely difficult time" for the families of the three. "Louisa is a true and compassionate humanitarian. Alaa and Nabil were committed colleagues and an integral part of our aid deliveries."

"We call on anyone with information to please come forward. If our colleagues are still being held, we call for their immediate and unconditional release." Akavi had carried out 17 field missions with the ICRC and the New Zealand Red Cross, the statement said. Rajab and Bakdounes were "dedicated husbands and caring fathers", it added. A spokesman for Akavi's family, Tuaine Robati, said she knew the dangers she faced. "She's been through tough times in her job before but she's stuck at it because she loves it," he said. "Louisa is an incredibly experienced nurse and aid worker who knew the risks of her job." — AFP



ACEH, Indonesia: An Indonesian election worker unloads a ballot box as police provide security at a polling station ahead of the April 17 elections in Trumon, Southern Aceh province. — AFP

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International

Finland eyes left-right coalition to keep anti-immigration populists out

Social Democrats narrowly win elections

HELSINKI: Finns face a broad, incohesive coalition government for the next four years as the Social Democrats, who narrowly won weekend elections, focus on keeping the surging anti-immigration populists out, analysts said. Sunday's polls were closely watched to see how the nationalists would do ahead of European Parliament elections in May when many believe they and the eurosceptic camp as a whole could make significant inroads.

As Finland's politicians digested the vote, the big question yesterday was what role the far-right anti-immigration Finns Party—which more than doubled its seats in parliament under the leadership of hardline nationalist Jussi Halla-aho—would play. The Social Democrats came in as Finland's biggest party with 17.7 percent of the votes, just ahead of the Finns Party on 17.5 percent.

Halla-aho told Finnish media yesterday he did not want to repeat the mistakes his party made in 2015 when it entered government and was forced to compromise on immigration and EU bailouts. "We were flexible about the wrong things," he told Finland's biggest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat.

"I don't see it as possible that the Finns Party would take part in a government which doesn't clearly commit to reducing humanitarian migration," he added. On the campaign trail, Halla-aho told supporters he wanted to see the refugee intake reduced to "almost zero".

This would appear to clash directly with the Social Democratic Party's manifesto pledge to make it easier for refugees in Finland to be joined by family members from their home countries. Speaking to AFP yesterday, Rinne said his party disagreed with the Finns Party on immigration, the EU, and economic policy, and, most importantly, in their core values. "I don't think that we can work together with the Finns because of those differences," he said, adding that he expected to be able

to instead find a compromise with either the conservative National Coalition or the Centre party.

While Halla-aho said he would be interested in the post of interior minister, in charge of immigration, he was also upbeat in interviews at the prospect of being in opposition. He told reporters that the huge increase to his party's parliamentary seat-count—from 17 to 39, just one shy of the Social Democrats—would give his party sway over any future discussion on immigration, whether or not it was a member of the government. "Of course they're scared of losing voters to us," he told Helsingin Sanomat. "It would be quite strange if they didn't take that into account in some way."

Grand left-right coalition

Political analyst Sini Korpinen said that, in a bid to keep the nationalists in opposition, a coalition between the leftist Social Democrats and the centre-right National Coalition appeared almost a certainty. "It's very hard to see that the other parties would say no to working with the Social Democrats because then we would be in a situation with Halla-aho trying to form a government and I just don't see that happening," she said. Political commentator Jeanette Björkqvist agreed. "Rinne has been pretty clear that there are substantial ideological differences between the Social Democrats and the Finns Party. It would be astonishing to see them in the same government," she told public broadcaster YLE. Korpinen predicted the Social Democrats would likely try to build a coalition with the National Coalition, the Greens, the far-left Left Alliance, and centrist Swedish People's Party.

"But the broad coalition Rinne will need to keep the Finns Party out will be difficult to manage and ineffective," Korpinen said. Goran Djupsund, political science professor at Abo Akademi University, said the outcome showed how rising populism across Europe was frag-



HELSINKI: The Finns Party supporters cheer during The Finns Party parliamentary election party in Helsinki, Finland. —AFP

menting and weakening political systems. "A splintered political landscape makes it harder to build a government and nations become harder to lead," Djupsund said. "When populists win, the EU also becomes hard to govern... then no one cheers, with perhaps the exception of our neighbor to the east," Russia.

Belts loosened

Much of the pre-election discussion centered around whether cuts to Finland's cherished welfare state and education system went too far. Rinne has

been a staunch opponent of the National Coalition's austerity policies over the past four years. Meanwhile Petteri Orpo, leader of the conservative National Coalition Party and co-architect of the government's savings program, has repeatedly denounced the Social Democratic Party's anti-austerity plans as "irresponsible". However, there are signs the two parties may be able to reach some agreement to restrict further belt-tightening, as Orpo has insisted that the economy is now strong enough to allow for some more generous public spending. —AFP

Is WikiLeaks' Assange heading to the USA?

LONDON: British police dragged Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian embassy last Thursday after his asylum was revoked, ending his seven-year stay there and opening the way for his extradition to the United States. Assange's supporters, who cast him as a dissident facing the wrath of a superpower, fear the 47-year-old will end up on trial in the United States. The United States wants Assange for one of the largest compromises of classified information in US history. What happens now?

Who is Assange?

Assange was born on July 3, 1971 in Australia. In his teens, he gained a reputation as a talented computer programmer and in the mid-1990s he was arrested and pleaded guilty to hacking. He founded WikiLeaks in 2006. He shot to fame in early 2010 when WikiLeaks published a classified US military video showing a 2007 attack by Apache helicopters in Baghdad that killed a dozen people, including two Reuters news staff. WikiLeaks published hundreds of thousands of secret US diplomatic cables that laid bare often critical US appraisals of world leaders, from Russian President Vladimir Putin to members of the Saudi royal family.

Why was he in embassy?

Assange took refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in June 2012 to avoid being extradited to Sweden, where authorities wanted to question him as part of a preliminary sexual assault investigation. That investigation was later dropped but because he had breached his British bail in 2012, he was arrested last week and found guilty of failing to surrender to Westminster Magistrates' Court. Following his arrest,

US prosecutors announced charges against him and Swedish prosecutors are considering reopening the rape investigation.

Jail in United Kingdom?

Westminster Magistrates' Court's Judge Michael Snow said Assange faces up to 12 months in jail when he is sentenced at a later date at Southwark Crown Court.

The British criminal action against Assange will take precedence over extradition proceedings although Nick Vamos, lawyer at London-based firm Peters & Peters and former head of extradition at Britain's Crown Prosecution Service, said in practice it would make little difference. "Even if he gets a maximum 12-month sentence, that means he will serve six and it will take at least six months for his extradition proceedings to be resolved," Vamos told Reuters. So while he is in custody, the extradition hearings can proceed. The British judge gave the US government a deadline of June 12 to outline its case against Assange.

Sweden or United States?

The courts will have to rule on any extradition request and Home Secretary Sajid Javid would decide which one takes precedence. Vamos said the home secretary would take into account the seriousness of the offence and which request was issued first, and expected a Swedish one would take supremacy. "Even though technically it would be a re-issued request, in effect it would be just a repeat of the request that was issued many years ago and therefore it would be treated as if it was the earliest one," he said.

"The fact that his extradition had already been ordered on it once would be in the home secretary's mind. The US government can wait a bit longer, they've taken quite a long time to sort out whether they were ever going to charge him or not ... "We don't know what happened in Sweden, we don't whether he committed that offence and there's a victim there who's been waiting for justice for many years and I think that should take priority." — Reuters

Things to look for in Mueller report

WASHINGTON: Attorney General William Barr has provided only a glimpse of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's report on the inquiry into Russia's role in the 2016 US election, with many details expected to emerge when the document is finally released. Barr on March 24 sent a four-page letter to lawmakers detailing Mueller's "principal conclusions" including that the 22-month probe did not establish that President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign team conspired with Russia.

Barr said he found insufficient evidence in Mueller's report to conclude that Trump committed obstruction of justice, though the special counsel did not make a formal finding one way or the other on that. The attorney general told Congress he hopes to release the nearly 400-page report this week, with portions blacked out to protect certain types of sensitive information. Here are five things to look for when the report is issued.

Obstruction of justice

Perhaps the biggest political risk for Trump is the special counsel's supporting evidence behind Mueller's assertion that while the report does not conclude the Republican president committed the crime of obstruction of justice it "also does not exonerate him" on that point. According to Barr's March 24 letter, Mueller has presented evidence on both sides of the question without concluding whether to prosecute.

Barr filled that void by asserting there was no prosecutable case. But Barr's statement in the letter that "most" of Trump's actions that had raised questions about obstruction were "the subject of public reporting" suggested that some actions were not publicly known. Democrats in Congress do not believe Barr, a Trump appointee, should have the final say on the matter.

While the prospect that the Democrat-led House of Representatives would begin the impeachment process to try to remove Trump from office appears to have receded, the House Judiciary Committee will be looking for any evidence relevant to ongoing probes



WASHINGTON DC: US Attorney General William Barr arrives to testify before the Senate Appropriations Committee in the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC. —AFP

into obstruction of justice, corruption and abuse of power by the president or others in the administration. Barr's comment that most of what Mueller probed on obstruction has been publicly reported indicates that events like Trump's firing of James Comey as FBI director in May 2017 when the agency was heading the Russia inquiry are likely to be the focus of this section of the report.

Russian 'information warfare'

The report will detail indictments by Mueller of two Kremlin-backed operations to influence the 2016 election: one against a St. Petersburg-based troll farm called the Internet Research Agency accused of waging "information warfare" over social media; and the other charging Russian intelligence officers with hacking into Democratic Party servers and pilfering emails leaked to hurt Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

With those two indictments already public and bearing no apparent link to the president, the focus may be on what Mueller concluded, if anything, about other incidents that involved contacts between Russians and people in Trump's orbit.

That could include the June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower in New York in which a Russian lawyer promised "dirt" on Clinton to senior campaign officials, as well as a secret January 2017 meeting in the Seychelles investigated as a possible attempt to set up a back channel between the incoming Trump administration and the Kremlin while Democrat Barack Obama was still president. Any analy-

sis of such contacts could shed light on why Mueller, according to Barr's summary, "did not establish that members of the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities."

Manafort, Ukraine policy

In the weeks before Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort was sentenced in March to 7-1/2 years in prison mostly for financial crimes related to millions of dollars he was paid by pro-Russia Ukrainian politicians, Mueller's team provided hints about what their pursuit of him was really about.

Prosecutor Andrew Weissmann told a judge in February that an Aug. 2, 2016 meeting between Manafort and Konstantin Kilimnik, a consultant Mueller has said has ties to Russian intelligence, "went to the heart of" the special counsel's investigation. The meeting included a discussion about a proposal to resolve the conflict in Ukraine in terms favorable to the Kremlin, an issue that has damaged Russia's relations with the West.

Prosecutors also said Manafort shared Trump campaign polling data with Kilimnik, although the significance of that act remains unclear. One focus will be on what Mueller ultimately concluded about Manafort's interactions with Kilimnik and whether a failed attempt to secure cooperation from Manafort, who was found by a judge to have lied to prosecutors in breach of a plea agreement, significantly impeded the special counsel's work. —Reuters



LONDON: German Die Linke MPs Heike Hansel (center) and Sevim Dagdelen (right) and Spanish MEP Ana Miranda Paz pose with placards calling for freedom for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at Belmarsh Prison in London yesterday. — AFP

HRW calls for arrests in South Africa after attacks on foreigners

JOHANNESBURG: Human Rights Watch (HRW) urged South African authorities yesterday to prosecute the perpetrators of deadly xenophobic violence that displaced some 300 Malawi migrants three weeks ago but has yielded no arrests. From March 25 to 27, mobs armed with metal rods and machetes broke into the homes of foreigners in Durban on South Africa's east coast, chasing them out and looting their belong-

ings, HRW said.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said at least six foreign nationals were killed and several injured, raising fears of a resurgence of xenophobic bloodshed in a country where poor, jobless people accuse migrants of taking their work and benefits. About 88 survivors of the Durban attacks asked to be sent back to Malawi as they felt unsafe, according to representatives of the Malawi High Commission.

Others had no choice but to return to the same informal settlement they had been violently chased out of. "Re-integration of foreign nationals into communities without justice and accountability for past xenophobic attacks is a recipe for disaster," said HRW's southern Africa director Dewa Mavhinga. "To deter those who attack foreign nationals, there is an urgent need for effective policing, arrests, and prosecutions."

The lack of arrests showed "impunity for xenophobic crimes," said the rights watch-

dog. Widespread condemnation of the violence prompted emergency talks between South Africa's foreign and police ministers, Lindiwe Sisulu and Bheki Cele, and diplomats of African countries. HRW also urged politicians to refrain from statements that "scapegoat migrants and feed anti-foreigner violence," ahead of May 8 general elections.

It cited remarks by President Cyril Ramaphosa at a party rally in March, when he "blamed undocumented migrants for problems and promised a crackdown". The country hosts millions of foreigners, most from African countries and many undocumented. Immigrants bear much of the anger about chronic unemployment and limited economic gains made by poor black people since white-minority rule ended in 1994. Violence erupts sporadically, targeting foreign-owned shops and migrants themselves. Sixty-two people were killed in a wave of xenophobic violence in 2008, and at least seven in a fresh outburst in 2015. — AFP

International

Indian politicians banned over firebrand election comments

Mayawati urged Muslims to vote in a bloc against Modi's BJP

NEW DELHI: India's election watchdog yesterday banned two outspoken politicians from campaigning in the country's national vote for making provocative speeches which it said could stir communal unrest. The measures came after the Supreme Court called on the election commission to get tough on hate speech during the world's biggest election, which started last Thursday and runs through to May 19.

Mayawati, a leader for low-caste Dalits, was banned from campaigning for 48 hours for calling on Muslims to vote in a bloc against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Yogi Adityanath, firebrand BJP chief minister of India's most populous state Uttar Pradesh, was sidelined for three days for his response to Mayawati, comparing the election to a battle between Muslim and Hindu gods.

Hindus—who make up the majority community in India—had “no option” but to support the BJP, he added. Both politicians made “highly provocative speeches” which had “the tone and tenor to aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred between different religious communities,” the commission said.

Indian politicians are often accused of using hate speech and intimidation to win votes. The Indian campaign has been marked by headline-grabbing declarations by politicians. Adityanath has already waded into trouble by calling Muslims the “green virus” who are set to “engulf the nation”. BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj caused controversy last week by saying he was a “saint” who would put a “curse” anyone who votes against him—while another BJP contender, Maneka Gandhi, said Muslims should vote for her or their future requests could be shunned if she wins.

The Supreme Court has in turn called on opposition

Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi to explain why he “incorrectly” attributed remarks to the court saying that Modi had “committed a theft” in agreeing a fighter deal with France. The election commission—often accused of being ineffective—has been flooded with complaints since campaigning started in March, and the Supreme Court told it to “act very promptly” on potential violations.

The watchdog told the court its code of conduct limits the punishments it can mete out however. “We can't de-recognize them (parties) or disqualify candidates,” the counsel representing the commission at the hearing yesterday said. The commission sought to counter critics this month by postponing the release of a fawning film biography of Modi. It also ordered a clampdown on a TV channel dedicated to the prime minister, NaMO TV.



Minister says extreme poverty falling, to end by 2031

Extreme poverty falling

In another development, India's finance minister said yesterday fast economic growth and rapid urbanization would slash the number of people in extreme poverty by 2021 and end it completely in the decade after that. More than 21 percent of India's 1.3 billion people lived on less than \$1.90 a day in 2011, when the last census was taken, according to the World Bank.

The economy is a major issue in a staggered general election that began on Thursday and will end on May 19, with the main opposition Congress party rejecting a rosy picture Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been presenting. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who heads the BJP's publicity department in the election, said the number of people who live in poverty would drop to below 15 percent in the next three years and to a negligible level in the 10 years after that. “Urbanization will



KASHMIR: Supporters of Pro-Indian National Conference (NC) shout slogans as they attend an election campaign in Srinagar yesterday. India's gargantuan election, the biggest in history, kicked off on April 11 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking a second term from the South Asian behemoth's 900 million voters. —AFP

increase, the size of the middle-class will grow and the economy will expand manifolds,” Jaitley said in a Facebook post.

“These will add to the number of jobs, and as the experience of the past three decades have shown in the liberalized economy, every section of citizens will benefit.” Economic growth in recent years had generated enough revenue for states to work more on poverty alleviation, job creation and improving healthcare and education, he said. But the Congress has taken issue with such assertions, in particular, pointing to leaked government data that showed unemployment rose to its

highest level in at least 45 years in 2017/18. Jaitley said economic problems could be addressed as India remained the world's fastest growing major economy. But he said restoring peace in the insurgency-hit state of Jammu and Kashmir was the most important issue facing the country. “The issue of Jammu and Kashmir and terror continues to remain the biggest challenge before India,” he said. “It relates to our sovereignty, integrity and security.” Modi has won public praise by taking a tough line on neighboring Pakistan, which India accuses of backing separatist militants in Muslim-majority Kashmir. Pakistan denies that. — Agencies

Secrets and crimes: Gay S Korean soldiers trapped in legal bind

SEOUL: Productive and driven, he was a model army officer, but he had a secret: he was in a gay sexual relationship with a fellow soldier—a crime under South Korea's military law. He kept his sexuality hidden from everyone, including friends and family, only meeting his lover off-base and after work. Same-sex acts are legal for South Korean civilians, although homosexual people live largely under the radar as it remains a conservative society, influenced by evangelical Christianity.

But the South Korean military classes openly gay men in its ranks as having “special needs” and campaigners say it actively pursues soldiers who have consensual same-sex intercourse with each other. “I worked very hard as an officer, but none of that mattered when I became a suspect,” the 27-year-old, who asked for anonymity said.

“There were days when I just wanted to die,” he added, explaining that he was

caught after authorities discovered his messages on his partner's phone. He faced a criminal conviction and a possible forced outing to his parents, whom he had hoped would never find out the truth about his homosexuality, describing them as “conservative, devout Christians”. South Korea has a conscript army to defend itself against the nuclear-armed North, with all able-bodied male citizens obliged to serve for nearly two years.

Doing so is seen as a patriotic duty, and failure to complete service can bring enduring stigma that affects social standing, employment prospects and more. South Korea is also the world's only advanced economy to make consensual gay sex between soldiers a crime under military rules. Under clause 92.6 of its criminal code, known as the military sodomy law, soldiers can be jailed for two years with labor if convicted at a court-martial. For homosexual men this can mean having to live a double life.

‘Military witch-hunt’

The officer was among 22 soldiers arrested during a 2017 inquiry into homosexual activity in the army. He was luckier than most in his position: he was charged during his last month of service, so his case was transferred to a civilian court and he was later acquitted. It was the first time a soldier charged under the military sodomy law had been found not guilty. And while he has begun a



SEOUL: A 27-year-old former South Korean army conscript, who asked for anonymity to be able to tell his story without fear of exposure, poses for a photo at an office in Seoul. —AFP

civilian life with a new job, and thus far avoided his family finding out any details of his sexual orientation—prosecutors have since appealed, leaving him in a legal and social limbo as he awaits the next hearing.

He said: “It is as if my entire existence was being denied.” “I should never have been charged... in the first place,” he added. South Korea's armed forces used intrusive “witch-hunt like” tactics in the search for alleged wrong-doing according to the Military Human Rights Center for Korea (MHRCK), an advocacy group in Seoul. As part of the 2017 probe, investigators forced suspects to message

dating app users in front of them to hunt down other gay soldiers, it said.

Three navy officers are currently under investigation for violating clause 92.6, MHRCK told AFP, after one revealed he was gay to a military counselor, who then reported him. “The fact that a military therapist disclosed the soldier's sexual orientation without consent says a lot about human rights in South Korea's military,” explained the organization's head Lim Tae-hoon. The navy said the inquiry was being carried out according to the military criminal code, and on the orders of the defense ministry. — AFP

Too many travelers, too few planes: US summer dilemma

CHICAGO: Normally US airlines compete to sell tickets and fill seats during the peak summer travel season. But operators of the grounded Boeing 737 MAX are facing a different problem: scarce planes and booming demand. The grounding of Boeing Co's fuel-efficient, single-aisle workhorse after two fatal crashes is biting into US airlines' Northern Hemisphere spring and summer schedules, threatening to disarm them in their seasonal war for profits.

“The revenue is right in front of them. They can see it, but they can't meet it,” said Mike Trevino, spokesman for Southwest Airlines Pilots Association and an aviation industry veteran. Southwest Airlines Co, the world's largest MAX operator, and American Airlines Group Inc with 34 and 24 MAX jetliners respectively, have removed the aircraft from their flying schedules into August.

Southwest's decision will lead to 160 cancellations of some 4,200 daily flights between June 8 and Aug. 5, while American's removal through Aug. 19 means about 115 daily cancellations, or 1.5 per-

cent of its summer flying schedule each day. Low-cost carrier Southwest, which unlike its rivals only flies Boeing 737s, had estimated \$150 million in lost revenue between Feb. 20 and March 31 alone due to MAX cancellations and other factors.

So far airlines have said it is too soon to estimate the impact of the MAX grounding beyond the first quarter, but the extended cancellations signal that they do not expect a quick return of Boeing's fast-selling jetliner. The 737 MAX was grounded worldwide in March following a fatal Ethiopian Airlines crash just five months after a Lion Air crash in Indonesia. All on board both planes were killed. Boeing is under pressure to deliver an upgrade on software that is under scrutiny in both crashes and convince global regulators that the plane is safe to fly again, a process expected to take at least 90 days.

The timing of a prolonged grounding could not be worse for Northern Hemisphere carriers. Planes run fullest during June, July and August, when airlines earn the most revenue per available seat mile, according to US Bureau of Transportation Statistics. In a letter to employees and customers on Sunday, American Airlines' top executives said they believed the MAX would be recertified “soon” but wanted to provide their customers reliability and confidence during “the busiest travel period of the year.”

American was cancelling about 90 flights per day through early June, but runs more flights and has less fleet flexibility in



NEW YORK: In this file photo, a Boeing 737 flown by American Airlines passes by the Lockheed Martin building as it takes off from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia. —AFP

the peak summer travel months. “We're not denying that it's going to be a challenge for us,” American spokesman Ross Feinstein said. “That is why if we have to extend cancellations based on aircraft availability we will do so as far in advance as possible.” A decline in seat capacity could mean higher last-minute summer fares, particularly for business class travelers, aviation consultants and analysts said.

United Airlines, with 14 MAX jets, has largely avoided cancellations by servicing MAX routes with larger 777 or 787 aircraft, but the airline president, Scott Kirby, warned last week that the strategy was costing it money and could not go on forever. Overall the MAX represents just 5

percent of Southwest's total fleet and even less for American and United, but the strain on fleets increases as additional MAX deliveries remain frozen. Southwest has 41 MAX jets pending delivery for 2019, while American has 16 and United 14.

To compensate, global MAX operators have added a flight or two to other aircrafts' daily schedules and deferred some non-essential maintenance work. Some airlines are also weighing extending aircraft leases and bringing back idled planes, but with unclear MAX timing, no option is clear-cut or cheap, consultants said. United is due to publish first-quarter results on April 16, followed by Southwest on April 25 and American on April 26. — Reuters

News in brief

Facebook, WhatsApp outages

CALIFORNIA: Facebook Inc said it restored services on Sunday after some users could not access its social networking site, photo-sharing network Instagram and messaging app WhatsApp. However, Facebook did not specify the cause or scope of the outages. “Earlier today, some people may have experienced trouble connecting to the family of apps. The issue has since been resolved; we're sorry for any inconvenience,” a Facebook spokesman said. The issue comes after Facebook experienced one of its longest outages in March, when some users around the globe could not access Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp for more than 24 hours. On Sunday, Downtetector.com indicated that there were more than 12,000 incidents of people reporting issues with Facebook at its peak. — Reuters

Chad soldiers, jihadists battle

N'DJAMENA: Fighting between Chad soldiers and Boko Haram jihadists killed dozens, including 63 “terrorists”, in an overnight attack on a military base, an army spokesman said yesterday. Seven soldiers were killed and 15 wounded when “the terrorists attacked our forces at midnight in Bouhama... in the Lake Chad region,” Colonel Azem Bernandou said. He added “63 terrorists were killed” and the search for other attackers continued. Chad's Defense Minister Daoud Yaya Brahim and army chief of staff Taher Erda were on their way to the scene of the fighting Monday to “evaluate the situation,” said Azem. Last month, 23 soldiers were killed in the Lake Chad region in the deadliest attack yet on the Chad army by Boko Haram, which launched an insurgency in Nigeria a decade ago. — AFP

China blasts Pompeo ‘lies’

BEIJING: China yesterday lashed out at US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for accusing Beijing of prolonging the crisis in Venezuela, slamming his remarks as “lies”. Beijing has been Venezuela's main creditor and maintains relations with the government of President Nicolas Maduro, which also enjoys support from Russia. Foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Pompeo had “wantonly slandered” China-Latin America relations, and that it is Washington that views the region as its “backyard”. “For some time, some US politicians have been carrying the same version, the same script of slandering China all over the world, and fanning the flames and sowing discord everywhere,” said foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang. — AFP

Nearly 150 killed in Tripoli

TRIPOLI: At least 147 people have been killed and 614 wounded in the offensive launched on April 4 by Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar to take the capital Tripoli, the World Health Organization said yesterday. The clashes have displaced more than 18,000 people, according to the latest figures from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Fighting broke out as Haftar's forces sought to take control of Tripoli from loyalists of the internationally-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) which is based in the capital. The rising number of casualties has prompted the World Health Organization to deploy surgical teams “to support Tripoli-area hospitals as they cope with the influx of trauma cases”, the UN agency wrote on Twitter. — AFP

Analysis

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US immigrant visa denials skyrocket after rule change

When Arturo Balbino, a Texas construction worker, walked into his visa interview at the American consulate in the northern Mexican border town of Ciudad Juarez in March, he wasn't nervous. He felt good. Balbino, a 33-year-old Mexican national who had entered the United States illegally 14 years ago, thought he had a strong case for a spousal visa: a wife and children who are US citizens, a father-in-law who had pledged in an affidavit to financially support him if necessary, and a letter from his employer guaranteeing him an \$18-per-hour job upon his return.

When he went for the interview, he was at the final step of legalizing his status, which would, he hoped, pave the way for a more stable life for himself and his family. Instead, the consular officer denied his application on the grounds that he could become a drain on US taxpayers by requiring government financial assistance, according to documents reviewed by Reuters. That decision stranded Balbino in Mexico indefinitely and upended his family's life.

More and more aspiring immigrants - especially Mexicans - are being denied visas based on determinations by the US State Department that they might become "public charges," dependent on the government for support, according to official data and interviews with attorneys, immigrants and their family members. Lawyers for some immigrants say consular officers are denying visas even when applicants fulfill legal requirements to prove they will be financially independent.

The refusals, capping an often complex and lengthy application process, can trap people for months or longer outside the United States, separated from American spouses and children, as they renew their efforts to legally return. Some may never be able to go back. One reason for the rise in refusals are little-known changes last year in the State Department's foreign affairs manual that gave diplomats wider discretion in deciding visa denials on public-charge grounds.

The changes occurred in January 2018 as the Department of Homeland Security was preparing a separate, highly controversial proposal to restrict immigration on public-charge grounds. The regulation, officially proposed in October, received more than 200,000 public comments, which will likely take months longer to fully evaluate. Some critics say the State Department is using a back door, tightening immigration policy without going through a similarly high-profile rulemaking process.

"The State Department is trying to bypass public comment and implement changes to public-charge (policy) all on its own," said Charles Wheeler, an attorney with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. "These changes are already having a terrible effect on people." The State Department declined to comment, citing pending litigation over the manual changes. In the lawsuit in a Maryland federal court, the government rejected accusations that the manual changes are motivated by any antipathy toward immigrants and argued that such "guidance" is not subject to court review or laws requiring public comment.

The guidance, government lawyers wrote in a February court filing, is neutral and implements a long-standing US law meant to exclude immigrants who are likely to become burdens on the United States. The government acknowledged in the filing that the guidance "could potentially lead" to more frequent public-charge denials. The changes to the manual are not the only reason for the increase in refusals of immigrant visa applications on public-charge grounds. Those have risen since 2015, when fewer than 900 were issued, according to government data.

But after the manual changes in January 2018, the refusals shot up. In the 2018 fiscal year, which ended in September, nearly 13,500 immigrant visa applications were refused on public-charge grounds - quadruple the number in the previous fiscal year and the highest total since 2004.

Fewer visas for Mexicans

Although the State Department does not release visa refusal data by nationality or consulate, immigration lawyers said public-charge enforcement is particularly rigorous at the US consulate in Ciudad Juarez, where all Mexican immigrant visa applications are processed. Mexicans received 11 percent fewer immigrant visas in fiscal year 2018 compared to 2017. That compares to a 4.6 percent overall decline in such visas to people of all nationalities during that period.

Previously, the State Department typically considered an "affidavit of support," signed by an American citizen or permanent resident offering to act as a sponsor of the immigrant, sufficient evidence that the person would not become a government burden, immigration lawyers said. To qualify as a sponsor, a person must make at least 125 percent of the US poverty level for that person's household size. — Reuters

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



Environmental protesters from the Extinction Rebellion group stage a demonstration in Parliament Square in London yesterday. — AFP

Shift towards climate change civil disobedience

Playing the role of a riot cop dispersing a peaceful but illegal sit-in on the steps of France's National Assembly, Axel struggled to dislodge a woman whose arms and legs were enmeshed in a Gordian knot of activists. It was like trying to pull a limpet off a rock - he couldn't get a grip. Welcome to Non-Violent Civil Disobedience 101, a one-day basic training for people who have decided they may need to break the law to further a good cause.

For most of the 55 people attending a course in Paris on Saturday, the driving concern was climate change and the gathering pace at which Earth's species are disappearing. Since October, the world has seen a crescendo of grassroots protests around these issues, especially in western Europe and North America. High school students in a dozen countries have poured into the streets every Friday to raise the alarm about their climate-blighted futures, a movement inspired by 16-year-old Swedish wunderkind Greta Thunberg.

Yesterday, a loosely knit but well-organized group called Extinction Rebellion, born in Britain, launched a week-long campaign in major cities worldwide, vowing to "bring London to a standstill" by blocking traffic at Waterloo Bridge, Parliament Square and other iconic locations. XR, as the group is known, looked to historic examples of civil disobedience - the US civil rights movement, the push for Indian independence - for inspiration.

What triggered the sudden uptick in climate activism is unclear, but several participants in the course mentioned a landmark UN science report last fall warning that only a deep change in the way humanity produces

and consumes energy can minimize global warming devastation.

No tickling allowed

"I've been teaching several sessions a month for the last six or seven months," said Remi Filliau, the instructor in Paris and founding member of a small NGO called Les Desobeissants (The Disobedient Ones). "Before, it was a lot less." Back in class, Filliau gave Axel a tip on how to pry loose his quarry. Reaching from behind, Axel placed an index finger under the young woman's nose and pulled up sharply. Her arms instantly flew open and he yanked her free within seconds, dragging her across the floor into mock detention.

"Police are allowed to use that technique," Filliau told the class. "But they are not allowed to tickle - that is considered sexual harassment," he added. Seated in a large circle, the class began with an exercise designed to force participants to think about how far they are willing to go, and the risks they are willing to take. Filliau presented a scenario: Friends propose slipping into a farmer's field at night while wearing masks to destroy an experimental crop of genetically modified corn.

Commercial production of genetically modified crops has been effectively banned in France, and most people in the room were clearly anti-GMO. That was not the issue. What they didn't agree on was tactics. Everyone situated themselves in relation to four signs he had posted at compass points in the room, depending on how they answered two questions: Are you willing to do this? Do you consider this to be a violent act? Two thirds of the

Ready to face the music

As for those who considered it to be an act of violence, some balked at ransacking the crops while a few said they would do it anyhow. In the ensuing discussion, people moved around the room as their positions changed. Some said damaging property did not rise to the level of a violent act. Others countered that a struggling farmer might not see it that way. Still others pointed out that farmers have insurance. The group was at loggerheads.

In a second scenario, the same action was to be done in broad daylight without masks. The media was to be alerted beforehand and the activists stayed to face the music, including arrest. This, it became clear, was the "correct" approach, and Filliau explained why. "We have to legitimize our actions in the eyes of the public," he told the group. "And we have to take responsibility for what we do." Successful campaigns in France over the last decade - pressuring a bank into divesting from fossil fuel projects, getting the state ban a particular GMO crop - were all done openly and non-violently, he said. "But if you're not ready to be arrested by the police, then you probably shouldn't come," he added, referring to a climate change action planned for the end of the week. Julie, a university student, said she was deeply worried about the threat of climate change. "Just marching in the streets is not enough anymore," she said. "But I'm not sure if I'm ready to go to jail." — AFP

Neighbors, powers anxiously watch post-Bashir Sudan

The ousting of Sudan president Omar Al-Bashir by the army brought the curtain down on 30 years of iron-fisted rule in the northeastern African nation but failed to quell the anger of protesters who remain encamped outside army headquarters. Few international or regional powers shed public tears over the fall of a man who presided over years of civil war, the break-up of his country and is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes in the region of Darfur.

But with protesters fearing that even with Bashir gone the military takeover heralds no meaningful change, the situation remains combustible in the Red Sea state of some 43 million, which borders seven countries. How are world and regional powers viewing the takeover and what would be the consequences outside Sudan of a prolonged period of violence and instability?

African neighbors at risk

Sudan sits nestled in a hugely diverse region in northeast Africa bordered by regional powerhouse Egypt to the north, with strife-torn states like Libya and Chad to the west and key regional player Ethiopia to the south. According to the International Crisis Group, Sudan is "surrounded by neighbours facing internal difficulties of their own" and should Sudan descend into chaos, "the turmoil could spill across borders". A wary observer of events in its bigger neighbor is South Sudan, which was created in 2011 as an independent state after years of fighting under Bashir and has itself been beset by conflict. Sudan remains a guarantor of South Sudan's own peace agreement.

Export violence to Chad?

But the biggest potential flashpoint could be Chad, where the government is fighting both Libya-based rebels and Islamist Boko Haram extremists. Analysts expressed concern over the naming of Mohammad Hamdan Daglo as the deputy chief of Sudanese military council. Widely known as Himeidti, he heads the feared Rapid Support Force (RSF) that grew out of the "janjaweed" militia accused of abuses in Darfur.

"If Himeidti sufficiently reinforces his power he could be tempted to destabilize Chad," said Jerome Tubiana, an independent researcher specializing in Sudan. "The RSF are heavily armed and extremely dangerous. They could also export their violence to Libya and the Central African Republic," he told AFP.

Trouble for Darfur

The changes in Khartoum come with the conflict in



Sudanese protesters rally in the area of the military headquarters in the capital Khartoum yesterday. — AFP

Sudan's Darfur region - which broke out in 2003 when rebels took up arms against Khartoum, accusing it of neglecting the region - still unresolved. According to Tubiana, "there has been no resolution to the Darfur question and the repression is continuing", with the local population and Sudanese security forces still at odds. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Darfur rebels were currently fighting alongside the militia of strongman Khalifa Haftar in Libya as he seeks to take Tripoli, he added. "They could be tempted to return to Sudan to remind Khartoum to take account of Darfur," said Tubiana.

Heavyweight neighbors fear Islamists

Sudan's neighbor Egypt, and Cairo's influential Gulf allies the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have raised no objection to the fall of Bashir. Cairo last week expressed its "complete support" for the Sudanese people and, crucially, the army. The situation in Sudan has drawn some parallels with that in Algeria, where popular protests won the resignation of ailing leader Abdelaziz Bouteflika but where the existing military elite is still very much in power. Analysts say the last thing Cairo, Abu Dhabi or Riyadh want in Sudan and Algeria is any kind of

popular uprising that could bring to power the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, which they vehemently oppose. "If they are offered a military and pro-Arab authority, then they are okay with that even if it uses militia and is violent," said Tubiana.

EU, US cautious

The European Union and United States have treaded nearly as carefully while calling for civilians to be brought into the government. Ethiopia under prime minister Abiy Ahmed and Turkey, whose President Recep Tayyip Erdogan repeatedly hosted Bashir in defiance of the ICC warrant, have also kept their distance. There is also little chance Sudan's current military authorities, many of whom were themselves involved in the Darfur conflict, will hand Bashir over to the ICC in The Hague to face trial.

In a possible recognition of who currently holds the cards, the US envoy to Khartoum on Sunday Steven Koutsis met key military figures in Khartoum including Himeidti. "Washington should step up its coordination with the Gulf States and regional leaders such as Prime Minister Abiy of Ethiopia to press both sides to compromise," said Judd Devermont, director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. — AFP

Business

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12 CMA holds awareness campaign for launching qualifications exam project**13** Stricken Jet Airways lenders to decide on emergency cash**14** 2018 marked a turning point in the future of Global: Sarkhou

SHANGHAI: A worker cleans a Porsche Cayman GTS a day before the opening of the Shanghai Auto Show in Shanghai yesterday. Global carmakers flock to the Shanghai Auto Show this week with the world's largest vehicle market facing an unfamiliar sales slump just as China veers toward an ultra-competitive electric future. — AFP

US eases demands on China subsidies

Washington marks a retreat on core objective for trade talks

WASHINGTON/BEIJING: US negotiators have tempered demands that China curb industrial subsidies as a condition for a trade deal after strong resistance from Beijing, according to two sources briefed on discussions, marking a retreat on a core US objective for the trade talks.

The world's two biggest economies are nine months into a trade war that has cost billions of dollars, roiled financial markets and upended supply chains. US President Donald Trump's administration has slapped tariffs on \$250 billion worth of imports of Chinese goods to press demands for an end to policies — including industrial subsidies — that Washington says hurt US companies competing with Chinese firms. China responded with its own tit-for-tat tariffs on US goods.

The issue of industrial subsidies is thorny because they are intertwined with the Chinese government's industrial policy. Beijing grants subsidies and tax breaks to state-owned firms and to sectors seen as strategic for long-term development. Chinese President Xi Jinping has strengthened the state's role in parts of the economy.

In the push to secure a deal in the next month or so, US negotiators have become resigned to securing less than they would like on curbing those subsidies and are

focused instead on other areas where they consider demands are more achievable, the sources said. Those include ending forced technology transfers, improving intellectual property protection and widening access to China's markets, the sources said. China has already given ground on those issues.

"It's not that there won't be some language on it, but it is not going to be very detailed or specific," one source familiar with the talks said in reference to the subsidies issue.

A representative for the White House referred Reuters to the US Trade Representative's Office, which did not respond to a request for comment. "If US negotiators define success as changing the way China's economy operates, that will never happen," said the other source with knowledge of the trade talks.

"A deal that makes Xi look weak is not a worthwhile deal for Xi. Whatever deal we get, it's going to be better than what we've had, and it's not going to be sufficient for some people. But that's politics," that source said. China pledged earlier this year to end market-distorting subsidies for its domestic industries but offered no details on how it would achieve that goal, three people familiar with the trade talks told Reuters in February.

Mixed messages

One of the key sticking points in the negotiations is the removal of the \$250 billion in US tariffs. It is broadly expected in the trade community that US negotiators want to keep some tariffs on Chinese goods, which Washington sees as retaliation for the years of damage done to its economy by Beijing's unfair trade practices.

The role of the state firms may benefit the United States in another part of the trade deal. The Trump administration wants China to make big-ticket purchases of over a trillion dollars of US goods in the next six years to reduce its trade surplus. The companies likely to make the purchases are the state-run firms, both sources said.

"The purchasing, for example, reinforces the role of the state sector because the purchasing is all being done through state enterprises," one of the sources said. Another point of contention between the two countries, telecommunications, may drive China to increase the state's role rather than reduce it, the source said.

Pressure from the United States on allies to reduce cooperation with Chinese telecommunications champions such as Huawei Technologies could push the government into raising state support to develop technology at home.

Decades of friction

Subsidies and tax breaks have been a source of friction between the two countries for years. Washington says Beijing has failed to comply with its World Trade Organization obligations on subsidies that affect both imports and exports. China has taken steps to address some US concerns in cases brought before the WTO. It has also begun to publicly downplay its push to dominate the future of high-tech industries under its "Made in China 2025" policy, although few expect it to jettison those ambitions.

But the USTR complains of a catalog of other subsidies and supports, including preferential access to capital and land. The United States says China has failed to disclose subsidies as required by the WTO. Washington has detailed more than 500 different subsidies it says China applies in notifications to the WTO.

The scope of China's local government subsidy programs is largely unknown, and even the Chinese negotiators have said in recent discussions they do not know the details of all those programs. "China continues to shield massive sub-central government subsidies from the scrutiny of WTO members," the USTR said in a February 2019 report to Congress on China's WTO compliance. — Reuters

A recession is coming; US online lenders reduce risk

NEW YORK: US online lenders such as LendingClub Corp, Kabbage Inc and Avant LLC are scrutinizing loan quality, securing long-term financing and cutting costs, as executives prepare for what they fear could be the sector's first economic downturn.

A recession could bring escalating credit losses, liquidity crunch and higher funding costs, testing business models in a relatively nascent industry.

Peer-to-peer and other digital lenders sprouted up largely after the Great Recession of 2008. Unlike banks, which tend to have lower-cost and more stable deposits, online lenders rely on market funding that can be harder to come by in times of stress.

Their underwriting methods also often include analysis of non-traditional data, such as education level of borrowers. While platforms see that as a strength, it has yet to be

tested in times of crisis.

"This is very top of mind for us," LendingClub Chief Executive Officer Scott Sanborn said in an interview, referring to the possibility of a recession. "It's not a question of if, it's when, and it's not five years away," Sanborn and executives at some half a dozen other online lenders who spoke to Reuters said worsening economic indicators and forecasts have made them more cautious.

Their worries are the latest sign that fears a US downturn is nigh are growing. Economists polled by Reuters in March saw a 25 percent chance of US recession over the next 12 months. More recently, some executives said, a Federal Reserve decision to halt interest rate hikes reinforced those fears.

"We were seeing economists bringing up some warning signs, and we were following the Fed signals and that they were becoming more dovish," said Bhanu Arora, the head of consumer lending at the Chicago-based lender Avant. "We wanted to be prepared and ready."

To position itself better for recession, Avant came up with a plan late last year that includes tightening credit requirements for segments it identified as higher risk, Arora said. To be sure, the executives said they are not yet seeing glaring signs of trouble in their loan books. A downturn is also far from certain. On Friday,

JPMorgan Chase & Co, the country's largest bank by assets, eased fears of a recession after it posted better-than-expected quarterly profits driven by what it described as solid US economic growth. If a downturn hits, however, it would separate the stronger online lenders from the weaker ones. "All these different platforms say they can underwrite in unique ways," said Robert Wildhack, an analyst at Autonomous Research. "This will be the first chance we have to see who is right and who might have been taking shortcuts."

Tightening credit

In February, LendingClub, one of the pioneers of peer-to-peer lending, offered growth projections for 2019 that fell short of Wall Street expectations, partly a sign of growing caution. LendingClub does not provide loans directly to consumers but earns fees by connecting borrowers and investors on its online marketplace. Sanborn said the company has gotten more stringent about credit standards for borrowers on its platform and is attracting investors with broader risk appetites in case the more cautious participants pull back. It is also outsourcing more of its back-office operations and relocating some staff to Utah from San Francisco to reduce expenses, he said. — Reuters

EU approves copyright rules in blow to Google, FB

BRUSSELS: Google will have to pay publishers for news snippets and Facebook filter out protected content under new copyright rules aimed at ensuring fair compensation for the European Union's \$1 trillion creative industries. EU governments yesterday backed the move launched by the European Commission two years ago to protect Europe's creative industries, which employ 11.7 million people in the bloc.

"When it comes to completing Europe's digital single market, the copyright reform is the missing piece of the puzzle," the Commission's president Jean-Claude Juncker said in a statement.

Under the new rules, Google and other online platforms will have to sign licensing agreements with musicians, performers, authors, news publishers and journalists to

use their work. The European Parliament gave a green light last month to a proposal that has pitted Europe's creative industry against tech companies, internet activists and consumer groups.

Wikipedia blacked out several European sites in protest last month, while the change was opposed by Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. But 19 countries, including France and Germany, endorsed the revamp, while Belgium, Estonia and Slovenia abstained.

Under the new regime Google-owned YouTube, Facebook's Instagram and other sharing platforms will have to install filters to prevent users from uploading copyrighted materials. Google said the new rules would hurt Europe's creative and digital economies, while critics said it would hit cash-strapped smaller companies rather than the tech giants.

Poland said the overhaul was a step backwards as the filter requirement may lay the foundation for censorship. EU lawmaker for the European Pirate Party Julia Reda, who had campaigned against the reforms, said critics could take their case to court but it would be slow and difficult and that the best thing would be to monitor fair implementation. — Reuters

Business

Jet extends cancellations after lenders fail to release funds

Stricken airline appears to be edging closer to collapse

MUMBAI: India's stricken Jet Airways appeared to be edging closer to collapse yesterday after lenders failed to take a decision on whether to release crucial funds to keep the debt-laden carrier flying. Thousands of passengers have been stranded in recent days after the airline, which has debts of more than \$1 billion, cancelled all international flights as it cannot pay its bills. Jet CEO Vinay Dube said in an email to staff yesterday that the cancellation of all international flights was being extended to Thursday because an emergency cash injection had not yet been made available.

"As you are aware, we have been working with the lenders to secure interim funding for our operations. The interim funding has not been forthcoming thus far..." he wrote. Dube added that the board of Jet would meet on Tuesday to discuss "the next steps forward". The airline has only seven jets left after dozens of others were seized by creditors in recent weeks. Pilots, engineers, and ground staff who have not been paid for three months have said they will strike if the banks do not inject emergency funds. They had planned to strike from yesterday but postponed the action until after the bankers' meeting.

The State Bank of India-led lenders took control of Jet last month, pledging to give \$218 million of "immediate funding support" as part of a debt resolution plan. But most of the funds have not been released and Jet, which is now operating a skeleton service, needs the money desperately or could go bust within days, Indian media reports say. The lenders met for several hours yesterday but failed to agree on how to proceed. SBI said in a statement that "necessary support to facilitate the (debt resolution) process is being extended by the banks in the consortium". "Cooperation by and support from all the other stakeholders will be the key to the success of the process," it added.

Jet has been in a tailspin for months. All of its international flights have been suspended since late Thursday, with Europe and North America particularly badly hit. Hundreds of staff protested in New Delhi and Mumbai over the weekend demanding to be paid and calling for the company to be rescued. The Mumbai-based firm has defaulted on loans and repeatedly failed to pay staff and lessors in recent months.

The SBI-led consortium is trying to find a buyer for Jet, which was until recently India's second-biggest air-



MUMBAI: India's Jet Airways pilots gather at its head office in Mumbai yesterday. —AFP

line by market share. A deadline passed Friday for prospective bidders to express an interest in acquiring a 75 percent stake in the carrier. Etihad Airways, which

owns a 24 percent stake, has submitted an expression of interest to buy a controlling stake of up to 75 percent, according to media reports. — AFP

UK fears Brexit could hurt global hunt for new BoE governor

WASHINGTON: British finance minister Philip Hammond has fired the starting gun for the race to succeed Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, but concerns about Brexit may keep some potential contestants on the sidelines.

Britain is unusual in throwing open the invitation to run its central bank to candidates from around the world. Yet Carney's tenure - the first for a foreigner at the BoE - has been seen as a success for the country's financial



Bank of England Governor Mark Carney

diplomacy, and the government is keen to promote what it calls a "global Britain" after the country leaves the European Union.

The chances are high that the Canadian's successor was somewhere among the thou-

sands of delegates at the International Monetary Fund's half-yearly meeting last week, where Hammond told media the process for finding a new governor was "getting underway".

Attendees included all four of the BoE's current deputy governors, the head of Britain's market regulator as well as central bankers, academics and other policymakers from across the globe.

The role becomes vacant on Feb. 1 next year when Carney leaves after over six years on the job. This followed five years as governor of the Bank of Canada - during which he was courted by Hammond's predecessor, George Osborne, when they met at international meetings in 2012.

But the next BoE governor will have to reckon with a sharply divided political backdrop on top of the obvious challenges that Brexit poses as regards short-term growth and longer-term regulatory relations with the EU. — Reuters

Rusal invests in US aluminum mill after sanctions lifted

MOSCOW: Russian aluminum giant Rusal yesterday announced plans for its first investment in the United States since sanctions against the company were lifted.

The US sanctions, which targeted oligarchs close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, were imposed on Rusal last year and only removed in January after owner Oleg Deripaska divested and resigned his seat on the board. Rusal yesterday said it would partner with US manufacturer Brady Industries Inc "to establish a joint project

in Ashland, Kentucky, USA to produce flat rolled aluminum products for the US automotive industry". The factory "will be the widest US-based cold rolling mill" and "will aid towards rebalancing the anticipated deficit of the auto body sheet in the US market," Rusal said in a statement.

Rusal, the world's largest aluminum maker outside of China, will hold a 40 percent share in the project and be the exclusive supplier to the factory. It will therefore be subject to the 10 percent tariff on aluminum imports announced by US President Donald Trump last year.

Rusal will initially invest \$200 million in the \$1.7 billion project, executives of both companies told S&P Global Platts. The company took a hit last year when Russian billionaire Deripaska was included in the US Treasury's sanctions which sought to punish Putin's inner circle for Moscow's alleged interference in the politics of Western democracies. — AFP



Boubyan Bank (K.S.C.P) Shareholders' Public Subscription Announcement for the Bank's Share Capital Increase

Issuer and Subscription Agent: Boubyan Bank (K.S.C.P), a Kuwaiti Shareholding Public Company, incorporated in the State of Kuwait.

Commercial Registration Number: 104042

Clearing and Depository Agent: Kuwait Clearing Company K.S.C.

We recommend reading and understanding the subscription prospectus, undertaking risk assessment and seeking professional advice before investing. This announcement does not contain all the information that prospective investors should consider before deciding to invest in the Issue Shares and does not purport to be complete.

Subscription Prospectus:

Available for printing and downloading from Boubyan Bank's Website. A copy can also be obtained from Boursa Kuwait Kuwait Clearing Company or the Bank's Head Office.

Total Value of the Issue Shares: The Total Value of the Issue Shares shall be KD 131,664,496/950 (KD one hundred thirty-one million, six hundred sixty-four thousand, four hundred ninety-six Kuwaiti Dinars and nine hundred fifty Fils) inclusive of the nominal value and the issue premium.

Type of Shares: Ordinary Shares

Minimum Subscription Amount: 1 (One) Share

Subscription Period Allocated for Exercising Pre-emption Right: From 21st April 2019 to 5th May 2019. Pre-emption Right: Shareholders recorded in the Bank's Shareholders

Register with Kuwait Clearing Company K.S.C. at the close of trading on Boursa Kuwait on the Record Date, i.e. shareholder recorded in the Bank's Shareholders Register Boursa as on 18th April 2019. For clarity, any trading on the Bank's shares prior to the Record Date, but for which the trade settlement process at Boursa Kuwait has not been completed as at the Record Date (Ex-Date), and as a result have not yet been recorded in the Bank's Shareholder Register, will not be considered in determining the Eligible Shareholders enrolled as on the Record Date.

Public Subscription Period for Additional Shares (if any): From 12th May 2019 to 23rd May 2019.

Subscription Instructions:

First: Online Subscription:

The website allows subscription in the capital increase for KD 2,975 (Kuwaiti Dinars Two thousand and nine hundred seventy-five Kuwaiti Dinars) or less, which is equivalent to 8,500 (Eight thousand and five hundred) shares or fewer; wherein Payment shall be processed through K-NET service.

The Subscriber:

1. Log in to the website via the link: <https://www.ipo.com.kw>

2. Enter the Civil ID number, and accordingly the system shall verify whether the subscriber is eligible for the subscription or not (the said verification shall be conducted during the period of exercising the

pre-emption right only).

3. Enter the number of shares to be subscribed for.

4. Be transferred to the payment portal via the K-NET service, where the subscriber can pay from his/her/ its own account (no other person may pay on behalf of the Subscriber except in the cases provided for under law "Required documents shall be reviewed when submitting the subscription application". The Subscriber shall bear all legal consequences in case of violation).

Second: Subscription Through Visiting the Clearing and Depository Agent Office

"To subscribe in number of shares exceeding 8,500 (Eight thousand and five hundred)":

The Subscriber shall:

1. log in to the following link:

<https://www.ipo.com.kw> to print the subscription information document, including but not limited to the name of the subscriber, the Civil ID number, the number of shares to be subscribed and their value.

2. Visit his/her own bank and submit a copy of the Subscription Document printed from the above link to transfer the amount required to the bank account (non-profit bearing) to increase the bank's share

capital of (net amount without any charges by the transferring bank and the receiving) stated below:

Name of Bank: Boubyan Bank

Account number: 0003001366

IBAN:

KW858BYN00000000000000003001366

Swift: BBYN

Beneficiary: Boubyan Bank K.S.C.P
Reference / Description: Boubyan Bank capital increase + subscribers ID number (Civil Identity Card number) + subscribers contact details (Telephone number)

3. Get the original deposit voucher of the amount transferred from his own bank and then visit the clearing and depository agent office to complete the remaining procedures.

4. Visit the headquarters of the Clearing and Depository agent located at Arabian Gulf Street, Ahmad Tower, Fifth floor to submit the documents as listed in the "Documents Required when Submitting Subscription Application" in the prospectus, between the general hours of 8:30am to 1:30pm, or from 4pm to 6pm being the hours dedicated for Subscriptions for the Boubyan Share Issue.

5. The Clearing and Depository Agent shall provide the Subscriber with a

deposit receipt of the Subscription. Failure of any Subscriber to submit a duly completed and accurate Subscription Application Form (together with all applicable supporting documentation thereof) at the premises of Kuwait Clearing Company, after the transfer or deposit of the Subscription Monies as required in this Prospectus, shall render the Subscription Application of a Subscriber null and void. Subscription monies shall not be accepted in cash.

Risk Factors: Investment in the Issue Shares is associated with some types of risks. These types of risks can be categorised as follows: (A) Risks Associated with the Issuer; (B) Risks associated regulatory systems; (C) Risks associated with the State of Kuwait; and (D) Risks Associated with the Issue Shares.

Neither the Capital Markets Authority nor any other regulatory body in the State of Kuwait shall bear any liability for the contents or accuracy of this announcement or for any loss arising from relying on this announcement.

For Inquiries, please contact:
Call Centre: 182 0082

Investor Relations Unit:
Investor-Relations@bankboubyan.com

Business

2018 marked a turning point in the future of Global: Sarkhou

Global celebrates 20th anniversary, holds AGM

KUWAIT: Global Investment House ("Global" or the "Company"), a regional asset management and investment banking firm headquartered in Kuwait, with offices in major capital markets in the MENA region, held yesterday its Annual General Meeting. The shareholders approved all the agenda items including the Board of Director's recommendation to retain the liquidity and the transfer 10 percent of net profits to the voluntary reserve account and a similar amount to the general reserve account, among others.

The meeting was chaired by Faisal M Sarkhou, Chairman of the Board, who affirmed the Company's continued profitability for the sixth consecutive year despite challenging macro-economic environment and geo-political uncertainties through progress made by its businesses in implementing their growth-driven, client-focused and yet risk-conscious strategies. During 2018, the company achieved a net profit of KD 4.6 million compared to KD 2.5 million reported in 2017. Total Income (revenues) stood at KD 14.2 million, a marginal increase compared to 2017 and fee-based businesses (asset management, investment banking and brokerage) contributed to KD 11 million of total revenues.

Sarkhou said: "The company has a healthy capital structure with no external debt and a capital base of KD 64.4 million. Other liabilities of KD 12.4 million mainly reflect trade and staff related payables and are covered almost 2.3 times by cash in hand. The company's capital is conservatively deployed primarily in liquid assets, operating assets and co-investments in the company managed products. During 2018, following the shareholders' vote and regulatory approvals, we completed KD 7.5 million cash distribution to shareholders in lieu of capital reduction in par. On conclusion of the distribution and capital reduction the authorized, issued and fully paid share capital of the parent company reduced from KD 57 million to KD 49.5 million, while maintaining adequate capital and liquidity to fund the core fee business".

Sarkhou added, "2018 marked the 20th

anniversary for the company and is considered a major turning point in its future with a strategic shareholder acquiring a majority stake in its share capital. The company's financial position, performance and human capital, among others, attracted several local and regional parties to acquire the majority stake in the company. Following negotiations and discussions with potential buyers, a purchase agreement was signed between NCH Ventures, the majority shareholder representing interests of more than 50 financial institutions, and KAMCO Investment Company in May 2018.

In September 2018, KAMCO Investment Company completed the acquisition of majority stake in the company thus becoming the largest shareholder owning around 70% of the company's capital with the aim to merge both entities, where KAMCO will be the merging company and Global the merged company, to create one of the largest, strongest, and a more efficient player in the regional investment services sector namely asset management, investment banking and brokerage.

Since then, teams from both companies have been working closely to create value for all stakeholders with focus on shareholders and clients. In addition, a joint application was submitted to Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority showing the intention to merge, a financial advisor was assigned to evaluate the company and a new board of directors was elected in December 2018 to reflect the changes in shareholders' structure.

Sarkhou affirmed that during the year, the company remained at the forefront in ensuring full compliance with the letter and spirit of the various applicable laws and regulations and kept itself abreast with new regulatory developments.

He added that the company's continuous efforts to control and rationalize its cost base resulted in a decline of KD 2.5 million in the operating cost base to KD 9.6 million.

Sulaiman M Al-Rubaie, Acting Chief Executive Officer, provided a detailed presentation on the company's performance in 2018

despite of the extremely volatile and challenging economic environment due to the geopolitical tensions in the region and low domestic government surpluses in addition to internal challenges resulting from changes in shareholders' structure.

Al-Rubaie affirmed that the company has maintained the quality of its revenues through a strategy focusing on core fee-based businesses which include Asset Management, Investment Banking and Brokerage. The revenue generated by the main fee-based businesses represents 77 percent of the total revenues, i.e. KD 11 million, while revenues from fees and commissions amounted to KD 9.6 million or 68 percent of total revenue.

Al-Rubaie stressed on the performance of the fee-based businesses and stated that the Asset Management business generated total fee revenues of KD 9.2 million and remained focused on launching products and services best suited to our clients' investment needs offering recurring income/yield accompanied with low volatility.

MENA Asset Management continued to report competitive performance for its managed funds and portfolios in the regional equity markets. Several funds managed by the Company outperformed their respective benchmarks and peers.

The Real Estate Asset Management team has successfully acquired a property in Europe and exited two properties achieving competitive returns to clients.

In Private Equity, the team's efforts add value to portfolio companies resulted in achieving major milestones in implementing the growth strategies for several companies. The team successfully exited three portfolio companies and continued to provide its clients with liquidity in challenging geopolitical and economic environment. With successful conclusion of three exits and receipt of dividends from the underlying portfolio companies, Private Equity distributed USD132.6 million in total in 2018; USD67 million from Global Buyout Fund and \$65.6 million from Global MENA Financial Assets, making Global one of



Faisal M Sarkhou addresses the Annual General Assembly meeting

the largest Private Equity distributor in the region in 2018.

During the year, the Special Situations Asset Management team has won the mandate to manage a portfolio worth \$90 million for a regional group, raising the total awarded mandates since launching the service in 2013 to \$690 million. Furthermore, the team has successfully executed the portfolios' strategies and resulted in generating cash inflows of \$116 million to raise the total cash inflows generated to \$548 million.

The Investment Banking team had an exciting year despite the regional turmoil and economic challenges and generated revenues of KD 0.4 million, a marginal increase compared to 2017. The team advised on numerous transactions across the region. Some notable transactions on the Mergers & Acquisitions front included the sale of a majority stake of a listed steel manufacturing company in Oman, and the acquisition of a non-banking financial institution in Kuwait. While the Equity Capital Markets in the region witnessed a slowdown

in new issuances, Global participated in the Initial Public Offering of a major logistics company on the Bahrain Bourse.

The team has also continued to develop the investment banking deal pipeline and was successful in securing several Equity & Debt capital market mandates in addition to Advisory mandates across the region in various sectors, including Healthcare, Financial Services, Real Estate, Food & Beverage, Media & Technology, Logistics and Construction.

On the brokerage front, Global made focused efforts to grow the institutional brokerage business leading to gains in market share in markets we operate. The brokerage segment contributed KWD1.3 million to revenues. Sarkhou concluded by saying "We look forward to successfully conclude the merger, thus creating value to shareholders and further enhancing offerings with solutions that can protect and grow clients' wealth even in challenging, uncertain and volatile economic environments".

Huawei to drive discussion on 5G commercialization at SAMENA summit

DUBAI: Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices, will host the '5G is ON' forum as part of the SAMENA Leaders' Summit, scheduled for Thursday, 18th April 2019. Huawei will explore the 5G readiness of the region and engage in discussions exploring the large-scale deployment and commercialization of 5G.

Private and public sector industry leaders will take part in Huawei's subforum to discuss how emerging 5G-enabled intelligent services and innovations can help operators identify new business opportunities and thereby achieve growth. As the leader and partner of choice for operators launching 5G globally, Huawei will also use the event as a platform to demonstrate how its E2E 5G solutions can help Middle East organizations fully capitalize on the commercialization of 5G.

SAMENA Leaders' Summit is a platform for private and government sector leaders in the telecommunications sector to discuss opportunities and challenges in the industry. Attracting delegates from across 29 regional nations, this year the summit invites industry partners to discuss how emerging 5G-enabled services and innovations will start to take shape in the region.

Under the summit theme 'Early Proliferation of 5G Vital to Building the Digital Economy', Huawei will partake in several key discussions. They include the high-level leaders' roundtable conversation addressing the impact of 5G, indus-

try 4.0, cross-industry engagement and digital enablement. Huawei will also be a key contributor to the leaders' panel discussion, addressing the topic of enabling and transitioning to an 'inclusive 5G' ecosystem.

In his keynote address presentation, 'Bring you 5G Safer, Faster, Smarter', Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East, will address the progress that Middle East and North Africa countries have made in the implementation of 5G, while highlighting the groundbreaking achievements made by Huawei in the realization of accessible 5G networks.

Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East commented: "This year's SAMENA Leaders' Summit is especially meaningful to us, as 2019 marks Huawei's sixth consecutive year co-hosting the event, and while in the past we have focused on the imminent arrival of 5G, this year we can say with confidence that the time for large scale 5G deployment has finally come. Businesses, standards, products, and terminals are fully ready, and a comprehensive 5G ecosystem is emerging. The arrival of 5G will accelerate digital transformation and bring about the all-connected, all-intelligent world, playing a pivotal role in helping regional leaders meet their economic growth targets and national agendas. We are excited to meet with our partners and stakeholders in Dubai to discuss how together we can lead this transformative epoch of digital transformation."

End-to-end solutions

Alongside the various key discussions, Huawei will also present its latest 5G end-to-end solutions within a dedicated exhibition area. This will include leading 5G-ready technologies such as chipsets and consumer devices, network infrastructure, and bespoke solutions for over 280 global industry partners.

As one of the most anticipated ICT thought leadership events in the region, the Leaders' Summit 2019 will empower



Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East

the SAMENA Telecommunications Council to be at the forefront of the campaign to build digital economies. The event also strives to unify the telecom industry's voice, while helping to optimize the collaboration between operators, regulators, and ICT industry service providers to make a positive impact on the region's socio-economic development. Boar BA, CEO SAMENA Telecommunications Council, added ahead of the Summit: "SAMENA Council wishes to witness the vision of 5G materializing in the region. For this reason, our Leaders' Summit 2019 will specifically focus on understanding the impact that 5G will have in boosting ICTs and enabling a whole new level of digital flexibility and possibility for Operators. With Huawei as the co-host of the Leaders' Summit and with a special '5G is On' forum that has been organized by Huawei during the Leaders' Summit, we look forward to seeing how 5G solutions and their commercialization could be capitalized on to create new intelligent services that would benefit Operators, and assist in the fulfillment of digital transformation goals defined by the regional governments.

It is SAMENA Council's privilege that the Leaders' Summit 2019 has the patronage of the TRA-UAE and is being organized in collaboration with the leading private-sector names of the region's digital communications industry."

The summit will reinforce the beneficial outcomes gained by Huawei and its partners when working together to accelerate the growth of 5G in the region. Its consultation process and expertise in advanced ICT technologies is setting a global 5G standard while creating the optimal opportunity for cities to achieve digital transformation. Driven by the goal of creating an intelligent 5G ecosystem, Huawei has invested considerable resources into 5G development, deployment, and infrastructure, and is the first choice for global operators to deploy new generation networks. Ranked number one in the industry, Huawei has successfully signed 30 5G contracts worldwide and shipped over 40,000 base-stations worldwide. Putting consumer interests ahead of commercial ones, Huawei prioritizes forming key partnerships and works to provide business opportunities for telecommunications companies.

AAOIFI honors KFH for its role in supporting Islamic finance

KUWAIT: AAOIFI honored Kuwait Finance House Group (KFH) in recognition of its sponsorship of the AAOIFI 17th annual sharia Boards Conference held for two days in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The conference brought together several sharia scholars and senior representatives from central banks, regulatory authorities, supreme Islamic Financial Institutions (IFIs), accounting and auditing firms, legal firms, universities, higher learning institutions, as well as media representatives. On behalf of Kuwait Finance House Group, Abdulhakeem Al-Khayyat, Managing Director and CEO of KFH-Bahrain expressed received the honorary shield. He said: "We are pleased to continue to collaborate with the AAOIFI Conference, which sets Sharia Standards for Islamic Financial Institutions. This partnership comes in line with the Bank's strategy, which focuses on elevating the standards of Islamic Banking in the Kingdom of Bahrain." The conference shed

light on vital topics related to the future of the Islamic financial industry including: 'Importance of Regulatory Requirement of Mandatory Adoption of Sharia Standards by Islamic Financial Institutions', 'Regulatory Imposition of Obligatory Reduction of the Amount of Debt Due to Prepayment', 'Validation of Defective Contracts and its Impact on Stability of Transactions and its Modern Applications', 'Coordination Amongst Central Sharia Boards', 'Sukuk Listing in Global Financial Markets and Compatibility of Listing Requirements with Sharia Structures', 'Methods of Safeguarding Against Risks Associated with Ownership in Ijarah Muntahia Bittamleek Financing Mode'.

Established in 1991 and based in Bahrain, AAOIFI is the leading international not-for-profit organization primarily responsible for the development and issuance of standards for the global Islamic finance industry. The body has issued a total of 100 standards in the areas of Sharia, accounting, auditing, ethics and governance for international Islamic finance. AAOIFI is supported by several institutional members, including central banks and regulatory authorities, financial institutions, accounting and auditing firms, and legal firms, from over 45 countries. Its standards are currently followed by all the leading Islamic financial institutions across the world and have introduced a progressive degree of harmonization of international Islamic finance practices.



Abdulhakeem Al-Khayyat receiving the honor

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 14th April 2019 announcing the names of its winners for the week from the 7th March till the 11th April 2019, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

- Dalal Khaleel Taher Al-Sayegh
- Qassim Hussain Ali Al-Enezi
- Habiba Abdulrahman Salem Ba Musalam
- Abdulla Abdulwahab Abdulaziz Al-Asfour
- Mohammed Miflih Abdullah Al-Judai

The second of Gulf Bank's Al-Danah quarterly draw 2019, for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on 26 June 2019, and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 on 25 September 2019. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

The Al-Danah draws are all approved by and held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce. Furthermore, Gulf Bank have partnered with Ernst and Young Kuwait (EY) with reference to "Al-Danah Prize Draw" system in order to assist in assessing processes, technical controls considering relevant parameters and provide recommendations in-line with industry leading practices. The study was conducted in line with industry standards and control requirements relevant to similar prize draw schemes wherein, a detailed review of prize draw management system along with draw scheme parameters, data extraction for draw, filtration of customers as per defined business criteria and necessary system interactions was conducted to advise on any potential areas of improvements.



What's On

Burgan Bank sponsoring Ahmadi Music Group's biggest concert in Kuwait's history

Burgan Bank, a leading contributor to the arts and cultural scene in Kuwait, is sponsoring Kuwait's biggest orchestra comprising of 130 performers from all over the world. Following the success of the first ever classical music performance last year, Ahmadi Music Group returns to present one of Mozart's most famous symphonies played by international calibers from the UK, Russia and Bulgaria.

Driven to support social advancement among all communities, Burgan Bank continues to sponsor one of Kuwait's most prestigious music and arts organizations for the fifth consecutive year. This year, the respected music group celebrates the work of a legend, led by Maestro Richard Bushman, in one of the largest and oldest musical ensembles in Kuwait. Audiences heard Mozart's requiem, one of the most influential compositions in classical music and his last masterpiece, in addition to a clarinet concerto.

The event was hosted at Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre wherein both international and locally acclaimed soloists, including a rising talent from the UK and two

more top-level soloists from Bulgaria performed. Also, seated alongside the professional orchestra was a Youth orchestra consisting of eight young players.

Ahmadi Music Group's annual performances constitute a mix of jazz, classical, Broadway, opera and newly-commissioned music of which the members include both seasoned professionals and beginners. Bringing unique experiences for over 65 years with world class musical standards, the internationally famous group continues to inspire and nurture a new generation of Kuwaiti Classical performers.

Burgan Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.



Discover the taste of France at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa presents exceptional evenings of traditional French nights of "Le Bal des Musettes" in collaboration with the French Embassy in Kuwait. From the mouth-watering smells and tastes to the live cultural music, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa brings you authentic French nights from 17th through 19th April with special accordion performance from the live band all the way from France!

Guests will feast on a mouth-watering range of French inspired delicacies and a succulent selection of BBQ specialties, grilled live on the night of April 17th and 18th at the pool and beach area, which offers spectacular views while listening to the rhythm of the live French band. On Friday, April 19, starting from 1 PM to 4:30PM, visitors can satisfy their appetite with authentic French cuisine that will be served at the open brunch buffet hosted at pool-side cafe, Mint, with beverages and welcome drinks. To add more merriment to Le Bal des Musettes, all three days



will be enchanted with the live breath-taking performances of the French band as they play an eclectic mix of live music at the venue.

Georges Akar, Director of Sales & Marketing said: "We are thrilled to host Le Bal des Musettes event in collaboration with The French Embassy in Kuwait. Our exciting themed nights' rich authenticity with live music and performances is what makes Jumeirah Messilah Hotel and Spa a renowned and popular destination. Time and again we play an active role in accommodating events like this which provide a mix of tradition and the very best of our local culture."

ACK success in Injaz 'Company Program'

Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) students recently won the Injaz "Company program" annual competition for High Schools and Universities in Kuwait for the second time in a row. ACK team represented by Business, Engineering and English Program students formed a company named 'Meren' and launched their first product called 'MySO' in front of the judges.

Students worked intensively over 6 months' period after classes and in weekends to finalize their entry. The requirements for the competition included designing a company from scratch, starting with the need to raise capital, developing the product, marketing and selling, HR organization and tracking financials.

The students assembled all their information and data into a formal business report and business pres-

entation as well as preparing a booth to showcase their product, in addition to their appearance for a final interview with the judging panel before being declared as winners. The students were focused on creating an innovative product for future

The students who represented ACK were Talal Al Mouli (leading the team), Yousef Al Ali, Wafa Nauman Shaikh, Barehan El-Zohairi, Afsah Abdullah, Sara Dawara, Ali Al Sarraf and Ariya Dashti. Students received guidance from ACK faculty member Ms Rupali Bhagat who was their mentor for the program and guided them throughout this successful journey.

The ACK students outperformed their competitors in all aspects and as a result of their hard work over an extended period they secured 2 prizes: Best Company Award and Best Innovative Product for the Year 2019. ACK Mentor Ms Rupali Bhagat commented that the "team's continuous commitment from day one, their passion to create something innovative and their belief in themselves helped them to overcome each challenge and survive successfully till the end. Each team member has been able to develop life skills which will help them to succeed in future. ACK will now represent Kuwait in the Regional Competition to be held in November, 2019 in Oman.



Loyac Academy of Performing Art (LAPA) hosted a group of trainers from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to hold musical workshops for more than 70 students from various local schools and musical institutes in Kuwait at Loyac's Youth Center at the Qibliyah School. Training routines concentrated on composing orchestra pieces of students' creation.

Health & Science

Activists block London roads to demand action on climate change

Roadblocks will continue night and day at each site

LONDON: Thousands of environmental activists paralyzed parts of central London yesterday by blocking Marble Arch, Oxford Circus and Waterloo Bridge in a bid to force the government to do more to tackle climate change. Under sunny skies, activists sang songs or held signs that read "There is no Planet B" and "Extinction is forever" at some of the capital's most iconic locations. Roadblocks will continue night and day at each site and the demonstrators say the protests could last at least a week.

The protests are being led by the British climate group Extinction Rebellion and will involve demonstrations in 33 countries around the world over the coming days. "I realized that signing petitions and writing letters was not going to be enough. Real action is needed," said Diana McCann, 66, a retired wine trader from south London, holding a banner in the middle of a traffic-free road. "It's like a world war. We have to go on to a war footing."

Extinction Rebellion, which generated headlines with a semi-nude protest in the House of Commons earlier this month, has warned its members that some of them could be arrested for taking part in non-violent civil disobedience. The group is demanding the government declare a climate and ecological emergency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025 and create a citizen's assembly of members of the public to lead on decisions to address climate change.

At the Shell building near the River Thames, two protesters scaled up scaffolding writing 'Shell Knows!' in red paint on the front of the building and three protesters

glued their hands to the revolving doors at the entrance. Activists said they smashed the glass of a revolving door and caused more than 6,000 pounds (\$7,900) worth of damage. At least one person was arrested by police for criminal damage.

'Extinction rebellion'

At Oxford Circus, protesters unveiled a pink boat that says "TELL THE TRUTH" and on Waterloo Bridge demonstrators brought trees, hanging baskets and skate ramps. The protest had a festive atmosphere, with many families in attendance, and a low police presence. Extinction Rebellion wrote to Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday outlining their demands and asking for face-to-face talks, warning that they will escalate their disruptive actions over the coming weeks unless the government acts.

"Make no mistake, people are already dying," the letter states. "In the majority world, indigenous communities are now on the brink of extinction. This crisis is only going to get worse ... Prime minister, you cannot ignore this crisis any longer. We must act now." Organizers of the protests circulated legal advice to anyone planning to attend, requesting they refrain from using drugs and alcohol, and asking them to treat the public with respect.

London's police have advised people travelling around London in the coming days to allow extra time for their journey in the event of road closures and general disruption. The disruption follows similar action last November when thousands of protesters occupied five central London



LONDON: Environmental protesters from the Extinction Rebellion group waves flags as they stand on the Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain during a demonstration at Piccadilly Circus. — AFP

bridges. Police arrested 85 people that day. Rowan McLaughlin, 47, a teacher, said this week's protests were more important that

the huge pro and anti-Brexit protests in London recently. "In Europe, out of Europe, it makes no difference if we have no liveable

habitat," he said. "We're just going to get bigger and more annoying until the government speaks to us." — Reuters

UK's child privacy push targets social media

LONDON: Social media giants including Facebook and Instagram could be forced to switch off "like" buttons and geolocation services for children in Britain under a new set of rules proposed yesterday. Britain's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) published a 16-point draft code listing recommendations for online service providers, which it said would set a global standard

for children's privacy online. The document calls for a ban on targeting under-18s with so-called nudge techniques - features that push users to share more personal data or spend more time on a website or app than they intended to. It lists Facebook's "like" function and Snapchat's "streaks" - a fire icon indicating two people have been messaging each other for several consecutive days - as examples. A Facebook spokesman declined to comment. Snapchat did not immediately reply to a request for a response.

The Internet Association UK, a trade group representing both firms, said internet companies were committed to keeping people safe online, particularly their youngest users. "Any new guidelines must be technically possible to implement in practice, and not stifle innovation and

opportunities for smaller platforms," Daniel Dyball, the group executive director said.

Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham said the code came on the back of growing public mistrust of social media and online services. Tech companies have been rocked by a series of user privacy scandals over in recent years. "This is the connected generation. The internet and all its wonders are hardwired into their everyday lives," Denham said in statement. "We shouldn't have to prevent our children from being able to use it, but we must demand that they are protected when they do."

Recent cases of a teenage boy groomed by his killer on a gaming site and a girl who took her own life after viewing content glorifying self-harm showed the need to make social media safer for children, said children's charity the NSPCC. — Reuters

Death in China zoo puts rarest turtle on cusp of oblivion

SHANGHAI: The world's rarest turtle has moved a step closer to extinction after a female specimen died in a Chinese zoo, leaving behind just three known members of the species. The Yangtze giant softshell turtle, believed to be above 90 years of age, died in Suzhou Zoo on Saturday, according to the Suzhou Daily.

The female's death came a day after zoo officials made a last-ditch effort at artificial insemination using semen from the Suzhou Zoo

male, an animal estimated to be more than 100 years old, the newspaper said. The zoo had tried unsuccessfully for several years to get the pair to mate and reproduce naturally. It will now conduct an autopsy to determine what caused the animal's death, the newspaper reported. Besides the Suzhou Zoo male there are only two other known members of the species left, both living in the wild in Vietnam and of unknown gender, according to conservationists.

The Yangtze giant softshell turtle is the largest freshwater turtle in the world, growing to 100 cm long and weighing up to 100kg. Its main habitat was the Yangtze River and other inland China waterways. But aquatic life in China's rivers has suffered severely from centuries of hunting and, more recently, decades of pollution, shipping traffic and ecological disruption wrought by hydroelectric dams. — AFP

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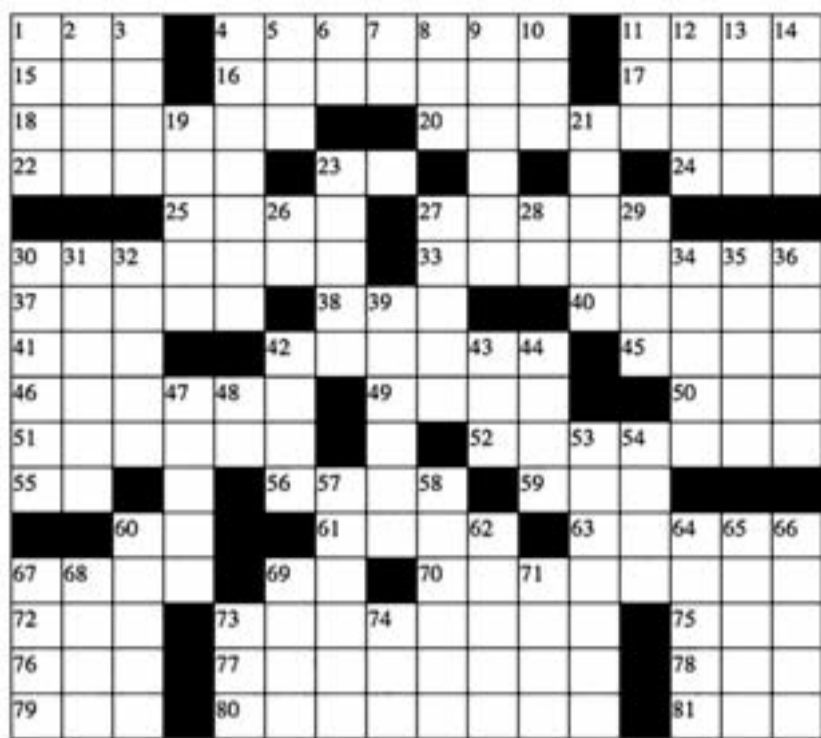
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Stars

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ACROSS

1. Tag the base runner to get him out.
4. A small two-wheeled cart for one passenger.
11. In bed.
15. A member of a people living in southern Benin and Togo and southeastern Ghana.
16. Porridge made of rolled oats.
17. A strong wind moving 45-90 knots.
18. A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
20. Easily calmed or pacified.
22. City in Sudan.
24. An anticipated outcome that is intended or that guides your planned actions.
25. (computer science) A rule stating that the quality of the output is a function of the quality of the input.
30. An annual publication including weather forecasts and other miscellaneous information arranged according to the calendar of a given year.
33. Toward land.
37. A person to whom money is paid.
38. An actor's line that immediately precedes and serves as a reminder for some action or speech.
40. A dress worn primarily by Hindu women.
41. In favor of (an action or proposal etc.).
45. A color varying from dark purplish brown to dark red.
46. Brass that looks like gold.
49. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
50. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
51. A cylindrical drawstring bag used by sailors to hold their clothing and other gear.
52. By chance.
55. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
56. Wading birds of warm regions having long slender down-curved bills.
59. Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
61. Surpassing the ordinary especially in size or scale.
63. The Mongol people living the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
67. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
70. A successful journey.
72. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
75. A master's degree in business.
76. The network in the reticular formation that serves an alerting or arousal function.
77. A short amusing opera.
78. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
79. A fatal disease of cattle that affects the central nervous system.
80. Showing both bilateral and radial symmetry.
81. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. The compass point that is one point north of northeast.
2. Distant in either space or time.
3. English monk and scholar (672-735).
4. A vasodilator (trade name Loniten) used to treat severe hypertension.
5. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
6. A New England state.
7. A metric unit of length equal to 1000 meters (or 0.621371 miles).
8. The month following August and preceding October.
9. Ground snakes.
10. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
11. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
12. A small cake leavened with yeast.
13. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
14. Keep in mind or convey as a conviction or view.
19. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
21. Cotton trousers made of corduroy cloth.
23. Italian lawn bowling (played on a long narrow dirt court).
26. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
27. Fleshy spore-bearing inner mass of e.g. a puffball or stinkhorn.
28. An associate degree in nursing.
29. An equal exchange.
31. Xerophytic evergreen shrubs.
32. A benign tumor composed of muscle tissue.
34. A popular island resort in the Netherlands Antilles.
35. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
36. Performance of moral or religious acts.
39. Remove the clip from.
42. Tall evergreen of Japan and China yielding valuable soft wood.
43. An ester of adenosine that is converted to ATP for energy storage.
44. A notable achievement.
47. Excessively fat.
48. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
53. One of two official languages of Norway.
54. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
57. A jar made of glass or plastic.
58. Having a handwritten signature.
60. Lower in esteem.
62. Omnivorous mammal of Central and South America.
64. A subsidiary proposition that is assumed to be true in order to prove another proposition.
65. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
66. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
68. Type genus of the Anatidae.
69. A member of the South American Indian people living in Brazil and Paraguay.
71. A collection of facts from which conclusions may be drawn.
73. An orange-brown antelope of south-east Africa.
74. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Taking care of business is on your mind today. You think you deserve better in life and you don't mind giving time and effort to provide well for you and your family. Those at work see you as hard-working and talented. That helps you to get your job done to the best of your abilities which is noticed by higher ups. Your partner, family and close friends urge you on to make the most from your life and give you the Atta Boys you need. Really their approval is what you work for more than being at the job each day. You know you have to do well enough there though that all of you can enjoy life. Aries. Good for you!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You have very strong desires for making the most of your job today and bring what you started yesterday at home into your workplace today. You're clear-headed and decisive ideas cut right to the heart of the matter where job is concerned. It becomes a group thing because of your ability to talk others into what you like. Ideas come easily and in multiples which keeps those listening to them involved, waiting on your every word. It's the same with romance now. You proceed towards new love just as you do with work issues in an applied, strategic manner. Taurus. It works for you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You want your life to be orderly and accounted for but life and orderly rarely go together. You give it your best shot though at work and start the process of organizing all that needs it. Being able to see what you need at a glance is powerful to you and if it is to you, you're sure your boss will love the organization as well. Communication skills make you very persuasive now. Sympathy and understanding go a long way to helping you at work and at home. Love is something you've put on the back burner today but will be hot soon. Enjoy some time at home.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're in a rare mood where you see your own worth and can acknowledge it. Those chances come along seldom but when they do, it's so worth it. Love is in the air for that special person and for those friends who make you feel secure. Your boss may even have one of those special places in your heart now. Cancer. Those close relationships boost your confidence and add to your life in such a way that you feel wealthier for it. Your lover will reap the benefits of those feelings later although they don't feel the same as your partner does to you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You're funny and you have unusual ideas others are drawn to because you first got their attention with your comedy routine before they realized the ideas, you're proposing may be a little eccentric. At any rate you've got it going on now. You like working in a group and use unique methods to get their attention. Now might be the time to bring up a change in your work environment. Use the group to optimize time in your work place by discussing topics you'd like to address. You'll be considered intelligent when the project goes well.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You like being in charge both at work and at home. Right now, everyone thinks you hung the moon in being able to lead them effectively, even your lover. That has its benefits too which you can take full advantage of later since you're in the mood after knowing you're in charge of others life success too. You're enjoying the situation you're in and find that this is the happiest you've ever been with your success also. This is a good time to reflect on your good fortune.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Looking back over your life and using it to realize just how lucky you are is in play today. You're in the mood to organize and accomplish more at this time because of your thoughts. When you're in this mood, Libra, you can run circles around anyone else who works with you. Moreover, you make it pay. New items at work make you look good because you enjoy tackling them. Family and home mean more to you now and puts you in the mode of remembering. Make happy memories now.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Practicality is at the forefront of your mind. Taking care of business is your motto along with taking care of you. This is a day you get all your ducks in a row at work. Those that don't go along with you in your organizing endeavor are of no use to you at all and can be easily kicked to the way side. Your health is on your mind. Look at what you're eating first. Then make a plan on how you'll achieve feeling better. You've got the energy and the desire but sometimes you lack other motivating factors. Today should help you jump start a new path in your life.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Habit is not what you're into right now and you don't want life to be conventional in any manner. Authority is something you run from and that makes you kick the traces, so to speak. Let anything you touch now be unique. Being organized is probably the only traditional aspect your life has to offer at the moment. You have to be able to find the things you're looking for in order to do your work. Sagittarius. Even though your mind is on hair trigger those who work with you think you're refined and charming. Make it fun and exciting.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is a day to work. It's all about taking care of business which you, of all people, know how to do. It's in your nature and your Zodiac Sign. You may not have changed jobs because the stars say you're going to have the same trouble you had a few days ago with an obstinate person who looks to criticize your work and put you on the spot. Though you aren't changing jobs at the moment, just think it over, Capricorn. The right time will have you chomping at the bits to get out of Dodge. Then you'll feel happier.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Well, you're back to work as usual but you haven't given up on the thoughts of perhaps changing your work place or more. Practicality in your nature calls out to you to make sure your work is organized and can function even if you're not there. You want to make work the best it can be so that you can be proud of items you've accomplished. Not only that you want other workers to say you did your best when you leave. You know what they say about work, Aquarius. "Give more to the busiest person so that you know the work will be done." That seems to be your motto now.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

The thoughts that started yesterday on building your business acumen are even stronger today. Work means a lot to you and you're now making it a bigger part of your life. Feeling as if you need to do a little housekeeping at work, you do the task early this morning so that your day is more productive, you think, later. This is a time going on for a while that you can bring business, creativity and inventiveness together to make work and your life better. Pisces. Study of religion, philosophy and mystical ideas take on greater importance. This leaning process will be with you for some time to come.

Wordsearch Puzzle

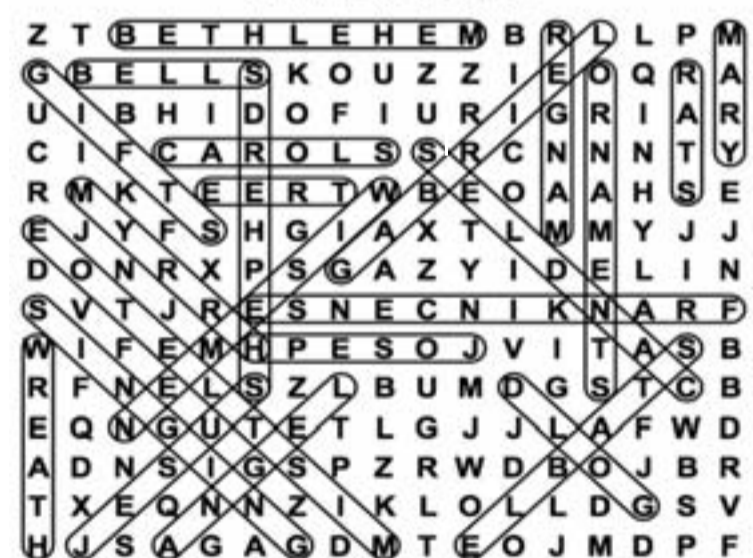
Christmas Decorations - Word Search



- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| ADVENT CALENDAR | HOLLY | SNOWMAN |
| ANGELS | NATIVITY SET | STAR |
| CANDLES | NUTCRACKER | STOCKINGS |
| CANDYCANES | ORNAMENTS | TREE LIGHTS |
| CHRISTMAS TREE | POINSETTIA | TREE SKIRT |
| ELVES | REINDEER | WINDOW ART |
| FIGURINES | SANTA | WREATH |
| GARLAND | SNOWFLAKE | |

Yesterday's Solution

Christmas - Solution

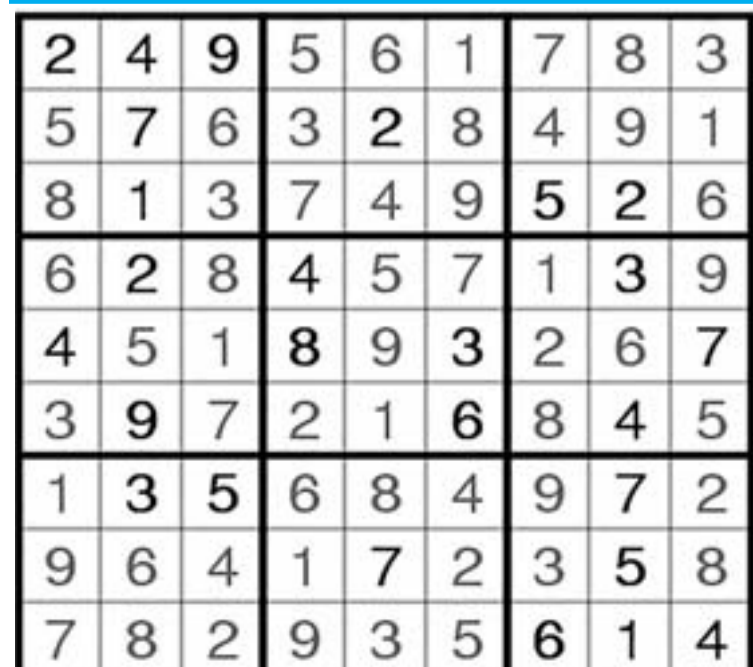


- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| ANGEL | GOLD | SHEPHERDS |
| BELLS | JESUS | SINGING |
| BETHLEHEM | JOSEPH | STABLE |
| CANDLES | MANGER | STAR |
| CAROLS | MARY | WISE MEN |
| FRANKINCENSE | MISTLETOE | TREE |
| GABRIEL | MYRRH | WREATH |
| GIFTS | ORNAMENTS | |

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2019



A man selling infant shoes waits for customers in the northern Syrian city of Raqa, the former Syrian capital of the Islamic State (IS) group. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces overran Raqa in 2017, after years of what residents described as IS's brutal rule, which included public beheading and crucifixions. — AFP

Game of Thrones fans fired up for final season

Three hundred die-hard Game of Thrones fans laughed, howled and moaned their way through the premiere of the hugely popular fantasy saga's last season in New York on Sunday. More than an hour before the episode began, a crowd gathered at central Brooklyn's Understudy bar and broke into raucous shouts as the first notes of the famous theme music rang out. Almost 20 months after season seven finished, "GoT" aficionados finally got their fix—and their fill of a Jon Snow cocktail, specially concocted for the occasion in honor of one of the main characters.

The nine most tweeted words Sunday morning all had a link with the world created by author George R. R. Martin, a sign of the immense popularity of the HBO series. The name of character Bran Stark took first place, mentioned in more than 500,000 tweets by 0500 GMT. Bookmakers consider him the most likely to wrest power and reign over the seven kingdoms. A number of masks and get-ups were brought to the Brooklyn screening, with a homemade, Jon Snow-inspired costume with strong fantasy and medieval overtones the clear crowd favorite. One young woman with peroxide blond hair styled a la strongwoman Brienne of Tarth brought along a gnashing papier-mache dragon hand puppet she had made for the occasion.

To add a little spice to the night, some fans played a game based on which character would survive the longest in the bloody, deadly world of Game of Thrones. The ruler

with the wind now in her sails, Daenerys Targaryen, was selected by Jean-Louis Baron. "She must die, so she'll be the last to die," he said. "The whole world building is absolutely phenomenal," Baron added. "It's a great escape".

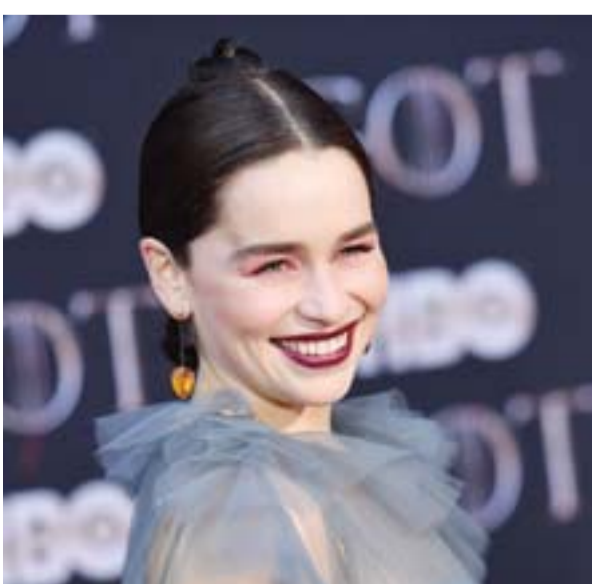
Laughter and tears

Many choose to watch the richly layered series at home so they don't miss any of the nuances, or have the option of watching a single scene multiple times. But some, like Robin Akyigit, decided to make an exception for the start of the final series and make it "more of an event." "One of the reasons why I wanted to be here was to get everybody's reaction," he said. "I love hearing the audience." "Luckily, the sound was great," said Alejandro Hernandez who had come up from Miami.

"I was kind of afraid we were going to miss some of it because of everybody talking but everybody was pretty quiet when they needed to be." The crowd of connoisseurs largely restrained their reactions—but there were moments when they burst into laughter, and at times there were tears too. "I would definitely give it an 8 or a 9," said Hernandez after the lights came up, adding: "It was pretty exciting to have them all back after so long." — AFP



Game of Thrones fans hold up masks as they wait for the start of the "Game of Thrones" premiere party at the Understudy bar in Brooklyn in New York. — AFP photos



British actress Emilia Clarke arrives for the "Game of Thrones" eighth and final season premiere at Radio City Music Hall in New York city.



Scottish actress Rose Leslie and husband British actor Kit Harington arrive for the "Game of Thrones" eighth and final season premiere.



US actor Jason Momoa arrives for the "Game of Thrones" eighth and final season premiere.



LULU ANNOUNCES 35-DATE UK TOUR

Lulu is set to play a 35-date UK tour later this year. The 'Shout' hitmaker has announced an extensive career-spanning run, entitled the 'On Fire Tour', which kicks off at The Anvil in Basingstoke on September 19 and runs right through to November 2, when the 70-year-old Scottish music legend will play Barnstaple in south west England. She said: "I've so enjoyed touring with my amazing band over the past few years that it didn't take very long for me to get the urge to hit the road again. "We'll be playing here, there and everywhere, so I invite fans old and new to come along and share a great night covering my six decades in music." Lulu released her most famous hit

'Shout' back in 1964, whilst other notable inclusions in her discography include her James Bond theme for 1974's 'The Man with the Golden Gun' and her 1993 duet with Take That on 'Relight My Fire'. The star is currently a special guest on Take That's 'Greatest Hits Live Tour', where she has been performing their hit song each night. Last year saw the 1969 'Eurovision' winner return to the West End for the first time in 33 years. Lulu landed a starring role in hit London musical '42nd Street' as Dorothy Brock, a Broadway diva who can sing but can't dance. The 60s icon, who took over from Sheena Easton, said at the time: "I'm still ticking, so why not? One of the things I am blessed with - there's no doubt about it - is to be still here."

The pop legend had last appeared on the West End in 1985 when she played Miss Adelaide in 'Guys and Dolls'. The 'To Sir, with Love' star added how "blessed" she is that she has the energy to be able to perform at her age and credited her stamina to her "disciplined" healthy lifestyle. She said: "I'm blessed with having a lot of energy. I've always had bundles of it. You have to be disciplined. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I try to eat healthily." Tickets for the 'On Fire Tour' go on general sale from 10am on Thursday (18.04.19). The full tour dates can be found on Ticketmaster.co.uk

Perry joins Zedd for 365 at Coachella

Katy Perry joined Zedd on stage at Coachella on Sunday. The pop star teamed up with the chart-topping German-Russian DJ for a rendition of their hit song '365' during his set at the Empire Polo Club ground in Indio, California. The 'Chained to the Rhythm' hitmaker had already teased her appearance at the famous festival by taking to Twitter to advise her 107 million followers to check the live stream of Coachella after tuning in to watch her on 'American Idol'. She wrote: "After you're done watching Idol, East Coast (and before yours begins, West Coast), Channel #GetYouAGirlWhoCanDoBoth (sic)" The 'Teenage Dream' hitmaker attended the festival with her fiancé Orlando Bloom and the pair both shared posts about watching Billie Eilish the day before. After her set, the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' star wrote on Instagram: "Verified occasionally the most authentic of humans comes along and scoops up all the heart n minds and makes a grown man gush still tripping over last nights set @wherearetheavocado (sic)" Katy also took to the social media app to share backstage snaps with the 17-year-old pop sensation and Orlando, 42, and admitted the 'Bury A Friend' hitmaker needs to be protected as she is one of a kind. She captioned the post: "we must protect @wherearetheavocados, beings like her don't enter our orbit often (sic)" Meanwhile, the 34-year-old singer had admitted that she felt old amongst the young crowd at the festival. She tweeted: "feel like I've been doing full looks at @Coachella for as long as some of these people have been alive (sic)".



Erasure's Andy Bell wants to become beekeeper

Erasure frontman Andy Bell plans to sell honey in Spain. The 54-year-old star has revealed he is keen to become a beekeeper and make some extra cash by selling the sugary syrup, after he previously revealed how hard it is to maintain his Majorca pad financially in 2014. He told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "I want to spend more time at my villa and start keeping my own bees and selling honey." Asked five years ago what the biggest drain on his resources were, he said: "The upkeep of the Spanish house because it's big with a huge garden and needs people to take care of it." Meanwhile, Andy and his bandmate Vince Clarke recently revealed they are set to start work on the new Erasure album this summer. The British synthpop duo released their 17th studio LP 'World Be Gone' in 2017 and the pair have made plans to go into the studio in July to write their next batch of songs once Andy has finished his upcoming 'Let's Rock' festival headline slots. Andy admitted he and Vince, 58, never have any tracks ready before they reunite and do all their writing in the studio together. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, he said: "I've got some of those retro gigs, 'Let's Rock' they're called. I'm doing them around the UK. Vince won't do them but I do them for some pocket money. Then we start writing in July and we'll see what comes out of that and then hopefully we'll have something recorded, or half-recorded, for the New Year and then we'll aim to go on tour next summer." After 33 years of working with Vince, Andy says the pair share a "bit of a psychic relationship" and they know what the other is thinking when it comes to where a song needs to go. He said: "On the first album I was employed as a singer and then there was a song that Vince was writing and he said, 'Do you know a word for this song for the chorus? I'm missing one.' I called it 'Oh L'Amour' and Vince gave me 50 per cent of the royalties, which I thought was very generous and since then we've co-written everything, almost, and it's 50/50. You kind of get a bit of psychic relationship really as musicians." The 'A Little Respect' hitmaker - who can currently be seen starring as polysexual, mythical being Torsten in 'Queerretoria TV' at London's Above the Stag Theatre throughout April - revealed he and Vince don't really keep in touch when they're not recording or touring as Erasure, but insisted that's not because they don't get on, because they actually still really "like each other" after all these years. Andy said: "We don't really stay in touch, no. Vince has got his family and his radio shows and things and that's why I do shows on my own and charity things. We pretty much live separate lives and probably just say hi on Christmas Day and things like that. "Erasure is Erasure and this way it's fresh when it is. "I think most bands hate each other. We're lucky, because we like each other ... Although when we haven't seen each other for a while it's like meeting an embarrassing ex-girlfriend, you have to kind of warm up again to the person!"

Guns N' Roses to start work on new album in the fall

Slash says Guns N' Roses will start work on their new album in "the fall". The 'Welcome to the Jungle' group's guitarist has revealed the band - which is currently comprised of himself, Axl Rose, Duff McKagan, Richard Fortus, Dizzy Reed and drummer Frank Ferrer - are yet to enter the studio, but he is planning on putting aside some time to solely to work on the original line-up's first record since 1993's 'The Spaghetti Incident?'. Asked where they are at in regards to a new record, Slash replied: "I wouldn't say we've really sat down and had those sessions yet." In an interview with BelfastLive, the 53-year-old rock legend, who is also touring and planning to pen new material for his other band, Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators, continued: "The Conspirators are finishing up in mid-August and then Guns is going out in late September/October, so in the fall. "But at the same time, we're focused on working towards this new record that everybody's been asking about. So start focusing on that in earnest. And that's it. "I'm not thinking about anything else while that is going on. That's really the main focus. "By the time the Conspirators tour is done, I will have written enough material for the next Conspirators record that whenever that break comes up with Guns N' Roses we can go on to do that. "We'll just juggle all this stuff, schedules permitting." The 'Sweet Child O' Mine' hitmaker admitted that he is clueless when it comes to what the record will sound like. He confessed: "I have no idea. I



really couldn't tell you. It's like anything else - you don't know what it is until it's done." Slash' album update comes after bassist Duff confirmed the record is "real" but the band want to surprise their fans, whilst he admitted they won't be tied down to any kind of schedule. He said: "Oh, it's real, but the fun part and the cool part about Guns N' Roses is we don't really talk about it, and what happens next just happens. "It's never been that band that there's a direct schedule of how we do things. I've heard some magnificent stuff that Axl has, really cool stuff he's been working on. "So I'm excited about the possibilities with that, of course. I don't mean to get anybody rabid. Our day will happen when it happens, that's for sure."



Matty Healy: Paid meet and greets aren't cool

Matty Healy doesn't think paid meet and greets are "cool". The 1975 frontman has insisted he and his band will never charge their fans to get a picture with them, because he doesn't like the idea of "making music exclusive", as he says that's "not what music's about". He said: "What is it? Like 300 to a thousand bucks. It's just not cool because you're making music exclusive and that's not what music's about. You're saying to people, 'This relationship that we have in art goes so far until you can't afford it anymore.'" Matty also spoke about which 1975 track he feels perfectly sums up the band, and whilst he admitted that every song has its place with the rockers, he thinks 'Falling for you' - which appeared on their 2013 EP 'IV' - would be the best choice. Speaking to KROQ backstage at Coachella, he said:

"[Every song], because every time I get excited about a song I have to be like, 'This is the song that is The 1975'. I know that it should be 'Love It If We Made It' but I'd want it to be 'Falling for you' ... but that's a more left field one." Meanwhile, the 'Chocolate' hitmaker has previously hit out at artists who charge fans for meet and greets, as he claimed they were profiting off of "human connection". He fumed: "Who came up with payed meet and greets? Did they think 'Surely there must be something else we can monetise.....OH! Human connection!! They'll eat that up!' "MEET YOUR FANS OR DON'T "DON'T ONLY MEET THEM IF YOU'RE GETTING PAYED HONESTLY WHAT ARE YOU DOING (sic)".

Morrissey axes gigs after 'medical emergency'

Morrissey has been forced to axe shows in Canada, due to a "medical emergency". The former Smiths star postponed two shows in Vancouver scheduled for Sunday and yesterday, with the gigs now set to take place on the same dates in October, after a mystery "accident" which "occurred" whilst he was travelling in Europe. The singer/songwriter is said to be "on the path to a swift recovery" and can't wait to make his return to the city. Ticketmaster said in a statement: "Due to a medical emergency stemming from an accident incurred while travelling in Europe, Morrissey will be forced to postpone his performances in Vancouver to October 14 and 15, 2019. "Spirits are high and the artist

is on the path to a swift recovery. All tickets will be valid for the new date and exchanges will not be necessary. Thank you for your understanding. "Morrissey looks forward to making his long-awaited return to the city and wishes to deeply thank everyone for their patience." According to the 59-year-old star's official Facebook events page, the Edmonton show on April 18 is reported to have also been pushed back, however this has not yet been confirmed. The 'All You Need Is Me' singer is due to reconvene the Canadian run on April 26 in Toronto. The ticketing company added: "All remaining dates on Morrissey's tour will resume as planned, commencing in Toronto on Friday April 26." The tour will be the first time

Morrissey has set foot in Canada in 15 years, as he previously avoided the country in protest of their annual seal hunt. Morrissey plans on making "sizeable" donations to animal charities in each Canadian city he plays. He said last year: "My decision to return to Canada after almost 15 years of protest against its savage and Neanderthal annual Baby Seal Kill is entirely because my stance was ultimately of no use and helped no one. "My voice was drowned out by the merciless swing of spiked axes crushing the heads of babies. On my return to Canada I feel that I can be of more use by making sizeable donations to animal protection groups in each city that I play."



'Shazam!' holds off newcomers to top box office again



Warner Bros' lighthearted superhero tale "Shazam!" held on to top spot on its second weekend, taking an estimated \$25.1 million as it kept a flurry of newcomers at bay, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. The family-friendly flick stars Asher Angel as Billy Boston, an unhappy foster kid who is transformed into a muscular, wise-cracking adult superhero (Zachary Levi) when anyone pronounces the secret word. The film has been a hit with critics and audiences, scoring 90 and 88 percent respectively on movie ratings website Rotten Tomatoes and overseas ticket sales hitting \$164 million. Universal's new release "Little"—another body-swap comedy, this time with a grown-up trapped in her teenage self—was runner-up with \$15.5 million on its opening weekend, playing particularly well with female and African American audiences. Child star Marsai Martin, who has been in popular ABC sit-com "black-ish" for five years, pitched the idea for the movie when she was just 10 after being

inspired by 1980s hit "Big," starring Tom Hanks, in which a child becomes trapped in his adult body. Martin, 14, is the youngest producer ever on a major Hollywood production and plays the younger version of Regina Hall. In third spot was fellow newcomer "Hellboy" which posted a disappointing \$12 million for distributor Lionsgate against expectations of \$17-\$20 million. The rebooted superhero movie, directed by Neil Marshall and starring "Stranger Things" actor David Harbour, was panned by critics who complained about its lack of cohesion and compared it unfavorably to Guillermo del Toro's 2004 and 2008 entries starring Ron Perlman. Horror film "Pet Sematary"—a remake of the 1989 film based on the Stephen King book—took fourth place with an estimated \$10 million. Fifth went to Disney's "Dumbo," at \$9.1 million. The Tim Burton remake of the 1941 film tells the story of a small elephant with huge ears and a powerful desire to be reunited with his mama.

Thompson urges better treatment of writers in Hollywood



Dame Emma Thompson wants better treatment for writers in Hollywood. The 60-year-old actress explained that many big budget movies begin shooting before the screenplay is finished because they want to start filming immediately once a big star is attached to the project, and says writers often receive "lip service" about the quality of their work. However, the 'Sense and Sensibility' star shared that "after 30 years of doing this" she believes writing the script during shooting "makes things so much more difficult" and insisted that she doesn't want to make movies "with unfinished scripts". In an interview with the Guardian newspaper, she said: "One of the reasons is that they need stars - big stars - who work all the time and have to be fitted into timescales. What happens is there'll be an idea for a story. "It will be in development, and then suddenly two of the big stars come free, and everyone says, 'right, let's shoot it, we'll work it out as we shoot'. "One thing I know, after 30 years of doing this, is you can't work it out while you shoot ... It always ends up just making things so much more difficult in post-production. "This is a tradition - and yet, when there is a good screenplay, and everyone recognizes that it's a good screenplay, there's a lot of fuss and a tremendous amount of what can only be described as lip service to the value of good writing. "And then everything continues as before. That's what happens, and I don't know how to change that. But I know that I don't want to make films with unfinished scripts."

Gunn 'knew' his brother James was 'cut out' for Guardians of the Galaxy

James Gunn's brother Sean "knew from the beginning" that the director was "really cut out" for 'Guardians of the Galaxy'. The 52-year-old director was recently re-hired by Disney to helm the third instalment in the Marvel trilogy after being fired when a string of controversial old Twitter posts resurfaced and Sean - who plays Kraglin in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films - insisted he always thought the franchise was "exactly the perfect kind of project" for his brother. Speaking to ComicBook.com, Sean said: "I think I always knew from the beginning that my brother James was really cut out for the job. "You know like I knew when he was hired that like, wow, this is exactly the perfect kind of project for him. "So I had high hopes that we would make something good, you know? Then I read the script and I'm like, 'This is fantastic!' "If we're able to actually make the movie as written on the page, make it pop the way that it does from reading the first script, we're really going to have something here, and I think I was one of the most optimistic people on set from the word go." As for when he knew the 'Guardians' films were going to be a hit, the 'Gilmore Girls' star admitted that he was "always pretty confident" they "had something massive". He explained: "I always felt pretty confident that we would have something on our hands, at least that people liked, but I never ever imagined that it would be the massive, massive hit that it was. "I never thought that they would be able to sell so much. That it would be marketed so well and that kids would identify so well to it and that people would compare it to their favorite 80s movies. "All of the runaway success was something that I never really expected."



Women on top: Varda is star of Cannes festival poster

French movie legend Agnes Varda, who died last month, is the star of this year's Cannes film festival poster unveiled yesterday, perched on the back of one of her technicians. The ever-playful director—who passed away on March 29 aged 90 — is pictured standing on the back of one of her crouching male crew to get a shot for her film, "La Pointe Courte". The arresting image could even be taken as a knowing comment on how the industry is finally bending to women's will after the #MeToo movement. Last year, the diminutive Varda and Hollywood star Cate Blanchett led a red-carpet protest at the festival demanding gender equality. The director is credited with inventing the French New Wave with "La Pointe Courte" in 1955, which was shot on the fly and on a shoestring in the Mediterranean port of Sete, where she grew up. "Like a manifesto, this still photo sums up everything about Agnes Varda," the festival said. "Her passion, aplomb, and mischievousness. "Perched on the shoulders of an impassive technician, clinging to a camera... a young woman, aged 26, (is) making her first film," it added. The movie, starring Philippe Noiret, was shown at Cannes and

helped spark one of the most influential movements in cinema history. A festival spokeswoman told AFP that the identity of the technician is something of a mystery. Varda, who later married fellow director Jacques Demy—the maker of "Lola" and "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg"—went on to win the Golden Lion at Venice for "Vagabond" and universal acclaim for her now classic documentary, "The Gleaners & I". Last year, she became the oldest person ever to be nominated for an Oscar for another documentary, "Faces Places", having earlier picked up an honorary Oscar for her career. She was awarded an honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes in 2015. The world's biggest film festival, which sees itself as the "Olympics of cinema", will open next month with cult US director Jim Jarmusch's "The Dead Don't Die". The zombie comedy stars Bill Murray, Adam Driver, Tilda Swinton and singers Iggy Pop and Tom Waits. The festival, whose jury this year is headed by the Mexican maestro Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu of "Birdman" and "The Revenant" fame, runs from May 14 to 25.

Bohemian Rhapsody passes \$900 million

'Bohemian Rhapsody' has surpassed \$900 million in ticket sales. The Queen biopic - which starred Rami Malek in the role of the iconic late rocker Freddie Mercury - may have been released way back in October, but it seems the flick isn't done raking in the millions just yet, as Fox and New Regency have announced it has officially earned more than \$900 million worldwide. According to Variety, the movie - which is the highest-grossing music biopic of all time - has generated \$685 million internationally, along with an impressive \$216 million at the domestic box office. Despite having not been shown in cinemas in the US or UK for several weeks, the film is still playing in theatres in China and Japan, where it grossed a total of \$114 million. In the UK, the movie made \$71 million, whilst South Korea earned the production a further \$76 million. 'Bohemian Rhapsody' uses the legendary catalog of Queen music to chronicle the life of Freddie Mercury and the band's rise to glory. The production cost just \$50 million to make, meaning Fox have managed to secure a mammoth profit for their venture. And it isn't just audiences who have loved the flick, as it turned out to be a hit during awards season, with Rami's performance as Freddie Mercury bagging him the Best Actor gong at the Oscars, alongside three other awards for Best Sound Editing, Best Sound Mixing, and Best Film Editing. The movie also won Golden Globes for Best Motion Picture Drama, and another win for Rami as Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama. 'Bohemian Rhapsody' is now Fox's fourth biggest movie ever after 'Avatar', 'Titanic', and 'Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace', and comes as Disney last month announced it was closing its \$71 billion acquisition of 21st Century Fox.

Jenkins to make major acting debut alongside Depp



Katherine Jenkins will make her big screen debut alongside Johnny Depp. The 38-year-old Welsh mezzo-soprano singer has been cast in the World War II drama 'Minamata' by her husband Andrew Levitas, in the role of Millie. The movie sees Johnny portray the photographer W. Eugene Smith, whose images uncovered the pollution which damaged the health of the residents of Minamata in Japan. The Classic BRIT Award-winner reportedly jetted over to Serbia in February to film her scenes. And a source has claimed that Katherine - who has three-year-old daughter Aaliyah and son Xander, who celebrates his first birthday this month, with Andrew - is keen to embark on a "new career" in movies. An insider told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "Katherine is delighted by the role and was really excited to be acting opposite such huge, talented stars. "She thinks it could potentially be the start of a new career and she would love to do more. "Producers were impressed with her stints on the small screen previously and think she has amazing stage presence." Katherine's first acting role was in the 2010 festive episode of hit British sci-fi series 'Doctor Who', entitled 'A Christmas Carol', in which she played Abigail Pettigrew alongside Matt Smith as the titular Time Lord. Two years ago, the star appeared on London's West End as Julie Jordan in 'Carousel'. Speaking previously about working with 'Pirates of the Caribbean' star Johnny on the forthcoming flick, filmmaker Andrew said: "Working with Johnny to give voice to those who have been silently suffering is a responsibility we do not take lightly. "Much like Eugene Smith in 1971, we could not feel more privileged or humbled to be tasked with the mission of bringing this incredible story to the world." The upcoming movie, which could hit cinemas later this year, will tell the story of how Smith was convinced by Life magazine editor Ralph Graves to head to Japan to expose the devastation caused in the coastal community through mercury poisoning. Katherine was in the same venue as Johnny when they performed at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in Soho, London, in October, at a star-studded Chuck Berry tribute concert. — Agencies



Phoebe Waller-Bridge working on Bond 25 script



Phoebe Waller-Bridge is working on the script for Bond 25. The 33-year-old actress and writer - best known for creating and starring in BBC Three's 'Fleabag' as well as producing and writing 'Killing Eve' - has been drafted in to help with the script for the upcoming Bond movie at the special request of Bond himself, Daniel Craig. Craig asked for Waller-Bridge to be a part of the team after being impressed by her work on 'Fleabag' and 'Killing Eve', The Observer reports. Whilst in the United States, Waller-Bridge met with Craig to discuss the script, which he felt needed some "polishing". He wants to introduce more humor into the script and include her offbeat style of writing. Cary Fukunaga - who previously helmed the 2011 romantic drama 'Jane Eyre' and 2015's 'Beasts of No Nation' - was brought in as the new director of 'Bond 25' to replace Danny Boyle, who walked away from the project over "creative differences". Producers Michael Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said at the time: "We are delighted to be working with Cary. His versatility and innovation make him an excellent choice for our next James Bond adventure." A source had previously claimed that Boyle's decision to walk away from the movie centered on plans to kill off Bond. The source said: "There were discussions about killing off Bond in dramatic fashion at the end. It would also leave it open for a twist in the next instalment - either Bond hadn't died or there could be a 'Doctor Who'-esque regeneration with a new actor. "There were clashes over budget and there's pandemonium among crew with people leaving the production left, right and center." 'Bond 25' was originally slated for release on February 14, 2020 but it has since been pushed back.

Grande, youngest ever Coachella headliner, reunites NSYNC

Ariana Grande became the youngest ever act to headline Coachella in her Sunday night performance featuring a coterie of high-profile guests including a reunion of 1990s boy band NSYNC. The 25-year-old pop phenom also invited rapper Nicki Minaj onstage before throwing back to hip hop classics, bringing out Sean "Diddy" Combs and Mase for a touching tribute to both the recently slain rapper Nipsey Hussle and her ex-boyfriend Mac Miller, who committed suicide last September.

Grande is just the fourth woman to headline Coachella, a sun-drenched trendsetting festival in the desert of California that will run through the same lineup again next weekend, save for an exclusive Easter Sunday performance by Kanye West. The top billing is a feather in Grande's cap after a year that saw the former child star permeate the public consciousness as she shattered record after record and released two hit albums.

She kicked off the show with her hit celebrating pleasure and shortly thereafter performed "Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored", which features a deep cut sample from NSYNC's 2000 album "No Strings Attached." Four of NSYNC's

five former members came together for the occasion, though Justin Timberlake—who found fame in his own right after the band broke up—was noticeably absent. But the four who turned up delighted the audience and Grande herself—who would've barely been in primary school when the group peaked—with the pop star saying: "I've been rehearsing my whole... life for this moment!" The performers then did a rendition of the 1997 classic "Tearin' Up My Heart," nailing the original choreography.

Technical difficulties struck when Minaj joined Grande onstage to an eruption of cheers to perform their joint smashes "Side to Side" and "Bang Bang." A botched rap from Minaj saw the two awkwardly bob back and forth, with Grande saying "We can't hear anything" several times, before using her four-octave range to try and move on from the snafu. A clip of the incident quickly became the stuff of memes, with captions like: "Me And My Best Friend During Our Oral Presentation That We Forgot About."

'Still standing'

The crowd threw up peace signs for Grande's

collaboration with Diddy and Mase, with the trio performing "Mo Money Mo Problems," the 1999 megahit by the Notorious B.I.G. that featured the duo and was released after his death. During the emotional tribute to Miller and Hussle—whose shooting death triggered an outpouring of grief from the music industry and beyond—the performers also gave shoutouts to Biggie and Tupac Shakur, whose murders in the mid-1990s were the most high-profile of the era's spate of rapper killings.

While Grande has found massive success recently, she has also suffered highly publicized personal and professional upheavals, which included Miller's death, the demise of her whirlwind engagement to comedian Pete Davidson of Saturday Night Live and a deadly bombing at her 2017 concert in Manchester. "She's been through a whole lot, but she's still standing," shouted Diddy to cheers. "Give it up for the number one artist in the world!" —AFP



NSYNC and Ariana Grande at Coachella.



French singer Christine and the Queens performs on stage at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival.

Post French touch, a new breed of pop stars takes global stage

Decades after the breakout of dominating French house acts like Daft Punk, a fresh crop of Francophone pop stars are internationalizing their appeal with music that travels. At Coachella, the eclectic American festival that kicks off the summer circuit of music's top acts, a handful of French musicians lesser-known stateside played for thousands in the California desert and had crowds bumping. Art-pop provocateur Christine and the Queens played a top outdoor stage after doing a smaller set three years prior, and found a crush of fans old and new welcoming her with open arms.

She along with international phenom DJ Snake topped a laundry list of nearly a dozen French acts that descended on the festival—including rising world pop singer Jain, veteran artist Charlotte Gainsbourg and electro-pop duo Polo and Pan. Aside from some indie acts, like Phoenix, such a prominent lineup of Francophone music hasn't been seen stateside since the late 1990s and 2000s. That was during the house music craze, often referred to as the "French touch" genre, which saw Daft Punk, AIR and Cassius sweep the club scene with their disco-tinged tracks.

Sporting menswear-style pleated trousers and an oversized red button-down atop a ballerina-like bodysuit, Christoborn Heloise Letissier, the pansexual artist formerly known

as Christine now goes by Chris—oozed athletic sensuality as she pumped the energy with her stagecraft and banter: all of it in English. "What a time to be alive," she shouted into the arid desert night to reverberating cheers. "This is now a safe space." "Mutations are allowed—we are free to break the law."

Boxed in

The bold statement referencing her newfound freedom and gender fluidity can also apply to her genre-bending art. She has voiced feeling boxed in in her native France, saying in recent years she has wanted to "assert hybridity by traveling, by singing in English." She has recorded several of her hit singles in both English and French, a bid to reach a wider audience. "In France—I was not really French to them," the daughter of academics born in the country's western city of Nantes told AFP prior to her show-stopping performance.

"I like to work on broken mirrors and many identities," she said in her near-impeccable English. "English allows me to be more international, French stays that language that I love to work on," she said, noting the fortune of Latin artists who are beginning to meld Spanish and English and still touch the public at large.

'Asserting my freedom'

Chris said some in her home country have seen her boundary-pushing, norm-questioning music that she performs as much with her toned body as her impressive voice as "aggressive," even as it reaches fans worldwide. Saying that France remains quite "patriarchal" and is "not really queer yet," the artist voiced surprise at the reception of her self-titled second studio album. "I was working on my own desires and my active sexuality and my active lust and my active will to be powerful—and I just noticed that in France, it was associated with aggressivity," she said.

"I was just asserting my freedom as a woman." But the ever-trendy masses at Coachella were seduced by her androgyny, songs in both English and French, and covers of fellow shapeshifters David Bowie and Janet Jackson. "I love her message and what she stands for," said festival-goer Sunny Park, a 36-year-old from Los Angeles. "My friends are converts now!"

'Language of travel'

For Jain, the 27-year-old pop star who blends electronica and Afrobeat influences, singing exclusively in English is "natural." Born Jeanne Louise Galice in Toulouse, she said her language choice helped her nab a spot at the premier festival and also facilitated the booking of her US tour. "Even if it's not a perfect English, it really helped me to be able to travel," the songwriter told AFP the day before taking the stage in a bright blue catsuit with red trim.

But in her home country, Jain said it poses a "disadvantage," pointing to a law there demanding radio stations give French-language music more than a third of total airplay. But the singer, who in her youth lived in both Congo and Dubai, said that when she began making music as a teen, many of her friends didn't speak French. "I wanted them and other people, not only American people but others, to understand me," Jain said, saying English "is the language of travel, and that's what I want to do with my music."

"You may hear from my fabulous accent that I'm French!" the energetic performer said to applause, uttering but a single French word—"merci"—throughout the set. Contorting her lithe body to the Afrobeat, she danced off-stage, leaving behind an enraptured crowd—and a forgotten French flag one festival-goer had thrown to her. —AFP



British-French actress and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg performs onstage at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California. — AFP



French singer Jain performs on stage at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival.

Bergman actress Bibi Andersson dies, aged 83

Swedish actress Bibi Andersson, best known for her roles in legendary director Ingmar Bergman's films, died on Sunday aged 83, her daughter Jenny Grede Dahlstrand told AFP. Andersson is perhaps best known for starring in many of Bergman classics including "The Seventh Seal" (1957), "Wild Strawberries" (1957) and "Persona" (1966). Andersson first started working with the director at the age of 15, when she was cast in several commercials for the Swedish soap brand "Bris", directed by Bergman.

She received several awards including the Silver Bear for Best Actress at the Berlin international film festival in 1963 for her role in Vilgot Sjöman's "The Mistress" (1962). From early film credits in 1951, she continued working and starring in movies until 2009, when she suffered a stroke paralyzing one side of her body.

Her daughter Grede Dahlstrand said Andersson had made a mark on many people's lives. "She leaves behind a great hole of loss for every one of us who had the privilege of being near her," Grede Dahlstrand said. Jan Holmberg, CEO of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation, told AFP that although Andersson came to be extensively linked to Bergman, she was very



This file photo taken on November 24, 1981 in Paris shows Swedish actress Bibi Andersson.



In this file photo Sweden's Bibi Andersson holds out her Ibsen Centennial Award during a gala celebration in Oslo. — AFP photos

Academy warned against excluding Netflix from Oscars

It may already have Oscars under its belt, but Netflix's acceptance by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences hangs in the balance. The prestigious body is set to reexamine whether the streaming giant will remain eligible for such awards, despite a warning from the US Justice Department that could violate antitrust laws. "We've received a letter from the Dept. of Justice and have responded accordingly," the Academy said in a statement, confirming reports in Variety magazine.

Film director Steven Spielberg has suggested that Netflix films should not be eligible for Oscars, but instead for Emmy Awards handed to the stars and creators of television shows. "Once you commit to a television format, you're a TV movie," said Spielberg, who is set to work with new streaming platform Apple TV+. But for US authorities, "such conduct may raise antitrust concerns." In its letter to the Academy, the Justice Department expressed concerns that new restrictions could "suppress competition."

The Academy, for its part, simply says it will meet on April 23 for an annual meeting on the rules of the Oscars. Netflix declined to comment, but last month tweeted: "We love cinema." "Here are some things we also love: Access for people who can't always afford, or live in towns without, theaters; Letting everyone, everywhere enjoy releases at the same time; Giving filmmakers more ways to share art," it added. "These things are not mutually exclusive."



In this file photo this illustration picture shows the US Online Streaming giant Netflix logo displayed on a tablet in Paris. — AFP photos

US antitrust laws exist to regulate businesses to promote fair competition and protect consumers. Recently, authorities blocked the takeover of media giant Time Warner by telecoms group AT&T, on the grounds that it would cut out competition and raises prices for customers. In this case, the Justice Department "wants to avoid having to intervene by way of a lawsuit," said C. Kerry Fields, a business economics professor at the University of Southern California.

The Academy did not reveal its response to the Justice Department's letter, but Kerry Fields suggested it "may cause the Academy to be more circumspect and cautious." "I'm sure there are many people on the Academy board that are uneasy about taking on the Department of Justice," he added.

Fueled by Netflix's haul at this year's Academy Awards, including three statues for Mexican Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma," underlying all this is a battle between the world of old cinema and the new world of streaming services. For Kerry Fields, it is surprising the US authorities have sided with the latter. "It is a titanic struggle: one that pits old formats against a new one," he said. "For a lot of young people, it's the right decision but I would have thought they would have sided with the Academy." —AFP



In this file photo Best Director, Best Foreign Language Film, and Best Cinematography winner for 'Roma' Alfonso Cuarón poses in the press room with his Oscars during the 91st Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California on February 24, 2019.

Classifieds

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

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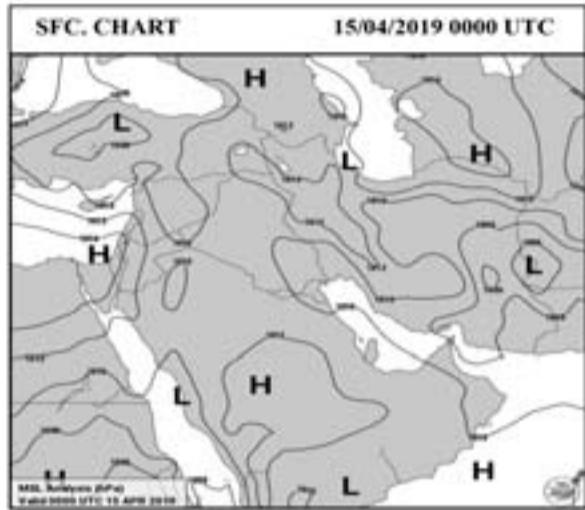
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Fair and Clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
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STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	34 °C	21 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	35 °C	15 °C
ABDALY	36 °C	17 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	36 °C	18 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	33 °C	18 °C
SALMIYAH	32 °C	23 °C
AHMADI	33 °C	22 °C
NUWAISIB	35 °C	17 °C
WAFRA	36 °C	15 °C
SALMY	35 °C	17 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	04/16	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy	36 °C	18 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	04/17	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy to cloudy causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain	36 °C	20 °C	SE-NW	10 - 45 km/h
Thursday	04/18	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy causing rising dust with a chance for scattered rain	32 °C	22 °C	NE-SE	15 - 35 km/h
Friday	04/19	Relatively hot and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	34 °C	21 °C	NE-SE	12 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:59
Sunrise	05:21
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:14
Isha	19:34

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	34 °C
MIN. Temp.	18 °C
MAX. RH	36 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	NW 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

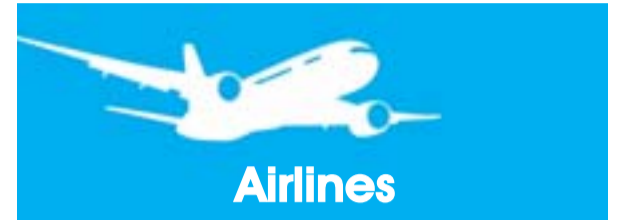
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Abdul Azeez (surname) and given name Sainumandavida S/o Bappan Ebrahim holder of Indian Passport No: L5939181 issued by Indian Embassy Kuwait on 13/04/2014, hereby declare to change my surname as Sainumantavida and given name as Abdul Azeez. (C 5516) 15-4-2019

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Kuwait Airways	171
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Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
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Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

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Arrival Flights on Tuesday 16/4/2019				Departure Flights on Tuesday 16/4/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	JZR	713	Sohag	06:15
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
THY	766	ISL	00:30	JZR	771	Istanbul	06:40
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	623	Doha	06:50
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	UAE	874	Dubai	06:50
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	KAC	167	Paris	07:10
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	RJA	643	Amman	07:15
KAC	102	London	01:20	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	JZR	115	Doha	07:30
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:10
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	165	Rome	08:20
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	08:35
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	FEY	442	Asyut	08:40
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	FDB	054	Dubai	08:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:05	BAW	156	London	09:15
RBG	211	Luxor	03:05	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	JZR	141	Al Najaf	09:25
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	541	Cairo	09:30
MSR	606	Luxor	03:10	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	741	Dammam	09:45
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	101	London	09:45
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	151	Mashhad	09:50
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
JZR	716	Sohag	04:40	QTR	1089	Doha	10:00
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	10:10
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	KAC	1543	Cairo	10:10
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	205	Islamabad	10:35
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	MEA	403	Beirut	10:40
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	ALK	230	Colombo	10:40
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	GFA	220	Bahrain	10:40
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	KAC	303	Mumbai	10:40
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	KAC	383	Delhi	10:45
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	ICV	675	Hong Kong	10:45
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KLM	445	Bahrain	11:00
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	783	Jeddah	11:25
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	UAE	860	Dubai	11:25
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	KAC	411	Bangkok	11:25
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	12:00
THY	6376	Istanbul	06:30	RBG	214	Sohag	12:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	795	Madinah	12:00
BAW	157	London	07:05	QTR	1083	Doha	12:55
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10				
KAC	708	Luxor	07:15				
JZR	358	Kochi	07:35				
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35				
FEY	241	Alexandria	07:40				
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50				
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00				
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20				
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35				
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05				
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05				
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30				
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40				
IRA	675	Lar	09:40				
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40				
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00				
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00				
KAC	624	Doha	10:40				
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40				
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10				
JZR	116	Doha	11:10				
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35				
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55				
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25				
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30				
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35				
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50				
JZR	142	Al Najaf	12:50				
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50				

Bouteflika mosque seen as monument to megalomania

ALGIERS: Algeria's Abdelaziz Bouteflika may be gone, but his unfinished Great Mosque of Algiers looms large as a symbol of his 20-year reign and, many say, his megalomania. Built with the nation's vast oil wealth, the monument on the Bay of Algiers will be the world's third biggest mosque and Africa's largest, also boasting the tallest minaret anywhere at 265 m.

The majestic white building, known locally as the Djamaa El-Djazair, sprawls across 20 hectares, and its silhouette can be seen from across the capital region. But it has few defenders among the people of Algiers, where many dismiss it as a vanity project of the 82-year-old deposed leader and an immense waste of public money. The initial cost estimate of 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) has long been overrun and the construction, launched by a Chinese company in 2012, is more than three years behind schedule.

"There are mosques every 500 meters in this country, we didn't need that," said an exasperated 68-year-old Zhora. Algeria, Africa's largest country, has more than 20,000 mosques. One of them, a small, immaculate neighborhood mosque, sits about 100 m behind the lavish structure in a residential district where laundry dries on the balconies of buildings dotted with satellite dishes. A 70-year-old resident sitting on the sidewalk recounted witnessing the impressive dome grow day by day from his window. "It's true, it's a masterpiece, but... what we need are hospitals," he said.

Algeria, with 40 million inhabitants, does slightly better than Morocco in terms of hospital beds per inhabitant, and somewhat

worse than Tunisia, according to the WHO. The National Agency for Health Institutions in 2015 noted that Algeria's university hospitals date to colonial times and are "mostly a century old". Health workers' unions regularly denounce the lack of medical staff and equipment in public hospitals. "I have nothing against this mosque, but these billions could have been used to improve a health system that really needs it," said Imene, a 26-year-old doctor. On social networks, petitions have been launched to transform the Great Mosque into "Algeria's largest hospital".

With space for up to 120,000 faithful, the Great Mosque of Algiers will be the world's third largest after those in Makkah and Madinah, Islam's two holiest sites, in Saudi Arabia. In addition to a 20,000-sq-m prayer room, it will include a Koranic school, library, cultural center and vast gardens. To many Algerians, it symbolizes the misguided vision of a leader who desperately clung to power despite age and illness, and his backers. "This mosque just shows that they are all thieves," said Fella, 52, who has been active in the protest movement against the "system" since it began on Feb 22.

She said Bouteflika "wanted to compete" with regional rivals by overshadowing Morocco's Hassan II mosque in Casablanca and Tunisia's mosque built by another fallen autocrat, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. In Algiers, police still guard the construction site, which so far is only accessible to the workers. "Bouteflika wanted his mosque, that's all. This mosque is his mark," said Mourad, a 47-year-old resident. "The worst thing is



ALGIERS: This picture shows the Great Mosque of Algiers (Djamaa el Djazair) on April 13, 2019. — AFP

that we can't even get in there," he added. A few blocks away, 42-year-old shop owner Radia commented on the unfinished

dream of Bouteflika, who has rarely been seen in public following a stroke in 2013 that affected his speech and left him wheelchair-

bound. "Bouteflika made this great mosque for himself, and now he won't even be able to go and pray in it," she said. — AFP

3D heart with human vessels...

Continued from Page 1

cells, blood vessels, ventricles and chambers," said Tal Dvir, who led the project. "People have managed to 3D-print the structure of a heart in the past, but not with cells or with blood vessels," he said.

But the scientists said many challenges remain before fully working 3D printed hearts would be available for transplant into patients. Journalists were shown a 3D print of a heart about the size of a cherry, immersed in liquid, at Tel Aviv University yesterday as the researchers announced their findings, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Advanced Science*. Researchers must now teach the printed hearts "to behave" like real ones. The cells are currently able to contract, but do not yet have the ability to pump.

Then they plan to transplant them into animal models, hopefully in about a year, said Dvir. "Maybe, in 10 years, there will be organ printers in the finest hospitals around the world, and these procedures will be conducted routinely," he said. But he said hospitals would likely start with simpler organs than hearts.

In its statement announcing the research, Tel Aviv University called it a "major medical breakthrough".

Cardiovascular disease is the world's leading cause of death, according to the World Health Organization, and transplants are currently the only option available for patients in the worst cases. But the number of donors is limited and many die while waiting. When they do benefit, they can fall victim to their bodies rejecting the transplant - a problem the researchers are seeking to overcome.

Their research involved taking a biopsy of fatty tissue from patients that was used in the development of the "ink" for the 3D print. First, patient-specific cardiac patches were created followed by the entire heart, the statement said. Using the patient's own tissue was important to eliminate the risk of an implant provoking an immune response and being rejected, Dvir said. "The biocompatibility of engineered materials is crucial to eliminating the risk of implant rejection, which jeopardizes the success of such treatments," said Dvir. Challenges that remain include how to expand the cells to have enough tissue to recreate a human-sized heart, he said.

Current 3D printers are also limited by the size of their resolution and another challenge will be figuring out how to print all small blood vessels. But while the current 3D print was a primitive one and only the size of a rabbit's heart, "larger human hearts require the same technology," said Dvir. 3D printing has opened up possibilities in numerous fields, provoking both promise and controversy. The technology has developed to include 3D prints of everything from homes to guns. — AFP

Milan attracted over 22 million.

Dubai's government has already spent over \$40 billion on major infrastructure projects related to Expo including a \$2.9 billion new Metro line and an \$8 billion expansion of Al Maktoum International Airport, next to the Expo site. The Metro line links the \$13.4 billion Dubai South Villages and Dubai Exhibition Centre, projects currently underway. Al Maktoum Airport, when complete, will have the capacity to handle 160 million travellers per year. The 4.4 sq km Expo site south of Dubai is due to be redeveloped into a full-fledged city after the Expo, the so-called District 2020, home to a mega exhibition center and scores of companies, organizers said. — AFP

Dubai Expo to give \$33bn boost...

Continued from Page 1

Dubai assumes that Expo 2020 - which runs from October 20 next year to April 20, 2021 - will attract some 25 million visits, Benson said. The economic impact includes "direct, indirect and induced effects" of the first Expo to be organized in the Middle East and Africa, he said. The Expo 2010 in Shanghai drew 93 million visitors, and Expo 2015 in

Offensive stalls, but Haftar digs in

TRIPOLI/PARIS: Military strongman Khalifa Haftar's intended lightning seizure of Libya's capital has stalled, but he is unlikely to face real pressure from abroad to pull back as the arrival of hardline opponents bolsters his war cry against "terrorism". Haftar's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) advanced to the outskirts of Tripoli almost two weeks ago, predicting defections, victory within two days and joyful women ululating in the streets.

However, the internationally-recognized government of Prime Minister Fayez Al-Serraj has managed to bog them down in southern suburbs, thanks largely to armed groups who have rushed to aid them from various western Libyan factions. And instead of ululating, many women in fact joined a rally on Friday in Tripoli against the offensive. Haftar, a 75-year-old former general in former dictator Muammar Gaddafi's army, has been building up troop numbers and intensifying air strikes in a campaign he is selling as necessary to restore order and eradicate jihadists.

That, however, is uniting Haftar's enemies behind Serraj, who lacks regular forces and needs help, but may find them difficult to control the longer the war drags on, analysts say. Renewed conflict has scuppered for now a UN peace plan for Libya, with a national reconciliation conference planned for this week postponed. It also threatens to disrupt oil supplies from the OPEC member and cause new migration across the sea to Europe. Diplomats believe Haftar for now will face no pressure from backers including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and France, who still see him as the best bet to end the chaos and divisions since the ousting of Gaddafi in 2011.

Their case, which undermines calls by former colonial ruler Italy and others for a political solution, is aided by the arrival of militants in recent days to help Serraj's forces. One of them is Salah Badi, a commander from nearby Misrata port who has Islamist ties and possible ambitions himself to take Tripoli. In videos from the frontline, Badi has been seen directing men as well as a UN-sanctioned people trafficker.

Some hardcore Islamists, previously affiliated to Ansar Sharia, have also popped up in the fighting, according to the videos. That group was blamed by Washington for the 2012 storming of a US diplomatic compound in Benghazi that killed the ambassador and three other Americans. France, which has oil assets in Libya though less than Italy, has called for a ceasefire - albeit more reluctantly than Rome - while also echoing Haftar's narrative that some extremists were among the Tripoli defenders.

"There is an oversimplification. It is not just Haftar the baddy against the goodies in Tripoli and Misrata. There are groups that are at the end of the day allied to Al-Qaeda on the other side," said a French diplomatic source. "Perhaps if those opposed to Haftar had done a deal with him in 2017, the balance of power would not have shifted against them," the source said, referring to when France brought Haftar and Serraj together for face-to-face talks in Paris.

Serraj's government has sought to downplay the presence of hardliners. "On both sides there are members accused of being violators," Mohamed Siyala, his foreign minister, told reporters. Haftar's own troops are swelled by an estimated hundreds of Salafist Islamists, and one of his commanders is wanted by the International Criminal Court over the alleged summary execution of dozens of people in the eastern city of Benghazi.

It was there that Haftar in 2014 launched his "Operation Dignity" campaign, naming his forces an "army" to try and distinguish from "militias" elsewhere. He won the Benghazi battle against mainly Islamists in 2017 with covert support from the UAE, Egypt and France, but some of his defeated foes are now in Tripoli seeking revenge. Neighboring Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi met Haftar at the weekend in Cairo and in a statement "confirmed Egypt's support for efforts to combat terrorism".

Wolfram Lacher, a researcher at German think tank SWP, said there was exaggeration of the presence of militants in Tripoli for propaganda purposes. "These elements are a tiny minority of the forces that are fighting against Haftar right now, but this could become a self-fulfilling prophecy the longer this goes on," he said. "So anybody who has an interest in preventing jihadist mobilization in Libya should have an interest in stopping this war now." — Reuters



PARIS: Smoke billows as flames rise during a fire at the landmark Notre-Dame Cathedral in central Paris yesterday. — AFP

Dakar Rally moving to...

Continued from Page 1

diversifying the economy to help ride challenges thrown up by changeable global energy prices and also by implementing social and lifestyle changes.

On the sporting front, Saudi authorities have already been busy trying to make it into an international hub, much as their regional rivals the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have. Saudi Arabia have recently hosted the WWE Crown Jewel, a Formula-E race on the streets of

MP warns govt over labor law...

Continued from Page 1

Shaheen warned the government that MPs may resort to grillings if the government does not change its decision, which works against the main objectives of attracting Kuwaitis to the private sector, where some 95.6 percent are expatriates.

Head of the Assembly's human resources development panel MP Khalil Al-Saleh said the appointment of expatriates in public sector jobs has increased, and charged the government of failing to do enough to cre-

Riyadh and January's Italian Super Cup between AC Milan and Juventus, while an exhibition match between Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal in December was called off because the latter was injured.

George Groves and Callum Smith battled it out for the WBA super-middleweight and World Boxing Super Series (WBSS) titles in Jeddah, while American Dustin Johnson won the European Tour's inaugural Saudi International in February. "In hosting the Dakar Rally we aim to produce an unbelievable and unforgettable experience for drivers as they discover the beauty of Saudi nature and a unique spectacle for motorsport fans not only in Saudi Arabia but also in the region and around the world," said Saudi sports supremo Prince Abdulaziz. — Agencies

ate more jobs for citizens. The Assembly is expected to hold a special debate tomorrow on unemployment among Kuwaitis and MPs have asked the government to come with complete information and data.

In another development, several MPs yesterday called on the Assembly to approve a draft law granting civil and social rights to stateless people (bedoons), who have been living in the country without nationality for decades. MP Adnan Abdulsamad criticized those who have been leading a campaign against the law, saying that the bill does not call for or facilitate granting citizenship to bedoons, but only provide them with basic human rights. MPs Mohammad Hayef and Abdullah Fahhad urged their colleagues to vote for the law and labeled as racists those who are mounting attacks against thousands of bedoons in the country.

Sports

Houston Astros sweep Seattle Mariners, run win streak to 9

Dodgers end six-game skid with win over Brewers

SEATTLE: Aledmys Diaz led off the seventh inning with a home run to break a tie as the Houston Astros rallied to defeat the host Seattle Mariners 3-2 on Sunday afternoon, extending their winning streak to nine games. Jose Altuve's homer streak ended at five consecutive games, but the Astros swept the three-game series at T-Mobile Park to pull within a game of the first-place Mariners in the American League West. Right-hander Gerrit Cole (1-2) pitched six strong innings for his first victory of the season. He gave up two runs on four hits with no walks and 11 strikeouts. Seattle's Mitch Haniger led off the bottom of the first with a home run off Cole, hitting a 1-2 pitch into the bullpen in left field. That gave the Mariners homers in each of their first 18 games to begin the season, extending their major league record.

DODGERS 7, BREWERS 1

Ross Stripling allowed one run in eight innings to help Los Angeles end a six-game losing streak with a win against visiting Milwaukee. Stripling (1-1) gave up four hits, struck out three and walked one with his 88 pitches, becoming the second Dodgers starter to go at least seven innings this season. Alex Verdugo homered and drove in three runs, Chris Taylor had two hits and two RBIs, A.J. Pollock had two hits and scored two runs, and Joc Pederson homered for the second time in the series for Los Angeles.

PHILLIES 3, MARLINS 1 (14 INNINGS)

Jean Segura slugged a two-run homer in the top of the 14th inning as Philadelphia outlasted Miami. Andrew McCutchen started the winning rally with a one-out triple to left-center off reliever Wei-Yin Chen (0-1). Marlins center fielder Lewis Brinson, shaded to right-center, made a long run but didn't quite get full extension at the end, as the ball hit off the wall. Segura followed by hitting an O-2 slider over the fence in left for his first homer with the Phillies. Victor Arano (1-0) earned the win in relief. In all, seven Phillies relievers combined to toss eight scoreless innings, allowing just three hits and striking out 14.

ROCKIES 4, GIANTS 0

Right-hander German Marquez took a no-hitter into the eighth inning en route to his first career shutout, allowing Colorado to salvage one win in a four-game series at San Francisco. Nolan Arenado smacked his first home run of the season, a three-run shot in the fifth inning, giving Marquez (2-1) all the offense he would need as he threw his first career complete game, a one-hitter. The 24-year-old retired the first 15 Giants in order before hitting Kevin Pillar with his second pitch of the sixth inning. Marquez rebounded to retire the next seven Giants in succession before Evan Longoria denied him a piece of history with a clean single to left field with one out in the eighth inning.

ROYALS 9, INDIANS 8

Hunter Dozier's RBI single in the bottom of the ninth drove in Terrance Gore to give Kansas City a victory

over visiting Cleveland and a three-game series sweep. Gore, pinch-running for Ryan O'Hearn—who drew a lead-off walk off Brad Hand (0-1) — stole second base and advanced to third on a throwing error by catcher Roberto Perez. Willy Peralta (1-1) pitched a scoreless inning for the victory as Kansas City earned its first walk-off victory of the season. The Indians had not been swept in a road series of at least three games since May of last year at the New York Yankees. Corey Kluber was chased after 2 2/3 innings, having allowed 11 of the 18 batters he faced to reach base safely.

WHITE SOX 5, YANKEES 2

Tim Anderson hit his first career grand slam off Masahiro Tanaka with one out in the top of the fourth inning, and Chicago beat New York at Yankee Stadium. Anderson came into the game leading the majors with a .444 average after his season-opening 10-game hitting streak ended in Saturday's 4-0 loss. After Chicago fell behind 2-0 early, Anderson lifted Tanaka's 1-1 splitter to right field. It was Chicago's first grand slam since Yoan Moncada had one on April 18 of last season. It also was the first grand slam by a White Sox player at any version of Yankee Stadium since Frank Thomas off Roger Clemens on Aug. 26, 2003.

PIRATES 4, NATIONALS 3

Jason Martin had an RBI ground-rule double with two outs in the ninth inning off reliever Wander Suero, as visiting Pittsburgh beat Washington, taking two of three games in the series. Josh Bell led off with a walk off Suero (1-1) and took second on a groundout. He then scored on the Martin double to left that bounced into the Pirates bullpen. The winning pitcher was former Nationals reliever Felipe Vazquez (1-0), who delivered two scoreless innings. Vasquez fanned Howie Kendrick with the bases loaded for the second out in the ninth before getting hot-hitting Anthony Rendon for the final out on a fly ball to center.

RAYS 8, BLUE JAYS 4

Guillermo Heredia capped a five-run eighth inning with a two-run, pinch-hit home run to help visiting Tampa Bay defeat Toronto and win its fifth straight series to open the season. Mike Zunino added a two-run, pinch-hit single in the eighth as the Rays took two of three games in the series and have now won six of their last seven games, all on the road. Rays starter Charlie Morton gave up four hits, three walks and one run over 4 2/3 innings. He struck out four. Adam Kolarek (1-0) pitched one perfect inning to pick up the win. Freddy Galvis and Billy McKinney homered for Toronto, with McKinney also adding two doubles.

RANGERS 8, ATHLETICS 7

Two days after coughing up a five-run lead, Texas scored four runs in the bottom of the eighth to finish erasing its own five-run deficit and defeat visiting Oakland. Rangers pinch hitter Danny Santana, in his first



SEATTLE: Jose Altuve #27 of the Houston Astros scores off a RBI single by Michael Brantley #23 of the Houston Astros in the sixth inning against the Seattle Mariners during their game at T-Mobile Park in Seattle, Washington. — AFP

at-bat of the season, tied the game at 7-7 with a two-run triple to deep right off As reliever Joakim Soria (0-2) in the bottom of the eighth. He then scored the winning run on Delino DeShields' bunt single. Steven Piscotty and Matt Chapman went deep as Oakland set a franchise mark with its seventh consecutive multi-homer game.

BRAVES 7, METS 3

Julio Teheran tossed six solid innings and earned the win for host Atlanta, which took advantage of a second straight subpar start by reigning National League Cy Young Award winner Jacob deGrom in a victory over New York. Teheran (2-1) continued to succeed against the Mets by allowing one run on six hits and two walks while striking out six. The 28-year-old right-hander is 10-7 with a 2.35 ERA in 26 career appearances (25 starts) against New York. DeGrom (2-2) allowed three runs on five hits and four walks while striking out nine over five innings. He entered Tuesday having allowed three runs or fewer in a record 31 straight starts and with 26 straight quality starts, tying the record first set by Bob Gibson in 1967-68, before giving up nine runs over nine innings in this week's starts.

CARDINALS 9, REDS 5

Marcell Ozuna belted a pair of homers and drove in four runs as St. Louis posted a victory over Cincinnati to salvage a split of their two-game series in Monterrey, Mexico. Tyler O'Neill went deep as part of a four-run first inning, and Matt Carpenter homered to lead off a five-run

seventh for the Cardinals, who have won six of their last seven games. Jesse Winker blasted a three-run shot for his fourth homer in five contests, and Michael Lorenzen had an RBI double for the Reds, who saw their four-game winning streak come to a halt.

DIAMONDBACKS 8, PADRES 4

Right-hander Zack Greinke pitched seven strong innings and had another big day at the plate as Arizona snapped a four-game losing streak by beating San Diego in Phoenix. The Diamondbacks avoided a four-game series sweep to the Padres, who had won four in a row. Arizona had 13 hits, including three home runs, with pinch hitter David Peralta delivering a three-run shot in the sixth inning. Greinke (2-1) gave up four hits and two runs, both coming on solo homers, including one to Manuel Margot to lead off the game. He struck out six, walked one and continued to swing a hot bat against the Padres, going 2-for-3 with two runs, after clubbing two homers at San Diego on April 2.

RED SOX 4, ORIOLES 0

David Price struck out seven over seven dominant innings as Boston blanked visiting Baltimore. Price (1-1) gave up just three hits and walked none, and Xander Bogaerts homered and drove in all four runs as Boston won for the fourth time in six games. The Orioles lost for the ninth time in their last 11 games, struggling on offense a day after snapping a four-game losing streak with a nine-run, 13-hit attack. — Reuters

Mansour Al-Rashidi qualifies for Tokyo 2020 Olympics

By Abdellatif Shara

KUWAIT: President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait people for the sports achievements Kuwait shooting continues to make, as Kuwait's skeet shooter Mansour Al-Rashidi won the gold medal in the World Cup Championship being held in Al-Ein, and this qualified him for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics being the second Kuwaiti to qualify after shooter Al-Faihan who qualified in Korea. Kuwait is the first Arab country that gets two qualifications in Olympic shooting for 2020.

Al-Otaibi said this achievement is achieved with the fatherly support of our beloved Amir, and HH the Crown Prince and government, also the result of the efforts of board members and workers of Kuwait Shooting Sports Club.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Shooting Sport Club will organize the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-



Obaid Al-Osaimi

Humoud Al-Sabah annual tournament, with the generous support and patronage of the late sheikh's family. The tournament will start on Thursday in the skeet, trap, 10m air pistol and rifle, 25m pistol, 50m rifle in addition to archery. The tournament will be concluded on Saturday.

KSSC Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi said the season was full of events and saw strong competitions between club shooters and the military sports association shooters. He said the tournament of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah is one of the most important tournaments that most shooters are keen to participate in, as all categories participate in it and is considered a very good opportunity for junior shooters to be with national teams to gain experience.

Al-Osaimi said the club commemorates those who served the country and had clear influence on the sport of shooting, adding that the late sheikh was one of the first pioneers of the sport of shooting.

He lauded the major support Kuwait shooters are receiving from the honorary president of KSSC Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, who is keen along with the late sheikh's family on organizing



Duaij Al-Otaibi and Mansour Al-Rashidi

this annual tournament to encourage and motivate shooters, particularly the juniors, so that they can develop their skills and be able to represent Kuwait within the national teams.

Al-Osaimi concluded by saying, competition this year will be tough as teams from Bahrain and UAE will participate along with club and National Guard shooters, adding that this tournament will mark the end of the local season.

Burgan Bank concludes second sponsorship of KBA's 'Night Run'

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the leading contributors to sustainability in Kuwait, recently concluded its sponsorship of the 2019 edition of the 5 KM "KBA Night Run" held by the Kuwait Banking Association. Reflecting the bank's vision to enable a healthier and happier future for all, the one-of-a-kind event held for the second year in a row, was aimed at encouraging all segments of society to experience a new type of sports challenge.

The night run took place with the help of special gear and saw the active participation of a large number of marathoners committed to finishing the race at Murooj complex. Dedicated to focusing on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals, the event was attended by families, athletes and avid runners, both



males and females from different age groups.

As a dynamic and innovative brand, Burgan Bank's contribution to impactful fitness activities aimed at improving lifestyles comes as part of its ongoing commitment to progress the community with positive and rewarding changes.

Burgan Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled

'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.

AUB co-sponsors KBA's Night Run competition

KUWAIT: Within the framework of its unique social responsibility program, Ahli United Bank (AUB) has co-sponsored the Kuwait Banking Association's Second Night Run competition. Held on 13th April at Al-Murooj Complex, the 5 kilometers racing competition was held under the theme Ready - Set - Glow.

Targeting all age groups of different athletic ability the event emphasized the need to lead a healthy life style through sports and physical fitness.

Commenting on the race, Mrs Sahar Dashti, General Manager of Customer Protection, being also responsible for the Program of Social Responsibility at Ahli United Bank said: "We are very pleased to participate and support this special event for the second year in a row. We are always keen to contribute to these initiatives that can only lead to positive results on the physical fitness and mental alertness in addition to promoting team spirit and cooperation among all those involved, both individual participants and sponsors. That was a racing competition designed to support sports activities and spread health awareness among members of society through a variety of remarkable initiatives."

Dashti expressed thanks to Dr Hamad Al-Hasawi, Secretary-General of Kuwait Banking Association and to the organizers of this unique health promoting initiative, and called for organizing this event every year in order to send a strong message to society by calling attention to the need to embrace positive practices and lead a healthy life style.



AUB employees participating in the KBA's Night Run competition.

Sports

India go for 'big match' experience in World Cup picks

Pant out, Karthik and Rahul in World Cup squad

MUMBAI: India yesterday named a tried and tested squad for the World Cup led by Virat Kohli with selectors going for experience in all the slots for the marquee 50-over event. Dinesh Karthik, 33, was given the second wicketkeeper's slot over rising 21-year-old star Rishabh Pant, ending days of speculation over the role.

Vijay Shankar's inclusion means he will probably be the first choice number four batsman, a position which India has struggled to fill permanently.

Karthik has not been on form in recent games, but selectors said they value his performance under pressure over the years. "Definitely it's a case where we debated at length. We went ahead with Karthik because of his experience in big matches," chief selector M.S.K. Prasad told a news conference.

"We have seen Karthik finishing matches under pressure. Pant is full of talent, there's a lot of time for him and it's just unfortunate that he has missed out."

Karthik was part of the Indian squad for the 2007 World Cup but was overlooked for 2011 and 2015. The selectors however made it clear that former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, 37, would remain first-choice wicketkeeper.

"In an important game, wicket keeping is also important. Karthik will only play in case of an injury to Dhoni," Prasad said.

Indian batting great Sunil Gavaskar said Pant could have been an exciting option but backed the selectors.

"On a morning when say, (Dhoni) has flu and can't play, you want somebody who is a better wicket-keeper. I think Karthik's wicket keeping skills, more

than anything, have won him this place," he told India Today TV.

The veteran Dhoni led India to World Cup glory at home in 2011 and would be playing in his fourth tournament.

All rounder Shankar, who made his one-day debut this year, was also named for the tournament to be held in England and Wales and starts on May 30.

The 28-year-old would probably be the number four batsman, a position in the 15-member squad that had been difficult to fill, according to Prasad. India have tried 11 different number fours since 2017.

Shankar's "three-dimensional qualities" worked in his favour when pitted against Ambati Rayudu who has been struggling recently.

"Apart from his batting, he can bowl if the conditions are suitable. If the conditions are overcast, which we might encounter in England, he might bowl a bit and he's a fantastic fielder."

In the fast bowling department, Bhuvneshwar Kumar was set to be back-up pacer to Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami in the big games.

India, ranked number two behind England in one-day games, reached the semi-finals of the 2015 World Cup where they lost to Australia.

India squad:

Virat Kohli (capt), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, K.L. Rahul, Vijay Shankar, Mahendra Singh Dhoni (wk), Kedra Jadhav, Dinesh Karthik, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami. —AFP



MUMBAI: Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli (L) leaves the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) headquarters after attending the ICC Cricket World Cup team selection meeting in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

Bangladesh hit by injuries ahead of WCup

DHAKA: Bangladesh's hopes for the cricket World Cup have been hit by injuries to several key players, including star pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman. The 23-year-old left arm bowler sprained his ankle warming up for a Dhaka Premier League match on Thursday, joining a growing injury list which includes batsman Mahmudullah Riyad and pace bowler Rubel Hossain.

Bangladesh had previously barred the injury-prone Mustafizur from playing in the Indian Premier League ahead of the World Cup, which starts May 30. It had let him take part in the domestic 50-over league to keep match-fit however.

The new injury is expected to sideline him for at least two weeks.

"Mustafizur is slightly better now. We are hopeful he will play the World Cup," Bangladesh Cricket Board chief physician Debashis Chowdhury told AFP. Debashis is being kept busy by the squad. Mahmudullah aggravated a shoulder injury during a recent tour of New Zealand and only returned to tentative training last week.

Rubel Hossain has been suffering from a side strain. "We hope to start his training session within a day or two," said Debashis.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who missed the two Tests in New Zealand started individual training last week while batsman Tamim Iqbal was expected to resume in the upcoming days.

Pace bowler Taskin Ahmed, who was in superb form before a ligament injury ruled out him of the New Zealand tour, played one domestic league game last week.

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan hurt his thumb in a league game last week but returned to action on Monday.

However, Debashis was hopeful all of the squad would be match-fit for the tournament.

"With the amount of time we have and the current improvement rate of the players, I don't think anyone will miss the World Cup," he said.

Bangladesh still face a race against time however as they are to play a tri-nation one-day international tournament in Ireland from May 5 against Ireland and the West Indies.

"We hope we can field all our regular players in the tri-nation and World Cup. We hope to announce the squad in a day or two," said chief selector Minhajul Abedin.

The deadline for announcing World Cup squads is April 23, but teams can be changed up to May 23.

Bangladesh will ask star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan to return from Indian Premier League and join the team's World Cup preparation camp next week, the nation's Cricket Board said yesterday.

Shakib is currently in India with his IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"Our camp is beginning. I have asked to send a letter to Shakib immediately to come back. Let's see how he responds to this," said Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan in Dhaka.

Shakib played just one game this season, picking up one wicket for 42 runs in 3.4 overs against his former franchise Kolkata Night Riders.

It was the only competitive game for Shakib since returning from an injury he picked up during the Bangladesh Premier League final in January. — Agencies

Smith, Warner return for Australia's WCup defence

MELBOURNE: The return of Steve Smith and David Warner to Australia's squad for the Cricket World Cup came as little surprise yesterday but selectors still managed to cause a stir by omitting strike bowler Josh Hazlewood and in-form batsman Peter Handscomb.

Former skipper Smith and Warner were eligible for Aaron Finch's side after their 12-month ball-tampering bans ended last month but their return put a squeeze on the batting positions that saw Handscomb drop out.

"Steve Smith and David Warner come back into the squad. Both are world class players and it has been pleasing to see them produce some good form in the IPL (Indian Premier League)," Chairman of Selectors Trevor Hohns said in a Cricket Australia statement.

Warner has registered five 50-plus scores, including an unbeaten century, for Sunrisers Hyderabad in seven IPL matches this season while Smith, returning from an elbow surgery like his former deputy, has also looked in good touch for Rajasthan Royals.

Spinners Nathan Lyon and Adam Zampa have made the cut, with selectors going for the pace of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Jhye Richardson and Jason Behrendorff, who has been in fine form in the IPL.

Hohns said Hazlewood, who has instead been named in the Australia A team for their tour of England in June-July, remained a big part of Australia's Ashes plans. The quick, who has taken 72 wickets in 44 one-dayers, has been sidelined since January due to a back injury but had been confident of being fit for the World Cup.

"Having not played at the highest level for some time, we feel this will provide him with the best preparation to get some quality cricket under his belt," Hohns said. "Our focus is to have Josh back bowling at his best for the commencement of a big Ashes tour."

Blue Jackets push Lightning to brink of elimination

COLUMBUS: Goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky made 30 saves to lead Columbus to a 3-1 win over the visiting Tampa Bay Lightning on Sunday night, lifting the Blue Jackets to a commanding 3-0 lead in their opening-round playoff series. Cam Atkinson had a goal and an assist, and Matt Duchene and Oliver Bjorkstrand tallied for the Blue Jackets, who have won 10 of their last 11 games, including seven of eight to close the regular season and earn the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference. Bobrovsky stopped 16 shots in the third period, as Tampa Bay tried to rally from a 2-0 deficit but couldn't do so in front of a raucous crowd at Nationwide Arena. The Blue Jackets can close out the series against club in Game 4 in Columbus on Tuesday. Ondrej Palat scored a goal, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 27 saves for the Presidents' Trophy-winning Lightning, who tied an NHL single-season record with 62 regular-season wins and dropped their third straight game for the first time this season.

ISLANDERS 4, PENGUINS 1

Jordan Eberle scored his third goal in as many games as New York took a commanding lead in its first-round playoff series with host Pittsburgh. Brock Nelson, Leo Komarov and Anders Lee also scored for the Islanders, who took a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven series, with Game 4 set



MELBOURNE: Australia's one-day cricket captain Aaron Finch (R) speaks to the media as the team for the upcoming World Cup is announced in Melbourne yesterday. Ball-tamperers Steve Smith and David Warner were selected for Australia's World Cup squad, but there was no room for Josh Hazlewood or Peter Handscomb. — AFP

Starc and Richardson have both been selected subject to fitness. "The advice from the CA medical team is they are progressing well and barring any setbacks will be available for selection ahead of our opening match against Afghanistan on June 1," Hohns said.

Teams have to submit their 15-member squads by April 23 but injury replacements can be named until May 23. Opener Usman Khawaja, player-of-the-series in Australia's ODI series victory in India last month, was picked but may have to bat lower with Warner likely to partner Finch at the top.

Handscomb was left out despite his good form and the value he adds as a back-up stumper. Alex Carey has been named the sole wicketkeeper in the squad, which also contains all-rounders Marcus Stoinis and Glenn Maxwell. The tournament, being hosted in England and Wales, runs from May 30 to July 14.

Squad: Aaron Finch (captain), Usman Khawaja, David Warner, Steve Smith, Shaun Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Jhye Richardson, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Jason Behrendorff, Nathan Lyon, Adam Zampa. — Reuters

Woods' fairytale Masters win inspiration for Cardiff: Warnock

LONDON: Tiger Woods' epic comeback from career-threatening injury and scandal in winning the Masters on Sunday can spur Cardiff to avoid relegation from the Premier League, manager Neil Warnock said yesterday.

Cardiff are presently third from bottom-Fulham and Huddersfield having already been relegated-but can reduce the gap to two points between themselves and Brighton if they beat the latter on Tuesday.

Brighton would still have a game in hand but Warnock believes 43-year-old Woods' achievement in capturing his first major in 11 years can be an inspiration for his team. Winning a fifth Masters title cemented a fairytale comeback to the pinnacle of golf for Woods, whose career imploded after a 2009 sex scandal and knee and back injuries that required a total of seven surgeries.

"We just have to look at the golf and at what Tiger has done-amazing," said Warnock. "Nobody gave him a chance either, he has been written off that many times and we have. "Obviously over the last few weeks we have felt sorry for ourselves a few times."

"We haven't got time to do that (at Brighton) and if it's not good enough then we accept it. "But this is an opportunity to give ourselves a chance till the end of the season. We have to grab that." — AFP

for Tuesday in Pittsburgh. New York spotted Pittsburgh a 1-0 lead before netting four unanswered goals. The Penguins, who won the Stanley Cup in 2016 and 2017, continued to be thwarted by the Islanders' stifling pressure and the play of goaltender Robin Lehner, who made 25 saves Sunday.

JETS 6, BLUES 3

Second-period goals four minutes apart by Kevin Hayes, Patrik Laine and Kyle Connor, who scored two goals in the game, sent Winnipeg off and running to a road victory over St. Louis. The Jets, who lost the first two games of the series on their home ice, pulled to within 2-1 in the best-of-seven Stanley Cup playoffs series. Game 4 will be Tuesday in St. Louis. Brandon Tanev and Dustin Byfuglien also scored for the Jets, who got 26 saves from Connor Hellebuyck. David Perron, Vladimir Tarasenko and Alex Steen scored for the Blues, who got 23 saves from Jordan Binnington.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 6, SHARKS 3

Mark Stone and Paul Stastny each had five points as Vegas took a 2-1 lead in its first-round playoff series with a convincing victory over visiting San Jose. Stone notched his first-ever hat trick, while Stastny's five-point night was the first of his career. Both set a team record for points in a playoff game. Max Pacioretty added a goal and an assist, and Shea Theodore also had three assists for Vegas. Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 25 saves. Kevin Labanc, Timo Meier and Logan Couture scored for San Jose, which surrendered goals within the first 36 seconds in all three periods. Martin Jones finished with 34 saves. — Reuters

Sports

Q-final curse looms as Barca, Messi look to set record straight

'We will do all we can to bring that beautiful cup back to Camp Nou'

BARCELONA: Four years have passed since Lionel Messi last reached a Champions League semi-final and his drought has become a source of unease for Barcelona ahead of their latest attempt today. Manchester United are the ones looking to emulate Atletico Madrid, Juventus and Roma by sending Barca out in the quarters for a fourth year running but for the Catalans, another failure would be unforgivable, not least because of the implications for their captain.

"Last season we did the double but we all felt bad about how it went in the Champions League," Messi said in August. "We promise this season we will do all we can to bring that beautiful cup back to Camp Nou." Barcelona's dominance in Spain has been shaped by Messi, who only this month overtook Iker Casillas as the player with the most La Liga victories, 335, in its history.

Those wins have helped them capture seven of the last 10 league titles, a figure that will surely become eight from 11 next month, given their nine-point lead at the top of the table. There could be an historic fifth consecutive Copa del Rey too if Ernesto Valverde's side beat Valencia on May 25.

But in Europe, Barca would appear under-marked, with only one success in the last seven years, three in 10 since Pep Guardiola took charge in 2008 and set in motion what has felt, in playing terms at least, like an iconic era.

The list of clubs etched onto the cup hoisted at the Wanda Metropolitano on June 1 will instead show a decade swallowed up by Real Madrid, whose domestic failings in that period have been exonerated by four

Champions League triumphs in five years. "Obviously it's infuriating," Luis Suarez said. "Madrid have made history and it's a thorn in our side."

Messi's record is similarly unbalanced. He has nine La Liga titles and is by a distance the competition's top scorer, with an astonishing 414 goals. Cristiano Ronaldo, closest in second, has 311. But in the Champions League, Messi has lifted the trophy four times, a relatively modest return given it puts him on a par with 11 current Real Madrid players alone, including Nacho, Casemiro and Dani Carvajal. This year, Ronaldo is hunting his sixth.

And while Messi dwarfs the Portuguese for goals in La Liga, the opposite is true in Europe, where Ronaldo has 125 goals to his 108. The game's most illustrious pair could yet meet in this year's final, should Barca capitalise on their 1-0 first-leg win over United and then overcome either Liverpool or Porto in the semis.

Ronaldo and Juventus, meanwhile, would have to beat Ajax, and then either Manchester City or Tottenham. A showdown in Madrid would throw an even brighter glare on Messi's record compared to Ronaldo, whose sensational hat-trick against Atletico Madrid last month only enhanced the sense this tournament belongs to him. Messi is not one to complain, particularly given he cannot be blameless in Barca's underachievements in Europe.

But the fans are frustrated, with last season's double doing little to ease the disappointment of the collapse against Roma. And his teammates feel it too, the weight of history on their shoulders from a need to square arguably the game's greatest ever player with a



SANT JOAN DESPI: Barcelona's German goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen gives a press conference at the Joan Gamper Sports Center in Sant Joan Despi yesterday on the eve of the Champions League second leg quarter-final football match between FC Barcelona and Manchester United. — AFP

Champions League haul that befits that status.

"It is an important trophy," Suarez said after following up the league title by winning the Copa del Rey last season. "But this does not hide what happened in

Rome." It means the pressure on Barcelona in this competition runs deep, a psychological burden that perhaps United, or their next opponents, will use to their advantage. For Messi, there is work to do. —AFP

FIFA bans disgraced ex-Brazil football chief Marin for life

GENEVA: FIFA yesterday slapped a lifetime ban on the disgraced former boss of Brazilian football, Jose Maria Marin, after a US court convicted him of massive corruption. The 86-year-old Marin was one of the key figures swept up in the graft scandal that began

with a series of stunning arrests in 2015 and subsequently upended world football.

He had already been sentenced to four years in a US prison after a court in New York found him guilty in connection with nearly \$6.6 million in bribes from sports marketing companies in exchange for contracts to broadcast major tournaments.

But the decision from FIFA's independent ethics judges definitively confirms that Marin is finished in football. FIFA's ethics committee said in a statement that Marin had participated in various bribery schemes.

Judges "banned him for life from all football-related activities (administrative, sports or any other) at both

national and international level", a FIFA statement said. FIFA also imposed a 1 million Swiss franc (\$1 million) fine against Marin, once one of the most powerful figures in world football.

Following his May 2015 arrest at a luxury hotel in Zurich, Marin spent five months in a prison in Switzerland before being extradited to the United States. He posted bail of \$15 million and spent two years living in luxury at Trump Tower, the Fifth Avenue skyscraper best known for housing the penthouse and company headquarters of the US president.

But his life of excess dramatically came to a halt at his sentencing in August, when he broke down in tears over the "nightmare" his family had endured. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Juventus FC v Ajax Amsterdam	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
Barcelona v Manchester United	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1	

PSG title party delayed again

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain missed the chance to seal their sixth Ligue 1 title in seven years for the second week running on Sunday after a 5-1 hammering at Lille, their biggest league defeat in 10 years. Thomas Tuchel's side could have been crowned champions in record-equaling time last weekend but failed to beat Strasbourg, and they fell short again on Sunday despite needing just a point in a match that saw them have to play with 10 men for 54 minutes and lose both captain Thiago Silva and Thomas Meunier to injury.

The loss was PSG's worst domestic defeat since going down 4-0 at Bordeaux in 2009, and the first time they had conceded five goals in the league since another 5-1 defeat at Sedan way back in 2000.

However they are still 17 points clear of second-placed Lille and if they win at Nantes tomorrow they will still win the league with six matches to spare. "We are going to be champions, but you have to lose in the right way," said Kylian Mbappe, who had two goals ruled out for offside.

"We can't lack personality like that, and concede three, four, five goals. Losing happens, but that is not normal." World Cup winner Mbappe had already had one goal chalked off by the officials when a comical Meunier own goal set Lille on their way after six minutes. But PSG looked set to seal the title when Juan Bernat levelled soon after and Mbappe roared what looked like his 28th league goal of the season in the 13th minute, only to see that one also rightly disallowed.

Silva left the field with a knee injury soon after and after Meunier was pulled off, Bernat was then handed a debatable straight red card in the 36th minute for a tug on Nicolas Pepe despite a VAR check.

Attacker Pepe slotted home Lille's second five minutes after the break when he latched onto a superb Jonathan Ikone through ball and after that the floodgates opened. Jonathan Bamba smashed home the third 14 minutes later from another Ikone assist and two fine headers from Gabriel and Jose Fonte in the final 20 minutes completed



VILLENEUVE D'ASCQ: Lille's players celebrate after winning the French L1 football match between Lille (LOSC) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), at the Pierre-Mauroy Stadium in Villeneuve d'Ascq, near Lille, northern France. — AFP

the rout and put Lille eight points ahead of third-placed Lyon. "Putting five past PSG doesn't happen to everyone, even if they did only have 10 men, but we played well tonight," Pepe told Canal+. "We've still got six matches left and we need to win at least three or four to be assured of the Champions League next season."

Earlier on Sunday, Saint-Etienne closed in on Champions League football after Mathieu Debuchy scored twice in a 3-0 win over Bordeaux that moves them to within three points of Lyon. Wahbi Khazri opened the scoring from the spot 10 minutes after the break following a VAR check of Sergi Palencia's handball before Debuchy headed home the second from a corner to seal the points 17 minutes before the end.

Debuchy then completed the win with a deflected close-range strike in the final minute to put Jean-Louis Gasset's side back ahead of Marseille, who started the

day fourth and in the Europa League spot after surviving late VAR penalty drama on Saturday to scrape to a 2-1 win over Nimes.

They are two points ahead of Rudi Garcia's side and piling pressure on Lyon, who have lost two on the bounce following Friday's shock 2-1 defeat at Nantes. Lyon go into the final six games in trouble following coach Bruno Genesio's announcement that he would leave the club in the summer after falling out of favour with the fans.

Monaco moved to two places and seven points clear of the relegation play-off spot despite only drawing 0-0 with Reims after all four of the teams below them failed to win. Caen lost 1-0 to Angers, Guingamp draw 3-3 at Strasbourg, while Dijon and Amiens drew 0-0 in a match that was interrupted after monkey chants were directed by a home fan towards the away side's captain Prince Gouano. — AFP

Pukki edges Norwich closer to EPL return

LONDON: Prolific striker Teemu Pukki's 27th goal of the season edged Norwich closer to a return to the Premier League as they came from 1-0 down to draw 1-1 with Championship strugglers Wigan.

The 29-year-old Finnish international's delightful finish nine minutes from time gives Norwich a four-point advantage over Leeds United with four games remaining. Leeds-seeking a return to the Premier League for the first time in 15 years-moved into the second and last automatic promotion spot on Saturday due to a deserved 1-0 win over Sheffield Wednesday.

Wednesday's city rivals Sheffield United had been held to a 1-1 draw on Saturday leaving them three

points adrift of Leeds. Leeds had been the big winners of the week in the enthralling battle for promotion having won two on the trot whilst Norwich and United dropped four points.

Norwich, though, remain in the box seat and require just six more points from their remaining four games to go back up to the Premier League. "We were struggling a lot today, it was a hard, hard game so it was important to come out with at least one point," Pukki told Sky Sports.

"I don't think it's comfortable. We just need to keep going and it's good we have a game on Friday (they host Sheffield Wednesday) so we can keep winning again." Wigan had broken the deadlock as half-time neared-xx penalised for handball.

Reece James made no mistake from the spot-although 'keeper Tim Krul went the right way and got a hand to it-for his second goal in three games. The hosts went close to doubling their advantage in the 65th minute on the counter-attack-after Pukki's appeals for a penalty had been turned down-saw Leon Clarke turn the Norwich defence inside out but Canaries goalkeeper

er Krul denied him by getting the slightest of touches to his shot to deflect it away for a corner.

James also went close first with a superb long range effort which just scraped the bar and then with a free-kick although Norwich too had their moments largely through Pukki. However, having wasted a few chances Pukki made no mistake when found by Kenny McLean, he outpaced a defender and coolly slid it right-footed past Wigan goalkeeper Christian Walton.

Wigan thought they had taken the three points in time added on but Leon Clarke was adjudged to be off-side. James though was content to have at least a point against the table toppers and give them a two point advantage over third from bottom Rotherham.

Millwall and Reading are also embroiled in the fight to avoid filling the final relegation spot-Bolton look destined to join Ipswich Town in the third tier as they are 10 points adrift of safety.

"The league table is there but anyone can beat anyone," James told Sky Sports. "That's why it's a fantastic league. Points in this league are massive when you're down there fighting." — AFP

Samba king' Neres looks to weave past Juventus

AMSTERDAM: David Neres may not represent part of Ajax's latest crop of gifted homegrown talent, but the Brazilian import is a chief component of a new golden generation emerging in Amsterdam.

The 22-year-old forward struck a magnificent individual equaliser in the first leg against Juventus to give Ajax hope ahead of Today's return leg of their Champions League quarter-final in Turin.

Signed from Sao Paulo in January 2017 for a reported 12 million euros (\$13.6 million), Neres' form in the Dutch capital recently earned the winger a first call-up to the Brazil squad.

Mirroring a fearless Ajax side that has lost just once in five European matches this season against three continental giants-Bayern Munich, Real Madrid and Juventus-impressed on his debut for the Selecao last month. He set up a late winning goal in the 3-1 victory over the Czech Republic, and contributed to another with a sublime backheel having come off the bench for the final 27 minutes. His dance-like moves around opponents on the pitch and his trademark jig after scoring goals have earned Neres the title of Ajax's "Samba King". His haul of eight league goals only ranks fifth at Ajax this season, but seven in his last nine outings-both in Europe and the Eredivisie-show that Neres is hitting his stride at the ideal time.

"With his excellent jewel of a goal, which sent the Ajax supporters into a crazed frenzy, David Neres again underlined his excellent form," popular daily tabloid De Telegraaf said after last week's 1-1 draw. "Ajax with their home-grown philosophy have exposed Juventus' weaknesses, which showed that they're after all not Ajax or Neres proof," the paper added.

Having fallen behind to a Cristiano Ronaldo header, Neres fired Ajax level early in the second period by robbing Joao Cancelo just inside the Juve half and advancing before curling a shot beyond Wojciech Szczesny and into the far corner.

"David Neres is the dribble king, the street youngster who ignored his mum's calls when it was time to come inside. Dribbling, driving, haggling until he could no more (against Juventus)," wrote Willem Vissers in the De Volkskrant daily.

Neres' path to Europe is one increasingly well trodden, following the likes of Vinicius Junior, Douglas Costa and Richarlison who crossed the Atlantic despite limited first-team exposure in Brazil.

"I think he has the potential to be an important player for the Selecao, but he has to be patient," says Ledio Carmona, a widely respected Brazilian football commentator. "There are high expectations of him and he deserves to be given a chance, but you can't yet guarantee he will be an indispensable part of the national team." "He's a cutting-edge player, who does well on the wings, who works for the team and doesn't hesitate to get back and defend," Carmona adds. "He reads the game well and knows how to finish off moves." With reigning champions Madrid vanquished at the Bernabeu in the last round, Neres and co. will look to deliver a follow-up act in Italy every bit as mesmerising so to end Juventus' hopes of a first European crown in 23 years. — AFP

25 Mansour Al-Rashidi qualifies for Tokyo 2020 Olympics



26 India go for 'big match' experience in World Cup picks



27 PSG title party delayed again



Tiger roars with Masters title

Woods 'moved the needle' like no other player



AUGUSTA: Tiger Woods of the United States celebrates with the Masters Trophy during the Green Jacket Ceremony after winning the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia. — AFP

AUGUSTA: Tiger Woods is still a game-changer. And now the player who transformed golf with his first Masters title in 1997 is a major champion again after 11 years marked by personal turmoil and injuries that threatened not only his career but his prospects of living an ordinary life.

Woods expanded the sport's reach as no one before him. The sight of Woods, clad in power red and fist-pumping as the putts dropped, inspired a generation of golfers and launched millions of dollars worth of endorsement campaigns.

At 25, he became the first man to hold the US Open, British Open, PGA Championship and Masters titles at the same time, a feat dubbed the "Tiger Slam" when he completed it at Augusta National in 2001.

In 2002 he emulated Nick Faldo and Jack Nicklaus in winning back-to-back Masters. In 2008, grimacing in pain with nearly every step, he beat Rocco Mediate in a playoff to win the US Open and despite ever-

increasing injury troubles his 14th major title appeared to have him within comfortable reach of Nicklaus's record of 18.

But in November of 2009, a bizarre car accident outside his Florida home unearthed a series of infidelities that would destroy his marriage. As sponsors began to flee, Woods took an "indefinite break from professional golf" to get his life together.

He returned, penitent, in 2010, but it would take until 2013 before he returned to the summit of the world rankings. One year on he was battling back trouble that would relegate him to the sidelines for extended periods. "I had serious doubts after what transpired a couple of years ago," Woods said when asked if he ever wondered if he would win another major—or even resume his career. "I could barely walk. I couldn't sit. Couldn't lay down. I really couldn't do much of anything." He underwent a last resort spinal fusion operation in April of 2017. A month later he found himself

tabloid fodder again when he was arrested after falling asleep at the wheel under the influence of several drugs he took to combat pain.

Eventually, however, the procedure proved a success, Woods saying it "gave me a chance at having a normal life". "I was very fortunate to be given another chance to do something that I love to do," Woods said.

"But more importantly, I've been able to participate in my kids' lives in a way that I couldn't for a number of years ... now I'm starting to be able to play with them and do things in their sports. That's something I always missed." Golf missed him, too.

The excitement that greeted his return to the PGA Tour in 2018 only grew as his game improved, his presence in a tournament guaranteed to boost attendance and television coverage. The "Tiger Effect" persisted, despite past scandal and current uncertainties, with pundits and fellow pros noting that Woods "moved the needle" like no other player.

As his comeback season in 2018 progressed, Woods contended in two majors and finally won again, at the US PGA Tour Championship in September. "I felt if I could somehow piece this together that I still had the hands to do it," Woods said. "The body's not the same as it was a long time ago, but I still have good hands."

After he sank his winning putt on Sunday—letting out a roar of release as he raised club and fist to the sky—fans began chanting "Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!" Augusta National officials had scrapped the usual 18th-green presentation of the green jacket, wanting to clear the course before expected severe weather moved in.

But even the weather bowed to Woods—the storms held off, the fans stayed put and finally saw the jacket slipped over his shoulders for a fifth time. "Incredible," said Brooks Koepka, who finished tied for second behind Woods. "I mean, I think we all knew it was going to come ... as a fan, just of golf and of Tiger, it's very special." — AFP

Bucks obliterate short-handed Pistons 121-86

MILWAUKEE: Giannis Antetokounmpo racked up 24 points, 17 rebounds and four assists in only 23 minutes as the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks overwhelmed the visiting Detroit Pistons 121-86 in their Eastern Conference playoff opener on Sunday. George Hill had 16 points off the bench for the Bucks, who led by 27 at halftime. Eric Bledsoe scored 15 points, Brook Lopez and Khris Middleton had 14 apiece, and Sterling Brown added 11 along with a team-high seven assists. Pistons

center Andre Drummond was ejected with 4:07 remaining in the third quarter for shoving Antetokounmpo to the floor. The two-handed push occurred after Antetokounmpo grabbed an offensive rebound. Drummond finished with 12 points and 12 rebounds. Luke Kennard's 21 points off the bench topped Detroit, which played without All-Star forward Blake Griffin. He was sidelined by a sore left knee, which also kept him out of four of the last seven regular-season games. The Bucks were without guards Malcolm Brogdon (foot) and Tony Snell (ankle).

ROCKETS 122, JAZZ 90

James Harden and Clint Capela posted double-doubles, and Houston rolled to a victory in Game 1 of its first-round series with visiting Utah. Harden paired 29 points with 10 assists and finished two rebounds shy of a triple-double to fuel the Rockets to a 1-0 series lead. Capela added 16 points and 12 rebounds while grap-

pling with Jazz center Rudy Gobert (22 points, 12 rebounds). Houston made headway by holding its own on the glass and defending with vigor, limiting Utah guard Donovan Mitchell to 19 points on 7-of-18 shooting and the Jazz to 39.0 percent shooting. Utah finished just 7-for-27 on 3-pointers and committed 19 turnovers.

TRAIL BLAZERS 104, THUNDER 99

Damian Lillard scored 30 points as Portland held off visiting Oklahoma City to win the opener of their first-round playoff series. CJ McCollum added 24 points, and Enes Kanter contributed 20 points and 18 rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who led by as many as 19 points in the first half. The lead shrunk to as few as three points in the fourth quarter, but Oklahoma City never had possession with a chance to tie. Paul George collected 26 points and 10 rebounds, and Russell Westbrook compiled 24 points, 10 rebounds

and 10 assists for the Thunder, who made only 5 of 33 3-point attempts in the game.

CELTICS 84, PACERS 74

Boston held visiting Indiana without a field goal for the first 8 1/2 minutes of the second half, rallying from a halftime deficit for a victory in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series. After failing to make even one-third of their shots in the first half while falling behind 45-38, the fourth-seeded Celtics became a defensive force in the third quarter. The Pacers, seeded fifth in the East, missed their first seven shots of the second half and mixed in three turnovers as their seven-point lead turned into a 47-45 deficit. Kyrie Irving and Marcus Morris scored 20 points apiece for Boston, which won handily despite shooting just 36.4 percent. Cory Joseph led Indiana with 14 points, and Bojan Bogdanovic had 12, as the Pacers shot 33.3 percent for the game overall. — Reuters