

Friday Times

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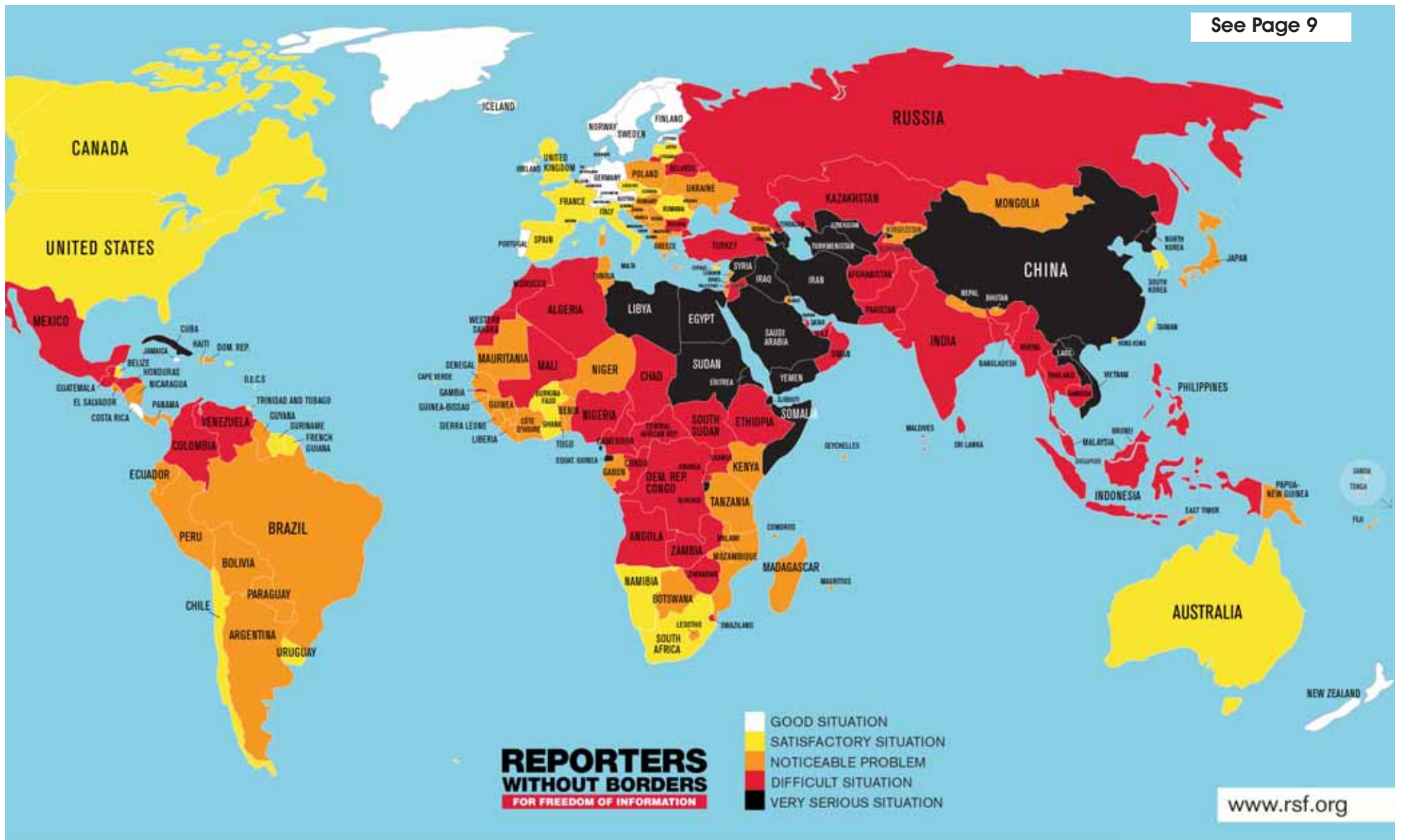


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Kuwait ranks 108th worldwide in 2019 Press Freedom Index

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Local

Expatriate resignations



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai
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Reports of mass resignations by expatriates in Kuwait, especially teachers, doctors and engineers, sparked a debate over the reasons for their sudden decision to leave. I believe these jobs are important because of the shortage of workers in such fields negatively affects and delays work. For example, one daily said the education ministry recently received some resignations of expatriate teachers, especially of scientific subjects such as physics, chemistry and computers, and most of them did not give reasons for leaving.

Other reports spoke about resignations by engineers and doctors, but I did not find a specific number or percentage that could lead to panic or anxiety. Maybe these resignations are normal, and were previously not under focus. I believe that it is the right of any expatriate in Kuwait to submit their resignation if it is important and beneficial to their personal interests or for any other reason, even if they have got better offers and privileges in



Maybe these resignations are normal, and were previously not under focus

another country. This is their right and no one can argue about it; but the reasons to resign are important.

So, when a doctor or engineer chooses to leave the country, can the reason be their eagerness for a better salary, or is there something else that needs attention? I think the resignations of doctors need a review of their salaries and benefits given to them and their families, which may have led to their decision to leave.

I wonder if the conditions of expatriates in Kuwait are a warning of further resignations in other sectors. What sectors are likely to be abandoned by expatriates? Do expatriates resign as a result of increased charges including health fees, rent and school fees? Have some of the expatriates started to send back their families and live alone in Kuwait because they cannot afford to live here as a family?

These resignations have caused controversy. Some considered the issue of resignations as normal that should not cause concern, but there are those who see the matter, especially of teachers, as a danger to the educational process because a shortage of teachers can affect students and the educational process. Whether those teachers choose to work in other countries or return to their home countries, we will lose hands that we may not be able to replace immediately.

We in Kuwait should pay attention to the conditions of expatriates working in all sectors, with a focus on the jobs that we cannot replace easily. I think this issue should not pass as mere news. Kuwait will continue to need skilled and experienced workers.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Antique cameras for sale are displayed at the Friday Market in AlRai. — KUNA

Entire generation in danger of being lost



Kaffeeklatsch

By Shakir Reshamwala

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According to a report this week, nearly a fifth of all students in Kuwait have experimented with drugs. The Director of Drugs Control General Department Brig Bader Al-Ghadouri said in a statement that 18.6 percent of the 22,434 public and private school students surveyed recently have abused drugs. Meanwhile, drugs-related deaths increased to 116 in 2018 after 68 such cases were recorded in 2017.

These are shocking figures. Even if only a portion of them get hooked, the fact that so many schoolchildren have dabbled with narcotics is very disturbing. The statistics also raise some troubling questions. Firstly, how can thousands of students get access to drugs so easily? It's not as if drug pushers are lurking on every street corner or dark alley. This means some students have contacts with clandestine networks and dealers, and through them other students procure drugs.

Secondly, when it comes to money, we all know students don't have much of it. So from where do they get the cash to feed this expensive habit? Once their pocket money runs out, addicts have no option but to steal from their parents and friends or resort to petty crime. Thirdly, the report reveals a degradation of the social, familial and moral fabric. Most parents in the country - both Kuwaiti and expat - have fulltime jobs, resulting in delegating the upbringing of children to maids, nannies or preschools and nurseries.

Deprived of a loving environment at home, many chil-

dren seek approval from their peers. If they keep bad company, they can easily be sucked into a whorl of addiction and thievery. This has a domino effect - the students' grades suffer and they may even drop out of school. Even if they manage to keep out of trouble and don't run afoul of the law, the lack of a proper education will hamper them for the rest of their lives, trapping them in a vicious quagmire of depression, poverty and low self-esteem.

Kuwait is a conservative society, and issues like drug addiction are not usually spoken about openly. Having an addict in the family is a source of shame, which may lead to a reluctance in seeking help. Rehab options are also few. Moreover, expat families fear that instead of their addict children being viewed as victims, they may be treated as criminals, especially if anti-social behavior is involved. This can lead to a summary deportation, further breaking apart an already shattered family.

The report should be a wakeup call for all stakeholders in the fight against abuse of drugs - parents, teachers and the authorities. Children should be made aware of the dangers of drugs and the importance of focusing on their education. Instead of parking them in front of a screen or leaving them to their devices - both literally and figuratively - parents should encourage their kids to pursue extracurricular activities and hobbies that keep them constructively engaged and develop their talents. An idle mind is indeed the devil's workshop. We all have to save our children from the scourge of drugs before it's too late.

Kuwait Times

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Photo Essay

The hands of work



Much has been said in recent years about the imbalance of locals vs expats in the demographics of Kuwait. Kuwaitization has aimed to rectify this imbalance by encouraging more locals to take up work typically performed by expatriates.

When it comes to the actual work done, we contend that it is the skill, dedication, training and competence of the hands doing the work - and not the nationality of their owner - that matters.

Without weighing into the discussion, Kuwait Times' photographers have conducted a random photographic survey of the work done by people living in Kuwait. Here is the results for your consideration.

— Photos by Joseph Shagra and Yasser Al-Zayyat



Local



Local

Darkness in Kuwait

Residents decry lack of street lights in Farwaniya block 5

By Ben Garcia

Block 5 in Farwaniya has several large residential buildings and businesses like baqalas, restaurants, pharmacies and auto garages, but unfortunately no streetlights. The streets are barely lit by adjoining establishments and buildings, and are full of cars parked all over. Adding to the grim situation of the area are huge containers and trucks parked in empty lots.

"I've been here for 20 years and I haven't seen streetlights since," an elderly Arab man told Kuwait Times. "It's dangerous in the night to walk, especially for women, since there are lots of parked trucks. I hope the municipality will be able to do something and install the much-needed street-

lights here," he added.

An Indian family told Kuwait Times that when night falls, they never allow their children to go to the baqalas. "I fear for the safety of several kids who I sometimes see playing outside, as they cannot be seen by passing cars and can get hit. Also, there are some criminal activities going on here because the suspects can easily hide in the dark. I hope this place will get the attention from the municipality. We have reported this issue many times, but there hasn't been any action yet," they said.

The Indian couple said from 6 pm to around 11 pm, there is brightness from surrounding structures, but some of these buildings and baqalas switch off their lights when they close their establishments. "Walking in the night here is really dan-

gerous. I've heard about many snatching and robbing incidents by people in cars who target pedestrians," the couple said. "After midnight, you can barely find any lights here. You fear for the safety of your loved ones - you could be the next victim or get hit by cars."

A Bangladeshi working as cleaner whose accommodation is located in the area said he is used to the same environment in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. "I think these areas are almost similar. The only difference here is a lack of garbage on the streets. It is cleaner here compared to Jleeb, but more dangerous. After the shops close, we only see darkness," he told Kuwait Times. Since there is no designated parking for residents, cars are parked almost everywhere haphazardly, and many portions of the streets are in a deplorable state.

Antiquities at Kuwait's **Friday Market**

Vendors at the antiquities market display fine accessories, old household items, pottery, pieces of furniture and weaving product at Kuwait's Friday Market. — KUNA photos

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Local

Two MPs file to grill Saleh over 'financial, administrative violations'

Disgruntled lawmakers threaten to grill premier, other ministers

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: In a surprising move, Islamist opposition MPs Mohammad Hayef and Mohammad Al-Mutair yesterday filed to grill Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh over alleged financial and administrative violations amid a flurry of warnings to grill the prime minister and other ministers by disgruntled lawmakers. The two lawmakers had not made any indication that they were planning to grill Saleh who is one of the most senior ministers in the cabinet and his ministry is responsible for a number of key state institutions.

During the assembly session on Wednesday,

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kundari said he was going to grill Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah over the government failures, while MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said he planned to file to grill Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri over alleged violations and corruption.

Newcomer MP Bader Al-Mulla said he will file to grill Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf in early June while Hayef himself had threatened to grill Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah over mistreatment of 'bedoons' or stateless people and other alleged violations.

The flurry of threats to grill the premier and several ministers has raised concern about the fate

of the national assembly and the possibility of dissolution. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem however insisted on Wednesday the assembly will not be dissolved and will complete its term.

The grilling accuses the minister of responsibility for alleged wide-spread corruption in several state departments which threatens their reputation and their very existence. They charged that the government has done little to curb the spread of corruption and adopted wrong policies in this regard to the extent that the structures of state institutions have become highly sluggish.

The two lawmakers also charged in the grilling that the minister has violated the law in admitting

Kuwaiti lawyers at the Fatwa and Legislative Department, the state legal department under the minister's authority, and made lots of exceptions which resulted in unfair treatment to many Kuwaiti job seekers. According to the grilling, the minister stands accused of squandering public funds and encouraging corruption as a result of the Central Agency for Public Tenders, which is responsible for awarding state projects, awarding state contracts to a small number of contractors who did not fulfill conditions which resulted in wasting public funds. The grilling will be listed on the agenda of next assembly session on April 30 but its debate could be delayed for two more weeks.

Embassy celebrates Queen Elizabeth II's 93rd birthday

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The British Embassy in Kuwait hosted a festive occasion to celebrate the 93rd birthday of Queen Elizabeth II. The event was held at the ambassador's residence in Dasman with the attendance coming from various diplomatic missions, ministers, local government officials, civil society and more.

Addressing the crowd, British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport lauded the relations between two countries "spanning for generations," and the bonds of friendship between the two peoples continues in younger generation. "Kuwait and Britain have always stood side by side in all aspects," the ambassador said. "We are proud that British armed forces have served bravely alongside our Kuwaiti and coalition friends to deter aggression and to restore Kuwait's sovereignty and independence. The commitment remains as solid as ever." He added that one solid proof of friendship is evident in the form of education. "Kuwaitis are now studying in the

UK more than ever before. This year, the Northern Consortium of British universities will launch the first ever Foundation Year course in Kuwait. UK is considered by many Kuwaitis as their second home," he added.

The envoy also applauded His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision for Kuwait, in which he noted that with Kuwait-Britain partnership, they can be part of making that vision a reality. "[We are] supporting the modernization and diversification of Kuwait's economy in whatever way we can," he added. "Kuwait has showed great faith by setting up the first Sovereign Wealth Fund in London. The Kuwait Investment Office in London, managing its portfolio rights across Europe, continues to go from strength to strength. We have faith in the Kuwait vision for its future and want to be part of it."

He also congratulated His Highness the Amir for completing 13 years as the ruler of Kuwait, and for the award given to him by the World Bank for his "untiring support for global peace, economic and social development." He also mentioned that this year, the two nations are celebrating the 120th anniversary of treaty of protection, which is now known as the 'Treaty of Friendship.' He also thanked several companies who sponsored this year's event.

Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and other senior officials attended the ceremony. Jarallah hailed the strong friendship with the United Kingdom, re-



KUWAIT: Officials cut the cake during the British Embassy's ceremony marking the 93rd birthday of Queen Elizabeth II. — KUNA

calling Britain's role in Kuwait's liberation war. In statements to reporters he said that Kuwait is looking forward to expanding cooperation with the UK in all domains. He lauded the outcome and mechanism of the UK-Kuwait steering committee meetings.

Zain concludes strategic partnership of 7th Ideal Mother Award

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, concluded its strategic partnership of the seventh edition of the Ideal Mother Award during the event's conclusion ceremony organized by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel.

The awarding ceremony witnessed the attendance of Chairman of Sanad Kuwaiti Foundation for Disabled Children Sabeeka Al-Jaser, Honorary President of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Shaikha Shaikha Abdullah Al-Sabah, Award Director and President of Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center Aisha Al-Salem, Head of the Award's Organizing Committee Fawaz Al-Qabban, Zain Kuwait's External and Internal Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Matar, as well as the honored mothers and their families.

The event's conclusion ceremony witnessed the honoring of 19

mothers from Kuwait, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and a number of nations from the Arab world. The award mainly aimed at shedding light and recognizing the distinguished and dedicated individual efforts of the mothers for caring and developing their children with mental disabilities. As part of the honoring program, the mothers also took part in a special trip to a number of cultural and traditional sites in Kuwait.

Zain's strategic partnership of this annual event comes in line with its support of the various social causes that are of interest to all segments of the society, especially within the special needs sector. The company is keen on reinforcing its partnerships with the many public and private entities that cater to people with special needs and their families within the local community all year round.

Zain constantly shoulders initiatives that work towards enhancing the society's welfare. The company's long-term cooperation with the various private and public entities that cater to people with special needs springs from its belief in the importance of having a positive print by supporting and launching initiatives that cater to various interests of the community.

Zain dedicates a great part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards people with special needs. The company recently participated in a special event organized by the Public Authority of the Disabled on the occasion of the International and Arab Day of People with Special Needs. During



KUWAIT: Sabeeka Al-Jaser and Shaikha Shaikha Al-Sabah honor Zain for its support.

the event, Zain organized a number of recreational activities to share the joys of this day with people with special needs and their families. The company also sponsored the annual charity marathon organized by Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network (FSHN) and aimed at supporting children with special needs in Kuwait. Zain also regularly conducts visits to social care centers during multiple seasons all-year round.

Kuwait 108th worldwide in 2019 Press Freedom Index

Fifth in Arab world; first in Gulf region

By Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: Kuwait ranked 108th out of 180 countries in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index released yesterday by Reporters Without Borders, which indicates that the Middle East and North Africa region continues to be the most difficult and dangerous for journalists.

Finishing with a global score of 33.86, Kuwait remained stable, keeping the same ranking it secured in last year's index. This ranking puts Kuwait in fifth place in the Arab world after the Comoros (56) Tunisia (72), Mauritania (94) and Lebanon (101), and first among Gulf Cooperation Council states, followed by Qatar (128), Oman (132), the United Arab Emirates (133), Bahrain (167) and Saudi Arabia (172).

Norway is ranked first in the 2019 index for the third year running while Finland (up two places) has taken second place from the Netherlands (down one at 4th). In Africa, the rankings of Ethiopia (up 40 at 110th) and Gambia (up 30

at 92nd) have significantly improved from last year's index.

At the bottom of the index, both Vietnam (176th) and China (177th) have fallen one place, Eritrea (up one place to 178th) is third from last, and Turkmenistan (down two at 180th) is now last, replacing North Korea (up one at 179th).

Only 24 percent of the 180 countries and territories are classified as "good" or "fairly good," as opposed to 26 percent last year. As a result of an increasingly hostile climate that goes beyond Donald Trump's comments, the United States (48th) has fallen three places in this year's index and the media climate is now classified as "problematic," the report noted.

Reporters Without Borders determines the degree of press and journalist freedom in 180 countries through a qualitative analysis combined with quantitative data which measures: "abuses and acts of violence against journalists during the period evaluated. The criteria evaluated in the questionnaire are pluralism, media in-

REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS FOR PRESS FREEDOM

dependence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information," according to the 2019 World Press Freedom Index report.

The report warned that an intense climate of fear has been triggered - one that is prejudicial to a safe reporting environment, noting that the number of countries regarded as safe, where journalists can work in complete security, con-

tinues to decline.

"If the political debate slides surreptitiously or openly towards a civil war-style atmosphere, in which journalists are treated as scapegoats, then democracy is in great danger," Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire said. "Halting this cycle of fear and intimidation is a matter of the utmost urgency for all people of good will who value the freedoms acquired in the course of history."

Senior citizen commits suicide

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man in his 60s threw himself from a sixth floor apartment in an apparent suicide. Police found a suicide note in the man's apartment in which he said that he was "depressed for years," and that he was having difficulties running his businesses due to alleged "demands for bribes" from government employees. A case was filed for further investigations.

Attempted murder

Farwaniya prosecutor charged three citizens with attempted murder after they beat and stabbed another citizen then escaped. A dispute erupted between the victim and the three suspects, so they beat him severely, stabbed him three times in the back and arm then escaped. The victim's family found him bloodied in front of their home, so he was taken to Farwaniya hospital before being transferred to Razi hospital for further treatment. Detectives are investigating.

Banned from entry

A Saudi national was deported to Bahrain as passport officers at Kuwait International Airport discovered that he was banned from entering Kuwait. The man had arrived from Thailand to Kuwait as a stopover en route to Saudi Arabia, but entered the passports control area at Kuwait airport by mistake. When officers found that he was banned from entering Kuwait due to security reasons, orders were made to deport him, but since flights to Saudi Arabia were not available at the time, he asked to be deported to Bahrain so he could drive home from there, and was granted his wish.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

KMA warns of doctors' migration

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Head of Kuwait Medical Association Dr Ahmad Thuwaini Al-Enezi warned against the migration of Kuwaiti and expat doctors from public hospitals to the private sector inside Kuwait, or to other countries due to what he described as the "shaky confidence in the health system," as well as obstacles facing medical staff in Kuwait.

"It is our duty to deal with the obstacles and challenges doctors and the health system are facing, and find a solution for them because

the KMA is the legitimate representative of doctors," Dr Enezi said. He added that the current medical practice law is old, fails to keep up with the latest developments in the field, and does not provide enough protection for doctors. "KMA carried out its professional role in cooperation with research establishments and conducted a referendum to get a draft for a new law," he said, adding that after completing the final touches on the law, they found 'disparity of views' expressed by the health ministry. "We asked for further cooperation from the ministry to finalize this law which protects patients and doctors alike," he said.

About bedoon doctors, he said there are nearly 300 doctors who are qualified to work at the health ministry. "We should not ignore them, especially with the shortage of doctors in Kuwait, he said. Furthermore, he demanded that the Central Agency for Illegal Residents provides all facilities for bedoon doctors so that they can be hired in the medical field.

Kuwait affirms Sudan situation 'internal affair'

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi has affirmed the current situations in Sudan are an internal affair that should not be interfered with. Otaibi made his remarks while addressing participants of UNSC special session on Darfur, noting that UN Secretary General's recent report indicates that violations in Darfur have decreased significantly within the past four years. There is also a relative stability in the region's security, in addition to the continued return of the internal refugees to their homeland, added the Kuwaiti diplomat. He stressed the importance of securing safe, good, and optional return for the internally displaced persons, particularly in light of the current difficult circumstances in the Darfur, welcoming the allocation of \$26.5 million as a fund to provide urgent aid for the needy ones. He also stressed the importance of committing to UNSC resolution 2429/2018 on mandating the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for keeping the peace, providing sustainable solutions to those concerned of conflict, preventing relapse and enabling the Government of Sudan, civil society, and other actors to prepare for the eventual exit of UNAMID. — KUNA

Colonel sentenced to 15 years in co-op embezzlement case

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The appeals court sentenced a police colonel to 15 years in jail for his involvement in the embezzlement of funds from the interior ministry's co-operative society. The court also sentenced six expatriate employees in the same case to jail terms ranging between seven and 10 years, and fined them KD 1.68 million in total. One expat was ruled innocent.

Fake news

The Health Ministry denied social media reports claiming that organs were 'stolen' from a dead body at the Sabah health zone. It said in a statement to the press that such reports were 'totally false' and damage Kuwait's reputation, noting that it will take legal measures against "all those who harm the health sector" through the spread of inaccurate news.



N Korea tests new weapon with a 'powerful warhead'

UN voices alarm at Bahrain decision to strip 138 of nationality

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DIWANIYAH, Iraq: An woman walks past a dress shop in the central Iraqi city of Diwaniya. Iraqi society remains largely conservative, bound by tribal traditions and religious customs practiced from its sprawling capital Baghdad to far-flung rural provinces. — AFP

Traditions rob Iraq women, girls of rights

Women and girls suffer under patriarchal systems

AMARAH: Two weeks into Mariam's forced marriage to her cousin according to Iraqi tribal custom, she desperately doused herself in fuel, flicked on a lighter and attempted suicide by self-immolation. The 22-year-old spent three days in hospital in Iraq's southern Misan province last summer before succumbing to her wounds, recalled sheikh Haydar Saadoun. "A university classmate from a different tribe had proposed, but her relatives refused," said Saadoun, an official from the Bani Lam tribe in the town of Amarah in Misan.

"They said they had rights over her because of 'nahwa'," he said, referring to a tribal custom that authorizes the men of a clan to reject marriage proposals to a female member. They arranged for her to wed her cousin instead. "He was already married, had fathered multiple children and was illiterate, while Mariam was going to university," Saadoun said. Wearing a modern three-piece suit under a traditional cape, he told AFP he tried to dissuade Mariam's fiancé but was overruled.

"He told me: 'I'll break her nose. I'll marry her and rub her face in it,'" Saadoun recounted. Iraqi society remains largely conservative, bound by tribal traditions and religious customs practiced from its sprawling capital Baghdad to far-flung

rural provinces. In the country of nearly 40 million, clan names can carry weight in securing work, a spouse and even votes. They often trump government institutions, as tribes look to their own mediation methods to resolve disputes instead of the official court system.

'Accept your fate'

Women and girls often suffer under these patriarchal systems, with many forced to marry against their will, subject to domestic abuse and deprived of an education. The southern provinces of Misan and Basra, where tribal influence is widespread, have the highest rates of child marriage in Iraq, the United Nations' children's agency UNICEF said in 2018.

In Misan, 35 percent of married women between 20 and 45 said they wed as teenagers, and in Basra the rate is 31.5 percent. In one tribal custom known as "fasliya", women are married off as restitution for blood spilt between two tribes. Karima al-Tai, a women's rights activist in Misan, said the custom had ravaged her own family. "Twenty years ago, a conflict broke out between my tribe and another. During the fighting, a man from the other clan was killed," said Tai, 50.

Calling for a truce, Tai's tribe offered "five virgins" to the opposing tribe—including her cousin, Sahar, who was married off to the victim's brother. Over "20 years of hell" Sahar was bullied and harassed by her husband's family, Tai recalled. Even her children were publicly branded "children of the fasliya". But when Sahar asked her family for help, said Tai, "her relatives would tell her, 'you're a fasliya. Accept your fate.'" "Fasliya" is still being practiced. In 2015, a tribe in the southern province of Basra married off 50 girls and women to another tribe under a truce.

'Modern slavery'

With no family support or access to outside help, some Iraqi women and girls have turned to suicide. A 2017 study of 62 attempted self-immolation cases in Basra found that family problems, including marital issues, were the precipitating factor in 80 percent of the cases. Authorities in Misan said 198 women had attempted suicide over the past two years, and 14 of them lost their lives.

But details are scarce. Mental health problems in Iraq remain taboo, and efforts to discuss them with tribal leaders have seen little success. Even

Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the top religious authority for most Iraqi Shiites, called last year for an end to "nahwas" and other tribal practices, to no avail.

The customs were criminalized in Iraq's 1959 personal status law, which was strictly implemented under Saddam Hussein's brutal rule. Marrying a woman by force under "nahwa" is punishable by three years in jail for a cousin and 10 years for a more distant relative. But as the central government lost influence across swathes of Iraq following the 2003 US-led invasion, tribal power structures took precedence. Now, "this law is not applied because no woman would file a complaint against her own family," said lawmaker Intissar al-Juburi.

And efforts to introduce tough laws to protect women have been hampered by political stalemates and an emphasis on security and economic issues. Meanwhile, tribal customs are becoming further entrenched, according to Maytham al-Saadi, a professor at Misan University. "In the past, fasliyas would be proposed only in cases needing blood money, but in recent decades they've been used to end the simplest disputes between tribes," he said. "It's modern slavery." —AFP

International

Iran leader calls on Mideast states to 'drive back Zionism'

Rouhani calls Israel a 'cancerous tumor'

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani called on Middle East states yesterday to "drive back Zionism", in an Army Day tirade against the Islamic republic's archfoe Israel. Speaking flanked by top generals before troops began their annual march-past, Rouhani also sought to reassure the region that the weaponry on display was for defensive purposes and not a threat.

"The region's nations have lived alongside each other for centuries and never had a problem... If there is a problem, it is caused by others," he said in the speech broadcast live on state television. "Let us stand together, be together and rid the region of the aggressor's presence." Rouhani assured neighboring countries that Iran's armed forces are "never against you or your national interests" but are "standing against the aggressors."

"The power of our armed forces is the power of the region's countries, the Islamic world," he said. "If we have a problem in the region today, its roots are either with Zionism or America's arrogance." Rouhani called on Muslim nations to band together and "restore the historical right of the nation of Palestine," saying that "Zionism ... has been committing crimes in the region for the past 70 years." "The final victory will surely be with the righteous," he said.

The military parade was held next to the south Tehran mausoleum of the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. It showcased some of Iran's latest weaponry, including the domestically designed and manufactured Kowsar fighter jet, which was first unveiled last year. Iran also displayed its short-range

Zelzal missile and an upgraded model of the Russian S-200 air defense system. US-manufactured Bell, Cobra and Chinook helicopters bought before the Islamic revolution of 1979 also took part in the air display.

'Cancerous tumor'

Diatribes against Israel are standard fare of official speeches in Iran, although some, such as a call by Rouhani's firebrand predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for Israel to be "wiped off the map", have triggered international condemnation. Iran does not recognize Israel and opposition to the Jewish state has been a central tenet of official policy since the revolution. Iran has supported Palestinian radical groups and has vocifer-

ously opposed the now moribund Middle East peace process under which the Palestinians were offered limited autonomy in the territories captured in the Six-Day War of 1967.

Rouhani has previously called Israel a "cancerous tumor", and called on Muslim governments to unite against it and its US ally. Iranian officials have warned repeatedly that Israel will soon cease to exist, but have usually been careful to underline that that will come about not through a direct attack by Iran. "In 25 years' time, with the grace of God, no such thing as the Zionist regime will exist in the region," supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in 2015.

Syria tensions

The presence of Iran's Revolutionary Guards in Syria supporting President Bashar Al-Assad's

Iran displays its short-range Zelzal missile



TEHRAN: A Iranian military truck carrying a missile drives in front of the officials' stand during a military parade marking the annual National Army Day in Tehran yesterday. — AFP

forces in the eight-year civil war has sharply increased tensions between the regional foes.

Israel has said publicly that it has carried out hundreds of air and missile strikes targeting the forces of Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah in Syria. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed that he will never allow Iran to establish a long-term military presence in Israel's north-eastern neighbor.

Netanyahu has been an outspoken opponent of a landmark nuclear deal Iran signed with major powers in 2015 and was the leading supporter of US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from it and reimpose crippling economic sanctions last year. Washington's European allies have refused to follow suit and they,

along with China and Russia, continue to support the deal. But the Trump administration has sought to forge an anti-Iran axis within the Middle East bringing together Israel and the Gulf Arab states to make common cause against what they see as Iranian "meddling" in the region. Last week, Washington placed Iran's Revolutionary Guards on its blacklist of "foreign terrorist organizations," the first time it had imposed the sanction on a military arm of a foreign government. Rouhani warned Washington yesterday that "an insult to the Guards... is an insult to the great nation of Iran." "America's leaders are lost in their delusions," he said, adding that Washington was the real source of "terrorism" in the region. — AFP

'Torture ongoing' in Iraq jail despite documentation

BAGHDAD: Iraqi officers at a detention facility in the onetime jihadist stronghold of Mosul have continued to torture detainees despite rights defenders' efforts to intervene, Human Rights Watch said yesterday. HRW documented new torture allegations early this year at the Faisaliya prison in northern Iraq, around six months after publishing a report on what it said were "chilling" abuses there and in two nearby facilities.

The rights group said it had reached out about last year's allegations to the Iraqi premier's office, the foreign ministry and the interior ministry, without response. "If the Iraqi government ignores credible reports of torture, it's no wonder that the abuses persist," said Lama Fakih, HRW's deputy Middle East director.

"What will it take for the authorities to take torture allegations seriously?" The new reports

come from a detainee held in Faisaliya in early 2019. He described guards beating groups of naked detainees on their feet with plastic piping until they confessed to being affiliated with the Islamic State jihadist group. The prisoner said guards also waterboarded detainees and suspended them from the ceiling with their hands tied behind their backs.

Faisaliya is located in eastern Mosul, the battered Iraqi city that was IS's de facto capital for three years before security forces recaptured it in late 2017. Iraq has since tried thousands of its own citizens, as well as hundreds of foreigners, for affiliation to IS. But rights groups including HRW say the accused are often detained on lofty or circumstantial evidence, their trials do not guarantee due process, and that torture is widespread in Iraq's prison system.

In its release, HRW said Iraqi judges had "routinely failed" to investigate credible reports of torture in detention. Earlier this month, it said, Iraq's High Judicial Council told HRW that Iraqi courts had investigated 275 complaints against investigative officers by the end of 2018. The council said 176 had been "resolved," without providing details of the outcome, while 99 were still being addressed. — AFP

Salah calls for change in treatment of women in the Muslim world

LOS ANGELES: Egyptian football star Mohamed "Mo" Salah has called for change in the way women are treated in the Muslim world, in an interview with Time magazine published Wednesday. The 26-year-old Liverpool forward was named one of the US magazine's 100 most influential figures of the year, alongside other athletes including Tiger Woods, LeBron James and Naomi Osaka. Salah told Time that while his attitudes towards gender equality had evolved over the years, he wanted to see more change.

"I think we need to change the way we treat women in our culture," Salah was quoted as saying. "It's not optional." He said the treatment of women "in my culture and in the Middle East" had changed his opinions on gender issues. "I support the woman more than I did before, because I feel like she deserves more than what they give her

now, at the moment," Salah told the magazine. Salah is an icon in Egypt after helping the country qualify for the 2018 World Cup, the first time they had reached the finals of the event since 1990.

He was named African Footballer of the Year in 2017 and 2018 and was also English football's Player of the Year in 2017-2018 following a dazzling season with Liverpool. He told Time he has learned to cope with the "little bit of pressure" that comes with his elevated profile, while expressing pride at being regarded as a role model. "To be the first Egyptian in (this) situation and no one has done this before... it's something different," he said, insisting that superstardom had not changed his lifestyle. "I just live my life normal," he said. "Most of the time I stay at home, I don't like to go out." — AFP

International

Fake news war: In Libya, battles also raging on the social media

Fighters hold a gun in one hand and a smartphone in the other

TRIPOLI: On Libya's front lines, fighters often hold a gun in one hand and a smartphone in the other, using their cameras in the propaganda war. Since strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive to seize the capital Tripoli, most Libyans have watched the fighting on social media. Facebook has become the main online battleground, where both sides weaponise photos and video footage - both real and fake. Images of wounded, killed or imprisoned fighters are immediately published by one side or the other as they try to prove their supremacy on the battlefield. When rockets slammed into residential areas in the south of the capital Wednesday, killing six people, both sides, predictably, blamed each other.

While few Libyans trust the TV channels, they now also sift through images, fake news and propaganda online, from both Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) and forces backing the internationally recognized unity government. Last week, unity government spokesman Colonel Mohamad Gnounou even accused Haftar's forces of "infiltrating certain places, taking pictures and then withdrawing" so they could claim online to be in control of a particular site or neighborhood.

Fake news war

This week, an American who had become an unlikely celebrity in Libya took to the Internet to deny reports by Haftar's LNA that he had piloted a Libyan fighter plane as a GNA "foreign mercenary pilot". In his own short video post on

Twitter, he held up a US newspaper to date the clip and assured viewers that "I am currently here in the US ... I am not in Libya". Warring factions have used fake content to discredit their enemies or hit their morale. "It is true that we have a huge wave of misinformation spread through social networks," said Libyan analyst Emad Badi. "Each party has invested considerably to influence the media to adopt a narrative that is favorable to them".

Last week, three videos circulated - all purportedly shot at the same time, in the same place on the front line, but with completely different messages. In two of the films, one side claimed that its rivals had laid down their weapons and surrendered. A third clip, whose authorship remains a mystery, showed the unlikely scene of fighters halting combat and embracing each other, crying "united Libya". One Internet user quipped that "whatever the real version of the facts, a united Libya triumphed for at least a few moments".

Troll armies

Social media users have sought to fill the vacuum left by mass media, as each Libyan television station has long chosen its side and tends to broadcast videos or photos without verification if they appear to support their stance. "There's no point in turning on the TV," said one young Libyan, Karim, his eyes fixed on his phone, as he sat on the terrace of a seaside cafe in Tripoli. "Libyan channels are either late or so biased that it's comical if you're not on the same side."

UN voices alarm as Bahrain revoke the citizenship of 138

GENEVA: The UN human rights chief expressed alarm yesterday at Bahrain's decision this week to revoke the citizenship of 138 people convicted in a mass trial of planning an Iran-linked "terror" group. A Bahraini court on Tuesday handed 139 men-many of them tried in absentia-to prison terms of three years to life for having tried to build a Bahrain Hezbollah, similar to the Shiite militia active in Lebanon. It stripped all but one of them of their nationality. The UN human rights office said it had received information that 17 of those convicted were minors between the ages of 15 and 17.

"Tuesday's convictions give rise to serious concerns about the application of the law, particularly through a mass trial that reportedly lacked the procedural safeguards necessary to ensure a fair trial," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said in a statement. "Deprivation of nationality must not be arbitrary, especially on discriminatory grounds," she said, stressing that "arbitrary deprivation of nationality

places the individuals concerned and their family members in a situation of increased vulnerability to human rights violations."

The rights office pointed out that the revocation of nationality is prohibited under international law "if it does not serve a legitimate aim or is disproportionate". Bachelet also expressed concern at reports of torture or other ill-treatment of some of those convicted, and urged Bahrain authorities to take "immediate steps" to prevent such violations.

She also demanded they investigate all such allegations and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. Ruled for more than two centuries by the Sunni Al-Khalifa dynasty, Bahrain has a majority Shiite Muslim population, according to unofficial estimates contested by the government. The small Gulf state, a key US ally located between rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran, has been gripped by bouts of unrest since 2011, when authorities cracked down on Shiite-led protests demanding political reform.

Since then, hundreds of protesters have been jailed or stripped of their nationality, with Bahrain claiming Iran trained and backed demonstrators in order to topple the Manama government-an accusation Tehran denies. All opposition groups have been banned and disbanded. According to the UN human rights office, Tuesday's verdict brings to around 980 the number of people who have been stripped of their Bahraini nationality since 2012. — AFP



AIN ZARA, Libya: This grab obtained from a video published on the Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar's self-proclaimed Libyan National Army War Information Division's Facebook shows fighters riding atop an armored vehicle waving gestures and chanting slogans. — AFP

Some internet users have taken on the role of military experts, pointing to maps and images of specific weapons to support their take on the truth. Not surprisingly for a country riven by multiple conflicts since the fall of late dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Libya also has armies

of online trolls who spread hatred and incite violence. "Anonymity on social networks encourages some people to engage in aggressive and hateful speech and even incitement to crime," said Mayss Abdel-Fattah, 26, a sociology student at the University of Zawiyah. — AFP

Sudanese mark one week after Bashir's ouster

KHARTOUM: Crowds are expected to converge yesterday in the Sudanese capital as protesters mark one week since the army ousted president Omar Al-Bashir, determined to complete their revolution seeking civilian rule. On April 11, the army removed Bashir as tens of thousands of protesters camped outside its headquarters in central Khartoum demanding support in toppling the veteran ruler. "This is the first week in my life that I have lived without Bashir," said Tariq Ahmed, 28, an engineer from Khartoum. "I'm proud of what my generation has done to the dictator."

Bashir, 75, took power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989, and headed a brutal regime for three decades. His rule saw conflicts across the country, the south splitting away to become a separate nation, and regular arrests of opposition leaders, activists and journalists. Protests initially began on December 19 in response to the tripling of bread prices, but swiftly turned into nationwide rallies against the autocrat.

Cities, towns and villages echoed with chants of "freedom, peace, justice," and "just fall, that's

all". Bashir faces charges from the International Criminal Court of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity relating to the conflict in Darfur. But despite detaining him, the military has resisted sending him to The Hague, saying his handover is a matter for a promised civilian government. On Tuesday night, he was moved to the capital's Kober prison, a family source said.

'Dangerous waters'

Seven days on from Bashir's ouster, the huge square outside army headquarters now reverberates with demonstrators demanding the dissolution of the military council that replaced him. Thousands were in the square yesterday, and they are expected to be joined by women's groups, trade unionists, engineers and students at around 4:00 pm. "We are sending a message that we are not leaving this area until we achieve our goal," said Ahmed, who has been at the protest since yesterday morning.

"The idea is to keep the fire burning." Bashir's defense minister General Awad Ibn Ouf initially took power as council chairman but he too was ousted within 24 hours following intense pressure from the street. The council is now headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, a career soldier who is largely unknown outside of the army. Protest leaders say they asked for a joint military-civilian council, but what they got was a full military council with many faces from the old regime. — AFP

International

In Denmark, drop-in baptisms help boost Church numbers

Church lowering the bar for hesitant prospective members

HVIDOVRE: Looking to get baptized, but put off by the thought of tedious planning? With membership waning, Denmark's Lutheran Church is lowering the bar for hesitant prospective members by hosting drop-in christenings. The process is simple: You just walk into a church hosting a drop-in ceremony and all you need to bring is some form of identification.

After a brief chat with a minister you are ready to get christened. The ceremony lasts only a few minutes, and then it's time for refreshments offered by the church. On a recent Friday, Ida Hauerberg Olesen went to a church in Hvidovre, a suburb of Copenhagen, with papers in hand. The 27-year old woman, whose two children were not christened, decided she needed to take the plunge a few weeks earlier when her niece asked her to be her daughter's godmother—which would require her to be baptized herself. She said that before that, she hadn't considered herself "church compatible".

"I thought that religion was something boxy

(narrow-minded) and boring but this pastor I had, he showed me other things," she said without delving into theological details. For Peter Skov-Jakobsen, the bishop of Copenhagen, "the sacrament is the beginning of the journey" in the Lutheran faith for the new faithful. He sees no need to go through future members' knowledge of the Bible with a fine-tooth comb or to require exhaustive preparation. Skov-Jakobsen explained that he sees a renewed interest in the Church through a need for spirituality in the contemporary era.

"We have reached an age where people are actually realizing there is more to life than what science can tell us," he told AFP in his bright office in the Danish capital's city centre. Like its Nordic neighbors, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark has seen a steady decline in membership in recent decades. Churches in Sweden and Norway have also adopted the more casual christening ceremony to lower the threshold for the secularly minded northerners. In keeping with the countries' progressive cul-

tures, their respective churches have had traditions of early reform. Denmark's state Church started blessing same-sex partnerships in 1997, eight years after their legal recognition, and marrying same-sex couples in 2012. The Church also ordained its first female minister in 1948. Since the premiere of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church's drop-in ceremonies in 2017, more than 600 people have been christened. But this has done little to boost membership numbers and engagement with the Church, which relies on its members for financing through a tax levied on adult members of the congregation.

2.4 percent practitioners

While 75 percent of Denmark's population of 5.8 million are members, most are so out of tradition rather than faith. Only 2.4 percent of the population attend church regularly, but 64 percent of Danes describe themselves as Christian, said Astrid Krabbe-Trolle, a lecturer in religious studies at the University of Copenhagen.

According to Krabbe-Trolle, the move toward less formal christenings can be seen as a way of showing the Church's openness. "It is really saying, 'Ok, we are a Church for everybody, you can just come in and we have no expectations of you other than you getting baptized,'" she said. The motivations for the new converts are diverse, from parents looking to make amends for an "oversight" by christening their children, to teenagers wanting to be confirmed or sick people and urbanites looking for a sense of purpose.

At age 73, John Ib Knudsen had "been thinking about it for a long time" before making the decision. "I saw it in the newspaper and thought it was time for a rebirth," he said. After the ceremony he wanted to "surprise" his ninety-something mother, a fierce opponent of the Church, with his certificate. Jakob Kleofas Christensen, the minister who christened Hauerberg Olesen, said the Church is not carelessly offering this without any preconditions but is responding to public thirst for tradition and rituals. — AFP

Sanders: A troubling favorite for the US Democrats in 2020?

NEW YORK: In 2016, Senator Bernie Sanders mounted a surprising challenge to veteran Democrat Hillary Clinton in the party's 2016 White House nomination race. Today, he is once again in the hunt for the US presidency, and atop the list of 18 candidates formally vying for the Democratic nomination. But his early lead could prove to be divisive as the party seeks to oust Donald Trump from the Oval Office in 2020. Sanders, a 77-year-old self-described Democratic socialist from Vermont, is so far running from a position of strength, even as fresh new faces like "Mayor Pete" Buttigieg are making headlines.

Of course, the Wall Street foe is still running second in opinion polls to 76-year-old former vice president Joe Biden, who hasn't officially thrown his hat in the ring. But fans of Sanders, who favors universal health care and steep taxes on the wealthy, are on board once again, if donations are any indication. He has more than \$18 million in his campaign war chest so far, more than any other Democrat in the race. And most of those donations - 84 percent - were less than \$200.

Cheers on Fox News

Sanders seems ready for the fight—he held a high-energy town hall meeting on Fox News Monday night, which other Democrats have shunned, and earned praise for his efforts. Trump, who is known to spend a fair bit of time watching the channel, even commented on his performance. "I believe it will be Crazy Bernie Sanders vs. Sleepy Joe Biden as the two finalists" for the Democrats, Trump tweeted. "I look forward to facing whoever it may be." But for Ester Fuchs, a professor of political science at Columbia University in New York, that outcome is far from being a certainty. "It is so early," Fuchs told AFP. "He has high name recognition, which affects his standing in the polls, which also affects fundraising." But even if Democratic voters are leaning more to the left than before, Fuchs believes the younger, more moderate candidates like former Texas congressman Beto O'Rourke, California senator Kamala Harris and Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, are "going to



NEW YORK: US Senator Bernie Sanders addresses a rally to kick off his 2020 US presidential campaign in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. — AFP

blow him out of the water." And this time around, the media—which gave Sanders "a free ride" in 2016, Fuchs says, because "nobody took him seriously"—are not going to be as forgiving.

While Sanders is well positioned for now, and a win in the primaries would not exactly be a shock, it's too early to talk about a frontrunner, says Kyle Kondik, an analyst at the University of Virginia Center for Politics. For Kondik, the key to Sanders' eventual success will be if he can rally support beyond his traditional support base. "Once the field gets smaller, will he grow his support or stagnate?" Kondik said. "I am just not positive that the party is going to rally around him."

Of course, Sanders is not technically a Democrat—he's an independent who caucuses with Democrats on Capitol Hill and only wears the party's stripes for primary purposes, analysts note. If he remains ahead of the pack, a 'Never Bernie' movement—similar to one that sprouted up in the Republican Party against Trump in 2016 — could take root, Kondik says. But on the flip side, if he fails once again to win the nomination, "it is not clear that he will step up and rally to support the standard-bearer," Fuchs says. Indeed, the party's establishment is still bitter about his last run, believing that his supporters failed to sufficiently back Clinton in her battle with Trump. This time around, that could happen again. — AFP

Blackout: Much of the Mueller report could be redacted

WASHINGTON: The final report from Special Counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation could leave much of the public unsatisfied because it could be heavily redacted, stripped of significant evidence and testimony that the investigators gathered. Attorney General Bill Barr made clear he will edit out large parts of Mueller's 400-page final report on his investigation of President Donald Trump and Russian election meddling.

Removed elements will include information from US intelligence used in the probe, information on ongoing investigations, and information on targets of Mueller's team that never gelled and, if made public, could unfairly hurt them. Crucially, Barr says the law prevents him from revealing materials from the two grand juries that the special counsel convened for his investigation.

Redaction - blacking out words and blocks of text with real or digital ink, or leaving pages completely blank - is the way bureaucrats and courts prevent the public from learning about classified information and secret testimony or evidence, or just embarrassing information. Many court filings in the Mueller probe came with pages heavily blacked out, with prosecutors not wanting to tip their hands on ongoing parts of the sprawling Russia probe or expose sources. But some worry Barr's redactions could have political aims. A Trump appointee who has already announced that the report exonerates the president from wrongdoing, he has much leeway on what he will withhold. Barr said he wants as much of the report public as possible, but his editing could mask key elements of the 22-month investigation, which concluded with no charges against any Trump associates for colluding with Russia's meddling in the 2016 election. And it could mask evidence behind the allegations of criminal obstruction against Trump - on which Mueller refused to reach any conclusion. — AFP

International

Turkish opposition takes control of Istanbul, re-run appeal still pending

Loss of Istanbul is heavy blow for Erdogan

ISTANBUL: Turkey's main opposition candidate took office as Istanbul mayor yesterday after a stunning victory over President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party, but the new head of the country's largest city still faces an appeal for the vote to be re-run. The final result of the March 31 local elections gave a wafer-thin majority to the secularist opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) in Turkey's commercial hub, ending 25 years of control by the AK Party (AKP) and its Islamist predecessors.

The loss is especially hard for Erdogan who launched his political career in Istanbul as mayor

in the 1990s and has triumphed in more than a dozen parliamentary, presidential and local polls since his party came to power in 2002. The Turkish lira, which has dipped since the election, firmed on Wednesday. Addressing thousands of flag-waving supporters outside the municipality building, Ekrem Imamoglu promised to work for all 16 million residents. "We never gave up, we never gave up on our battle for democracy and rights," he said. "We are aware of our responsibilities and the needs of this city. We will start to serve immediately."

Imamoglu's margin of victory - the final count put him about 13,000 votes, or less than 0.2 percentage points, ahead of the AKP candidate and former prime minister Binali Yildirim - prompted several AKP challenges. On Tuesday, after 16 days of appeals and recounts, the AKP asked the High Election Board to annul and re-run the election in

Istanbul over what it said were irregularities. Its nationalist MHP allies made a similar request on Wednesday.

But Yildirim struck a conciliatory note on Wednesday evening while stressing that the AKP had not abandoned its appeal. "I hope the decision (to offer Imamoglu the mandate) will bring good. Democracy and law have worked and we see there is no need for raised tensions," he said on Twitter. Imamoglu said he hoped the election board would deal with the AKP challenge in a "just way", adding he had won his mandate from the voters and only

Final result shows narrow victory for opposition CHP



they could take it away.

'Too many irregularities'

The repeated challenges by the AKP and MHP have fuelled frustration among opposition supporters which spilled over into football stadiums at the weekend when fans chanted at top Istanbul derby matches for the mayoral mandate to be given to their candidate. "There are way too many irregularities," AKP Deputy Chairman Ali Ihsan Yavuz said, presenting the party's justification for its demand for a new vote and complaining of "organized fraud".

CHP Deputy Chairman Muharrem Erkek responded that there were "no concrete documents, information or evidence in the AKP appeal for an annulment". While the AKP was defeated in the battle for Istanbul mayor, results showed the party had won most seats in its municipal councils. The



ISTANBUL: Supporters of Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) candidate Ekrem Imamoglu cheer after Turkish election officials officially confirmed his win as Istanbul mayor. — AFP

AKP's re-run appeal applies only to the mayoral elections, not those for municipal councils.

Wolfgang Piccoli, co-president of Teneo political risk advisers, said it was puzzling to call only for a re-run of the mayoral elections, and added that some areas where the AKP claimed fraud took place were under its own rule. Uncertainty over the results has put pressure on fi-

ancial markets, pushing the lira down nearly 5 percent. Erdogan had vowed that Turkey would enter a four and half year period with no elections after March 31, during which the ailing economy would be the focus. If the AKP appeal is upheld, Istanbul, which accounts for more than a third of Turkey's economy, would vote again on June 2. — Reuters

Man caught walking into cathedral with full gasoline cans

NEW YORK: A 37-year-old man was arrested on Wednesday night after walking into St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City with two full gasoline cans, lighter fluid and lighters, police said. The incident occurred two days after a massive fire severely damaged the eight-century-old Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, causing global shock and sorrow. The blaze was most likely the result of an accident though a major investigation is under way. In New York, the man entered the Roman Catholic cathedral in midtown Manhattan just before 8 p.m. (0000 GMT) and was confronted by a security guard, according to a New York City Police Department (NYPD) official.

As the man turned to leave, gasoline spilled onto the floor and the guard alerted police officers stationed outside. Officers caught up with the man and he was taken into custody after questioning, said John Miller, deputy commissioner of intelligence and counterterrorism for the NYPD. "An individual walking into an iconic location like St. Patrick's Cathedral carrying over four gallons of gasoline, two bottles of lighter fluid and

lighters, is something we would have grave concern over," Miller told reporters.

Asked if terrorism was a possible motive in the incident, Miller said it was "too early to say that". But, alluding to worldwide publicity about the Notre Dame fire, he added: "This is an indicator of something that would be very suspicious." Three predominantly African-American churches in Louisiana burned down between March 26 and April 4. A man was arrested and charged with arson and hate crimes.

The man told police he was taking a short cut through the cathedral to get to Madison Avenue from 5th Avenue to return to his van which had run out of gasoline, Miller said. When police checked the vehicle they found it was not out of fuel, at which point the man was arrested, he said. "He is known to police and we are looking into his background. We don't know what his mindset was, what his motive was." The man, who police declined to identify because he has not been charged, was still in custody.

The New York Daily News and other publications, citing unnamed police sources, identified the man as a philosophy professor and a New Jersey resident. A police spokesman said detectives would discuss the case with the Manhattan district attorney's office on Thursday morning to decide on possible charges. St Patrick's, a neo-gothic church across from the Rockefeller Center, has stood in the heart of Manhattan since 1879 and is considered one of the most important symbols of the Catholic Church in the United States. — Reuters

New Zealand official guilty over embassy toilet camera

WELLINGTON: One of New Zealand's highest ranking military officers was yesterday found guilty of trying to secretly film people in the toilet at the country's embassy in Washington DC. Alfred Keating, 59, was New Zealand's top defense official when a hidden camera was found in the embassy bathroom in July 2017.

He had denied a charge of attempting to make an intimate visual recording but a High Court jury returned a unanimous guilty verdict at the end of a two-week trial, local media reported. A small camera mounted inside a heating duct in the bathroom was discovered when the panel it was attached to fell to the floor. The court was told the camera's media card had traces of Keating's DNA, and it had also at one time been connected to his laptop.

Prosecutor Henry Steele said Keating's motivation was to covertly film his colleagues using the toilet and "was not an act of espionage." Judge Robert Ronayne told the jury their task was to decide whether the totality of the evidence meant they could be sure it was Keating or someone else who planted the device. Keating, who appeared emotionless in the dock as the verdict was read out, will be sentenced on June 25 and faces up to 18 months in jail. — AFP

Rich v poor - donations row over Notre-Dame shatters French unity

Controversy over \$950 million pledged to restore Notre-Dame

PARIS: France's culture minister pleaded yesterday for an end to the controversy over the 850 million euros (950 million dollars) pledged to restore Notre-Dame cathedral, which critics have suggested would be better spent on the poor. Some of France's biggest companies and billionaires, including luxury goods tycoons Francois-Henri Pinault and Bernard Arnault, have pledged amounts of 100 million euros or more to rebuild the landmark after it was gutted by fire on Monday evening.

The vast sums have drawn fire in a country where wealth inequality and the plight of the low-income households have been highlighted during five months of demonstrations by "yellow vest" protesters. "This pointless debate consists of saying 'it's too much money for Notre-Dame even though there are needs elsewhere' - of course there's a need for money for the social system, for health, the fight against climate change," Culture Minister Franck Riester told RMC radio. "But let's leave this extraordinary show of generosity to run its course," he pleaded. He said Notre-Dame was "not only old stones. It's a part of our identity, it's our nation, European culture."

The controversy has undercut hopes expressed by President Emmanuel Macron for the divided country to "come together" in the wake of the fire, which is widely suspected to have been caused by renovation work underway on its steeple. "It's very disturbing to see how in France you get criticized even when you do something," Arnault said yesterday at a shareholder's meeting when asked about the row. Some leftist politicians have argued that the ultra-rich donors could best help protect the country's cultural heritage by fully paying their taxes - or helping the "human cathedral" of people in need.

"In one click, 200 million, 100 million. That shows the inequality which we regularly denounce in this country," the head of the CGT trade union, Philippe Martinez, said on Wednesday. "If they can give tens of millions to rebuild Notre-Dame, then they should stop telling us there is no money to help with the social emergency (in France)," he added. The huge tax breaks available on the donations also caused some unease, prompting Pinault to announce he would forfeit the rebate on his contribution.

Other priorities

Sweden's teenage climate change activist Greta Thunberg also used the drama at Notre-Dame to underline her message that the environment should be the biggest priority. "Notre Dame will be rebuilt, I hope its foundations are strong, I hope that our foundations are even stronger, but I fear they are not," she told the European parliament on Tuesday, referring to the fight against climate change. Writer and historian Mike Stuchbery, writing on the Huffington Post, reminded donors of their responsibility to the poor.

"It's important for some to remember that such a wonderful edifice was built to celebrate a faith that emphasizes giving aid and comfort to the poor, regardless of who they are," he said. In Britain, a satirical online article went viral after it compared the reaction to the Notre-Dame disaster and the fatal fire at London's Grenfell towerblock in 2017 in which 71 people lost their lives. "Former Grenfell residents have expressed regret that they didn't splash out on pretty stained glass windows before their tower burned down," said the post on newsthump.com.—AFP



PARIS: This handout satellite image shows smoke and flames rising during a fire at the landmark Notre-Dame Cathedral in central Paris. — AFP

Trump: The world's greatest expert on almost everything

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump raised eyebrows when he told French firefighters to move "quickly" and possibly use aerial water tankers to save Notre Dame. But it was hardly the first time he has come forward as an unlikely expert. Monday's tweeted advice got short shrift from French authorities racing to save the renowned Paris cathedral. Bombardment with large quantities of water from airplanes could have flattened the 850-year-old building, French emergency services said.

Trump's confidence in his eclectic knowledge base, however, is unlikely to have been shaken. Here are some other nuggets of wisdom from a president, lifelong real estate developer and former TV show host whom The Washington Post accuses of having made more than 9,000 false or misleading statements in two years.

Trump is worried about aerospace giant Boeing's reputation following two recent crashes of the 737 MAX model. He also has a solution: change the name. "What do I know about branding, maybe nothing (but I did become President!), but if I were Boeing, I would FIX the Boeing 737 MAX, add some additional great features, & REBRAND the plane with a new name," Trump tweeted.

"No product has suffered like this one. But again, what the hell do I know?"

April 2019 - Energy theories

Citing widely disproven or unproven theories, the president says wind turbine energy cannot handle variations in output - and is bad for you. "If it doesn't blow, you can forget about television for that night," he told a rally, imitating a couple relying on wind-generated power. "Darling, I want to watch television. 'I'm sorry! The wind isn't blowing.' I know a lot about wind." March 2019 - Noise causes cancer

Tech guru

Although mostly known for his work with buildings and golf courses, Trump has quite a bit to say about aerospace. Musing earlier on the Boeing 737 MAX tragedies, Trump tweeted: "Airplanes are becoming far too complex to fly. Pilots are no longer needed, but rather computer scientists from MIT. I see it all the time in many products. Always seeking to go one unnecessary step further, when often old and simpler is far better." He's also shared his expertise on drones at a cabinet meeting: "I know more about drones than anybody."

January 2019

But Trump sees himself equally as standing up for rather older technology, like walls on the US-Mexican border. "Nothing (else)... will work, and that has been true for thousands of years," he tweeted. "I know tech better than anyone."—AFP

Scammers preying on Notre-Dame donors

PARIS: Fraudsters are taking advantage of the Notre-Dame fire to fool donors into handing over cash believing they are helping to rebuild the gutted Paris cathedral, officials have warned. The French Heritage Foundation, which has so far collected more than 13 million euros (\$14.5 million) from individual donors to help restore the gothic landmark, said any phone or email appeals were fake.

"A number of scams have been flagged to us both in France and abroad," the foundation said Wednesday, insisting it issues no appeals by phone, mail or email for donations. "All of these initiatives are fraudulent."

The foundation is accepting donations through its website (don.fondation-patrimoine.org), its Facebook page, PayPal, a Paris metro station and by SMS for those in France. Culture Minister Franck Riester on Tuesday warned people to be vigilant of websites claiming to support the reconstruction of Notre-Dame, which suffered heavy damage in Monday's blaze. French President Emmanuel Macron has vowed to rebuild the monument by 2024, when France hosts the summer Olympics.—AFP

International

N Korea tests new weapon with a 'powerful warhead'

North Korea wants Pompeo dropped from nuke talks

SEOUL: North Korea said yesterday it no longer wanted to deal with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and said he should be replaced in talks by someone more mature, hours after it announced its first weapons test since nuclear talks broke down. The North's official KCNA news agency quoted senior foreign ministry official Kwon Jong Gun as warning that no one could predict the situation on the Korean peninsula if the United States did not abandon the "root cause" that compelled North Korea to develop nuclear weapons.

The statement came shortly after North Korea announced that leader Kim Jong Un had overseen the testing of a new tactical guided weapon, which KCNA said has a "peculiar mode of guiding flight" and "a powerful warhead". It was the North's first weapon test since talks in Vietnam between Kim and US President Donald Trump in late February broke down over conflicting demands by North Korea for sanctions relief and by the United States for North Korea to abandon its nuclear program. KCNA gave no details on the weapon that was tested on Wednesday but "tactical" implied a short-range weapon rather than the long-range ballistic missiles that have been seen as a threat to the United States.

KCNA quoted Kwon, who is in charge of US affairs, as saying the Vietnam summit, the second between the two leaders, showed that talks could go wrong "whenever Pompeo pokes his nose in". "I am afraid that, if Pompeo engages in the talks again, the table will be lousy once again and the talks will become entangled," Kwon said. "Therefore, even in the case of possible resumption of the dialogue with the United States, I wish our dialogue counterpart would be not Pompeo but other person who is more careful and mature in communicating with us."

While Kwon did not elaborate on why

North Korea felt compelled to develop nuclear weapons, it has long spoken of the need to defend itself from what it sees as US aggression. Kim said last week said the breakdown in talks risked reviving tensions and he gave a year-end deadline for the United States to change its attitude. Despite the failure of the Vietnam summit, Trump has stressed his good relationship with Kim.

Kwon also said the two leaders were on good terms, even as he castigated Pompeo for "fabricated" stories as part of a "publicity stunt". He did not elaborate. Kwon said Pompeo had made "reckless remarks hurting the dignity of our supreme leadership", apparently referring to him agreeing to the characterization of Kim as a "tyrant" at a US Congressional hearing last week. US government officials were not immediately available for comment on the call to replace Pompeo.

'Useful reminder'

Earlier, Kim Dong-yub, a military expert at Kyungnam University's Institute of Far Eastern Studies in Seoul, said the newly tested weapon was likely a short-range cruise missile that could be launched from the ground, sea and air. Kim oversaw the test of an unidentified tactical weapon in November. Experts said in November Kim wanted to shift the mainstay of the North's conventional military power from a nearly 1.3 million-strong army to high-tech weapons.

The young leader said last April that he would stop nuclear tests and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles because the nuclear capabilities of North Korea, which has tested nuclear devices six times, had been verified. "This does serve as a useful reminder of one critical fact: Chairman Kim Jong Un never promised to stop testing all weapons in his military arsenal, just nuclear weapons and ICBMs that

adding that he believed himself cleansed of sin after the event. He volunteered this year to continue a family tradition, he said, taking over from an older brother who is now abroad.

The Easter penance aims to secure forgiveness for sins, cures for illness, or blessings. "We always pray for strength, (good) health for our families, and thank God for blessings," said Roger Aquino, a 59-year-old village official who was among the penitents. "People should understand that what we do is a tradition (and they) should respect it." Re-enactments of the sufferings of Christ are a tradition in the Southeast Asian nation ahead of Easter, though the Catholic Church has always expressed disapproval of what it calls misinterpretations of faith. —Reuters



PYONGYANG: This file photo shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (left) greeting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the Paekhwawon State Guesthouse in Pyongyang. North Korea has demanded the removal of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo from stalled nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington, accusing him of derailing discussions. — AFP

have the potential to hit the US homeland," said Harry Kazianis of the Washington-based Center for the National Interest.

A US official said that, according initial information, US forces did not detect a missile launch from North Korea. Checks were underway, said the official. Referring to the test, a White House official said: "We are aware of the report and have no further comment." South Korea's presidential Blue House declined to comment on the test, referring questions to the defense ministry. It said it was analyzing the nature of the weapon and North Korea's intentions.

Kim's visit to the testing site came after he visited the North Korean Air and Anti-aircraft Force on Tuesday, according to KCNA. Kyungnam University's Kim Dong-yub said the latest test appeared to partly be a message to the

United States that North Korea would not bow to sanctions. "It's also an internal message to the North Korean people and to the military" to instil trust in their own security by reinforcing conventional weapons, he said.

Satellite images from last week showed movement at Yongbyon, North Korea's main nuclear site, that could be associated with the reprocessing of radioactive material into bomb fuel, the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the United States said on Tuesday. US national security adviser John Bolton said in a Bloomberg News interview on Wednesday the United States needed to see "a real indication from North Korea that they've made the strategic decision to give up nuclear weapons" before a third summit between Trump and Kim. —Reuters

Philippine Catholics lash themselves in Easter penance

PAMPANGA: Dozens of barefoot penitents in the Philippines whipped themselves and carried large wooden crosses in sweltering heat yesterday as they participated in a ritual ahead of Easter in Asia's biggest Catholic nation. Some of the men, wearing red robes with their faces covered and hands tied to the crosses, walked for hours along a highway in the northern province of Pampanga, about 88 km (55 miles) north of Manila, the capital.

Others were half-naked, using bamboo flails to hit their backs, which had been nicked with blades before the ritual. The groups stopped to pray at several places along their route, while women recited religious verses. "It is difficult yet rewarding," said sixteen-year-old Job Christian Ong, the youngest in his group of devotees,

Malaysian inquiry probes trafficking and migrant graves

KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysian inquiry into the 2015 discovery of suspected human-trafficking camps and graves in the jungle heard yesterday police found one of the sites months before authorities publicly revealed their existence. The public inquiry, which began this week, is examining the conduct of law enforcement agencies with regard to the discovery of almost 150 graves and dozens of camps near the Thai border.

Malaysian authorities announced in May 2015 they had uncovered the sites in the north of the country, about a month after neighboring Thailand said it had found bodies of Rohingya from Myanmar and Bangladeshis at a makeshift camp over the border. The discovery prompted Thai authorities to crack down on traditional sea routes for illegal migrants coming to the country, triggering a crisis as people-smugglers dumped hundreds of

refugees off the coasts of other countries and fled.

Yesterday the Malaysian inquiry heard from M Joeking, a senior police official charged with guarding the border in part of northern Malaysian, who said authorities found a camp in January 2015. After hearing from a colleague about the camp in the jungle, he sent officers to raid the site in northern Perlis state where they discovered wooden cages and lookout posts, as well as graves and a stretcher to carry dead bodies.

His testimony confirmed long-held suspicions that authorities knew about the camps - where Rohingya and Bangladeshis were held in appalling conditions after arriving by sea - for months before going public. Razali Ismail, one of the officials overseeing the inquiry, suggested the raid was a failure as many migrants fled and police rescued only 38 of them. —AFP

Gunmen kill 14 passengers in Pakistan's Balochistan

Latest attack claimed by separatists in the restive region

QUETTA: Gunmen killed at least 14 people after forcing them to disembark from buses in Pakistan's Balochistan, officials said yesterday, in the latest attack claimed by separatists in the restive southwestern province. The attackers, who numbered around two dozen, were wearing uniforms of the paramilitary Frontier Corps, provincial home secretary Haider Ali said. They "stopped buses on the Makran Coastal Highway and gunned down 14 people", he said, adding that the four vehicles were travelling to the port megacity of Karachi from the coastal town of Ormara.

The gunmen identified non-Baloch passengers by their identity cards and shot them, he said. All the victims are believed to be Pakistani,

with a naval official and a coast guard member among the dead. The attack was claimed by a Baloch separatist group. A militant spokesman denied that any civilian passengers had been killed and said the group had only targeted coast guard and navy service members. Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is Pakistan's poorest province and the largest by landmass, with Islamist as well as ethnic Baloch separatists active there.

Pakistani security forces have been targeting insurgents in the province since 2004, and have also been repeatedly accused by international rights groups of abuses there. The military denies the allegations. Provincial home minister Mir Zia Langov told AFP a full-scale

investigation had been launched into the attack, and authorities are trying to track down the gunmen, who he said had fled the scene. "Such incidents are intolerable and we will not spare the terrorists who carried out this dastardly attack," he said. Prime Minister Imran Khan also condemned the killings in a statement from his office.

Poorest province

The attack came less than a week after a suicide blast claimed by the Islamic State group in provincial capital Quetta killed 20 people. Balochistan is also host to a number of major projects under the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The massive infrastructure project seeks to connect the western Chinese province of Xinjiang with the Arabian Sea port of Gwadar in Balochistan.

But it has also drawn its share of attacks, particularly by separatists who have long complained that residents do not receive a fair share of profits from the province's resources. Violence in Pakistan has dropped significantly since the country's deadliest-ever militant attack, an assault on a school in the northwestern city of Peshawar in 2014 that killed more than 150 people - most of them children. But militants still retain the ability to carry out attacks, and analysts have long warned that Pakistan is yet to tackle the root causes of extremism.—AFP



CANICO, Portugal: A video grab shows the wreckage of a tourist bus that crashed on April 17, 2019 in Canico, on the Portuguese island of Madeira. — AFP

29 German tourists killed in bus crash

CANICO, Portugal: Twenty-nine German tourists were killed when their bus spun off the road and tumbled down a slope before crashing into a house on the Portuguese island of Madeira. Drone footage of the aftermath of the accident showed the badly mangled wreckage of the bus resting precariously on its side against a building on a hillside, the vehicle's roof partially crushed and front window smashed.

Rescue workers attended to injured passengers among the undergrowth where the bus came to rest, some of them bearing bloodied head bandages and bloodstained clothes, others appearing to be more seriously hurt. Local authorities said most of the dead were in their 40s and 50s. They were among the more than one million tourists who visit the Atlantic islands off the coast of Morocco each year, attracted by its subtropical climate and rugged volcanic terrain.

"Horrible news comes to us from Madeira," a German government spokesman tweeted after the crash. "Our deep sorrow goes to all those who lost their lives in the bus accident, our thoughts are with the injured," he added. German holidaymakers were the second largest group after British tourists to visit the islands-known as the Pearl of the Atlantic and the Floating Garden in the Atlantic—in 2017, according to Madeira's tourism office.

The islands are home to just 270,000 inhabitants. Filipe Sousa, mayor of Santa Cruz where the accident happened, said 17 women and 11 men were killed in the crash, with another 21 injured. A

doctor told reporters another woman died of her injuries in hospital. "I express the sorrow and solidarity of all the Portuguese people in this tragic moment, and especially for the families of the victims who I have been told were all German," President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa told Portuguese television. He said he would travel to Madeira overnight.

'Profound sadness'

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa added on Twitter that he had contacted German Chancellor Angela Merkel to convey his condolences "It is with profound sadness that I heard of the accident on Madeira," he wrote on the government's Twitter page. "I took the occasion to convey my sadness to Chancellor Angela Merkel at this difficult time," he added. The regional protection service in Madeira confirmed 28 deaths in the accident that happened at 6:30 pm (1730 GMT) Wednesday, while hospital authorities said another woman later died of her injuries.

The bus had been carrying around 50 passengers. Regional government Vice President Pedro Calado said it was "premature" to speculate on the cause of the crash, adding that the vehicle was five years old and that "everything had apparently been going well". Judicial authorities had opened an investigation into the circumstances of the accident, the Madeira public prosecutor's office told the Lusa news agency. Medical teams were being sent from Lisbon to help local staff carry out post-mortems on the dead.—AFP

Poppies bloom across Afghanistan as drought eases

LASHKAR GAH: A vast field of towering white poppies sways gently in the breeze, silky petals sometimes tumbling to the ground, a visible marker of the resilience of Afghanistan's lucrative opium trade. The sight of a seemingly endless expanse of opium-producing flowers is common across rural Afghanistan, but this farm is in the centre of government-controlled Lashkar Gah city - the capital of Helmand province. In a field AFP visited this month, workers were scoring grooves into the plants' bulbous seed pods from which the raw, milky-white opium oozes. "We know it is harmful but we have no other way to earn money, this is the only income for us," laborer Mohammad Ghous said.

Afghanistan is the world's top grower of opium, and the crop accounts for hundreds of thousands of jobs. Farmers grow poppies with impunity, as both Taliban and government officials often profit from the lucrative trade. "The Taliban also don't care - they only need their share," said Gul Mohammad, a poppy farmer. Afghan opium production took a hit last year as an intense drought dried fields and shrunk cultivation areas. According to a UN survey, potential opium production dropped by 29 percent in 2018 compared to the previous year.

Still, production remained near record levels - and so far this year some farmers are seeing a rebound amid heavy rains that have poured over parts of Afghanistan in recent weeks. Conflict is also providing a surprising boon for the industry. "(The) government was destroying poppy fields in previous years, but this year due to the ongoing war they couldn't," Mohammad said. Most poppy production in Afghanistan is in the Taliban-controlled southern part. The insurgents have long profited from poppies by taxing farmers and traffickers, and running their own drug-making factories that turn raw opium into morphine or heroin for export.

Excess supply in recent years has led to falling prices, but a lack of alternative cash crops has left many Afghan farmers hooked on growing opium poppies. "We have been cultivating poppies for twenty years," farmer Abdul Hadi said. "It is less tiring, makes a lot of money and is less demanding than growing corn or wheat."—AFP

International

Sporadic violence as millions vote in second phase of India's election

PM's party runs aggressive campaign, courts nationalist base

BENGALURU: Millions of voters across swathes of southern India cast ballots yesterday in the second phase of a mammoth, staggered general election, as sporadic violence flared in the east and the insurgency-racked state of Jammu and Kashmir. More than 155 million people are eligible to vote in 95 constituencies in 12 states yesterday, with results of the election to India's 545-member parliament expected on May 23.

In focus are the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, where the main opposition Congress party and its allies need to win big if they hope to stop Prime Minister Narendra Modi from securing a second straight term. Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have run an aggressive campaign, playing to their nationalist, Hindu-first base and attacking rivals they accuse of appeasing minorities. Critics say such divisive rhetoric threatens India's secular foundations.

"Communal polarization is the biggest issue for me," said Rakesh Mehar, who voted in the technology hub of Bengaluru, which is the capital of Karnataka. "And the growing intolerance in the country is what worries me the most." Yet it may be tough for the BJP to repeat its 2014 feat of sweeping victories in six northern states that delivered 70 percent of all its seats, helping to clinch a landslide majority, said academic Neelanjan Sircar. "You can never expect you'll do that again," added Sircar, a political science professor at Ashoka University near the capital, New Delhi. "Those seats that you lose, you'll

have to make up somewhere."

The BJP would be looking to make gains in Karnataka, he added. Congress, which is focusing on concerns about growing joblessness and farmers' distress, is staking its chances on a promise of generous handouts to India's poorest families. "People are talking about national issues," said Manjunath Munirathnappa, a voter in Bengaluru, who hoped lawmakers would resolve infrastructure woes, such as traffic congestion and inadequate water supply. "But only when they fix the local issues will there be progress."

Sporadic violence

The election, in which almost 900 people are eligible to vote, began last week and ends next month, with vote counting set for May 23 and results expected the same day. Sporadic violence was reported in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, where separatists have called an election boycott and the eastern state of West Bengal, which has a history of election clashes. Police fired teargas to disperse stone-throwers in Srinagar, the Himalayan region's main city, where thousands of troops had been deployed to guard the vote, although turnout was just 5 percent by 1 pm.

"There has been stone pelting by protesters in at least 40 places," said a senior police officer who sought anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media. Police in the West Bengal constituency of Darjeeling also fired tear



TAMIL NADU: Indian nuns display their ink-marked fingers after casting their vote at a polling station in Chennai yesterday during the second phase of the mammoth Indian elections. —AFP

gas at protesters who complained they had not been allowed to vote, said the top district official, Arvind Kumar Mina. "They had blocked a highway and had to be dispersed," he added.

In the neighboring constituency of Raiganj, unidentified people attacked the car of the communist candidate at a voting station he visited to check accusations of voting malpractice, the party said. Elections in West Bengal have his-

torically been marred by violence among the communists who ran the state for decades, the main opposition Congress and a powerful regional group, all trading charges of vote-rigging and intimidating supporters. The election panel has banned campaigning for a few days by a firebrand Hindu ascetic from the BJP, who governs northern Uttar Pradesh, over his anti-Muslim comments. — Reuters

Indonesia leader declares poll win as rival does too

JAKARTA: Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday declared victory in a presidential election to lead the world's third-largest democracy but his challenger also claimed he had won and complained of widespread cheating. Unofficial results from private pollsters based on vote samples from Wednesday's election pointed to a comfortable win for Widodo, with about 55 percent of the popular vote, giving him a lead of almost 10 percentage points over his rival, former general Prabowo Subianto. The counts from reputable pollsters have proved to be accurate in previous elections, though the official result will not be announced until May 22.

Widodo told reporters he had received congratulatory calls from 22 state leaders, including Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and he had invited his rival to meet. Widodo also urged supporters to wait for official results to con-

firm the win. At a separate news conference just minutes after Widodo declared victory, Prabowo appeared defiant and said his team had evidence of cheating and claimed to have won 62 percent of the popular vote based on internal polling.

"We have declared (victory) because we got evidence of widespread cheating at the village, sub-district and district levels across Indonesia," he said, standing next to his running mate, Sandiaga Uno, who looked more subdued. In 2014, Prabowo had also claimed victory on election day, before contesting the results at the Constitutional Court, which confirmed Widodo's win. A spokesman for Prabowo said he would take his complaint to the Constitutional Court if the Election Commission confirmed Widodo's victory.

The commission said earlier on its website Widodo had secured about 50 percent of the vote, based on results from 808 of more than 800,000 polling stations, with Prabowo on about 45 percent. The English-language Jakarta Post newspaper carried a front-page headline declaring "Five More Years" next to a picture of the president. Financial markets surged yesterday on Widodo's apparent victory, though gains were pared in the afternoon. The rupiah currency ended the day up 0.3 percent from the previous close, and the Jakarta stock index - at one

point up 2.4 percent - closed 0.4 percent higher.

Alexander Raymond Arifianto, a political analyst at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore, said Widodo's margin of victory meant the opposition did not appear to have a strong case to claim the election was stolen. But he noted risks that Islamist supporters of the challenger, including the hardline Alumni 212 movement, could hit the streets to dispute the election. "So Prabowo has no case, but the hardliners and Alumni 212 can create lots of headaches for Jokowi if they go ahead with their protest plan tomorrow and in future weeks," he said, referring to president by his nickname.

Novel Bamukmin, a spokesman for Alumni 212, said the movement planned a peaceful march after Friday prayers at Jakarta's Istiqlal mosque. "We just want to bow down to express our gratitude in order that this victory is recognized," he said, referring to Prabowo's claim he won the election. Islamist groups have in the past been able to mobilize tens of thousands of supporters. From late 2016, they organized a series of big protests against the Jakarta governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, the first ethnic-Chinese Christian to hold the job, who was subsequently jailed for insulting the Koran. —Reuters

Schools evacuated, services halted as quake rocks Taiwan

TAIPEI: A 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck Taiwan's coastal city of Hualien yesterday, shaking buildings and temporarily halting subway services in the capital Taipei, but there were no immediate reports of serious damage or casualties. Television footage showed school children being evacuated from buildings after the largest quake to hit the heavily industrialized island this year, a weather bureau official said.

A hundred people were evacuated from a building in Taipei City, while two people were hit by falling rocks in the tourist city of Hualien, the government said. While small-scale power cuts were reported in some districts in Taipei, the Central News Agency said, oil refinery plants and services were operating as normal, according to the government. It set up a disaster reaction centre after the quake which hit at a depth of 18 km (11 miles), according to the weather bureau. Aftershocks of more than a 5 magnitude were possible in the coming days, the bureau said.

President Tsai Ing-wen said high-speed rail service in northern Taiwan, between Taipei and the neighboring city of Taoyuan, had been temporarily suspended. On her official Facebook page, Tsai said she asked officials "to gather information from everywhere to check whether there's any damage, and if so, to react as soon as possible." The United States Geological Survey put the magnitude of the quake at 6.4, adding that it struck at a depth of 15 km (9 miles) from Hualien. —Reuters

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2019

www.kuwaittimes.net

This handout photo shows a kakapo on Codfish Island, also known as Whenua Hou, off the south coast of New Zealand's South Island. — AFP

Kakapow! Rare world's fattest parrot has record breeding season

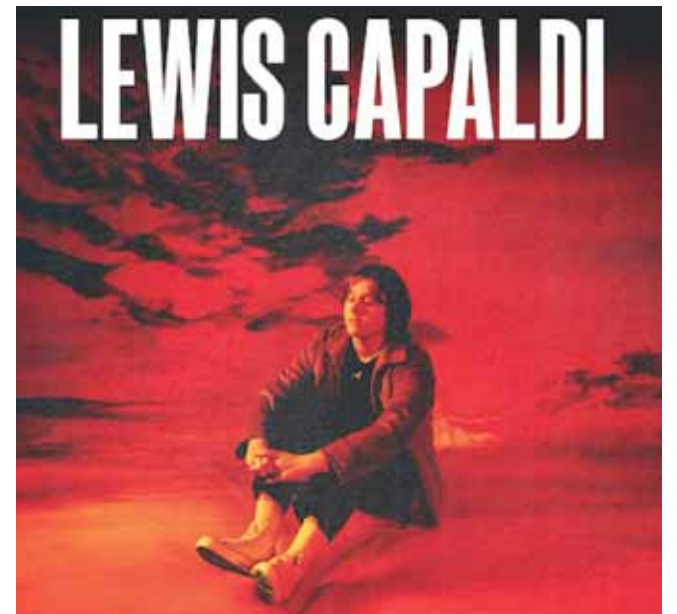
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Lifestyle | Gossip

Capaldi announces UK arena tour and mental health initiative

Lewis Capaldi has announced a UK arena tour alongside an initiative supporting fans suffering from mental health issues. The 22-year-old singer-songwriter will embark on a run of concerts at major venues in March 2020 - including a night at London's The SSE Arena, Wembley - making him one of the first artists in history to announce arena shows before the release of a debut album. As well as his tour, the 'Someone You Loved' hitmaker has announced LIVELIVE, which aims to help those who experience any form of anxiety or emotional difficulties and have concerns about attending concerts. The initiative will help fans by providing a team at each venue who are expertly trained and qualified in assisting with panic, anxiety or any other concerns they may have, and the 'Bruises' singer hopes the service will "support" and help them "feel comfortable" attending his gigs. He said: "I al-

ways get tons of messages from people online who have said they want to come to my shows but can't because they're struggling massively with anxiety or are just generally afraid they will have a panic attack during the show. "I really wanted to put something in place to help those people feel comfortable and offer them support to allow them to experience the shows. "I hate to feel that anyone's anxiety is making them miss out on anything they want to do and LIVELIVE is my attempt at helping make these shows enjoyable for as many of those people who have been supporting this journey for me!" All proceeds from a compulsory 50p extra charge at checkout for each ticket sale goes solely towards the initiative and tickets go on general sale on April 26 at 9am at <https://www.livenation.co.uk>. The 'Grace' hitmaker's debut album 'Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent' is released on May 17.



Mark Ronson to play Radio 1's Big Weekend



Mark Ronson will play at Radio 1's Big Weekend 2019, which has added an extra night. The 43-year-old musician will perform on the additional evening at Middlesbrough's Stewart Park on Friday May 24th, which will also feature other huge dance music acts such as MK and Purple Disco Machine. Mark said: "I can't wait to play Radio 1's Big Weekend. "From my very first one back in 2007 all the way till now, it's always such a great vibe and great crowd. "Psyched to start my summer playing some bangers with Annie Mac and the crew." MK added: "Can't wait to play at Radio 1's Big Weekend. Great way to kick off the summer." Other delights on the night will see Wilkinson, Sub Focus and Dimension form a supergroup for one night only. Sub Focus said: "We've all become friends and collaborators through years of touring and releasing music together but this is the first time the three of us have linked up to do a set, it's about time." Record producer Wilkinson cannot wait to team up with his pals on stage for the spectacle. He said: "It's all about collaboration. Myself and Dimension did 'Rush'. Then I did 'Take It Up' with Sub Focus. Then Sub and Dimension did 'Desire'. "It's just great to work with friends who you are fans of and we all hang out on the road all the time. "Really looking forward to this. A proper one-off." The latest acts have been added to a bill which already features Miley Cyrus, Stormzy, The 1975 and Little Mix. Tickets will be available for audiences over 18 and will go on sale at 7pm on Friday 26th April, priced at £10 plus £2.50 booking fee. There is more information on Radio 1's Big Weekend website.



Mabel announces debut album High Expectations

Mabel has announced her debut album 'High Expectations' will be released on July 12. The 23-year-old singer has released details of her hotly-anticipated record, which is available on pre-order now, and revealed how working on the songs allowed her to "gain so much confidence". In a statement, the 'Don't Call Me Up' hitmaker said: "High Expectations' the title says it all. "It's about the expectations I have of myself, other people's expectations of me and vice versa, especially in relationships. The general topic of the project is the negatives and positives that come with that. "I want to send a positive message to everyone that's going to listen to it. I've gained so much confidence from writing this album and that's what I want people to take from it." The twice-BRIT-nominated star has already sold over three million singles in the UK - two platinum, three gold, and two silver - surpassed a billion streams and sold out the likes of Brixton Academy. The star previously revealed that she has the title of her "empowering, uplifting and disarmingly candid record" tattooed on her neck - and the album will tell the story of Mabel's own extraordinary life-story as well as those who inspire her - such as Destiny's Child and Lauryn Hill. The singer previously said of 'High Expectations': "It's not just a collection of songs, it has to tell a story and it has to have a thread and it has to have different nuances. "But when I figured out what that story was, the rest poured out. I am gassed off the name. I'm actually going to get it tattooed!"

The Hollywood Vampires announce new album

The Hollywood Vampires have announced a new album mostly comprised of original music. Alice Cooper, Johnny Depp and Aerosmith's Joe Perry's legendary supergroup will release 'Rise' - the follow-up to their 2015 self-titled debut LP - on June 21. As well as the brand new material, Depp has recorded his own take on late music legend David Bowie's 1997 classic 'Heroes', whilst there is also a tribute to Jim Carroll Band's 'People Who Died' and Perry has put his own spin on Johnny Thunder's 'You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory'. The trio worked on the record with Cooper's long-time touring band member Tommy Henriksen, and the 'Poison' hitmaker says the songs represent what The Vampires' sound "really is". He said: "'Rise' is not only a totally different animal than the first Vampires album, it is unique to anything I've ever been a part of. "I approached it very differently than I usually do when working on an album. "Each of us; Joe, Johnny, Tommy and myself have written songs on this album. "What is different though is that I didn't try to change any songs to be more "Alice-like". "Because each of us has different influences, the sound of this album is very cool. "I think that with this album, we are establishing what the Vampires' sound really is, whereas with the first album we were more tipping our hats to our fallen rock n roll brothers." Perry - the lead guitarist in Aerosmith - added that 'Rise' is "one of the most freest and honest" albums he's ever worked on. He said: "'Rise' came from pure creative energy, which is just like playing live with the Vampires. "The record showcases everyone doing what they do best without anyone looking over our shoulders. "There was no pressure or deadlines, allowing us to write and record an album that is one of the freest and most honest sounding records I've been part of. I can't wait to perform some of these tunes live for our fans."





Olyphant recalls 'moment' shared with Perry on Once Upon a Time in Hollywood

Timothy Olyphant bonded with Luke Perry while filming 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood'. The pair met for the first time when they were cast as James Stacy and Wayne Maunder in the upcoming Quentin Tarantino film and the 50-year-old actor thinks his late pal - who died after suffering a stroke aged 52 last month - will be much missed at the movie's upcoming premiere. Speaking to Variety, he said: "What a lovely guy. Just a lovely guy. I'm going to miss him at that premiere. I'm going to miss him. I'm going to miss him anyway." "We just met on the film, but the two of us showed up, and we kept looking at each other like, 'How'd we get in? I don't know who let us in, but they let us in.'" "There were so many moments where it just felt like the two of us would look at each other and we both had the same look on our face, which is, 'Not bad. Here we are.'" Timothy went on to praise the 'Riverdale' star as "the best kind of actor" and a true "craftsman". He said: "I haven't met anyone who's ever said a bad thing about the guy, and that was my experience hanging out with him and working with him. He was the best kind of actor. He was a craftsman." The 'Santa Clarita Diet' star added that Luke - who had 18-year-old Sophie and 21-year-old Jack with ex-wife Rachel Sharp - was a family man who was "all about the work".

Thompson says Thor: Ragnarok sequel has been pitched

Tessa Thompson says Marvel are considering another 'Thor' sequel with Taika Waititi returning as director. The 35-year-old actress - who plays Valkyrie in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films opposite Chris Hemsworth as the titular character - confirmed a pitch for a follow-up to the latest edition of the superhero's standalone story, 'Thor: Ragnarok', has been submitted and she believes the 43-year-old filmmaker has been asked to helm the project. Speaking to the LA Times, she said: "I don't know how real that intel is, but I hear that the pitch has happened, I think the idea is Taika would come back." 'Thor: Ragnarok' - which saw Taika voice fan favourite character Korg - followed the film's hero fighting his way out of deadly gladiatorial contest that pit him against his former ally and fellow Avenger the Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), after being imprisoned on the other side of the universe. Thor's quest for survival led him in a race against time to prevent the all-powerful Hela from destroying his home world and the Asgardian civilisation. The latest edition to the MCU is the upcoming 'Avengers: Endgame', which is set for release on 25 April and will end phase three of the universe - wrapping up 11 franchises and 22 films.



M. Night Shyamalan cried over bad Glass reviews

M. Night Shyamalan cried when he heard 'Glass' had poor reviews. The 48-year-old filmmaker admitted that upon learning his superhero movie - which is a sequel to 'Unbreakable' and 'Split' and is the final chapter in his 'Eastrail 177' trilogy - was taking a critical beating back in January, he couldn't help but break down, despite preparing to make a television appearance. Speaking at NYU's Stern School of Business, where he delivered the 2019 Ashok C. Sani Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence lecture, he said: "I was in London when I heard the US reviews for 'Glass' were poor, I was in a make-up chair for a TV show, and I cried. But the 'Sixth Sense' director went on to explain that the first reaction to the film - which ended up making nearly \$247 million worldwide - were overwhelmingly positive and meant he was even more upset when he received his negative feedback because he wasn't "prepared" for it. He continued: "We'd just come back from the London screenings, which were through the roof. We had only great screenings of the movie around the world. So essentially I wasn't prepared. "I had this false sense of being a part of the group in a safe way. But boy, did I feel distraught that day." Shyamalan added that although the film's poor reception made him feel "worthless" the film's eventual box office success restored his faith in his own "beliefs".

Wiig to reunite with Mumolo to pen new comedy

Kristen Wiig is set to reunite with her 'Bridesmaids' co-writer Annie Mumolo on a new comedy. The 45-year-old actress and comedian - who penned the Oscar-nominated comedy script alongside 45-year-old Annie - has re-teamed with the 'Joy' scribe to create a new Lionsgate film, 'Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar'. The pair will also co-star in the film, which will be helmed by Josh Greenbaum and female-focused production company Gloria Sanchez Productions - founded and led by Jessica Elbaum, Will Ferrell and Adam McKay - will produce alongside Kristen and Annie. The movie will tell the story of best pals Barb and Star (Wiig and Mumolo), who find themselves tangled up in a villain's evil plot to kill everyone in town after leaving their small midwestern town for the first time to go on vacation in Vista Del Mar. In a statement, Greenbaum said: "I'm so excited to be a part of this movie which showcases Kristen and Annie's original, fresh and undeniably hilarious voice in spades, I'm also always looking for projects with titles that rhyme, so it really all worked out on this one." Lionsgate Motion Picture Group president Nathan Kahane added: "It is such an honor that Kristen and Annie have entrusted us with their follow-up to 'Bridesmaids.'"



Ziegler cast in Spielberg's West Side Story

Maddie Ziegler is to star in 'West Side Story'. The 16-year-old dancer and actress - who starred in the music video for Sia's 'Chandelier' and 'Elastic Heart' - will play a member of the Jets in Steven Spielberg's upcoming big-screen adaptation of the classic musical. The filmmaker has also cast Mike Faist - who starred in Broadway's 'Newsies' - as Riff, the leader of the Jets, while Puerto Rican singer-and-dancer Ana Isabelle will play Rosalia. The 72-year-old filmmaker previously announced that 17-year-old New Jersey high school student Rachel Ziegler would make her film debut as the film's female lead Maria and take on the iconic role - made famous by Natalie Wood in the original 1961 film - opposite Ansel Elgort as Tony. The 'E.T.' director previously pledged that the lead role of Maria in his reboot - which follows the love story of a 1950s Romeo and Juliet who are caught between two New York gangs, the American Jets and the Puerto Rican Sharks, - would exclusively go to a Latina actress. Spielberg previously said: "When we began this process a year ago, we announced that we would cast the roles of Maria, Anita, Bernardo, Chino and the Sharks with Latina and Latino actors. I'm so happy that we've assembled a cast that reflects the astonishing depth of talent in America's multi-faceted Hispanic community. — Bang Showbiz



A small step for China: Mars base for teens opens in desert



This aerial photo shows "Mars Base 1", a C-Space Project, in the Gobi desert.



A woman is seen inside the "Mars Base 1", a C-Space Project.

In the middle of China's Gobi desert sits a Mars base simulator, but instead of housing astronauts training to live on the Red Planet, the facility is full of teenagers on a school trip. Surrounded by barren hills in northwestern Gansu province, "Mars Base 1" opened on Wednesday with the aim of exposing teens-and soon tourists-to what life could be like on the planet. The facility's unveiling comes as China is making progress in its efforts to catch up to the United States and become a space power, with ambitions of sending humans to the moon someday. The white-coloured base has a silver dome and nine modules, including living quarters, a control room, a greenhouse and an airlock.

Built at a cost of 50 million yuan (\$7.47 million), the base was constructed with help from the Astronauts Centre of China and the China Intercontinental Communication Centre, a state television production organization. The teenagers go on treks in the desert, where they explore caves in the martian-like landscape. The closest town is Jinchang, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) away.

On Wednesday, over 100 students from a nearby high school walked on the arid Gobi plains, dressed in space-suit-esque tracksuits. "There are so many things here that I've not seen before, I'm very interested in it," said 12-year old Tang Ruitian.



A group of students walk past a model of a lander at "Mars Base 1", a C-Space Project.



Models of Mars rovers are seen at "Mars Base 1".



A guide wearing a space suit stands at an entrance at "Mars Base 1".



A group of students walk past a model of a lander at "Mars Base 1", a C-Space Project, in the Gobi desert, some 40 kilometres from Jinchang in China's northwest Gansu province. — AFP photos



This picture shows food on a shelf at "Mars Base 1".



This picture shows "Mars Base 1".



A group of students visit "Mars Base 1".

'Closest to Mars'

The company behind the project, C-Space, plans to open the base—currently an educational facility—to tourists in the next year, complete with a themed hotel and restaurant to attract space geeks. "We are trying to come up with solutions ... the base is still on earth, it's not on Mars, but we have chosen a landform that matches closest to Mars," C-Space founder Bai Fan told AFP. It follows a similar Mars "village" that opened last month in the Qaidam Basin of neighboring Qinghai—a brutally hot and dry region which is the highest desert in the world, considered the best replica of Mars' surface conditions. As budding astronauts explore "Mars" on Earth, China is planning to send a probe to the real Red Planet next year.

Beijing is pouring billions into its military-run space program, with hopes of having a crewed space station by 2022. Earlier this year, it made the first ever soft landing on the far side of the moon, deploying a rover on the surface. But the C-Space project has faced criticism from some quarters of

the scientific community. Jiao Weixin, a professor at the School of Earth and Space Sciences at Peking University, said the building and surrounding desert were hardly representative of the truly hostile conditions on Mars. To truly replicate the harsh, toxic conditions of Mars would be to create a truly hostile environment, which is expensive and "completely unnecessary", he said. "From the very beginning, I've been opposed to this," Jiao told AFP. "Tourism doesn't make much sense ... what is the meaning in it?" — AFP



This picture shows crops at "Mars Base 1".



This picture taken on April 16, 2019 shows a model of a spacecraft at "Mars Base 1".

Loach and Malick top bill but no Tarantino - yet - for Cannes festival

Veteran directors Ken Loach and Terrence Malick head the line-up of a gritty and highly political Cannes film festival next month, its director Thierry Fremaux said yesterday. Despite red-carpet protests last year led by Hollywood star and jury head Cate Blanchett demanding equality, only four of the 19 films competing for the Palme d'Or top prize are directed by women. Fremaux-whose selection committee consisted of four men and four women-insisted that female talent was coming through in the rest of the official selection, with 13 women directors making the cut overall.

But the big news was that there was no place-as yet-for Quentin Tarantino's much-anticipated new movie, "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", starring Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio. Fremaux hinted that he would hold the door open for the maker of "Reservoir Dogs" until the very last minute. "It is not yet ready," he told reporters. "It's a bit of a sprint... we hope we will have good news to announce" before the festival starts on May 14. Loach, 82, who won the Palme d'Or prize in 2016 with "I, Daniel Blake"-which he then said was his final film-returns with "Sorry We Missed You", an indictment of the gig economy.

Maradona and Elton John

Fremaux revealed that the reclusive American Malick will premiere his World War II story, "A Hidden Life", about a German conscientious objector guillotined by the Nazis in 1943. The world's biggest film



President of the Cannes Film Festival Pierre Lescure (left) and General Delegate of the Cannes Film Festival Thierry Fremaux pose in front of the Cannes official poster during the presentation of the 72nd Cannes Film Festival Official Selection, in Paris yesterday. — AFP photos

festival, which sees itself as the "Olympics of cinema", will open with cult US director Jim Jarmusch's "The Dead Don't Die". The zombie comedy stars Bill Murray, Adam Driver, Tilda Swinton and singers Iggy Pop and Tom Waits. But overall the festival is again missing big starry Hollywood productions.

They have migrated in recent years to the rival Venice film festival in August, which the studios believe gives them a better springboard for the Oscars. Netflix also premiered its Oscar-winning "Roma" at Venice last year after a bitter row with Cannes-since partly patched up-over its rule that selected films must be shown in French cinemas. Fremaux, however, appeared to have some stardust up

his sleeve, hinting that Elton John may perform on stage before the biopic of his life, "Rocketman", premieres out of competition. And "Drive" director Nicolas Winding Refn will similarly unveil two episodes for his new Amazon series "Too Old to Die Young".

Not quite Hollywood

What the Cannes line-up lacks in glamour, it attempted to make up with star auteurs, social issues and a global span. Korean master Bong Joon-ho of "Okja" and "Snowpiercer" fame is back with a tragic-comedy film noir called "Parasite" about the growing divide between rich and poor in his homeland. Another Cannes regular Pedro



In this file photo French director Claude Lelouch poses on the red carpet before the screening of the film "Galveston" during the 44th Deauville US Film Festival in the French northwestern sea resort of Deauville.

Almodovar also returns with his most personal film yet, "Pain & Glory", which has already opened to great acclaim in his native Spain. This time round it's a caper about gangsters who form a union.

Palestine film-maker Elia Suleiman charts a struggle to find an alternative homeland in "It Must Be Heaven". Meanwhile, acclaimed documentary-maker Asif Kapadia tackles the legend of Diego Maradona out of competition. The British Oscar-winning maker of "Amy"-which revealed the singer Amy Winehouse's demons shortly before her death-will concentrate on the footballer's days at FC Napoli. —AFP

John Cena wanted for Suicide Squad sequel

John Cena is reportedly being eyed for a role in the 'Suicide Squad' sequel. According to Variety, the WWE star-and-actor is reportedly in talks to join James Gunn's follow-up to the 2016 DC ensemble movie. It's not known what part he's wanted for, but if he does sign up, the 'Bumblebee' star will be joining returning cast members including Margot Robbie (Harley Quinn), Jared Leto (The Joker), Jai Courtney (Captain Boomerang) and Viola Davis (Captain Waller). The latest rumour surrounding the comic book flick comes after it was reported that Idris Elba will play a new character, rather than replacing Will Smith as Deadshot.

The 46-year-old actor was previously believed to have signed up to portray the gunslinging adversary of Batman after Smith exited the project in February. However, Variety reported that bosses involved with the sequel, including director Gunn, had decided to move on from the Deadshot character and axe him from the movie, with Elba instead taking on a new role.



Smith thinks Aladdin Genie memes are 'very funny'

Will Smith thinks memes about the Genie in 'Aladdin' are "very funny". The 50-year-old actor has assumed the role of the lamp-dweller in Guy Ritchie's upcoming live-action film and the first look at the character arrived in a teaser trailer in February, causing the internet to respond with a slew of funny posts about Will's blue alter-ego. However, the Hollywood star admitted that he wasn't offended by the memes and although he's still trying to "get a handle on" internet culture, he enjoyed the comedic posts. In an interview with Empire, he said: "It was very funny. There was a Sonic The Hedgehog / Genie frog. "Everything is under such critical scrutiny. I came up in an era where there was no internet. It's a new thing that I'm trying to get a handle on." Guy, 50, went on to explain that when another trailer was released with improved shots of the Genie, he was satisfied fans were back on board with the character. He said: "It even came with apologies from the cynics who were so adamant initially; I've never seen apologies in that world. — Bang Showbiz



Films in the running for Cannes' top prize

From a zombie flick starring Iggy Pop to a tale of Chinese gangsters who decide to form a union, these are the films vying for the top prize at the Cannes film festival next month:

The Dead Don't Die

Jim Jarmusch's zombie comedy will open the festival on May 14 with a starry cast that includes Bill Murray, Adam Driver, Tilda Swinton, Iggy Pop and Tom Waits. The indie American icon, who made his name with "Down by Law" and "Mystery Train" in the 1980s, scored a low-key hit with last film "Paterson"—also starring Driver—which also premiered at Cannes.

Sorry We Missed You

Having won the Palme d'Or two years ago with "I, Daniel Blake", which showed the devastation caused by austerity in Britain, veteran director Ken Loach is back with an indictment of the gig economy. Written by his long-time collaborator Paul Laverty, it is the story of another Newcastle family battling debt since the 2008 financial crisis. They hope to turn a corner when the father becomes a self-employed delivery driver, but the economy is not all it seems.

A Hidden Life

Two decades after "The Thin Red Line", American master Terrence Malick returns to World War II with a haunting story of a German conscientious objector guillotined by the Nazis in 1943. It also includes the final screen performance of the late actors Michael Nyqvist and Bruno Ganz of "Downfall" and "Wings of Desire" fame. It is the first time Malick has premiered a film at Cannes since he won the Palme d'Or with "The Tree of Life" in 2011.

Parasite

Korean master Bong Joon-ho of "Okja" and "Snowpiercer" fame is another Cannes regular, famous for his dark gripping genre-bending creations. This time he tells a tragicomic tale of a poor family's obsession with a rich one after their son gets a job as a tutor to the daughter of a wealthy industrialist. The tale has echoes of another South Korean movie, "Burning", which became an arthouse hit last year after showing at

Cannes. With Bong regular Song Kang-ho ("The Host" and "Snowpiercer") in the lead, it also stars Choi Woo-shik of the cult horror hit "Train to Busan".

Matthias & Maxime

French Canadian wunderkind Xavier Dolan wrote, directed and plays the lead in his latest drama about a group of late twentysomethings in his native Quebec. Of late, the prolific young auteur—who made an impact with "Mommy" and "I Killed My Mother"—has divided critical opinion. Cannes will be hoping this is a return to form.

The Traitor

A biopic of Tommaso Buscetta, the first high-ranking member of Cosa Nostra to break the Sicilian Mafia's oath of silence, it stars Brazilian actress and model Maria Fernanda Candido as his third wife, who convinces him to spill the beans to US prosecutors. Veteran Italian auteur Marco Bellocchio shot the film in Sicily, Rome, London and Rio de Janeiro.

Young Ahmed

Three times Palme d'Or winners Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne return to the scene of their greatest triumphs with "Young Ahmed", the story of a teenager who embraces Islamic extremism. The Belgian brothers' gritty slices of working-class life are always set in their native French-speaking Wallonia, an area that served as the base for the terrorist cell responsible for the November 2015 Paris attacks.

Pain & Glory

Cannes usually only shows world premieres, but the festival has made an exception for its former jury head Pedro Almodovar's most personal film. Released in Spain and Mexico last month to almost universal acclaim, it is a psychodrama with a film director looking back on his life as his past catches up with him. With Almodovar stalwarts Antonio Banderas and Nora Navas leading the cast alongside Penelope Cruz, it's no wonder this is the most viewed Spanish film of the year so far.

Nighthawk

Having wowed Cannes in 2016 with "Aquarius", in which

the amazing Sonia Braga shone, Brazilian director Kleber Mendonca Filho is back with what has been described as a "sinister genre piece" again starring Braga in a western set in the country's vast interior.

Portrait of a Young Woman on Fire

Celine Sciamma, who won rave reviews for "Girlhood", her 2014 tale of young black girls growing up in the gritty French suburbs, returns with the story of a painter commissioned to do the portrait of a young woman in the 18th century. The film stars Adele Haenel, one of France's most sought-after young actresses.

The Wild Goose Lake

The sole Chinese contender is Diao Yinan, who won the top prize at the Berlin film festival in 2014 for another crime story, "Black Coal, Thin Ice". This time round it's a caper about gangsters who form a union.

Roubaix, a Light

Arnaud Desplechin, the whimsical director of the 2004 film "Kings & Queens", explores his native northern French town of Roubaix in his latest feature starring Roschdy Zem, Lea Seydoux and Sara Forestier.

Little Joe

Austrian-born director Jessica Hausner delves into the near future in a film about genetic modification featuring rising British star Ben Whishaw and Emily Beecham.

Les Misérables

French actor-director Ladj Ly, who grew up filming his high-rise Paris suburb, makes his Cannes debut with his first feature film set in the deprived neighborhood where the 2005 Paris riots kicked off.

It Must Be Heaven

Palestinian director Elia Suleiman, who was nominated for the Palme d'Or in 2002 with "Divine Intervention" about a love affair across the Israeli-Palestinian divide, travels to Paris, New York and other cities for a film about wandering and exile. — AFP

Girls got game: Young women hope to level up video game coding skills

Alexa was eight when she discovered video games, from racing, solving puzzles and playing out fantasies in virtual worlds. But as a girl gamer, she was sometimes the odd one out among her peers. "In my class, no girls really play games. It's just the boys. I think more games are aimed towards boys than girls," said the London student, now 10 years old. But Alexa hopes to change that after spending a day at a workshop by Girls Make Games, a US-based training organization that works to inspire more girls to consider a career in the male-dominated video games industry. "I didn't really think I could be a video game developer but this has made me think about that because before, I generally thought it was just men," said Alexa at the London offices of gaming giant Sony PlayStation, where the event was held.

"I would want to see more gender-neutral things - not stuff that's stereotyped to be for girls, like pink or rainbows. And not the boy stereotypes, like fighting and racing (games)." Through workshops and summer camps in over 50 cities globally, Girls Make Games has taught over

6,000 girls how to program and design basic video games to get them interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

In the United States, nearly 60 percent of girls play video games, compared to 84 percent of boys, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center report. But if you include gamers of all ages, women make up nearly half the players in the United States, said the Entertainment Software Association, which represents the U.S. computer and video game industry. The global video games industry - including mobile games and consoles - was worth some \$135 billion in 2018, and is projected to jump to \$174 billion by 2021, data from gaming analytics company Newzoo showed.

Missing voice

Despite the huge appetite for video games from both men and women, only 22 percent of game developers are female, according to figures by the US-based International Game Developers Association, the largest global network



for people who create video games. It's not just about making games, though. The industry was embroiled in a movement known as "Gamergate", in which video game fans, mostly men, lashed back aggressively online at criticism about sexism in gaming culture. The movement came into general public view in 2014. — Reuters



Photo shows a kakapo on Codfish Island, also known as Whenua Hou, off the south coast of New Zealand's South Island. — AFP photos



Three kakapo chicks in their nest on Codfish Island, also known as Whenua Hou, off the south coast of New Zealand's South Island.

Kakapow! Rare world's fattest parrot has record breeding season

The world's fattest parrot, the critically endangered kakapo, has enjoyed a record breaking breeding season, New Zealand scientists said yesterday, with climate change possibly aiding the species' unique mating spree. Less than 50 years after the flightless nocturnal bird was thought to have been extinct, at least 75 chicks are expected to survive this year, Andrew Digby, a science advisor to New Zealand's kakapo recovery, operation told AFP. Digby oversees a breeding program so precisely monitored that scientists can state the last of 249 eggs laid will hatch on Friday.

It will significantly boost the population which has grown to 147 adults since a small number of the plump green, yellow and black birds was discovered in 1970. Digby described the kakapo as an "unusual" parrot as the females control the breeding process and only mate every two to four years when New Zealand's native rimu trees are full of fruit. "We don't quite know what the trigger is but one of the things we are looking at is that the rimu berry is really high in vitamin D, a super food basically, which is associated with fertility and health," he said. The rimu trees have produced a bumper crop

this year with Digby saying one theory was that climate change and temperature fluctuations could be behind the berry bonanza.

The surviving kakapo—whose name means "night parrot" in Maori—are kept on four predator-free islands off the New Zealand coast. At the start of the breeding season, the males which weigh about 4.0 kilograms (nine pounds), put themselves on display while the females choose a partner. They mate and then end the relationship, shutting the male out of the incubation and rearing processes. The kakapo recovery program is so tightly monitored that although they remain in the wild, each one has a radio transmitter attached to its body and there are monitoring systems embedded in their nests.

Digby knew that of the 50 adult females, 49 produced 249 eggs, of which 89 have so far hatched and 75 were expected to make it to adulthood. That is more than double the success rate from the last breeding season three years ago. "It's probably one of the most intensively managed species in the world," said Digby, who wants at least 500 birds before any thought is given to easing up the intensity of the recovery operation. — AFP



Scientists in Argentina unearth 220 million-year-old dinosaur fossils

A site containing the 220-million-year-old fossilised remains of nearly a dozen dinosaurs has been discovered in western Argentina, researchers said Wednesday. "There are almost ten different individuals, it's a mass of bones, there's practically no sediment," said Argentinian paleontologist Ricardo Martinez. "It's very impressive." According to Martinez, of the University of San Juan, the fossils are approximately 220 million years old, belonging to "an era of which we know little".

"This discovery is doubly important because there are at least seven or eight individuals of dicynodonts, the ancestors of mammals, the size of an ox," he said. He said there were also remains of

archosaurs, reptiles that could be the ancestors of great crocodiles "that we do not know about yet". The find was discovered in September last year in San Juan province, about 1,100 kilometers (680 miles) west of Buenos Aires.

The site is between one and two meters (yards) in diameter and about the same depth, leading scientists to speculate it was a former drinking hole at a time of great drought, and the creatures died of weakness at the spot. Argentina has been a rich source of fossils from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous eras over the years—most, of creatures not found in the northern hemisphere. —AFP



Handout photo released by the Institute and Museum of Natural Sciences (IMCN) of the San Juan University, of Argentine researcher Ricardo Martinez sitting next to a 220-million-year-old fossil at the Ischigualasto National Park in San Juan province, Argentina. — AFP

Sekiro: An inspiring masterpiece

By Aakash Bakaya

Every great work must nurture the ability to inspire. It must affect you profoundly and lead you down new, untraveled roads of knowledge and imagination. They present as pieces true to themselves and deeply personal to the creators responsible for them. When done right, and on those rare occasions you come across some, you will know it because they have embedded themselves deep within you.

For me it's the entire Peter Jackson's 'Lord of the Rings' trilogy and putting down Stephen King's final page of his 'Dark Tower' saga. It's the first time I made the jump into Xen in 'Half-Life' and watched the final montage in the last episode of 'The Wire'. We all have our fair share of these personal artistic milestones we feel lucky and privileged to have experienced, whether it was in its time or decades after it was released. 'Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice' may not have usurped any of those experiences I just mentioned, but it is definitely up there.

I didn't want this write-up an objective analysis of 'Sekiro' or how game director Hidetaka Miyazaki crafted yet another gaming milestone. You can already find several of them elsewhere. To be honest, I just wanted an outlet - a funnel to gush about how almost every aspect of 'Sekiro' spoke to me on a personal level and as a fan of the gaming medium as a whole.

As it neared its March 22 release, I began to worry that my expectations for the title were much too high. I adored Miyazaki's Souls games (and even wrote about them in this paper a few years ago) and I thought filling those shoes and standing on those shoulders would be impossible. However, 'Sekiro' surpassed those expectations with ease. In my first session with the game I ended up playing for five hours straight. I opened it about 30 minutes after its midnight release and when I finally closed it - the sun was beginning to come up. I don't usually do this - I like pacing myself and taking time to absorb everything I possibly can. But the moment the beautiful menu music began, I was hooked. I remember feeling overwhelmed at one point; I can't remember why, but I might have stopped breathing...or I guess my face got tired from staring at the screen in awe. It was perhaps the greatest first impressions I've ever gotten from a game.

The experience only grew from strength to strength with perfect pacing and gameplay mechanics that gelled seamlessly into each other. The combat system is so precisely designed that it must absolutely be played to be believed. It took me 11 days to beat the game, only to realize that my choices only led to one of four endings. That means I would have to play it through three more times to get the entire experience. In most cases, I would simply watch the other endings on YouTube and move on, but 'Sekiro' is so good, I am going to push myself to achieve each one myself.



That would fit nicely with one of the overarching themes of the game - a theme carried forward from previous titles by developer FromSoftware. To persist and overcome great adversity takes persistence and patience. 'Git Gud', a now meme reply to those who complain about any game with a high but rewarding difficulty curve, isn't meant as a jab or slight (although more malicious individuals might mean it as such). It is more aligned to a more common saying - 'practice makes perfect'.

I firmly believe that people only truly grow from hardships and that you will never learn how to jump over certain obstacles until you've gathered the courage to face them. 'Sekiro', even more so than its spiritual predecessors, reinforces these ideals. The world it inhabits may not be as bleak but that doesn't stop its fleeting moments of light to shine through all the brighter.

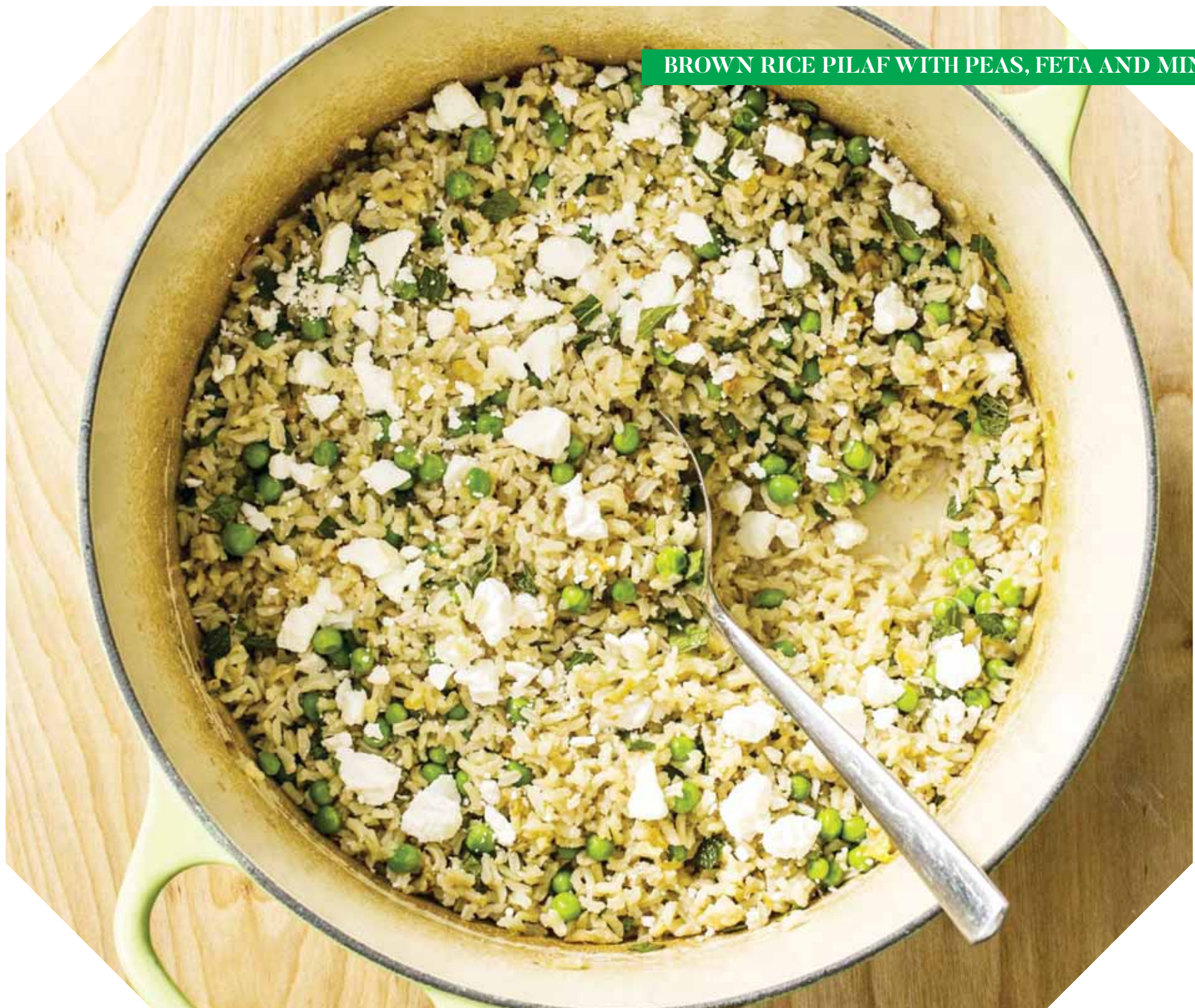
Set during the Sengoku period, it is a time of conflict and bloodshed. The gorgeous backdrops and levels based on real Japanese locations bring the setting to life. Even the Ashina Clan and its vassals which the plot revolves around are based on actual historic counterparts. Yet it would be more straightforward to simply reenact these struggles and somewhat more pedestrian. What 'Sekiro' ends up doing is mixing these elements with a dark and fantastical tale of immortality, duty and power that lit up every barrel of imagination within me. There's also an enormous snake

(maybe more) and a great white ape that will humiliate you with his farts and feces. What's not to love?

I could go on and on speaking about every single merit of 'Sekiro', but for now, I will spare you, kind reader. It is a great game - a masterpiece in every sense of the word and has easily landed into my list of top 10 favorite games of all time. But I can safely say it is not for everyone, even though I hope it is at least tried by as many people as possible.

Even the character of 'Wolf' who we play as may seem a bit bland for some, but he reminded me so much of the cowboys of Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Westerns or a stoic, no-nonsense protagonist from a Tarantino flick. Essentially, he was a Japanese shinobi version of Roland Deschain from 'The Dark Tower', and I loved it. All the characters did that in one way or the other. I would say the entire game did so as well. It brought back cherished memories and created brand new ones in return. For that, I am eternally grateful to the great artists behind this wonderful game and I can give it the best compliment I can think of - it was inspiring.





BROWN RICE PILAF WITH PEAS, FETA AND MINT

This rice dish gets delish with peas, feta and mint

Brown rice can be difficult to cook well: All too often, it is underseasoned and turns starchy and mushy. Plus, it takes a long time to cook, so stovetop recipes run the risk of scorching on the bottom. While rice cookers can turn out perfect rice every time, most American home cooks don't own one, so we hoped to use our Dutch oven and a moderate oven to approximate the controlled, indirect heat of these specialty appliances.

The thick, heavy cast-iron pot and enveloping heat of the oven promoted even cooking and eliminated scorching. A bit of sauteed onion offered an aromatic flavor boost as the rice cooked, and incorporating chicken broth into the cooking liquid provided savory notes. We decided to brighten up the brown rice's nutty flavor

by adding frozen peas (we didn't need to cook them; simply adding them to the pot while the rice rested was enough to warm them through) along with some fresh mint, lemon zest, and feta.

BROWN RICE PILAF WITH PEAS, FETA AND MINT

Ingredient
Servings: 4-6

Start to finish: 1 hour, 45 minutes
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 onion, chopped fine
1 cup chicken broth
2 1/4 cups water
1 1/2 cups long-grain brown rice
1 teaspoon salt

1 cup frozen peas, thawed
1/4 cup chopped fresh mint
1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest
2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (1/2 cup)

Preparation

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 F. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and well browned, 12 to 14 minutes. Stir in broth and water and bring to boil. Off heat, stir in rice and salt. Cover, transfer pot to oven, and bake until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender, 65 to 70 minutes. Remove pot from oven and sprinkle peas over rice. Cover, laying clean dish towel underneath lid, and let sit for 5 minutes. Add mint

and lemon zest and gently fluff with fork to combine. Sprinkle with feta and serve.

Variation:

Brown Rice Pilaf with Onions and Roasted Red Peppers Increase oil to 4 teaspoons and onion to 2 onions. Substitute 3/4 cup chopped jarred roasted red peppers for peas, 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley for mint, 1/4 teaspoon pepper for lemon zest, and 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese for feta.

Nutrition information per serving:

249 calories; 52 calories from fat; 6 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 8 mg cholesterol; 509 mg sodium; 42 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 7 g protein.

Honey is the glue that keeps these granola bars together

Great granola bars put the flavor of the oats at the forefront while supporting players back them up with a mellow sweetness. We found that toasting the oats with a little oil and salt before mixing them with the other ingredients really deepened their flavor. Honey provided plenty of stickiness to hold the bars together. We kept the other flavors simple: a little brown sugar for extra sweetness, aromatic vanilla and cinnamon, and chopped nuts for additional crunch.

After multiple attempts at baking the bars resulted in a crumbly mess, we realized the key to making granola bars that held their shape was to spread the mixture onto a rimmed baking sheet and then firmly press on it with a greased metal spatula. Do not substitute quick or instant oats in this recipe. Don't use a baking sheet smaller than 18-by-13-inches or the bars will be too thick and won't bake evenly. Be sure to let the granola bars cool for 15 minutes before cutting. If any of the bars should fall apart during cutting, just press them back together; as they cool they will firm up and stick together.

CRUNCHY GRANOLA BARS

Ingredients

Servings: 36

Start to finish: 1 hour, 30 minutes

7 cups (21 ounces) old-fashioned rolled oats

1/2 cup vegetable oil

1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup honey

3/4 cup packed (5 1/4 ounces) light brown sugar

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon (optional)

1 1/2 cups almonds, pecans, peanuts, or walnuts, chopped coarse

Preparation

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 F. Toss oats, oil, and salt together in medium bowl. Spread mixture over rimmed baking sheet and toast, stirring often, until pale golden, 20 to 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, line 18-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and grease foil. Cook honey and sugar in small saucepan over medium heat, stirring frequently, until sugar is fully dissolved, about 5 minutes.

Off heat, stir in vanilla and cinnamon, if using. Transfer toasted oat mixture to large bowl. Reduce oven temperature to 300 F. Add honey mixture and almonds to oat mixture and toss until well combined. Transfer mixture to prepared sheet and press firmly into even layer with greased metal spatula.

Bake bars until golden, 35 to 40 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Let bars cool completely in sheet on wire rack for 15 minutes, then cut into 36 pieces. Let cool completely, then remove individual bars from sheet with spatula. Serve. (Bars can be stored at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.)

Nutrition information per serving:

161 calories; 64 calories from fat; 7 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 34 mg sodium; 22 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 11 g sugar; 3 g protein.



CRUNCHY GRANOLA BARS

We made a deeply flavorful chicken tagine - in about an hour

We love the way the liberal warm spices, sweetness, and tart brininess of a tagine enliven workaday chicken, so we set to develop a chicken tagine with depth of flavor in about an hour. We followed our standard for braised chicken recipes: We browned the skin-on chicken pieces to give the braising liquid deep flavor, removed the chicken from the pot and sautéed the aromatics (onion, garlic, and lemon zest strips) along with a blend of spices (paprika, cumin, cayenne, ginger, coriander, and cinnamon), and added chicken broth for braising and honey for sweetness.

With the flavorful base built, we returned the chicken to the pot, starting the longer-cooking thighs and drumsticks before the breasts. Along with green olives, we finished and brightened the dish with a mixture of minced lemon zest strips and garlic, lemon juice, and fresh cilantro. For best results, use four chicken thighs and two chicken breasts, each breast split in half; the dark meat contributes valuable flavor to the broth and should not be omitted. Make sure to trim any white pith from the zest, as it can impart bitter flavor. If the olives are particularly salty, give them a rinse.

CHICKEN TAGINE WITH OLIVES AND LEMON

Ingredients

Servings: 4

Start to finish: 45 minutes
1 1/4 teaspoons paprika

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 (2-inch) strips lemon zest plus 3 tablespoons juice
5 garlic cloves, minced
4 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken pieces, trimmed
Salt and pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large onion, halved and sliced
1/4 inch thick
1 3/4 cups chicken broth
1 tablespoon honey
2 carrots, peeled and cut crosswise
2 cups pitted Greek green olives, halved
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Preparation

Combine paprika, cumin, ginger, cayenne, coriander, and cinnamon in small bowl; set aside. Mince 1 lemon zest strip and combine with 1 teaspoon garlic; mince together until reduced to fine paste and set aside.

Season chicken with salt and pepper. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add chicken, skin side down, and cook until well browned, about 5 minutes. Using tongs,

flip chicken and brown second side, about 4 minutes longer; transfer to large plate. When cool enough to handle, discard skin. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon fat from pot.

Add onion and remaining 2 lemon zest strips to pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion slices have browned at edges but still retain their shape, 5 to 7 minutes (add 1 tablespoon water as needed if pot begins to scorch). Add remaining garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add reserved spice mixture and cook, stirring constantly, until darkened and very fragrant, 45 seconds to 1 minute. Stir in broth and honey, scraping up any browned bits. Add drumsticks and thighs, reduce heat to medium, and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add carrots to pot, then arrange breast pieces in single layer on top of carrots. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until breast pieces register 160 F and drumsticks/thighs register 175 F, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer chicken to plate and tent with aluminum foil. Add olives to pot; increase heat to medium-high and simmer until liquid has thickened slightly and carrots are tender, 4 to 6 minutes. Return chicken to pot and stir in cilantro, lemon juice, and reserved garlic mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

877 calories; 536 calories from fat; 60 g fat (11 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 251 mg cholesterol; 2118 mg sodium; 24 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 7 g sugar; 58 g protein.



CHICKEN TAGINE WITH OLIVES AND LEMON

Comic

Word Search

Comedy Movies 2 - Word Search

R C L U E L E S S D D H E T T W P
 E R E M U A D T O Q A X C S H P B
 K R A V A F N O W P M H I T E E U
 C L E T S H H I P I C R U I N R L
 A N O G A T R Y R T N H J R A E W
 L K T C N T G U E B M S E C K H O
 S G X E A I O L D X A J L R E T R
 P Q R B L L F U C L T S T A D G T
 S A A M P U H W I M L R E Z G N H
 P B O R D S D E O L E U E Y U I S
 E R U O H H S U R B L V B H N E C
 E I G R Z B O B R O B E R T S B H
 F H E G H O S T B U S T E R S T G
 O K I N V F P M U G T S E R R O F

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| BABE | FLETCH | RUSH HOUR |
| BEETLEJUICE | FORREST GUMP | SABRINA |
| BEING THERE | GHOSTBUSTERS | SHREK |
| BOB ROBERTS | HAPPY GILMORE | SLACKER |
| BOWFINGER | LOCAL HERO | STIR CRAZY |
| BULL DURHAM | OH GOD | THE NAKED GUN |
| BULWORTH | PARENTHOOD | TWINS |
| CLUELESS | RATATOUILLE | |

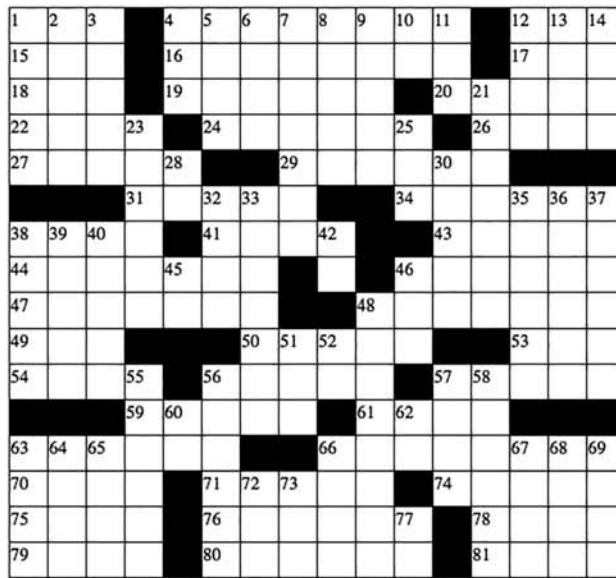
Yesterday's Solution

Comedy Movies 1 - Solution

U K E R O M L I G Y P P A H A J S
 K C B Z H A R V E Y M M O L S Q V
 J U B D O E Q E G A I E L R Y U M
 X R A H T M D I N D T O E Z A I T
 T T N I W H B H N I F H L S D C R
 H S A T E C A I U M T G K U G K A
 E N N C Y T G S E O A R X W O C M
 R O A H T H A Q R L E S Q Q H H S
 U O S A T Z D B D L A I H B D A T
 T M N R A B S L C R V N S N N N E
 L B U L S E P I R T S A D T U G G
 E N P P U C A T B A L L O U O E P
 S C X L S M A D A H C T A P R O M
 V T B A N I M A L H O U S E G U T

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 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 | |

Crossword 2187



ACROSS

1. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
4. Irregularly slashed and jagged as if torn.
12. A doctor's degree in dental medicine.
15. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
16. Characterized by the interdependence of living organisms in an environment.
17. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
18. (informal) Of the highest quality.
19. Pull back or move away or backward.
20. Small shrubby African tree having compound leaves and racemes of small fragrant green flowers.
22. A fraudulent business scheme.
24. Characterized by violent and forceful activity or movement.
26. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
27. Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
29. The innermost membrane of an organ (especially the inner lining of an artery or vein or lymphatic vessel).
31. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
34. French novelist.
38. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
41. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
43. Leafless East Indian vine.
44. An attribute that fits a person for something.
47. A lack of vitality.
49. (slang) A gangster's pistol.
50. A kind of literary or artistic work.
53. Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
54. Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
59. Of or relating to or containing barium.
61. (Old Testament) Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve born after the Fall of Man.
63. English scholar remembered for his chronology of Shakespeare's plays and his editions of Shakespeare and Dryden (1741-1812).
70. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
71. A deliberately false or improbable account.
74. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
75. Indicating the most important performer or role.
76. Be abundant or plentiful.
78. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
79. Scottish sea captain who was hired to protect British shipping in the Indian Ocean and then was accused of piracy and hanged (1645-1701).
80. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
81. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.

DOWN

1. Cause to be embarrassed.
2. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
3. (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
4. (Irish) The sea personified.
5. Type genus of the Aceraceae.
6. A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
7. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
8. French sculptor noted for his renderings of the human form (1840-1917).
9. An active and efficient cause.
10. A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
11. Electronic warfare undertaken to prevent or reduce an enemy's effective use of the electromagnetic spectrum.
12. No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
13. An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Biu-Mandara and East Chadic languages.
14. A unit of apothecary weight equal to an eighth of an ounce or to 60 grains.
21. A kind of sealing material that is used to form a hard coating on a porous surface (as a coat of paint or varnish used to size a surface).
23. Middle-distance iron.
25. A castrated tomcat.
28. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
30. United States naval officer and historian (1840-1914).
32. Medium-sized tree having glossy lanceolate leaves.
33. The slender spear of the Bantu-speaking people of Africa.
35. A belt-shaped region in the heavens on either side of the ecliptic.
36. Pertaining to or containing any of a group of organic compounds of nitrogen derived from ammonia.
37. A chain of connected ideas or passages or objects so arranged that each member is closely related to the preceding and following members (especially a series of patristic comments elucidating Christian dogma).
39. (astronomy) An indistinct surface feature of Mars once thought to be a system of channels.
40. Sports equipment that is worn on the feet to enable the wearer to glide along on wheels and to be propelled by the alternate actions of the legs.
42. A hemoprotein composed of globin and heme that gives red blood cells their characteristic color.
45. A metric unit of length equal to one billionth of a meter.
46. Any of numerous hairy-bodied insects including social and solitary species.
48. Often cultivated for the decorative foliage.
51. (computer science) A coding system that incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
52. A state in New England.
55. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
56. Manufactured in standard sizes to be shipped and assembled elsewhere.
57. Any orchid of the genus *Disa*.
58. A faint constellation in the southern hemisphere near Hydra and Vela.
60. An associate degree in nursing.
62. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
64. (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
65. Weight to be borne or conveyed.
66. A team of professional baseball players who play and travel together.
67. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
68. A language unit by which a person or thing is known.
69. United States labor organizer who ran for President as a socialist (1855-1926).
72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
73. A cry or noise made to express displeasure or contempt.
77. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.

Yesterday's Solution

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| M | O | B | | M | A | L | O | S | M | A | | A | D | A | M | |
| A | P | E | | S | H | I | N | P | A | D | | N | A | S | A | |
| L | E | D | | H | A | N | S | A | R | D | | A | R | C | H | |
| S | C | A | T | | B | E | A | R | | L | E | N | T | I | A | |
| | | | | A | B | | A | G | E | N | E | | A | S | I | N |
| A | S | A | N | A | | R | E | R | E | D | O | S | | | | |
| M | O | C | K | | K | R | I | | C | | E | W | E | | | |
| Y | U | C | A | T | E | C | | B | | S | A | T | R | A | P | |
| T | A | R | | F | H | A | | T | O | R | O | N | T | O | | |
| A | R | A | B | | T | A | N | G | O | | I | B | S | E | N | |
| L | I | | A | F | A | R | | R | A | N | A | T | R | A | | |
| | | | C | E | I | B | A | | G | U | L | A | G | | | |
| B | L | A | D | E | | | | G | A | L | L | | O | K | R | A |
| R | E | C | A | L | L | | | H | Y | O | I | D | | A | A | R |
| A | N | A | | D | E | C | E | A | S | E | D | | M | F | A | |
| T | A | O | | S | O | L | E | L | E | S | S | | A | T | M | |

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



00:25 Back In The Day
02:30 Friday The 13th Part IV: The Final Chapter
04:05 The Space Between Us
06:05 The Fast And The Furious
07:35 Boone: The Bounty Hunter
09:05 The Space Between Us
11:05 The Fast And The Furious
12:45 Boone: The Bounty Hunter
14:15 Mine
16:05 Tombstone
18:20 Dante's Peak
20:10 Max Payne
22:00 Bad Boys II



00:45 North Woods Law
01:40 I'm Alive
02:35 Baby Panda's First Year
03:25 Into Alaska
04:15 North Woods Law
05:02 Wildest Islands
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 Animal Airport
07:25 Whale Wars
08:15 Animal Cops Houston
09:10 Into Alaska
10:05 North Woods Law
11:00 Wildest Islands
11:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
12:50 Baby Panda's First Year
13:45 The Vet Life
14:40 Extinct Or Alive
15:35 I'm Alive
16:30 Whale Wars
17:25 Animal Cops Houston
18:20 Earthquake: Panda Rescue
19:15 Hanging With The Hendersons
20:10 Extinct Or Alive
21:05 Wildest Islands
22:00 I'm Alive
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
23:50 Hanging With The Hendersons



00:15 EastEnders
00:50 The Split
01:45 Holby City
02:40 Bad Move
03:05 Mum
03:35 Agatha Raisin
04:20 Father Brown
05:05 Death In Paradise
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Last Tango In Halifax
07:55 Call The Midwife: Christmas Special 2016
08:45 Death In Paradise
09:40 Father Brown
10:30 Bad Move
10:55 Doctors
11:25 EastEnders
12:00 Holby City
12:55 Casualty
13:50 Death In Paradise
14:45 Father Brown
15:35 Bad Move
16:00 Doctors
18:30 The Coroner
20:10 The Split
21:05 The Level
21:55 The Cry
22:55 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
23:45 Doctors



00:00 Kingpin
01:55 I Didn't Do It
02:50 Nightmare In Suburbia
03:45 Cults And Extreme Belief
06:00 Homicide Hunter
07:00 Police Patrol
07:20 The First 48
08:05 Homicide: Hours To Kill
08:50 Homicide Hunter
09:35 Secrets Of The Morgue

10:30 Evil Up Close
11:25 The First 48
12:20 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
13:15 Police Patrol
14:10 It Takes A Killer
15:05 Homicide Hunter
16:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 Police Patrol
21:30 Pd Cam
22:00 It Takes A Killer
23:00 Homicide Squad: Atlanta



00:25 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
00:55 Inside Amy Schumer
01:15 Broad City
01:40 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
02:05 Takeshis Castle Thailand
02:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:00 Inside Amy Schumer
03:45 Are We There Yet?
04:10 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
04:40 Impractical Jokers
05:00 Are We There Yet?
07:05 Lip Sync Battle
07:55 Ridiculousness Arabia
08:20 Takeshis Castle Thailand
08:45 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
09:45 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
10:15 Friends
12:25 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
14:35 Disaster Date
15:50 Friends
18:00 Impractical Jokers
19:30 Ridiculousness Arabia
20:00 Takeshis Castle Thailand
20:30 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
21:30 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 The Half Hour
23:30 Important Things With Demitri Martin
23:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:30 Space Dealers
01:20 America's Cutest Pets
02:10 Bad Dog
03:00 Ultimate Survival
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Space Dealers
06:20 Cliptastic
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Ultimate Survival
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 Cliptastic
10:20 America's Cutest Pets
11:10 Bad Dog
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Space Dealers
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 Cliptastic
15:45 Kids Do The Craziest Things
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 America's Cutest Pets
17:50 Bad Dog
18:40 The Carbonaro Effect
19:30 Tricks On The Streets
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Ultimate Survival
22:00 How It's Made
22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:15 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 Tricks On The Streets



00:00 People Magazine Investigations
01:00 Murder Chose Me
02:00 What Lies Beneath
03:00 Body Cam

03:45 People Magazine Investigations
04:30 American Monster
06:10 The Perfect Murder
07:00 Disappeared
07:55 Southern Fried Homicide
08:50 The Perfect Murder
09:45 Swamp Murders
10:40 Murder Comes To Town
12:30 Deadly Affairs
13:25 Deadly Affairs
14:20 Disappeared
15:15 The 1980s: The Deadliest Decade
16:10 Swamp Murders
17:05 American Monster
19:00 I Almost Got Away With It
20:00 The 1980s: The Deadliest Decade
21:00 Obsession: Dark Desires
22:00 Grave Mysteries
23:00 Heart Of Darkness



00:00 Alex & Co.
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:40 Alex & Co.
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:35 Violetta
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
05:50 Rolling With The Ronks
06:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
06:25 Raven's Home
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 101 Dalmatian Street
07:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
07:20 Shake It Up
07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bizaardvark
08:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
09:25 Tangled: The Series
10:15 Bizaardvark
11:05 Liv And Maddie
11:55 K.C. Undercover
12:45 Tangled: The Series
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:00 101 Dalmatian Street
14:15 Shake It Up
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:10 A.N.T. Farm
15:35 Penny On M.A.R.S
16:00 101 Dalmatian Street
16:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
16:50 Raven's Home
17:15 Stuck In The Middle
17:40 Bizaardvark
18:05 K.C. Undercover
18:30 Bunk'd
18:55 Descendants Wicked World
19:00 Raven's Home
19:25 Liv And Maddie
19:50 K.C. Undercover
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:20 A.N.T. Farm
20:45 Bizaardvark
21:10 Tangled: The Series
21:35 Stuck In The Middle
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
22:50 Lolirock
23:10 Evermoor Chronicles
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:00 Zou
00:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:20 The Hive
01:40 Zou
02:25 The Hive
02:45 Henry Hugglemonster
03:35 The Hive
03:45 PJ Masks
04:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
05:00 Disney Muppet Babies
05:20 Paprika
05:40 PJ Masks
06:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers

Racers
06:15 Puppy Dog Pals
06:30 Vampirina
06:45 Fancy Nancy
07:00 Sofia The First
07:30 Elena Of Avalor
08:00 PJ Masks
09:00 Doc McStuffins
10:00 Vampirina
11:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Road Rally
12:00 PJ Masks
12:40 Doc McStuffins
13:40 Vampirina
14:30 Elena Of Avalor
15:00 Puppy Dog Pals
15:25 Doc McStuffins Shorts
15:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers

Racers
16:00 Fancy Nancy
16:30 Vampirina
17:00 PJ Masks
17:30 The Lion Guard
18:00 Sofia The First
18:25 Doc McStuffins Shorts
18:30 Elena Of Avalor
19:00 Puppy Dog Pals
19:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
20:00 Fancy Nancy
20:30 Vampirina
21:00 PJ Masks
21:30 The Lion Guard
22:00 Sofia The First
22:25 Doc McStuffins Shorts
22:30 Henry Hugglemonster
23:00 PJ Masks
23:50 The Hive



00:15 Dual Survival
01:05 Impossible Engineering
01:50 Mythbusters Jr.
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Fast N' Loud
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Property Wars
06:00 Storage Hunters UK
06:20 Property Wars
06:45 Dual Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Fast N' Loud
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 Property Wars
13:55 Alaskan Bush People
14:40 Railroad Australia
15:30 Virus: Invisible Killers
16:15 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Fast N' Loud
21:00 American Chopper
21:50 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings
23:30 Deadliest Catch: The Bait



00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Boyster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Boyster
03:50 Dude That's My Ghost
04:40 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Marvel's Avengers: Secret Wars
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Gravity Falls
09:00 Lab Rats
10:00 Mighty Med
11:00 Kickin' It
12:00 Lab Rats
13:00 Mighty Med
14:00 Kickin' It
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:29 Supa Strikas

16:00 Big City Greens
16:29 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:29 DuckTales
18:00 Phineas And Ferb
19:00 Lab Rats
20:00 Big City Greens
20:29 Supa Strikas
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
22:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
23:00 Botched



00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 Dinner Date
03:25 The Jonathan Ross Show
04:20 One Night With My Ex
05:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
06:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
07:10 Dinner Date
08:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
09:00 One Night With My Ex
09:55 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
10:55 Who's Doing The Dishes?
11:50 Dinner Date
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
15:10 Dinner Date
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
18:50 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Dinner Date
21:00 Dancing On Ice
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:15 Ancient Aliens
01:00 Ancient Discoveries
01:45 Cities Of The Underworld
02:30 UFO Files
03:15 Ancient Aliens
04:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
04:45 What Really Happened
05:30 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
06:15 Ancient Aliens
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19:00 Ancient Discoveries
19:45 Cities Of The Underworld
20:30 UFO Files

21:15 Ancient Aliens
22:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
22:45 The Lost Evidence
23:30 Brad Meltzer's Decoded



00:20 Swamp People
01:05 Pawn Stars
01:25 Pawn Stars
01:50 American Pickers
02:35 Storage Wars
03:00 Storage Wars
03:25 The Zodiac Killer: Case Closed?
04:15 River Hunters
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Counting Cars
06:45 Swamp People
07:30 Pawn Stars
08:15 American Pickers
09:00 Storage Wars
09:45 River Hunters
10:30 Forged In Fire
11:15 Counting Cars
12:00 Swamp People
12:45 Ice Road Truckers
15:00 Counting Cars
16:30 Ultimate Wheels
17:15 Road Hawks
18:45 Detroit Steel
19:30 WW2 Treasure Hunters
21:00 Who Killed Tupac?
22:40 The Warfighters
23:30 Road Hawks



00:45 The Food Files
01:10 A Is For Apple
02:35 World's Best Beaches
03:30 Fish Tank Kings
04:25 Route Awakening
04:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
06:15 Poh & Co.
07:10 A Is For Apple
08:05 World's Best Beaches
09:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:55 Route Awakening
10:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
11:45 Poh & Co.
12:40 A Is For Apple
13:05 A Is For Apple
13:35 World's Best Beaches
14:30 Fish Tank Kings
15:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
16:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
17:15 Poh & Co.
18:10 Celebrity Chef: East vs West
18:35 48 Hrs Destination
19:05 World's Best Beaches
20:00 Fish Tank Kings
21:00 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
22:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
22:55 Poh & Co.
23:50 Celebrity Chef: East vs West



00:10 Nazi Megastructures: America's War
01:00 I Wouldn't Go In There
02:00 To Catch A Smuggler
03:00 Going Deep With David Rees
03:30 Going Deep With David Rees
04:00 Nazi Megastructures: America's War
05:00 Ultimate Survival Alaska
06:00 4 Babies A Second
07:00 How To Win At Everything
08:00 Surgery Ship
09:00 Mine Kings
10:00 Hard Time: Locked Up
11:00 Explorer
12:00 Lost Treasures Of Egypt
13:00 4 Babies A Second
14:00 Surgery Ship
15:00 How To Win At Everything
16:00 Explorer
17:00 Lost Treasures Of Egypt
18:00 Hard Time: Locked Up
19:00 How To Win At Everything
20:00 Explorer
20:50 Lost Treasures Of Egypt
21:40 Hard Time: Locked Up
22:30 How To Win At Everything

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Think through ideas before you jump onto them at work. Quick decisions could cause you to have to rescind them later. That won't look good on your resume. Think before you jump, Aries, though that's not generally how you roll. You may be thinking of joining a gym or making the concerted effort to walk through the park or down a road daily. You feel items more sharply now and have good reason for the need to change your health. This might include a checkup. Get yourself ready for the next part of your life so that your mind is acute and your body is fit.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Someone higher up at work tells you that they understand you work hard to make the company prosper. You may feel as if you're not doing very well for your company now. This feeling has been going on for a couple of days now. Having someone notice and acknowledge your commitment to work makes you feel much better. Read a good book or do something that doesn't take much mental energy tonight, Taurus. Take time to rest and rejuvenate. Tomorrow should be better.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may feel you need to make changes in your environment including your work place. You need a rapid-fire change of pace to keep you involved in working. You feel good about your life and most of the people therein. An older cherished person takes on more meaning to you now, Gemini. Love in general is prized. You lavish attention on those you need. Circumstances seem to be in your favor at work. You buzz through getting projects done and notice that those ventures are accomplishing what you thought they would. Take time at home for your lover tonight.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have no patience for people who don't think as quickly as you do now. Obstacles may be in your way at work but you still feel that you're able to think and act rapidly. Generally, we see in others what we don't like in ourselves. Be careful to keep your mind clear of feeling about yourself in this manner. Sex is something you need now for more than the usual reason. Part of that motive is to blow off steam. Make sure you attend to that need with your lover tonight. Everyone you know will be pleased, Cancer. Your attitude may change then.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Now is the time you crave social interaction with friends and your siblings. They teach you and you teach them. It's just what the doctor ordered for your janky attitude. Being able to teach others what you've learned puts a new spin on the work place. The time you spend with those you love will make the time you're spending now with friends an assisted program for work. You're learning what to do while at work now and in the future. Discussions on everyone's part motivate you to better creative thought, Leo. You may just make it out of this day without too much hair coming off your chin.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You've got a way with talking that makes people want to listen as if they're listening to poetry. You feel as if you're in a dream where everything happens to make life better for you. If you drop something, someone picks it up. If you think about someone you haven't seen in a long time, they call or you run into them. The stars are working to make you happy now, Virgo. Be glad you've got this nice added oomph to your life. It helps resolve some of the down times you've experienced.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You're in the mood for taking big chances now but that can bring huge rewards if successful. You have the ability to pull a group together for building success in any job. You're appreciated and admired by those you've worked with before because of your mind. The stars are helping you by giving you a little extra boost. You're helping by doing the work. Make adjustments now to places you've fallen short in business. You can use the part that you've done well and shore up the part you haven't. You got the tried and true and the creative new in one proven source. Be with those you love later.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You really need something good to think about and you're finding it. When a dark cloud of emotion shows up, the sun shines through quickly. Emotions are highlighted today with the ability to make the best of even a bad situation. You know what others want and have the skill to make it happen. Because of this you find that others sing your praises now. With all these good feelings happening over the bad, don't temp your luck in money now. Stay away from shopping centers. Go out with friends, converse and laugh.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Well, it's time to plan for the emotional itchy feet filling your soul now. You've been thinking of going for the gusto in life by moving to some exotic place since yesterday and you haven't stopped yet. Perhaps you should set up a plan and see if you're still in the mood in a week or so. The reason for the wait is because you want to be sure you're not making a dreadful decision, Sagittarius. Poetry and art exhibits may be enough to quench your emotional longing. Take a small trip as soon as possible. Do the things you know will help you settle down. Then if you're still in the mood, go for it.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Children, family and your lover hold a special place in your heart especially now. You need their respect and admiration on your ability to make things happen in business for you and them. You haven't had as much confidence in this part of your life lately because of the issues you've had at work. Your family and loved ones see you in a better light than you feel you've created lately. Assurances are being made today that they realize what you've been going through, Capricorn, with bunches of kudos aimed right at you. You give others more understanding than you allow yourself. It's time for that to stop. Believe in you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Being able to get your message across to those in all walks of your life is at a high now. You know just how to speak. People want to listen. That's a good quality to have. You're mentally acute with good communication. What more could you want? Well, to get paid for it either in monetary or personal favors through love. This is a wonderful time to use your mind and build better throughout your life, Aquarius. Dominance in your nature is showing now. You may want to tone that down a bit but continue to be aggressive.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Restriction is something you unused to but today you may even feel a little mental depression making it hard to think as you generally do. Coworkers may get on your last nerve. Chalk it up to the stars and try to let it go. Not everyone is in the mood you are unless you make your mood contagious by popping off about your thoughts now, Pisces. However, those irritating you may not solve their issues in same manner you do today and you may get your feelings more hurt which adds to your dol-drum. Keep your distance from those you know will bring out your ire.

Country Codes

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------|--------|
| Afghanistan | 0093 | Jordan | 00962 |
| Albania | 00355 | Kazakhstan | 007 |
| Algeria | 00213 | Kenya | 00254 |
| Andorra | 00376 | Kiribati | 00686 |
| Angola | 00244 | Kuwait | 00965 |
| Anguilla | 001264 | Kyrgyzstan | 00996 |
| Antigua | 001268 | Laos | 00856 |
| Argentina | 0054 | Latvia | 00371 |
| Armenia | 00374 | Lebanon | 00961 |
| Australia | 0061 | Liberia | 00231 |
| Austria | 0043 | Libya | 00218 |
| Bahamas | 001242 | Lithuania | 00370 |
| Bahrain | 00973 | Luxembourg | 00352 |
| Bangladesh | 00880 | Macau | 00853 |
| Barbados | 001246 | Macedonia | 00389 |
| Belarus | 00375 | Madagascar | 00261 |
| Belgium | 0032 | Majorca | 0034 |
| Belize | 00501 | Malawi | 00265 |
| Benin | 00229 | Malaysia | 0060 |
| Bermuda | 001441 | Maldives | 00960 |
| Bhutan | 00975 | Mali | 00223 |
| Bolivia | 00591 | Malta | 00356 |
| Bosnia | 00387 | Marshall Islands | 00692 |
| Botswana | 00267 | Martinique | 00596 |
| Brazil | 0055 | Mauritania | 00222 |
| Brunei | 00673 | Mauritius | 00230 |
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| Burkina | 00226 | Mexico | 0052 |
| Burundi | 00257 | Micronesia | 00691 |
| Cambodia | 00855 | Moldova | 00373 |
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| Chad | 00235 | Myanmar (Burma) | 0095 |
| Chile | 0056 | Namibia | 00264 |
| China | 0086 | Nepal | 00977 |
| Colombia | 0057 | Netherlands (Holland) | 0031 |
| Comoros | 00269 | Netherlands Antilles | 00599 |
| Congo | 00242 | New Caledonia | 00687 |
| Cook Islands | 00682 | New Zealand | 0064 |
| Costa Rica | 00506 | Nicaragua | 00505 |
| Croatia | 00385 | Nigar | 00227 |
| Cuba | 0053 | Nigeria | 00234 |
| Cyprus | 00357 | Niue | 00683 |
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| Diego Garcia | 00246 | Norway | 0047 |
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| Dominica | 001767 | Pakistan | 0092 |
| Dominican Republic | 001809 | Palau | 00680 |
| Ecuador | 00593 | Panama | 00507 |
| Egypt | 0020 | Papua New Guinea | 00675 |
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| Haiti | 00509 | Solomon Islands | 00677 |
| Holland (Netherlands) | 0031 | Somalia | 00252 |
| Honduras | 00504 | South Africa | 0027 |
| Hong Kong | 00852 | South Korea | 0082 |
| Hungary | 0036 | Spain | 0034 |
| Ibiza (Spain) | 0034 | Sri Lanka | 0094 |
| Iceland | 00354 | Sudan | 00249 |
| India | 0091 | Suriname | 00597 |
| Indian Ocean | 00873 | Swaziland | 00268 |
| Indonesia | 0062 | Sweden | 0046 |
| Iran | 0098 | Switzerland | 0041 |
| Iraq | 00964 | Syria | 00963 |
| Ireland | 00353 | Taiwan | 00886 |
| Italy | 0039 | Tanzania | 00255 |
| Ivory Coast | 00225 | Thailand | 0066 |
| Jamaica | 001876 | Toga | 00228 |
| Japan | 0081 | Tonga | 00676 |

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Friday, April 19, 2019

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- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
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ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- o Dermatology board certified.
- o Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- o Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- o Referee reviewer of international journal of Dermatology.

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DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant Interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
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- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
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- ◆ Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
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Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
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- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ YAAT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
◆ Transanal minimally Invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

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Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta
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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
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Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

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Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

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

Academic Certificates – Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

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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 |

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot and Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times north easterly wind changing to south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 42 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

| WEATHER WATCH | Thunder Rain | |
|----------------|--------------|-----------|
| STATION | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. |
| KUWAIT CITY | 33 °C | 22 °C |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 33 °C | 22 °C |
| ABDALY | 34 °C | 19 °C |
| BUBYAN | - °C | - °C |
| JAHRA | 33 °C | 22 °C |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 30 °C | 23 °C |
| SALMIYAH | 30 °C | 22 °C |
| AHMADI | 31 °C | 23 °C |
| NUWAISIB | 33 °C | 24 °C |
| WAFRA | 34 °C | 22 °C |
| SALMY | 30 °C | 18 °C |

| SFC. CHART | 18/04/2019 0000 UTC |
|--|---------------------|
| | |
| <small>MSL Analysis (hPa) Valid 0000 UTC 18 APR 2019</small> | |

4 DAYS FORECAST

| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
|----------|-------|--|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Friday | 04/19 | Relatively hot | 34 °C | 22 °C | NW | 15 - 40 km/h |
| Saturday | 04/20 | Relatively hot and Partly cloudy | 32 °C | 20 °C | NE-VRB | 08 - 30 km/h |
| Sunday | 04/21 | Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear | 32 °C | 21 °C | NE-SE | 15 - 38 km/h |
| Monday | 04/22 | Relatively hot and rising dust | 30 °C | 21 °C | NW | 20 - 55 km/h |

PRAYER TIMES

| | |
|---------|-------|
| Fajr | 03:56 |
| Sunrise | 05:19 |
| Zuhr | 11:47 |
| Asr | 15:22 |
| Sunset | 18:16 |
| Isha | 19:37 |

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| MAX. Temp. | 38 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 23 °C |
| MAX. RH | 44 % |
| MIN. RH | 13 % |
| MAX. Wind | NW 46 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | 0 mm |

Business

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2019

39 Jet shares nosedive after flights grounded, lenders 'hopeful'



40 Unemployment takes heavy toll on South Africa's young



41 Amazon to pull plug on China retail operations



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Finance Minister Asad Umar speaks to the media during a press conference after stepping down from his ministry, in Islamabad.—AFP

Pakistan's finance minister resigns

Pakistan reaches 'agreement in principle' on IMF deal

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's finance minister Asad Umar has stepped down, he announced yesterday, with no replacement yet named as Islamabad seeks a crucial bailout deal with the International Monetary Fund. Umar, one of cricketer-turned-premier Imran Khan's most powerful ministers, had been entrusted with the task of negotiating the long-delayed bailout as Pakistan's cash-strapped economy faces a balance-of-payments crisis.

His abrupt resignation comes as Khan's government, which came to power last year, faces growing pressure with the rupee losing 30 percent of its value since the start of 2018, stirring sharp inflation. "As part of a cabinet reshuffle, PM desired that I take the energy minister portfolio instead of finance," Asad Umar tweeted. "However, I have obtained his consent to not take any cabinet position. I strongly believe @ImranKhanPTI is the best hope for Pakistan and inshallah (God willing) will make a naya (new) Pakistan," he wrote.

There was no immediate statement from Khan's office or confirmation of who would replace Umar, and it was not clear how Umar's absence would impact any IMF deal. A new finance minister will have to look after a "difficult economy", Umar told a hastily assembled press conference in the capital Islamabad

shortly after the tweet announcing his resignation.

"We need to take some difficult decisions and we need to show some patience," he said, appealing to the public to "stand with" the new finance minister. "Don't expect that there will be miracles and rivers of honey and milk will start flowing in the next three months," he warned.

Tough decisions

Economist Muzammil Aslam said Umar had taken "tough decisions" to fix the economy. "In my view, he has become a political victim and a scapegoat to neutralize the pressure," said Aslam, who heads Emerging Economics Research, a Karachi based company. Pakistan has gone to the IMF repeatedly since the late 1980s, and last received an IMF bailout in 2013 to the tune of \$6.6 billion. Umar has said often that a deal is coming soon, and that it will be the last one.

Earlier this week Hammad Azhar, a state minister for revenue, tweeted that Umar had reached an "agreement in principle" on an IMF deal during a recent trip to Washington, with the agreement to be finalized later this month. But experts have warned that any tough measures imposed by the IMF could impact Khan's

grand plans for an Islamic welfare state in Pakistan. An IMF forecast suggests the Pakistani economy is likely to grow at around 2.9 percent for the fiscal year ending June 2019, compared to 5.8 percent growth in the last fiscal year.

The government is already suffering a backlash. The rupee has been repeatedly devalued, sending inflation to 9.4 percent, as discontent rises along with prices of consumer goods. The United Arab Emirates, Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East and a major investment source, recently offered \$3 billion to support Pakistan's battered economy. Islamabad also secured \$6 billion in funding from Saudi Arabia and struck a 12-month deal for a cash lifeline during Khan's visit to the kingdom in October. It has also received billions of dollars in Chinese loans to finance ambitious infrastructure projects.

At the press conference, Umar said he had first been informed that Khan wanted him to take over the petroleum ministry the previous night. He dismissed rumors which rapidly began circulating about his removal in a country which has long been caught in a tussle between civilian and military power. "I am not aware of any conspiracies," he said, adding that he will remain in Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party.—AFP

Business

Poor PMIs wipe week's gains off global shares

Global stocks erase gains for the week

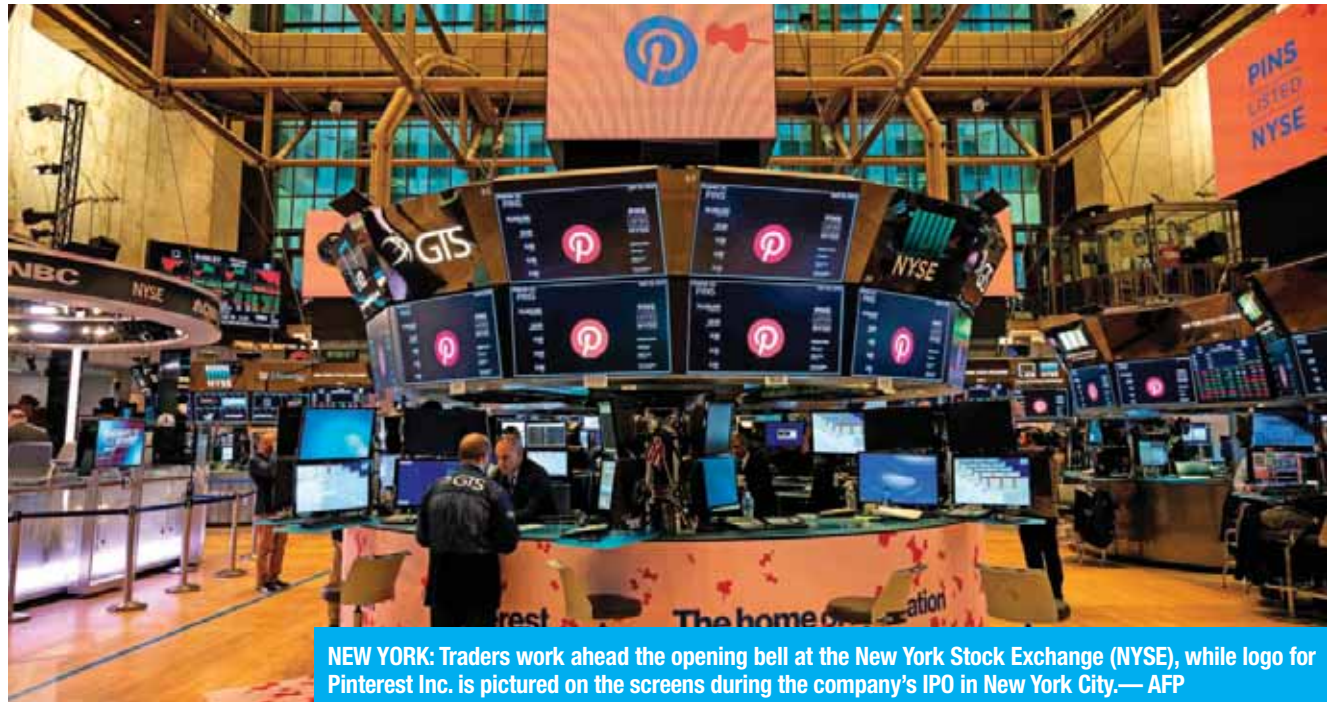
LONDON: Global shares erased this week's gains yesterday after weak manufacturing surveys from Asia and Europe stoked fears of a widespread slowdown in growth, adding to profit-taking ahead of the long Easter weekend. French and German surveys of purchasing managers in the manufacturing sector for April showed activity continuing to contract, hitting European stocks in early trade. However, short-covering helped Germany's DAX trade half a percent higher by afternoon in London and the pan-European STOXX 600 index was higher 0.2 percent.

The euro fell to its lowest in over a week after the data, last down 0.3 percent on the day to \$1.1253. German 10-year bond yields were three basis points lower at minus 0.5 percent, dropping further off Wednesday's high of 0.10 percent. Activity in Germany's services sector rose to a seven-month high in April, but investors focused on the 44.5 reading for the manufacturing sector, well below the 50.0 mark separating growth from contraction even if it was above the 44.1 reading last month.

"Overall, these prints confirm that Europe's growth engine entered Q2 on a soft footing, and other things equal, they raise the likelihood that the ECB (European Central Bank) may roll out some more stimulus, or at least that any rate hike may be pushed further back," said Marios Hadjikyriacos, investment analyst at XM. The weak surveys out of Europe added to a reading of Japanese manufacturing activity which showed new export orders fell at the fastest pace in almost three years.

MSCI's All Country World Index, which tracks stocks in 47 countries, was down 0.2 percent on the day. It erased all gains for the week after the German data. The VIX volatility index, also known as Wall Street's "fear gauge", inched up to 12.61, close to where it was at the start of the week. On Wednesday, the index had fallen to its lowest since August 2018. E-mini futures for the S&P 500 were flat. Market participants are also eyeing signs of progress in US-China trade negotiations.

Washington and Beijing set a tentative timeline for a fresh round of face-to-face meetings ahead of a possible signing cer-



NEW YORK: Traders work ahead the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), while logo for Pinterest Inc. is pictured on the screens during the company's IPO in New York City.— AFP

emony in late May or early June, according to a Wall Street Journal report. The US trade deficit fell to an eight-month low in February as imports from China plunged, data on Wednesday showed. Separate figures from China earlier on Wednesday showed the world's second-largest economy grew at a steady 6.4 percent pace in the first quarter, defying forecasts for a slowdown. Attention is now turning to how much more stimulus Beijing will apply without triggering more financial risks.

Elsewhere in currencies, the dollar was 0.3 percent higher

against a basket of peers at 97.293. The Australian dollar was 0.3 percent lower at \$0.7157. It had earlier jumped to \$0.7200 as traders wagered the Reserve Bank of Australia will not rush to ease rates even though the broader economy has seemingly lost momentum. Oil prices rose slightly, boosted by a decline in US inventories, ongoing supply cuts from OPEC and its allies, and US sanctions on Venezuela and Iran. Brent crude futures were 0.3 percent higher at \$71.87 per barrel, while US crude futures were also 0.3 percent higher at \$63.97. — Reuters

AUB reports net profit of \$192.9 million

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) reported a net profit attributable to its equity shareholders of \$192.9 million for the quarter ended 31 March 2019. The net profit reflected an increase of 10.4 percent in Q1/2019 as compared to the net profit of \$174.7 million achieved in Q1/2018. The Q1/2019 net profit also represents a 13.9 percent improvement over the Q4/2018 trailing quarter reported profit of \$169.3 million. The Basic Earnings per Share in Q1/2019 were US 2.2 cents (+10.0 percent), compared to US 2.0 cents in Q1/2018.

Operating income grew by 6.6 percent to \$311.9 million (Q1/2018: \$292.6 million) mainly driven by an increase in net interest income by \$13.9 million (+6.1 percent) to \$243.3 million (Q1/2018: \$229.3 million) attributable to growth in loans and investments and to effective interest rate risk management. Net operating income increased from \$279.4 million in Q1/2018 to \$298.4 million in Q1/2019 (+6.8 percent).

Operating results continued to be supported by operational efficiencies resulting in an improved cost to income ratio of 25.6 percent (Q1/2018: 25.9 percent). Despite challenging operating conditions, solid asset quality levels were sustained with a non-performing loans ratio of 1.8 percent (31 December 2018: 1.9 percent) while specific provision coverage ratio increased to 85.6 percent (31 December 2018: 85.5 percent). The total provision



AUB Chairman Meshal Al Othman

coverage ratio, excluding the available significant asset collaterals, improved to 222.7 percent as at 31 March 2019 (31 December 2018: 214.7 percent).

The Group's total assets at 31 March 2019 increased by 4.2 percent to \$37.0 billion (31 December 2018: \$35.5 billion). Return on Average Assets was sustained at 2.3 percent for Q1/2019 (Q1/2018: 2.3 percent). The Group's equity attributable to owners at 31 March 2019 stood at \$3.7 billion (31 December 2018: \$3.9 billion) post deduction of 2018 year end appropriations totaling \$399.8 million. The Group's Return on Average Equity (ROAE) for Q1/2019, increased to 18.7 percent, compared to 18.2 percent achieved in Q1/2018.

Meshal Al-Othman, AUB Chairman, commented: "Our continued growth in Q1/2019 demonstrates AUB's resilience and ability to deliver sustainable core earnings on a consistent basis under its diversified well managed business model. AUB's strategic investments across multiple markets, robust risk management, intelligent cost control measures and ongoing focus on the sourcing of cross border business flows has helped achieve its net profit growth for Q1/2019, while maintaining solid asset quality parameters and tight cost discipline."

Japan leaves economy assessment unchanged

TOKYO: Japan's government left its assessment of the economy unchanged in April, after a rare downgrade in March, saying the US-China trade war remained a threat to exports and economic growth. The Cabinet Office, which helps coordinate government policy, last month blamed the bruising trade war for the first downgrade of its overall assessment in three years. In its latest review, the office said the economy remained in a gradual recovery, but exports and output showed signs of weakness.

The risks to Japan's economic outlook could fuel calls for the government to delay a nationwide sales tax hike scheduled for October, analysts say, and speculation that the Bank of Japan (BOJ) will take some steps to bolster economic growth. The government is scheduled to raise the nationwide sales tax to 10 percent from 8 percent in October, but there are concerns this will weaken consumer spending and harm growth. The April view that exports remained weak was unchanged from March, the office said, but there is a chance of a downgrade if economic data showed a further decline in exports.

Exports fell for a fourth straight month in March as China-bound shipments slumped again, data showed on Wednesday, reinforcing concerns that weak external demand may have knocked the economy into contraction in the first quarter. The Cabinet Office left unchanged its assessment that consumer spending is recovering, but some economists worry that consumer sentiment will take a hit if the China-US trade dispute drags on.—AFP

Business

Jet shares nosedive after flights grounded, lenders 'hopeful'

Collapse of Jet to deal blow to PM Modi's pro-business reputation

MUMBAI: Jet Airways shares plunged more than 32 percent yesterday, hours after the Indian carrier's final flight landed following a decision to ground its entire fleet. The Mumbai-based carrier is on the edge of bankruptcy and has failed to secure emergency funding from banks, forcing it to suspend all operations late Wednesday. Jet's stock fell more than 32 percent to 162.15 rupees on the Bombay Stock Exchange yesterday. It was worth more than four times that a year ago.

The lenders that control the airline said yesterday they were focusing on finding a buyer for Jet, which was until recently India's second-biggest carrier by market share. "Lenders are reasonably hopeful that the bid process is likely to be successful in determining fair value of the enterprise in a transparent manner," they said in a statement. The State Bank of India-led consortium is looking to sell a controlling stake in Jet and has shortlisted four potential buyers, including Etihad Airways, which already owns 24 percent.

The four have until May 10 to submit formal bids. But until then, the carrier's remaining fleet is grounded, with a final flight from Amritsar to Mumbai landing in the early hours of yesterday. Several hundred staff gathered outside the airline's headquarters in Mumbai yesterday, chanting "We want justice" and "Please save Jet Airways". "What's the management doing and

why isn't the government doing anything to save our jobs?" said Sarvesh, an employee of Jet's ground staff who did not want to give his surname. "Many here have been working for Jet for over 20 years. Our families are going to suffer," he added.

Modi blow

Zoya Khan, a 23-year-old flight attendant, said she was "extremely concerned" about her future. "This is my first job," she told AFP. "We just want the management and the government to figure out a solution." 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. The chairman of state-carrier Air India, which has been bailed out by the government several times, said Jet's temporary closure was a setback for India's aviation sector.

"We have in the past witnessed many airlines shutting shop and it is time to appreciate that the razor thin margins which airlines are forced to operate within a competitive environment results in a scenario that encourages unsustainability," Ashwani Lohani said in a Facebook post. Jet, which has debts of more than \$1 billion, has been in a tailspin for months. It has defaulted on loans and failed to pay many staff since the start of the year.



MUMBAI: India's Jet Airways employees gather at the ground floor of the head office as they wait for a meeting with the management in Mumbai.—AFP

The carrier cancelled hundreds of flights in recent weeks, stranding thousands of passengers. It was operating just five planes before Wednesday's grounding, down from 120 last year. Bad investments, competition from several low-cost carriers, high oil prices and a weak

rupee contributed to Jet's financial demise, experts say. Its plight has been compared to that of Kingfisher Airlines, which ceased operations in 2012 before later going bust, causing thousands of job losses and huge financial costs to lenders.—AFP

White House will tie Iran sanctions review to response by Saudi Arabia

LONDON: The White House will have to weigh costs and benefits carefully before tightening sanctions on Iran and Venezuela further - and decide whether the economic price is worth the diplomatic gains. If the White House toughens sanctions on Iran and Venezuela significantly (and the next decision on Iran sanctions is scheduled for the first week of May) any decision is likely to be tied to production increases by Saudi Arabia.

The White House is likely to agree to scale back Iran sanctions waivers if, and only if, Saudi Arabia commits to replacing the lost barrels at least one-for-one to leave the global production-consumption balance unchanged. High-level discussions between the two countries over sanctions and production policy are likely to have begun already.

President Donald Trump spoke with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman by telephone earlier this month about maintaining pressure on Iran and human rights, according to a statement from the White House. The content of the discussions was not made public but it is safe to assume that oil prices, production and sanctions formed part of the dis-

ussion since they are central to the bilateral relationship as well as policy towards Iran.

If sanctions are tightened, it will be because the White House believes it has an undertaking from Saudi Arabia to increase production by at least the equivalent amount, if not more, to contain the impact on US motorists.

Costs and benefits

The United States consumed 3.4 billion barrels of gasoline and 1.5 billion barrels of distillate fuel oil in 2018, according to the US Energy Information Administration ("Petroleum Supply Monthly", EIA, March 2019). For every \$1 benchmark oil price rise because of sanctions, the first round costs for households and businesses amount to roughly \$5 billion per year (assuming increased crude prices are passed on by refiners). Brent prices have already risen by \$22 per barrel since the start of the year, as a result of output cuts by the OPEC+ group of oil exporting countries as well as sanctions policies and other supply disruptions. The impact has been similar to a tax increase of \$110 billion per year on U.S. households and businesses and will rise to \$150 billion if prices continue heading upward towards \$80 per barrel.

Net costs to the United States are much smaller because the country has also become a substantial producer of crude and condensates as a result of the shale revolution. Domestic crude production is running at 4.3 billion barrels per year, so price rises have so far boosted domestic producers' revenues by around \$95 billion per annum.

The problem for the White House is that the households and businesses hurt by cost increases for gasoline and diesel fuel are not the same households and businesses that benefit from higher crude prices.—Reuters

China says US trade agreement not yet settled

BEIJING: China said yesterday there is "still much work to finish" on the text of a trade agreement with the United States. US President Donald Trump on Wednesday held out hope the current trade talks with China will be a success, and said an announcement on the status was due "shortly". The Wall Street Journal reported that US negotiators would return to Beijing at the end of the month.

Gao Feng, a spokesman for China's commerce ministry, declined to answer when asked about the next round of trade talks at a regular press briefing. "Recently negotiations on the text of the China-US economic and trade agreement have continued to make new progress but there is still much work to finish," Gao said. "Both sides will continue to keep in close contact through various effective channels," he told reporters.

The Journal reported US and Chinese officials are tentatively working toward a signing ceremony for the trade agreement as soon as late May. During shuttle diplomacy in recent months, US and Chinese officials have alternated between projecting optimism and warning that success in their high-stakes talks is not guaranteed. But a key US demand—a binding enforcement mechanism to prevent Beijing from backsliding on its commitments—has been virtually agreed, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said this month.

"At present, the China and US economic and trade teams are seriously negotiating the text of the economic and trade agreement, including the implementation mechanism, on the principle of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit," Gao said.—AFP

Business

Unemployment takes heavy toll on South Africa's young

Govt vows to create jobs on elections campaign trail

JOHANNESBURG: A large portrait of a bright-eyed young woman draped in a black graduation robe looms over a spotless, tiled lounge in Protea Glen, a suburb of Johannesburg's Soweto township. It is a constant and gnawing reminder of potential that has gone unrealized for 10 years. "It's like you go to school, you go to school... and then once you are qualified you sit with a whole stack of certificates that you can't actually use," 36-year-old Kgomotso Sebabi said.

Armed with qualifications in wealth management, she migrated in 2008 from the small, central city of Kimberley to South Africa's financial hub, Johannesburg, in pursuit of opportunities. To date, the holder of two bachelor's degrees has failed to find a job in her field. She has since acquired three more post-graduate certificates in a bid to enhance her chances, but all she has managed to secure is a part-time job at a call centre. "Initially I wanted to see myself grow within the financial sector, maybe become a manager... a finance chief executive or something. But it didn't go as planned," she told AFP.

A quarter of a century into democracy, South Africa has an official unemployment rate of 27.1 percent. Among people under 35 the rate is about 53 percent—among the highest in the world. Causes of unemployment in South Africa are many and complex, the biggest factor being a slow-growing economy which has failed to produce jobs at the pace at which new graduates enter the market. The government repeatedly vows, especially on the elections campaign

trail, to create desperately needed jobs.

According to chief labor statistician Malesela Mosiane, unemployment remained stubbornly high even as the population grew rapidly. Media graduate Tswelopele Maputla, 22, completed her journalism studies in November 2018 at Rhodes University, but has been nowhere near a newsroom. She mails out job applications whenever she can. "It's been incredibly difficult and demotivating," said Maputla as she finished cleaning her mother's house in Daveyton township east of Johannesburg. "I have the skills and it's just disheartening that I can't get that one break that I need to prove myself."

Votes for jobs

As South Africa heads to the polls on May 8, the promise of jobs has once again become election bait. President Cyril Ramaphosa has vowed that his African National Congress (ANC) will create "many more" jobs. The party has been in power for 25 years and will, according to all polls, win the majority vote yet again. "We will be able to create up to 275,000 additional jobs each year," Ramaphosa said at the ANC's election manifesto launch in January.

Mmusi Maimane, leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance, meanwhile recently told supporters in Johannesburg: "I have a dream of putting a job in every home." And Julius Malema, the firebrand leader of the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has warned that South Africa "cannot postpone the jobs question". But the promises are up against a lackluster econ-



JOHANNESBURG: Kgomotso Sebabi, a South African unemployed graduate shows her higher Education certificate as she speaks about the lack of job opportunities for people with degrees and high education achievement at her house in Soweto, Johannesburg.—AFP

omy. The International Monetary Fund in April lowered South Africa's projected GDP growth rate for 2019 from 1.4 percent to 1.2 percent, citing policy uncertainty which with high levels of corruption and recurrent electricity blackouts, has harmed investor confidence.

The massive unemployment rate is seen as fuelling apathy among many young voters. The

electoral commission has recorded a 47-percent drop in registered voters aged 18 and 19. About two-thirds of the nine million eligible voters who did not bother to register are under 30 years old. "I'm not voting," said unemployed agriculture graduate Xhanti Ndongela, 26, who qualified in 2016. "Why should I vote for a government that I will never work for?" —AFP

Nigeria has no intention of cutting fuel subsidy

ABUJA: Nigeria has no intention of removing subsidies on petroleum products, its finance minister said on Wednesday after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) advised the country to eliminate them to protect public finances. Africa's top oil producer and biggest economy heavily subsidises gasoline and relies on imports for the bulk of its domestic demand due to an underperforming refining system.

"It's still work in progress ... there is no intention to remove the fuel subsidy at this time," Zainab Ahmed told reporters. Ahmed said she agreed with the IMF's advice on subsidies but the country first needed to take steps to cushion the effect of their removal on the population. "We have to find a formula that will work for Nigeria. And until we do that, we should not be contemplating removing the subsidy," she said. The IMF says the country needs to maintain good public finances and has advised Nigeria to remove the state subsidy on petrol and channel the saved funds into building hospitals, roads and schools. Nigeria emerged from a recession in 2017 brought on by low oil prices and a currency crisis. But growth is still fragile as private sector credit expansion remains weak and the government is trying to mobilize funds to spend its way out of the sluggish growth.— Reuters

Lebanese 2019 draft budget reduces deficit

BEIRUT: Lebanon's draft budget for 2019 projects a deficit of less than 9 percent of GDP compared to 11.2 percent in 2018 and includes "wide reductions" in spending based on the need for "exceptional austerity measures", the finance minister said on Wednesday. The budget, seen as a critical test of the heavily indebted state's determination to reform, is based on an economic growth forecast of 1.5 percent in 2019, which could rise to around 2 percent as the economy picks up, Ali Hassan Khalil told Reuters.

Lebanon has one of the heaviest public debt burdens in the world at some 150 percent of GDP. State finances are strained by a bloated public sector, high debt servicing costs and hefty subsidies spent on the power sector. Serious steps toward reform could unlock \$11 billion in financing pledged at a donor conference last year to help Lebanon build infrastructure to boost its economic growth.

Efforts to move forward with those reforms were slowed by protracted negotiations to form a new coalition after an election last May. A unity government was finally created in late January. Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri has said the reforms will be "painful" and warned that Lebanon faces "catastrophe" if they are not implemented. The draft budget projects a primary surplus compared to a deficit in 2018, Khalil said. "The most important thing is that we have put ourselves on the path of dealing with the accumulated deficit," Khalil said. The draft represented an "introduction to more deficit reductions in the 2020 and 2021 budgets," he said. The draft includes measures to tackle tax evasion and to boost customs revenues in addition to "tax amendments" for high earners, he said. There would be no tax increases for the poor and those with middle incomes, he said.

Khalil did not give any details of the spending reductions. Earlier on Wednesday, Hariri hinted in comments to reporters at cuts to benefits enjoyed by some state workers. Hariri was also cited by Lebanese media as telling parliament he supported recipients of state pensions but also wanted to protect the Lebanese pound, which has been pegged against the dollar for more than two decades. Small protests over the last two days against cuts have underlined the political minefield



BEIRUT: In this file photo Lebanese Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil holds a news briefing in Beirut, Lebanon.—Reuters

facing the government of a country that has put off reforms for years.

The government believed the level of interest rates would tend to decline in the coming months, Khalil said. He said he believed it was the first time Lebanon would have a budget that was "transparent and realistic" and which included "real spending in all its respects" and did "not hide numbers". He said the draft included many of the reforms set out at last year's Paris donor conference. Promised reforms included starting work to reduce the deficit in the state subsidized power sector - a major drain on state coffers - "sound management of the public debt to reduce its cost", and reducing waste and corruption, Khalil said.—Reuters

Business

Amazon to pull plug on China retail operations

Company focuses on cross-border sales in China

SHANGHAI: Amazon plans to close down its online retail operations that cater to consumers in China in an apparent admission of defeat to local e-commerce rivals such as Alibaba and JD.com, a report said yesterday. The US e-commerce pioneer will maintain other operations in China such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Kindle e-books and cross-border teams that help ship goods from Chinese merchants to customers abroad, Bloomberg News said, citing unidentified people familiar with the plans.

Beginning on July 18, the company's Chinese website, Amazon.cn, will feature only diminished offerings sourced from its global network, the report said. An Amazon spokesperson did not explicitly confirm plans to throw in the towel on domestic e-commerce, but said the company was looking to focus more on cross-border sales. "Over the past few years, we have been evolving our China online retail business to increasingly emphasize cross-border sales, and in return we've seen a very strong response from Chinese customers," the spokesperson said in a statement emailed to AFP.

The company was making "operational adjustments to focus our efforts on cross-border sales in China", the statement said. Founded by Jeff Bezos 25 years ago, Amazon in January became the world's biggest publicly traded company by market value and dominates in the United States and other markets.

E-commerce is just as popular with consumers in China-if not more-than it is in the

United States, due to cheap delivery costs and a less-developed bricks-and-mortar retail landscape. But Amazon has struggled to make headway in China, where a host of nimble rivals led by Alibaba and JD.com have capitalized on domestic supplier networks and a deeper understanding of Chinese consumers to gobble up market share before Amazon could gain a foothold.

Barely a dent

Amazon has tried to make a go of it on China retail, investing in logistics and acquiring Chinese online book seller Joyo in 2004. But it has barely made a dent. The firm occupied just 0.6 percent of Chinese business-to-consumer online retail in the fourth quarter of 2018, with Alibaba's Tmall taking 61.5 percent, and JD.com 24.2 percent, according to China-based Internet consultancy Analysys.

Li Chengdong, founder of the Beijing-based internet financial research house Dolphin Think Tank, said Amazon was hurt by not adapting to what works in China. "Amazon has been unwilling to localize in China, which feels kind of arrogant," Li said. "They still insist on American-style web pages and do not promote merchandise during the 'Double 11' shopping season, in which Chinese e-commerce companies Alibaba and JD put a lot of effort."

"Double 11", also called "Singles' Day" refers to an annual shopping extravaganza that takes place each November 11 and in which tens of bil-

"A few years ago, such things as water purifiers, mixers and rice cookers were only seen at some restaurants and rich households, but they are becoming commonplace, especially in cities," said Kang Mi-jin, an economic expert who regularly speaks with North Koreans for Daily NK, a website run by defectors. "Some would look just like an ordinary middle-class South Korean home, with a wall-hanging LED TV, multiple laptops and electric mini cars for babies."

Consumer culture

North Koreans started using solar panels several years ago, mostly to charge mobile phones and light their homes as a backup to the unstable, mostly hydro and coal-fired national grid. As well as markets brimming with electronics products, there are more teahouses, computer games rooms, karaoke bars and billiard halls open longer after switching to solar from diesel generators, according to recent visitors and defectors. Such entertainment venues are becoming more widespread, not only in cities, but also the countryside, where grid power is even less reliable.

"At night, often it is only those places that have solar panels and batteries that have lights on," a source with knowledge of the issue told Reuters on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of North Korea affairs. Use of the panels spread after they were used at a now-closed inter-Korean factory park in the North's



SEATTLE: In this file photo an Echo Sub and Echo Inputs, part of Amazon's push towards giving audio-philos Alexa connectivity, are on display in Amazon's Day 1 building in Seattle.—AFP

ions of dollars worth of merchandise is bought, in China's answer to the US "Black Friday" shopping day. The Amazon statement said that "we will continue to invest and grow in China across Amazon Global Store, Global Selling, AWS, Kindle devices and content". Bloomberg News

border city of Kaesong that opened in 2004. "Now many apartment balconies have them out in the sun during the day collecting energy so they are readily visible, the source said.

Private use of solar panels has gone from being officially banned, to tolerated, to encouraged by the ruling Workers' Party, which keeps a tight rein on the economy and the populace. Early this month, the official Rodong Simmun ran an article about a team of laborers at a cooperative farm who earned solar panels and LED TVs as a reward from the Party for surpassing a production goal. State television has also aired a series of reports on the growing use of solar energy over the past year, including a 17-minute documentary from October introducing locally made devices, such as high-voltage inverters and even a portable charger for electric bicycles.

Kim Yun-soung, a research fellow at the Green Energy Strategy Institute in Seoul, said the North's push for domestic production of solar equipment was spurred by sanctions banning imports of metal products. "Electricity was the biggest problem but we achieved such a highly advanced, cutting-edge technology ourselves from scratch, which was once monopolized by developed nations," the film's narrator said, referring to the inverters.

State media has listed the central bank, schools, factories, and even ferries as entirely powered by solar panels. "A solar panel gives you 'free' power once it is installed," said Kim Young Hui, a defector and an economist at the

called the move the latest sign that Amazon, due to the difficulty competing with Chinese rivals, would focus its overseas attention on India's growing market. Amazon opened an India website in 2013 and has invested heavily in logistical infrastructure.—AFP

South's state-run Korea Development Bank. "So the nature of the panels perfectly fits Kim Jong Un's mantra of self-reliance - or in other words, creating something out of nothing."

Free power

Most of the panels sold in markets were brought in from China, and prices have dropped by up to 40 percent over the last few years amid a global glut and rising North Korean production, defectors and experts said. In 2015, sources told Reuters a small 20-watt panel was sold at about \$44. These days a 30-watt panel - a more widely used model - costs only about \$15, Kang said. Pyongyang does not provide data on its use of solar power, but Kang said about 55 percent of North Korean households are equipped with the panels. The ratio is higher in Pyongyang and other cities, as well as border regions where Chinese goods are widely available, she said.

David von Hippel, an Oregon-based senior associate at the Nautilus Institute, a U.S. think tank, said North Korea has imported a total of 29 megawatts of solar panels from China through 2017, citing Beijing's custom data. Experts say solar energy still account for less than 0.1 percent of the country's generation capacity, estimated by South Korea's statistics agency at some 7,700 megawatts as of 2017. Pyongyang aims to boost its renewable capacity to 5,000 megawatts by 2044, with a focus on wind power, according to state media.—Reuters

Cheap solar panels power consumer appliance boom in North Korea

SEOUL: Years after they first appeared in North Korea, increasingly cheap and available solar panels are giving a boost to consumer consumption and industry as Pyongyang tries to limit the impact of tough international sanctions. Electricity shortages have been a perennial concern for North Korea, and leader Kim Jong Un has called for greater use of renewable energy as part of his drive for self-sufficiency as sanctions have ratcheted higher in response to the country's nuclear and missile programs.

Now ever more households, factories and businesses are equipped with solar panels, leading to a greater variety of home electronics products available in increasingly common private markets known as jangmadang, defectors and recent visitors say. Among the hottest selling items are water purifiers, hair straighteners and electric bicycles, mostly from China but some made in North Korea or even smuggled in from South Korea.

Sports

Ireland captain Best to retire after World Cup

'I have been fortunate to play and captain Ulster Rugby'

LONDON: Ireland and Ulster captain Rory Best has announced he will retire from professional rugby after the World Cup in Japan later this year. Best, 36, has been capped 116 times by his country and won the Six Nations four times, including Grand Slams in 2009 and 2018.

"It is with mixed feelings that I announce my retirement from Ulster Rugby as of the end of this season," Best told Ulster's website. "This feels like the right time for me to go out on my terms, a luxury for which I feel very privileged."

"I am very excited for the end of the season with Ulster Rugby and for the upcoming World Cup with Ireland, both of which I hope to finish with a massive high, playing at the top of my game."

The hooker has led Ireland to as high as second in the world rankings during an international career which began in 2005, and captained the team to their first win against world champions New Zealand in 2016.

Best also toured with the British and Irish Lions in 2013 and 2017, although he was not selected for a Test match. At club level, he won the

Pro12 with Ulster in 2006 and has scored 23 tries in 219 appearances for the club following his debut in 2004. "In my 15 years at this brilliant club, I have been lucky to have met, played alongside, been coached by and supported by many great people, and I would like to thank every individual for the time they have invested in me since 2004," added Best.

"I grew up supporting Ulster Rugby, have been fortunate to play and captain Ulster Rugby, and now look forward to supporting Ulster Rugby in the future with my family." Ulster operations director Bryn Cunningham said Best would be remembered as "one of the greatest legends of Ulster and Irish rugby".

"No player representing Ulster Rugby has had a more profound impact in the professional era than Rory," said Cunningham. "During a match, players turn to Rory for leadership and direction. He has been our all-encompassing talismanic figure for more than a decade. "Rory will justifiably go down as one of the greatest legends of Ulster and Irish Rugby." — AFP



Rory Best

Joshua-Miller fight off after New York denies license

LOS ANGELES: Jarrell Miller was denied a license to box by the New York State Athletic Commission (NYSAC) over a failed drug test on Wednesday, scuppering his planned June 1 bout with world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua.

In a statement quoted by US media outlets, the NYSAC said Miller was barred from fighting in the state following the news of his positive doping case. "The New York State Athletic Commission has denied Jarrell Miller's professional boxing license application for a violation relating to the use of a prohibited substance. We have no further comment at this time," the commission said.

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 on Tuesday it emerged Miller had tested positive for a banned substance following a test conducted by the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association (VADA) 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. 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. ESPN reported that Joshua still planned to make his US debut as planned in June for what will be his seventh title defence.

Promoter Hearn said he was scrambling to find an alternative opponent. "I am on the search for a new opponent," Hearn said. "Literally anyone can get it." — AFP

Late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud tourney begins

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The tournament of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Cup began yesterday with club, National Guard, UAE and Bahrain shooters participating. Competition will continue until Saturday, April 20 (Tomorrow).

Assistant Treasurer at Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Adnan Nasser Al-Ibrahim said, the tournament is one of the important events the club is keen on organizing each year, and always witness strong competition between participating shooters. Al-Ibrahim said Kuwait shooting continues its efforts and participation in local, regional and international championships, where Kuwaiti shooters made, and make great achievements, the latest of which the qualifying of skeet shooter Mansour Al-Rashidi to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics by winning the gold medal of the skeet event during the World Cup competition in UAE, being the second shooter to qualify after Abdelrahman Al-Faihan.

Al-Ibrahim, on behalf of KSSC chairman and board members thanked the family of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah for supporting the sport of shooting. He also lauded the support of KSSC Honorary President Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah for shooters when they win in the name of the countries.

Al-Ibrahim urged Kuwait's shooters to exert their utmost efforts during the tournament so that they can represent Kuwait and win. The closing ceremony of the tournament will be on Saturday at 6:30 pm at the club's premises.



Adnan Nasser Al-Ibrahim

Patriots to kick off 2019 season against Steelers

LOS ANGELES: The New England Patriots will open their 2019 campaign with a blockbuster clash against the Pittsburgh Steelers, the National Football League revealed Wednesday as the schedule for the league's centenary season was unveiled.

In a break with recent tradition, the Patriots will not be involved in the opening game of the season, which this year will see the Chicago Bears face the Green Bay Packers on September 5. Instead, the reigning Super Bowl champion Patriots will host the Steelers at their Gillette Stadium home on September 8 in a battle of veteran quarterbacks Tom Brady and Ben Roethlisberger, the league said.

An NFL statement said the league's 100th season would aim to serve up a regular "Game of the Week" which would reference a famous game played, a fierce rivalry or matchup of original teams.

Season highlights include a rematch between the Patriots and the Kansas City Chiefs, two teams who have scored a combined 152 points in their last two regular season meetings. The league's international fixtures includes four games in London and one in Mexico City. The Oakland Raiders will face the Chicago Bears on October 6 at the new London home of English Premier League side Tottenham.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers will face the Carolina Panthers at the same venue on October 13 before the final two games are staged at Wembley, with the Los Angeles Rams playing the Cincinnati Bengals on October 27 and the Jacksonville Jaguars meeting the Houston Texans on November 3. The Kansas City Chiefs meanwhile will face the Los Angeles Chargers at Mexico City's Azteca Stadium on November 18. The regular season will conclude on December 29. — AFP

Astros' streak halted at 10

Choo, Rangers edge Angels to complete sweep

OAKLAND: Matt Chapman broke a sixth-inning tie with a home run Wednesday night, helping the host Oakland Athletics snap the Houston Astros' 10-game winning streak with a 2-1 victory. Frankie Montas (3-1) gave up one run and three hits in 6 1/3 innings, and the Oakland bullpen got the final eight outs as the A's beat the Astros for the first time in five tries this season to split the two-game series. Wade Miley (1-2), who took a 5-1 career record against the A's to the mound, was the hard-luck loser, allowing two runs on just four hits in six innings.

RANGERS 5, ANGELS 4

Shin-Soo Choo had two hits, including a two-run triple in the decisive fifth inning to lead Texas past visiting Los Angeles. Choo, who raised his batting average to .345, was instrumental in Texas sweeping the three-game series. Rangers starter Lance Lynn (2-1) worked out of trouble early and minimized damage before exiting with two outs in the sixth inning. Lynn allowed just two runs on seven hits and three walks. He struck out two. Rangers closer Jose Leclerc notched his fifth save, although he made it adventurous. Entering with a 5-3 lead, he loaded the bases with no outs on a David Fletcher double, a walk to Kole Calhoun and a Mike Trout hit-by-pitch. Leclerc dodged disaster, allowing only a fielder's choice RBI to Andrelton Simmons between striking out Justin Bour looking and Brian Goodwin swinging.

INDIANS 1, MARINERS 0

Carlos Carrasco pitched seven scoreless innings as Cleveland completed a three-game sweep of host Seattle. Jake Bauers hit a solo homer to account for the game's lone run. Carrasco (2-2), who allowed six runs in two of his first three starts of the season and entered the game with a 12.60 ERA, showed the form that helped him win 35 games over the past two seasons with the Indians. Carrasco allowed only three hits, walked two and struck out 12.

DODGERS 3, REDS 2

A.J. Pollock interrupted a pitchers' duel with a three-run home run, and Los Angeles finished off a three-game series sweep with a victory over visiting Cincinnati. With Reds starter Sonny Gray locked in a scoreless showdown with Dodgers starter Walker Buehler, Pollock came through in the sixth inning as Los Angeles tied the major league record for consecutive games with a home run at home. The Dodgers have hit at least one home run in 32 consecutive games going back to last season, matching the mark set by the Colorado Rockies in 1999.

PHILLIES 3, METS 2

Jake Arrieta pitched eight-plus solid innings, Scott Kingery and Cesar Hernandez each homered, and host Philadelphia defeated New York. J.T. Realmuto had two hits for the Phillies, who played without shortstop Jean Segura due to a strained left hamstring. Arrieta (3-1) allowed six hits and two runs and induced the Mets into 12 ground-ball outs. He walked two and struck out three. Hector Neris

earned the shaky save despite allowing an RBI single and hitting Wilson Ramos. Neris struck out Keon Broxton swinging on a 3-2 count with the bases loaded in the ninth.

CARDINALS 6, BREWERS 3

Paul DeJong matched his career high with four hits, and visiting St. Louis avoided a three-game sweep with a win against Milwaukee. Michael Wacha (1-0) improved to 6-0 in his career against the Brewers, allowing two runs and five hits in six innings, striking out seven and walking one. Marcell Ozuna hit his fifth home run in the past four games. Matt Carpenter also homered, while Kolten Wong had three hits and Matt Wieters had two hits and two RBIs for the Cardinals.

DIAMONDBACKS 3, BRAVES 2 (10 INNINGS)

Adam Jones walked with the bases loaded and Arizona exploited the struggling Atlanta bullpen for the second straight night. The winning rally came against Jesse Biddle (0-1), whose throwing error allowed Tim Lincecum to reach second base with one out. Biddle walked Jarrod Dyson, coaxed Eduardo Escobar into a lineout and then walked David Peralta.

Greg Holland pitched a scoreless 10th inning, striking out two, to earn his fourth save and extend his scoreless streak to 11 innings. Archie Bradley (1-1) pitched two scoreless innings and earned the win. Brewers starter Corbin Burnes (0-2) had allowed three home runs in each of his first three starts this season and gave up two more before leaving after 3 1/3 innings. He yielded five runs on nine hits and two walks while striking out three.

YANKEES 5, RED SOX 3

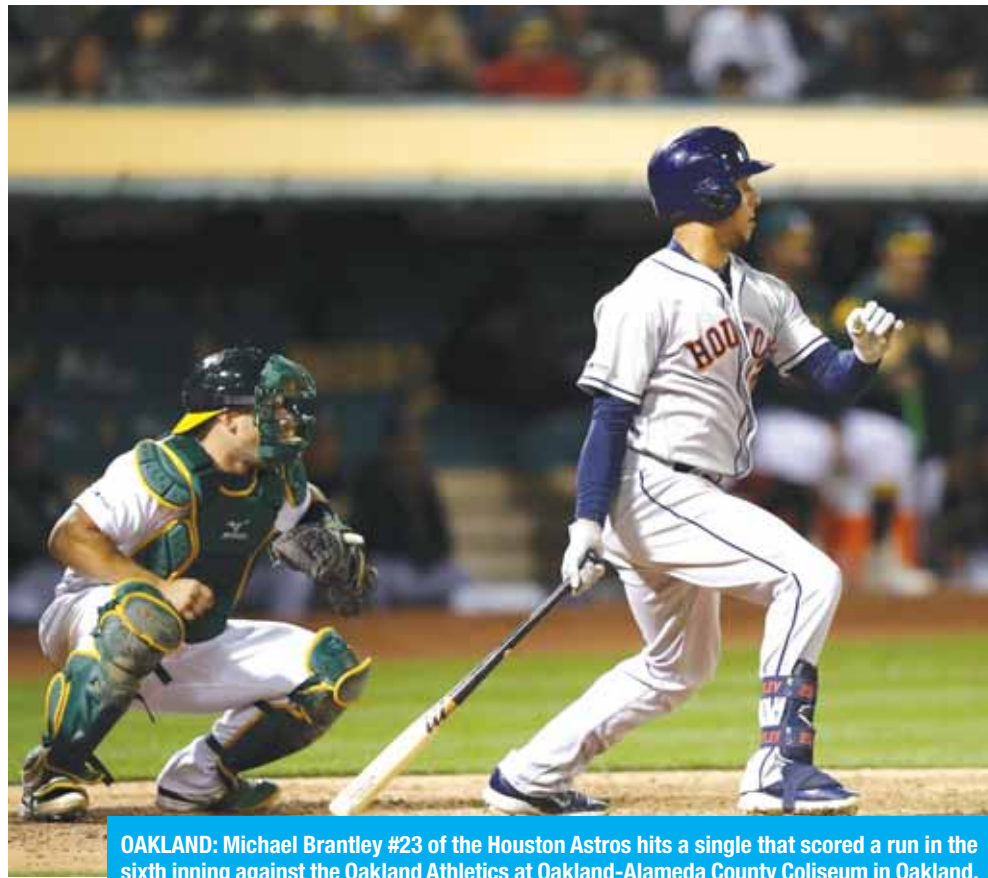
Brett Gardner hit a grand slam off Ryan Brasier with one out in the seventh inning, and New York rallied past Boston to complete a two-game sweep at Yankee Stadium. The Yankees loaded the bases on two walks and a single by Clint Frazier against Brandon Workman (0-1). It was Gardner's 100th career homer and fourth career grand slam. It was his first grand slam since June 30, 2017, in Houston off James Hoyt.

CUBS 6, MARLINS 0

Cole Hamels pitched seven scoreless innings to lead Chicago to a shutout win at Miami. All six Cubs runs scored on two-out, opposite-field hits as Chicago completed a three-game sweep. Daniel Descalso went 2-for-3 with three RBIs, and Javier Baez went 2-for-4 and homered for the second straight game. Hamels (3-0) allowed just three hits—all singles—and no walks, striking out eight and lowering his ERA to 2.77. He got 11 groundouts.

NATIONALS 9, GIANTS 6

Juan Soto and Howie Kendrick hit homers in the first inning, and Matt Adams and Kurt Suzuki went deep in the seventh as Washington held on to beat visiting San Francisco. Adams hit a three-run homer off Travis Bergen to give his team a 7-2 lead in the seventh. Two batters later, Suzuki went deep with



OAKLAND: Michael Brantley #23 of the Houston Astros hits a single that scored a run in the sixth inning against the Oakland Athletics at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum in Oakland, California. — AFP

a two-run shot. The Giants erupted for four runs in the ninth as Gerardo Parra and Steven Duggar hit two-run homers to make it 9-6 off reliever Austen Williams with no outs. That brought on Kyle Barraclough, who retired the only batter he faced before closer Sean Doolittle got the final two outs after allowing a double to Buster Posey and a walk to Brandon Belt.

PIRATES 3, TIGERS 2 (10 INNINGS)

Colin Moran knocked in the go-ahead run in the 10th, and Pittsburgh edged host Detroit for the second consecutive night. Josh Bell was the only other Pirate to record an RBI. Nick Burdi (2-1) pitched an inning of scoreless relief to notch the victory. Felipe Vazquez got the last three outs to pick up his fifth save. Pirates starter Trevor Williams allowed two runs on six hits and a walk while striking out five in six innings. Detroit's Spencer Turnbull only gave up an unearned run in six innings while limiting Pittsburgh to two hits and two walks. He fanned five. Ronny Rodriguez and John Hicks drove in the runs for the Tigers, who have dropped five straight.

RAYS 8, ORIOLES 1

Brandon Lowe, Ji-Man Choi and Yandy Diaz each homered as Tampa Bay defeated visiting Baltimore. The Rays have taken the first two games of this series and have belted four homers so far. Lowe's homer was the big one in this contest, a three-run shot off Baltimore starter David Hess, and it gave the Rays a 3-0 lead in the first inning. Five Tampa Bay players finished with at least two

hits as the Rays banded out 13 overall, nine for extra bases.

ROYALS 4, WHITE SOX 3 (10 INNINGS)

Hunter Dozier homered to lead off the 10th inning, and visiting Kansas City posted a victory over Chicago in a game that featured a benches-clearing melee. After his RBI single in the seventh gave Kansas City a 3-2 lead, Dozier launched a 2-0 inside fastball from Nate Jones (0-1) over the wall in left field for his fifth homer of the season. Chicago's Tim Anderson punctuated his two-run homer off Kansas City starter Brad Keller in the fourth inning by emphatically tossing his bat. Keller drilled Anderson in the backside on the first pitch to lead off the sixth inning, resulting in both benches and bullpens rushing the field. Keller, Anderson, White Sox manager Rick Renteria and Royals bench coach Dale Sveum were ejected.

TWINS 4, BLUE JAYS 1

Nelson Cruz went 2-for-3 with a walk and two RBIs, and Jake Odorizzi allowed just one run over 5 2/3 innings as Minnesota beat Toronto in Minneapolis. Odorizzi (1-2) allowed six hits and one walk while striking out six. Blake Parker retired all three batters he faced in the ninth, including two by strikeouts, to pick up his fourth save. Jorge Polanco went 2-for-3 with a walk and scored two runs, raising his average to .429, and Marwin Gonzalez also went 2-for-3 with a walk and an RBI for the Twins. Freddy Galvis went 2-for-4 with a run for Toronto. — Reuters

Sports

Hashim Amla named in S African World Cup squad

JOHANNESBURG: Veteran batsman Hashim Amla was yesterday named in South Africa's squad for the 2019 Cricket World Cup in England and Wales. Amla, 36, will be playing in his third World Cup despite a poor run of recent form.

He was selected ahead of opening batsman Reeza Hendricks, who played in 18 consecutive one-day internationals before being dropped for the country's most recent match against Sri Lanka in March.

The 15-man squad was largely as predicted by most pundits, with Amla's form the biggest talking point ahead of the announcement. In keeping with a recent comment by Cricket South Africa chief executive Thabang Moroe that racial quotas would not apply for the World Cup, eight white players were selected. CSA has an official target of black players making up 55 percent of teams.

South Africa's campaign in the 2015 World Cup ended in controversy over quotas when official pressure

was exerted to pick Vernon Philander for a semi-final against New Zealand despite the team management wanting to stay with the team that won a quarter-final against Sri Lanka, when Philander was injured.

Philander was picked ahead of the in-form Kyle Abbott, who subsequently signed a Kolpak contract with English county Hampshire. "We are very happy with the squad we have been able to put together and have every confidence in their ability to do our country proud at the World Cup," said selection convener Linda Zondi.

The fact that we have managed to win our last five series in a row in this format against Zimbabwe, Australia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka twice underlines the quality of the team that Faf (du Plessis) will lead into the contest. "The final selection is also the result of a very rigorous search we have conducted, leaving no stone unturned, to make sure that we have made the best use of the options available to us.

"We feel that Faf's team is well

equipped to handle whatever conditions are presented to them, bearing in mind the weather extremes one can encounter in the British Isles." Fast bowler Anrich Nortje gained selection after an impressive debut series against Sri Lanka, with Chris Morris missing out despite outstanding form in the current Indian Premier League.

Zondi said Nortje and fellow fast bowler Lungi Ngidi were recovering well from injury and were expected to be fit for a pre-tournament camp next month. South Africa have reached the semi-finals in four of their seven World Cup campaigns but have lost six times in seven knock-out matches.

Their only knock-out win was against Sri Lanka in the quarter-finals in 2015. Du Plessis, Amla, JP Duminy, Imran Tahir and Dale Steyn will be playing in their third World Cup, while Quinton de Kock and David Miller will be making their second appearance on one-day cricket's biggest stage. The South Africans will be wearing a specially-designed World Cup shirt at



Hashim Amla is among cricketers who makes cricket a truly Gentlemen's game.

the tournament, mainly in apple green with darker green patterned sleeves.

South African squad: Faf du Plessis (capt), Hashim Amla, Quinton de Kock (wkt), JP Duminy, Imran Tahir, Aiden

Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Dale Steyn, Rassie van der Dussen. — AFP

We need bigger World Cup, says 'Nepalese Shane Warne'

NEW DELHI: Nepalese sensation Sandeep Lamichhane has called for the World Cup to be expanded to up to 16 teams, saying limiting it to 10 hurts players from emerging cricket nations.

The 18-year-old leg-spinner, who last year became the first Nepalese player to land an Indian Premier League contract, said he was frustrated to be missing out on the tournament in England and Wales starting in May.

"Sorry to say but a 10-team World Cup will hurt a lot of players like me who will not be a part of it," the Delhi Capitals player told AFP in an interview. "I think there should be 14-16 teams in the World Cup." Lamichhane added: "World Cup comes after every four years and teams can achieve their biggest dreams there. We are an emerging nation and this is something we would love to play for our country.

"Even in 2023 there are (again) only 10 teams so it will be a while before we can even think of playing in the 50-over event."

Lamichhane, who has a blond streak in his dark hair and earrings in both ears, has drawn comparisons with his hero, the flamboyant Australian great Shane Warne, for his bowling style and ability to generate wicked turn.

The confident teenager is the poster boy for the rise of cricket in mountainous Nepal, which gained one-day international status last year but remains a long way from contesting a World Cup. The Cricket's showpiece tournament had 16 teams in 2007, but the field was reduced to 14 in 2011 and 2015 as the International Cricket Council sought to avoid one-sided matches.

It has been slashed to just 10 teams for 2019 and 2023, featuring the top eight sides in the one-day rankings and another two coming through qualifying. Lamichhane, who will be watching the World Cup from afar, said he was hoping for some upsets by the smaller teams, who include Afghanistan.

"I am going to watch the World Cup on TV and love to see any team that is under-rated perform well against the big nations," said Lamichhane. "It will be an inspiration for us who are just be-



Sandeep Lamichhane

ginning their journey right now."

Test cricket is also on Lamichhane's radar as Nepal bid to follow in the footsteps of Afghanistan and Ireland, who in 2017 were elevated to the elite club of nations eligible to play the five-day game. "Two years back we were nothing," said Lamichhane. "But now we are an ODI and T20 international nation. "Hopefully there will be a time when we become the next Test nation. Even if I play a Test match for my country after 10 years, it will be the proudest

moment." Nepal gained one-day international status at last year's World Cup qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe, despite the ICC's suspension of Nepal's national governing body since 2016 over political interference.

Despite their success, the team from the Himalayas are yet to play a top side, and have just a couple of international-standard grounds capable of hosting games. However, individual talent has flourished and Lamichhane, a product of Nepal's Chitwan Cricket Academy, became a protege of former Australian captain Michael Clarke who spotted him at a tournament in Hong Kong. The teenager's big break came when he was snapped up by IPL's Delhi Capitals, coached by another ex-Australia captain in Ricky Ponting, for \$318,000 in January 2018.

So far this season he has bagged five wickets in four IPL matches, with the Capitals often using him as a new-ball bowler on spin-friendly Indian wickets. "There is no doubt that IPL is the biggest league in the world. You get to see players who play spin really well and we get to perform against players who are the world's best batsmen," he said. "He (Ponting) is been a huge influence on me. It's a great sign when a player like Ricky coaches your team. Things become easy because you know that he is there if something is wrong."

Lamichhane, whose biggest idols are Warne and Sachin Tendulkar, is surrounded by the world's top cricketers in the IPL but insists he remains focused on his own self-improvement. "I look up only to myself because I want to be better than yesterday. I never plan something big, I always enjoy the day I am playing a game and let the life go in a flow," he said. — AFP

Steyn backs South Africa to end World Cup jinx

NEW DELHI: South Africa's veteran paceman Dale Steyn is confident his side can end their World Cup jinx and get to the final with "a bit of luck". The Proteas have always been among the world's top cricket teams but have never got past the semi-final hurdle-losing four times.

With the Faf du Plessis-led side winning 11 of their last 13 one-day series, Steyn believes the South Africans can lift the trophy at the tournament in England and Wales starting May 30. "We're going with good expectations," Steyn, who has joined Indian Premier League side Royal Challengers Bangalore, told reporters.

"If you're not going to the World Cup expecting to win, then you probably shouldn't go. But I'm not going to lie, we have some fantastic players," said Steyn, 35. Du Plessis and spinner Imran Tahir, who play for Chennai Super Kings and speedster Kagiso Rabada with the Delhi Capitals are enjoying good form in the Twenty20 tournament.

Steyn, who is hoping to make South Africa's World Cup squad, singled out Rabada for special praise. Rabada is currently the top ranked bowler in the IPL with 17 wickets followed by fellow South African Tahir on 15. "He's been bowling exceptionally well. Kagiso is a wonderkind. Just hope he continues that kind of form," said Steyn. "We are led by Faf, who has been in fantastic form lately. And in the Indian Premier League, Imran Tahir has been right up there in terms of wickets," said Steyn, who joined Bangalore as a replacement for injured Nathan Coulter-Nile.

"From Quinton de Kock all the way down to number 11, they're all match-winners," he said. "We just need to go there and hope (for) a bit of luck-weather, a missed no-ball-goes your way, and you could win the tournament." Steyn, who has 196 wickets from 125 ODI matches, said team rankings would be of little significance in the tournament.

South Africa, ranked fourth, take on top-ranked England at The Oval in the opening game. — AFP

Sports

Pakistan leaves Amir out of World Cup preliminary squad

Surprise WCup call-up for 19-year-old fast bowler Mohammad Hasnain

LAHORE: Pakistan selectors yesterday left out pace spearhead Mohammad Amir from the preliminary 15-man squad for next month's World Cup to be held in England. The 27-year-old has been in wretched form since guiding Pakistan to win over India in the Champions trophy final in June 2017, with just four wickets in 14 matches.

But the left-arm fast bowler, who missed the 2011 and 2015 World Cup due to a five-year ban on match fixing imposed in 2010, has a lifeline as teams can be changed until May 23 — seven days before the ten-team event starts.

Chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq said Amir's form was concerning. "Amir had not performed as well as was expected of him," said Inzamam, who was part of Pakistan's World Cup winning team in 1992.

Amir is included in the 17-man squad for the five-match one-day series against England from May 5-19, and can regain his World Cup place if he performs well. "We have included Amir for the

England series with a hope that he regains his rhythm and wicket-taking ability in the series," said Inzamam. Allrounder Mohammad Hafeez was included in the World Cup squad subject to fully recovering from a fractured thumb injury he sustained during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in February this year. There was a surprise World Cup call-up for 19-year-old rookie fast bowler Mohammad Hasnain, who bowled at 150kph in the PSL earlier this year.

"Hasnain is exciting and can be a surprise package of the World Cup," said Inzamam of the paceman, who played three one-day internationals against Australia last month, taking two wickets. Sarfraz Ahmed will lead both the squads. Another left-arm pacer, 29-year-old Junaid Khan, was preferred over Amir.

Opener Abid Ali, 31, also earned a call-up after scoring a debut hundred against Australia. The squad is largely comprised of young players, with only a handful of veterans—Sarfraz and Haris So-

hail, who played in 2015, as well as Shoaib Malik, who played in 2007, and Mohammad Hafeez, who took part in the 2007 and 2011 tournaments.

Pakistan will leave for the UK on Tuesday and play three one-day matches against county teams before taking on England in the five-match ODI series from May 5. They will play two warm-up World Cup games against Afghanistan on May 24 and Bangladesh on May 26, before taking on the West Indies in their first World Cup match in Nottingham on May 31. All ten teams will play each other in the first stage, with the top four playing the semi-finals.

Squad: Sarfraz Ahmed (captain), Fakhar Zaman, Imam-ul-Haq, Abid Ali, Babar Azam, Haris Sohail, Shoaib Malik, Mohammad Hafeez (subject to fitness), Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan, Hasan Ali, Faheem Ashraf, Junaid Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Mohammad Hasnain.

Two additions for England ODIs: Mohammad Amir and Asif Ali. — AFP



LAHORE: Chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq gestures as he speaks during the announcement of the Pakistani cricket squad for next month's ICC World Cup, in Lahore yesterday. — AFP

Ponting hopes Pant's India snub will benefit Delhi in IPL

MUMBAI: Rishabh Pant's exclusion from India's World Cup squad could prove to be a big gain for Delhi Capitals in the ongoing Indian Premier League, the franchise's head coach Ricky Ponting has said. Dinesh Karthik pipped young Pant to the second wicketkeeper's spot in India's World Cup squad, which was announced on Monday.

With former captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni the undisputed first-choice wicketkeeper, India's selectors preferred Karthik's experience to the raw aggression of the 21-year-old Pant. "I had a quick chat with him (Pant) on Monday night, and he seems to have taken it quite well," Australia's former World Cup-winning captain Ponting told reporters.

"He is obviously disappointed as he would have loved to be in the squad as a lot of other players would have as well. But the thing with him that he has to remember and we all have to remember is that he is still pretty young.

"He will have the opportunity to potentially play in three or four more World Cups over the course of his career." Famed for his swashbuckling batting, Pant impressed in the Test series in England and Australia and is perceived as a long-term replacement for Dhoni when the 37-year-old decides to quit limited-overs formats.

Ponting advised Pant to take the World Cup snub positively and concentrate on scoring heavily for his IPL franchise. "But what might be a negative thing for him to not get picked in the Indian team, might turn out to be a very positive thing for the Delhi Capitals as he can totally focus on playing his best cricket for us," Ponting said.

"Like I said a few games ago, he is a match-winner and I'm sure he will come back strongly to win more matches for us. It is important that he focuses on the little things on the field that make him a really good player for us.

"There is nothing he can do now to get into that World Cup team, but he can definitely help the Delhi Capitals win some matches in the coming days which will help him boost his confi-



Rishabh Pant

dence for the future as well."

Pant's team are currently second in the IPL standings with 10 points from nine matches while champions Chennai Super Kings top the leaderboard with 14 from 10. — Reuters

S Lanka dump Chandimal amid mass WCup clearout

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka yesterday dumped established stars including former captain Dinesh Chandimal from their one-day team in a mass clear-out for the World Cup.

One day after announcing that Test skipper Dimuth Karunaratne would be World Cup captain in place of Lasith Malinga, selectors also axed wicketkeeper-batsman Niroshan Dickwella, off-spinner Akila Dananjaya, and openers Danushka Gunathilaka and Upul Tharanga from the 15-man squad.

Sri Lanka have been riven with personality clashes and disciplinary problems in recent years that have seen their world standing slump. Batsman Lahiru Thirimanne, leg-spinner Jeffrey Vandersay and all-rounders Milinda Siriwardana and Jeevan Mendis got places despite not playing an ODI for more than a year. Opening batsman Avishka Fernando and paceman Nuwan Pradeep were also included in the squad for the tournament which starts in England and Wales on May 30. The 1996 champions kick off their campaign against New Zealand in Cardiff on June 1.

Karunaratne and the 35-year-old Mendis last played a 50-over international at the previous World Cup in 2015. Chief selector Ashantha de Mel said players like Siriwardana, who last played an ODI in 2016, were chosen to provide stability.

"To balance the side, the batsman coming in at number six has to be able to bowl," de Mel said of Siriwardana, a left-handed batsman and bowler. "We went with someone who has a bit of experience in that role."

Dananjaya, a mystery spinner who has played 34 ODIs, and Dickwella were axed after their poor showing in the recent tour of South Africa. Kusal Janith Perera will be wicketkeeper and could also be used an opener.

De Mel said Dhananjaya de Silva is a better spin option than Dananjaya who picked up just two wickets from four games in Sri Lanka's 5-0 drubbing in the one-day series in South Africa. On the pace front, Sri Lanka again opted for experience, omitting Dushmantha Chameera and Kasun Rajitha in favour of Pradeep and Suranga Lakmal. — AFP

Sports

Djokovic into Monte Carlo q-final as Medvedev topples Tsitsipas

Medvedev increase his leading total match wins to 20

MONTE CARLO: Top seed Novak Djokovic continued his win streak against US players as he reached the quarter-finals of the Monte Carlo Masters with a 6-3, 6-0 victory over Taylor Fritz yesterday. Two-time tournament champion Djokovic has now won nine in a row over US players since losing at Wimbledon 2016 to Sam Querrey.

The world number one will be playing his ninth quarter-final here from 13 appearances at his home event: the win came around after he claimed his 850th career victory against Philipp Kohlschreiber this week.

Fritz came to the court after defeating Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and Diego Schwartzman. Djokovic turned in a steady performance with a dozen each of winners and unforced errors, while his opponent committed nearly 30 unforced errors in 68 minutes.

Defending champion Rafael Nadal was to play his second match of the pre-Roland Garros campaign when he faced Grigor Dimitrov in a third-round encounter. Sixth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas earlier lost 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 as Daniil Medvedev continued his run of form.

The Russian winner will next line up against Djokovic after losing to the seed in January in the Australian Open fourth round. Tsitsipas was caught on the back foot facing three match points as he trailed 0-40 on his serve late in the second set. After saving the first two, the Greek mismanaged the third to seal his exit after an hour and three-quarters.

Medvedev increased his leading total of ATP season match wins to 20 as a result of his success as he beat Tsitsipas for the fourth time without a defeat in the series.

"This was a great achievement for me," Medvedev said. "Everything was perfect today."

"Some wind came up in the second set and I could not get used to it. But in the third, I just worked to put every ball in the court."

"I was pleased to fight back after going a set down in the third set."

The player who stands a career-high 14th credits his rising form to a renewed dedication to the sport. "I've been working hard for the past 18 months - since before the start of 2018. I've dedicated my life to tennis, which I did not do before," he said. "I had my best season last year



MONACO: Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return to US Taylor Fritz during their tennis match on the day 6 of the Monte-Carlo ATP Masters Series tournament yesterday in Monaco. — AFP

- hopefully this year will be better." The Russia reached his first quarter-final at the Masters 1000 level after winning his second match against a Top 10 opponent.

Tsitsipas, runner-up last season to Nadal in Toronto, suffered his eighth defeat of the season against 18 wins and will try and lift his game next week on the clay of Barcelona. — AFP

Celtics rally past Pacers for 2-0 series lead

BOSTON: Jayson Tatum buried a go-ahead 3-pointer with 50.8 seconds remaining Wednesday night, allowing the host Boston Celtics to overcome a late Indiana Pacers flurry and pull out a 99-91 victory in Game 2 of their Eastern Conference first-round playoff series. With the fourth-seeded Celtics having successfully held serve on their home court to go up 2-0 in the best-of-seven set, the fifth-seeded Pacers will host Games 3 and 4 on Friday night and Sunday afternoon. Indiana blew a 12-point, fourth-quarter lead. However, the Pacers appeared primed to even the series when Wesley Matthews and Bojan Bogdanovic combined for three 3-pointers in a 70-second spurt, allowing Indiana to retake a 91-89 advantage with 2:16 to go. But the Pacers didn't score again, and the Celtics finally did when Tatum drilled his third 3-pointer of the game for a one-point lead in the final minute. The Celtics scored the game's final 10 points.

ROCKETS 118, JAZZ 98

James Harden posted his third career postseason triple-double, and Houston recorded another rout of visiting Utah in Game 2 of a Western



BOSTON: Cory Joseph #6 of the Indiana Pacers handles the ball against the Boston Celtics in Game Two of Round One of the 2019 NBA Playoffs against the Boston Celtics at the TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

Conference first-round series. Harden totaled 32 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists in the wire-to-wire victory. After Utah utilized an unorthodox defensive approach against Harden in the series opener, Harden exploded for 25 first-half points Wednesday on 8-of-15 shooting, including 5-of-9 accuracy on 3-point attempts. He finished 11 of 24 from the floor, 6 of 13 from long distance. Harden, however, did commit a game-high eight turnovers. The Rockets will take a 2-0 series lead to Salt Lake City for Game 3 tomorrow.

BUCKS 120, PISTONS 99

Giannis Antetokounmpo sparked the decisive run in Game 2 of the

Eastern Conference first-round series, scoring Milwaukee's first seven points of the second half in a win over visiting Detroit. The top-seeded Bucks lead the best-of-seven series two games to none. Game 3 is scheduled for Saturday in Detroit, where the eighth-seeded Pistons will try to snap a 12-game postseason losing streak that dates back to 2008. That's tied for the second-longest postseason losing streak in NBA history, behind only the New York Knicks' 13 consecutive losses from 2001-12. Antetokounmpo scored 13 of his 26 points during a third quarter in which the Bucks outscored the Pistons 35-17. He also grabbed a team-high 12 rebounds. — Reuters

Avalanche put Flames on brink with OT win

DENVER: Mikko Rantanen's second goal of the game was the overtime winner as the Colorado Avalanche erased a two-goal deficit and beat the Calgary Flames 3-2 Wednesday night in Denver. The result put the Western Conference's No. 1 seed, Calgary, on the brink of elimination in the opening round of the Stanley Cup playoffs. The Avalanche lead the best-of-seven series 3-1.

Game 5 will be Friday in Calgary. Shortly after the Flames failed to convert on a power play, the Avalanche raced up the ice, and Carl Soderberg fed Rantanen a cross-ice pass that he one-timed for the winner. Avalanche goalie Philipp Grubauer made 35 saves, while Calgary netminder Mike Smith stopped 49 shots. After a scoreless first period, Calgary's Elias Lindholm broke the deadlock with a power-play goal 3:25 into the second. Derek Ryan doubled the Calgary lead at 6:58 of the third period. The Avalanche's J.T. Compher scored 72 seconds later on a rebound, then Rantanen tied the game with a power-play goal with 2:50 remaining in regulation.

BRUINS 6, MAPLE LEAFS 4

David Pastrnak scored twice, Brad Marchand added a goal and two assists, and visiting Boston held on to defeat Toronto to even the first-round Eastern Conference playoff series at two games apiece. Charlie McAvoy had a goal and an assist, and Zdeno Chara and Joakim Nordstrom each scored once for the Bruins, who will host Game 5 in the best-of-seven series on Friday. Auston Matthews scored twice for Toronto, and Zach Hyman and Travis Dermott each scored once. Morgan Rielly added two assists for Toronto. Tuukka Rask made 38 saves for Boston while Toronto's Frederik Andersen stopped 25 shots.

STARS 5, PREDATORS 1

Rookie Roope Hintz scored his first two career postseason goals as host Dallas cruised to victory over Nashville in Game 4 to even their Western Conference first-round series. Alexander Radulov and Mats Zuccarello joined Hintz in scoring on the power play, and Andrew Cogliano also tallied for the Stars, whose four goals in the first period were one shy of the franchise record for a single period in the playoffs. John Klingberg notched three assists, fellow defenseman Esa Lindell had two, and Ben Bishop made 34 saves for Dallas, which travels to Nashville for Game 5 on Saturday afternoon. Pekka Rinne, who made 40 saves in a 3-2 win over the Stars in Game 3 on Monday, yielded four goals on eight shots before being relieved by Juuse Saros (20 saves). — Reuters

Sports

Champions League failures haunt Guardiola as City fall short again

MANCHESTER: Another season will pass without Champions League glory for Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, but few will forget the manner in which the quest for a historic quadruple was ended by a combination of Tottenham Hotspur and VAR.

Spurs survived a seven-goal thriller on Wednesday night at the Etihad, losing the battle 4-3 but winning the war on away goals thanks to their 1-0 victory in the first leg a titanic quarter-final tie. A match that saw City lead 1-0, trail 2-1, then forge ahead 4-2 to lead the tie for the first time before Fernando Llorente's controversial decisive goal was allowed to stand after a VAR check for handball, brought one final twist in stoppage time.

Guardiola scampered down the touchline in celebration when Raheem Sterling thought he had completed his hat-trick with the goal to take City into the semi-finals for just the second time.

Seconds later, delirium turned to disbelief, as Guardiola sank to his knees in the realisation that VAR had revealed an offside earlier in the move. Guardiola described the exit as "cruel." Winning the Champions League remains the grail for the club's Abu Dhabi owners after a decade of pouring money into the club, but no one can say they were not entertained.

For the much-lauded Catalan coach, though, the elimination continues a pattern of Champions League anguish since he won the title for a second time with his great Barcelona team in 2011. Guardiola's Barca reign ended in semi-final defeat to Chelsea in 2012 and there were last four exits in each of his three seasons at Bayern Munich. The upturn in City's standards since he arrived in 2016 is unquestionable, and they could

still complete an unprecedented treble of Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup in England. However, it is for Champions League success that Guardiola was pursued so long by City, and in three attempts he has failed to even reach the semi-finals.

Guardiola has consistently played down City's potential as a European powerhouse in his three years in charge, contrasting their lack of historic success to Barca, Bayern and Real Madrid. But it is Monaco, Liverpool and now a Spurs side 16 points adrift of City in the Premier League, that have sent his expensively assembled squad packing in the Champions League.

A common theme has been City's poor defensive record. Monaco scored three times in both legs in the last 16 in 2017, Liverpool thrice in 31 minutes to take a decisive lead in last season's quarter-final and, even shorn of Harry Kane, Tottenham became just the second visiting side this season to score three at the Etihad.

Guardiola will contend that is why his approach for the first leg was more conservative, but the lack of an away goal ultimately cost him. The decision to leave out Kevin de Bruyne in north London last week was even more questionable after the Belgian bagged a hat-trick of brilliant assists on Wednesday.

"Guardiola might say that the passages of chaos here, as City traded goals with Spurs like an under-nines match after too many Haribos, explained why he had tightened up at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium with Fernandinho alongside Ilkay Gundogan, showing untypical caution," wrote The Times.

"But others, even David Silva, could have made way. You wonder if there can ever be a



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's English midfielder Raheem Sterling (R) scores his team's fifth goal but has the goal disallowed during the UEFA Champions League quarter final second leg football match between Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. — AFP

right time to omit a fit De Bruyne when you marvelled at his hat-trick of assists here." A Premier League title is still to be won for City and there is little time to reflect before Tottenham visit again tomorrow.

Winning their last five league games would deliver an eighth league title in 10 seasons across three countries for Guardiola. But after seven straight failed attempts, questions remain over

his suitability for the cut-throat nature of the Champions League.

"There is a theory that Guardiola, the master of control and systems, just isn't suited to the intangibles of one-off knockout football," wrote The Guardian. "Nights where an entire campaign can be thrown away in a fit of human frailty or a surge of irresistible emotion." — AFP

Klopp delight as Liverpool march on in Europe

PORTO: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp hailed as "crazy" his team's achievement in once again reaching the semi-finals of the Champions League after they comfortably saw off FC Porto on Wednesday.

"I'm very, very happy of course," said Klopp after his side's emphatic 4-1 win in Portugal that saw them win their quarter-final tie 6-1 on aggregate and set up a last four tie against Barcelona.

"I said it before that it would be very difficult so how can I be surprised now that it was difficult," he added.

The Premier League leaders weathered an early storm before goals from Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Virgil van Dijk gave them a comfortable victory and set up a mouthwatering semi-final against Barcelona.

"We had to defend in the first half-hour a lot in the last third, that's ok, no problem," he said. "We had chances, we scored a goal, we had a big chance before half-time and then in the second half it was clear that Porto could not keep their level until the end.

"So we won the game and now another semi-final, it's unbelievable really. It is our second time in a row in the semis, that is really something crazy!" After losing in the final to Real Madrid last year, Klopp's team are hoping to go one better in Europe this season and also remain on course for a remarkable double.

While Manchester City were knocked out of the Champions League on Wednesday, ending their dream of a quadruple, Liv-



PORTO: Porto's Brazilian defender Felipe (L) challenges Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final second leg football match between FC Porto and Liverpool at the Dragao Stadium in Porto. — AFP

erpool could still win the Premier League and lift the European Cup. However, the prospect of Barcelona in the last four is a daunting one.

"You can imagine I don't think too much about that but I am really happy about the fact we play them," added Klopp. He then insisted that his thoughts will be quickly turning back to the Premier League.

"Tonight we are in the semi-finals and we play on Sunday against Cardiff. "That is in my mind and that will be 100 percent on my mind when I wake up tomorrow and not Barcelona." — AFP

PSG again fail to clinch French title

NANTES: Paris Saint-Germain failed to seal the Ligue 1 title for the third match running on Wednesday after a second-string line-up without dropped Kylian Mbappe took the champions to their second defeat in a matter of days, 3-2 at Nantes.

A Diego Carlos brace and Majeed Waris' tap-in inflicted a third league loss on Thomas Tuchel's side, who were hammered 5-1 at second-placed Lille on Sunday and drew with Strasbourg the previous week, despite Dani Alves' stunning opener and substitute Metehan Guclu pulling one back late on.

However PSG, who were also missing a host of other first-team players through injuries and suspension, remain 17 points clear with six games left. The runaway leaders will win their sixth title in seven years on Sunday if Lille fail to win at Toulouse and they then beat struggling Monaco.

Tuchel refused to reveal if he left Mbappe out of the squad for blasting his teammates for "lacking personality" after the Lille loss, saying that there would be "no explanation" of his decision. "It's very easy to analyse, it was a very bad performance, we deserved to lose," said Tuchel.

"We controlled the game at Lille but today there was no performance for 90 minutes. "You can lose and you can make mistakes, and we will always defend the players if we feel that they've played with a great attitude and hunger. But today it is not possible." Depleted PSG had to thank Gianluigi Buffon 12 minutes in when he managed to push away Kalifa Coulibaly's header from point-blank range, and seven minutes later Alves appeared to have calmed Parisian nerves with his wonder strike. — AFP



MONACO: Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return to US Taylor Fritz during their tennis match on the day 6 of the Monte-Carlo ATP Masters Series tournament yesterday in Monaco. — AFP

Djokovic into Monte Carlo quarter-finals

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