



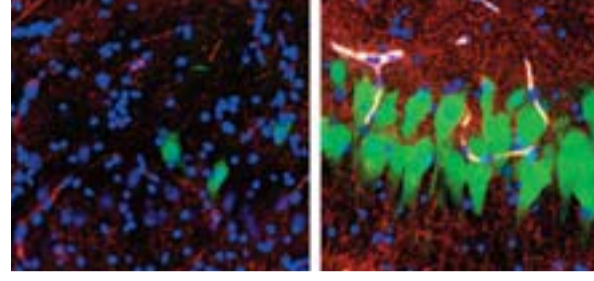
3 Amir attends Kuwait's 10th int'l Holy Quran competition



12 Syria fuel queues grow amid Iran credit freeze



24 Scientists revive brain function in dead pigs



28 Female Iranian boxer 'to stay in France' after fight



Hospital fees hiked in bid to push expats to private clinics

MPs debate employment of Kuwaitis, inflated bank accounts case

Zain KSA revenues soar 24% to SAR 2.1bn in Q1 2019

KUWAIT: Zain Saudi Arabia (Zain KSA) announced impressive financial results for all key indicators for the first quarter ended March 31, 2019. For the first quarter of 2019, Zain KSA recorded revenues of SAR 2.1 billion (\$558 million), a 24 percent increase to the same period in 2018. Net income for Q1 2019 reached a healthy SAR 129 million (\$34 million), a marked improvement on the loss of SAR 77 million (\$21 million) recorded for Q1 2018.

Commenting on the results, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO and Zain KSA Vice-Chairman, said: "Despite the fierce competition present in the Saudi telecom market, the operation's ongoing transformation has resulted in Zain KSA recording net profit for three consecutive quarters with revenue growing quarter-on-quarter." (See Page 11)



Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO; & Zain KSA Vice-Chairman

By A Saleh and B Izzak

KUWAIT: Expatriates will now have to pay a fee of KD 10 when receiving treatment at public hospitals, the health ministry said yesterday. The measure aims to ease congestion at public hospitals, while allowing government-run clinics to take in more patients, the ministry said in a statement. But informed sources said the health ministry plans to limit treatment in government hospitals only to Kuwaitis, and expats should go to private hospitals or health insurance hospitals.

The sources said the ministry believes that improving health services and giving the best medicines will not be achieved unless the number of patients is reduced, as currently expat patients make up three times that of Kuwaitis. The sources added the health ministry recommended to the Cabinet earlier to consider imposing health insurance on expats so they can be sent to the private sector, or increase fees in government hospitals temporarily until the private sector can absorb all expat patients.

Meanwhile, CEO of Al-Dhman Health Assurance Company Ahmad Al-Saleh said the company has com-

pleted the first stage of its healthcare system, saying it will be a model locally and regionally that will contribute to boosting healthcare indicators. The company is getting ready to receive nearly two million expats at its health facilities, as five centers have been equipped in Hawally, Farwaniya, Dajeej, Jahra and Fahaheel in the first stage, and all approvals have been obtained to get the licenses. The company will launch the second stage according to demographic studies on the concentration of expats.

At the National Assembly yesterday, MPs debated the issue of unemployment of Kuwaitis and urged the government to create more jobs for nationals, especially by speeding up the replacement of expatriates. The Assembly also warned the government to pay greater attention to a case under investigation by the public prosecution in which current and ex-MPs are among some 30 people suspected of money laundering and corruption.

MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari said he will grill HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and new MP Bader Al-Mulla said he plans to grill the finance minister in early June.

Continued on Page 24

News in brief

19% of students abused drugs

KUWAIT: A senior government official yesterday said 18.6 percent of the 22,434 public and private school students surveyed recently have abused drugs. Drug-related deaths increased to 116 in 2018 after 68 such cases were recorded in 2017. Director of Drugs Control General Department Brig Bader Al-Ghadouri said in a statement. — Meshaal Al-Enezi

Iraqi PM meets Saudi King

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi made his first visit to Saudi Arabia since taking office six months ago, meeting King Salman during the stop on a regional tour that has also seen visits to Cairo and Tehran in recent weeks. The premier went to Riyadh with a large delegation including officials and businessmen, with trade billed as a prime focus of discussions. Abdul Mahdi's office said the leaders had signed 13 agreements in areas such as trade, energy and political cooperation. — Reuters

Iraq bans PUBG over 'violence'

BAGHDAD: Iraq's parliament yesterday voted unanimously to ban the popular but brutal online game PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds for "inciting violence" in the war-torn country. Specifically naming PUBG and its rival Fortnite, among others, lawmakers said the games "threaten social security, morals, civics and education" in Iraq society. Iraqi media had, for months, alleged that addiction to playing PUBG had caused marital disputes and even divorces. — AFP

Two women elected to Qatar council

DOHA: Two women won seats on Qatar's 29-member municipal council, the Gulf emirate's sole elected body, the elections committee said yesterday. Sheikha Al-Jafiri and Fatima Al-Kuwari retained the seats they had won in 2015. Five women were among the 85 candidates standing in Tuesday's election for the emirate-wide council. The other three failed to win seats. Qatar held its first municipal election in 1999. — AFP

France to try Assad's uncle

PARIS: The uncle of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad is to stand trial in France on charges of building up a big property empire in the country using funds from Syrian state coffers, legal sources said yesterday. An investigating magistrate ordered Rifaat Al-Assad to stand trial for organized money laundering in building the €90 million property portfolio in France. Rifaat, dubbed the "Butcher of Hama", has been under investigation in France since 2014. — AFP

Peru ex-president Garcia kills self to avoid arrest

LIMA: Peru's former president Alan Garcia died in hospital yesterday after shooting himself in the head at his home as police were about to arrest him in a sprawling corruption case, a party official said. He was 69. "Alan Garcia has died, long live Apra," said Omar Quesada, the general secretary of Garcia's American Popular

Revolutionary Alliance (Apra) party. Garcia was resuscitated three times after suffering cardiac arrest while undergoing emergency surgery, before finally succumbing, Peru's Health Minister Zulema Tomas had said.

The Casimiro Ulloa Emergency Hospital in Lima earlier confirmed he had suffered "a bullet wound to his head". "This morning there was a regrettable accident: The president took the decision to shoot himself," Erasmo Reyna, Garcia's lawyer, told reporters outside the hospital after Garcia was admitted. The attempted arrest took place at 6:30 am (130 GMT) at Garcia's home in Lima's upmarket Miraflores neighborhood.

Interior Minister Carlos Moran said at a news conference shortly before Garcia died that the former president had told police he needed to call his attorney after they arrived at his home to arrest him. "He entered his room and closed the door behind him," Moran said. "Within a few minutes, a shot from a firearm was heard, and police forcibly entered the room and found Mr Garcia sitting with a wound in his head."

Police were acting on an arrest warrant for money laundering that would have allowed Garcia to be held for 10 days, giving authorities time to gather evidence and prevent him from

Continued on Page 24



Alan Garcia

Bashir moved to prison as protesters rally

KHARTOUM: Sudan's military rulers have transferred ousted president Omar Al-Bashir to prison, a family source said yesterday, as an array of protest groups marched through Khartoum to join a sit-in at the army complex. Following the dramatic end to Bashir's rule of three decades last week, he was moved late Tuesday to Kober prison in the capital, the source said without revealing his name for security reasons. Witnesses near the prison in north Khartoum said there was a heavy deployment of soldiers and members of a paramilitary group outside.

The 75-year-old's whereabouts have been unknown since a military takeover on Thursday, when the country's new rulers said he was being held "in a secure place". Amnesty International called for Bashir to be "immediately handed over to the International Criminal Court" in The Hague where he faces charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity relating to the conflict in Darfur. "His case must not be hurriedly tried in Sudan's notoriously dysfunctional legal system.

Continued on Page 24



KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters chant slogans and flash victory signs as they continue to protest outside the army complex yesterday. — AFP

Stricken Jet suspends all operations

MUMBAI: India's debt-stricken Jet Airways halted all of its operations yesterday after failing to secure emergency funding from lenders, leaving it teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. "Jet Airways is compelled to cancel all its international and domestic flights. The last flight will operate today," it said in statement. Jet had asked a consortium of lenders led by the State Bank of India to urgently provide four billion rupees (\$57.5 million) but said that this had not been forthcoming.

"This has been a very difficult decision but without interim funding, the airline is simply unable to conduct flight opera-

tions in a manner that delivers to the very reasonable expectations of its guests, employees, partners and service providers," it added. The airline was once India's second-biggest by market share but is on the brink of collapse with debts of more than \$1 billion.

Jet was operating just five planes yesterday because it could not pay its bills, down from a fleet of more than 120 at its peak. The carrier has cancelled hundreds of flights in recent weeks, stranding thousands of passengers. It has repeatedly defaulted on loans and failed to pay staff in recent months. The consortium took control of Jet in March, pledging to give \$218 million in "immediate funding support" as part of a debt resolution plan.

But they have failed to release most of the money and the banks also failed to agree how to proceed after a meeting of several hours on Monday.

Continued on Page 24



MUMBAI: In this file photo taken on March 25, 2019, Jet Airways aircraft are seen parked on the tarmac at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport. — AFP

Local

Amir receives Malaysian speaker, state officials

Speaker Ghanem, Malaysian counterpart hold official talks



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Malaysia's Speaker of the House of Representatives Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the Supreme Judicial Council and Constitutional Court and Head of the Court of Cassation Youssif Al-Mutwaa.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and Malaysia's Speaker of the House of Representatives Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof. His Highness the Amir also received President of the Supreme Judicial Council and Constitutional Court and Head of the Court of Cassation Youssif Al-Mutwaa. His Highness the Amir went on to receive Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, Speaker Ghanem held official talks with his Malaysian counterpart, which focused on discussing means to strengthening bilateral relations, especially in parliamentary affairs. The talks were attended by a number of MPs, along with the

delegation accompanying the Malaysian top lawmaker, in addition to respective ambassadors of both countries.

In the meantime, Acting Premier Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad also met with Malaysia's Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the cordial talks revolved around matters of mutual concern and bilateral ties, according to a defense ministry statement. Also yesterday, Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held talks with Malaysia's Speaker of the House of Representatives Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof, which revolved around matters of mutual concern and bilateral ties on regional and global scales, the foreign ministry said in a statement to the press. — KUNA



Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Malaysia's Speaker of the House of Representatives Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Malaysia's Speaker of the House of Representatives Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof.



Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Malaysia's Speaker of the House of Representatives Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof.

UN appreciates Kuwait's 'unlimited support' for a peaceful Mideast

KUWAIT: Kuwait's major and historic role, as well as unlimited support for all efforts to resolve the Middle East crisis, is much appreciated, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov said yesterday. This was recognizably eminent during Kuwait's non-permanent membership at the UN Security Council, noted the UN official. His remarks came during his

meeting with Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace earlier yesterday. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled voiced appreciation to Mladenov's efforts in a bid to reach a just and inclusive peace in the region. Recent regional and international developments were also discussed during the meeting, according to a foreign ministry statement. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov. — KUNA

Kuwait supports recovery efforts in New Zealand

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has called for concrete measures to support New Zealand in the aftermath of the deadly attacks on two mosques in the city of Christchurch, a Kuwaiti minister said yesterday. His Highness the Amir commended New Zealand authorities, chiefly Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, for their response to the "horrific incident." Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement. — KUNA

Kuwait's science, engineering contest important for students

KUWAIT: Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel affirmed on Tuesday the importance of Kuwait's science and engineering competition organized by Kuwait Science Club (KSC) in supporting scientific research. Fadhel made the press statement following a closing ceremony of the competition which was supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, the Ministry of Education, Kuwait University, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training as well as the American University of the Middle East and Al-Kharafi Group. The officials developed the annual competition, which targets male and female students of high schools to practice scientific research and engineering design called "innovation," he said. The number of participants has risen to 130 in the seventh edition of the contest, which includes the scientific research and the engineering design categories, he added.

Meanwhile, head of KSC's competitive programs and development sector Mohammad Al-Safar stressed the club's keenness on adopting and encouraging youth to innovation and scientific research, referring to the event's importance in investing in human capital. The contest includes 22 scientific fields suitable for all ages, as knowledge economy requires a generation capable development and self-reliance, he said. Also, Education Ministry's Undersecretary for educational



KUWAIT: Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel speaks during the ceremony. — KUNA

development and activity sector Faisal Al-Meqseed affirmed the ministry is eager to focus mainly on research and scientific activities to students as part of its strategies in disseminating technology and sciences. He said the ministry is also keen on backing talented

students in all fields so as to promote knowledge and scientific research. Thirty students won in the science and engineering category, while three secondary schools obtained the first two positions in the scientific research domain. — KUNA

Kuwait's charity stresses offering aid to displaced Iraqis

IRBIL: Head of Kuwait's International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) Abdullah Al-Maatouq affirmed on Tuesday that the basic and urgent needs of displaced Iraqis in the shelters are met. After inspecting shelters of displaced Iraqis east of Mosul, Maatouq said he would urge charities in Kuwait to rapidly send urgent aid to the displaced so as to alleviate their sufferings. He further noted that the IICO, in collaboration with several government charitable institutions and organizations, would provide assistance quickly to mitigate the sufferings of displaced Iraqis. The organization, in cooperation with other Kuwaiti charitable bodies, has ambitious future projects to offer the best humanitarian aid to displaced people and improve their living conditions, he said.

In an earlier statement, Maatouq had stressed that the shelters of displaced Iraqis lack a lot of services. During tours to the shelters, he pointed out that the organization's delegation was briefed on ongoing and future needs of the displaced. He said the current needs would be provided as soon as possible, while the future ones will be studied for carrying out them later. A large number of international humanitarian organizations stopped assisting displaced Iraqis as their areas were liberated. However the displaced are staying at shelters since their homes have been devastated. The organization's delegation visited Iraq Kurdistan Region over the last days and inspected several shelters there. It was apprised of projects carried out by Kuwait to serve the displaced that included schools, health centers and others. The IICO has provided several aid to displaced Iraqis across Iraq. — KUNA

Amir patronizes, attends Kuwait's 10th int'l Holy Quran competition

Award strengthens the role of Kuwait's leadership in the field of the Holy Quran: Minister



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other officials attend the ceremony of honoring participants in Kuwait's 10th International Award for Memorizing the Holy Quran. — Amiri Dwan photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronized and attended Kuwait's 10th International Award for Memorizing the Holy Quran at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir was received by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Al-Shola, and members of the judiciary committee. The ceremony witnessed the attendance of Malaysian Speaker of Parliament Mohamad Ariff Yusof, Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa, Acting Premier and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and

several top officials. The award aims to strengthen the role of Kuwait's leadership in the field of the Holy Quran and to promote the role of institutions and organizations of the Holy Quran, Shola said. It also aims at defining the Islamic and Arab nation in Holy Quran readings and highlighting the role of the imams of readings and the sciences of the Holy Quran as well as encouraging the memorizers of the Holy Quran in studying the science of readings, he continued. The award also aimed at encouraging for more effort and time to memorize, recite and care for the Holy Quran memorizers from the young generation and highlighting the civilized part of Kuwait as a sponsor of the Holy Quran worldwide, he added. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses in a group photo with the honored participants in Kuwait's 10th International Award for Memorizing the Holy Quran.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah greets the audience.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen during the honoring ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets the honored participants.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honors a participant.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honors a participant.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a calligraphic work of art as a memento.



Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Al-Shola delivers a speech.



A participant recites verses from the Holy Quran.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen during the honoring ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen during the honoring ceremony.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Gulf street's seafront captured before sunset. — Photo by Mohammad Subhi (KUNA)

French envoy holds reception, to pursue cooperation in legal and juridical system

French government to renovate cancer hospital in Kuwait: Ambassador



KUWAIT: Ambassador of France to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy delivers a speech during the event. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



A French band performs on stage during the ceremony.



Ambassador of France to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy poses with guests for a group photo.

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A reception was held yesterday in honor of friends and families of French residents in Kuwait, who have been very supportive and appreciative of all aspects of French interests here. The reception held at the ambassador's residence in Jabriya, and became a venue for

extending compassion and support to the French people after a massive fire gutted the historic Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. "I dedicate this event tonight to around 400 firefighters who battled to control the fire at Notre Dame de Paris," said Ambassador Marie Masdupuy.

"It was a tragic event which devastated the historic church in Paris, which is centuries old. From the moment it

went live on TV, many Kuwaitis and other nationals have been extending sympathies to us and inquiring what they can do to help. They've been sending messages, and why not? The tragedy is not just about Notre-Dame - it concerns the world today, as she has stood tall at same location for centuries and witnessed the ups and downs of humanity. Thank you very much, I appreciate it a lot. Yes, it

was indeed a complex situation to battle the blaze in a centuries-old edifice," she said.

Masdupuy also announced that her government will renovate a cancer hospital in Kuwait, which it will fund. She lauded Kuwait's current environment and defense cooperation and her country's willingness to pursue cooperation in legal and juridical systems.

KIB honored for sponsoring 7th Ideal Mother Award

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) was recently honored for its sponsorship of the 7th Ideal Mother Award, organized annually by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center under the patronage of the President of the Kuwait Foundation for Disabled Children, Sabeeka Al-Jasser. The honoring ceremony was attended by a number of notable figures and representatives of large institutions across Kuwait, recognizing their commitment to supporting events and activities that have a positive impact on the local community.

In recognition of its ongoing support of the Ideal Mother Award over the years, KIB was honored for its recent sponsorship of the award's latest edition. The bank was recognized for its efforts in cultivating a culture of acceptance and support for people with disabilities.

Receiving the award on behalf of KIB was Manager of the External Communication at the bank, Fahad Alsarhan. Meanwhile, Najia expressed



KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank is honored for sponsoring the 7th Ideal Mother Award.

his pride at KIB receiving this award, saying: "We are truly proud to be long-term supporters and partners of the Ideal Mother Award, reflecting our strong belief in the importance of supporting all facets of community development. As partners in the community, we remain dedicated to participating in events and initiatives that aim at giving back to the community we belong to."

KIB continues to reaffirm its positive

impact on the local community to which it belongs by strengthening its social role. The bank's leading social responsibility program features a wide range of initiatives that serve people with disabilities. Additionally, KIB aims at supporting and participating in many events and initiatives that serve all segments of the local community, thereby promoting social unity between members of the community.

Kuwaiti women union appreciates political leadership's support

KUWAIT: Chairperson of Kuwaiti Union of Women's Associations (KUWA) Sheikha Fadya Saad Al-Sabah appreciated Tuesday the "historic endeavors" of the political leadership for the support of woman at different levels. Sheikha Fadya was addressing a press conference held to announce festivities of the Kuwait Women's Day, due on May 16. She added that May 16th

reflected the "great ability of Women in holding responsibility and contribute actively to development" of the country.

Kuwaiti women won their political rights during a historic parliamentary session on May 16, 2005, thus they became able to vote and run for elections, a great transformation in history of Kuwait, she said. Sheikha Fadya said the festivities would feature the honoring of several women for their achievements and contributions which resulted in political rights. She said the event would include an exhibition and a seminar about scientific and cultural achievements of Kuwaiti women. Sheikha Fadya said that the union would coordinate with the Ministry of Information to publish the 'Woman Magazine,' which would highlight women issues and their role in society. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Chairperson of Kuwaiti Union of Women's Associations Sheikha Fadya Saad Al-Sabah speaks during a press conference held to announce festivities of the Kuwait Women's Day. — KUNA

Local

Measures to prevent small projects to be used as backdoor for visa trafficking

Awqaf ministry ends labor contract with violating company

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower is reviewing rules and conditions of registering and estimating the needs of small projects, so that new rules are added to guarantee that advantages given to their owners are not abused, or open a backdoor for visa trafficking. Sources said the review became necessary after the discovery of several attempts to bypass laws organizing small projects, prompting the authority to suspend tens of files that are doubtful, as the companies proved to be in violation of the interior ministry investigations department. The total number of licenses registered at the authority for small projects is 7,876.

Workers' sit-in

Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Quran and Islamic Studies Walid Al-Shuaib said the ministry has no relation to a sit-in held by workers, especially since their salaries are paid by the company that supplies them, adding that it received all its financial dues in December. Shuaib said the ministry held meetings with the concerned company during which it demanded that the company adhere to the contract, noting that the company did not comply with the conditions mentioned in the contract. As a result, Shuaib said the awqaf ministry decided to cancel the contract with the company at the end of March through a memo. Speedy measures are being taken, the most important of which is corresponding with supervisory authorities such as the State Audit Bureau to close the file of this company permanently.

Egyptian consulate

Informed sources said a new location for the Egyptian consulate is being mulled to move it from Salam, following public objections. The sources expected the move to be to one of two sites - in west Mishref or Dajeej. Sources said in any case, the move will not be made until after the holy month of Ramadan.

Fugitive caught

Sentences implementation detectives arrested a fugitive Kuwaiti who escaped with the help of his friends in Kaifan. Detectives received information that the wanted man was in a Salmiya apartment, so they went there along with special forces, stormed the apartment and arrested the fugitive. Detectives found another man with him who is also wanted to serve sentences totaling nine years in jail.



KUWAIT: A car flipped over on Sixth Ring Road near Khaitan. Farwaniya fire center responded and used hydraulic equipment to free the driver, who was injured in the arm. Paramedics rushed him to hospital. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Silk City board of trustees dissolved

KUWAIT: In a surprise move, the board of trustees of Silk City and Boubyan Island was dissolved and the CEO was terminated. All of them received thank you

notes at their homes. Meanwhile, a new board will be formed soon according to the requirements of the mega projects and according to the vision of First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, with regards to the required competencies for the coming stage. The dissolved board was made up of: Salem Matheeb Al-Othainah, Mohammad Jassem Al-Marzouq, Imran Habeeb Jouhar Hayat, Adnan Abdelaziz Al-Bahar, Khalid Eid Al-Nasser, Tariq Abdelaziz Sultan Al-Essa, Sarah Hussein Akbar, Abdelaziz Abdellatif Al-Ibrahim, and CEO Faisal Al-Midleg. —Al-Qabas

'Masked man' used pepper spray in robberies

KUWAIT: Policemen are looking for a masked thief who used pepper spray during his crimes. A police source said a 42-year-old Indian woman from Mangaf sought police's help, saying a masked man stormed her apartment and sprayed her with pepper spray. She said she became unconscious after falling on the ground, noting that money and jewelry were stolen from the apartment. Detectives who are investigating found that several apartments were robbed by the masked man the same way.

Syrian deported to Iran

Criminal detectives deported a Syrian man to Iran after convicting him of drug smuggling and after he served his jail sentence at the central prison. The Syrian was arrested on arrival from Tehran with a large quantity of drugs. Separately, two Bangladeshis were sent to the deportation department after being caught in Hawally, and were found to have entered the country illegally.

Harassment

A restaurant worker thought he had bought the silence of an Egyptian woman with KD 30 after committing indecent acts with her inside a building's elevator. The woman pretended to accept his offer, then told her father about what happened. He told detectives, who arrested the suspect. He was sent to concerned authorities for further legal action. —Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

RAMADAN KAREEM

<p>0.620 0.400</p> <p>Arwa Mineral Water 1.5Ltr 6's</p>	<p>2.650 1.995</p> <p>Lipton Tea Powder 400gm 2's</p>	<p>1.750 1.350</p> <p>Indomie Noodles Assorted 75gm 10's x 2</p>	<p>1.680 1.350</p> <p>Royal Jelly Assorted 140gm 12's (Strawberry/ Raspberry/ Cherry)</p>	<p>1.140 0.970</p> <p>Sunquick Drink Concentrate Orange 840ml</p>
<p>1.290 0.945</p> <p>Lamb Weston Regular Potato Frites 2.5kg</p>	<p>3.290 2.850</p> <p>Maple Leaf Premium Duck/kg</p>	<p>1.895 1.495</p> <p>Orange Valencia Plastic Box</p>	<p>0.995 0.745</p> <p>Potato Net Bag</p>	
<p>2.990</p> <p>Tide Washing Powder 2.5kg 2's</p>	<p>4.590 3.890</p> <p>Norwegian Whole Salmon /kg</p>	<p>5.990 5.590</p> <p>White Pomfret (Medium) /kg</p>	<p>3.990 3.490</p> <p>Prawns (Sea) /kg</p>	<p>4.090 3.590</p> <p>New Zealand Chilled Lamb Leg Bone-In /Kg</p>
<p>3.750 3.250</p> <p>Dettol Liquid 750ml 2's+500ml</p>	<p>0.890</p> <p>Harpic Toilet Cleaner 500ml 2+1 free</p>	<p>179.900 159.900</p> <p>SONY 4K UHD TV KD-49X7500F</p>	<p>289.900 239.900</p> <p>Apple iPhone X</p>	

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Party's over: Rio reels from deadly disasters

Thunderstorms kill at least 35 in western India

Page 9

Page 8



CUCUTA: People carry goods along the 'trochas'-illegal trails on the border between Cucuta in Colombia and San Antonio del Tachira in Venezuela. — AFP

Venezuelan scavengers vie with vultures

Migrants scrape out a living scavenging for metal, plastic, food in Brazil

PACARAIMA: Surrounded by vultures perched on trees awaiting their turn, Venezuelan migrants scrape out a living scavenging for metal, plastic, cardboard and food in a Brazilian border town's rubbish dump. Trapped in a wasteland limbo, they barely make enough to feed their families and cannot afford a bus ticket to get away and find regular work in Brazilian cities to the south. They blame leftist President Nicolas Maduro for mismanaging their oil-producing nation's economy and causing the deep crisis that has driven several million Venezuelans to emigrate across Latin America.

"I left because I was dying of hunger. We are trying to get ahead looking through this rubbish. Every night I pray to God to take me out of here," said Rosemary Tovar, a 23-year-old mother from Caracas. Tens of thousands of Venezuelans have fled the political and economic upheaval in their country through

Pacaraima, the only road crossing to Brazil, overloading social services and causing tension in the northern border state of Roraima. More than 40,000 Venezuelans have swollen the population of state capital Boa Vista by 11 percent, Mayor Tereza Surita told Reuters.

The influx has also been a headache for Brazil's new, far-right government of President Jair Bolsonaro, who has so far resisted US pressure to take a more forceful attitude against Maduro. About 3.7 million people have left Venezuela in recent years, mostly via its western neighbor Colombia, according to the

World Bank. A dozen Venezuelans scramble to grab bags of rubbish that tumble from the Pacaraima trash truck twice a day. They then sift through the piles as fetid plumes of smoke rise from the smoldering landfill. Sometimes they scavenge at night using headlamps.

"We are looking for copper and cans, and hopefully something valuable, even food," said Astrid Prado, who is eight months pregnant. "My goal is to get out of here.

Nobody wants to spend their life going through garbage," Charly Sanchez, 42, arrived in Brazil a year ago and has not been able to get to Boa Vista to get

his work papers so that he can find employment. "We live off this. We make enough to buy rice, maybe some sausage, but not enough to buy a ticket to Boa Vista," he said. Copper pays best, 13 reais (\$3.30) a kilo, but it takes Sanchez a whole week to gather that much "wire by wire."

On a lucky day he said he had found a discarded cellphone, but not today. Some spaghetti, a small jar of sugar and a bit of cooking oil was Sanchez's pickings for the day. Samuel Esteban, using a breathing mask for the smoke, stuffed cardboard into a large sack. For 50 kilos he will earn five reais, one third of the minimum monthly wage in Venezuela but just enough to buy a liter of milk in Brazil and some bread. Tovar criticized Maduro for denying that Venezuela is facing a humanitarian crisis. "He is so wrong. Look at us here in this dump," she said. "If Maduro does not leave Venezuela, I will never return there." — Reuters

“ I left because I was dying of hunger ”

India cancels poll in southern area over 'vote buying'

NEW DELHI: Indian election authorities have cancelled voting in a southern region of the country after seizing more than 110 million rupees (\$1.5 million) they believe was meant to influence the outcome, officials said yesterday. It is the first time a ballot has been cancelled in a national election over attempted vote-buying, officials said. The decision comes as Indians vote in a mammoth national election being held over several phases, the next of which begins today.

But voters in the Vellore constituency in coastal Tamil Nadu state will not be going to the polls as scheduled after the Election Commission of India ruled there were fears of a "systematic design to influence voters". The ruling came after authorities seized more than 110 million rupees from a candidate in the run-up to the vote. The commission said late Tuesday that the environment in Vellore was no longer conducive to "free and ethical" elections.

No fresh date has been announced for polling in the constituency. Nearly 100 constituencies in 13 states go to the polls today in the second round of the seven-phase election that began on April 11. Almost 900 million voters are eligible to cast their votes to elect 543 members to the lower house of the parliament, with results expected on May 23. Attempts to secure votes in return for cash, liquor, electronic gadgets and even goats have been reported



SRIKHOLOA, India: Indian poll station workers transport Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines with a horse on the trek to the remote high altitude Darjeeling constituency polling station in Srikhola. — AFP

across Tamil Nadu in the run-up to voting. More than 1.3 billion rupees (\$18.7 million) and one ton of gold worth 3 billion rupees have been seized in the state since the poll dates were announced on March 10. Elsewhere in the country, polls have been delayed by five days in parts of the northeastern state of Tripura over

security fears. Polls will be held there on April 23 instead of today. And in the country's east, Bangladeshi star actor Ferdous Ahmed has been forced to leave India after he was discovered campaigning for a candidate from the opposition Congress party, officials at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kolkata said. — AFP

Malaysia probes talk on women giving up hijab

KUALA LUMPUR: Islamic officials in Malaysia have launched an investigation into a public event that discussed women who stop wearing the hijab, according to a group of female activists who spoke at the forum. The probe into Saturday's "Malay Women and De-hijabbing" talk is the latest sign of growing Muslim conservatism in the multi-ethnic nation, which critics say is chipping away at a traditionally tolerant brand of Islam.

The forum took place at a book shop outside Kuala Lumpur to mark the launch of a book called "Unveiling Choice", about author Maryam Lee's decision to stop wearing the headscarf. At the three-hour event, Lee and two other Muslim women shared their experiences about giving up the hijab.

The number of women from the country's ethnic Malay Muslim majority wearing the headscarf has been increasing, in line with growing conservatism, but it is also common to see Muslim women without their heads covered. Following a social media backlash, the religious affairs minister called for an investigation, and officers from the Islamic affairs department visited the shop to get copies of the book and talked to a staff member, the women said.

"We condemn this unnecessary investigation as abuse of power to harass and intimidate women activists," said the trio in a statement late Tuesday. "We are ready to give full cooperation to the authorities however we are unequivocal that there has been no transgression of Malaysian laws." The Islamic affairs department in central Selangor state, which is reported to be probing the incident, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In a statement on Facebook, Religious Affairs Minister Mujahid Yusof Rawa had expressed concern about the event and called on Islamic authorities to probe it in a "fair and just manner". About 60 percent of Malaysia's 32 million inhabitants are Muslim Malays and the country is also home to substantial minorities of ethnic Indians and ethnic Chinese, who do not typically follow Islam. Members of different races and religions generally live side by side harmoniously but critics say that influential Muslim hardliners are pushing an increasingly conservative form of Islam. — AFP

International

Military considering 'all options' as Algerians vow to continue protests

Army chief says time running out after weeks of protests

ALGIERS: Algeria's army chief said the military was considering all options to resolve the national political crisis and warned "time is running out", after weeks of anti-government protests. Lieutenant-General Ahmed Gaed Salah's remarks were the strongest indication yet that the military, which has said it supports a transition period after the April 2 resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, is losing patience. In a speech broadcast on state television, Salah, speaking at a military base in the central town of Ouargla, urged protesters who have been gathering since Feb. 22 to avoid violence.

"All options are open in the pursuit of overcoming the different difficulties and finding a solution to the crisis as soon as possible, in a way that serves our nation's interests without regard to individual interests," he said. Salah did not specify what measures the army could take. But he said: "We have no ambition but to protect our nation." The army patiently monitored the mostly peaceful protests that sometimes swelled to hundreds of thousands of people.

But Salah intervened when Bouteflika sought to extend his fourth term, declaring him unfit for office in a bid to avoid prolonged turmoil. Parliament named an interim president and a July 4 election date was set in a transition the army said it would support. Bouteflika's departure failed to placate many Algerians who want to topple the old guard and its associates. Protesters want a clean break with the ruling elite - veterans of the war of independence against France, the ruling party and oligarchs - and sweeping democratic reforms.

Analysts say the army has been acting within the framework of the constitution to avoid giving any impression of a coup. In the early 1990s, the military cancelled an election Islamists were poised to win, triggering a civil war that killed an estimated 200,000 people and ravaged Algeria. "The army's leadership does not take any decision

that does not serve the country and the people," said Salah, adding that some parties were not happy with the "peaceful protests".

Algeria's God

Salah accused a former intelligence chief of trying to undermine the transition, in a clear reference to General Mohamed Mediene, a spy chief dubbed "Algeria's God" because many saw him as the real authority. "I send to this person a final warning," said Salah. "And in case he persists in his actions, firm legal measures will be taken against him." Bouteflika fired Mediene in 2015 in an attempt to weaken the intelligence services, but he is still seen as one of the most powerful figures in Algeria.

Bouteflika, rarely seen in public since a stroke in 2013, also worked for years to ease the generals' clout and make the presidency more powerful by sacking dozens of top officers. But the army is still the most powerful institution in Algeria. It has swayed politics from the shadows for decades and is expected to help guide the transition process. Earlier on Tuesday, the chairman of the Constitutional Council, Tayib Belaiz, quit his post, state news agency APS said. That followed calls for his resignation by protesters who say he is part of a ruling elite they want abolished.

Belaiz submitted his resignation to interim President Abdelkader Bensalah, APS reported, citing a statement from the council. He was replaced by Kamel Fenich, a little-known judge and member of the council, state TV said. Thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Algiers and in cities across the country on Tuesday, calling for radical change in the eighth week of mass protests. Belaiz's departure could herald that of other senior political figures who protesters want removed. These include Bensalah, who was appointed interim president after Salah managed Bouteflika's exit. — Reuters



ALGIERS: Algerian students take part in a demonstration in the capital Algiers. Thousands of Algerian students chanting 'peaceful' rallied in the capital as they defiantly faced police officers who barred them from reaching the focal point of weeks of protests. — AFP

Fear, uncertainty haunt shelter near Libyan front line

AIN ZARA: Sadness and fear are etched into the faces of those lining up for food near the front line of fighting that is raging on the outskirts of Libya's capital. One of those who have sought refuge in a district town hall is Fatma Al-Naami, a 49-year-old widow who just lost her only child when her house was bombed. "My son died because of this dirty war," she says, unable to contain her tears as she recounts how he was hit by shrapnel and died of his injuries two days later. "I feel I can't go on alone... I feel like the living dead," says Naami, who lost her husband to illness. Not far from her, in the small garden of the Ain Zara town hall, a group of children seem to have kept their carefree spirit.

Twelve-year-old Mahmoud is playing with his new friends who have also escaped the fighting south of the vast suburb dotted with farms. Together with his parents, he had to hastily abandon his home in nearby Al-Keheli amid the fighting that has raged for nearly two weeks. They are among the latest victims of violence in the North African country that has been plunged into chaos since NATO-backed forces overthrew former dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Violent clashes

Since April 4, gunfire and explosions have rocked the southern outskirts of Tripoli, amid an attack from strongman Khalifa Haftar and his self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA). Pushing back against his offensive are forces of the internationally recognized Government of National Unity (GNU) headquartered in the capital. Some of the most violent fighting has shaken the suburbs of Ain Zara, about 10 kilometers south of central Tripoli, an area where creeping urbanization has nibbled away at farmlands. A total of 189 people have been killed and more than 800 wounded in the clashes, many of them civilians, according to the World Health Organization.

More than 18,000 internally displaced people - 7,000 of them from Ain Zara - have had to seek refuge with relatives or in shelters, says the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "I left home a week ago with my wife and son Mohamad," one of them, Abdessalam said. "The fighting became so violent that we didn't sleep for days." Abdessalam said he was "lucky" to



AIN ZARA, Libya: Displaced Libyans cook at a school turned into a shelter on the southern outskirts of the capital Tripoli. — AFP

have found refuge in a university residence near the town hall. "Other large families sometimes crowd seven people into a room," he explained.

'Children suffer trauma'

Faced with the influx of displaced people, Ain Zara town hall has set up a crisis committee, a food bank and a makeshift pharmacy to manage donations of food and medicines. "We collect donations for the displaced, to whom we distribute more than 1,500 family food baskets every day," Ain Zara mayor Abdul Wahed Ballug said.

"We have made the university residence available to them," he said, adding with regret that it can accommodate no more than 500 people. Ballug deplored what he said was a lack of assistance from local and international organizations. "Is it conceivable that an international organization gives us 10 mattresses and a few products and then announces that it has helped us?" he said. Nor was there any state assistance, Ballug said, pointing out that "only businessmen and traders came to the rescue of the displaced". — AFP

only major social media service accessible in the country without the use of a virtual private network, or VPN, to bypass censorship.

In another development, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday met with Iran's foreign minister, who arrived in Ankara to brief him on his meeting with Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad. Turkey supports Syrian opposition rebels and Iran backs Assad in Syria's long war, but the two sides have been expanding contacts amid international efforts to end the fighting. Kazakhstan will host a fresh round of Syria talks on April 25-26 in its capital, recently renamed from Astana to Nur-Sultan.

"I had a long interview with Bashar Al-Assad. I will be giving details of these discussions to Mr Erdogan," Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in translated comments. Ankara broke ties with Damascus in 2011 after the start of the Syrian war, and Erdogan has in the past described Assad as an "assassin". But Erdogan acknowledged in February that low-level contacts have been taking place and his rhetoric has also softened in tone in recent months. — Agencies

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Chief General Manager (CPG)

Benin votes - but with no opposition to choose from

COTONOU: Benin votes for a new parliament on April 28, but a country that was once seen as a model of democracy in Africa is facing a worrying political crisis. Voters in the small West African state will get only one choice of members of parliament - for the first time in three decades, the opposition will not take part. Election watchdogs last month ruled that only two parties, both allied to President Patrice Talon, met toughened conditions of admissibility under new electoral laws.

Their decision effectively barred the entire political opposition from fielding candidates. "This is the first time that opposition parties will not be taking part in legislative elections since the return of the democratic era in 1991," said Steve Kpton, a lawyer and political analyst. Before 1991, Benin struggled under decades of authoritarian rule. The transition to democracy brought a flowering of political competition - five years ago, voters could choose from 20 parties for the 83 seats in parliament.

New election rules

But this year, lawmakers from the ruling party pushed through a new electoral code. Critics say the rules were too tough and bureaucratic, and opposition parties failed to meet all the administrative requirements in time. Eric

Houndete, deputy speaker of parliament and the leader of an opposition coalition, warned of public anger. "Benin will not allow 83 personal deputies of the head of state to be appointed to parliament," he said. Public protests have been broken up by security forces. Talon, elected in 2016, portrays himself as reformer and modernist. He defended the electoral code, saying it would bring together the scores of political parties into simpler blocs.

"There are more than 250 political parties... each of these new parties includes dozens of political movements," Talon said this month. Instead, he said he wanted to see parties coalesce into a third and fourth coalition to counterbalance the two main parties - that both back him - in parliament. "I am pragmatic, I am a realist," Talon said. "I am someone who moves forward despite the difficulties." But Talon, a 60-year-old millionaire former businessman who made his money in cotton and ports, has also been repeatedly accused of authoritarianism since coming to power.

Civil society groups say the new electoral code is a "democratic retreat." "An election can only be democratic when it brings into competition political forces favorable to power, and political forces opposed to power," said civil society coalition Social Watch Benin. The coalition, along with other groups, has suspended its role in the electoral process, including not deploying observers. "Civil society cannot condone this serious attack on democracy," said Hubert Acakpo, chief of a watchdog group called SOS Credible Elections.

Kpton, the analyst, warned the vote would produce a parliament "exclusively" under the power of the president, and able to change the country's constitution. Others fear that is exactly president's aim. — AFP

Instagram accounts of Revolutionary Guards commanders blocked

TEHRAN: The Instagram accounts of several Iranian Revolutionary Guards commanders have been blocked, the Tabnak news website reported Tuesday, with the photo-sharing website saying it was complying with US sanctions. The United States announced on April 8 that it has placed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the ideological army of the Islamic republic, on their list of "foreign terrorist organizations". Tabnak, a site close to Iranian conservatives, said Instagram blocked the accounts of Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, Major General Mohammad Bagheri and Major General Ghassem Soleimani.

Access to Soleimani's account, which was working last week, was denied on Tuesday. "Sorry, this page isn't available," read a message on the account. "The link you followed may be broken, or the page may have been removed." Contacted by AFP, an Instagram spokesperson said it was operating "under the constraints of US sanctions laws". "We work with appropriate government authorities to ensure we meet our legal obligations, including those relating to the recent designation of the IRGC," the spokesperson added.

Iran's Telecommunications Minister Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi appeared to be referring to Instagram's move with a tweet on Tuesday. "When you tear out a man's tongue, you aren't proving him a liar, you're only telling the world that you FEAR what he might say," he wrote on Twitter. Facebook, Twitter and the Telegram messenger service are officially banned in Iran, making Instagram the

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International

Fearing death, runaway Saudi sisters appeal for international protection

‘We are in danger Please help us’

TBILISI: Two Saudi sisters took to Twitter yesterday to plead for international protection and a safe haven, saying their lives would be at risk if they went back to the conservative kingdom. The women, in their 20s, said they had arrived in the former Soviet republic of Georgia and needed help from the international community to find a new country to call home. “We are in danger. We need your support to deliver our voice. We want protection. We want a country ... (that) welcomes us and protects our rights. Please help us,” the pair wrote on a shared Twitter account named GeorgiaSisters.

The case is the latest to draw attention to Saudi Arabia's strict social rules, which force women to obtain the permission of a male “guardian” if they want to work, marry or travel. Rights groups say the system can trap women and girls as prisoners of abusive families, and the sisters are not the first Saudi women to seek urgent refuge outside their homeland. The sisters, who identified themselves as Maha Al-Subaie, 28, and Wafa Al-Subaie, 25, posting photos of their passports online,

said they were seeking protection from the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR).

They initially said they had become stranded in Georgia after the Saudi government suspended their passports and that members of their family had come looking for them, but later retracted this version of events. “We are confused,” they wrote. “We are terrified as (we’ve) never been before. Been crying all the time not knowing what’s next. We do not feel safe,” they said in a tweet that was later cancelled.

Georgia's interior ministry said the sisters had not asked for asylum or any help. Nino Kajaia, a UNHCR spokeswoman in Georgia said the agency could not discuss individual cases due to confidentiality. The Saudi embassy in Tbilisi did not immediately reply to a

request for comment. Earlier this year, a Saudi teen who had holed up in a Thai airport hotel to escape her family won asylum in Canada. In 2017, a Saudi woman who had sought asylum in Australia, saying she feared violence from relatives, was stopped on a layover in the Philippines and returned to Riyadh.

Second-class Saudis

Separately yesterday, a Saudi court postponed a hearing in the trial of several women rights activists who had campaigned for the right to drive and an end to the guardianship system. Shortly after their campaign, the kingdom got rid of the driving ban in a move that won positive headlines worldwide. Yet some of the women who had fought for that very right said they were subjected to torture in detention,

be it electric shocks, flogging or sexual assault - something authorities deny.

Suad Abu-Dayyeh, Middle-East consultant for women's rights group Equality Now, said Saudi women were treated as minors and second-class citizens because of the guardianship system. “This creates an oppressive situation, both inside the family environment and within the country as a whole, so it is understandable that many women and girls want to escape,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

“The UN and international community need to place greater pressure on the Saudi Arabian government to give women and girls the liberty to freely exercise their civil rights in their own country, and without persecution.” The lifting of the driving ban, which for years drew international condemnation, was welcomed by Western allies as proof of a new progressive trend in Saudi Arabia. But it has been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent, and many Saudis fear the reforms could provoke a backlash from religious conservatives once seen as dominant. — Reuters



Court postpones hearing in the trial of rights activists

News in brief

150 missing after shipwreck

KINSHASA: About 150 people are missing after a boat sunk on a lake in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, President Felix Tshisekedi said. “I am very saddened by the shipwreck of a pirogue on Lake Kivu. The provisional toll is 150 people missing,” Tshisekedi said on his office's Twitter account. Delphin Mbirimbi, a local activist in South Kivu province, told Reuters that the boat, which had departed from neighboring North Kivu province, wrecked on the lake near Kalehe territory. He said three bodies had been recovered, 33 people had been rescued and another 150 passengers were missing. Tshisekedi said he was following the situation closely “in order to identify and sanction those responsible”. Deadly boat accidents are common in Congo, a vast, forested country which has few roads outside of major towns and where boats are frequently loaded well beyond their capacity — Reuters

Second wave of tornadoes

TEXAS: Tornadoes and thunderstorms will hit the US South and Midwest for a second time this week, starting today afternoon and pushing eastward, forecasters said. At least five people, including three children, were killed over the weekend in a storm system that drove more than three dozen tornadoes across the US South. Communities in central Texas and western Louisiana, already hit by flash floods and twisters in the first round, will be hit once more by high winds, twisters and intense rain, according to AccuWeather and the NWS. “This is a dangerous, vigorous storm,” Jim Hayes, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center in Maryland, said yesterday. The storm is expected to stretch from Iowa and Missouri in the north through Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas to the south, said AccuWeather Senior Meteorologist John Feerick. — Reuters

13 sentenced in Guinea

CONAKRY: A court in the West African state of Guinea has handed down life sentences to 13 people accused of killing a Saudi preacher whose sermon is believed to have angered local villagers. The court in the eastern town Kankan on Monday recommended the defendants serve a minimum of 30 years for the January 2018 shooting. All but one of the 13 were sentenced in absentia - 12 are suspected to have fled abroad. “The ringleader, Moussa Kante, was the only one who was in court, pleading not guilty,” Judge Kpoulomou Gbamon said. The preacher, Abdul Aziz Tuwaijri, was shot dead in the village of Kantebaladougou, near the border with Mali and Ivory Coast. He was on a mission to build mosques and spread the conservative Wahabi form of Islam in Guinea, a country where Islam, the predominant religion, is traditionally moderate and often incorporates animist beliefs. — AFP

Sudan rebels suspend hostilities

KHARTOUM: A Sudanese rebel leader yesterday ordered a three-month suspension of hostilities in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states where his forces have been fighting government troops. “As a goodwill gesture... to give a chance for an immediate transfer of power to civilians, I, commander of SPLM-N announce the suspending of hostilities for three months in all areas under its control until July 31, 2019,” the leader of the Sudan's People's Liberation Movement-North, Abdulaziz al-Hilu, said in a statement. Hilu's announcement comes days after Sudan's new military rulers, who took power last week after toppling veteran president Omar Al-Bashir, declared a ceasefire in all three of the country's conflict zones - the western region of Darfur included. Blue Nile and South Kordofan lie on the border with South Sudan and there was strong support in both states for the decades-long rebellion that culminated in the south's secession in 2011. — AFP

Talks in trouble as Taliban slam the guest list

KABUL: An upcoming conference between Afghan representatives and the Taliban appeared to be in trouble yesterday even before it begins, with the militants deriding Kabul's plan to send 250 delegates-several of whom have already dropped out. President Ashraf Ghani's administration had announced Tuesday a list of people from all walks of Afghan life, including some from the government, that it wants to send to the so-called intra-Afghan dialogue in Doha this weekend.

But the Taliban poured scorn on the lengthy list, saying it was not “normal” and that they had “no plans” to meet with so many people. “The creators of (the) Kabul list must realize that this is an orderly and prearranged conference in a far-away Khaleeji (Gulf) country and not an invitation to some wedding or other party at a hotel in Kabul,” Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

The Taliban—who see Ghani as a US stooge and his government as a puppet regime—also continue to insist they will not be negotiating with Kabul at the conference, and any administration officials are involved merely in a “personal capacity”. Further doubts were cast when some of those Ghani said would attend the conference announced they would not go. Ghani's own running mate Amrullah Saleh, the former head of Afghan intelligence and a longtime Taliban critic, was among them.

The Taliban “should agree to direct & focused negotiations with the Afghan government”, he tweeted. Atta Mohammad Noor, a key opposition figure and former governor of Balkh province, had also been included on the list, which was meant as an inclusive representation of Afghan society. But Noor slammed the delegation as politically biased toward Ghani. “We won't be attending

Palestinian economy in ‘crisis’

JERUSALEM: The World Bank warned yesterday of a deepening economic crisis in the occupied West Bank if the Palestinian Authority and Israel do not resolve a dispute over tax transfers. Israel collects around \$190 million a month in customs duties levied on goods destined for Palestinian markets that transit through its ports, and then transfers the money to the PA. In February, Israel decided to deduct around \$10 million a month from the revenues—the sum the PA paid families of prisoners or prisoners themselves serving time in Israeli jails—prompting the Palestinians to refuse any funds at all.

Israel sees the payments to those who have carried out attacks against Israelis as encouraging further violence. The PA describes the payments as a form of welfare, while Palestinians venerate prisoners jailed by Israel as heroes for their cause. In its report, the World Bank said the unresolved standoff deepened a “fiscal crisis” that could increase the PA's financial gap from \$400 million in 2018 to one “exceeding \$1 billion in 2019”. “This is expected to choke economic activity, threatening to push the West Bank into negative growth,” the World Bank said.

“A resolution to the stand-off over clearance revenues is essential,” it said, referring to the tax transfers. The bank also called for a change in Israel's restrictions on Palestinian imports of so-called “dual-use goods”—products and technologies that can be used both for civilian and military purposes. Israel bans 56 items from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and an additional 62 to Gaza only. It has fought three wars with Palestinian militants in Gaza since 2008 and maintains a blockade on the enclave run by Islamist movement Hamas.

As a result of the restrictions, “the Palestinian economy is unable to access



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani and Afghan refugee girls play on a ground on the outskirts of Islamabad. Afghanistan has published a lengthy list of delegates who will meet with the Taliban in Doha this week. — AFP

the talks with this running order,” Noor tweeted yesterday, adding he viewed the list as Ghani's “intentional act to sabotage the peace efforts”.

‘Pick and choose’

A senior Taliban commander based in Pakistan told AFP that the mammoth delegation showed the “Americans and their puppet Afghan government are not serious about the peaceful settlement of the issue”. Ghani met with the delegates yesterday, giving no indication of any trouble, saying: “We and the Afghan nation expect you to return home successfully and proudly from meeting with the Taliban in Qatar.”

The US has been holding separate bilateral peace negotiations with the Taliban in Doha as part of a months-long peace push led by Washington. The intra-Afghan dialogue comes as part of the effort, but the US

is not believed to be attending. Taliban expert Rahimullah Yusufzai told AFP that while the Afghan government needs to be inclusive in who it sends to Doha, “this is not realistic”. “I have seen in the list people who have no influence. You have to pick and choose, 250 is not manageable,” Yusufzai said.

“The Afghan government is under pressure. With the elections coming, they don't want to make anyone angry. There are alliances to keep in mind,” he added, referring to presidential elections set for September. Yusufzai predicted the conference would be postponed, and that finding a new date might be tough before Ramadan begins next month. The developments come as fresh violence rips across Afghanistan with the Taliban launching their so-called spring offensive. The militants now control or influence about half the country, and last year was the deadliest yet for civilians. — AFP



JERUSALEM: A picture taken from the Israeli settlement of Gilo in Jerusalem, shows a road leading from Jerusalem to Hebron, that is forbidden for Palestinian cars and surrounded by protective walls to isolate it from the occupied West Bank city of Beit Jala. — AFP

key production inputs and modern technology, challenging its ability to expand its production frontier and grow in a sustainable manner,” the report said. The World Bank estimated that easing restrictions on such goods “could bring additional six-percent growth in the West Bank economy and 11 percent in Gaza by 2025.” The bank's report will be presented to the international donor group for Palestinians, known as the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, at its meeting in Brussels on April 30.

It also noted “a continuous decline in real per capita income and a further rise in unemployment and poverty” in the Palestinian territories, with 52 percent of Gaza's labor force jobless in 2018. The Palestinian Authority has seen a dramatic drop in direct foreign aid, which has gone from 10 percent of gross domestic product five years ago to 3.5 percent last year. In 2018, the United States cut hundreds of millions of dollars in Palestinian aid. — AFP

Party's over: Rio reels from deadly disasters

RIO DE JANEIRO: Long a party hot spot, Rio de Janeiro has not had much to celebrate after a series of deadly disasters rocked the Brazilian city, exposing the dire state of its infrastructure and official negligence. Flooding, landslides and the collapse of illegal apartment buildings following torrential rain last week left more than 25 people dead and the “Marvelous City” in shock. The havoc caused by the unusually heavy downpour was amplified by rampant construction in neighborhoods controlled by heavily-armed gangs and militias, where emergency workers are wary of entering because of the threat of violence.

“It's not the rain that kills, it's the incompetence of the leaders of the city and our country,” wrote Brazilian columnist Miriam Leitao in the powerful daily O Globo after the predicted torrential rain on April 8-9 left 10 people dead. Independent risk analyst Moacyr Duarte

said Rio officials had made the post-card-pretty city, which has a “complex” topography of verdant hills and granite peaks, even more vulnerable to natural disasters through their lack of preparation. “We had very intense rain which would have caused damage anywhere, but the impact here would have been much less if everything had worked properly,” Duarte said.

Mayor under fire

Much of the blame has been heaped on Marcelo Crivella, a former Evangelical pastor who is halfway through his term as Rio's mayor. Already unpopular for his frosty attitude toward the city's Carnival, Crivella faces impeachment over allegations he illegally extended advertising contracts. Now he is being skewered for failing to invest enough money in the city's creaky infrastructure. In response to claims Rio has not spent anything on drainage works since the start of the year, a city government official told AFP that 103 million reais (\$26 million) had been allocated for prevention works against flooding so far this year. But she admitted that the figure for the entire year was down more than 33 percent from 2016, the year before Crivella took office. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: People watch a rescue helicopter as it flies away carrying an injured person after two buildings collapsed in Muzema, Rio de Janeiro. — AFP

International

Indonesia's 'everyman' leader on track to beat firebrand ex-general

Unofficial results put Widodo in a comfortable lead

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Joko Widodo was on track to be re-elected leader of the world's third-biggest democracy as unofficial results put him in a comfortable lead over firebrand ex-general Prabowo Subianto after voting closed yesterday across the 17,000-island archipelago. While official results are not due until next month, a series of so-called "quick counts" by pollsters showed Widodo as much as 11 percentage points ahead.

The vote ended at 1:00 pm (0600 GMT) in Sumatra, although some of the 800,000 polling stations across the volcano-dotted nation remained open late due to delays and long queues. The quick counts have proven reliable indicators in past elections, but Widodo held off declaring victory. "We've all seen exit poll and quick count numbers, but we still need to wait for the official results," he told cheering supporters in Jakarta.

His 67-year-old rival - who lost to Widodo in their 2014 presidential contest and warned he would challenge this year's results if he lost - insisted that exit polls suggested he was in the lead. He did not cite specific evidence. "I'm calling on my supporters to keep calm and don't get provoked," he said. The campaign was punctuated by bitter mudslinging and a slew of fake news online - much of it directed at the presidential contenders. "I hope after this that there will be a call for reconciliation because ... we've been living in a very polarized atmosphere," political analyst Gun Gun Heryanto told Kompas TV.

Papua to Sumatra

From the jungles of Borneo to the slums of Jakarta, yesterday saw millions of Indonesians cast their ballots in one of the world's biggest exercises in democracy. Horses, elephants, motorbikes, boats and planes were pressed into service to get ballot boxes out across the vast country that is home to hundreds of ethnic groups and languages.

9,500 inmates granted 'amnesty' in Myanmar

YANGON: Myanmar started releasing more than 9,500 prisoners yesterday as part of its annual amnesty marking the country's traditional new year, but Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo will not be included, said an NGO advocating for political prisoners. President Win Myint announced in a statement yesterday the pardons were granted on humanitarian grounds during the Buddhist new year festival known as Thingyan.

A total of 16 foreign prisoners are expected to be pardoned and deported, while 9,535 local prisoners are expected to be freed, Win Myint said. But an NGO that helps political prisoners said the release will not include Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. The duo were sentenced to seven years under the Official Secrets Act after reporting on the military's atrocities committed against the Rohingya Muslim minority in strife-torn Rakhine state-work which they received a Pulitzer prize for on Monday.

"They will not be included. We got this information from an Insein prison source," said Bo Kyi, founder of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). "Journalists should not be imprisoned... That directly contradicts with democracy." Reuters also reported that Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were not among those being pardoned. According to AAPP, there are currently 46 political prisoners in Myanmar's jails and around 300 others are facing trials linked to political activities.

Thunderstorms kill 35 in India

NEW DELHI: Thunderstorms swept across western India killing at least 35 people and leaving widespread damage, officials said yesterday. Strong winds barreled through Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh states felling walls, trees and electricity lines. The storms have also been blamed for at least 25 deaths in Pakistan this week.

At least 10 people were killed in the desert state of Rajasthan, where a wall of dust swept over several cities. Another 10 were killed in neighboring Gujarat and 15 in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, state emergency services told AFP. Officials said victims were hit by lightning, falling trees or electrocuted by power lines.

Strong winds and sudden rains also hit the capital, New Delhi, bringing searing summer temperatures down by 10 degrees. The storms forced the cancellation of several political rallies as India's national election gathers pace. The wind blew away a tent that was to have been used for a rally by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Himmatnagar in Gujarat. More than 125 people were killed in a wave of storms that battered northern Indian states in May last year. Lightning kills thousands in India every year, mostly farmers working in fields. — AFP

More than 190 million voters were asked to choose between the incumbent Widodo and his fiery nationalist rival, who has strong ties to the country's three-decade Suharto dictatorship. The call to prayer had rang out as voting began at first light in restive Papua province in the east of the 4,800 kilometer-long (3,000 mile) Muslim majority nation.

Leading in pre-vote polls, Widodo, 57, pointed to his ambitious drive to build much-needed roads, airports and other infrastructure across Southeast Asia's largest economy. But Widodo, a political outsider with an everyman personality when he swept to victory in 2014, has seen his rights record criticized owing to an uptick in discriminatory attacks on religious and other minorities. His choice of conservative cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate also raised fears about the future of Indonesia's reputation for moderate Islam.

Campaign punctuated by bitter mudslinging

'Indonesia First'

The soft-spoken Widodo stands in stark contrast to Subianto, a strongman who courted Islamic hardliners and promised a boost to military and defense spending. Echoing US President Donald Trump, Subianto vowed to put "Indonesia first" by reviewing billions of dollars in Chinese investment.

His long-held presidential ambitions, however, have been dogged by a chequered past and strong ties to the Suharto dictatorship, which collapsed two decades ago and opened the door for what is now a flourishing democracy. Subianto - who moved to soften his strongman image with an Instagram account featuring his cat Bobby - ordered the abduction of democracy activists as the authoritarian regime collapsed in 1998, and was accused of committing atrocities in East Timor.

A record 245,000 candidates ran for public office, from the presidency and parliamentary seats to local positions - the first time all were held on the same day. Voters punched holes in ballots - to make clear their



JAKARTA: Supporters surround a vehicle carrying Indonesian President Joko Widodo after the country's general election in Jakarta yesterday. Widodo was on track to be re-elected as president of the world's third-biggest democracy, with pollsters giving him a wide lead over rival Prabowo Subianto, an ex-general. — AFP

candidate choice - and then dipped a finger in Muslim-approved halal ink, to prevent double-voting in a graft-riddled country where ballot-buying is rife.

In Palu, which was devastated by a quake-tsunami six months ago, one woman who lost her 10-year-old daughter and her home in the disaster voiced hope that the poll could help bring some relief to thousands still living in makeshift tents. "Hopefully the president or the new legislative candidate will help people like us still living in evacuation shelters," said Laila, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. "All this time we've been living on handouts from volunteers."

'Path of our nation'

About two million military and civil protection force members were deployed to ensure the vote went smoothly, including in mountainous Papua where rebels have been fighting for decades to split from Indonesia. Papua election officials dressed in traditional headgear and grass skirts, as others strapped on superhero costumes to entertain voters in other parts of the country of 260 million. "This only happens once in five years, so we have to exercise our (voting) rights," I Gusti Ketut Sudarsa, 65, said from holiday hotspot Bali. "This will determine the path of our nation." — AFP



YANGON: Family members wait for prisoners to be released from Insein Prison in Yangon, Myanmar yesterday. Myanmar started releasing more than 9,500 prisoners as part of its annual amnesty marking the country's traditional new year. — AFP

By 6 pm (1130 GMT), Bo Kyi told AFP he had received word of only two political prisoners released, and the amnesty process might continue through the next day. Myanmar has freed thousands from its jails since a military junta ceded power in 2011 after five decades of brutal repression.

But John Quinley of Fortify Rights said yesterday's amnesty should have extended to anti-war activists

Lum Zawng and Zau Jet, who were jailed last year for demonstrating against the decades-long fighting between the military and ethnic Kachin insurgents. "The amnesty could have also included the many Rohingya men and boys who have been unjustly jailed with no fair trial in Rakhine State on terrorism-related offenses," Quinley said. "Many of these men and boys are farmers and should be urgently freed." — AFP

Indonesia lures voters with ghouls, tons of fun and superheros

SURABAYA: Dressed like Count Dracula, Yasim Adnan doesn't look much like an election official, but neither do his staff who are decked out as mummies and spooky nuns with blood pouring from their eyes. The 37-year-old Indonesian presided over one of the creepiest ballot stations in the Muslim majority country yesterday as it held a giant election that featured some 190 million voters and 245,000 candidates vying for public office, including a new president.

To bolster turnout at some 800,000 polling booths nationwide, election officials pulled out all the stops, from dressing like ghouls and superheros to enlisting the help of elephants in Sumatra. In Lebak Bulus, in the south of the capital Jakarta, voters cast their ballots at Adnan's horror-themed polling station which was outfitted with cardboard coffins and blood-stained rags that hung from the ceiling.

Staff were allowed any costume they chose, as long as it didn't appear to favor either president Joko Widodo or his re-election rival Prabowo Subianto. "We're trying to attract people so there will be less gollput," Adnan told AFP, using the

Indonesian term for citizens who don't vote. It seemed to work for some locals. "This is amazing - the theme is so different from other stations," said 42-year-old Komariah Usia.

There was also a photo booth on hand for successful ballot casters - whose fingers were dipped in indelible ink to prevent double voting - keen to snap a picture of themselves as proof of their civic duty. Some restaurants and other retailers were offering free food and drink to those held up their ink-stained finger as proof they voted. In Surabaya, Indonesia's second-biggest city, an Avengers-themed polling station also proved a hit.

Election officials there dressed as the cartoon superheroes as well as the Amazing Spiderman, helping disabled voters cast a ballot and pressing fingers into the Muslim-approved halal ink jars. "We made it look this way to motivate millennials, especially first-time voters," said polling station chief Andilio, who goes by one name. But he also hoped that staff would take the Avengers costumes to heart by serving "voters just like how these characters would". "Safeguard democracy and the election so it will be smooth, safe, and peaceful," he added.

Not to be outdone, officials in Sumatra enlisted the help of three critically endangered Sumatran elephants to boost voter numbers and raise awareness about their dwindling numbers in the wild. The elephants were used to transport cardboard ballot boxes to polling stations in Central Trumon sub-district - much to the entertainment of locals. "I see everybody came out to the polling station - especially because there's elephants," said 32-year-old Syahrul. — AFP

News in brief

Arsonist kills 5 neighbors

SEOUL: Five people were killed and more than a dozen others injured by a South Korean man who set his apartment on fire and stabbed his neighbors as they tried to flee the flames, police said yesterday. Police said the 42-year-old started the fire in the early hours of yesterday in the southern city of Jinju, and waited on the second floor of the building to attack people running downstairs from the blaze. The youngest of the five victims stabbed to death was a 12-year-old girl. An unnamed resident told Yonhap news agency that he initially tried to leave the building after hearing the fire alarm but went back to his apartment after seeing "lots of blood" in the hall. — AFP

Thai spy agency's powers

BANGKOK: Thailand's spy agency is set to be handed carte blanche powers to obtain information believed to threaten the country's security using "any methods", according to a bill announced yesterday. The bill, published by palace mouthpiece the Royal Gazette, comes less than a month after disputed elections which saw both the ruling junta and an opposition coalition claim the right to form a government. The law, which was last discussed by Thailand's rubberstamp parliament in early February but has largely escaped public notice, is to be enforced from today, the announcement said. — AFP

Students produce 'ecstasy'

TOKYO: A Japanese university professor could face up to 10 years in jail after allegedly getting his students to produce ecstasy, officials said yesterday, in an echo of TV hit series "Breaking Bad". Authorities suspect the 61-year-old pharmacology professor from Matsuyama University in western Japan got his pupils to make MDMA - commonly known as ecstasy - in 2013 and another so-called "designer drug" 5F-QUPIC last year. The professor told investigators he was aiming to further the "education" of his pharmaceutical sciences students, an official from the local health ministry told AFP. The ecstasy allegedly produced has not been found and has "probably been discarded," added this official, who asked to remain anonymous. If charged and convicted, he could face 10 years behind bars. — AFP

Satellite show nuke activity

WASHINGTON: Satellite images from last week show movement at North Korea's main nuclear site that could be associated with the reprocessing of radioactive material into bomb fuel, a US think tank reported on Tuesday. Any new reprocessing activity would underscore the failure of a second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi in late February to make progress toward North Korea's denuclearization. Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank said in a report that satellite imagery of North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear site from April 12 showed five specialized railcars near its Uranium Enrichment Facility and Radiochemistry Laboratory. It said their movement could indicate the transfer of radioactive material. "In the past, these specialized railcars appear to have been associated with the movement of radioactive material or reprocessing campaigns," the report said. — Reuters

Analysis

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The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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Farmers in limbo after Georgia bans foreign landowners

When Georgian businesswoman Tamar Gerliani planted grapes on a small piece of land to start her own winery three years ago, she knew she faced an uphill battle in an industry dominated by men. But she could not have foreseen that a legal reform designed to help Georgian landowners would make things even harder. A ban on foreigners owning farmland introduced last year in Georgia's new constitution has made it more difficult for farmers to borrow because the country's mostly foreign-owned banks will no longer accept it as collateral.

That has thwarted hundreds of small farmers looking to expand, banking associations, farmers and pressure groups say - among them Gerliani, who needs \$10,000 for a tractor to tend her vines. "It's difficult to work without a tractor," the 31-year-old told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "This business already has many challenges and I could do without having to go ask around every time I need to use it."

The new constitution states that, with a small number of exceptions, agricultural land can only be owned by the state, a Georgian citizen or a Georgian-owned entity. The provision came into force in December last year as the former Soviet republic swore in a new president - though there has been a de-facto ban on foreigners buying farmland since 2017, when the government imposed a moratorium on purchases. It followed widespread public concern about outsiders scooping up too much of the country's fertile soil, particularly in strategically sensitive areas, said Agriculture Minister Levan Davitashvili.

About 40 percent of Georgia's population live in rural areas, but less than 10 percent of the country's land is arable - and foreigners own about 10 percent of it, he said. "Most of our agricultural land is pastures located in high mountainous areas," Davitashvili told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. "People were a bit concerned and this ... was reflected in the constitution."

But the ban is damaging small farmers, who often have no other collateral, said Teona Zakarashvili, a lawyer at anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International. "This type of regulation has a bad effect on common people. It directly impacts the livelihood of small farmers who already are in a very poor financial state," she said. Since the moratorium came into force, about 1,500 loans were denied loans of it, according to the parliamentary committee on agrarian issues. Women in particular have been badly affected. They often have no other property because sons are traditionally favored when it comes to inheritance, said Nino Zambakhidze, who heads the Georgian Farmers Association.

Gerliani's grandfather left her one hectare of land in Kakheti - the main wine-producing region of a country widely regarded as the birthplace of winemaking. Her family, like many others in the area, had been producing small quantities of wine for generations, but as she grew up she began dreaming of turning it into a business. After studying marketing online, she took up winemaking classes and used her spare time to work on her dream - a wine label called Malati, the word for love in the Svan language spoken in Georgia's mountains.

She invested savings and planted Saperavi - the grapes used to make Georgia's best known wine, a full-bodied red. Georgian wines went into decline under the Soviet Union, when many wineries fell under state control. But it is now enjoying a resurgence - last year, the country exported a record 86 million bottles, according to the Georgian National Wine Agency. After a few years of hard work Gerliani is expecting to produce up to 3,000 bottles of organic wine with her next harvest in autumn.

But the journey was not an easy one. At first, she said, almost no one took her seriously. "It's not easy to start as a woman," she said. "Men think they are more professional and know much more about this business than women do". Most people assumed she had no idea what she was up to, and whenever she needed equipment or workers she found herself quizzed over her winemaking credentials. That was one of the reasons she was so keen to buy her own tractor. But with only her vineyard as collateral, she has been unable to do so.

Davitashvili, the agriculture minister, said the government was aware of the problems faced by small farmers like Gerliani and was looking for possible solutions. They include allowing financial institutions to own agricultural land for up to two years, after which they must sell it. A draft law would also allow foreigners to own land if they inherit it or have an investment plan approved by the government.

Those failing to use it for agriculture however would be forced to sell it. Davitashvili said he hoped the law would be approved before the beginning of the summer. Meanwhile, tractor or no tractor, Gerliani is determined to make it. "It's really hard but I manage," she said. "I am doing my best." — Reuters

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Demonstrators gather during a protest by state TV employees against censorship in the capital Algiers on April 15, 2019. — AFP

Algeria protests loosen stranglehold on media

Weeks of anti-government protests have helped Algerian journalists shake off the chokehold of state-imposed censorship but their work remains complicated and is often contested by demonstrators. After the first protests erupted in February, journalists working for state media complained that their bosses had imposed a news blackout on the rallies against Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid to seek a fifth presidential term. The protests have since become headline news on both private and public television channels, with live footage of nationwide demonstrations.

On a recent Friday, the main day of protests, however, television crews were shouted down and cursed by demonstrators as "a***kissers". "It reflects the hatred" protesters feel for the main private television channels because they totally ignored the first rallies, said Khaled Drareni of Reporters Without Borders (RSF). The lack of coverage triggered shock in Algeria where private channels are usually quick off the mark and often run live reports. But they are mostly owned by businessmen close to Bouteflika.

These media outlets "have tried to redeem themselves" by zooming in on the protests, said Drareni, who himself is a journalist, but they also report on alleged "manipulation" of the protest movement. A small revolt has been brewing within the public sector media, with many journalists saying they refuse to be silenced. Over the past week, dozens

of journalists employed by state radio and television have staged their own sit-in demanding more freedom. Journalists from EPTV, the public television company, gather weekly, chanting "free television" or covering their mouths with their hands to denounce censorship.

'Small windows' of change

"There has been change, there are small windows that have opened," said Imene Khemici of EPTV at a protest. "We now have two specialized programs where we can invite people from different political persuasions, people from the opposition who can speak openly." Opposition figures and former officials who had been banned for the past quarter of a century are back on the airwaves. "The most striking thing is how the public media have evolved, especially radio," said Omar Belhouche, director of the private newspaper El Watan. As an example, the French-language radio station Chaîne 3 now broadcasts live debates several times a week, a feature that was previously banned.

'Financial pressure'

In the late 1980s, Algeria saw the emergence of dozens of privately-owned media outlets but their freedoms were quickly stifled by the outbreak of the country's bloody civil war in 1992. Several journalists were killed by Islamist groups during the decade of conflict, and the army imposed strict censorship on the media. During

Bouteflika's 20-year rule, Algeria's ranking on the press freedom index deteriorated dramatically. In its latest report, the media watchdog RSF ranked Algeria in 136th place out of 180 countries, mainly due to "political and financial pressure" imposed by the authorities.

Newspapers in Algeria largely depend for their survival on revenues from state-funded advertising. Private advertising comes mostly from businesses linked to stalwarts of the regime, said media sociologist Redouane Boudjemaa. The media "reflect the diversity of the clans within the political system rather than the diversity of the Algerian population", said Boudjemaa. He cautioned that the changes in Algeria will not necessarily pave the way for greater media independence. "In some ways we've moved from censorship to disinformation, especially on private channels," he said.

But a group of journalists from state media are trying to build on the gains they have made in recent weeks. They have drafted a charter consisting of 40 articles defining rules and regulations and have submitted the text to the new head of national television hoping it will be adopted. Communication Minister Hassane Rahebi, for his part, has set up a committee to ensure "transparency" in state-funded advertising to avoid its use to exert pressure. "This popular movement will open up new perspectives, including for freedom of the press," said El Watan's Belhouche. — AFP

'Masters of our destiny': Wa in show of force

It has a standing army of 25,000, manufactures its own guns and conscripts at least one member of each household - meet the United Wa State Army: Communist, reclusive, China-backed rebels determined to protect their supremacy over Myanmar's badland border zone. Thousands of soldiers, including a company of women and a sniper platoon in combat webbing, marched yesterday alongside armored vehicles in Panghsang, the capital of the ethnic Wa, which borders China's Yunnan province.

It was a show of force marking 30 years since Communist Wa rebels prodded Myanmar into a ceasefire leading to the establishment of special, semi-autonomous zone, marshalled by Bao Youxiang, chief of one of the world's largest non-state armies. This week the normally inscrutable Wa extended a rare invite to foreign media to their isolated territory to show off their military muscle and deliver a defiant message of self-sufficiency within Myanmar's borders.

"The Wa people are masters of their own destiny," Bao, flanked by senior Chinese officials, declared in an address to the thousands gathered for the parade. He vowed his 600,000 "war-tested" people will never be pawns in proxy wars and proclaimed the "builders and defenders of Wa" as "one of the best groups in human society." Fed by a ready supply of conscripts - some barely in their teens - China-armed and trained, the UWSA bears comparison to Lebanese Hezbollah in size. Also like Hezbollah they are clients of a larger state actor, who pulls strings for strategic ends.

But the UWSA also taps a deep seam of local pride and enmity towards the central state, which is dominated by the Bamar ethnic group. Estimates vary, but experts put the UWSA strength at 25-30,000 regulars, backed up by a large, well-trained reserve. Wa forces dwarf the collage of other ethnic rebel groups operating across Myanmar, posing a deterrent to the country's "Tatmadaw" army and gifting Beijing a useful bridgehead into its resource-rich neighbor.

"We haven't suffered fighting in decades and have developed over these 30



Flares go off during a military parade to commemorate 30 years of a ceasefire signed with the Myanmar military in Wa State in Panghsang yesterday. — AFP

years," a UWSA officer told AFP, requesting anonymity. "But we need to be ready. Our leader's motto is 'Sweating a lot leads to a little blood coming out.' So one or two people from each household must serve in the Wa Army."

Headhunters, drugs and tin

Once a Chinese enclave, the Wa became known by British colonizers as the "wild Wa" for their fearsome reputation for headhunting. Since becoming a special region, the zone has undergone an economic boom of sorts. It is home to one of the world's largest tin mines and massive rubber plantations. Regional drug cops say it plays a central role in the "Golden Triangle" drugs trade, forged over decades of opium production.

The Wa have long been accused of running a narco-state peppered with meth labs across their self-policed lands - claims Wa leaders vehemently deny. "Poppy cultivation will never appear again," said Bao

citing its eradication as one of his state's "proudest achievements" and vowing to combat all drug production. But independent analysis is impossible. Wa remains virtually locked-off, resistant to outside visitors, ringed by checkpoints and tight internal controls.

Chairman Bao

The publicity-shy septuagenarian Bao has helmed the region for decades. An unassailable, authoritarian figurehead, he presides over a political hierarchy that shadows the structures of big neighbor China and a tightly-controlled society. "In the mold of Xi Jinping, Bao is the head of the army, party and government and has been confirmed in those positions for life," Bangkok-based security analyst Anthony Davis told AFP.

As a trading gateway to China - the yuan is the Wa currency - the zone provides a point of leverage for Beijing against Myanmar and any potential resistance to

its grand infrastructure and pipeline plans for the country. The Wa have attended peace talks in a country lacerated by ethnic conflicts, but so far remain outside a nationwide ceasefire deal. Intense violence between Myanmar's army and Rakhine rebels on the other side of the country has undercut prospects of a binding peace deal any time soon.

"The UWSA is the largest non-state military actor in East Asia," Davis said, adding it "has unquestionably been armed by China" despite producing its own China-designed rifles.

A barrage of colorful flares ended the parade as thousands of people in ethnic clothes joined the ranks of military in the sports ground - a show of loyalty in a highly militarized area. "I became Wa soldier when I was about 13 years old. My younger brother is also a soldier," a 32-year-old UWSA recruit told AFP, also requesting not to be named. "As a Wa, you have to serve the army." — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2019

12 Syrian fuel queues grow as Iranian credit freeze bites**13** Five million lost jobs in India between 2016 and 2018**14** FBCG, PwC publish guide on managing shareholder exits in family businesses

Zain KSA revenues soar 24% to SAR 2.1bn in Q1 2019

Al-Kharafi: Zain Saudi Arabia continues to record net profit for three consecutive quarters

KUWAIT: Zain Saudi Arabia (Zain KSA), announces impressive financial results for all key indicators for the first quarter ended 31 March, 2019.

For the first quarter of 2019, Zain KSA recorded revenues of SAR 2.1 billion (\$558 million), a 24 percent increase to the same period in 2018. EBITDA for the quarter reached SAR 955 million (\$255 million), up 67 percent from SAR 571 million (\$152 million) a year earlier. The operator's EBITDA margin for Q1 2019 stood at 46 percent. EBIT also improved to reach SAR 382 million for Q1 2019 compared to SAR 143 million for the same period a year earlier, reflecting a 167 percent increase.

Net income for Q1 2019 reached a healthy SAR 129 million (\$34 million), a marked improvement on the loss of SAR 77 million (\$21 million) recorded for Q1 2018.

Key Operational and Financial notes for three months ended 31 March, 2019:

- The Zain KSA board of directors signed an agreement to sell and lease back the passive physical infrastructure of the company's mobile tower portfolio to IHS Holding Limited (IHS) for a revised amount of circa SAR 2.52 billion (\$672 million)

- Zain KSA successfully obtained new frequencies in the 3.5 GHz band, which is one of the key bands used globally to provide 5G wireless services

- Zain KSA acquired 2600 MHz spectrum, following an auction held by the Communications and Information



Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO; & Zain KSA Vice-Chairman

Technology Commission (CITC). By expanding its range of available frequencies, Zain KSA is expected to offer even more state-of-the-art mobile telecommunications services using 4G and 5G technologies. Following this acquisition, Zain KSA has expanded its current spectrum frequencies roster to include 800MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz, 2100MHz, and 2600MHz

- Profitability positively impacted by decrease in the CITC royalty fees from 15 percent to 10 percent and from the release of certain provisions from the settlement

signed with various ministries of the Kingdom (MOF, MCIT and CITC)

Commenting on the results, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO; & Zain KSA Vice-Chairman, said "Despite the fierce competition present in the Saudi telecom market, the operator's ongoing transformation has resulted in Zain KSA recording net profit for three consecutive quarters with revenue growing quarter-on-quarter."

Al-Kharafi added, "This positive growth is a real translation of the performance and hard work of both the Zain KSA and

- Transformation initiatives continue to pay off as reflected by all key financial indicators
- Q1 EBITDA up 67% to reach SAR 955 million, reflecting a 46% EBITDA margin
- Operator remains focused on network upgrades and data services in enhancing customer experience

Group team efforts in leveraging the operator's network investment in advanced technologies and upgrades, prudent cost optimization and operational efficiencies, ongoing focus on the growth of data services, higher value customers and B2B acquisitions, combined with dedicated customer care efforts."

Furthermore, Al-Kharafi highlighted that the company is working on a package of qualitative initiatives aimed at further developing Saudi nationals, increasing the efficiency of the quality of the company's services, in addition to concluding important agreements with major global technology companies to improve and develop the 5G ecosystem.

Zain KSA has recently signed several important agreements aimed at improving the quality of services. The most prominent of these agreements include with Nokia, Alibaba Cloud, Huawei, Saudi Telecom Company (STC), DETASAD and other significant agreements of strategic importance.

Al-Kharafi concluded by expressing his sincere gratitude to the leadership of Saudi Arabia for creating an environment in which companies can thrive, stating, "Zain is committed to playing a key role in the Kingdom's ICT sector and offer customers quality and life empowering telecommunication services in line with Vision 2030."

Zain KSA Key Performance Indicators (SAR and USD) for Q1 2019

Revenues	SAR 2.1 billion	- (USD 558 million)
EBITDA	SAR 955 million	- (USD 255 million)
EBITDA Margin	46%	
Net Income	SAR 129 million	- (USD 34 million)

US trade gap hits 8-month low as China imports drop

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit fell to an eight-month low in February as imports from China plunged, suggesting President Donald Trump's "America First" agenda was starting to bear fruit.

The surprise narrowing in the trade gap reported by the Commerce Department yesterday also implied a much stronger pace of US economic growth in the first quarter than initially anticipated at the start of the year. The 20.2 percent drop in imports from China was the main driver behind a nearly 3.4 percent improvement in the US trade deficit to \$49.4 billion, data from the Commerce Department showed. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the trade shortfall would widen to \$53.5 billion in February.

The politically sensitive goods trade deficit with China - a focus of the Trump administration's protectionist trade policy - decreased 28.2 percent to \$24.8 billion in February as US exports to the world's No. 2 economy jumped 18.2 percent.

But even with the improvement, the trade deficit remains large and February's drop in Chinese imports could be temporary. The trade data have been volatile in recent months amid big swings between exports and imports, because of the United States' conflicts with trading partners, including China.

Washington last year imposed tariffs on \$250 billion worth of goods imported from China, with Beijing retaliating with duties on \$110 billion worth of American products. Trump has delayed tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports and talks to end the trade impasse continue.

The US goods trade deficit declined 1.7 percent to \$72.0 billion in February, also the lowest level since last June. When adjusted for inflation, the overall goods trade deficit fell \$1.8 billion to \$81.8 billion in February. The average goods trade deficit for January and February is below the fourth-quarter average. This suggests that trade could provide a boost to gross

domestic product in the first quarter after being neutral in the October-December period.

Slowing domestic demand

Growth estimates for the January-March quarter are in a 1.5 percent to 2.3 percent annualized range, largely reflecting an accumulation of inventories amid slowing domestic demand. The economy grew at a 2.2 percent rate in the fourth quarter, slowing from the July-September period's brisk 3.4 percent pace. US Treasury yields rose slightly after the release of the data. US stock index futures were trading higher while the dollar was largely unchanged against a basket of currencies.

The trade deficit in February was pushed down by a 1.1 percent jump in exports to \$209.7 billion. Exports of services were the highest on record. Goods exports increased 1.5 percent to \$139.5 billion in February. The surge in goods exports is a hopeful sign for global economic growth, which has showed signs of slowing in recent months.

Exports of motor vehicles and parts increased by \$0.6 billion in February. Shipments of civilian aircraft soared by \$2.2 billion in February. But commercial aircraft exports are likely to decline in the months ahead following Boeing's decision to suspend deliveries of its troubled 737 MAX aircraft.

The MAX planes have been grounded indefinitely following two deadly crashes.

There was a modest increase in soybean exports. In February, imports rose 0.2 percent to \$259.1 billion. Consumer goods imports increased by \$1.6 billion in February, led by a \$2.1 billion rise in imports of cellphones and other household goods. Imports of industrial supplies and materials fell by \$1.2 billion. Capital goods imports rose slightly. — Reuters

US handbags, shovels on \$20bn EU tariff list over Boeing

BRUSSELS: Handbags, tractors, shovels and fish are part of an 11-page list of US imports worth \$20 billion that the European Union yesterday said it could hit with tariffs in a transatlantic aircraft subsidy dispute. The United States and the European Union have been battling for almost 15 years at the World Trade Organization over subsidies given to US plane-maker Boeing and its European rival Airbus.

After partial victories for both sides, each is asking a WTO arbitrator to determine the level of countermeasures they can impose on the other. The Trump administration last week proposed targeting a seven-page list of EU products for tariffs, ranging from large aircraft to dairy products and wine, to counteract the harm from EU subsidies for Airbus worth an estimated \$11 billion.

Brussels has responded with its own list of

some \$20 billion worth of US imports, including agricultural produce from dried fruit to ketchup, planes, fish, tobacco, handbags, suitcases, tractors, helicopters and video game consoles. The published list will now be open to consultation until May 31 and could then be revised. "The EU remains open for discussions with the US, provided these are without preconditions and aim at a fair outcome," EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom said in a statement.

In both cases, WTO arbitrators have yet to set an amount, but the US case against Airbus is more advanced, with a ruling possible in June or July. The EU case against Boeing could come early in 2020.

Both sides have said they would prefer a settlement that did not lead to the imposition of tariffs. The European Union has meanwhile declared itself ready to start formal trade talks

with the United States. The Commission is set to start two sets of negotiations - one to cut tariffs on industrial goods, the other to make it easier for companies to show products meet EU or US standards.

However, it has insisted that agriculture not be included, putting the 28-country bloc at odds with Washington, which wants farm products to be part of the talks.

The ultimate amount to be won by both sides will be determined by the World Trade Organization, with the final sums likely to be far below the tit-for-tat demands by the EU and US. The Boeing-Airbus trade row has rumbled on for 14 years with the EU and US mutually accusing each other at the WTO of doing out illegal state aid since the 1990s to their respective aeronautical champions. — Agencies



ARLINGTON: 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

Syrian fuel queues grow as Iranian credit freeze bites

US sanctions broadly prohibit any trade with Damascus

BEIRUT: Syria has suffered oil shortages since an Iranian credit line was halted six months ago...

Syrians say shortages grew more acute a week ago: hundreds of cars waited in line at one Damascus petrol station yesterday...

President Bashar al-Assad, speaking in February, said the crisis was part of a siege imposed by governments that oppose him, including the United States...

A front page story in Al-Watan newspaper, which is close to the Syrian government, said the government 'wanted to present the picture as it is'...

It did not give any explanation for the halt in Iranian credit. Tehran is itself the target of US sanctions...

its own forces to Syria while Tehran-backed Shi'ite militias spearheaded by Lebanon's Hezbollah have also played a big role.

Since the Iranian credit line was halted on Oct. 15, al-Watan said 'Syria has been in need of oil... and according to the oil ministry, not one oil tanker reached Syria from that date'...

The United States has warned of significant US sanctions risks for parties involved in petroleum shipments to the Syrian government...

Washington says its sanctions aim to isolate Syria's leadership and its supporters from the global financial and trade systems in response to atrocities...



DAMASCUS: Syrians queue to fill their car with gasoline at a station in Damascus. — AFP

Tenable launches predictive prioritization in Tenable.io

DUBAI: Tenable, Inc, the Cyber Exposure company, yesterday announced Predictive Prioritization is now generally available within Tenable.io...



Renaud Deraison

However, the majority of vulnerabilities scored through CVSS are rated 'high' or 'critical'...

Predictive Prioritization addresses this industry-wide problem by re-prioritizing vulnerabilities based on the

probability they will be leveraged in an attack. Tenable.io now automatically displays a Vulnerability Priority Rating (VPR) that indicates the remediation priority of each flaw...

'The release of Predictive Prioritization across Tenable's Cyber Exposure platform is the latest phase of our mission to redefine vulnerability management for the digital era...

This latest release follows the general availability of Predictive Prioritization in Tenable.sc(tm) (formerly SecurityCenter), making Tenable's Cyber Exposure platform the only one to provide predictive capabilities for on-premises and cloud deployments.

Ericsson, Swisscom launch Europe's first large-scale 5G network

STOCKHOLM: Telecom equipment manufacturer Ericsson said yesterday it had launched the first European large scale commercial 5G network together with Swiss operator Swisscom...

ment that the 5G network, launched in 54 cities in Switzerland, had been switched on just after midnight on April 17, after Swisscom secured a license to operate a 5G network in the country.

Ericsson made the announcement as it reported a first quarter net profit of 2.4 billion kronor (\$260 million, 230 million euros), compared to a net loss of 725 million kronor in the corresponding quarter a year ago...

Chief executive Borje Ekholm said growth had primarily been driven by sales in North America.

'To date we have publicly announced commercial 5G deals with 18 named operator customers, which, at the moment, is more than any other vendor,' Ekholm said in a statement. — AFP

Basque Country boosts fragile Spanish economy

ELGOIBAR, Spain: At his factory in Elgoibar in Spain's northern Basque Country, Pello Rodriguez stops before an imposing machine tool that is used to shape metal for products such as engines and fridges.

Machine tooling is speciality of this mountainous and thickly forested industrialized region, prospering even as economic growth in Spain, which will hold early elections on April 28, has begun to slow.

At Rodriguez's feet there are several boxes marked with Chinese characters with train wheel-axles. A client has sent them to test a machine that will be used to adjust with precision these heavy pieces of metal once it is installed at a factory in China...

Unemployment is Spaniards' top concern. But the Basque Country, which is also home to top auto parts makers and renewable energy firms, has the lowest unemployment rate in Spain at 9.58 percent, compared with 14.45 percent nationally...

Looking abroad Elgoibar, a town of 11,600 resi-

dents nestled in a verdant valley in the heart of the Basque Country, even has a museum dedicated to machine tools, which recounts the long history of the region's industrialization.

Danobatgroup is the only company that makes certain metal parts and has customers in the auto, energy, oil-and-gas, rail and aeronautics sector.

'We look for niches which have barriers to entry for our competitors,' said Rodriguez. This is why he is not worried about political instability in Spain, which is likely to continue after the elections as polls show no party is likely to win a majority...

Spain's outgoing Socialist government predicts the economy will expand 2.2 percent this year, down from 2.6 percent in 2018 and 3.0 percent in 2017. 'We export more than 90 percent of our production, we are much more concerned by Brexit, if the Chinese economic growth picks up or not, or if the auto sector will move towards electric vehicles,' he said.

'Virtually everything we make here goes abroad,' said Agustin Anitua, the commercial director at the

Lanbi Group, which supplies steering wheels and suspension machines for companies such as French auto maker Renault.

Ecosystem

Thanks to a well-established ecosystem, Lanbi can outsource part of its business to a plethora of local suppliers of components and tools.

Lanbi's turnover has doubled in the past five years thanks to greater specialisation and the use of more advanced robotics although it has noticed 'a deceleration' in activity among its customers due to a slowdown in the global economy, he added.

The firm, which employs 60 people, benefits from the organization of the economy in the Basque Country around 'clusters' of companies that focus on a certain sector.

This allows it to test its machines at a nearby technological center while a university institute in Elgoibar which specializes in machine tools provides training for employees in new technologies such as data collection and analysis.



Machine tooling is a speciality of the Spanish Basque region. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Table of exchange rates for AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO., EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES, ASIAN COUNTRIES, GCC COUNTRIES, and ARAB COUNTRIES.

Table of exchange rates for DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD, listing Rate for Transfer and Selling Rate for various currencies.

Table of exchange rates for BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY, listing CURRENCY, BUY, and SELL rates.

Table of exchange rates for various international currencies including Chinese Yuan, Hong Kong Dollar, Indian Rupee, etc.

Business

Five million lost jobs in India between 2016 and 2018

Young urban men are being hit hardest: Report

NEW DELHI: At least five million Indians lost their jobs between 2016 and 2018, and young urban men are being hit hardest, a Bengaluru-based private university said in a report on Tuesday. The report by the Azim Premji University comes as Indians are voting in a staggered general election, which is due to end on May 19, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government keen to defend its economic record, including on jobs.

"In addition to rising open unemployment among the higher educated, the less educated (and likely informal) workers have also seen job losses and reduced work opportunities since 2016," said Amit Basole, an economist and lead author of the report.

The report did not say how many jobs were created during the period. Modi's abrupt withdrawal of high value currency notes from circulation in November 2016, with the aim of curbing tax evasion and promoting digital transactions, disrupted small businesses and sparked layoffs.

The introduction of a national sales tax the following year compounded difficulties for some businesses. The unemployed were mostly higher educated and young people, in the 20-24 age range, according to the study titled "State of Working India 2019".

"Among urban men, for example, this age group accounts for 13.5 percent of the working age population but 60 percent of the unemployed," it said. Modi has faced criticism for not doing enough to create jobs for millions of unemployed young people despite official annual economic growth of about 7 percent for the past five years. An official survey that the government withheld showed unemployment rose to its highest level in at least 45 years in 2017/18, the Business Standard newspaper reported in February.

The unemployment rate rose to 7.2 percent in February 2019, its highest since September 2016, and up from 5.9 percent in February 2018, according to data compiled by the private research house, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). The report suggested the next government should consider an urban employment guarantee scheme to create jobs, build infrastructure and provide services. India has a rural jobs guarantee program, launched in 2006, which offers work to about 70 million rural people at the minimum wage for 100 days a year. "India is at a crucial juncture in its economic development where timely public investment and public policy can reap huge rewards," Basole said. — Reuters



AMRITSAR: Indian laborers unload bananas from a truck in Amritsar on Monday. — AFP

Oil hits 2019 high above \$72 on China growth, US inventories

LONDON: Brent oil hit a 2019 high above \$72 a barrel yesterday, propelled by steady economic growth in China and a fall in US crude stocks which defied expectations and signaled firm demand, while global supply remained tight.

International benchmark Brent crude futures were up 34 cents, or 0.47 percent, at \$72.06 by 1130 GMT, having hit an intraday peak of \$72.27.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$64.38 per barrel, up 33 cents or 0.52 percent and just shy of a 2019 high of \$64.79 hit last week. China's economy grew by 6.4 percent in the first quarter, official data showed, defying expectations for a further slowdown and assuaging global markets as a US-

China trade deal also appears near.

Refinery throughput in China - the world's second-largest crude user - rose 3.2 percent in March from a year earlier to 12.49 million barrels per day (bpd). "The demand side of the equation got a substantial fillip via today's China data suggesting prices will continue to move higher on improving global growth and risk sentiment," said Stephen Innes, head of trading at SPI Asset Management.

Prices have been supported this year by a pact reached by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, including Russia—a group known as OPEC+ — to limit their oil output by 1.2 million bpd. Global supply has been tightened further by US sanctions on OPEC members Venezuela and Iran. Iran's crude exports have dropped in April to their lowest daily level this year, tanker data showed and industry sources said, suggesting a drawdown in buyer interest ahead of expected further pressure from Washington. "Buyers are shying away in view of US policy uncertainty regarding waivers to import Iranian crude oil," BNP Paribas strategist Harry Tchilinguirian told the Reuters Global Oil Forum. — Reuters

Germany further slashes 2019 growth forecast

BERLIN: Berlin halved its economic growth forecast for 2019 yesterday as Europe's largest economy cools off, but ministers are unlikely to bend to foreign demands to boost activity with extra government spending.

"The federal government expects an increase of 0.5 percent in gross domestic product (GDP) this year and 1.5 percent" in 2020, economy minister Peter Altmaier told a press conference in Berlin.

"The German economy has not yet overcome the weakening in the economic upturn" that had been visible until mid-2018, he added, although "over the remainder of the year there are prospects of a significant recovery." It is the second downgrade in a row, after Altmaier's January prediction of 1.0 growth for

2019 was 0.8 points lower than an autumn forecast.

Global factors including slowing trade, Brexit and US President Donald Trump's commercial confrontations with Europe and China have hit the eurozone powerhouse particularly hard.

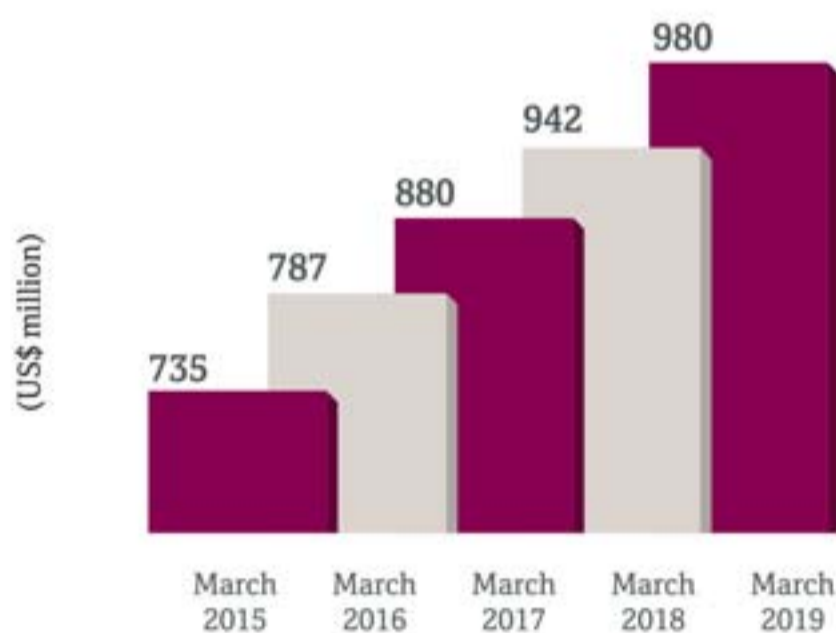
And a string of local one-off factors including tough new emissions tests on car manufacturers and a drought that lowered water levels in the Rhine inland waterway, put a brake on activity.

But more structural challenges are also present, including an ageing population and a chronic lack of public investment in infrastructure and high-tech innovations. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its April economic outlook, repeated its long-running call for Germany to spend its way out of a downturn.

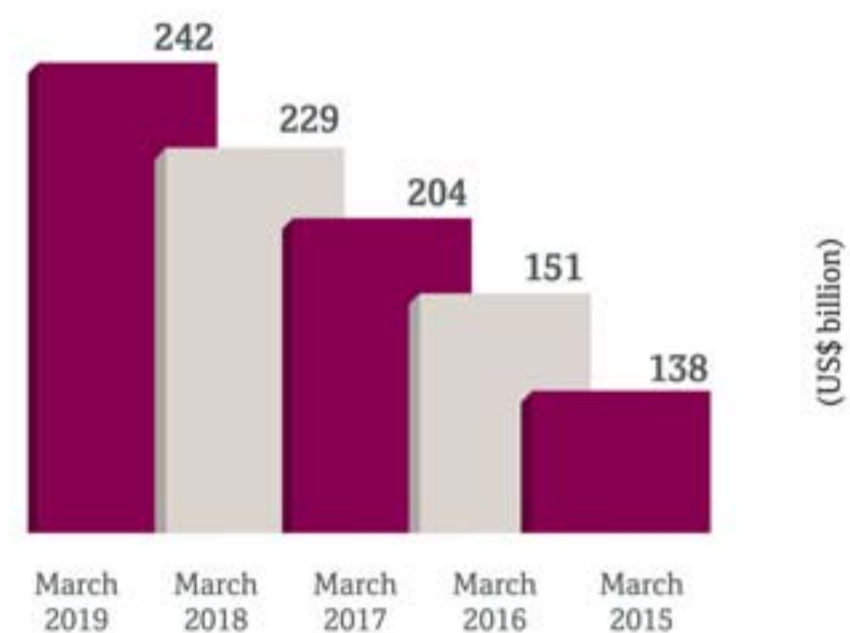
To avoid the German slowdown contaminating the rest of the eurozone, "the available fiscal space can be used to increase public investment in physical and human capital or reduce the labor tax wedge", the IMF judged. The Washington-based fund also slashed the country's growth forecast to 0.8 percent, in line with domestic bodies such as Berlin's "Wise Men" council of economic advisers and leading think-tanks. — AFP

QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the MEA region, continues to deliver strong results for the first quarter in 2019

Net Profit US\$980 million, up 4% on March 2018



Total Assets US\$242 billion, up 6% on March 2018



QNB Group delivers strong financial results for the three months ended 31 March 2019.

- QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the MEA region, is currently present in more than 31 countries across three continents
- QNB Group is supported by 30,000 staff serving more than 24 million customers through 1,100 locations and 4,400 ATMs
- QNB Group credit rating is one of the highest among top tier banks: Capital Intelligence AA-, Fitch A+, Moody's Aa3, Standard & Poor's A

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Business

FBCG, PwC publish guide on managing shareholder exits in family businesses

We are happy to help families develop sustainable governance: Alghanim

DUBAI: Family Business Council - Gulf (FBCG), a regional association of the Family Business Network (FBN) has launched a guide in cooperation with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to help family businesses in the Middle East successfully plan and navigate scenarios of shareholder exit in the family business.

For family-owned businesses in the Middle East, and the GCC in particular, handover from the first to the second generation, and increasingly from the second to the third generation can present unique challenges, which can have tremendous implications on the sustainability and growth of many of the region's largest companies. The newly published guide provides a roadmap through succession challenges, and is designed to help family businesses navigate potential divergence and differences in family members' interests and goals, understand the opportunities and challenges of the shareholder exit process, and plan for an optimized outcome that preserves both business continuity and family unity.

Chairman of Family Business Council - Gulf, Omar K Alghanim spoke on FBCG's role in sharing best practices for family-owned businesses operating in the region. He said: "Family members choosing to leave a business can be a sensitive topic for all involved, and many will overlook it until it's unfortunately too late. Both FBCG and PwC have conducted studies telling us that while in the last two years, family businesses have improved their commitment to documenting their policies in writing, only 31 percent of businesses have a robust, documented succession plan in place, and only 33 percent have effective governance policies in place. At FBCG, we are happy to play our part in developing our regional knowledge base on this topic, to help families develop sustainable governance and business models and contribute to the economy in the best way we can."

The surveys, which were conducted across the Gulf and the Middle East, also revealed that despite being aware of the challenges and sensitivities involved, many family businesses do not have adequate plans in place to address shareholder exits. This absence of essential documentation can often leave room for ambiguity and complication for those looking to address challenges or conflicts in family dynamics.

PwC Partner and private business leader Imad Shahrouri, spoke on the partnership between PwC and the Family Business Council - Gulf as a whole, commenting: "We recognize that family businesses have always been an engine for growth and their success translates into prosperity for the Middle East region. Family businesses show higher profitability in the long run and have a more long-term strategic outlook. Our goal is to help family businesses maintain their values and legacy while unlocking their maximum



Omar K Alghanim

Graphic 1:

Only **31%** of businesses have a robust, documented and communicated succession plan in place, with only 12% making it to the 3rd generation - Source: PwC



Graphic 2:

Less than **33%** of large family businesses in the GCC region have effective policies and practices in place to govern the family business. Families lack policies addressing challenging family dynamics and common conflict areas - Source: FBCG



potential to achieve a competitive advantage in times of transformation." Amin Nasser, PwC's senior advisor on Middle East private and family business, remarking that "The unique dynamics of family-owned businesses become particularly apparent in the case of a family member deciding to leave the business. Navigating an exit process can be a challenge and common cause for family conflict. We worked with FBCG to develop a brief yet comprehensive overview of the process, so that family businesses are prepared to create a healthy exit process by setting family constitutions and documentation that allows the business' future to remain intact while balancing financial security and personal freedoms for all family members."

The publication will be available in April 2019 on respective company websites, and will provide family businesses with guidance on developing the necessary plans for governance, legalization and enforcement, and corporate structure, identifying ideal right exit routes, committing to transparency and communication, and taking advantage of expert advice on moving forward. The Family Business Council - Gulf (FBCG) is a private not for profit organization aiming to strengthen family business governance and ensure their continuity over generations. The council seeks to identify and address issues unique to the GCC region through research, education, capacity development, and networking among peers. FBCG is a member of a worldwide organization - the Family Business Network International (FBN) - the largest global network 'by families, for families' representing leading family businesses all over the world.

- Governance:** Having the proper governance framework in place is the guideline that can help a business navigate an exit process smoothly. This framework can be provided in the family protocols or family constitution and can include a valuation methodology that is agreed by shareholders.
- Legalization and enforcement:** It is strongly recommended that governance frameworks are made legally binding and indisputable through the memorandum of association and shareholders' agreement.
- Corporate structure:** Designing a strategic corporate structure to allow ownership and exit at a central level, i.e. a holding or sub-holding company where there are different business streams.
- Right exit route:** Understanding and aligning the motivations and goals of the family, the business and the departing shareholder help identify the right exit route and the right way forward.
- Transparency:** Achieving transparency in a necessary yet comfortable level is key for a family business to ensure they have access to the most suitable investment options.
- Communication:** A clear communication strategy and a defined change management process during the transition phase can provide a smooth journey into a new status quo.
- Advisors:** Finally, the support of the right qualified professional service advisors can help family businesses maximise the value they are looking for.

ABK debuts merchant loyalty program in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), has partnered with Emirates Skywards, the award-winning loyalty program of Emirates airline and flydubai, to launch the 'Skywards Miles on POS' program that gives ABK merchants the opportunity to earn Skywards Miles when customers use their ABK Emirates Visa cards on the ABK Point of Sale (POS) machine. This makes ABK the first bank in Kuwait to introduce an innovative program that benefits merchants, and provides them with an additional channel for increasing their earnings and rewards.

Leveraging its 17-year relationship with Emirates Skywards, ABK has designed the unique 'Skywards Miles on POS' program to be advantageous for both its merchants as well as its customers. ABK's merchant network consists of over 4,000 merchants and 8,000 active POS terminals across Kuwait. Under the new program, ABK merchants can earn three Skywards Miles for every KD 1 spent on the Bank's POS machine by a customer using ABK Emirates Visa cards. Additionally, the bank has also created a new dedicated web page on eahli.com where merchants can learn about the latest offers.

Stewart Lockie, General Manager of ABK Retail Banking stated "ABK's 'Skywards Miles on POS' program was developed to strengthen the Bank's relationship with its merchants by providing a simple and unique opportunity to earn Skywards Miles. The first and only loyalty rewards program for merchants within Kuwait."

Tariq Almutawa, Emirates' Country Manager, Kuwait said, "The Emirates Skywards program is constantly evolving to provide its members with a wider range of opportunities to earn and spend Skywards Miles. We are excited to work with Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait to roll out this one of a kind program in Kuwait which allows both the merchants as well as the consumers to earn Skywards Miles."

ABK merchants with an Al-Tajer or a personal current account and a valid ABK Emirates Visa Signature card are eligible to enroll in the 'Skywards Miles on POS' program. ABK customers holding an ABK Emirates Visa Infinite card or ABK Emirates Visa Signature card are automatically eligible to earn one extra Skywards Mile for every KD 1 spent in addition to the usual Miles earned when they use their cards at any ABK POS terminal. The Skywards Miles earned through the program can be redeemed for reward flights and upgrades on Emirates, flydubai and other global partner airlines. Emirates Skywards members can also earn and redeem Skywards Miles through over 100 program partners including hotels and retail and lifestyle outlets across the world.



Rado's new take on a 1960s classic has hidden depths

LENGNAU, Switzerland: Since 1957, Rado has been producing watches designed to stand the test of time and, since the launch of the Golden Horse in 1958, to stand the test of the elements when water-resistant watches were far from the norm.

Building on this base, 1962 saw the introduction of an early diver's model that now makes a welcome comeback to the Rado collection in a reimagined version that is true to the look and feel of the original.

The Captain Cook MKII was first launched with an impressive 22 bar (220m) water resistance rating and an inner turning bezel capable of measuring up to 80 minutes of elapsed dive time. The reimagined Captain Cook MKII, retains these impressive features, whilst incorporating a whole lot more.

At first glance the Captain Cook MKII bears an uncanny resemblance to the 1962 original, with its red and white inner bezel

and natural coloured Super-LumiNova dots. On closer inspection however, the matt black dial and sleek rhodium coloured dial elements update the Captain Cook MKII for the twenty-first century.

Ready to dive into any challenge

Durable and versatile, the MKII features an easy-change strap system. This allows the wearer to change between the seven-row 'rice grain', polished stainless steel bracelet and the black NATO strap. It's a feature that makes the MKII a timepiece capable of slipping from on-duty to off-duty in a matter of seconds.

The changes to the new Captain Cook MKII are not only on the surface. Rado could not resist applying some contemporary touches to the 2018 MKII. The much loved metallised anchor in the dial now sits within a sapphire crystal.

Super-LumiNova painted applied indexes ensure optimum readability in even the most challenging conditions. And, with the quality Swiss automatic movement featuring up to 80 hours of power reserve, the MKII is ready to dive into any challenge.

With style and substance true to the original and with the readability and wearability of a twenty-first century timepiece, the Rado Captain Cook MKII has hidden depths.



Adeeb Ahamed, MD, Twenty14 Holdings with Lord Marland of Odstock, Chairman of Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) in London. Adeeb Ahamed was recently nominated to the prestigious CWEIC Global Advisory Council.

Ooredoo launches Huawei P30 and P30 Pro with Shamel

KUWAIT: In its consistent stride in providing customers with the best and most innovative products in the fast-paced telecom industry, Ooredoo launched the all new Huawei P30 last week across its branches with exclusive offers from Shamel starting at KD23 per month and include unlimited Ooredoo minutes, unlimited SMS, 500 local minutes, and 30GB internet.

The launch of the Huawei P30 and P30 Pro devices comes to reiterate Ooredoo's commitment to providing its customers with the newest products and the best offers. The Huawei P30 and Huawei P30 Pro deliver true innovation and break-

through technology, which is portrayed by taking mobile AI to the next level by creating synergy between chipsets, devices, and the cloud to ultimately deliver an intelligent, immersive experience across all user settings and stand out as a global iconic tech brand.

The Huawei P30 has an array of exciting features which include a revolutionary New Leica Triple Camera system, more power and efficiency, and The HUAWEI SuperCharge with TÜV Safety certification. The new Leica Triple Camera powered by AI reveals life's drama, texture, colour and beauty in every photograph.

Warba Bank to hold Al-Sunbula draw today

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, will be organizing its weekly Sunbula draw number 15 today at 11 am in presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Bank officials.

Al-Sunbula both account and fixed deposits are the perfect choices for customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while at the same time gain the opportunity to win prizes throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than KD 1 million. In the running campaign, Warba Bank con-

tinued its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each throughout the year, yet introduce the "Mega Draws" that take place on a quarterly basis to reveal five winners, the 1st winner gets KD 100,000 in cash! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest 2019 Land Cruiser 5.7 VXR. And more, as the last mega draw will give away 2 more Land Cruisers!

As per the winning chances, each customer will be participating in the draw for each KD 10 in the Sunbula Account. It is also worth noting that the Sunbula fixed deposit rewards its investor with both high expected returns, reaching up to 3.5 percent, as well as winning chances. And such investors have full flexibility in choosing the desired tenure and the profit distribution method.

Furthermore, Warba Bank is leveraging on its Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request the opening of Al-Sunbula account in a simple electronic manner without having to visit the branch, through 5 simple steps in 5 minutes.

China growth beats forecasts as economy shows signs of stability

BEIJING: China's economy expanded more than expected in the first three months of the year as government moves to kickstart growth helped offset weak global demand and a US trade war, data showed yesterday.

The 6.4 percent reading was the latest in a string of figures indicating the world's number-two economy and key driver of global growth is stabilizing after decelerating every quarter last year, though officials warned of headwinds. "The national economy enjoyed stable performance with growing positive factors, and stronger market expectation and confidence," said National Bureau of Statistics spokesman Mao Shengyong.

"Given slowing global economic growth and international trade, increasing international uncertainties and prominent domestic structural issues, the task of reform and development is arduous and downward pressure on the economy persists," said Mao. Top policymakers in Beijing last month unveiled a number of major plans to support the flagging economy with massive tax cuts, fee reductions, and financing support.

Officials pressed on with the drive to shift China to a more sustainable growth model, strengthened policies to counter the downturn and "spared no effort to put the policies into effect", said Mao. Beijing faces a delicate balancing act as it tries to support businesses in need of credit, without further inflating its debt balloon.

A strong March

New credit flooded into the financial system last month, with the growth of bank loans and total outstanding credit accel-

ating-thanks to measures to boost lending-though analysts say it will take about six months to spark a full economic turnaround.

"The better-than-expected (first quarter) figures reflect a strong March," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a note, adding seasonal factors could have contributed to the uptick.

"With credit growth now accelerating and sentiment improving, China's economy will bottom out before long if it hasn't already," he said. The government lowered its growth target for China this year to 6.0-6.5 percent, having chalked up its slowest pace for almost three decades in 2018.

However, while growth remains relatively slow, the crucial unemployment rate remains low and fell to 5.2 percent in March from 5.3 percent in February. Beijing is counting on consumers and renewed investment to stabilize the economy. The latest data showed retail sales for March rose 8.7 percent on-year after stagnating at 15-year lows for three months, though data Friday revealed imports plunged in the first quarter, feeding worries about weak demand.

And infrastructure spending expanded 4.4 percent in the first three months, sharply up from 3.8 percent last year when the government stepped up a campaign against debt and financial risk.

PBoC stimulus 'caution'

The broader fixed-asset investment indicator rose 6.3 percent for the first three months of the year, from 6.1 percent in January-February. Output growth at China's factories and workshops in March shot up 8.5 percent, from 5.3 percent in the first two months, well above forecasts.

The figures come after a number of positive indicators on the economy, including improving factory activity and inflation, pointing to a brighter outlook. "From Beijing's perspective, this set of data should show that the policy reset in mid-2018 from de-leverage to growth support is starting to yield results," said Tai Hui, chief market strategist for Asia-Pacific at JP Morgan Asset Management. — AFP

What's On

Burgan Bank offers customers the chance to watch 'Avengers: Endgame' movie for free

Burgan Bank, in collaboration with Grand Cinemas, announced that its Youth Customers will be offered the exclusivity to watch the first screening of the new movie 'Avengers: Endgame' for free at the luxurious movie theatre of Grand Cinemas located in Al Hamra Luxury Centre. The movie screening will be held on Thursday April, 25th, 2019, wherein each customer is entitled to two free tickets on one of the two shows, at 5:30 pm or 8:30 pm.

To book the free seats, Youth Account Holders are required to visit Grand Cinemas box office in Al Hamra Luxury Centre and present their Youth ATM card. The bank strives to reward its Youth account holders with exclusive offers that fits their lifestyle. The Youth Account is dedicated for young individuals, between the ages of 15 to 25, and who seek to attain a successful future. Furthermore, account holders receive free pre-paid MasterCard and an ATM card which entitles them to discounts at selective merchants along with an exclusive discount at Grand Cinemas Theatres.

Free tickets exclusively for "Youth" account customers

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COSTO: The revolutionary retail chain expands its wings

Costo retail chain has announced the opening of their second store in Kuwait after the successful run of their pilot store in Khaitan. Costo Khaitan has received phenomenal response from customers from day one of their operations. Costo has shortlisted Fahaeel for their second store. Situated in the basement floor of Al Rtaj Tower, Mecca Street, the store will celebrate a grand opening on Saturday, April 20th 2019 at 4:30 pm

COSTO is a customer driven purchase store where customer feedbacks determine the future products in the store. Giving customers the delight to buy exactly what they want, be it any brand or product. Additionally everyday will have new deals to keep customers excited at all times. The Fahaeel store spread over 11,000 sq/ft, unlike normal supermarkets and hypermarkets will feature a limited set of products across categories that caters to all necessary needs of a customer.

Costo is part of Regency Group which is among the foremost retail players in GCC region. The best price for customers is made possible as the group has its own sourcing centers in Turkey, China, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. This ensures the best quality products reach customers in minimum time at the lowest prices.

The concept of Costo was arrived after a lot of in-depth research done by group's internal research along with consultants from Europe and Turkey. Team Costo is in fact delighted that they chose Kuwait to launch this retail brand as customer response has been overwhelming which has further strengthened their belief in this revolutionary retail concept.

Costo stores Managing Director Dr Anver Ameen has stated that the vision of Costo is to be the preferred retailer providing anything from Fresh, Food & Non Food, butchery, household, fashion, footwear, electronics, mobiles and laptops at world class quality at best possible prices. Perishable goods, farm produces and meat are exclusively flown in from around the globe on daily basis to offer uncompromised quality standards. In order to achieve their mission of reaching every customer, the promoters, Regency Group, aim to spread this retail store in all the major areas of Kuwait. 3rd store is all set to open before the end of this month, further details will be revealed after Fahaeel store opening.



GUST recognizes honor students at awards ceremony

GUST hosted an award ceremony this week honoring their top students, who were inducted into the Dean's List of both the College of Business Administration and the College of Arts and Sciences. In total, 168 students were recognized for their achievement of maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.5 and above. The ceremony was attended by GUST President, Professor Walid Bouhamra, the Deans of both Colleges, Prof Antonis Simintiras and Prof Ali Ansari, the Dean of Student Affairs, Dr Raghad Al Kazemi, the Colleges' department heads, faculty, students, and their parents. GUST President, Prof Walid Bouhamra, said, "Our role as educators is not only

to push our students beyond their comfort zones, but to also encourage them to do so. Seeing so many people on stage this afternoon gives me an overwhelming sense of delight and pride."

GUST, as a university, constantly strives to provide its students with all the tools they need for success. The College of Arts and Sciences' Mass Communication and Media Department was recently awarded a full accreditation by the American Communications Association (ACA). Its Computer Science major has been accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), and the quality of the program is evident in our students winning 1st place at the Gulf Programming Contest in 2017. Recently, the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research (CTLR) was launched to provide workshops for not only GUST faculty, but Kuwait school teachers as well. The university tirelessly works on ensuring the best faculty and curriculum for its students through these accreditations and community projects.

The Palestine Heritage exhibition launched at the Women Social & Cultural Society on Tuesday. The event was attended by the Palestinian Ambassador Rami Tahboub and his wife.

Embassy announcement

On the occasion of Easter Holiday, the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa will be closed on Sunday, 21st April 2019. Work will be resumed on Monday, 22nd April 2019 and working hours will be from 8:00am to 16:00pm. Consular section operations hours will be from 8:30am to 12:30pm. For emergencies please contact number 94924895".

Health

Germany reopens painful debate on assisted suicide

KARLSRUHE: Germany's highest court yesterday began hearing a case brought by terminally ill patients and doctors against a law banning professional assisted suicide services, reopening a bitter debate. Lawmakers had passed the so-called Paragraph 217 in November 2015, which penalizes anyone who turns assisted suicide into a professional service — with or without payment. But a Leipzig administrative court's ruling two years later raised questions about the law, as judges found that in extreme cases, the authorities could not refuse life-ending medication to terminally ill patients.

The contradictory signals have fuelled renewed debate on an issue that has huge resonance in a fast-ageing country where the Church still exerts strong influence. It is also a particularly sensitive subject in Germany as the Nazis had used what they called "euthanasia" to exterminate around 200,000 disabled people.

Opening the hearing at the Federal Constitutional Court on Tuesday, chief judge Andreas Voßkuhle said the case is "not about the moral or political assessment of suicide and its impact on society... but is focused alone on the scope of freedom as limited by the threat of state prosecution under (Germany's) Basic Law." The latest challenge was brought by six plaintiffs among them terminally ill patients, doctors and

associations that provide support to people seeking assisted suicide.

In practice, the 2015 law means that a husband who helps his terminally ill wife to die would not be prosecuted. But an association or a business that repeatedly offers to help people die would face prosecution. The situation is also not so clear-cut for doctors who prescribe deadly cocktails to patients. In their case before the constitutional court, the patients argue that their general personal right extends to their right to a self-determined death. The medical practitioners are meanwhile seeking legal certainty in cases when they are required to prescribe palliative medication.

'Right to self-determined death'

Doctor Matthias Thoens told the DPA news agency that since the law came into force, he has been worried he could be charged if any of his patients were to abuse the palliative drugs he had prescribed. "If someone took his own life without my knowledge or will, I'd be the subject of an investigation," he said. But he said he had brought the challenge also because he felt it would be "criminal to leave such patients on their own".

As his fellow plaintiff and doctor, Michael de Ridder, wrote in the weekly Die Zeit: "There is not only a right to life, but also a right to self-determined death."

The associations among the plaintiffs meanwhile charge that the law has essentially also banned them from being there to support their members in their last days.

Ahead of the hearing, the Catholic Church piled on the pressure, with Berlin's Archbishop Heiner Koch warning the court against "shifting the value system" in Germany. The court should "send a strong signal for the protection of lives", he told the Funke newspaper group. Amid the controversy, the authorities were also waiting for the court to deliver clarity. Since the Leipzig court's ruling in 2017, more than 100 applicants have written the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices for medication to end their lives.

Under Health Minister Jens Spahn's order, none of the applications has been approved pending the latest court challenge. "Anything else would mean that bureaucrats, or in the end I as a minister, would decide who gets to die with state help and who doesn't," Spahn told the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung daily. Euthanasia is officially legal in only three countries in Europe — the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg — but others allow or tolerate a form of assisted suicide. In Switzerland, as well as in the US states of Vermont, Oregon and Washington for example, assisted suicide is legal. — AFP

Malaysia arrests poachers, seizes tiger and bear parts

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian authorities have arrested two suspected poachers from Vietnam and seized body parts from tigers and bears, a minister said yesterday, as the country clamps down on rampant wildlife trafficking. The Southeast Asian nation is home to swathes of jungle and a kaleidoscope of rare creatures from elephants to orangutans and tigers, but they are frequently targeted by poachers.

Two Vietnamese men, aged 25 and 29, were arrested Monday by a wildlife enforcement team in a national park in eastern Terengganu state, said Xavier Jayakumar, water, land and natural resources minister. The men were in possession of claws and teeth from the Malayan tiger, he said. The species once roamed the jungles of Malaysia in the thousands but is now critically endangered, with just a small number believed left in the wild.

They also had teeth and claws from bears, teeth from wild boars, as well as hunting equipment including machetes, axes and wire for setting traps, the minister said. "The two suspects have been arrested and will be remanded for three days to assist in the investigation," he said. Tiger pelts are prized collectors' items and fetch a high price on the black market, while many animals' body parts are used in traditional medicines in parts of Asia, including Vietnam and China. — AFP

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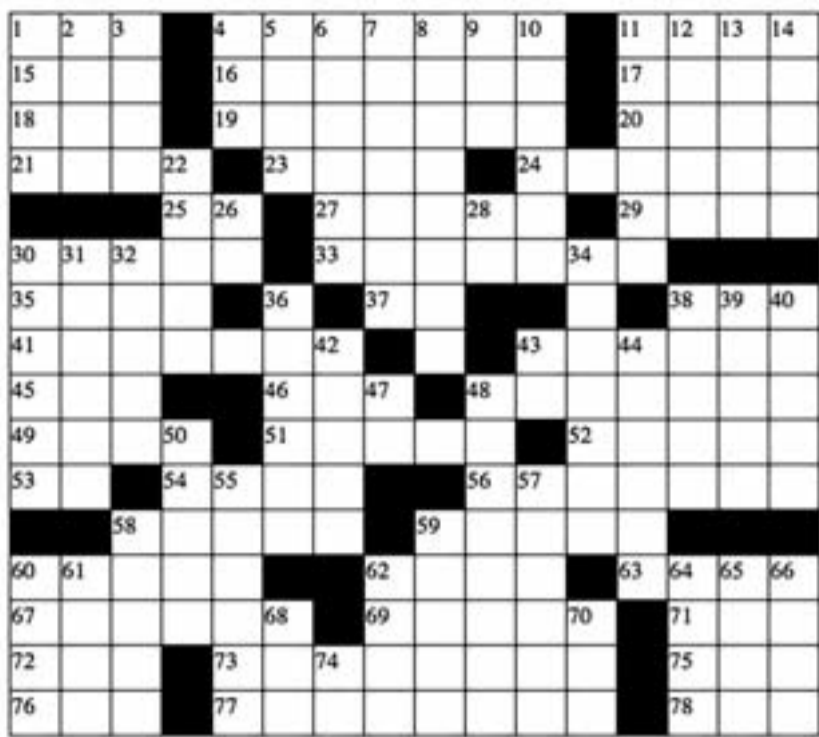
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2186



ACROSS

1. Characteristic of a mob.
4. One species.
11. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
15. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
16. A stiff protective garment worn by hockey players or a catcher in baseball to protect the shins.
17. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for aviation and spaceflight.
18. Having leadership guidance.
19. The official published verbatim report of the proceedings of a parliamentary body.
20. (of persons) Highest in rank or authority or office.
21. Singing jazz.
23. Massive plantigrade carnivorous or omnivorous mammals with long shaggy coats and strong claws.
24. City in northern Austria on the Danube.
25. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
27. A yellow pungent volatile oil (trade name Agene) formerly used for bleaching and aging flour.
29. The seventh month of the Hindu calendar.
30. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).
33. A painted or carved screen placed above and behind an altar or communion table.
35. Constituting a copy or imitation of something.
37. A state in New England.
41. A member of the Mayan people of the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico.
45. Any of various dark heavy viscous substances obtained as a residue.
46. The federal agency that insures residential mortgages.
49. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
51. A ballroom dance of Latin-American origin.
52. Realistic Norwegian author who wrote plays on social and political themes (1828-1906).
53. Being one more than fifty.
54. (old-fashioned) At or from or to a great distance.
56. Elongate very slender water scorpions.
60. Especially a leaf of grass or the broad portion of a leaf as distinct from the petiole.
63. Long green edible beaked pods of the okra plant.
67. The process of remembering (especially the process of recovering information by mental effort).
69. Of or relating to the hyoid bone n.
71. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
72. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
73. (euphemistic) "he is deceased".
75. A master's degree in fine arts.
76. An adherent of any branch of Taoism.
77. Having no sole.
78. A unit of pressure.

DOWN

1. A master's degree in library science.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. English monk and scholar (672-735).
4. A hormone secreted by the anterior pituitary gland that controls the degree of pigmentation in melanocytes.
5. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
6. (mathematics) Directly proportional.
7. United States chemist (born in Norway) noted for his work in thermodynamics (1903-1976).
8. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
9. The month following February and preceding April.
10. (of eggs) No longer edible.
11. A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
12. A game in which darts are thrown at a dartboard.
13. (computer science) American Standard Code for Information Interchange.
14. United States naval officer and historian (1840-1914).
22. A form of Japanese poetry.
26. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
28. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
31. Large South American evergreen tree trifoliate leaves and drupes with nutlike seeds used as food and a source of cooking oil.
32. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
34. Egg-shaped terra-cotta wind instrument with a mouthpiece and finger holes.
36. An oral cephalosporin (trade names Keflex and Keflin and Keftab) commonly prescribe for mild to moderate-severe infections of the skin or ears or throat or lungs or urinary tract.
38. Painter (born in Germany, resident of France and the United States) who was a cofounder of Dadaism.
39. Binary compound that occurs at room temperature as a clear colorless odorless tasteless liquid.
40. (possibly Roman) Goddess of horses and mules and asses.
42. Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
43. Conforming to truth.
44. Island in West Indies.
47. An associate degree in nursing.
48. (botany) Of a cylindrical or ellipsoid body.
50. English monk and scholar (672-735).
55. United States comedian and film actor (1880-1946).
57. An alliance of nations joining together to fight a common enemy.
58. Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
59. Ox of southeast Asia sometimes considered a domesticated breed of the gaur.
61. A Russian river.
62. Clarified butter used in Indian cookery.
64. God of love and erotic desire.
65. A flat float (usually made of logs or planks) that can be used for transport or as a platform for swimmers.
66. The biblical name for ancient Syria.
68. A zodiacal constellation in northern hemisphere between Cancer and Virgo.
70. A doctor's degree in dental surgery.
74. Being ten more than one hundred forty.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Independence is the order of the day. This includes independent thinking which some of your workmates might find alarming because they're stuck in the mundane. You're doing your research though and can back up your fundamental ideas. A nice business lunch might give you another birthday present today when a higher up praises you for those ideas. Enjoy the comradery but create a time to talk about implementing what you want for material success. Get together with friends and your lover for good informative communication on ideas you want to present at work. They'll give you the critical expertise you need to make your ideas better.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your independent spirit seems to have doubled today. You want it done your way but you're not opposed to learning something new. You may even find yourself teaching others on the job. This expansion of your intelligence makes you feel confident that you can do anything now and you can. Your day is filled with people asking, discussing and bringing you new ideas. Your thoughts turn to love and family throughout this day. If you're not married you may soon be or at least renewing the love that you need.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You have a pioneering spirit when you're teaching now and you find yourself doing that more often at work and at home. You want social interaction with those for whom you care. Take the time to make it so. Social functions give you a chance to explore new trends which you love. The staid has no place for you now, Gemini. Love is important. You have needs and you sense the needs of others too. Being involved makes your day go around. A new puppy may be in the air now. Wait a couple of days before you make your decision. In other words, keep thinking whether you'll have time for the responsibility.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your marriage if you have one means a lot to you now. If you aren't married then you may find that you're getting ready to be. The reason is you crave a person to love as only you can and be loved in return in that same manner. You may think of getting a pet with all the responsibility and unconditional love instead but that's not totally what you want. You want the leaning-on-each-other type love. You may also be making the choice to find a new occupation that is totally different from what you have now. It may involve children and teaching them independence. Whatever it is, Cancer, research before you move.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Changes need to be made. Otherwise you're likely to become very unhappy at home. Perhaps all it is may be buying a new home equipped the way you desire. People who live with you may want to discuss why you're unsatisfied with you and add their thoughts. You're looking for new outlets and new ways of living your life to the fullest. Without being able to make it your best life, you'll find you want a full change of residence. The status quo needs to change now because you're already feeling that dissatisfaction. Your more independent and pioneering spirit has you looking over traditions you've made and you don't like what you see. Now is the time to make it better.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Anything having to do with a pioneering spirit takes on more importance in your work life now and beyond. Perhaps you may decide to take a trip or do something that gets you away from the house or even way out of town. Freedom is on your mind. Exploring new places can give you the liberty to take chances you're unable to find close to your home. Really, you just need the change of pace. Seeing new places gives it, Virgo. You may feel you have to take this trip alone now just for the same change. Clear your head and discover your heart.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Unity is what you need from all who surround you. Harmony is your keyword now. Don't just act like you're getting along, get along needs to be your motto. There's a fine line here, Libra. Make sure you surround yourself with people who have these amazing attributes. In that way, you can work reliably and easily to accomplish your goals. Hasty decisions could result in missteps both at home and at work. You may find yourself apologizing or having to restart some decisions or words you've spoken harshly. Take your time and think with that quick mind of yours.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Social contact with those you love and even some you don't has a way of directing you to another direction in your life now. You're probably still thinking of the advice you gave younger people yesterday. It felt good, didn't it? Someone's work methods or attitudes, especially if a higher up, may send you towards a new work course even more quickly than you plan. That happens when, yet again, they disagree with your work methods. Refined attitudes mean more than money to you now, Scorpio, and when a boss shows gross neglect of that, you may be saying "Bye-Bye" to this job. Think before you leap.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You find yourself exploring new directions in your life now. This is good because you can become dissatisfied easily now. Perhaps you need a move to another state or even country. You may decide to teach subjects you're great in to students who aren't privy to what you're used to now. Sagittarius. Close personal ties might be the reason you're thinking about broadening your horizons. Teaching and communicating are exciting new ventures in your life. Also, being able to learn is highlighted as well. Go get it. Make your life better.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Here you go. Now it's getting good. New ideas and a pioneering mindset take over your life now. Thinking about becoming your own boss is minor in the scheme of things. Turn you loose and let you go. You can do anything. Think hard before you move with job related ideas though. You could be so caught up in the fact you want to move that you allow someone to talk you into an idea that may not be good for you in the long run, Capricorn. Talk to friends, neighbors, family and most importantly, your life's partner. They can help you make an informed decision or at least be a backboard for you to bounce ideas off.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A phase is entering your life now that has you seeking independence and pioneering thinking. This can be a time of making huge gains in the financial side of your life. Or, it can have you rubbing workers and authority figures in the wrong way. Be perceptive in how you use this time to garner what you need. When you're in social settings you're taking in all you hear. They may be part of the items making you take a different stroll down your working road of life. Aquarius. Be prepared for what comes. You want closer personal ties and they seem to be manifesting in the best possible manner.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You need harmony and beauty around you now. The lack of one of these qualities can send you over the edge but when it's both, Katy bar the door. Those closest to you could have you singing the blues if you're not careful to allow them their growth and stay away from letting upset become contagious. Hasty decisions could be made today both at work and at home. This isn't necessarily a good thing. Pisces. Try to keep an even keel when making a decision by putting your answer into stone today. You may have to reverse it and it may not be easy. Take some time to yourself this evening.

Wordsearch Puzzle

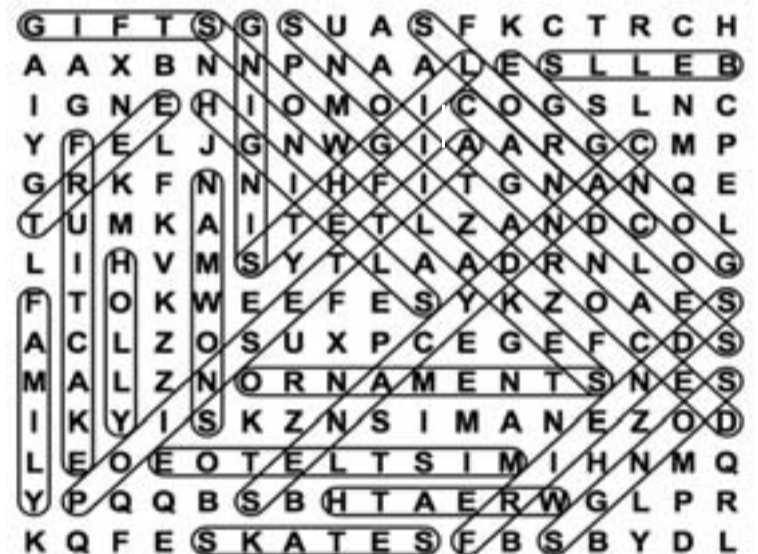
Comedy Movies 1 - Word Search



- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| ALL OF ME | GROUNDHOG DAY | PATCH ADAMS |
| ANIMAL HOUSE | HAPPY GILMORE | PLAZA SUITE |
| BANANAS | HARVEY | QUICK CHANGE |
| BIG | HITCH | STRIPES |
| BLUES BROTHERS | MANHATTAN | THE RUTLES |
| CAT BALLOU | MASH | TOOTSIE |
| CLERKS | MIDNIGHT RUN | ZOMBIELAND |
| GET SMART | MOONSTRUCK | |

Yesterday's Solution

Christmas Season - Solution



- | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|
| BELLS | FRIENDS | SINGING |
| CANDLES | FRUITCAKE | SKATES |
| CANDY | GIFTS | SLEIGH |
| CANES | HOLLY | SNOWFLAKES |
| CAROLS | LIGHTS | SNOWMAN |
| DECORATIONS | MISTLETOE | SONGS |
| EGGNOG | ORNAMENTS | TREE |
| FAMILY | POINSETTIA | WREATH |

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2019



This photograph taken on April 15, 2019 shows Miss Laos New Year or 'Nang Sang Khan' pageant winner Mila Douangximay (center) along with the other six chosen contestants, each symbolizing King Kabinlaphom's seven daughters, taking part in the annual Laos New Year or 'Pi Mai' celebrations at the Wat Xiengthong Buddhist temple in Luang Prabang. — AFP photos

BLESSED BEAUTIES: LAOS NEW YEAR PAGEANT PITS 'KING'S DAUGHTERS' AS RIVALS

Wearing gold-embroidered silk outfits, faces thick with makeup, a line-up of seven Laotian beauty queens greet a sea of cheering supporters at the annual new year beauty contest in Luang Prabang. But this is no regular pageant: the contestants are stand-ins for the seven blessed daughters of Laos' legendary heavenly King Kabinlaphom competing for top honors at the country's most famous beauty contest. "Everyone wants to be Miss Laos New Year," said spectator Kini, who was cheering on her sister, Mila Douangximay.

"If she wins she will be famous for a whole year! It's very special for Laos girls," Kini told AFP, standing in the massive crowd of cheering fans holding placards featuring numbers in support of their preferred competitors. Entering the contest is no easy feat. Contestants must be under 18 and are chosen by a local committee that first selects up to 30 girls. Numbers are then whittled down to seven contestants—all symbolizing the King's daughters—by a panel of judges and voting fans who size up the contestants on stage.

The pageant is a highlight of days-long Buddhist new year celebrations that draw thousands of worshippers and tourists to the normally sleepy city of Luang Prabang. The city is taken over by holiday events: elephants are paraded through the streets, sand stupas are carved on the banks of the Mekong River, and masked men dressed as the country's sacred protectors lead the main new year day procession. For many, the hottest ticket in town is the new year pageant, known as "Nang Sang Khan", where some fans who don't make it inside clamor to peek over fencing around the event.

Everyone gets a chance to see the girls again at the mainstay parade on new year day, when the girls are accompanied by bodyguards to walk to the shimmering golden Wat Xien Thong temple, one of Laos' oldest and most sacred, to make offerings. But only one winner will hold the honour after festivities die down, and she will spend the following 12 months making public appearances until the next blessed "daughter" takes over. As for Kini, her campaigning to see her sister win paid off:

Douangximay was crowned Miss Laos New Year at this year's pageant. "I feel very proud," a beaming Douangximay told AFP. — AFP



Miss Laos New Year or 'Nang Sang Khan' pageant winner Mila Douangximay (second left) along with the other chosen contestants, each symbolizing King Kabinlaphom's seven daughters.



A Miss Laos New Year or 'Nang Sang Khan' beauty pageant chosen contestant (center), symbolizing one of King Kabinlaphom's seven daughters.



Contestants dancing on stage during the annual Miss Laos New Year or 'Nang Sang Khan' beauty pageant in Luang Prabang.



Miss Laos New Year or 'Nang Sang Khan' pageant winner Mila Douangximay (center) along with the other six chosen contestants.



Ancient Christian manuscripts digitized at monastery beneath Mount Sinai

At St Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Egypt's Mount Sinai, the silence in the library is broken only by low electrical humming, as an early manuscript is bathed in green light. A team from Greece are photographing thousands of fragile manuscripts, including some of the earliest copies of the Christian gospels, using a complex process that includes taking images in red, green and blue light and merging them with computer software to create a single high-quality color picture. There is a tangible sense of urgency to the mission.

Although the monastery has survived centuries of warfare, it lies in a region where Islamist militants have destroyed countless cultural artifacts and documents in Syria and Iraq. Egypt's Christian churches have also been targeted by an Islamist insurgency in the rugged and thinly populated northern Sinai. "The Holy Monastery of the God-Trodden Mount Sinai" - which is part of the Eastern Orthodox church - lies in the safer southern half of the Sinai Peninsula. But in 2017, Islamic State claimed responsibility for an attack on a nearby Egyptian police checkpoint, in which one officer was killed.

"The upheaval of our times requires a rapid completion of this project," Archbishop Damianos of Sinai, Faran and Raitho, and Abbot of St. Catherine's Monastery, told Reuters by email. The aim is to create the first digital archive of all 4,500 manuscripts in the library, starting with around 1,100 in the Syriac and Arabic languages, which are particularly rare. The task could take more than a decade, using digital cameras and computer arrays alongside sophisticated cradles designed to support the more fragile manuscripts.

The project began last year and is being undertaken by the non-profit research organization Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL), in collaboration with the monastery and the Library of the University of California, Los Angeles. UCLA Library said it will start publishing the manuscripts online, in full color, from the fall of 2019. "This library is an archive of the history of Christianity and its neighbours in the Mediterranean world, and therefore is of interest to communities all over the world who find their history here," Michael Phelps, Director of the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library, told Reuters.

Where Moses trod

The monastery lies at the foot of Mount Sinai, by tradition the site where Moses received the Ten Commandments. UNESCO has listed the area as a World Heritage site, citing its sacred status in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. It says St. Catherine's was founded in the 6th century, and is the oldest Christian monastery still in use for its original function. The most famous manuscript in the library is the 4th century 'Codex Sinaiticus' - a Greek manuscript of the Bible which contains the oldest surviving complete New Testament. Its pages are divided between several institutions.

Another is the Codex Syriacus, an ancient copy of the Gospels in Syriac. Other manuscripts cover science, medicine and the Greek classics. The digitization of the first stage alone, the Syriac-Arabic manuscripts, will take around three years and cost a projected \$2.75 million, said Phelps.

"Throughout the centuries, monks have lived here in prayer, in dedication to spiritual goals, a witness to God's revelation to mankind... in that sense especially, the Sinai Monastery is an ark, a spiritual ark in the wilderness," said Father Justin of Sinai, the monastery's librarian. The project will provide a more complete record than partial microfilming carried out decades ago by the US Library of Congress, and also by the National Library of Israel. The two institutions are making their records available to the new digitization effort, the project organizers said. — Reuters



Morello agrees black hole should be named after Cornell

Tom Morello "would be happy" to add his name to the online petition calling for the recently photographed black hole to be named after his late Audioslave bandmate Chris Cornell. The Prophets of Rage star was the lead guitarist in the Soundgarden star's supergroup - completed by Tim Commerford and Brad Wilk - and he would love to see the supermassive black hole at the center of galaxy, which was seen for the first time ever last week after the Event Horizon Telescope shared their image, attributed to Chris who penned the hit song 'Black Hole Sun' in 1994. Asked if he'd like to support the campaign, Tom told Tennessee's Rock 105

WRXR radio station: "I heard that. I think that would be really nice. "I don't know who you send that petition to, but I'd be happy to officially add my name to that ... That seems absolutely appropriate." The single from Soundgarden's 'Superunknown' record was inspired by the Black Sun sculpture by Isamu Noguchi, which is located in the late grunge star's home city of Seattle's Volunteer Park. The petition, which was started by fan Giuliana Jarrin on Change.org, reads: "Black Hole Sun", written by Chris Cornell, is without a doubt SOUNDGARDEN's most recognizable and most popular song, and one of the biggest anthems of the '90s. "For this reason, and the

impact Chris Cornell had in the lives of so many and music itself, I ask NASA, the Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration and all the astronomers and scientists involved in this discovery, to name this black hole after Chris Cornell. This would be a 'surreal' and amazing way to honor his life and his contribution to music." Unfortunately, the phenomenon has already been given the name Powehi, which denotes the "embellished dark source of unending creation" of the vacuum. Chris tragically took his own life in May 2017, at the age of 52.

Paulson struggled to prepare for 'Glass' role

Sarah Paulson found it difficult to prepare for her role in 'Glass'. The 44-year-old actress plays Dr. Ellie Staple, a psychiatrist specialising in delusions of grandeur, in the M. Night Shyamalan superhero movie - which is a sequel to 'Unbreakable' and 'Split' - struggled to find someone she could study to research her role so wanted to take advice from Betty Buckley, who plays Dr. Karen Fletcher in 'Split'. When asked how she prepared for her role in an interview with Comingsoon.net, she said: "I don't really think there is a... I mean, when I was talking to Night about it, and when I was working on the script, I was like, I wonder if there's someone I could... the person I wanted to talk to the most was Betty Buckley, actually, because of her experience on 'Split'. "And I was taking the psychiatrist baton from her to this movie, but there aren't a lot of therapists and people in the field whose specialty are people who believe they're superheroes. So there wasn't a ton of research to dig into in that regard." The 'American Horror Story' star went on to explain that in order to prepare for her alter-ego she immersed herself in the "M Night Shyamalan universe" and admitted she was already a "big fan" of the director's work. She continued: "What I did was try to get myself as well versed in the M Night Shyamalan universe, if I could, which is very easy to do, because there are many movies to watch. "And of course, with this movie, there are two movies to watch that directly pertained and informed this movie. "So I watched those movies multiple times, but the truth is, I had seen both of those movies in the theatre, including 'Unbreakable' when it came out all those years ago."



Boyle to reunite with Welsh on McGee biopic

Danny Boyle is set to reunite with Irvine Welsh on a biopic about Alan McGee. The 62-year-old director - who helmed the 1996 cult classic 'Trainspotting', which was based on the writer's novel - will work with the author to bring the Creation Records boss' story to life on the big screen, serving as executive producer on the project. Irvine, 60, has written the screenplay based on Alan's book 'The Creation Records Story: Riots, Raves and Running a Label' with his partner Dean Cavanagh, while Nick Moran is on board to direct. The movie will tell the story of the record label owner as he signs the likes of Oasis, Primal Scream, My Bloody Valentine and Teenage Fanclub. 'Trainspotting' star Ewen Bremner - who portrayed Spud - will play McGee. The cast will also include Jason Flemyng - who starred alongside Nick in the hit 1998 Guy Ritchie crime thriller 'Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels' - Rupert Everett and Suki Waterhouse. However, it's not yet clear who will portray the iconic musicians, including Oasis brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher or Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie. In a statement, the 'Filth' author admitted he couldn't be happier to be writing the movie. He said: "I've been lucky to work with both Danny and Nick over the years and to have the two of them together on this project, along with Ewen, feels like a lottery win." And Nick added: "Working as a team with Danny on this film is a dream... The last time him and Irvine worked together they changed the world of cinema. Who wouldn't be excited to be part of that team!" McGee is best known for co-founding and running the independent Creation Records label from 1983 to 1999. However financial problems led to him selling his company and personal problems led to addiction struggles. Shooting will begin in London next month.

Russo brothers ask fans not to spoil Avengers: Endgame

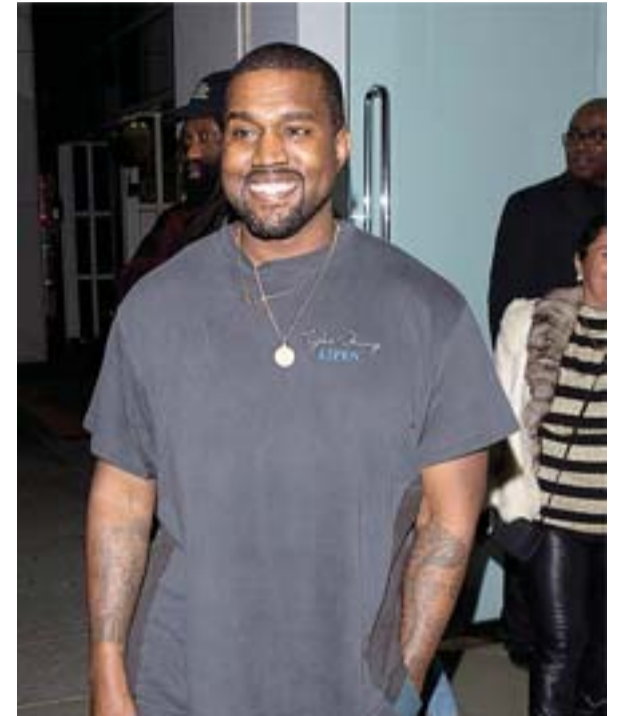
Anthony and Joe Russo have urged fans not to spoil the ending of 'Avengers: Endgame'. The acclaimed directing duo - who helmed 'Avengers: Infinity War' - penned a letter to audiences asking them not to reveal any details of the highly-anticipated film to others ahead of its release in theatres on April 26. The filmmakers posted the letter on

Disney's official Instagram account and began the emotional message by insisting that Marvel has the "greatest fans in the world" who have "invested so deeply" in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and its characters. The pair said: "To the greatest fans in the world. This is it. This is the end. The end of an unprecedented narrative mosaic spanning eleven years and eleven franchises. "For all of you who have been on this journey with us since the very beginning, sharing every high and low with your family, your friends, your classmates, your co-workers. "Investing so deeply in every character and storyline. Laughing. Cheering. Shedding tears. Giving so freely of your thoughts and emotions in spirited dialogue, theories, fan art and fan fiction." The letter went on to explain that the directors have "worked tirelessly" to come up with a surprising end to phase three of the MCU and requested that as so many fans have given their "time, hearts, and souls" to the franchise, "please don't spoil it for others". They continued: "Please know that the two of us, along with everyone involved in 'Endgame', have worked tirelessly for the last three years with the sole intention of delivering a surprising and emotionally powerful conclusion to the Infinity Saga. "Because so many of you have invested your time, your hearts, and your souls into these stories, we're once again asking for your help. "When you see Endgame in the coming weeks, please don't spoil it for others, the same way you wouldn't want it spoiled for you."



French Montana teases Kanye West's spiritual direction

French Montana says Kanye West's new music is inspired by his spiritual connection to the church. The 'Unforgettable' rapper has teased fans can expect something "so crazy" and "outside the box" from the 'Famous' hitmaker's next set of songs and revealed how running his popular Sunday church service in Los Angeles has influenced his "new direction". Speaking to Zane Lowe on his Apple Beats 1 radio show, French teased: "He's working on something that's so crazy. I think he's working on something bigger than music. "When I went to go see him, he showed me something that was so crazy. But, that's what makes people like him stand out, because he always thinks outside the box-really outside the box. Shout out to Kanye." The 34-year-old star - who used to date Kanye's sister-in-law Khloe Kardashian - says that the 'FourFiveSeconds' hitmaker wants to "change the world" with his art. He continued: "I just see that [West is] trying to do something that's going to change the world. "Whether it's something to help the people, or something like ... I feel like he's going to touch something that's going to change everybody's life." And commenting on his new direction, French added: "The whole time I'm with him, he's telling me about the church and he's telling me about what his direction with the music is going. "The whole time he's like, 'I'm thinking about doing this. All right? You know, I'm in that spirit. You know?' "So I play him a couple records. "I played a record called 'Wiggle It'. When the record stopped, he said, 'What you doing with that record?' I said, 'My God. I thought you was going towards Jesus.' This is across the street right here." Kanye's next project is 'Yandhi', which looks set to feature a collaboration with Nicki Minaj. In a recent episode of 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians', Kanye suggested the collaboration during a studio session with his producer. He said: "What do you all think about Nicki on 'New Body'?" When his producer replied to say he thinks it would be "dope", Kanye replied: "Yeah, OK. Send it to her then ... Wait a second. Kim, you want to



send it to her? She asked you." His wife Kim Kardashian West then added: "She did ask me, 'Can Kanye send me new music?' The reality star then promptly got Nicki on FaceTime and the rapper told her the collaboration was "gonna be fire". Taking to Twitter following the episode being aired, Kim wrote: "Nicki really is the goat! @NICKIMINAJ We FaceTimed her and within an hour she had written the song and it's soooo [hot]." It is believed the track will also feature Ty Dolla \$ign. Nicki isn't the only female collaborator Kanye is looking to feature on his new album, as he has also reportedly set his sights on Dua Lipa. A source said recently: "Kanye is super impressed with Dua's voice and he knows she's really hot property in the industry right now. He met her at the church service he holds in LA every Sunday and is now keen to get her on board. She's already teamed up with Calvin Harris and he saw how well that song did commercially. "He's got a few songs he thinks Dua would be perfect for and is really eager to get her on his next album Yandhi."

Lawrence's big screen return announced

Jennifer Lawrence will make her big screen comeback in a drama helmed by acclaimed theater director Lila Neugebauer. The 'mother!' actress decided to take a career break in 2017, but Deadline reports that she is gearing up for her return with a starring role in the as-yet-untitled debut feature length from Neugebauer. The script has also been penned by first-time screenwriter Elizabeth Sanders. Scott Rudin and Eli Bush are producing alongside Lawrence herself, who is teaming up with her Excellent Cadaver partner Justine Polsky on the forthcoming flick. The studio behind movies such as 'Lady Bird' and 'Ex Machina', A24, are taking the charge. Little else is known, other than work is due to begin in June in New Orleans. Although the Oscar-winner hasn't set foot on a film set of late, she will be seen reprising the role of Mystique in 'X-Men: Dark Phoenix', which hits cinemas this year. Announcing her hiatus two years ago, the 'Red Sparrow' star said: "I'm taking [a break]. I don't have anything set for two years." And asked what she'll do with her time off, she quipped: "Start making pots." However, the 28-year-old star said she won't be stepping away from the spotlight completely because she has a number of movies set for release which she'll have to promote. She quipped: "I'll see you in six months." During her year-long break, Jennifer got engaged to art gallery director Cooke Maroney. — Bang Showbiz



Watts in talks to direct B. Jordan in Methuselah

Jon Watts is in talks to direct Michael B. Jordan in 'Methuselah'. The 37-year-old filmmaker has entered negotiations with Warner Bros. to "re-develop" and helm the film based on the Biblical story of Methuselah - the Man of the Javelin - who lives to be hundreds of years old without showing the physical signs of ageing, according to Deadline. The 'Creed' star will produce through his Outlier Society production company along with Heyday's David Heyman and Jeffrey Clifford. The movie has been pitched as an "elevated genre" and will focus on the skills accumulated by the lead character throughout his existence and will be penned by Arash Amel and Zach Dean. The project has been in development by Warner for years and in 2017 it was reported that director Jerry Bruckheimer would helm the project with Tom Cruise as the lead, while Will Smith has also previously been attached to the project. Jon is best known for his work on Marvel's 'Spider-Man: Homecoming' - which has Tom Holland playing the central role of Peter Parker - and is currently in post-production on its sequel 'Spider-Man: Far from Home'. 'Spider-Man: Homecoming' earned \$880.2 million internationally at the box office worldwide and also stars the likes of Michael Keaton, Zendaya and Robert Downey Jr. Jon previously hinted that the highly anticipated sequel could feature the superhero's 'spider-sense'. The director said: "The idea was, again, just you want to make this movie be less about things you've already seen before, and you've definitely already seen a spider sense sequence done extremely well in Marc Webb's and Sam Raimi's movies. "It could be something that develops over time or we can do it in a different way. It's something that seemed like maybe there's a cool thing to do with that eventually, but let's not crowd this movie with something we've already seen before."



Lifestyle | Feature



Local resident Tsukimi Ayano (center) posing with life-size dolls displayed at an elementary school, which closed seven years ago as there was no one left to teach, in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan. — AFP photos



A life-size doll depicting a teacher at an elementary school, which closed seven years ago as there was no one left to teach, in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.



Life-size dolls sitting by a roadside in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.

Valley of the dolls: Scarecrows outnumber people in Japan village



Local resident Tsukimi Ayano making the head of a life-size doll at her house in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.



Life-size dolls depicting a family sitting in front of a house in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.



Life-size dolls displayed at a roadside in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.



Local resident Tsukimi Ayano walking in front of an abandoned grocery shop decorated with life-size dolls in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.

In the tiny village of Nagoro, deep in the mountains of western Japan, the wind howls down a deserted street with not a living soul to be seen. But yet the street appears busy, dotted with life-sized dolls that outnumber humans 10 to one, the product of a one-woman bid to counter the emptiness and loneliness felt in Nagoro, like many Japanese villages decimated by depopulation. Nagoro, around 550 kilometers (400 miles) southwest of Tokyo, has become known as the valley of dolls after local resident Tsukimi Ayano began placing scarecrows on the street to inject some life into her depopulated village.

"Only 27 people live in this village but the number of scarecrows is tenfold, like 270," the 69-year-old doll maker told AFP in an interview at her home. It all started 16 years ago when the dexterous Ayano created a scarecrow dressed in her father's clothes to prevent birds eating the seeds she had planted in her garden. "A worker who saw it in the garden thought it really was my father... he said hello but it was a scarecrow. It was funny," recalled Ayano.

Since then, Ayano has not stopped creating the life-size dolls, made with wooden sticks, newspapers to fill the body, elastic fabrics for skin and knitting wool for hair. The skillful craftswoman needs only three days to make an adult-sized doll that are now scattered all around the village. The secret to breathing life into the dolls? Applying pink color to the lips and cheeks with a make-up brush, revealed Ayano.

At the local school, she has placed 12 colorful child-sized dolls at desks, positioned as if part of a lively class poring over their books. The school closed seven years ago as there was no one left to teach, she recalled sadly. "Now there are no children. The youngest person here is 55 years old."

Down the street, a "family" of scarecrows lounges in front of an abandoned grocery shop while a doll dressed as an old farmer window-shops next door. Near the bus stop, a group of scarecrows gathers as another "father" doll pulls a cart full of "children."

'It's lonely now'

While never humming with people, Ayano remembers as a child that Nagoro was once a well-to-do place with some 300 residents and laborers supported by the forestry industry and dam construction work. "People gradually left... It's lonely now," she said. "I made more dolls as I remembered the time when the village was lively." Nagoro's plight is replicated all around Japan, as the world's third-largest economy battles a declining population, low birth rate and high life expectancy.

The country is on the verge of becoming the first "ultra-aged" country in the world, meaning that 28 percent of people are aged 65 or above. The latest government report shows that 27.7 percent of a population of 127 million-one in four people are aged 65 or older and the figure is expected to jump to 37.7 percent in 2050. According to experts, around 40 percent of Japan's 1,700 municipalities are defined as "depopulated."

'Extremely difficult'

After World War II, when forestry and agriculture were the main economic drivers, many Japanese lived in rural villages like Nagoro. But young people started to leave for Tokyo in the 1960s, said Takumi Fujinami, economist at the Japan Research Institute. "The economy was booming in Tokyo and industrial areas at that time. They were the only places people could earn money, so a lot of young people moved there," he said. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has pledged to revive regions outside Tokyo by pumping in tens of billions of yen, but this is not enough to stop young people from leaving their hometowns to work in Tokyo, Fujinami said.

"In order to combat depopulation, we need people moving in to depopulated areas. But recovering the popu-



Local resident Tsukimi Ayano checking on a life-size doll displayed at an elementary school.

lation is extremely difficult," he said. "Instead, it's important to increase income or improve working conditions for young people in rural areas." For example, companies in rural areas tend to have fewer holidays than those in Tokyo, he said. "We need to create communities where young people can make a long-term living," Fujinami said, adding that subsidizing them to move in is not enough.

While there is little evidence of citizens returning to Nagoro, Ayano's dolls have attracted flesh-and-blood people from as far afield as the US and France. "Before I started making scarecrows, nobody stopped by. Now many people visit here," she said. "I hope Nagoro will become lively again and many people come here for sight-seeing." "I don't know what Nagoro will look like in 10 or 20 years... but I'll keep on making dolls." —AFP



Local resident Tsukimi Ayano posing with life-size dolls in her workshop at the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.



Life-size dolls looking on from a bus stop in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.



A life-size doll displayed at a bus stop in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.



A life-size doll displayed at a house in the tiny village of Nagoro in western Japan.

Lifestyle | Features

Beyonce drops another surprise album

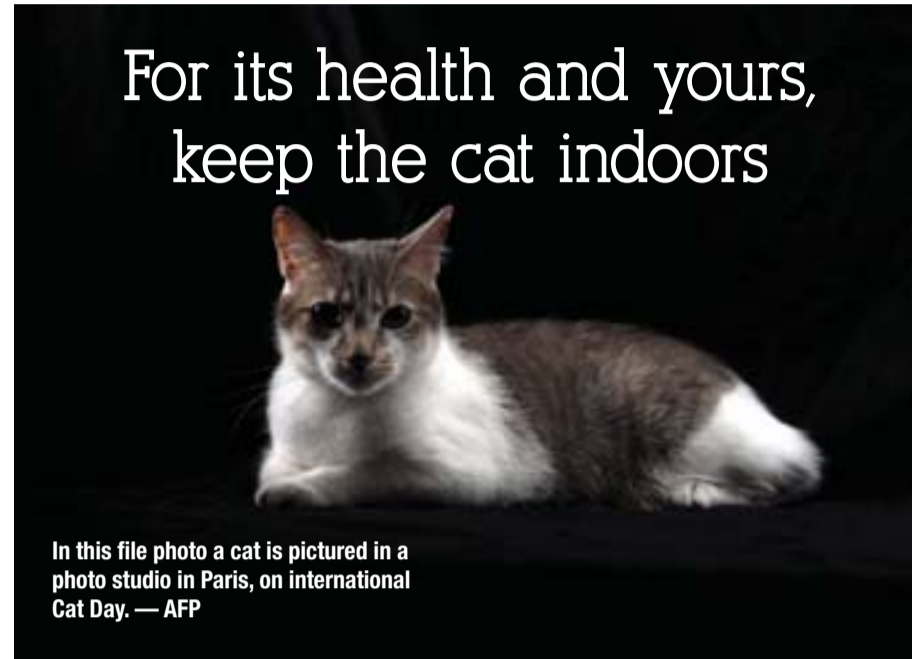
Beyonce, the queen of surprise and so much else, has again dropped a record with no warning: a live album to go with an upcoming Netflix documentary on her performance at Coachella last year. The album entitled "Homecoming," just like the film, was released in the early hours of yesterday across all major streaming platforms, including Apple Music, Spotify and Google Play. It breaks that more than two-hour

performance—she actually took to the stage twice last year at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival—into 40 tracks. Beyonce was the first black woman to headline the festival.

Her set paid tribute to the musical heritage of historically black American colleges and she was backed up by dozens of dancers and a marching band. Beyonce first dropped an album without warning in 2013: the

record "Beyonce" suddenly appeared in the iTunes music store with no advance notice. And she has repeated the tactic since then with albums like "Lemonade" and "Everything is Love." — AFP

In this file photo actress and producer Beyonce Knowles arrives for the Los Angeles premiere of 'Cadillac Records' in Hollywood, California. — AFP



For its health and yours, keep the cat indoors

In this file photo a cat is pictured in a photo studio in Paris, on international Cat Day. — AFP

At least one running argument among cat lovers is now over: Whiskers, Lucy and Tigger are definitely better off staying indoors, scientists reported yesterday. Pet cats allowed outdoors, in fact, are nearly three times as likely to become infected with pathogens or parasites than those confined to quarters, they reported in the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters*. Two-legged house-mates should also take note because cats—*a.k.a.* *Felis catus*—can transmit some of those diseases to humans, the authors said.

Intriguingly, the farther domesticated felines are from the equator, the more likely they are to be afflicted by some kind of bug or virus, if they spend time outdoors. "Each degree in absolute latitude increased infection likelihood by four percent," said lead author Kayleigh Chalkowski, a researcher at the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University in Alabama. "You think of tropical regions as just having more wildlife, more parasites," she told AFP. "But it turned out that latitude had the opposite effect."

To settle the indoor-vs-outdoor question once and for all, Chalkowski and colleagues combed through nearly two dozen earlier studies in which the prevalence of one or more diseases was compared across interior and exterior environments. All told, the new study looked at 19 different cat pathogens in more than a dozen countries, including Spain, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Germany, Pakistan, Brazil, the Netherlands and St. Kitts.

'Keep your cat indoors'

"This is the first time outdoor access as a risk factor for infection in cats has been quantified across a wide range of geographic locales and types of pathogens," Chalkowski said. The effects were consistent for almost all of the diseases, including feline roundworm and the single-cell parasite that causes toxoplasmosis, both of which can affect humans. This held true regardless of how they were transmitted—whether from soil, other cats, or prey such as mice and birds.

"Basically, no matter where you are in the world, keeping your cat indoors is a great way to keep them healthy from infectious diseases," Chalkowski said by way of summary. This is especially good advice, she added, "considering that many of the pathogens cats carry can actually be spread to humans". Other domesticated animals transmit disease to their caretakers—dogs, for examples, spread rabies, and cattle carry *Cryptosporidium parvum*, a parasitic disease that attacks the intestinal tract.

Wild cats were likely first drawn to human communities in search of rodents, and were domesticated some 5,000 years ago. In ancient Egypt, they were associated with gods and prominently featured in hieroglyphics. There are some 90 million pet cats in the United States, and an estimated 500 million worldwide. —AFP

Bangladesh starlet apologizes after 'atheist' comments

A Bangladeshi actress has been forced to apologize after remarks construed as admitting atheism in a country where people have been murdered for renouncing religion. Safa Kabir, an actress and model who has appeared in top Bangladeshi television dramas, told a private radio station this week she did not believe in the afterlife. "I don't believe in life after death. Actually, I never believe in what I can't see," she said, in comments that some took as a rejection of Muslim beliefs in heaven and hell. The remarks caused a storm on social media, with footage of the interview going viral, and Kabir faced a torrent of criticism in the conservative Muslim country. On Tuesday, the 24-year-old then posted an apology on Facebook, denying she is an atheist.

"If I committed any mistake, I seek forgiveness from the most merciful. He is the most merciful and forgiving. He will definitely forgive me," she wrote. "If my words hurt any one's belief, I am sorry for this and I ask for forgiveness," she added in a post that quickly accumulated over 60,000 comments. Atheism is largely taboo in Bangladesh, where nearly a dozen atheist activists have been brutally attacked and killed by suspected Islamist extremists in recent years. Many leading atheists have fled the country and are living in exile in the West. — AFP



Safa Kabir

'Unpatriotic' Afghan war film angers Russian veterans

Russian veterans want to ban a film about Soviet troops in Afghanistan they say is "unpatriotic," while the director insists it is an honest account of a disastrous conflict. "Brotherhood" is distributed by the local arm of Walt Disney and is sharply different in tone from recent patriotic war blockbusters. Shot by renowned Russian director Pavel Lungin, it shows Soviet soldiers getting drunk and looting during the chaotic final months of the Soviet-Afghan war.

The conflict with the Mujahideen lasted from 1979 to 1989 and led to the deaths of more than 14,000 Soviet soldiers. The movie's release date was set for May 9, a public holiday when Russia celebrates victory over the Nazis in World War II with a massive military parade on Red Square. But this is now uncertain after protests from veterans and relatives of those killed in the war, who say the film insults those who fought.

The movie is a "classic example of mud-slinging Russophobia," wrote Boris Gromov, the former commander of the main Soviet contingent in Afghanistan, in a letter to the culture ministry, which controls cinema releases. "Brotherhood" depicts Soviet troops as "a rabble of degenerates, thieves, swindlers, murderers and scoundrels," complained Gromov, the head of an association of more than 10,000 veterans, who is demanding the ministry deny permission for the film's release. Another former combatant, Igor Morozov, now the head of the Russian upper house of parliament's culture commission, told AFP that Lungin "has made an unpatriotic film that deters young people from serving in the army." The film "shows our troops looting caravans, fighting and drinking on every street corner," he complained, saying it "sullies the memory of Soviet dead" and "damages the country's image." The war ended with Moscow's humiliating withdrawal from the country and was denounced even by Soviet leadership at the time as a foreign policy blunder.

Wounds of Afghanistan, Chechnya
Russia's culture officials have massively

stepped up efforts to fund and promote cinema that positively depicts Soviet history including World War II. Other recent state-funded pictures have highlighted sporting triumphs and the space race, and have put a positive spin on the annexation of Crimea. Last year the culture ministry banned British director Armando Iannucci's black comedy "The Death of Stalin".

And this year the director of a Russian comedy set during the World War II Siege of Leningrad opted to release his film online rather than apply for a cinematic release, after it prompted outrage from lawmakers. "Brotherhood" director Lungin told AFP that he was "shocked by this new type of censorship from below"—led by influential veteran groups rather than culture ministry officials.



In this file photo Russian film director Pavel Lungin poses for a picture during the 40th edition of the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) at the Cairo Opera House in the Egyptian capital. — AFP

"I wanted to make an honest film for young people so that they could identify with those guys who were lost in the middle of the war," he said. Lungin stressed the fact that the idea for the film came from a former director of Russia's security service, Nikolai Kovalyov, who was involved in episodes of the conflict.

Shortly before his death aged 70 this month, Kovalyov "congratulated me on the result and gave his blessing to the film," said Lungin. "We have to stop glorifying our history and start talking about the wounds left by the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya." The controversy over the film comes shortly after the 30th anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal in March. Some former combatants have attempted to recast the painful historic episode as having been justified by the interests of national security. — AFP

French artisans gear up to restore Notre-Dame

Thanks to a small yet enduring corps of artisans specialized in traditional stone and woodwork techniques, France's ambitious goal of restoring the fire-ravaged Notre-Dame cathedral within five years may be within reach, experts say. But officials in the sector add they will probably need to hire hundreds of new apprentices to carry on the intricate and often arduous work, much of which can't be replicated by modern technology. "It's a niche market. There aren't that many projects but there aren't that many of us either," said Benoit Dulion, who heads a firm in the central Yonne department that restores timber roof frames.

For decades the French state has spent heavily on the exacting upkeep of its cultural treasures, ensuring the preservation of artistic and architectural know-how dating back to the Middle Ages. Maintaining the country's 40,000 registered monuments is effectively a full-time job, with schools passing on time-honed techniques to successive generations. But before a hammer or chisel gets anywhere near a registered monument like Notre-Dame, France's culture ministry dispatches an architect with demonstrated expertise in antique and often fragile artwork. Only 40 of the nearly 30,000 architects in France have currently passed the ministry's muster for such work.

'Lack of young people'

Once the architect has signed off on a project, the government seeks bids from companies accustomed to the painstaking work. A few are subsidiaries of France's major construction firms like Vinci, whose SOCRA unit is restoring 16 copper statues lifted off the roof of Notre-Dame just days before Monday's fire. Most however are small firms, including the roughly 200 in the GMH association of monument restoration companies.

"A lot of them are family affairs," said Dulion, who is also the GMH representative in Burgundy. His firm of 18 workers was founded in the late 1940s by his grandfather "who did a bit of everything with wood," before his son began focusing on historical monuments in the 1980s.

"The industry framework exists through the GMH," said Gael Hamon, founder of Art Graphique & Patrimoine. His company has made ultra-precise digital 3-D models of some 30 cathedrals. Notre-Dame is not among them—but fortunately modeling of the Paris cathedral was done by a Vassar College in the US, led by a francophile American art professor Andrew Tallon who died in November. "Between us and the different artisans like woodworkers, roofers stonemasons and architects, we can restore what's necessary," Hamon said.

But to meet the five-year goal set by President Emmanuel Macron, firms may have to



The Cathedrale Notre-Dame de Reims is lighted with a message reading in French 'Reims watches over Notre-Dame' a day after the fire that ripped through Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris. — AFP

move fast to find enough hands for all the work.

"As soon as September we'll have to recruit 100 masons, 150 woodworkers and 200 roofers," said Jean-Claude Bellanger, secretary general of France's storied Compagnons du Devoir artisan mentoring network. His guild, which dates back to the Middle Ages, usually takes on a total of 2,000 apprentices each year. "The problem is that these manual crafts are undervalued and don't attract many people," he said. "We have the firms and the expertise, but there's a serious lack of young people for this work."

'Never get rich'

GMH officials said this week that despite the handful of high-profile projects like Notre-Dame, most artisans make only a modest living off restoration work. The French monuments market represents around 600 million euros (\$680 million) of revenue a year, a small fraction of the country's 135-billion-euro construction industry. "I'm not going to whine, but as a colleague told me, 'We're never going to get rich with historical monuments,'" Dulion said. "And that's true."

Many learned their craft out of a love for art and time-honored techniques, and the prestige that comes from helping to preserve a cultural treasure. "We need these jobs to have the recognition of excellence they had in the 13th century, when they built the cathedral," Bellanger said. He fears that if France mobilizes all its resources for Notre-Dame, "it will come at the expense of other projects". And rushing to meet the five-year goal for finishing the work carries its own risks. "It's going to take time," said Hamon, of the digital modeling firm. "With a restoration, it needs to last for at least 50 to 100 years. You can't rush things." — AFP



In this file photo The Walt Disney Company Chairman and CEO Robert Iger delivers remarks during an event introducing Disney's new 'Magic of Healthy Living' program at the Newseum in Washington, DC. — AFP

Disney donates \$5 million to restore Notre-Dame

Disney will donate \$5 million for the reconstruction of Notre-Dame, the company announced yesterday, calling the French cathedral an "irreplaceable masterpiece." "Notre-Dame is a beacon of hope and beauty that has defined the heart of Paris and the soul of France for centuries, inspiring awe and reverence for its art and architecture and for its enduring place in human history," said Disney Chief Executive Bob Iger in a statement. "The Walt Disney Company stands with our friends and neighbors in the community, offering our heartfelt support as well as a \$5 million donation for the restoration of this irreplaceable masterpiece."

Disney's connection to the storied cathedral includes its 1996 animated hit "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," based on the Victor Hugo novel. The company also manages Disneyland Paris, a 5,510-acre theme park about 20 miles (32 kilometers) east of the French capital. The Disney donation is among the first major contributions from a US entity following

Monday's blaze, which gutted the great Paris landmark, destroying the roof, causing the steeple to collapse and leaving France reeling with shock.

Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook announced the tech giant would give an unspecified amount, while Henry Kravis, co-founder of investment fund KKR and his wife Marie-Josée Kravis, said they would give \$10 million to the project. The University of Notre Dame in Indiana has also promised \$100,000. Billionaire Bernard Arnault and his LVMH luxury conglomerate, Total oil company and cosmetics giant L'Oreal also each pledged 100 million euros (\$113 million).

However, the slew of announcements from French giants raised eyebrows in France, with some politicians on the left arguing that the ultra-rich could best help protect the country's cultural heritage by fully paying their taxes—or helping the "human cathedral" of people in need. — AFP

Classifieds

Thursday, April 18, 2019

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 Fax: (+965) 24348714
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and Clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 42 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind to north easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WATCH			Fresh wind +Dust +Thunder rain	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 17/04/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	35 °C	25 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	38 °C	23 °C		
ABDALY	39 °C	22 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	39 °C	23 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	33 °C	23 °C		
SALMIYAH	31 °C	23 °C		
AHMADI	30 °C	24 °C		
NUWAISIB	39 °C	21 °C		
WAFRA	39 °C	21 °C		
SALMY	35 °C	25 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	04/18	Relatively hot and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	33 °C	21 °C	NE-SE	15 - 38 km/h
Friday	04/19	Relatively hot	32 °C	21 °C	NW-NE	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	04/20	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	34 °C	22 °C	NE-NW	08 - 30 km/h
Sunday	04/21	Relatively hot and some high clouds will appear	31 °C	21 °C	NE-SE	15 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	03:56
Sunrise	05:19
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:15
Isha	19:36

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	36 °C
MIN. Temp.	21 °C
MAX. RH	44 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	SE 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

EMERGENCY

112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

1889988

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
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



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

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 18/4/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 18/4/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	212	Jeddah	13:45
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	KAC	672	Dubai	14:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	FDB	5059	Dubai	14:15
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:15
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15
JZR	734	Cairo	01:35	KAC	792	Madinah	14:40
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	JZR	222	Riyadh	14:45
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	304	Mumbai	14:45
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	618	Doha	14:50
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	562	Amman	14:50
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	14:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	118	New York	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	OMA	645	Muscat	15:20
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	546	Cairo	15:50
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	KNE	531	Jeddah	16:05
JZR	724	Alexandria	03:30	FDB	051	Dubai	16:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	732	Cairo	16:10
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	502	Beirut	16:15
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	QTR	1072	Doha	16:15
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FEQ	241	Alexandria	16:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	FDB	8065	Dubai	16:55
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	SAW	705	Damascus	17:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	JZR	116	Doha	17:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:35
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR	124	Dubai	17:40
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	JZR	104	Bahrain	18:00
BAW	157	London	06:10	QTR	1080	Doha	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR	612	Tbilisi	18:15
JZR	112	Doha	06:35	JZR	302	Istanbul	18:20
KAC	106	London	06:40	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	704	Asyut	18:45
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	RJA	640	Amman	19:05
IRA	601	Tehran	06:50	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:05
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:20
JZR	402	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	744	Dammam	19:25
QTR	8511	Doha	07:05	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:40
JZR	714	Sohag	07:20	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:45
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KNE	381	Taif	20:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	FDB	057	Dubai	20:05
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05	OMA	647	Muscat	20:05
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:05	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:10
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	MEA	402	Beirut	20:15
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25	JZR	126	Dubai	20:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	RBG	213	Sohag	20:30
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	620	Doha	20:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	174	Munich	20:30
FDB	5055	Dubai	09:20	QTR	1088	Doha	20:40
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:10
IRA	675	Lar	09:55	UAE	859	Dubai	21:15
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ALK	229	Colombo	21:15
JZR	410	Delhi	10:30	KAC	168	Paris	21:20
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	THY	764	Istanbul	21:30
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	676	Dubai	21:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	164	MXP	21:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	716	Sohag	12:10	KAC	564	Amman	21:55
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:20
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	RBG	555	Alexandria	22:30
IRA	667	Esfahan	13:00	JZR	128	Dubai	22:50
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	GEC	8456	Frankfurt	22:55
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00
				MSC	501	Alexandria	23:10
				MSC	415	Sohag	23:15
				MSR	614	Cairo	23:30

Houthi rebels claim Trump veto proves US behind war

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi rebels yesterday slammed US President Donald Trump's veto of a Congress resolution directing him to end support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen as proof Washington was behind the conflict. The resolution had aimed to end US backing for a war that Democratic House speaker Nancy Pelosi labeled "a horrific humanitarian crisis", but Trump vetoed it, citing the security of Americans in the region.

Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdelsalam tweeted that Trump's veto Tuesday "proves that the United States is not only involved in the war on Yemen but also was behind the decision to go to war". "Others followed that decision and execute the wishes and ambitions of the United States," Abdelsalam added, referring to Saudi Arabia and its allies. Abdelsalam, who heads a rebel delegation involved in ongoing UN-led peace talks, held the US responsible for "massacres, crimes and the unjust siege of Yemen".

The US Congress' resolution on Yemen had taken the historic step of seeking to curtail a president's war-making powers, a step Trump condemned. Trump said US support for the war between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and Houthi rebels, who control the capital Sanaa, was necessary to "protect the safety of the more than 80,000 Americans who reside in certain coalition countries".

These countries "have been subject to Houthi attacks from Yemen," he said, referring to drone and missile strikes Saudi Arabia's air force either claimed were intercepted or denied altogether. In March, Trump also overrode a congressional resolution that aimed to reverse the border emergency he had declared in order to secure more funding for his proposed wall between the United States and Mexico.

The congressional resolution was a clear bipartisan rebuke to Trump, whose ties to Saudi Arabia have

remained strong even following the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a Washington Post columnist and critic of powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Khashoggi was killed inside Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul. His murder sparked international condemnation of Saudi Arabia and thrust the Yemen war into the global spotlight. Several countries have since suspended arms sales to Riyadh over its role in the conflict.

Democrats argue that US involvement in the Yemen conflict, which includes intelligence-sharing, logistical support and now-discontinued aerial refuelling, is unconstitutional without congressional authority. Washington's involvement in Yemen long predates Trump. The Saudi-led coalition launched its first raids on rebel strongholds on March 26, 2015 in a bid to bolster President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who now lives in Riyadh. The US, which supported the coalition attacks, has also conducted drone strikes on suspected Al-Qaeda

targets in Yemen for over a decade.

While Saudi Arabia did not immediately react to the Trump veto, Saudi ally the UAE - which has US-trained boots on the ground in southern Yemen - hailed the move as a strategic "positive signal". The UAE minister of state for foreign affairs, Anwar Gargash, lauded Trump's statement as an "assertion of support to the Arab Coalition in Yemen is a positive signal of US resolve towards America's allies". "President Trump's important decision is both timely & strategic," tweeted Gargash.

Some 10,000 people have been killed in Yemen during the past four years, according to the World Health Organization, although human rights groups say the toll could be five times higher. The country stands at the brink of famine. Both the Saudi-led alliance and the Houthis have been accused of acts that could amount to war crimes, while the coalition has been blacklisted by the United Nations. — AFP

Scientists revive brain function in dead pigs

PARIS: Scientists have managed to restore cell function in the brains of pigs hours after they died, in a breakthrough yesterday that experts said threw into question the very notion of what makes animals - or even humans - alive. Authors of the US-based study said their research could one day be used to help treat victims of heart attacks and strokes and unravel the mysteries of brain trauma.

In human and large mammal brains, cells crucial for neural function begin to degrade as soon as blood supply is cut - a process long considered to be irreversible. But the findings of the trial, published in the journal Nature, show that the brains of pigs can have their blood flow and cell function restored even hours after death. The team from the NIH BRAIN initiative, a federally funded US research program, used the brains of 32 pigs that had been slaughtered for food and discarded, without blood or glucose flow, for four hours each.

Then, using a tissue support system that pumps a liquid designed to mimic blood through organs, they rehydrated the brains for a further six hours. Some brains received

the patented life-support solution and others were given a control substance.

Flickers of life

The results were astonishing: the brains that received the artificial blood had basic cell function restored. Their blood vessel structure was revived, and the team even observed some localized processes - including in synapses and immune responses - flickering back to life. Those that received the control solution turned within hours to what researchers described as "something a bit like yoghurt".

"I was tremendously surprised," Nenad Sestan, a researcher at Yale University and lead study author told AFP. "We were surprised how well the structure was preserved. We found that cell death is reduced, which is very exciting and promising. The main conceptual finding is this: Cell death in the brain occurs across a longer time period than we previously thought," Sestan added.

The team stressed that they saw no "higher level functional activity" such as electric signalling associated with consciousness in the revived brains. "That is a clinical sign that the brain is alive, and we never found it," said Sestan. "This is not a living brain, it is a cellularly active brain." Had any such activity been detected, the team said they would have had to deliver anesthetic to the brains to null any pain - despite them having been dead for hours.

"If some activity shows up that indicated consciousness, we would have to stop the

experiment," said Stephen Latham, from Yale's Centre of Bioethics. "This would be unique: Inducing consciousness in an organ that's not connected to any living being."

'Not alive, not dead'

The findings suggest that scientists may have underestimated the brain's capacity for self-restoration after a patient is declared brain dead. But for experts invited to comment on the study, it raised deeper philosophical and ethical questions. Writing in a linked editorial, Nita Farahany, a professor of law and philosophy at Duke University, said that the study "throws into question long-standing assumptions over what makes an animal - or a human - alive."

She said researchers had inadvertently created an ethical grey area where the pigs used were "not alive, but not completely dead". Dominic Wilkinson, professor of medical ethics at the University of Oxford, said that the study could have vital implications for future brain research. "This research reminds us that 'death' is less an event, and more of a process that occurs over time," he said. "Cells within the human organism may be alive for some period of time after the human person has died."

Zvonimir Vrselja, also at Yale School of Medicine's Department of Neuroscience, said the team planned to use their support system on dead brains for longer periods of time in order to see how the cells react. "We could potentially get some insight into how these brains could be saved," he said. — AFP

Elusive molecule detected in space

PARIS: In the beginning, more than 13 billion years ago, the Universe was an undifferentiated soup of three simple, single-atom elements. Stars would not form for another 100 million years. But within 100,000 years of the Big Bang, the very first molecule emerged, an improbable marriage of helium and hydrogen known as a helium hydride ion, or HeH+. "It was the beginning of chemistry," said David Neufeld, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and co-author of a study published Wednesday detailing how - after a multi-decade search - scientists finally detected the elusive molecule in space.

"The formation of HeH+ was the first step on a path of increasing complexity in the Universe," as momentous a shift as the one from single-cell to multicellular life on Earth, he told AFP. Theoretical models had long since convinced astrophysicists that HeH+ came first, followed - in a precise order - by a parade of other increasingly complex and heavy molecules. HeH+ had also been studied in the laboratory, as early as 1925.

But detected HeH+ in its natural habitat had remained beyond their grasp. "The lack of definitive evidence of its very existence in interstellar space has been a dilemma for astronomy for a long time," said lead author Rolf Gusten, a sci-

entist at the Max Planck Institute for Radioastronomy in Bonn. Researchers knew where to look. Already in the 1970s, models suggested that HeH+ should exist in significant quantities in the glowing gases ejected by dying Sun-like stars, which created conditions similar to those found in the early Universe.

The problem was that the electromagnetic waves given off by the molecule were in a range - far-infrared - cancelled out by Earth's atmosphere, and thus undetectable from the ground. So NASA and the German Aerospace Center joined forces to create an airborne observatory with three main components: a massive 2.7-metre telescope, an infrared spectrometer, and a Boeing 747 - with a window-like square cut away from its fuselage - big enough to carry them.

From a cruising altitude of nearly 14,000 m, the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, or SOFIA, avoided 85 percent of the atmospheric "noise" of ground-based telescopes. Data from a series of three flights in May 2016 contained the molecular evidence scientists had long sought, interlaced in the planetary nebula NGC 7027 some 3,000 light years away. "The discovery of HeH+ is a dramatic and beautiful demonstration of Nature's tendency to form molecules," said Neufeld. — AFP

Bashir moved to prison as...

Continued from Page 1

Justice must be served," said Amnesty's Joan Nyanyuki. Bashir's detention has failed to pacify protesters, who launched anti-government demonstrations in December and have for days been camped out in front of Khartoum's army headquarters. Scores of doctors in white robes marched from Khartoum's main hospital towards the sit-in, carrying banners and chanting: "Freedom, peace, justice". Journalists held a separate rally, along with university students and scores of women from a Facebook group who call themselves "the Information Network of the Revolution".

The women - who include doctors, lawyers and teachers - are renowned for monitoring security agents who target protesters and publishing their information online in order to hold them to account. Sudan's military rulers have made some concessions, including the sacking Tuesday of prosecutor general Omer Ahmed Mohamed, but demonstrators fear their uprising could be hijacked. "We faced tear gas, many of us were jailed. We have been shot and many have died. All this because we said what we wanted to," Fadia Khalaf told

AFP. Khalid Mohamed, a medic, said: "We got Bashir out, but we still have to get rid of the regime".

Officials say at least 65 people have been killed in protest-related violence since December, with some of those killed immortalized in a Khartoum mural. While there have been scenes of celebration - with demonstrators singing and waving their national flag - the protest site has grown more tense amid concerns the army will try to clear the sit-in with force. "Now we fear that our revolution could be stolen, which is why we are keeping our ground here. We are staying here until our demands are met," said Khalaf.

Earlier this week witnesses said several army vehicles had surrounded the area and that troops were removing the barricades which demonstrators had put up as a security measure. Yesterday, thousands of protesters remained at the site, cheering each other on despite looking fatigued. "I feel those people who are doing the sit-in are like my sons and daughters. I have suffered under this regime," said a woman serving tea at a makeshift checkpoint set up by protesters.

On taking power the army said a military council would run Sudan for two years, sparking a backlash from protest leaders. Just a day later former defense minister General Awad Ibn Ouf stepped down as council chief, sparking jubilation on Khartoum's streets. His successor General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan oversaw weekend talks with political parties, which failed to make headway. — AFP

Stricken Jet suspends all...

Continued from Page 1

The SBI-led consortium is looking for a buyer for Jet and a deadline passed on Friday for prospective bidders to express an interest in acquiring a 75 percent stake in the carrier. The SBI is yet to announce a shortlist of prospective bidders but Indian media said four were in the running including Etihad Airways, which already owns a 24 percent stake.

"Jet Airways will now await the bid finalization process by SBI and the consortium of Indian Lenders," the airline said, adding that it hoped to resume services "as soon as possible". A collapse of Jet, and the loss of more than 20,000 jobs, would deal a blow to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pro-business reputation as he seeks a second term in ongoing national elections. Jet CEO Vinay Dube paid tribute to staff in an email to employees and said the airline "must be given another chance" to fly.

But analysts said buyers would be reluctant to buy a

grounded airline that had lost most of its airport slots. "Is someone willing to take the risk to give this comatose body an electric jolt? I don't see it happening. At best it might come back in a smaller role," said Devesh Agarwal, editor of Bangalore Aviation.

Bad investments, competition from several low-cost carriers, high oil prices and a weak rupee have led to Jet's current financial predicament, experts say. Mismanagement has also plagued the airline. Analysts trace the start of Jet's financial problems to its 2006 purchase of Air Sahara for \$500 million in cash. Founder Naresh Goyal reportedly ignored the advice of associates who said the cost was too much. Goyal, 69, launched Jet in 1993 after the Indian government passed a series of reforms designed to make the economy more market-driven.

The Mumbai-based carrier quickly gained a reputation for introducing new initiatives - Jet was the first Indian airline to offer a frequent flyer program and in-flight entertainment. But it began to take a battering from new, well-run budget airlines including IndiGo, GoAir and SpiceJet, which were founded between 2005 and 2006. Alarm bells about Jet's financial predicament started to ring loudly in August when it failed to report its quarterly earnings or pay staff, including pilots. It later reported a loss of \$85 million. — AFP

Hospital fees hiked in bid to push...

Continued from Page 1

MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari said he will grill HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and new MP Bader Al-Mulla said he plans to grill the finance minister in early June.

On the employment of Kuwaitis, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel made a lengthy presentation in the Assembly about the workforce, the number of expatriates and the government policy on the replacement of foreigners. She said that the number of expatriate employees in the private sector reached 1.64 million, representing 96 percent of the workforce at the end of last year, while Kuwaitis in the sector number some 62,000 employees, representing only 4 percent. She said 72 percent of expats in the private sector do not have university degrees.

The minister also said that as many as 272,000 Kuwaitis are employed in the government, accounting for 77 percent of the public sector workforce against some 75,000 expatriates and 2,000 bedoons (stateless people). The numbers do not include some 600,000 domestic helpers, all of them expatriates and a majority of them Asian. The minister said that only 8,800 Kuwaitis are registered for jobs and many of them have been offered jobs in the government but rejected them, some repeatedly.

She told the Assembly that tens of thousands of Kuwaiti graduates are expected to enter the labor market over the coming years and said that there are 160,000 technical jobs available for Kuwaitis in the private sector. Aqeel said some 10,000 new jobs are created by the government every year, along with 3,000 jobs taken from expats. She said as many as 15,000 jobs could be replaced annually in the private sector.

During the debate, several MPs criticized the government policy on employment, adding that the government must create more jobs to employ all Kuwaitis entering the job market. At the end of the debate, MPs agreed to form a committee to study the issue in the summer.

The Assembly also debated the issue of inflated accounts and suspected money laundering, in which at least two MPs and several ex-lawmakers are suspects, in addition to businessmen. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said that at least 30 suspects are under investigation by the public prosecution after banks informed a specialized unit at the finance ministry about several inflated bank accounts and a number of suspicious transactions.

Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf said banks have made 4,388 complaints to the ministry monetary investigation unit since 2015, and only 465 of those were sent to the public prosecution, adding that 277 files were referred to the state security police. MPs passed a recommendation calling on the government to appeal against any decision by the public prosecution to shelve the case. The Assembly did not discuss the issue of bedoons, but Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the issue must be fundamentally resolved, adding that decision-makers have a solution. The next session will be held on April 30.

Peru ex-president Garcia kills self...

Continued from Page 1

fleeing, the prosecutor's office said. Peru's President Martin Vizcarra expressed his sympathy on his Twitter account. "Dismayed by the death of ex-president Alan Garcia. I send my condolences to his family and loved ones," Vizcarra wrote in a tweet.

Garcia, who was president from 1985-90 and again from 2006-11, was suspected of having taken bribes from Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht in return for large-scale public works contracts. In November, he sought refuge in the Uruguayan Embassy after a court ordered him not to leave the country for 18 months. He applied for asylum but following 16 days in the embassy he left when his request was denied.

Garcia, a social democrat, claimed to be the target of political persecution, an accusation denied by centrist Vizcarra. On Tuesday, Garcia said he would neither try to flee nor hide again. In recent weeks, Garcia insisted that "there is no statement, evidence or deposit that links me to any crime and even less so with the Odebrecht company or the execution of any of its projects". Although under investigation by the public prosecutor's office, Garcia had not been charged with anything.

He was one of four Peruvian ex-presidents embroiled in various corruption scandals - alongside Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (2016-18), Ollanta Humala (2011-16) and Alejandro Toledo (2001-06). Kuczynski, who is accused of money laundering and was being

held under a 10-day preliminary detention until April 20, was also taken to hospital yesterday suffering from high blood pressure. The 80-year-old was being treated in intensive care and had a cardiac catheter fitted, lawmaker Gilbert Violeta said.

Toledo faces extradition from the United States, having been charged with taking a \$20 million Odebrecht bribe. Odebrecht has admitted paying \$29 million in bribes to Peruvian officials over three administrations. Some of those payments were allegedly made during Garcia's second term in office to secure a contract to build the Lima metro. Peruvian press reports also claim Garcia received a \$100,000 payment from an illicit Odebrecht fund for giving a speech to Brazilian business leaders in Sao Paulo in May 2012.

Prosecutors allege that Garcia and 21 other officials conspired to enable Dutch company ATM Terminals to win a 2011 concession to operate a terminal at the port of Callao, near Lima. Another ex-president, Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), is serving a 25-year sentence for crimes against humanity and corruption. His daughter, opposition leader Keiko Fujimori, is being held in pre-trial detention for up to three years, accused of accepting \$1.2 million in illicit party funding from Odebrecht for her 2011 presidential campaign.

Garcia's death shocked the Andean country that had watched him become one of the world's youngest presidents when elected at 36 in 1985, a term that was marked by a severe economic crisis and the rise of leftist rebel groups. He was elected to another five-year term in 2006 after remaking himself as a free-market proponent. Chilean President Sebastian Pinera lamented Garcia's death. "I interacted with him a lot, not just when we both were presidents, but before and afterwards," Pinera said on Twitter. "May God take his soul." — Agencies

Sports

Host Yankees pummel Boston Red Sox in season's first meeting

Pederson homers again as Dodgers dump Reds

NEW YORK: James Paxton struck out 12 and pitched eight dominant innings of two-hit ball to outpitch Chris Sale, and the host New York Yankees rolled to an 8-0 victory over the Boston Red Sox on Tuesday night. Paxton (2-2) delivered his best showing as a Yankee by thriving in the first meeting between the rivals since the Red Sox won Games 3 and 4 of the American League Division Series last October. Clint Frazier, Mike Tauchman and Gleyber Torres homered for the Yankees, who scored their most runs in a home game this season. Frazier hit a solo homer off Sale (0-4) to start the fourth after the Yankees built a 2-0 lead on RBI singles by DJ LeMahieu and Luke Voit in the third. Tauchman had an RBI double off Sale in the fourth and then slugged a three-run homer off Erasmo Ramirez in the sixth. After Tauchman's first career homer, Torres made it 8-0 by opening the seventh with his fourth homer of the season.

PIRATES 5, TIGERS 3 (10 INNINGS)

Starling Marte hit a two-out, two-run homer in the 10th and Pittsburgh topped host Detroit. Marte's homer was his second this season and Jung Ho Kang also hit his second homer, a two-run shot in the fourth. Pinch hitter Jason Martin led off the 10th with a single. Reliever Shane Greene retired the next two batters before Marte jumped on a slider and launched it over the left-center wall. Greene (0-1) hadn't allowed a run this season before Marte's long ball. Keone Kela (1-0) picked up the win despite giving up a ninth-inning run. Nick Kingham recorded his first save by getting the last three outs.

PHILLIES 14, METS 3

Scott Kingery and J.T. Realmuto each had three hits and five RBIs as host Philadelphia built a 10-run lead in the first inning and cruised over New York as Mets starter Steven Matz (1-1) faced the first eight batters without recording an out and was lifted for Drew Gagnon. Kingery hit a three-run home run and set a career high for RBIs. He entered the night with no RBIs through 17 at-bats this year. Realmuto added a solo homer, and Maikel Franco also had a three-run homer. Phillies starter Nick Pivetta (2-1) tossed five innings and gave up seven hits and three runs. Jerad Eickhoff picked up a rare four-inning save, allowing no runs on three hits.

ASTROS 9, ATHLETICS 1

George Springer hit the sixth pitch of the game for a home run, Alex Bregman belted a grand slam, and Collin McHugh threw six shutout innings, sending visiting Houston past Oakland for a 10th straight win. Josh Reddick also homered among three hits against his former team, helping the Astros win for the fourth straight time on their eight-game trip. Houston made it 4-0 when Springer drew a bases-loaded walk with one out. Marco Estrada (0-2) was pulled at that point, and reliever Liam Hendriks struck out Jose Altuve to get within one out of escaping the jam. However, Bregman followed with his second career grand slam, increasing the Houston lead to 8-0.

DIAMONDBACKS 9, BRAVES 6

Christian Walker had three hits, including the go-ahead homer in the ninth inning, to help visiting Arizona beat Atlanta as Walker was 3-for-4 with two runs and two RBIs. Walker, playing first base while Jake Lamb is out with a strained left calf, led off the ninth with a long, majestic homer, his fifth. It came against Atlanta reliever A.J. Minter (0-2) and put Arizona ahead to stay. Adam

Jones followed by doubling in two insurance runs against Jacob Webb, who was making his major league debut for the Braves. Yoshihisa Hirano (1-1), who worked 1 1/3 scoreless innings, was the winner. Greg Holland got the save, his third.

DODGERS 6, REDS 1

Joc Pederson homered for the third game in a row, and Alex Verdugo drove in three runs as Los Angeles continued to get back to its winning ways with a victory over visiting Cincinnati. Pederson's second-inning home run came one night after he crushed the first game-ending home run of his career in a victory over the Reds. The Dodgers extended their winning streak to three games following a six-game losing streak. Joey Volto, in his second career game in the leadoff spot, had an RBI double as the Reds lost for the third time in their first four games of a nine-game trip that included two "home" games in Monterrey, Mexico. Yasiel Puig was 0-for-4 and Matt Kemp was 1-for-4 a day after the former Dodgers each had two hits.

CUBS 4, MARLINS 0

Jose Quintana pitched seven scoreless innings, and Javier Baez blasted an opposite-field, 439-foot home run as Chicago defeated host Miami as Quintana (2-1) allowed six hits and no walks, striking out seven and extending his scoreless streak to 14 innings. Against Miami, Quintana threw first-pitch strikes to 21 of 27 batters. He retired nine straight hitters from the first to the fourth innings, and he had an 8-6 groundball-to-fly-out ratio. He also picked up 15 swing-and-miss strikes. Baez, who is hitting .314, went 3-for-4, including two singles and his fifth homer of the season. Miami starter Pablo Lopez (1-3) lost his third straight start, allowing five hits, one walk and two runs in five innings. He struck out six.

BLUE JAYS 6, TWINS 5

Teoscar Hernandez broke a tie with a two-out, bases-loaded single in the seventh inning and then combined to throw out the potential game-tying run for the final out of the game as Toronto held on in Minneapolis. It was the second straight game in which Hernandez had the game-winning hit for the Blue Jays, as he belted a three-run home run in the eighth inning on Monday night to rally Toronto to a 5-3 victory. Aaron Sanchez (2-1) pitched six innings for the win, allowing four runs on four hits and four walks while striking out five. Ken Giles picked up his fifth save despite allowing a run in the ninth.

RAYS 4, ORIOLES 2

Avisail Garcia hit a two-run homer that gave Tampa Bay the lead for good and finished with three RBIs as they defeated visiting Baltimore, winning for the seventh time in eight games while the Orioles lost for the sixth time in eight games. Garcia's homer came off Baltimore starter Dylan Bundy (0-2) in the fourth inning as Tampa Bay rallied from an early 2-0 deficit. He added an RBI single in the eighth inning. Tampa Bay right-hander Tyler Glasnow (4-0) struggled over the first three innings, giving up two runs, but then settled down and didn't yield another run in his seven-inning stint.

INDIANS 4, MARINERS 2

Shane Bieber pitched six strong innings as Cleveland defeated host Seattle, sending the Mariners to their fifth consecutive loss. Indians leadoff hitter Leonys Martin, a former Mariner, went 3-for-5 with a run-scoring



NEW YORK: Mike Tauchman #39 of the New York Yankees hits a three run home run against Erasmo Ramirez of the Boston Red Sox in the sixth inning during their game at Yankee Stadium in New York City. — AFP

double. Seattle right-hander Mike Leake (2-1) had a quality start but couldn't quite match Bieber. Leake allowed two runs on eight hits in six innings. Bieber (2-0) allowed one run on four hits, with three walks and five strikeouts.

GIANTS 7, NATIONALS 3

Evan Longoria, Steven Duggar and Brandon Belt hit homers off Stephen Strasburg as light-hitting San Francisco beat host Washington. Nationals manager Dave Martinez was ejected in the fifth for arguing with home plate umpire Tony Randazzo after several of his players took called third strikes. The Giants entered the game last in the National League with a team batting average of .199 and they now have 13 homers. Longoria and Duggar homered in the fifth for a 3-1 lead and Belt hit a solo shot in the sixth to make it 4-1. Gerardo Parra had an RBI double in the seventh and some sloppy fielding by the Nationals led to a run-scoring infield single by Joe Panik for a 6-1 advantage in the seventh. The Giants took a 7-3 lead in the eighth on an RBI single by Kevin Pillar off struggling reliever Trevor Rosenthal.

WHITE SOX 5, ROYALS 1

Yoan Moncada homered twice, and Reynaldo Lopez pitched six effective innings for his first win of the season as host Chicago stopped Kansas City. Lopez (1-2), who entered the game with a 12.15 ERA, permitted five hits and a run in his 104-pitch stint. He issued two walks and struck out five. Four relievers obtained the final nine outs as Chicago won for the fourth time in five games and clinched a victory in the three-game series that concludes today. Jorge Lopez (0-2) fanned 10 and walked two over six innings for Kansas City, but he couldn't keep the ball in the yard, allowing three homers among his eight hits. Lopez was touched for four runs.

RANGERS 5, ANGELS 0

Joey Gallo and Asdrubal Cabrera provided the power and right-hander Mike Minor (2-1) threw a three-hit

shutout as Texas shut down Los Angeles in Arlington, Texas. Gallo welcomed Angels reliever Dillon Peters in the sixth inning by crushing his second pitch, a low fastball right in Gallo's sweet spot, 439 feet into the right-field bleachers for a five-run cushion. In the fourth, Gallo helped to spoil the first start for Angels right-hander Jaime Barria (1-1), who was promoted to the big leagues Monday. Barria got two quick outs to start the inning and had Gallo down in the count, 1-2. But Gallo held off on three straight sliders to work a walk and set up Cabrera. He sent a deep fly to right that Kole Calhoun nearly snagged at the wall, but the ball bounced off his glove and out for Cabrera's sixth home run and a 3-0 Texas lead.

ROCKIES 8, PADRES 2

Nolan Arenado homered in a third straight game, and Jon Gray continued his mastery of San Diego as visiting Colorado completed a two-game series sweep. Arenado's two-run homer in the first, which followed a single by Garrett Hampson, produced the first runs scored by the Rockies in the first inning this season. Colorado would score five runs in the first three innings against Padres left-handed rookie Nick Margerivicius (1-2). Meanwhile, Gray (1-3) didn't allow a hit until Wil Myers led off the bottom of the fifth with his second homer in as many nights and his fifth of the season.

BREWERS 8, CARDINALS 4

Brandon Woodruff threw 5 2/3 innings and doubled home two runs for Milwaukee against visiting St. Louis as Woodruff (2-1) allowed two runs and seven hits while striking out six and walking two. He also improved to 5-for-7 at the plate this season, and the Milwaukee pitching staff is 12-for-31 overall. Christian Yelich also continued to make big contributions for Milwaukee, especially against the Cardinals. Yelich went 2-for-5 with a three-run homer, improving to 11-for-21 in six games against St. Louis this season with eight home runs and 18 RBIs. — Reuters

MEW wins Burgan Bank sponsored indoor football championship



The victorious Ministry of Electricity and Water team with officials.

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the largest supporters of the sports movements in Kuwait, recently sponsored the Ministry of Electricity and Water team who participated in the 2019 Ministries Indoor Football League that took place at Martyr Fahd Al-Ahmad Hall. The Ministry of Electricity and Water team won the championship league title.

During the awards ceremony, Deputy Director in the Public Authority for Sport, Mishaal Al-Hadba congratulated the Ministry of Electricity and Water team for their stellar performance in winning the title third year in a row as well as the Kuwait National Guard and Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs teams for their victory in second and third places.

The final match was attended by Deputy Director

in the Public Authority for Sport, Mishaal Al-Hadba, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity Mohammad Bushehri, Director in the Public Authority for Sport Hamed Al-Hazeem and representatives of the participating ministries.

The 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.

Djokovic survives Kohlschreiber scare in Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO: Novak Djokovic was severely tested before securing a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 win over Philipp Kohlschreiber to survive his opening match at the Monte Carlo Masters on Tuesday.

The winner of the last three Grand Slams made eight double faults, dropped serve four times and smashed a racquet after losing the second set to his German opponent in the second-round encounter.

The world number one was relieved to avoid defeat in his first match of the clay season.

"It was a difficult match, there were lots of breaks (a run of eight straight during the second and third sets)," Djokovic said.

"There were lots of ups and downs. It was not the prettiest of matches.

"He played well, but a win is a win. This was a tough first match of the clay season.

"I had to figure out how I needed to move, this kind of match can be expected. It was probably good for me to spend so long on the court."

Djokovic was able to avoid a second straight loss to Kohlschreiber after the 35-year-old beat him last month in the Indian Wells third round.

Djokovic, who lives in the Principality, is playing his 'home' event for the 13th time in 14 years, winning it in 2013 and 2015 and losing in the final on two other occasions.

Kohlschreiber lost his 12th match from 13 played against top-ranked opponents, but gave as good as he got against an out-of-sorts Djokovic, who needed five match points to go through.

PELLA POUNDS CILIC

Argentine Guido Pella dealt a second-round blow to seventh seed Marin Cilic, beating the Croatian 6-3, 5-7, 6-1. Defeat in just over two hours left 2014 US Open

winner Cilic with just one win from six matches since January's Australian Open, where he went out in the fourth round.

Pella, who won his first career match at the event in the first round on Sunday, emerged a winner as he played on the idyllic centre court for the first time.

"This is my best chance. I knew I had chances," the world number 35 said. "But I had to play well. I was a bit nervous at the start, it was my first time on this court. But playing here is a dream-it's unreal."

Cilic was playing here for the 11th straight year, with quarter-final showings in three of the previous four editions. Left-hander Pella came to the European clay with a title this season in Sao Paulo. He now stands 13-3 on the surface in 2019.

Pella moved into a winning position as he broke Cilic for the eighth time of the afternoon, winning a six-minute game before serving out the upset, saving a break point in the final game and wrapping up victory as Cilic fired wide.

Elsewhere, 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka collapsed after a strong start to a 0-6, 7-5, 6-3 loss to Italy's Marco Cecchinato, who reached the French Open semi-finals last year.

In the first round, Briton Cameron Norrie advanced in his debut match at the event, with the 23-year-old defeating Adrian Mannarino 6-4, 6-3.

The 56th-ranked Norrie was impressed with the dramatic setting of the iconic Monte Carlo Country Club venue which overlooks the Mediterranean from a cliff. "I like the conditions here. Everything is kind of on top of each other," he said. "It's pretty sick kind of playing tennis on the side of a mountain with a water view."

Canadian revelation Felix Auger-Aliassime advanced into a second-round contest with third seed Alexander Zverev after beating Argentine qualifier Juan Ignacio Londero 7-5, 7-6 (7/5).

The 18-year-old Auger-Aliassime, who reached last month's Miami semi-finals as a qualifier, now boasts a ranking of 33rd-up from 175th when he played here a year ago.

"I'm very happy to win my first match after Miami, because I didn't know what to expect," he said. Italian qualifier Lorenzo Sonego beat Russian eighth seed Karen Khachanov 7-6 (7/4), 6-4. — AFP

Sports

Jackets make history with 7-3 victory over Lightning

Fleury, Knights shut out Sharks to take 3-1 series lead

COLUMBUS: Rookie Alexandre Texier scored his first two playoff goals as the host Columbus Blue Jackets made history with a 7-3 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday night, wrapping up an Eastern Conference first-round series. The Lightning became the NHL's first Presidents' Trophy winner ever to be swept in a best-of-seven, opening-round playoff series. Tampa Bay had tied the all-time NHL record with 62 regular-season wins. Meanwhile, the Blue Jackets won a playoff series for the first time in franchise history. Columbus' Oliver Bjorkstrand scored the tiebreaking goal late in the second period, and Artemi Panarin, Texier and Matt Duchene added empty-net goals in the final two minutes. Pierre-Luc Dubois and Seth Jones also scored for the Blue Jackets. Goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky made 30 saves.

ISLANDERS 3, PENGUINS 1

Jordan Eberle scored for the fourth time in as many games, and Brock Nelson added the winner as visiting New York completed a first-round playoff sweep of Pittsburgh. The Islanders, who finished second in the Metropolitan Division, used a consistent formula of stifling defense, effective puck pursuit, strong goaltending from Robin Lehner and just enough offense to oust the Penguins, who were third in the division but had hopes of winning the Stanley Cup for the third time in four years. New York advances to the second round of the Eastern Conference postseason to face the winner of the Washington-Carolina series. The Capitals lead two games to one heading to Game 4 on Thursday.

JETS 2, BLUES 1 (OT)

Kyle Connor scored the overtime winner as visiting Winnipeg erased a third-period deficit to defeat St. Louis and even their opening-round Western Conference playoff series at two wins apiece. Game 5 will be Thursday in Winnipeg. The road team has won all four games so far in the series between the Central Division rivals who finished even with 99 points in the regular season. Off the rush in the extra frame, Mark Scheifele was denied on a golden chance, but he had the presence of mind to feed the puck to the slot for a wide-open Connor to bury the winner at 6:02. It was the first-ever playoff overtime victory in Jets franchise history. — Reuters



COLUMBUS: Oliver Bjorkstrand #28 of the Columbus Blue Jackets beats Andrei Vasilevskiy #88 of the Tampa Bay Lightning for a goal during the second period of Game Four of the Eastern Conference First Round during the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Nationwide Arena in Columbus. —AFP

Karunaratne to lead S Lanka in World Cup

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne has been appointed the skipper for the one-day squad for the upcoming World Cup, the country's cricket board announced yesterday.

The 30-year-old will lead the team while playing his first one-day game since 2015. Karunaratne's leadership was praised after Sri Lanka won a two-match

series against South Africa in February to become the first Asian team to win a Test series in the African nation.

Sri Lanka Cricket said Karunaratne's appointment was ratified by the Minister of Sports Harin Fernando.

Karunaratne has not played a one day international since the 2015 World Cup, but was tipped to take over from fast bowler Lasith Malinga who led the side in a 5-0 thrashing in the ODI series against South Africa following the test triumph.

He also answered his critics with a string of impressive performances with the bat during the recent domestic one-day tournament, scoring 165 runs in four matches at an average of 55.

The left-handed opening batsman has played 60 tests and 17 one-day games for Sri Lanka. — Reuters



Dimuth Karunaratne

Golovkin to return to ring on June 8

LOS ANGELES: Former middleweight world champion Gennady Golovkin will fight undefeated Canadian Steve Rolls in June as he returns to the ring following his defeat to Saul "Canelo" Alvarez last year, organisers said Tuesday.

Golovkin, 37 will take on Rolls on June 8 at Madison Square Garden, New York, as he launches a comeback that could culminate with a third fight against Alvarez later this year. The hard-hitting Kazakhstan veteran lost his WBC, IBO and WBA titles last year when he was defeated by Alvarez via majority deci-

sion at their Las Vegas rematch, one year after a controversial draw.

Since that defeat, Golovkin (38-1-1, 34 KOs) has signed a new six-fight deal with DAZN, the sports streaming platform. "I am very excited to be returning to the ring and bringing the Big Drama Show back to Madison Square Garden," Golovkin said. "The Garden's fans are fantastic."

The Toronto-based Rolls has compiled an unbeaten record with 19 wins out of 19 including 10 knockouts. Although Golovkin will start as a clear favourite, Rolls is adamant he has the tools to cause the former world champion problems.

"I've won national championships and represented my country, and Golovkin is just a man," the 35-year-old said. "I'm coming to win this fight and put my name among the best middleweights in the world." — AFP



Gennady Golovkin

W Indies rope in Sarwan to work with batsmen ahead of WCup

LONDON: West Indies have brought on board former top order batsman Ramnaresh Sarwan to help prepare their players for the 50-over World Cup in England and Wales. Sarwan, who scored nearly 12,000 international runs across formats, joined the camp in Barbados where West Indies are currently preparing for the tri-nation series with Bangladesh and Ireland in Dublin next month.

"I've come here to act as kind of a mentor to the players and try my best to assist them in any technical ways and with any shortcomings where I think they can improve," Sarwan said in a Cricket West Indies statement. "Our batsmen have struggled... with rotating the strike, so I'm trying to see how best we can get them to improve in this area. It's not an overnight fix, but it's important to share ideas with them, so they have something to build on."

West Indies head coach Floyd Reifer said it was important to have a "finisher" like Sarwan working with the batsmen. "We're hoping he can help the batsmen get a better understanding of how to finish games—the mindset, how to approach batting first, how to approach batting last," Reifer said.

"He fitted in very well. He did a lot of talking and a lot of work with the batsmen." West Indies have also added former Pakistan spinner Mushtaq Ahmed and former fast bowlers Corey Collymore and Roddy Estwick to their coaching staff for the two tournaments. The two-times champions begin their World Cup campaign on May 31 against 1992 winners Pakistan at Trent Bridge in Nottingham. — Reuters

Kane's boyhood team-mate turns Chinese history-maker

SHANGHAI: Nico Yennaris was born in working-class east London, played with Harry Kane at Arsenal as a boy and is an England youth international. While Kane moved to Tottenham Hotspur and became England captain, Yennaris's career has taken a very different direction, becoming the first naturalised player to score in the Chinese Super League (CSL).

In January he made Beijing his home — 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles) from Leytonstone in east London—and the midfielder even has a new name. "It's the first in history so it's something that I can be proud of," the 25-year-old known as Li Ke in China told state television after his milestone goal Sunday for CSL leaders Beijing Guoan.

Born to a Chinese mother and Cypriot father, Yennaris, who is nine weeks older than fellow east Londoner Kane, now wants to help his new country become a footballing force. "I hope to help Chinese football and hopefully one day I can play in the national team as well and we will try to get to a World Cup," he said in his unmistakably London accent.

Yennaris, who signed for Beijing from Brentford in England's second tier in January for a reported £4.95 million (\$6.5 million), is eligible to represent China because he played for England only up to under-19, not the senior side. Chinese football this season began bringing in naturalised players, with Yennaris joined at Beijing by Norwegian-born John Hou Saeter. Yennaris will be on a vastly improved salary in the Chinese capital but he will have to dump his British passport because China does not recognise dual nationality.

That means no going back now for Yennaris, who is yet to get a call-up for his adopted country but would improve a team ranked 74th by FIFA, a rung above tiny Cape Verde who have population of 500,000 compared to China's 1.4 billion. He will though have to cover up his arm tattoos because the Chinese government frowns upon them. China



BEIJING: This photo taken on April 14, 2019 shows Nico Yennaris (L), also known as Li Ke, of Beijing Guoan controlling the ball against Henan Jianye during their Chinese Super League match in Beijing. — AFP

failed to score or win a point in their only World Cup appearance, in 2002.

If the stars align—and China improve markedly—Yennaris could face Kane at the World Cup, Yennaris in the red of China, Kane in England white. They played for the same club in east London and were recruited as boys by Arsenal, although Kane was released after one season at the age of eight. Yennaris made a handful of appearances for Arsene Wenger's side including 45 minutes against Manchester United in the Premier League in 2012. Yennaris and striker Kane remain on good terms. "When we see each other face to face and bump into each other we say 'hello' and we always speak," Yennaris said.

Yennaris had a couple of loan spells in the lower tiers of English football before moving permanently to west London club Brentford in 2014. Five years later came the life-changing opportunity to make the radical switch to China, where Yennaris is on a steep learning curve, especially with the language. — AFP

Uncapped all-rounder Archer left out of 15-man WCup squad

LONDON: England have not picked uncapped all-rounder Jofra Archer in a preliminary 15-man World Cup squad but have named him in squads for the warm-up games against Pakistan and Ireland. Barbados-born Archer, who shone for Sussex last season and in Australia's Big Bash Twenty20 competition for Hobart Hurricanes, is eligible for national selection under new England and Wales Cricket Board residency rules.

The 24-year-old could get a World Cup call-up if he impresses in the warm-up games as changes can be made to the squad until May 23, seven days before their tournament opener against South Africa at The Oval.

Joe Denly, whose last ODI appearance came in October 2009, retained his place in the World Cup group as a backup spinning all-rounder. Although he could be among the pool of players, including Liam Plunkett and Tom Curran, who will feel the pressure if Archer performs well over the next few weeks.

Archer's ability to bowl at more than 90 miles per hour and his lower-order power-hitting skills have earned him a number of high-profile admirers, including England regulars Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler.

"The selection panel has been impressed with Jofra Archer's performances in domestic and franchise cricket. He is a very talented and exciting cricketer," national selector Ed Smith said.

England play Ireland in a one-dayer on May 3 before a five-match ODI series and a Twenty20 against Pakistan. "In line with ICC (International Cricket Council) regulations, we have to name a preliminary squad of 15 for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup before April 23," Smith added.

"However, all 17 players named in the ODIs against Pakistan can stake a claim to be in the final 15-man squad, finalised at the end of that series." Fast bowler Chris Jordan, Archer's Sussex team mate, could also make a comeback to the ODI set-up against Pakistan, despite playing his last 50-overs game for England in September 2016.

"Chris Jordan, a regular in IT20 squads over the past few years, has continued to develop as a cricketer—as we saw in the IT20s in the West Indies. He fully deserves his return to the ODI squad," Smith said.

"With regard to resting players, we are conscious of managing player workloads leading into such an important summer so that players are in the best possible condition for the World Cup. That was also a factor in the way we have selected these three squads."

England's World Cup squad: Eoin Morgan (captain), Moeen Ali, Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler (wicket-keeper), Tom Curran, Joe Denly, Alex Hales, Liam Plunkett, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, David Willey, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood.

England squad for Pakistan ODI series: Eoin Morgan, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Tom Curran, Joe Denly, Chris Jordan, Alex Hales, Liam Plunkett, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, David Willey, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood.

England squad for Ireland ODI and Pakistan T20: Eoin Morgan, Jofra Archer, Sam Billings, Tom Curran, Joe Denly, Chris Jordan, Alex Hales, Liam Plunkett, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, James Vince, David Willey, Mark Wood. — Reuters

Sports

Careless United undone by Messi double as Barca cruise into semis

Messi now has his 109th and 110th Champions League goals

BARCELONA: Lionel Messi pounced on two Manchester United mistakes to score twice and end their hopes of another comeback at Camp Nou as Barcelona breezed into the Champions League semi-finals on Tuesday. After an excellent start, United were undone twice in four minutes by Messi, who first nicked the ball off the careless Ashley Young and then watched as a weak shot from distance squirmed underneath David de Gea.

Philippe Coutinho, in perhaps his best performance of the season, added a third with a curling effort into the top corner and by the end, an outclassed United might have been relieved the score was not more traumatic than 3-0, 4-0 on aggregate.

"We had five uncomfortable minutes because they came out strong," said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde. "But then there were another 85 minutes where we weren't bad." A dizzying opening spell, in which Marcus Rashford had hit the crossbar, was long-forgotten, even if it could offer Barca's next opponents some encouragement.

Liverpool, who take a 2-0 lead to Porto, are now the most likely obstacle between them and their first Champions League final since they last won this tournament in 2015. Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane might feel emboldened.

Instead, United's pair of early errors made this another night about Messi and ensured any faint hopes of repeating the comeback against Paris Saint-Germain, or even the famous 1999 rescue act against Bayern Munich, on this same pitch, were dashed.

"We said all along this was not going to change overnight," United's coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said. "In the next few years it is going to be a massive effort to get to the level of Barcelona and these sorts of teams." Messi now has his 109th and 110th Champions League goals and, potentially, three extra matches to

reduce the gap on Cristiano Ronaldo's 126, after Juventus were dumped out by Ajax. Barcelona's fans celebrated that too.

Solskjaer had urged his strikers to be more lethal here but it felt ominous that even before kick-off, Rashford, Anthony Martial, Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Sanchez had hit 42 goals this season, while Messi on his own had 43.

Around an hour before kick-off, Alex Ferguson was on the side of the pitch, shaking hands with Ryan Giggs and sharing words with Solskjaer, the scorer of the winning goal against Munich here 20 years ago.

They could have hardly have asked for a better start. United were brilliant for eight minutes and could have been ahead within 30 seconds as Rashford raced onto a curving Paul Pogba pass and toed away a shot, which Marc-Andre ter Stegen bravely left to graze his own crossbar.

MAGIC MESSI

Barca were flustered, so much so the crowd even cheered with relief when Arthur Melo played his team's first convincing pass. Then, Barcelona had their own eight-minute flurry as United almost conceded a penalty, ruled out after Fred took the ball before bringing down Ivan Rakitic, and then did concede, twice, to Messi. Both could have been avoided, even if Young's turn on the edge of his own box was punished in devastating fashion. Young lunged in to atone for his mistake but Messi skipped away from him, poked it through Fred's legs and then whipped the ball into the corner.

The second was simpler. Fred and Scott McTominay closed in on Coutinho and the ball spilled out to Messi, whose dribbling shot with his right foot should have drawn a routine save. Instead, De Gea let it squirm under his body for 2-0.

Pogba lashed out at the increasingly influential



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (C) scores during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final second leg football match between Barcelona and Manchester United at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

Arthur and Barca could have had a third before half-time, De Gea scrambling across to save on the line when Sergi Roberto should have finished.

Messi could have had his hat-trick too after Luis Suarez found him with a superb cutback and there was an almost comical sequence in the second half when the Argentinian played with his United chasers before finally being bundled over by McTominay.

Rashford might have made it interesting if he had controlled Pogba's ball over the top but Barcelona were in exhibition mode, helped by a vintage Coutinho curler after he had cut inside from the left.

Messi even attempted a bicycle kick and there were celebrations from the home fans when news went round that Ajax had taken the lead in Turin. They believe this is their year. — AFP

Juventus crash out to Ajax young guns

TURIN: Even Cristiano Ronaldo was not enough for Juventus to end their 23-year wait for the European title as they crashed out in the Champions League quarter-finals for a second consecutive year. Juventus splashed out 100 million euros (\$117 million) on the five-time Champions League winner last summer and the Portuguese star headed in his 126th Champions League goal to put the home team in front on Tuesday.

But a devastating young Ajax team, spearheaded by 19-year-old defender Matthijs De Ligt, ran riot in the second half in Turin to seal a famous 3-2 aggregate victory. "Apocalypse," read the headline in daily Corriere dello sport, as Juventus shares plunged 15 percent yesterday on the Milan stock exchange.

"Not even a huge investment like Ronaldo was enough to win a title that Juve have been searching for since 1996," the sports daily added. Juventus have lost five times in the final since 1996 when they won their last title, at the expense of Ajax.

Ronaldo was bought to change that and was handed an annual salary of 31 million euros. He has won the title five times and scored a 97th-minute penalty for Real

Madrid against Juventus last season in the quarter-finals. Coach Massimiliano Allegri said he had no regrets, blaming injuries for the team's failure to progress. "Football isn't maths," said Allegri. "Ronaldo gave us a lot during the season. We signed him to increase our chances of winning the Champions League, but in football one plus one does not always make two, it can also be either six or zero."

"I have always said that you have to arrive at the right time in the best condition, when you reach the quarter-final, you need every player. "We've been in a bit of an emergency situation for a while and that can only be sustained for so long. "We were missing four or five players."

For the first time since 2010, Ronaldo will not be in the Champions League semi-finals. And he held his head in his hands in despair as he slumped to the pitch at the Allianz Stadium. He had single-handedly lifted Juventus into the quarter-final with a stunning hat-trick in the second leg against Atletico Madrid.

But he was unable to lift his team to a Champions League title he had won in the three previous seasons and in 2014 with Real Madrid, as well as with Manchester United 11 years ago. He holds the record for Champions League goals with 126. That total includes 65 goals in the knockout rounds, another record. Rival Lionel Messi is second on 110 goals after his double for Barcelona against Manchester United on Tuesday. "Ajax deserved to qualify and you saw that on

the pitch," said Juventus president Andrea Agnelli, who said Allegri would be continuing as coach. Ironically Agnelli—who is also president of the European Clubs Association (ECA) — is the driving force behind moves to change the Champions League and make it even harder for teams from smaller countries, like Ajax, to qualify. Agnelli, 43, stressed that the team was growing. "For our part, we are aware of having been in the Champions League quarter-finals for five or six years and are proud to continue this path," said Agnelli.

Although Juventus are on course to seal an eighth consecutive Serie A title next weekend, they are out of the Coppa Italia, which they had won the four previous seasons. "I'm looking at the big picture," Agnelli said.

"We played a great return match against Atletico, and just a few years ago Juventus were 43rd in the European rankings, today we are fifth and this is the sign of the progress that continues. "A few years ago, the Champions League was a dream, this summer it was a goal and it will be next year too."

Ronaldo was a heavy investment with the club announcing expected losses for this season, having gone 19.2 million euros into the red for the 2017/2018 campaign. Ajax, meanwhile, reached their first semi-final since 1997.

"You could see that Juve were a little scared of us and so were Real Madrid," said coach Erik ten Hag. "It is very difficult to play against our style of football, as we have very technically-gifted players." — AFP

Ramsey in Italy rehearsal ahead of Juventus move

PARIS: Aaron Ramsey will get an advance taste of life in Italy as Arsenal look to finish off Napoli in today's return leg of their Europa League quarter-final tie, ahead of his summer move to Serie A giants Juventus.

The Welsh midfielder, out of contract with Arsenal in June, will end an 11-year association with the Gunners after agreeing a jaw-dropping deal with Juve reportedly worth £400,000 (\$515,000) per week over four seasons.

Reduced to a bit-part player under Unai Emery, Ramsey's recent form—he has three goals in his last six starts—has helped him regain a regular spot in the Arsenal side.

The 28-year-old, set to follow in the footsteps of countrymen John Charles and Ian Rush by switching England for Turin, excelled in last week's 2-0 win over Napoli and struck the opening goal.

"We've given ourselves a great opportunity in the first leg—now it's important to stick together and hopefully see out this quarter-final," said Ramsey.

"They've proved that they're a quality team and are second in Serie A, so they're a tough team to play against. "From a few years back, we know that they're a tough team to play against and it will be a difficult place to go."

With Ramsey set to join soon-to-be Juventus teammate Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Neymar as one of the best paid players in the world, the Welshman's Arsenal farewell could coincide with the final in Baku on May 29.

"I haven't thought about that but hopefully," said Ramsey, who departed Cardiff for Arsenal after appearing in the 2008 FA Cup final.

"We've started this first leg well so hopefully we can finish the job and get ourselves in the hat for the next round." Arsenal coach Emery, who won the Europa League three times in a row with Sevilla from 2014-16, praised the unyielding commitment shown by Ramsey, a fan favourite at the Emirates, in his final months at the



LONDON: File photo shows Arsenal's Welsh midfielder Aaron Ramsey celebrates scoring the team's first goal during the UEFA Europa League quarter final. — AFP

club. "It was not easy for him after he signed (for Juventus) to finish thinking about his future, but his focus is to help us and his attitude has been amazing towards each training session," said Emery.

"He wants to do something important for the supporters, and I want to do something important with him in his last matches here with his Arsenal heart." Chelsea, the 2013 Europa League champions, will be expected to overcome Slavia Prague at Stamford Bridge after a narrow 1-0 victory in the Czech capital.

Maurizio Sarri's side lost ground in the race for a top-four finish in the Premier League following a 2-0 defeat at Liverpool, but the Blues are unbeaten in 14 Europa League games. Nevertheless, the Italian has

warned his players not to underestimate Slavia, who are hunting a second Czech title in three seasons.

"We need to think that the second leg will be difficult because these opponents are really very dangerous also away," said Sarri. Benfica head to Germany with a 4-2 advantage over Eintracht Frankfurt thanks to a hat-trick by 19-year-old starlet Joao Felix in the first leg in Lisbon.

Felix became the youngest Portuguese and Benfica player to score three times in Europe, surpassing the great Eusebio. Valencia are in control of their all-Spanish clash with Villarreal after stoppage-time goals by Daniel Wass and Goncalo Guedes gave them a 3-1 lead heading to Mestalla. —AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE		
SSC Napoli v Arsenal	beIN SPORTS HD 1	22:00
Valencia v Villarreal	beIN SPORTS HD 3	22:00
Eintracht Frankfurt v SL Benfica	beIN SPORTS	22:00
Chelsea FC v SK Slavia Prague	beIN SPORTS HD 2	22:00

Cardiff sink relegation rivals Brighton to boost survival bid

BRIGHTON: Cardiff kept alive their bid to secure Premier League survival with a crucial 2-0 win against fellow strugglers Brighton on Tuesday. Neil Warnock's side would have been pushed to the brink of relegation with a defeat at the Amex Stadium.

But goals either side of half-time from Nathaniel Mendez-Laing and Sean Morrison moved third-bottom Cardiff to within two points of fourth-bottom Brighton. Brighton have managed just two top-flight goals at home in 2019 and a fourth successive league loss keeps them in danger of being overhauled by Cardiff.

The remaining hope for Brighton is they have five games to play compared to Cardiff's four. Albion face Tottenham, Arsenal and champions Manchester City during a tough run-in. With Liverpool and Manchester United still to come this season, anything but a win would have been disastrous for Cardiff.

"We had a few pundits say it would be our final game in the Premier League but we are alive and kicking," Warnock said. "We deserved tonight. I can't say anything better about the players. They have been great for me."

"We came out of the traps and enjoyed it. We are far from finished yet." Albion boss Chris Hughton added: "It's still in our hands, but it is a difficult feeling because of the result. "My job is to lift spirits. This is a proper fight. We have to make sure we turn it round by staying together, digging deep and making ourselves hard to beat." Solly March had rippled the side-netting inside two minutes for Brighton. Referee Andre Marriner waved away penalty appeals when Lewis Dunk was wrestled to the ground by Bruno Ecuele Manga following a Pascal Gross free-kick. But Warnock's decision to recall Mendez-Laing was rewarded in the 22nd minute when he drove forward on the counter-attack, exchanged passes with Junior Hoilett and curled a superb strike into the top corner from 20 yards.

After Brighton were booted off at half-time, Cardiff doubled their advantage five minutes after the restart. Spanish midfielder Victor Camarasa delivered an inviting free-kick deep into the Albion area, where centre-back Morrison headed home for his first goal in almost a year. Brighton substitute Jose Izquierdo almost had an immediate impact when he laid the ball off for Glenn Murray to smash narrowly over the crossbar from 18 yards. Romania forward Florin Andone threatened to halve the deficit, only to be thwarted by a fine last-ditch block from the impressive Morrison. Murray then nodded March's right-wing cross against the right post late on, leaving the Cardiff fans celebrating only their third away win of the season. — AFP

25 Host Yankees pummel Boston Red Sox in season's first meeting



26 Karunaratne to lead S Lanka in World Cup



27 Ramsey in Italy rehearsal ahead of Juventus move



Nuggets, Raptors even series

Blazers go up 2-0 on Thunder with 3-pointer barrage



DENVER: Bryn Forbes #11 of the San Antonio Spurs passes the ball against the Denver Nuggets during Game Two of Round One of the 2019 NBA Playoffs at the Pepsi Center in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

DENVER: Jamal Murray scored 21 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter, and the host Denver Nuggets rallied from down 19 to beat the San Antonio Spurs 114-105 in Game 2 of their Western Conference first-round playoff series on Tuesday night.

Nikola Jokic had 21 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists. Gary Harris scored 23 points, and Paul Millsap had 20 points for Denver. The Nuggets tied the series 1-1 and ended San Antonio's seven-game playoff winning streak in Denver. DeMar DeRozan scored 31 points and LaMarcus Aldridge had 24 points for the Spurs. Murray, who missed his first eight shots, hit five consecutive shots in the fourth quarter, including two straight and a pair of free throws that gave Denver a 99-97 lead, its first advan-

tage since 17-16. The Nuggets were ahead by three before Murray drained two 3-pointers to make it 110-101.

RAPTORS 111, MAGIC 82

Kawhi Leonard scored 37 points on 15-for-22 shooting from the field, and Toronto defeated visiting Orlando to even its first-round Eastern Conference playoff series at one game apiece.

Pascal Siakam added 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors, who never trailed. Kyle Lowry contributed 22 points and seven assists for Toronto while Serge Ibaka chipped in with 13 points and eight rebounds off the bench.

Aaron Gordon scored 20 points for the Magic, who split the regular-season series

2-2 with the Raptors. Terrence Ross added 15 points for Orlando while Evan Fournier scored 10 points.

TRAIL BLAZERS 114, THUNDER 94

CJ McCollum and Damian Lillard combined for 62 points as the Portland Trail Blazers swept to a 114-94 victory over the visiting Oklahoma City Thunder on Tuesday night. McCollum scored 33 points and Lillard added 29 as the Trail Blazers seized a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven, first-round Western Conference playoff series. Maurice Harkless chipped in 14 points and nine rebounds for Portland, which led by as many as 22 points in the fourth quarter.

Game 3 is set for tomorrow night at

Oklahoma City. Paul George tallied 27 points with eight rebounds for the Thunder, who led by as many as 10 points in the first half. Russell Westbrook collected 14 points, 11 assists and nine boards for Oklahoma City but shot only 5 of 20 from the field.

Portland won the game from 3-point range, making 13 of 32 attempts from beyond the arc. The Thunder were 5 of 28 and have made only 10 of 61 3-point attempts in the series. The teams went into intermission tied at 54. Lillard and McCollum each had 16 points for Portland while George led Oklahoma City with 16.

The Blazers went ahead 72-64 on a 3-pointer by Harkless midway through the third quarter. Portland increased the difference to 85-73 on back-to-back treys by

Seth Curry. Lillard hit a step-back 3-pointer as time expired to give Portland a 91-75 edge going into the final period.

Oklahoma City was within 100-86 after a 3-pointer by George with 6:02 to play. Portland's Meyers Leonard answered with a trey, and the Thunder got no closer than 14 points the rest of the way. The Thunder jumped to a 20-13 lead. Portland used a 9-0 run to go ahead 22-20. The Thunder took a 31-26 advantage into the second quarter.

Oklahoma City extended the margin to 46-36 midway through the second. Lillard converted a four-point play as the Blazers drew within 46-42, but the Thunder pushed the difference out to 52-45. McCollum's 3-pointer as time expired tied the count heading into halftime. — Reuters

Iranian female fighter cancels return home after arrest warrant

PARIS: The first Iranian woman to contest an official boxing bout has cancelled plans to return home after an arrest warrant was issued for her in Tehran, her representative said yesterday as Iranian authorities issued a denial.

Sadaf Khadem beat a French boxer, Anne Chauvin, in the bout, which took place in western France on Saturday. Her representative, Clara Dallay, told Reuters that authorities had issued arrest warrants against her and fight organiser Mahyar Monshipour.

Monshipour, an Iranian-born former boxing world champion who is now a French citizen, set up the bout after Iran opened the door to allowing women to box. Hossein Soori, the head of Iran's boxing federation, denied Khadem would be arrested, attributing the information to "media linked to Saudi Arabia".

"Mrs Khadem is not a member of (Iran's) organised

athletes for boxing, and from the boxing federation's perspective all her activities are personal," he was quoted as saying by the semi-official ISNA news agency.

Iranian women's participation in sports events is heavily restricted, though authorities are beginning to give ground in some areas after years of campaigning by pressure groups. The federation now allows women to register to box, on condition that they be coached by a woman and wear the Islamic hijab while competing. To date, no bouts between female fighters have taken place in Iran. Monshipour was planning to travel back to Iran with Khadem this week. France's foreign ministry could not immediately comment on the case. Franco-Iranian relations are in a tense phase after comments by France's ambassador to the United States last week on Iran's nuclear programme sparked an angry reaction from Tehran. — Reuters



Sadaf Khadem

Miller adverse doping sample puts Joshua bout in doubt

LONDRES: Jarrell Miller could miss out on a shot at Anthony Joshua's world heavyweight titles after the American produced an "adverse finding" in a drug-testing sample. Miller, who is undefeated in his 24 professional fights, was due to take on the Briton at Madison Square Garden for the WBA, IBF and WBO titles on June 1. However, both camps have confirmed the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association (VADA) had informed them that Miller had returned the results from a test on March 20. "We have been informed by VADA that there has been an adverse finding in Jarrell Miller's sample collected on March 20th, 2019," Eddie Hearn, Joshua's promoter, tweeted. "We are working with all

relevant parties and will update with more details soon. AJ's preparation continues for June 1st at MSG." Miller is expected to face a hearing before the New York State Athletic Commission to decide whether he will be allowed to fight.

"We are in the process of obtaining further information about VADA's finding and will have more to say soon on this developing situation," Miller's camp, Salita Promotions, said in a statement via Twitter. "In the meantime Jarrell continues to train for his June 1 fight against Anthony Joshua."

Miller previously served a nine-month ban from the California State Athletic Commission after testing positive for methylhexanamine when kickboxing in 2014. During their promotional tour for the fight, Miller revealed that both fighters had agreed to between 10 and 12 weeks of drug testing in the build-up to the bout.

Joshua, during the London leg of the tour, said: "I am on (drug testing scheme) ADAMS whereabouts, they have to know where I am for an hour every day and could walk in anytime. They can turn up any time during the day and that is a lifetime commitment. I have been on that since 2012 and I pay £40,000-a-fight to be tested by VADA two times a week." — AFP