

Friday Times

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Citizens' proposals



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Local newspapers reported last week that the government is willing to listen to citizens' proposals to support the country's development plans. But this simple news created a fuss. It occupied headlines and social media between those who tried to analyze the issue of citizens' proposals and others who found this move interesting, as the government does not need suggestions or ideas because it knows all of our problems.

The local press published reports that the Cabinet has formed a joint team comprising of a number of government agencies and entrepreneurs to receive initiatives and ideas supporting development plans in the country. The government will also welcome proposals from citizens. The team should present its report every six months to the Council of Ministers, including the total initiatives that were submitted and the number of proposals accepted and denied.

I think the idea is beautiful, but as usual, the fear of a lack of implementation is justified. Moreover, which proposals will be accepted and which will be rejected? Can the proposer object to the team's opinion? Who will review initiatives and what are their commercial and scientific backgrounds to consider the initiatives and make decisions?

For example, the reports said that there is a proposal calling for readying a comprehensive employee who is able to complete all transactions in a single review session, and that such a comprehensive employee could be an official or an ordinary employee.

I think this is known as the modern management system. So a manager, for example, should not have a large staff of secretaries to answer the phone, print a letter, make an appointment or respond to inquiries because he can do this all by himself or at least with one assistant and not an army of staff.

But this means that the employee should have strong administrative efficiency and not be appointed by wasta or be ignorant about the basic principles of the use of computers. It is expected that such an employee will be able to complete the transactions of people with record speed!

I believe many people and not only Kuwaitis want an initiative aimed at ending paper transactions and going electronic to overcome bureaucratic obstacles and red tape.

We are also heading towards the rainy season in few months' time, and people have the right to be worried about what is in store for them. Also, are schools really ready to receive students in this heat? There are many questions and concerns that we should not have in the first place in a country like Kuwait.

This is a good initiative, but we need action. The question remains - how much time do we need to become a productive and satisfied society?



Failaka Island stands as proof of ancient history in Kuwait

Failaka Island is located at the entrance of Kuwait Bay, adjacent to Kuwait City on the east side and 20 km away in the sea. The island has a fertile soil good for agriculture and has a reserve of groundwater. Failaka was inhabited by people since the ancient times and was a key commercial stop between Mesopotamia and other civilizations along the Gulf coast, according to a book titled "special researches on Kuwait's history," issued by the Center For Research And Studies On Kuwait and supervised by Dr Abdullah Al-Ghunaim.

Excavation operations discovered a civilization dating back to the 3rd millennium BC until the Hellenistic Age, where Alexander the Great built a Greek colony called 'Ikarus' towards the end of the fourth century BC. Among the most important discoveries in the island was a house containing 12 rooms and a Greek fortress where a number of Greek Gods' statues were found. The first appearance of Failaka on maps was in 1596 under the name 'I.Dagoada,' which was Portuguese, meaning the 'water island,' referring to the groundwater the island had. The same name appeared in later maps like Vingboons's map in 1660 and Mortier-Jaillot's marine map in Holland in 1692, where Failaka was referred to as 'Isle de Aguada,' the center said.

The island was also mentioned by several Greek historians, noting that it has so many trees and animals including goats and holy deer, which were not allowed to be hunted, as well as the temple of goddess Artemis. Moreover, a large number of seals of different shapes, representing civilizations were found in Failaka, the book said. The center also noted that Imam Malik's 'Muwatta' book was the oldest book coming from Failaka Island in recent ages. This copy of the book was written by Musaid bin Ahmad bin Musaad bin Salem in Failaka in 1682. It is a proof of the development of the culture and science fields in Kuwait in that era.

As for the relation between Failaka and Kuwait, the book said that a number of the Island's merchants had houses or relatives in Kuwait, while Kuwaiti leaders including Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah had vacation homes in the island. After the discovery of oil in Kuwait, the island had beautiful modern buildings and houses, schools and public services centers. However, the Iraqi Invasion forced its residents to leave the island in 1990, planting it with mines. — KUNA



Failaka ruins.



Artifacts from Failaka Island.

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Local



Back to school

Ideas to cut down cost of expensive supply lists



By Faten Omar

It's back to school time, and many parents are struggling and spending too much to buy special supplies and stock up for multiple children. But it's possible to whittle the back-to-school budget down with a few tricks. Kuwait Times spoke with parents and teachers to learn more about smart hacks to minimize the cost of sending children back to school.

Rania Dragmah, 29, mother of a 10-year-old son, said a plain notebook or backpack costs much less than one decorated with popular cartoon characters. "I have noticed that supplies that have famous characters, especially if they are recently trending, will cost more than plain ones. The problem is that my child wants to be like his friends and not go to school with boring supplies. So I buy stickers and patches to decorate the supplies," she said.

She adds that last year's backpack can be updated for the new school year easily. "In my case, you can just remove the patches and replace them with whatever new character the kids have now become obsessed with," Dragmah told Kuwait Times.

Another great way to level up a plain colored backpack is to have a positive quote or saying embroidered on the backpack. Many tailoring shops can do this easily. But be warned not to put children's names on their backpacks, as strangers may use this to become familiar with kids waiting for the bus or walking home.

Um Ali, 41, who has three children, said parents must not buy everything at once. "Your children will not be using every single item on the list during their first days at school. Sometimes I wait when the stores are trying to get rid of excess stuff by holding sales. In the first days of the new school year, things are expensive because they know we need them," she said.

She revealed she swaps school uniforms with friends and family. "Children grow up quickly, so you are going to need several uniforms during their years at school. Swapping with family and friends or even saving the old uniform for your younger child will save you money," Um Ali said. "Also, I'm a



Local



fan of handmade crafts. For example, last Ramadan I decorated the Girgian bags that kids give to teachers and classmates. I do similar things for my younger child to save money and make him more creative," she explained.

Um Talia, a 28-year-old teacher, told Kuwait Times that sometimes schools do not need that many supplies. "The school is deceiving parents by obligating them to buy too much. The truth is that the school does not need them. They give us old supplies to use and stock the remaining at the school," she said.

Alia Abdurraheem, 35, also a teacher, said she always checks for sales before she shops for her children. "I buy school supplies from stores that are running sales. They are always selling basics like crayons, folders and more for less. Also, at 100-fils stores, you can find basic supplies like folders, rulers, lunch bags and educational games cheaper than at popular stores," she noted. Abdurraheem added the best hack is to wait until after the school year starts to stock up and buy supplies at clearance prices in larger quantities.

Its also good to prioritize the items as most needed. Children usually need notebooks and folders right away but some items won't be used until later in the school year. If possible ask the teacher what supplies can be purchased at a later date and if you can stagger sending in supplies a bit at a time so that the children have what they need but you don't have to buy all of it at once.



Kuwait goes back to school this coming week with most private schools kicking off and public schools starting as of 8 September. Families across the country spend thousands of dinars every year on school tuition, uniforms and supplies.
— Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Local

Poor quality products pose safety hazard to consumers

By Nawara Fattahova

Trying to save money by buying cheap products can sometimes turn out to be costly and even dangerous. Safety and quality should be a priority when purchasing items for oneself and one's home. Unfortunately, there are various levels of products available in the markets of Kuwait. Some have high qualities and standards of safety and others are poorly made and potentially harmful.

Various accidents have taken place in Kuwait and other countries, including fires in homes due to cheap electronics, children hospitalized for swallowing magnetic toys, hoverboards that spontaneously catch fire and hundreds of other harmful products.

Consumers who have faced such situations and accidents told Kuwait Times they have learned from their experiences and decided to always seek quality before considering the price. "I bought an unbranded power bank at a cheap price, but it didn't last long. Not only did it stop

working but it spoiled my mobile, which I had to fix for triple the power bank's cost. This was a lesson for me to only buy good quality electronics from well-known stores," 30-year-old Jamal said.

"I will never buy any electronics of an unknown brand, as I have heard about even more serious cases than just a damaged mobile phone. Numerous fires have broken out in many homes due to electrical short circuits caused by charging with cheap and fake chargers," he added.

Rabab only buys from agents of brands or well-known stores that she trusts. "I have heard about many cases of damage and harm caused to consumers who bought cheap products. Also, twice I bought cheap electronics and they didn't last for long. So it's better to buy good quality products and pay more to enjoy using them for years instead of months," she noted.

Some products may be bad even if they are not cheap. "Once I bought a homemade face cream from a woman selling it online. I was encouraged by various



ads I saw on social media. But it was bad and I got an allergic reaction after using it. I doubt it was approved by the ministry of health. I will never buy such unknown products. Also, I earlier bought slimming cream of an unknown brand sold at a stall at an exhibition and it didn't work," Sameera told Kuwait Times.

Quality comes first. "I never buy products from an unknown source. I care about quality first, even if I have to pay more. If I'm not aware of a product, I educate myself through the Internet. I haven't experienced any adverse situation, but I have heard from my friends about cheap products and their poor quality. So I always look for quality, especially for my children's stuff, as it is related to their health, such as shoes or water bottles," stressed Ahmed.

Consumers can protect themselves by buying well known branded products or checking the quality of items before purchase. They can also report products that are problematic to the commerce ministry and consumer protection hotline #135.

According to Kuwait's consumer protection law, consumers have the following rights:

Article 9 lists the rights granted to consumers under the law as follows:

1. The right to safety - this means that consumers should be able to assume that the products they buy are reasonably safe.

2. The right to quality - this means consumers should be assured of satisfactory quality of products which can be used for their intended purpose.

3. The right to be informed - this means that consumers should be provided with sufficient information to make an informed choice and to be protected against false and misleading advertising and labelling practices;

4. The right to redress - this means that consumers have the right to receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.

5. The rights set out in Article 9 of the Consumer Protection Law are based on the rights granted by the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP). These guidelines were adopted by the UN in 1985 and the UNGCP are intended to act as an international reference point of the consumer movement. Kuwait, through the introduction of the Consumer Protection Law, has become a part of this movement in the interests of progress and modernity.

Article 10 allows a consumer to replace or return a defected product within 14 days of purchase (provided that it is not a rapidly perishable good) and further states that vendors and suppliers are jointly liable in such respect. Article 10 applies in instances where a consumer receives a defective or incomplete service in accordance with the nature of such service, contract conditions or prevailing commercial custom. In this case, the service provider shall refund the value of the service or the value of the product or re-provide the service to the consumer.



Condolences

The Management and Staff of
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Asok Kumar Namboothiri

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On the sad demise of his

Mother

May her soul rest in peace and
God grant comfort and strength to the
bereaved family members during this time

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Local

Qatar's Sheikh Tamim receives letter from Kuwait's Amir

DOHA: The Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani received yesterday the Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem who handed him a letter from Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The speaker of the Kuwaiti parliament conveyed greetings from His Highness the Amir to the Qatari Amir who said he was pleased to learn that His Highness had recovered from his recent health setback. He also wished His Highness the Amir excellent health and wellbeing.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable from Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani expressing sincere congratulations on his recuperation from his recent health setback. The Mauritanian president, in the cable, wished His Highness excellent health and wellness, hoping to see the State of Kuwait attain further progress and prosperity under His Highness the Amir's sagacious leadership. His Highness the Amir responded with a cable to the president of the sisterly nation, manifesting his heartfelt gratitude for the good sentiments, wishing that the president may enjoy good health and the sisterly Islamic Republic of Mauritania and its kind people may witness further progress and prosperity. In the meantime, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a phone call from former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, checking up on His Highness after re-



DOHA: Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani reads a letter from Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, delivered by Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. — KUNA

covering from his recent health setback. His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation for Maliki's concern and wished him long healthy life and more development and prosperity for Iraq.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable of condolences to President of the friendly Republic of Gambia, Adama Barrow, on demise of the ex-

president, Dawda Jawara. His Highness the Amir prayed for the soul of the deceased president, also expressing sorrow to his bereaved family. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addressed cables of identical content to the Gambian president. — KUNA

Prime Minister receives Jordanian Foreign Minister

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received yesterday Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the country. The meeting was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Dihani.

In other news, Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Min-

ister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah met yesterday with the Yemeni Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Ali Bin Safaa discussing bilateral relations, developments on regional and international arenas. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi. — KUNA

Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations deep-rooted since ancient times

KUWAIT: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi will start an official visit to Kuwait tomorrow during which he is set to hold talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at a time when bilateral relations are developing on various regional and Arab issues. The visit of President Sisi comes within the framework of strengthening bilateral relations between Kuwait and Egypt to discuss ways of developing them in various fields, in addition to discussing the latest developments on the regional and international arenas and issues of common concern.

The Egyptian president's visit to the country is his third since he assumed the presidency in June 2014 at a time when the history of the two countries has a long record of visits and official meetings between the leaders of the two countries over the past decades, which have cemented relations between the two sides at various levels. Egypt was the first country to immediately recognize Kuwait, where the late Abdul Aziz Hussein handed over his credentials to President Gamal Abdel Nasser as the

first ambassador of the State of Kuwait in Cairo on December 20, 1961 and only a few months later until Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Aziz presented his credentials on March 19, 1962 to late Amir, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as the first ambassador of Egypt to Kuwait.

Full support

For decades, Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations were characterized by a distinct brotherly and popular character, but they became deeper during the plight of the Iraqi invasion of the country, when Egypt had harnessed all its potentials to support the just cause of Kuwait, and in a repeated scene, when Kuwait had stood firmly with Egypt in confronting the aggression of June 1967 and in October war of 1973. And since the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the two countries after the independence of the State of Kuwait in 1961, relations between the two sides have started to grow steadily, as Cairo had received the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah three times in 1964 at the Arab summits held in Cairo and Alexandria and the third in the Conference of Non-Aligned Movement Countries.

The late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also visited Cairo several times during the period of Gamal Abdel Nasser's presidency. The late Amir was the last to bid farewell to Abdel Nasser after the Cairo Summit on September 28, 1970 at the airport to be the last leader to meet the Egyptian President before his death. Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem also made several visits to Egypt during the period

of the late President Anwar Al-Sadat to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries, in addition to another visit in 1976 to participate in the Arab Six-Party Summit, which was devoted to addressing the Lebanese crisis that erupted during that period. In this difficult period, Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem recorded honorable positions of the State of Kuwait in the 1967 and 1973 wars on the political, military and economic levels in support of the Arab position in general and Egypt in particular.

After Hosni Mubarak came to power in Egypt in 1981, he visited Kuwait four times before the Iraqi invasion in 1990. The first visit was in 1987 to participate in the Islamic Summit Conference and the second in January 1988 after the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries and the third in February 1989 to participate in Kuwait's National Day festivities. The fourth was in July 1990 before the ordeal of the invasion. On the other hand, the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid an official visit to Cairo in August 1989, where he received an official and popular reception.

After the liberation of the country from the invasion, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was one of the first leaders to visit Kuwait to congratulate the leadership on the liberation and to emphasize the depth of historical relations between the two countries. Late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad paid numerous visits to Cairo and Alexandria to foster such strong bilateral ties. Since His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah came to power in the country, Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations have been strengthened further,

both bilaterally and on the Arab level. His Highness and President Mubarak continued exchanging of consultations and meetings, most notably Mubarak's visit to Kuwait in 2009 when the country hosted the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit.

His Highness the Amir continued the series of reciprocal visits. In 2013, he met with interim President Adly Mansour, and then attended the inauguration of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi as President of Egypt in June 2014, while the latter officially visited Kuwait for the first time in 2015. In 2015, His Highness the Amir visited Egypt three times in 2015 to attend Egypt's Economic Development Conference, the 26th Arab Summit of the League of Arab States and the opening ceremony of the new Suez Canal. In February 2019, His Highness headed the Kuwaiti delegation to the first Arab-European Summit in Sharm El Sheikh.

Boosting relations

Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh welcomed President Sisi's visit to Kuwait and praised the deeply-rooted relations shared between Egypt and Kuwait. The upcoming visit of Egyptian President comes to answer an invitation extended by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which points out the historical and brotherly relations between the two countries, Thuwaikh said in a statement yesterday. Egyptian President's visit to Kuwait aims to further boost established relations and discuss the security of region, he added. — KUNA

115,000 iqama violators in Kuwait; up 7% in one year

\$3.7 million cost of deportees' tickets

KUWAIT: Despite the interior ministry's measures to deport residency law violators, the residency affairs department's data showed a rise in iqama violators, who reached 115,000 by Wednesday, compared to around 107,700 violators in April 2018, an increase of seven percent, Al-Qabas daily reported yesterday, quoting sources. The grace period given to violators to leave or correct their status in 2018 resulted in reducing their number to 107,000 after 58,000 took advantage of the amnesty, according to interior ministry numbers.

But during the 16 months since the grace period expired, the

number of violators has gone up, reaching 115,000 in the database of the residency affairs department, the sources noted. The interior ministry is monitoring the violators and is preparing a plan to confront their rising numbers, and there will be campaigns to round them up.

Meanwhile, Al-Rai daily quoted informed sources who said the process of deporting expats from Kuwait is costly and is borne by the interior ministry. The sources said the cost of deporting expats is around \$3.7 million, adding that this amount will be included within the financial allocations of the interior ministry,

without alluding to any additional details with regards to the number of those deportees or the period.

In other news, government sources said there are plans to regulate electronic publications and place strict rules that limit chaos caused by some bogus accounts, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The sources said accounts will be dealt with very strictly and will not be allowed to compromise social harmony and spread doubts about others' integrity. They said a review of the electronic publication laws is being conducted to close some loopholes in some items.

Postal sector privatization 'close'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Official sources said the postal sector at the communications ministry is close to being privatized, as the fatwa and legislation department approved the proposed law to privatize it. The communications ministry approved the post-privatization plan, wrote its text and sent it to the fatwa and legislation department to study it from a legal point of view. The proposal

will be sent to the Cabinet for approval and referral to the National Assembly along with other sectors to be privatized. The government will establish a company called Kuwait Postal Company to be offered to the private sector. As for postal employees, they will be given the option to work for the new company or be transferred to other sectors within the communications ministry. Meanwhile, sources said Kuwait Investment Authority is close to preparing a memo with regards to asking it to study a proposal to privatize landlines and prepare an economic feasibility for it. If landlines are privatized, the communications ministry will be scrapped from any future Cabinet.

Authorities coordinate to secure event tents

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad met Kuwait Municipality's Acting Director General Faisal Al-Jumaa to discuss preventive measures for event tents and halls in sandy yards in various areas of Kuwait. Mikrad said these conditions must be implemented by the companies handling the tents, and make those who rent them sign an undertaking not to violate the safety and security conditions, as the Municipality is keen on all facilities complying with KFSD conditions.

Shops closed

The commerce and industry ministry closed

three tailoring shops and issued six citations to others practicing without a license in Safat Market (known as the blocks). The ministry said its inspectors conducted a campaign, during which they found the stores practicing without licenses. The team noted the violations and sent them to the commercial prosecution. The ministry said teams will continue their tours and will not hesitate in issuing tickets to violating places.

Stray dogs

Head of reform and development committee at the Municipal Council said he received a promise from the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) to provide teams to visit Naseem and Industrial Jahra in Jahra governorate to put an end to the 'menace of stray dogs' following a complaint from a citizen, Abdellatif Al-Thafeeri, about packs of dogs in front of his house. The councilmember said he toured the area and spotted 40 stray dogs there, so he called PAAAFR and a team arrived and started to catch the dogs in a humane manner.

Kuwaiti traveler lifts flag at Khunjerab mountain in Pakistan

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti traveler Andulmohsen Al-Baghli was able to reach the high mountain of Khunjerab, Pakistan, near the Chinese borders and lift the Kuwaiti flag. On the altitude of 4,800 meters above sea level, where the highest ATM machine is located, the Kuwaiti traveler stated in a phone call to KUNA that he was

registered as the first Arab biker to lift his country's flag on the high mountains of Khunjerab, where there is no enough oxygen or paved roads. Baghli expressed his pride in accomplishing such an achievement, affirming his will to continue his journey in many countries in the East and the West. — KUNA



Kuwaiti traveler Andulmohsen Al-Baghli lifts Kuwait's flag on the old Silk Road.



KUWAIT: A ground power cable caught fire, which reached a building's annex and some nearby vehicles. Jleeb fire center responded, evacuated the building and put out the fire. No injuries were reported. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



Bangladeshis speak on 'rampant' rapes in Islamic schools

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Dutch 'Bible Belt' town tries to boost measles coverage

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KUALA LUMPUR: Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (C) speaks to members of the media after the Islamic World Forum. — AFP

EU says it will support US-Iran talks

Bitter standoff will get backing only if nuclear deal stays

HELSINKI: The EU's diplomatic chief said yesterday the bloc would support talks between the United States and Iran, but only if the current nuclear deal with Tehran is preserved. Washington and Tehran have been locked in a bitter standoff since last year when US President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of the 2015 deal that gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its atomic program.

Tensions have risen dramatically in the Gulf, where Iran has seized tankers, but EU countries are reluctant to join a US-led operation to protect commercial shipping. Instead, EU foreign and defense ministers meeting in Helsinki discussed the possibility of launching their own observation mission in the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically important choke point at the entrance to the Gulf. The idea of direct talks between Washington and Tehran as a way out of the crisis grew this week after Trump mooted the idea and the new US defense secretary urged Iran's leaders to engage.

The European Union has desperately sought to prevent the deal from collapsing completely, arguing it is the best way to stop Iran developing nuclear bombs. EU diplomatic

chief Federica Mogherini gave a cautious welcome to the idea of negotiations, after Trump said Monday he was ready to meet Iran's President Hassan Rouhani within weeks. "We are always in favor of talks, the more people talk, the more people understand each other better, on the basis of clarity and on the basis of respect," Mogherini said as she arrived for the Helsinki meeting.

But she added that "first and foremost what is existing needs to be preserved" — referring to UN Security Council resolutions and specifically the 2015 deal known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA. "We will always advocate for the full respect by all sides of the UNSC resolutions and that includes the JCPOA," she said. At the recent G7 summit in Biarritz, Trump showed openness to French President Emmanuel Macron's proposal of a summit with Rouhani.

US Defense Secretary Mark Esper followed up on Wednesday by urging Tehran to negotiate, but Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif insisted Washington must respect the deal and halt what he called "economic terrorism" against his country. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas welcomed the

"greater willingness for dialogue" seen since the G7 and urged Iran to engage. "It is now a matter of operationalising this and ensuring that everyone makes a contribution — including Iran — which leads to de-escalation in the region," Maas said.

Gulf missions

Maritime security and the Middle East are on the agenda in Helsinki, but apart from Britain, there has been little European enthusiasm for Washington's Operation Sentinel in the Gulf. Esper said the effort to protect shipping on crucial oil trade routes was now "up and running" with help from Britain, Australia and Bahrain.

French Defence Minister Florence Parly said that up to five countries had signed up for a potential EU observation mission. "We must guarantee free navigation and security in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital region for the transport of hydrocarbons," she said. "But there is no question of creating an escort force — rather a dissuasive presence with an exchange of information." France, which already has a warship in the region, is keen to avoid any perception that it is aligning itself to Trump's

strategy of "maximum pressure" on Iran.

A report by the German Council on Foreign Relations think tank assessing the options for an observer mission suggested it could require significant resources: three frigates or destroyers with helicopters, five maritime reconnaissance aircraft and at least one supply ship. Iran has said that sending a "European fleet" to the Gulf would be a provocative move and other EU countries struck a more cautious note. "If we speak about whatever operation there we need to be careful to avoid any kind of military escalation," said Edgars Rinkevics, foreign minister of Latvia, which currently has one of its seamen in Iranian custody.

"In my own country we are very far away from any kind of position that would be supportive of any kind of engagement there." In response to the US pulling out of the deal and re-imposing sanctions, Tehran has breached certain limits on its nuclear production imposed by the accord. An EU official said the focus now was on ensuring these breaches do not become irreversible. An Iranian delegation is expected in Paris next week and a meeting between senior Iranian and EU officials is — AFP

International

Yemen government accuses UAE of launching air strikes on troops

Yemeni government has also drafted in reinforcements

ADEN: Yemen's government yesterday accused the UAE of launching air strikes against its troops in the interim capital Aden in support of separatists who say they have regained control of the southern city. The United Arab Emirates has trained and supported separatists who seek an independent southern Yemen, although it is a key pillar in a Saudi-led military coalition backing the Yemeni government against Iran-aligned Houthi rebels.

"The Yemeni government condemns the Emirati air strikes against government forces in the interim capital Aden and in Zinjibar, which resulted in civilian and military casualties," Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Hadhrami said in a tweet. He urged coalition leader Saudi Arabia "to stand by the legitimate government and stop this illegal and unjustified military escalation".

The clashes between separatists and government forces — who for years fought on the same side against the Houthis — have raised concerns that the famine-threatened country could break apart entirely. The deputy foreign minister did not say when the alleged air strikes took place.

But residents in Aden told AFP they heard air raids late Wednesday when forces loyal to Yemeni President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi entered Aden, which separatists had captured earlier this month. Yesterday a spokesman for the separatists' Southern Transitional Council (STC) said the UAE-backed Security Belt forces were in full control of Aden after renewed clashes with government forces.

Reinforcements

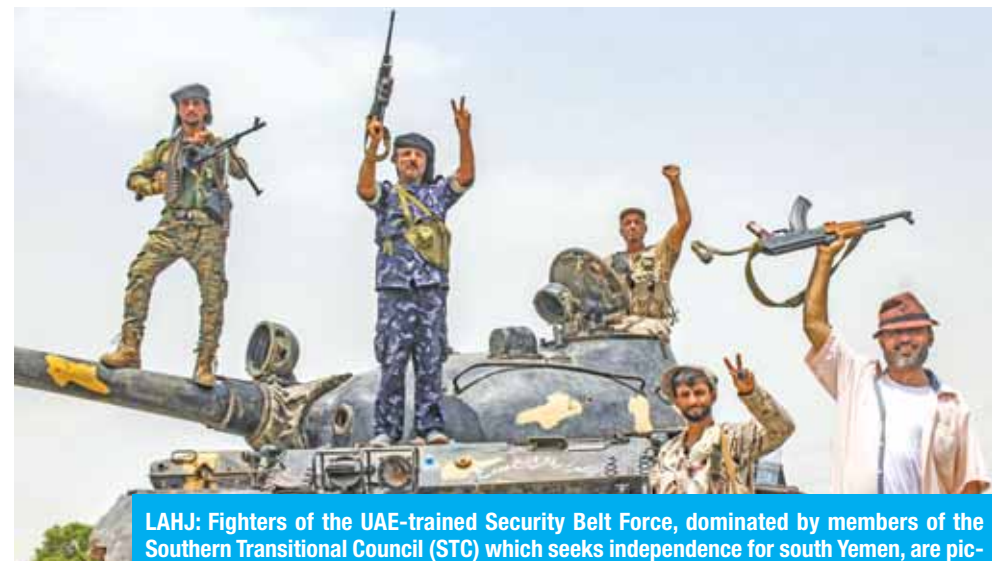
"The Security Belt force completely controls

the city of Aden along with its entrances," spokesman Haitham Nezar said. A government security source confirmed Aden was under the full control of the STC, saying government troops who entered parts of the city a day earlier "withdrew from Aden" to Abyan province. The STC-dominated separatists brought massive reinforcements from other regions, officials from both sides said.

Nezar said the Security Belt forces were now setting their sights on the nearby provinces of Abyan and Shabwa, which had been retaken by government troops earlier this week. "Our plan is to kick out the invading forces from the south," said Nezar, referring to government forces seen by the separatists as outsiders.

The Yemeni government has also drafted in reinforcements from the north as the two parties appear to be preparing for a major showdown for supremacy in the south of the Arabian Peninsula nation. STC vice president Hani bin Breik posted pictures of himself and other southern leaders touring the streets of the city including the airport, while warning fleeing government loyalists of punishment.

Thousands of Security Belt troops, dominated by the STC, were recalled from several parts of the country, including from the Red Sea port city of Hodeida, to reinforce the separatists in Aden. Bin Breik said that STC forces fighting against the Houthis in the north were sent to the south for a major battle. "We will not remain in the (battle) fronts to liberate the north from the Houthis while the north is invading us," he said. The STC is fighting to regain the independence of South Yemen which unified with the north in 1990.



LAHJ: Fighters of the UAE-trained Security Belt Force, dominated by members of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) which seeks independence for south Yemen, are pictured in the southern city of Lahj. — AFP

'Dialogue only way'

Hadi's government said on Wednesday it had seized back Aden from separatists who captured the strategic city on August 10 after a fierce battle that left at least 40 people dead. The fighting has opened a new front in a complex war that has already claimed tens of thousands of lives and sparked what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The coalition intervened in the war in 2015 in support of the government after the Houthis swept south from their northern stronghold to seize the capital Sanaa and much of Yemen —

the Arab world's poorest nation. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, meeting in Washington with Saudi Arabia's deputy defense minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman, called for a negotiated resolution with STC forces.

Pompeo and the prince "agreed that dialogue represents the only way to achieve a stable, unified and prosperous Yemen," the State Department said in a statement. The meeting came after The Wall Street Journal, citing anonymous sources, said US President Donald Trump's administration was pursuing secret talks with the Houthis in hopes of winding down the violence. — AFP

Regime forces inch forward in NW Syria

BEIRUT: Russian-backed regime forces seized several towns and villages in northwest Syria yesterday, as deadly air strikes hit the jihadist-held bastion, a monitor said. Seven civilians died in air strikes in the south of the bastion, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said, a day after regime air strikes killed 12 others, including six children in a single town.

Eight years into Syria's war, the Idlib region of some three million people is one of the last holdouts of opposition to President Bashar Al-Assad's regime. His forces have been chipping away at the southern edge of the stronghold run by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate for three weeks, after months of deadly bombardment. Last week, the regime took control of the town of Khan Sheikhun on a key highway that runs through Idlib province, linking Damascus to second city Aleppo.

Overnight, pro-government fighters "managed to advance in the southern Idlib countryside", according to the head of the Britain-based Observatory, Rami Abdel Rahman. They took control of the towns of Al-Tamaanah and Al-Khuwayn, as well as nearby villages, east of Khan Sheikhun, he said. "The forces are trying to further extend their control in the area of Khan Sheikhun before they advance north in the direction of the town of Maaret

al-Noman," he added. Maaret Al-Noman is the next stop northwards on the Damascus-Aleppo highway.

Children killed

Regime air strikes killed 12 civilians — half of them children — in Maaret al-Noman on Wednesday. AFP photographers at the scene saw rescue teams working to pull people from the rubble after nightfall with the help of bright spotlights. A rescue worker pulled a very young girl from the debris, her lifeless body covered in white dust. Her bloodied head and little arm hung limp as he carried her in his arms to an ambulance. Inside a morgue, a young father sobbed over the bodies of his three dead children and their cousin, none of whom appeared older than five. Also on Wednesday, another four civilians, including one child, were killed in other parts of the bastion.

Increased bombardment by the Syrian military and Russia since late April has killed more than 950 civilians in Idlib. In the same period, the violence has displaced more than 400,000 people including many already uprooted from other areas, the United Nations says. The bombardment and ground offensive come despite a deal between Russia and rebel backer Turkey in September last year to protect the area with a planned buffer zone.

That security cordon was never fully implemented, but Turkish troops deployed to 12 monitoring points around the planned buffer. On Wednesday, the Observatory said air raids hit near one of the monitoring points in Sheir Maghar. Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency said the post itself was not hit. Syria's war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions more since it started in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. — AFP

Turkey's ousted pro-Kurdish mayors denounce sackings

ISTANBUL: Three pro-Kurdish mayors sacked by the Turkish government this month over alleged links to militants lambasted yesterday a "political putsch" they vowed to challenge in court. The mayors of the eastern cities — all members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) elected in March — were removed on August 19 over alleged ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The sacking of the Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van mayors — Adnan Selcuk Mizrakli, Ahmet Turk and Bedia Ozgokce Ertan respectively — came after they had won strong majorities. Since their removal, there have been protests in the Kurdish-majority region, often blocked by police using heavy force including water cannon. "We were deprived of the opportunity to serve the people by the political putsch on August 19," said Turk, the deposed Mardin mayor and a key figure in the Kurdish movement. "It's a political decision aimed at preventing the Kurdish people's struggle for democracy, to intimidate the people and to block our efforts to bring about change in Turkey," he added. — AFP

International

In first press brief, new Pentagon chief aims to keep Trump happy

Skirting anything that could irritate his irascible boss

WASHINGTON: New US Defense Secretary Mark Esper picked his way through a political minefield in his first public meeting with the media Wednesday, skirting anything that could irritate his irascible boss President Donald Trump. Just hours after predecessor James Mattis wrote that Trump's policies toward US allies are damaging US security, the new Pentagon chief hewed the official line, undoubtedly aware that the US leader studiously watches and assesses his cabinet members' televised performances.

For most of two years Mattis avoided appearing on camera, knowing that speaking his mind could only worsen a tense White House relationship rooted in fundamental disagreements over US defense policy. Mattis resigned late last year. Esper, a close ally of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo — now Trump's primary national security advisor — made clear he would not rock the boat, even given the president's unorthodox policymaking and sharp turns in long-standing US defense principles.

'All options on the table'

He didn't blink when asked about Trump's disturbing assertion that the US military could easily settle the Afghanistan conflict. "We could win that war in a week if we wanted to fight it, but I'm not looking to kill 10 million people," Trump said last week, echoing similar comments he made previously and which led to speculation that only nuclear weapons could quickly eliminate such a large number.

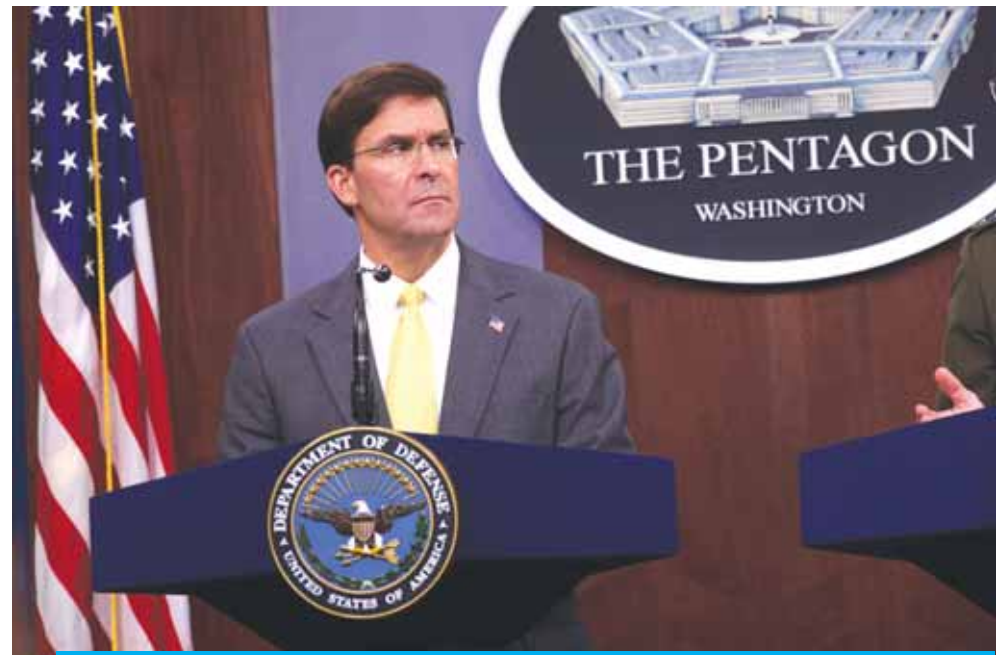
"We reserve the right to keep all options on the table," Esper said. "We're hoping that we can reach some kind of conclusion that could result

in a political agreement" and bring peace to the country, he said. Esper also smoothly took up Trump's apparent about-face toward Iran, whom he designated the premier US enemy after taking office in January 2017. Trump said on Monday he was willing to sit down and negotiate with Tehran's leaders, after an offer to arrange a summit by French President Emmanuel Macron. "We hope that the Iranians would agree to meet and talk and help us resolve these issues," Esper told reporters.

China is main US rival

In laying out the basis of his policies, he highlighted China as the foremost strategic rival to the United States, while making only the slightest reference to Russia, which Trump sees as a potential partner. He meanwhile highlighted the launch of the Pentagon's US Space Command, a pet Trump project that Mattis opposed as unnecessary. "The United States Space Command is the next crucial step towards the creation of an independent space force as an additional armed service," Esper said.

A classmate of Pompeo's at the US Military Academy at West Point, Esper served in the military for several years and then joined the defense industry, becoming an executive of leading Pentagon supplier Raytheon. As Army Secretary under Mattis he was closer to Pompeo and avoided the policy fights Mattis had with the White House. Not Trump's first pick to lead the Pentagon, he nevertheless got the president's blessing when he was sworn in on July 23. "There is no one more qualified to lead the Department of Defense," the president said



ARLINGTON: US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper holds a media briefing at the Pentagon. — AFP

Trump's shifting policies

But his tenure could be easier: Trump has already appeared to slightly back off the hardline Iran policy that Mattis disagreed with, and likewise has moved to take denuclearization talks with North Korea more slowly, as Mattis had reportedly counseled. In addition, a policy Mattis resigned over — pulling out of Afghanistan — is now well underway in negotiations with the

Taliban, and Esper could not likely reverse the process if he wanted.

Yet in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece published Wednesday, Mattis highlighted perhaps the foremost challenge his successor has in serving Trump. He assailed Trump for shredding US alliances, days after the G7 summit showed the president out of step with America's major partners. — AFP

Court bids launched to stop PM Johnson suspending parliament

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson's suspension of parliament just weeks before Britain's EU departure date faced legal challenges yesterday following a furious outcry from pro-Europeans and MPs opposed to a no-deal Brexit. Johnson announced the surprise decision Wednesday to dismiss parliament — known as proroguing — next month for nearly five weeks, claiming it was necessary to allow him to press reset and pursue a "bold and ambitious" new post-Brexit domestic agenda.

But the move sent shockwaves through the British political system, which relies on centuries of precedents and conventions instead of a codified constitution. In a blow for Johnson, popular Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson stepped down after eight years during which she has revived her party's fortunes. Davidson, who supported staying in the EU, urged Johnson to clinch a deal with Brussels and mentioned the "conflict I have felt over Brexit" in her resignation letter. Johnson's opponents have labeled the suspension of parliament a "coup" and a "constitutional outrage".

'Candyfloss of outrage'

The move prompted immediate court bids in London, Edinburgh and Belfast to halt the process. Gina Miller, a business-



BIARRITZ: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson walks towards his meeting. — AFP

woman and leading anti-Brexit campaigner, has applied for an urgent judicial review in London challenging "the effect and the intention" of the suspension. "We think that this request is illegal," said Miller, who in 2017 successfully won MPs the right to vote on formally starting to leave the EU in a court challenge.

In Scotland's highest civil court, 75 parliamentarians are seeking an interim interdict that would halt Johnson's move. "It's the advice underlying yesterday's order which we impugn," said Scottish National Party politician Joanna Cherry, who is heading the push. Meanwhile campaigner Raymond McCord launched a legal bid in Belfast to block Johnson's move, with a hearing set for Friday. "He's obviously trying to circumvent parliament and we say in the context of Northern Ireland that is unconstitutional," McCord's lawyer Ciaran O'Hare told AFP. However, arch-Brexit-teer minister Jacob Rees-Mogg defended the parliamentary sus-

pension and insisted MPs would still have time to debate Brexit ahead of Britain's October 31 EU departure date. "The candyfloss of outrage, which is almost entirely confected, is from people who never wanted to leave the European Union," he told BBC radio.

'Stop the coup'

Thousands of people protested in London, Manchester, Edinburgh and other cities, while an online petition seeking to block the decision had garnered more than 1.4 million signatures yesterday. At the biggest rally, crowds gathered near parliament in London chanting "stop the coup" and waving EU flags. General protests are planned outside parliament and around Britain on Saturday. The main opposition Labour Party's leftist faction Momentum urged members to "occupy bridges and blockade roads". Meanwhile leftists will rally outside parliament on Tuesday demanding an immediate general election. Queen Elizabeth II approved Johnson's request to end what has been the longest session of parliament in nearly 400 years in the second week of September and reopen it on October 14 — just over two weeks before Brexit.

The House of Commons typically goes into recess around the annual party conference season, which kicks off on September 14 and ends on October 2, but critics slammed this lengthier break. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn is mulling a no-confidence vote in Johnson's government, which commands a majority of just one seat. The pound was stable on Thursday after sliding on news of the suspension. In the seismic 2016 referendum on Britain's EU membership, 52 percent voted in favor of leaving the bloc — a result that has left parliament and the country bitterly divided. Johnson insists Britain must leave by the October 31 deadline — already twice-delayed — with or without a divorce deal from Brussels. — AFP

Conte to lead 'more united' Italy after its far-right fall from power

'We must transform this crisis into an opportunity'

ROME: Italy's premier-designate Giuseppe Conte said yesterday his new coalition would lead a "more united, inclusive" country after a deal was struck which cuts the anti-immigrant far-right out of power. The anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the centre-left Democratic Party (PD), once bitter foes, agreed Wednesday to govern in coalition in order to stave off snap elections in the eurozone's third largest economy.

"We must transform this crisis into an opportunity," Conte said, insisting that Italy would once more become a key player in Europe after 14 months of a populist, anti-EU government. The new government would create "a fairer, more competitive, more united, more inclusive country". The soft-spoken former academic, who was chosen as a compromise prime minister last year, was handed a fresh mandate by the president and said he would take a few days for political consultations to ensure a parliamentary majority. Milan's FTSE Mib was up 2.0 percent after his speech.

Conte said it was a "very delicate phase" for debt-burdened Italy, citing an economic slowdown in Europe and trade tensions between the US and China. "We have to make up for lost time so Italy can play the leading role (in Europe) that a founding country deserves," Conte said.

'Get straight to work'

The crisis was triggered on August 8 when popular far-right leader Matteo Salvini pulled his

far-right League party out of the governing coalition with M5S, calling for fresh elections he thought would make him premier. Mattarella has been racing to find a solution to the political turmoil, with Italy under a huge debt mountain and pressured to approve a budget in the coming months.

Without a new government at the reins it could face an automatic rise in value-added tax that would hit the poorest families the hardest and could plunge the country into recession. M5S chief Luigi Di Maio has said the deal with the PD will have to be approved by his party's members in an online vote, which could take place by this weekend. Conte said he would "immediately get to work on a budget that will counteract the increase in VAT, protect savers, and give a solid perspective of growth and social development."

He said the new coalition's priorities would include improving infrastructure, boosting renewable energies and fighting tax evasion — but notably did not mention immigration, which has been Salvini's political obsession. "The agreement means we won't have an election in the autumn and any budget confrontation with Brussels later this year may be less fierce than last," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at OANDA. "The two parties still very much have their differences and it's unlikely to be a harmonious relationship but it will likely be a better match than the last," he said. Investors and markets have welcomed the likely return to political stability in the eurozone's third



ROME: Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte (C-R) arrives to address the media following a meeting with the Italian president, after he was given a mandate to form a new government yesterday at the Quirinal presidential palace. — AFP

largest economy, with Italy's 10-year bond yield falling to a record low Wednesday.

But analysts have warned the deal between the M5S — which had sworn never to ally with traditional parties — and the centre-left, which has long loathed it, could quickly crumble. "Any new government formed by these unlikely bedfellows has the potential to be a fairly short-lived affair, given that the onus will now fall on a new

administration to implement new EU mandated spending reductions of up to 23 billion euros this autumn," said Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK. "These are not expected to be popular and likely to feed into the populist narrative of Matteo Salvini," he added. Salvini said Wednesday his party was confident it would win eventual new elections next year, saying "we're in no hurry". — AFP

Austria's far right eyes a comeback

VIENNA: Austria's far right, relatively unscathed by the so-called "Ibiza-gate" scandal that brought down its government in May, hopes for a second chance in national elections next month. Former chancellor Sebastian Kurz's conservative People's Party (OeVP) could once again partner with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), said analyst Thomas Hofer, in a re-run of late 2017 when the two parties rose to power together on an anti-immigration platform. "The conservatives are more cautious today than they were in 2017 to renew an alliance with the FPÖ... But this possibility cannot be dismissed because any other form of coalition would be unstable," Hofer said.

Popular despite scandal

The OeVP-FPÖ partnership came crashing down in spectacular fashion in May when hidden camera footage from 2017 showed then FPÖ leader Heinz-Christian Strache appearing to offer public contracts to a fake Russian backer in exchange for campaign help. After the footage emerged, Strache resigned as vice chancellor and from all his other posts, the coalition fell apart, Kurz was thrown out in a no-confidence vote — the first-ever such successful vote in modern Austrian history — and fresh elections were set for September 29.

Despite the unprecedented chaos, both the OeVP and the FPÖ — founded after World War II by former Nazis — have sustained their popularity, according to polls. The OeVP remains the strongest party on 36 percent, while the FPÖ stands at 20 percent, six percentage points lower than in October 2017 but neck-and-neck with the Social Democrats, according to a recent survey by the Unique Research institute published in the weekly Profil magazine.

Strache has continued to defend himself from various corruption allegations on his Facebook page. The page counts almost 800,000 followers — far more than his party colleagues and most other Austrian politicians — and its administration was recently taken over by the FPÖ. FPÖ leaders have sought to distance themselves from Strache, a heavyweight who flirted with neo-Nazism in his youth and led the party for 14 years. His wife Philippa, however, is running for a parliament seat on the party's list.

Norbert Hofer, who replaced Strache as FPÖ leader, has openly said he wants another coalition with Kurz. "We extend a sincere hand to the conservatives to continue the work begun together to reform Austria," Hofer, who ran for president in 2016 and narrowly lost to a green liberal politician, told reporters recently. FPÖ campaign billboards which have started to spring up around the central European alpine country of 8.8 million people proclaim the party wants to "renew the patriotic coalition" that Hungarian nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban has touted as a "model" for all of Europe.

Party infighting?

However, Kurz has made it a condition of any cooperation that the FPÖ's former interior minister Herbert Kickl, another heavyweight known for his incendiary rhetoric, not return to government. That has put Hofer, who is also seen as an ideologue but who has a softer public persona, in a tough spot and fuelled rumors of party infighting.

One of the biggest controversies of Kickl's tenure were interior ministry raids on Austria's domestic intelligence agency BVT. Numerous documents were seized, raising fears among Austria's Western partners over possible leaks to Moscow. The FPÖ has a cooperation agreement with President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party. In the Unique Research survey, 60 percent deemed an OeVP-FPÖ partnership incapable of governing after having drawn ridicule internationally with "Ibiza-gate". — AFP

Romania arrests 5 for 'enslaving' German teens

BUCHAREST: A German man and four others were arrested in Romania for allegedly holding troubled German teenagers like slaves, officials said yesterday. A judge ordered the five to be detained for 30 days, the German's lawyer Ioan Sas told AFP. The man, who founded a program for adolescents with problems, is "accused of creating an organized criminal group, human trafficking and sequestration", he said. "There is no proof against him," Sas said, adding the centre continued to operate.

The man's German wife and two others, who were also involved with the program, have been placed under judicial control and will have to report to police while investigations are on, prosecutors said. The "Projekt Maramures", financed by the German state, was licensed by Romania's labor ministry, according to investigators. A German foreign ministry spokeswoman has said her country had not been aware of any problem in the past 20 years. But Romanian prosecutors allege children aged 12 to 18 were detained in "slavery-like conditions", forced to "do exhausting physical labor".

They were treated in "humiliating and degrading" ways on a farm and in numerous households in the Maramures county village of Viseu de Sus. The teens were beaten, deprived of food, not allowed to study or take prescription medicines, had no contact with the outside world and were targets of "harsh and brutal methods of so-called re-education", they said. Twenty children were in the centre when prosecutors searched it on Tuesday, together with seven in other houses, according to the local child protection agency. Four of the children are now in the care of social services, waiting for their parents or legal guardian. "The others are still in the centre, which continues to function normally," Sas told AFP. Abuse allegations surrounding the program have surfaced in Romanian media in the past, but no action had been taken until now. — AFP

International

Bolsonaro bans burning for two months to defuse Amazon crisis

Trade disputes and alleged 'insults' as Brazil faces the heat

PORTO VELHO: Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro signed a decree Wednesday to ban burning throughout the country for two months, government sources cited in local media said, as the authorities scramble to defuse the Amazon fires which have triggered a global outcry. The blazes that have engulfed parts of the world's largest rainforest — which is crucial for maintaining a stable global climate — have also sparked a diplomatic spat between Brazil and Europe that threatens to torpedo a major trade deal.

The decree, which will be officially published today, prohibits any burning for the next 60 days, barring some exceptions in cases of approved agricultural and forestry practices, media reports said. It comes as Bolsonaro's renewed demand that French leader Emmanuel Macron withdraw "insults" against him cast doubt on whether Brazil would accept the G7's offer of \$20 million to help combat the fires.

Bolsonaro initially rejected the G7's offer, saying on Tuesday that he would be willing to accept it only if Macron withdrew his "insults," before appearing to change his mind to say Brazil would accept foreign aid on the condition that it controlled the money. But later on Wednesday, the South American leader fired a fresh salvo. "Only after he withdraws what he said... we can talk again," Bolsonaro told reporters Wednesday, referring to Macron.

He also accused France and Germany of "buying" the Latin American country's sovereignty with Amazon fire aid. "It seems that \$20 million is our price. Brazil doesn't have a price of 20 million or 20 trillion — it's the same thing for us," he said. Macron has accused Bolsonaro of lying to him about his commitments on climate change and vowed to block the EU-Mercosur trade deal involving Brazil that took decades to negotiate.

An aide to President Donald Trump said Wednesday the US was ready to assist with the Amazon crisis, but only if it involved the Brazilian government. "We didn't agree to a G7 initiative that failed to include consultations w/ @jairbolsonaro. The most constructive way to assist w/ Brazil's ongoing efforts is in coordination w/ the Brazilian Gov," National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis tweeted late Wednesday. Bolsonaro's latest remarks make him and his government appear "increasingly unhinged," said Robert Muggah, from a Rio de Janeiro think tank, the Igarape Institute. "There don't appear to be any adults left in the room with the ability or inclination to restrain his worst impulses," Muggah said.

No liars

On Monday, Macron rebuked the "extraordinarily rude" Bolsonaro after the Brazilian leader



An aerial view of deforestation in Nascentes da Serra do Cachimbo Biological Reserve in Altamira, Para state, Brazil, in the Amazon basin. —AFP

personally expressed approval for a supporter's Facebook post implying that Brigitte Macron was not as attractive as his own wife, Michelle Bolsonaro. The Brazilian leader has since removed the comment from social media to avoid misinterpretation, his spokesman Otavio Rego Barros told reporters Wednesday.

Vice President Hamilton Mourao — widely

considered to be a moderate voice in Bolsonaro's government — also weighed in publicly for the first time. In an opinion piece published in the conservative *Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper, Mourao criticized an "international campaign" against Brazil and said the country "does not lie and nor does its president, its government and its institutions." —AFP

Former Colombian rebel leader says taking up arms again

BOGOTA: A former senior commander of the dissolved FARC rebel army in Colombia said yesterday he is taking up arms again along with other guerrillas who have distanced themselves from a peace accord signed with the government. "We are announcing to the world that the second Marquetalia has begun," Ivan Marquez, dressed in military fatigues, said in a video posted on YouTube, referring to a rural enclave considered a birthplace of the FARC in the 1960s.

The whereabouts of Marquez, the Marxist FARC's number two leader, had been unknown for more than a year. He was the chief rebel negotiator in talks that led to a 2106 accord that ended half a century of armed conflict in Colombia. But Marquez and a fugitive rebel colleague, Jesus Santrich, have since distanced themselves from the agreement. Santrich also appeared in the video. With UN support, the peace accord ended the insurrection by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and turned it into a political party called the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force, which uses the same FARC acronym.

While it hasn't ended violence in the country — other left-wing rebels, right-wing paramilitaries and drug traffickers are still waging their battles — it has helped to reduce it. Conservative President Ivan Duque was elected last year with a promise to modify the accord, which he considers too lenient on ex-fighters guilty of serious crimes. The FARC political party, meanwhile, has denounced delays in the application of the accord as well as a lack of legal guarantees and security for its members. —AFP

Hurricane Dorian may spare Puerto Rico, heads for Florida

FAJARDO: A strengthening Hurricane Dorian appeared to have largely spared Puerto Rico, barreling past the US territory still recovering from a powerful storm two years ago. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) in Miami said the hurricane watch and tropical storm warning for the island had been lifted, and that "Dorian continues to move away from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands."

"The threat has already passed," Puerto Rico's new governor, Wanda Vazquez, told a news conference Wednesday. Vazquez announced that schools would reopen and people should return to work from yesterday. She said the storm had given the island a chance to evaluate its hurricane response. "These days have been a real exercise where we have been able to re-evaluate and make adjustments in all our responses to protect the people of Puerto Rico," she said. But the danger for other areas is far from over: "Dorian is forecast to strengthen into a major hurricane during the next couple of days," the NHC said.

Rainfall from the storm in the Bahamas and the southeastern United States "may cause life-threatening flash floods," it added. The storm's latest path puts Dorian on a trajectory to strike the Atlantic coast of Florida — which declared a state of emergency on Wednesday — or neighboring Georgia by the end of the weekend. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis urged all residents on the east coast of his state to prepare for impact.

"It's important for Floridians on the east coast to monitor

this storm closely. Every Florida resident should have seven days of supplies, including food, water and medicine, and should have a plan in case of disaster," he said in a statement. Dorian had earlier developed into a political as well as meteorological storm. President Donald Trump had declared a state of emergency in Puerto Rico authorizing federal assistance even while alleging the island is "one of the most corrupt places on earth. "Their political system is broken and their politicians are either Incompetent or Corrupt," he said on Twitter. Trump also declared an emergency in the US Virgin Islands.

'Keep his mouth shut'

Puerto Rico's former governor Ricardo Rossello was forced to resign last month in part because of criticism over his handling of the emergency created by Maria. San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin lashed into Trump, telling CNN that the president "continues to try to belittle the people of Puerto Rico." She told Trump "to keep his mouth shut" and let people do the work needed to save lives.

Puerto Rico was devastated in 2017 by Hurricane Maria, a major Category 4 hurricane on a scale where five is the maximum. It shattered the island's already shaky power grid, overwhelmed public services and left many residents homeless. A study accepted as valid by the government, which initially put the death toll at 64, estimated that nearly 3,000 people died as a result of the hurricane and the months of disruption that followed.

Dorian, though far less powerful, was the first major test of the island's halting recovery. As of 0900 GMT Thursday, the storm's maximum sustained winds had risen to 85 miles per hour with higher gusts, according to the NHC. Moving northwest, it is forecast to dump up to four inches of rain on the Bahamas, and up to eight inches on the southeastern United States. —AFP

International

Oceans turning from friend to foe, warns landmark UN climate report

Destructive changes already set in motion

PARIS: The same oceans that nourished human evolution are poised to unleash misery on a global scale unless the carbon pollution destabilizing Earth's marine environment is brought to heel, warns a draft UN report obtained by AFP. Destructive changes already set in motion could see a steady decline in fish stocks, a hundred-fold or more increase in the damages caused by superstorms, and hundreds of millions of people displaced by rising seas, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) "special report" on oceans and Earth's frozen zones, known as the cryosphere.

As the 21st century unfolds, melting glaciers will first give too much and then too little to billions who depend on them for fresh water, it finds. Without deep cuts to manmade emissions, at least 30 percent of the northern hemisphere's surface permafrost could melt by century's end, unleashing billions of tons of carbon and accelerating global warming even more.

The 900-page scientific assessment is the fourth such tome from the UN in less than a year, with others focused on a 1.5-Celsius (2.6-Fahrenheit) cap on global warming, the state of biodiversity, and how to manage forests and the global food system. All four conclude that humanity must overhaul the way it produces and consumes almost everything to avoid the worst ravages of climate change and environmental degradation.

Governments meet in Monaco next month to vet the new report's official summary. While the underlying science — drawn from thousands of peer-reviewed studies — cannot be modified, diplomats with scientists at their elbow will tussle over how to frame the findings, and what to leave in or out. The final advice to policymakers will be

released on September 25, too late to be considered by world leaders gathering two days earlier for a summit convened by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to extract stronger national commitments in confronting the climate crisis.

Guterres may be disappointed by what the world's major greenhouse gas emitters put on the table, according to experts tracking climate politics in China, the United States, the European Union and India. The Big Four — accounting for nearly 60 percent of global fossil fuel-based emissions — all face devastating ocean- and ice-related impacts, but none seem prepared just announce more ambitious goals for purging carbon from their economies.

'Irreversible' change

Donald Trump — a no-show at the G7 climate segment this week — wants the US to exit the Paris Agreement and has taken a chainsaw to predecessor Barack Obama's climate policies. India is rapidly developing solar power, but continues to build up coal-fired capacity at the same time. The European Union is inching toward a mid-century "net zero" emissions goal, but several member states are dragging their feet. Long seen as a leader on climate, China — which emits nearly as much CO2 as the US, EU and India combined — is also sending mixed signals.

"The eyes of Beijing are gradually moving away from environmental issues, and climate change in particular," noted Greenpeace International analyst Li Shuo, a longtime observer of China's climate policy. A resurgence of domestic coal-fired power and a relaxing of air pollution regulations, he said, point to a preoccupation with China's slowing economy and its trade war with the US. And yet,

to be when it comes to vaccines, he says. "Previously it had a lot to do with deeply religious motives, and I respect that. Now we see it has much more to do with habit — 'Mom and dad did not vaccinate, so why should I?' "The reverends and the preachers from the churches that are against it, they don't preach it, they leave it to the people themselves."

'God is in charge'

Urk is only 80 kilometres (50 miles) from Amsterdam but culturally it is far more distant from the liberal capital, where prostitution is legal and cannabis is sold openly. Seventy years ago Urk was still an island, before being joined to the Dutch mainland by a huge land reclamation project. It retains its own dialect, and much of its isolated mentality. On a busy market day by the harbor, many Urk residents insisted religion was still the reason some people opposed immunization.

"My children have been vaccinated. But I think it's a personal thing for everybody," said Yvonne Verbaan, 44. "But also, last week I read about a young boy who was also vaccinated but suffered an epileptic fit afterwards and had brain damage because of it. That does make you think whether it is a good thing." Shopping with her two sons, Jacoba Zoer, 37, agreed that "vaccination is a good thing and I have had my kids vaccinated."

Asked why people don't vaccinate on Urk, she replied: "People's religion is against it. They say God is in charge and 'He will save me when I get ill'. I also think it (vaccination) is more controversial, not only on Urk." The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment recorded 42 cases of measles in the Netherlands in 2019 so far — compared



This file photo taken on August 18, 2019 shows an aerial view of the Apusijak glacier, near Kulusuk (also spelled Qulusuk), a settlement in the Sermersooq municipality located on the island of the same name on the southeastern shore of Greenland. —AFP

all of these nations face many of the threats outlined in the IPCC report.

Shanghai, Ningbo, Taizhou and another half-dozen major coastal cities in China, for example, are highly vulnerable to future sea level rise, which is projected to add a meter by 2100 compared to the late 20th century global watermark, if CO2 emissions continue unabated. Mumbai and other coastal Indian cities are in harm's way as well. Even in the United States, where billions are being spent to protect New York, Miami and other exposed cities, such efforts could easily be overwhelmed, say experts.

"There is a pervasive thread in the US right now promoted by techno-optimists who think we

can engineer our way out of this problem," said Michael Mann, director of the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University. "But the US is not ready for a metre of sea level rise by 2100," he told AFP. "Just look at what happened in the wake of superstorm Sandy, Katrina, in Houston, or Puerto Rico."

By 2050, many low-lying megacities and small island nations will experience "extreme sea level events" every year, even under the most optimistic emissions reduction scenarios, the report concludes. By 2100, "annual flood damages are expected to increase by two to three orders of magnitude," or 100 to 1,000 fold, the draft summary for policymakers says. —AFP

Dutch 'Bible Belt' town tries to boost measles coverage

URK: In the Dutch coastal town of Urk, many people are still raised with a few core beliefs: God, fishing and refusing to be vaccinated. Located in the conservative Protestant "Bible Belt" of the Netherlands, Urk suffered a measles outbreak in June because of low vaccination rates. But as the World Health Organization warns of a measles surge across Europe, there are hopes that Urk can show how to turn things around.

"At this point vaccination is 60 percent and that's low compared with the rest of the country. We are the second-lowest in the Netherlands," Freek Brouwer, the Urk town councillor for health told AFP at his office. Like other Bible Belt towns, Urk is part of the Dutch Orthodox Reformed Church, and religion plays a strong part in daily life, alongside its traditional mainstay fishing industry. Ninety-four percent of people in Urk regularly go to church, which has traditionally opposed television, movies — and vaccination.

"It's the idea that you cannot do it because it is God who will take care of us — it's also the same with insurance," says Brouwer, a member of the Dutch Christian Democratic party, who is also a board member of the provincial public health service. But these days religion is less of a factor than it used

with 24 in all of 2018. A measles outbreak in 2013-14 hit the Dutch Bible Belt, killing one child, hospitalizing 182 children, and officially affecting 2,700 others, though officials said the actual number was much higher because many did not go to the doctor.

'Lot of fake news'

Councilor Brouwer meanwhile also blamed the internet for spreading 'anti-vaxxer' ideas. "What we also see is that people are thinking 'this is poison, it is going to cause autism' — a lot of fake news," he said. When nine children and one adult came down with measles in June, he said it was a "positive surprise" that many people came for free vaccinations offered by the government. "But there were also people I know whose children got measles and didn't go to the doctor — they said 'it's over in one or two weeks and they're not sick any more', so the number must be a little bit bigger."

Brouwer rejected the idea of making measles vaccination compulsory, as Germany has done, saying the goal was to better inform parents. "People have to make their own choices based on the correct information — something like that must never be forced because people will resist," he said. In Urk, doctors are advising pregnant women, local authorities have held information evenings for parents, and they have distributed a newsletter with interviews left disabled by polio before the government introduced vaccinations. "We do it step by step," said Brouwer. "It cannot be in a year that we are going to 90 percent, but if we go 10 or 20 percent higher, it's good for us to have those kinds of goals." —AFP

International

Belarus strongman looks to open 'new chapter' in rare talks with US

Belarus has been largely isolated by the international community

MINSK: Belarus's strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko said yesterday he was looking to open a "new chapter" in ties with Washington as he welcomed the White House national security advisor for rare talks in Minsk. Lukashenko met with John Bolton as the aide to President Donald Trump continued his tour of ex-Soviet countries that was sure to ruffle feathers in Moscow. The Belarusian president, a crucial ally of Russia's Vladimir Putin, said he hoped the visit would mark a turning point after years of distrust.

"Since the start of the deterioration of our relations with the United States, we have constantly proposed turning this bad page and opening a new chapter in our relations," Lukashenko said. He said Bolton's visit would help "create the foundation for future relations" and that he hoped for "frank" discussions on "all issues". "History is moving forward," the Belarusian presidency quoted Bolton as saying. "A lot of time has passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the geopolitical situation has changed."

The US embassy in Minsk said earlier that Bolton would "discuss regional security and emphasize US support for Belarus's sovereignty and independence" during the talks often dubbed "Europe's last dictatorship". Belarus has been largely isolated by the international community, though Russia remains a close ally. Speculation has swirled for years of unification with Russia, in particular as a way for Putin to circumvent Russia's constitutional term limits.

Lukashenko, a Soviet-era collective farm

chief who became Belarus's first post-independence president, has often pushed back, saying earlier this year that 98 percent of his citizens oppose unification with Russia. Belarus was long subject to Western sanctions over the country's poor rights record and lack of fair elections.

Russian 'weak spots'

In 2016 the US eased its sanctions, saying this opened the door to "expanded commercial ties". The European Union meanwhile dropped its sanctions in what it said was a bid to encourage progress on human rights. But the Belarusian authorities have ramped up efforts to control media since anti-government demonstrations in 2017, with independent journalists and activists facing pressure and harassment.

Bolton's visit to Minsk comes after a meeting with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kiev on Wednesday. The US advisor stressed Ukraine's "territorial integrity" in the face of its conflict with Moscow-backed separatists in the country's east. Earlier yesterday Bolton met with the president and prime minister of Moldova, where he said the US would continue working with the former Soviet republic in defense and the economy.

Moldova recently formed a new government made up of an unusual coalition of pro-European and pro-Russian forces, following months of political turmoil. "We discussed a wide range of questions relating to bilateral ties, and noted how these had strengthened after a peaceful

transfer of power in June this year," Moldovan President Igor Dodon said. Analysts said Bolton's trip was aimed at probing for "weak spots" on Russia's borders. "The United States is likely to search for openings to increase its influence in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova," US geopolitical think tank Stratfor said.



MINSK: Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko (L) speaks with US National Security Advisor John Bolton during their meeting. —AFP

transfer of power in June this year," Moldovan President Igor Dodon said. Analysts said Bolton's trip was aimed at probing for "weak spots" on Russia's borders. "The United States is likely to search for openings to increase its influence in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova," US geopolitical think tank Stratfor said.

It was the highest-ranking US visit to Be-

larus in two decades, Stratfor said. The last US ambassador to Minsk left the country in 2008 in a spat over sanctions. "While Belarus remains firmly within Russia's orbit, the countries' recent spats over oil supplies may have created an opening for the United States to attempt to expand economic and energy ties," Stratfor added. —AFP

Nigeria targets smuggling with Benin border closure

LAGOS: Nigeria has announced the "partial closure" of its border with Benin to clamp down on the smuggling of goods, above all rice, into the country. The West African powerhouse is targeting "massive smuggling activities, especially of rice, taking place on that corridor", the presidency said in a statement Wednesday.

Nigeria is heavily reliant on imports to feed its booming population, while the government is seeking to bolster agriculture as it looks to diversify the oil-dependent economy. The authorities are looking to stem the inflow of key produce with restrictions such as curbs on importers' ac-

cess to foreign exchange. Such measures have helped push up prices, creating an incentive for smuggling from neighboring countries.

The statement by President Muhammadu Buhari's office did not indicate when the latest measures took effect and what the "partial closure" entails. It said the measure would "allow Nigeria's security forces to develop a strategy" to combat smuggling, which it called a "dangerous trend". It said Buhari discussed the issue with his counterpart from Benin, Patrice Talon, at a summit in Japan and "would reconsider reopening in the not-too-distant future."

Nigeria's neighbor Niger, north of Benin, will be included in a later meeting, the statement said. A spokesman for Nigeria's customs service, Joseph Attah, told AFP yesterday there was "tighter screening" at the border but insisted people could still cross it. Nigerian media have reported delays and restrictions at the border since last week. —AFP

Sudan awaits new cabinet as premier mulls line-up

KHARTOUM: Sudan's new prime minister was yesterday locked in talks to form the first cabinet since the ouster of veteran leader Omar Al-Bashir, in another step in its transition from decades of autocratic rule. Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok had been due to name his key picks on Wednesday, following last week's swearing in of a joint civilian-military sovereign council. The council is due to steer the country through a three-year transition to civilian rule.

Yesterday, a source close to Hamdok said the prime minister was still considering nominees for the cabinet. "Deliberations are still underway and it is not clear when they will end," the source told AFP. Hamdok, who took the oath last week, was set to make his selection from a field put forward by the Forces for Freedom Change — an umbrella group that led months-long protests against Bashir and then pushed the generals who deposed him in April to share power.

On Tuesday, Hamdok confirmed that he had received the FFC's list of candidates including 49 nominees for 14 ministries. The FFC and the generals signed a power-sharing deal earlier in August outlining Sudan's transitional structures. Under the deal, the cabinet should be largely selected by the premier. Only the interior and defense ministers will be chosen by the military members of Sudan's ruling body. On Saturday, Hamdok told a local television channel that he would select technocrats based on their "competence".

'Great deal of challenges'

The delay however raised concerns among some in Sudan. "It is not good... the country has been without a government for almost five months now," said 48-year-old Hassan Abdelmeguid, who is a government employee. "Sudan is facing a great deal of challenges and require quick formation of a government," he added.

Sudan's economy was dealt devastating blows by two decades of US sanctions, which were only lifted in 2017, and the 2011 secession of the oil-rich south. Spiraling inflation and acute hardship were the main triggers for the anti-Bashir protests that erupted in December. Much-needed foreign investment remains hampered by Sudan's designation by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism. Hamdok said he is holding talks with US officials to remove Sudan from Washington's blacklist. —AFP

International

Bangladeshis speak up about the 'rampant' rapes in Islamic schools

Incidents have been subject to national scrutiny and debate for the first time

DHAKA: Former Bangladeshi students are turning to social media to detail allegations of "rampant" sex abuse at the hands of teachers and older pupils in Islamic schools, breaking their silence on a taboo topic in the conservative country. Child abuse in madrasas has long gone unreported in Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation where hardline Islamist groups draw their support from the tens of thousands of schools across the nation of 169 million people.

But in the wake of a brutal murder of a teenage girl who was burnt to death in April after accusing her headteacher of sexual assault, such incidents have been subject to national scrutiny and debate for the first time. In July alone, at least five madrasa teachers were arrested on rape charges against boys and girls under their care. Several senior students were also held by police over the rape and beheading of an 11-year-old orphan, while a Dhaka cleric and seminary teacher was charged with sexually assaulting a dozen boys aged between 12 and 19.

The accusations reveal how students from poorer and rural backgrounds, whose parents send them to madrasas as they are more affordable than secular schools, are disproportionately affected by the abuse. Rights activists said the assaults — which range from violent rapes to forcible kissing — are so pervasive that the cases reported in the media are just the tip of the iceberg. "For years these crimes eluded spotlight due to sensitivity of the subject," Abdus Shahid, the head of child rights' group Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum said. "Devout Muslims send children to madrasas, but they don't speak up about these crimes as they feel

it would harm these key religious institutions."

'Widespread and rampant'

Hojaifa al Mamduh, who studied in three madrasas in the capital Dhaka, published a series of posts on Facebook in July detailing the abuses endured by students including himself. The assaults were "so widespread in the madrasas, every student who has studied there knows about it", Al Mamduh, now a journalism student at a Dhaka University, told AFP. "Many madrasa teachers I know consider sex with children a lesser crime than consensual extramarital sex with women. Since they live in the same dormitories, the perpetrators can easily hide their crimes and put pressure on their poor students to keep mum."

The 23-year-old's posts generated heated debate in the country, and he was personally threatened. He was accused of being "an agent of Jews and Christians" and smearing the "sacred image" of a madrasa by one social media user. Another reminded him of the fate of Avijit Roy, a top Bangladeshi atheist blogger and writer who was hacked to death by Islamist extremists in 2015. But his posts encouraged others to share their own experiences of alleged sex crimes.

Mostakimillah Masum, who published his story on a feminist website, said he was "first raped by an elder student in my madrasa when I was just seven". The 25-year-old told AFP that another one of his rapists was "a teacher who made me unconscious and raped me. It traumatized me permanently". "Dozens of madrasa students I know were either raped or witnessed rapes and sexual assaults of their fellow students," he added. "It is so rampant almost

people in the northeast of India, largely cut off from the rest of the country by Bangladesh, which was formed after East Pakistan declared independence from Islamabad in 1971, sparking a brutal war. Hundreds of thousands of people fled to India during the fighting. Officials say those appealing against exclusion from the NRC need to be able to prove they or their forebears were in India before 1971 — a huge challenge for people in a state where illiteracy is rife and where many lack the necessary documentation.

The roughly two million people who are expected to be left off the final register being published on Saturday will have 120 days to appeal. Those rejected can then be declared foreigners and face being stripped of their Indian citizenship and rights, put in a detention camp and even deported. A majority of those affected are Muslims, and critics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) say this reflects its aim to serve only its co-religionists.

In January the lower house passed legislation that stands to grant citizenship to people who moved to India from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan as recently as six years ago — but not if they are Muslim. Home Minister Amit Shah, Modi's right-hand-man, has called for the ejection of "termites" from of India and said before the BJP's election victory in May that it would "run a countrywide campaign to send back the infiltrators". —AFP



DHAKA: In this photo taken on July 15, 2019, Hojaifa Al Mamduh, a former madrasa student who is now studying journalism at a Dhaka university, poses for a photo. —AFP

every madrasa has a fair share of such stories."

Culture of impunity

Madrasa teachers have strongly denied the allegations, calling them "negative propaganda". Mahfuzul Haq, a principal of a madrasa in Mohammadpur where Al Mamduh studied, told AFP "one or two isolated incidents can happen" as there were 20,000 madrasas in the South Asian nation. "Those who don't like to study in madrasas are spreading these stories," he added.

A spokesman for hardline Islamist group Hefazat-e-Islami, which represents a coalition of thousands of madrasas, said his organization told a recent conference of 1,200 principals to take "tough stand against any sex crimes". However, there has been growing acknowledgment of the alleged offences. Pro-Islamic website Fateh24.com, viewed as a voice for the madrasas, pointed out in a report that children were at risk in smaller seminaries run by just one or two teachers and that had no oversight from governing bodies. —AFP

India seeks to ease concerns on its 'citizens register'

NEW DELHI: India's government sought yesterday to ease concerns about an imminent "citizens' register" in the state of Assam that has left several million people, mostly Muslims, fearful of becoming stateless. A draft register last year left off more than four million people living in the north-eastern state, and India's Hindu nationalist government has indicated it wants to replicate the process nationwide.

"DO NOT BELIEVE RUMOURS ABOUT NRC," a spokesperson for the Indian home ministry tweeted in capital letters, referring to the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) due to be published on Saturday. "Non-inclusion of a person's name in NRC does NOT amount to his/her being declared a foreigner. Every individual left out from final NRC can appeal to Foreigners Tribunals, an increased number of which are being established," the tweet added.

Assam is an isolated state of 33 million

Thai court upholds death sentence for Myanmar men

NONTHABURI: Two Myanmar migrant workers sentenced to death for the brutal murder of a pair of British backpackers in Thailand lost their final appeal yesterday in a case tainted by claims of irregularities. Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Tun were found guilty of the rape and murder of Hannah Witheridge, 23, and of killing David Miller, 24, after their battered bodies were found on a beach on the southern resort island of Koh Tao in September 2014.

Prosecutors insisted the evidence against the men from Myanmar's impoverished Rakhine state was clear, and announcing the verdict of a final appeal yesterday, Thailand's top court agreed. "The Supreme Court upholds the verdict from the first court and the appeal court," a judge told the stone-faced defendants, who were wearing khaki prison garb. Their last hope now is for a royal pardon or commutation. During the proceedings, the defence said the evidence was not reliable as authorities mishandled DNA, did not allow independent analysis of samples and used confessions the pair said were forced.

Police were also accused of buckling under pressure to solve a crime that made global headlines and threatened a tourism sector that accounts for a fifth of Thailand's economy. The original verdicts on the 2014 double killing divided relatives of the victims. Miller's parents backed the court's conviction, but the family of Witheridge were more cautious, and a sister called the investigation "bungled". Yesterday's ruling said the confessions held up, as did forensic tests. But defence lawyer Nadthasiri Bergman told AFP her clients didn't have interpreters or lawyers when the police obtained the confessions. "Using all of that is a legal problem," she said outside the court, after the decision was handed down. Chief defence lawyer Nakhon Chompuchat said his clients were "shocked" by the verdict. "They absolutely still deny any wrongdoing," he said. "They are very worried about when they will be executed. It was very difficult to tell them, even though they were prepared." The case was also watched closely in Myanmar, where many felt they had been given an unfair trial.

Protests were triggered outside the Thai embassy in Myanmar's commercial capital Yangon after the original convictions. Thailand's legal system is notoriously opaque, with some cases flying through the courts and others taking years. Last year Thailand carried out its first execution since 2009, prompting criticism by rights groups who had hoped the country was moving towards abolishing the practice. —AFP

International

Retrials ordered for ex-S Korean leader Park and Samsung heir

Conglomerate vital to the health of the world's 11th-largest economy

SEOUL: South Korea's top court ordered new trials yesterday for former president Park Geun-hye and Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong over the corruption scandal that brought her down, in a blow to the world's biggest smartphone and memory chip maker. Park is serving a 25-year jail term after being convicted last year on bribery and abuse of power charges. But Lee, whose sprawling conglomerate is vital to the health of the world's 11th-largest economy, had many of his convictions quashed on appeal in February 2018 and was released after being given a suspended sentence.

Their trials highlighted shady links between big business and politics in South Korea, with Park and her close friend Choi Soon-sil accused of taking bribes from corporate bigwigs in exchange for preferential treatment. South Korea's Supreme Court on Thursday sent all three of their cases back for new proceedings, saying that errors had been made in the judgments. After a 10-month trial — in which she boycotted most of the proceedings in protest at being held in custody — Park was convicted in April last year of receiving or demanding more than \$20 million from conglomerates, sharing secret state documents, “blacklisting” artists critical of her policies, and firing officials who resisted her abuses of power.

She was sentenced to 24 years, later extended for an additional 12 months. But the Supreme Court ruled that under the country's public official election act, courts must rule separately on bribery accusations when incumbent or former presidents face multiple criminal charges. “We send the case back to the Seoul High Court,” said chief justice Kim Myeong-su. South Korean media warned that the ruling might not work out in her favour, as if she is con-

victed again in two separate verdicts she could face a longer total sentence in total.

‘Square one’

Samsung is by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates that dominate business in South Korea, and crucial to the country's financial health. Lee is vice-chairman of its flagship subsidiary Samsung Electronics, and his case centered on millions of dollars the group paid Choi, allegedly for government favors such as ensuring a smooth transition for him to succeed his ailing father.

He was initially jailed for five years in 2017 before his successful appeal, which chief justice Kim said “misunderstood the law on bribery”. In a key section of Thursday's ruling, the court said three horses worth 3.4 billion won (US\$2.8 million) that Samsung Group donated for the equestrian training of Choi's daughter did amount to bribes. It was not immediately clear whether Lee would be returned to prison pending his new trial but analysts said the ruling could complicate management at Samsung Electronics. Yonhap news agency quoted a high-ranking Samsung official calling the ruling the firm's “worst nightmare” and adding it increased “uncertainties at the leadership when the company is already going through hard times”.

“Nearly three years after the corruption scandal broke out, it seems like Samsung is back to square one,” they were cited as saying. Samsung Electronics faces a weak global chip market and export restrictions imposed on key supplies by Tokyo amid a long-running dispute between the neighbors over wartime history. Japan's move threatens to disrupt memory chip production and Lee has called it a “crisis”, visit-



SEOUL: Supporters of South Korea's former president Park Geun-hye shout slogans during a protest demanding her release from prison, outside the Supreme Court. — AFP

ing Tokyo to seek to secure materials.

Samsung Electronics said in a statement that it “deeply regrets” causing concern. “We will renew our commitment to carrying out the role of a responsible corporate citizen and will avoid a recurrence of past mistakes,” it said, without directly addressing the verdict or its possible consequences. The firm reported a 53 percent drop in profits in the second quarter. Its shares closed down 1.7 percent after the ruling.

Choi - who became close to Park through her father, a shadowy religious figure - received a 20-year prison term last year for using her pres-

idential connections to force companies including Samsung to donate to foundations she controlled, among other charges. The court also sent her case back for a retrial. Hundreds of Park's supporters gathered outside the heavily guarded courtroom for Thursday's ruling, waving South Korean flags and carrying signs reading: “Stop the human rights violation against President Park Geun-hye”. The daughter of assassinated dictator Park Chung-hee, Park took office in 2013 as a conservative icon who cast herself in the role of daughter of the nation — incorruptible and beholden to none. — AFP

Malaysia seeks origin of tons of plastic waste

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia wants to return almost 200 shipping containers believed to contain plastic waste, officials said yesterday, but first they need to work out where they came from. Southeast Asia has been flooded with waste plastic from more developed nations such as the US, Australia and Britain since last year when China — which boasted a massive recycling industry — ordered a halt to imports.

Malaysia has been particularly hard hit as many recyclers from China moved there as the ban took effect. The government has already sent back at least 10 containers of plastic waste to different countries and closed down 155 illegal processing plants, senior environment ministry official K Nagulendran said at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Malaysia yesterday. But officials are struggling to identify the origin of 198 more containers thought to contain scrap plastic at three ports.

The contents have been declared a type of plastic which can legally be imported, but none of the containers had the necessary permits to enter the country, he said. “We have been limited with finding the country of origin, because they have just abandoned them,” said Nagulendran. — AFP

Rioters torch government building in Indonesia's Papua

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Papua was plunged into chaos again yesterday as angry protesters torched a government building and damaged businesses, according to an AFP reporter, after nearly two weeks of riots across the island. Hundreds of demonstrators marched near Papua's biggest city Jayapura where they set fire to a regional assembly building and hurled rocks at shops and hotels, the reporter said. Many called for independence from Indonesian rule and an end to racism against the minority group.

The protest comes a day after violence flared in remote Deiyai, where a clash between protesters and Indonesian security forces left at least one soldier and two demonstrators dead, according to officials. The confrontation sparked reports that Indonesia's military — long accused of committing rights abuses against Papuans during a decades-old separatist insurgency — had gunned down six protesters. Authorities denied that claim and said they were attacked by hundreds of Papuans armed with machetes and arrows.

Some 300 extra personnel had been sent to Deiyai to restore order, officials said yesterday. Jakarta already deployed more than 1,200 police and military members to Papua last week.

“Right now the situation in Deiyai is calm and under control,” Papuan police said in a statement yesterday. “Community leaders are holding a meeting to urge people not to hold violent demonstrations again today.”

The accounts of what happened in Deiyai could not be independently verified. Conflicting reports are common in Papua — a resource-rich but impoverished island that shares a border with Papua New Guinea. The region has also been subject to a government-ordered Internet blackout since last week, making information sharing difficult. Riots and demonstrations have broken out in Papua since mid-August with buildings torched and street battles between police and protesters.

The unrest appears to have been triggered by the arrest this month of dozens of Papuan students in Java, who were also pelted with racist abuse. Police in riot gear stormed a dormitory in the city of Surabaya to force out students accused of destroying an Indonesian flag, as a group of protesters shouted racial slurs at them, calling them “monkeys” and “dogs”. Papuans are ethnic Melanesians and have few cultural ties with the rest of Indonesia. One person suspected of organizing the protest against the Papuan students in Surabaya had been named a criminal suspect, authorities said yesterday.

A half dozen police officers have also been temporarily suspended pending an investigation over the incident. Jakarta took control of Papua, a former Dutch colony, in the 1960s after an independence referendum widely viewed as a sham. Many Papuans say they have not gotten a fair share of vast mineral wealth in the region, which is home to the world's biggest gold mine. — AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30, 2019

www.kuwaittimes.net



A wooden structure made to resemble US President Donald Trump is constructed in the village of Sela pri Kamniku. —AFP

Oman's Samahram historical perfume village, an int'l tourist attraction

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Lifestyle | Music & Movies

K-pop star **Seungri** accused of illicit gambling

Disgraced K-pop star Seungri was questioned by police Wednesday for illicit overseas gambling, the latest step in a snowballing sex and drugs scandal that saw him retire in March. The 28-year-old singer from popular boy band BIGBANG is accused of habitual overseas gambling at luxurious casinos in Las Vegas involving illicit foreign exchange transactions. Dressed in a sharp dark suit, Seungri stepped out from a black sedan to a mob of reporters waiting for him at a police building in Seoul.

"I apologize again for causing concern," he said. "I will attend the police questioning in a sincere manner." Seungri, whose real name is Lee Seung-hyun, has also been accused of arranging sex services for potential investors in his business. The investigation into the scandal surrounding him uncovered a spate of allega-

tions against other musicians and personnel at YG Entertainment-Seungri's former agency and one of the biggest K-pop management firms.

YG Entertainment was behind Psy's 2012 mega-hit "Gangnam Style" that helped raise K-pop's global profile and has popular idol groups such as BIGBANG and BLACKPINK under its roof. Yang Hyun-suk, the firm's founder and former chief producer, will be questioned by police on Thursday over similar illicit gambling and cash transfer allegations as Seungri. Yang was also separately placed under investigation by police last month for allegedly arranging sex services for foreign investors in 2014. — AFP



Former BIGBANG boyband member Seungri (center), real name Lee Seung-hyun, speaks to the media as he arrives for police questioning in Seoul on Wednesday. — AFP



US rapper Lil Nas X poses with the Song of the Year Award in the press room during the 2019 MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP

Rapper **Lil Nas X** nominated for Country Music Award

After his ouster from the Hot Country US song charts triggered outrage and catapulted him to overnight fame, genre-bending artist Lil Nas X is up for a Country Music Award. His now-ubiquitous record-breaking megahit "Old Town Road"—which marries twangy banjo with thumping bass—will compete for "Musical Event of the Year" at this year's CMAs, organizers announced Wednesday. The infectious single by the Atlanta native was famously booted from Billboard's country list, with the industry tracker saying it was not in line with the genre's sound.

Its removal sparked anger over perceived white-washing in the country music industry, with many saying the novice musician's hit was pigeonholed as hip hop purely because he is black. Billboard denied those allegations—but didn't allow "Old Town Road" back onto the country chart, even after genre veteran Billy Ray Cyrus offered vocals for a remix of the hit, which is the version up for a CMA. Since then Lil Nas X broke the decades-old record for longest reign over the Billboard Hot 100, the industry's most closely watched singles chart, holding the spot for 19 weeks and fending off advances from pop juggernauts including Taylor Swift and Justin Bieber.

This week the unknown artist-turned-industry maverick along with Cyrus snagged MTV Video Music Award for Best Song. The collaborators will now compete at the CMAs in November against country artists including Maren Morris and Garth Brooks. "thank you guys for this nomination!!" tweeted Lil Nas X. — AFP

Lana Del Rey doesn't want West response to The Greatest

Lana Del Rey doesn't want Kanye West to respond to her mention of him in 'The Greatest'. The 34-year-old singer/songwriter appears to hit out at Kanye — whose wedding to Kim Kardashian West she performed at in 2014 — and his support for US President Donald Trump on the track from her new album 'Norman Rowell'.

Speaking about the lyric "Kanye West is blond and gone", Lana told the New York Times: "Here's the thing: I don't want to elicit a response. You never feel better for having written something like that. But Kanye just means so much to us. And by the way, I'm grateful to be in a country where everyone can have their own political views. I'm really not more of a liberal than I am a Republican—I'm in the middle. But it was more like the mood and the vibe around, Yo, this man is the greatest! Really? The greatest? It hurt me. Did I have to say anything? No. But it's more just a line that represents a lot of things."

Lana also spoke about her love for Billie Eilish, and said pop-music has been waiting for a star like Billie to come along. She explained: "I love Billie Eilish, and I feel like I've been waiting for this time in pop-music culture. I personally am very discerning. I can tell if a female pop singer, for instance, has a generosity of spirit or a playful fire in her heart. With Billie, she's prodigious. I needed to hear one line of one melody and I just know." — Bang Showbiz



Lana Del Rey

Diesel and Cena share 'intense' scene

Vin Diesel has shot an "intense scene" with John Cena. The 'Fast & Furious 9' cast are two and a half months into filming for the next installment in the adrenaline fueled blockbuster saga, and the 52-year-old star has been impressed with the franchise newcomer on set. Speaking in an Instagram video, Diesel said: "We're all on set here at 'Fast 9' and it is another amazing location, the locations in this movie have been incredible from Thailand to LA, all through Europe. "I'm doing an intense scene today with John Cena, who is killing his character. He's gonna blow you away when you see him in 'Fast.'"



He's also excited to have Charlize Theron joining the team on location as she reprises her role as Cipher, while Dame Helen Mirren and 'Guardians of the Galaxy' star Michael Rooker will also be getting stuck into the shoot. He added: "I'm only halfway through production and I'm just grateful today as I was when we started filming. "Charlize comes in today, who I love acting opposite, Helen Mirren who's family to me, and a character that was written for this film named Buddy who's being played by my first choice Michael Rooker, one of my 'Guardians of the Galaxy' brothers. So grateful, so blessed!" In July, Diesel was devastated when his body double Joe Watts fell 30ft during filming and was placed in an induced coma after suffering a serious head injury.

Weeks later, the stuntman was moved out of intensive care and thanked fans for their support and well wishes on his "long road" to recovery. A statement from Watts, his fiancée Tilly Powell and their families earlier this month said: "We would like to thank everyone for their kind wishes since Joe's accident whilst filming 'Fast & Furious 9'. "We have been overwhelmed by the incredible support from friends, family and the stunt community, as well as the 'Fast & Furious 9' cast, crew and Universal Pictures. — Bang Showbiz



In this file photo taken on December 15, 2006 US singer living in France, Nancy Holloway, performs at the Zenith in Paris. —AFP photos

This file photo taken on November 23, 1966 shows American jazz and soul singer Nancy Holloway (center) with jazz clarinetist Claude Luter and French jazz clarinetist and bandleader Maxime Saury at Le Chesnay, near Versailles.

Death of the American singer Nancy Holloway in Paris

American jazz and soul singer Nancy Holloway, who has lived in France since 1960, where she was successful among the idols yeye, died Wednesday at her home in Paris, at the age of 86, told AFP godson and publisher. “Nancy Holloway died this morning at home, she had left the scene in 2008 because of health problems,” said Christophe Mouty, who became his curator. Nancy Holloway, born December 11, 1932 in Cleveland (USA), took over in French the success of Dionne Warwick “Do not Make Me Over”, become “Do not go like this”.

Falling in love with France to the point of settling definitely, the singer will chain a dozen successes including “Tell him I’m not here” in duet with Nino Ferrer, “Last kiss”, “I discovered Paris”, “Beware”. In 1961, the most American of the Yeyes triumphed at the ABC. In the process, she is one of the main guests of the first issue of Albert Raisner’s program “Tender Age and Wood Head”.

“Nancy has worked with the greatest jazz artists and international producers as international variety like Sammy Davis Junior, Quincy Jones, and Dizzy Gillespie,” said

Christophe Mouty. In Paris, Nancy Holloway appeared in jazz clubs, including the famous Mars Club and Blue Note, before touring Germany and Lebanon.

Spotted by actor Andre Pousse, she recorded her first single in 1961 (“The Boogie baby”) while appearing in feature films including “The Gentleman of Cocody” of Christian-Jaque, “Games of massacre” Alain Jessua and “The cormorant’s cry in the evening above the junk” by Michel Audiard. In 1964, Nancy Holloway played her own role in Michel Boisrond’s “Seek the Idol”, sharing the bill with Sylvie Vartan’s Johnny Hallyday, Charles Aznavour and Eddy Mitchell.

From 2006 to 2008, Nancy Holloway participated in the “Age of Tender and Woodheads” event tour with other Yeye idols such as Richard Anthony, Demis Roussos and Franck Alamo. “I’m the only one responsible for my career saw-tooth, I made some serious mistakes ... I was a bit like a cicada that sang carelessly,” she said in 1969, a year marked by a family tragedy: her six-month-old daughter, left alone for a few moments, accidentally drowned in her bath. —AFP



In this file photo taken on December 15, 2006 US singer living in France, Nancy Holloway, performs at the Zenith in Paris.



This undated file photo shows American jazz and soul singer Nancy Holloway.



This file photo taken on May 25, 1964 shows American jazz and soul singer Nancy Holloway holds a black pearl on a chain in Paris.



This undated file photo shows American jazz and soul singer Nancy Holloway (right) in Paris.

Lifestyle | Feature



In this picture, eight-year-old rapper Waqas Baloch (center) gestures as he performs in Lyari, one of Pakistan's most dangerous neighborhoods, in Karachi. — AFP photos



Eight-year-old rapper Waqas Baloch (center) performs in Lyari.

Straight outta Karachi:

Pakistan's surprise hip hop hub



Writer Ahmer Naqvi speaks during an interview with AFP in Lyari.



Local cleric Jameel Ahmed speaks during an interview with AFP in Lyari.

H haunted by gang violence and poverty for decades, Lyari was once considered one of Pakistan's most dangerous areas, but those grim realities also inspired a generation of artists and spawned a burgeoning hip hop scene. With its close proximity to the sea and history of smuggling, the largely ethnic Balochi neighborhood in Karachi stands apart for its history of violence and lawlessness—even by Pakistan's standards.

When Karachi served as a major transport hub during the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, Lyari was hit hard by the influx of weapons and drugs—and the surge in brutality such black market businesses bring. Heavily armed gangs and political hit squads exerted iron-fisted control over large swathes of Lyari, squashing economic growth while residents battled with the fallout, including rampant drug abuse and poverty. “Lyari was a notorious place because of the gangs and the war. It was almost impossible for outsiders to even think about entering,” explains resident and new rapper Mohammad Omar.

But in recent years, the gangs have been brought to heel following a heavy-handed operation by paramilitary forces that kicked off in 2013 and saw the streets turned into virtual war zones. In the battle for Lyari, gangs infamously used rocket propelled grenades and assault rifles to fight security forces, with the crossfire shuttering schools and businesses and also keeping kids off the streets. “Children used to cry listening to the fierce gunfire,” says Omar, adding: “The poor people were the victims of those gang wars. We witnessed all those things.”

‘Showing reality’

But the worst of the violence has abated, and an increase in security has led to flowering creativity. The embattled neighborhood now clings fiercely to its reputation for producing top footballers, iron-chinned boxers, and most recently socially conscious rappers.

The rise of hip hop in Lyari mirrors the genre's own birth decades ago in New York's Bronx borough, where it largely centered around street performances and featured lyrics that addressed social ills and life in urban ghettos. Hip hop became a global phenomenon, but the genre initially failed to generate much traction in Pakistan where music fans tended to listen to pop, Bollywood soundtracks or traditional Sufi music. The occasional forays by Pakistani musicians into hip hop over the

years largely served as interludes in pop songs that veered closer to comedy.

Not so in Lyari where rappers were influenced by the likes of Tupac Shakur and looked to their own experiences for lyrical inspiration. “In other cities and provinces, there's rap but it's mostly about beautiful women and luxury cars,” says producer Qammar Anwar Baloch. “We are showing reality.”

This artistic expression with a bass line first burst onto the nation's airwaves in 2017 following the release of the hit song and video “The Players of Lyari” by the Lyari Underground. The anthem doubles as an ode to the neighborhood's love for football in cricket-obsessed Pakistan along with a fiery rant lambasting the country's sporting authorities for neglecting the neighborhood's football talent. “The young people in Lyari represent one of the first times in Pakistani history where kids from the working classes are contributing to the music that upper classes listen to as well,” explains writer Ahmer Naqvi. “They're using this moment to sort of assert their own place within Pakistani society, to not be content with being on the margins,” he adds.

Digital underground



Producer Qammar Anwar Baloch speaks during an interview with AFP in Lyari.

Lifestyle | Features

For years, their voices and stories were largely invisible in Pakistan. With little performance space available Lyari's rappers have largely turned to the internet to share their clips of their songs, which generate millions of views online. "I want to highlight the issues in Karachi and my own area in Lyari," explains eight-year-old rapper Waqas Baloch, who released a video under the moniker Thousand earlier this summer. The young MC is just one of dozens of rappers to pick up a microphone in recent years, according to residents following the scene closely.

For cleric Jameel Ahmed—who runs a madrassa in Lyari—youth interest in music and personal expression is a welcome relief after years of tough times. "It is far better than drugs, booze and other such menaces. Music is helping them stay away from such things," says Ahmed. He adds: "Now, their minds are opening up." — AFP



Youths listen to songs on a smartphone in a narrow street in Lyari.

Last German kaiser's heirs fight for riches lost behind Iron Curtain

A century after Germany's monarchy was abolished, some of its blue-blooded descendants are riding back into battle to reclaim what they see as their royal birthright. At stake are fabulous palaces and thousands of priceless artefacts and artworks. The fight has thrown a new spotlight on Germany's aristocratic families, who are now usually best known through glossy celebrity gossip magazines, and specifically the House of Hohenzollern.

The descendants of the last German emperor and king of Prussia, Kaiser Wilhelm II, have embarked on a struggle to get back properties and treasures that were confiscated by the Soviets in 1945. The biggest prize up for grabs is the right of residence in Cecilienhof Palace near Berlin, site of the 1945 Potsdam Conference. The Tudor-style mansion, which boasts 176 rooms, six courtyards and 55 fireplaces, was the last Prussian palace built by the Hohenzollerns.

It was there that the victorious Allied leaders, US president Harry Truman, British prime minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, decided the shape of a post-war world. The palace and other riches long lost behind the Iron Curtain came back into reach for the Hohenzollern family with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the turbulent event three decades ago this October 3. Family representatives and cultural foundations have held secret negotiations on their compensation and restitution demands since 2013, sometimes in Angela Merkel's chancellery building. The issue and the secret talks only came to light in July in a report by news weekly Der Spiegel, which was later confirmed by the culture ministry.

Thousand-year history

The Hohenzollerns, whose history has been linked with Germany's for almost a millennium, were kings of Prussia from 1701 and then ruled the German Empire from 1871 until Wilhelm II was forced to abdicate in 1918 and went into exile after Germany's defeat in World War I. The Prussian royals were initially stripped of their properties without compensation, but a deal on the monarchy's assets was later worked out under a 1926 law.

The imperial family received millions of marks and kept dozens of castles, villas and properties, mainly in and around Berlin but also as far away as today's Namibia. However, Soviet occupation following World War II and subsequent communist rule led to additional expropriations, of the type which has generally entitled owners to compensation. Georg Friedrich Ferdinand, the great-great grandson of Wilhelm II, says that his family has since the collapse of the Soviet bloc insisted on getting back what it had been granted in the immediate post-WWI agreement.

At stake are the right to reside at Cecilienhof and many other properties, as well as the restitution of thousands of paintings, sculptures, furniture, books and coins, Der Spiegel has reported. Most of these are now held by the state-run Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and the German Historical Museum.

Nazi era role

Many critics have expressed anger that the Hohenzollerns are now trying to get these treasures back, depleting public collections. "What nerve," said the former speaker of the lower house

of parliament, Wolfgang Thierse. Brandenburg state's finance minister, Christian Goerke, charged that "the Hohenzollerns have marginalized themselves with their unacceptable claims". Markus Hennig, the Hohenzollern's lawyer, however insisted to AFP that the "claims are based on law". The controversy comes as Germany builds a replica of the Berlin Palace, the principal residence of the Hohenzollern kings of Prussia, which was heavily bombed in WWII and then leveled by the communist East German regime in 1950. At the core of the ongoing fight is the question of what role the Hohenzollerns, whose Kaiser Wilhelm II was instrumental in causing the outbreak of World War I, played when the Nazis came to power.

Under a 1994 law, people whose property was expropriated by the Soviet Union have a right to claim compensation—but only if they did not "lend considerable support" to the Nazi regime. University of Edinburgh historian Stephan Malinowski said that there was a debate among historians about the link between the son of the last kaiser and Nazism. "Most of them have come to believe that there was a very strong link between the crown prince and the Nazi Party, although he was never a member of the party," Malinowski told AFP. In a newspaper in 1932, the crown prince called for people to vote for Adolf Hitler in the presidential election, he added. The wrangle may go on for years but, as Der Spiegel pointed out, that's not much "after a century-long dispute and a millennium of family history". — AFP



In these file photos Cecilienhof palace is seen in Potsdam. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Feature



Maksym Havrylenko, CEO of innovative OCHIS COFFEE eyewear brand, holds eco-friendly sunglasses as he picks up coffee waste in a cafe in Kiev, Ukraine. — Reuters



Maksym Havrylenko picks up coffee waste in a cafe.

Wake up and smell the coffee: From your **Ukrainian sunglasses**

Ukraine's innovative OCHIS eyewear brand is getting customers to literally smell the coffee - by making sunglasses out of coffee waste. Driven by an ambition to create eco-friendly yet fashionable sunglasses, OCHIS COFFEE CEO Maksym Havrylenko experimented with various herbs like mint, parsley, and cardamom, before he found the right natural material in coffee waste. Green industries already use coffee waste to produce furniture, cups, printing ink, and biofuel, but Havrylenko is a pioneer in using it to make sunglasses, which smell of the freshly brewed beverage.

"First, coffee is black which is a classic color of sunglasses which suits everything. Secondly, there are lots of coffee grounds in the world. There are millions of tons of coffee grounds in the world," Havrylenko told Reuters. Havrylenko, who comes from a family of opticians and had 15 years of experience in the eyewear industry, had to dump some 300 samples before

creating what he said were perfect OCHIS COFFEE sunglasses that are now available for \$78-89.

The main advantage of sunglasses made of coffee grounds and flax glued by vegetable oil is that if disposed, they turn into a fertilizer after 10 years, he said. OCHIS COFFEE's first fund raising effort on crowd funding platform Kickstarter raised \$13,000, surpassing an initial \$10,000 target and attracted customers from the United States, western Europe, Japan and Australia. Havrylenko said only 10% of clients were from Ukraine. "Our super goal is to promote at least in Ukraine and in the entire world, first, the idea of production of clean products and, second, proper waste disposal," he said. — Reuters



Eco-friendly sunglasses temple, made of coffee waste, are seen in workshop.



A cutter makes eco-friendly sunglass frames from coffee waste.



Eco-friendly sunglass frames, made of coffee waste, are seen in workshop.



Oman's Samahram historical perfume village, an int'l tourist attraction



Frankincense was known as the perfume of kings and sultans, as it was a symbol of power and authority, especially in the Arabian Peninsula. For that reason, Oman's Samahram historical village in Dhofar state became of great importance as it is surrounded by *Boswellia sacra* trees' reserves, used to extract Frankincense. The village also overlooks the Indian Ocean, making it a busy commercial area for countries with ports overlooking the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Ships that used to deliver all kinds of food items to Dhofar would carry Frankincense back home.

Frankincense trade between the East and West in the ancient world continued from the 3rd century BC to the 5th century. When extracted from trees, Frankincense looks like a milky glue-like liquid that freezes into small pieces. — KUNA



Lifestyle

Book review

Queenie

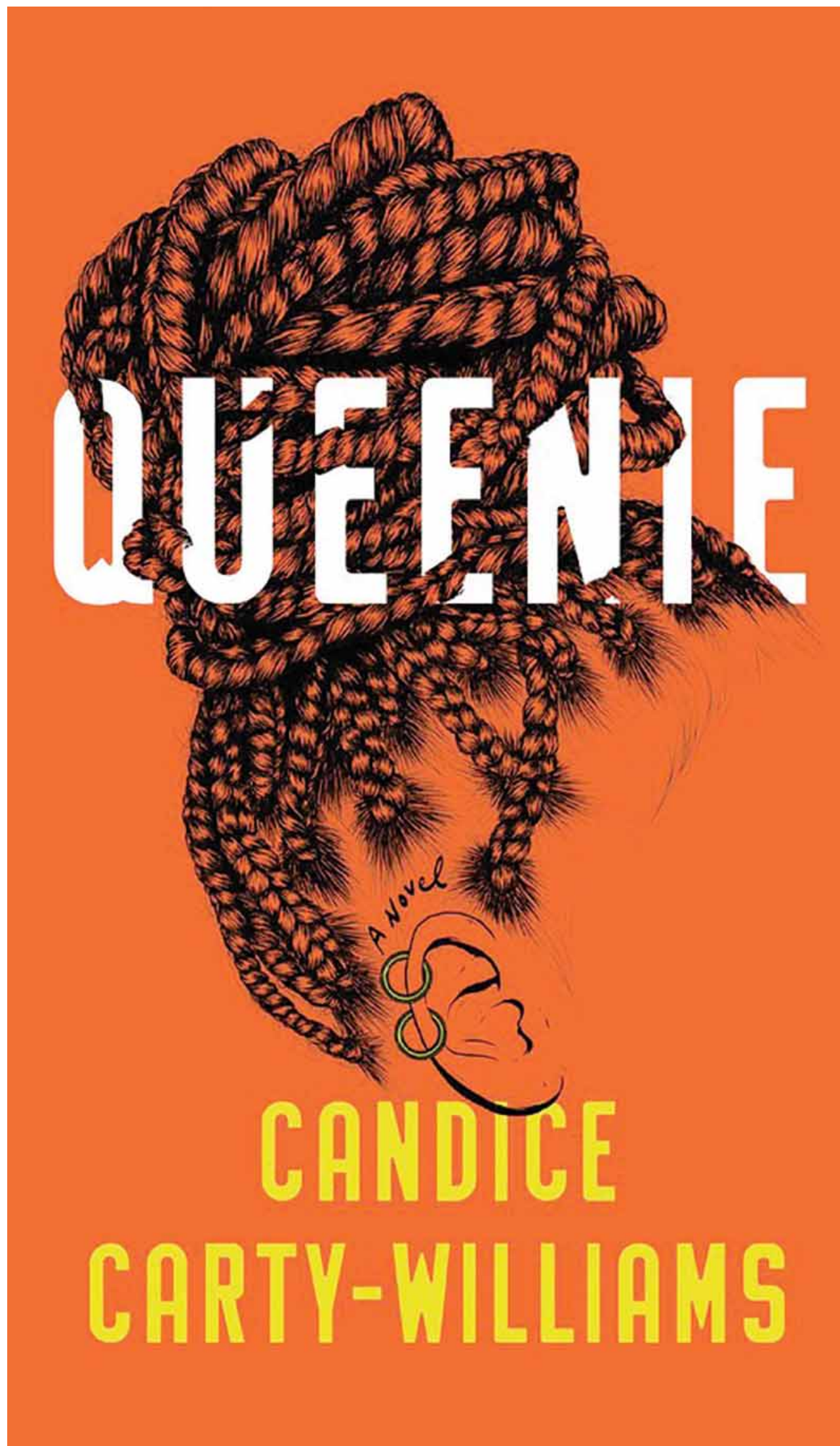
It would make sense to describe *Queenie*, the debut novel by Candice Carty-Williams, as an important political tome of black womanhood and black British life, a rare perspective from the margins. It is both those things, but primarily it is a highly entertaining, often very moving story about one young woman's life as affected - in fact, almost destroyed - by her love life, with the politics of blackness permeating the pages. It is rare. It's still so rare that even its most simple, nondescript moments are something to celebrate. *Queenie*, for example, taking off her coat and putting it through the strap of her rucksack in a London street while flat-hunting. Her Jamaican grandmother calling: "I'm putting the hot water on. Come down for your porridge and wait for it to warm." How often do we get to read of black people in novels making porridge for each other and negotiating their rucksack straps? It's a thing of joy to witness the everyday within a familiar yet still relatively hidden context, particularly when that context has often been shackled to hefty racial themes, its mundane humanity hardly given space to breathe.

South London millennial and budding journalist Queenie is, as she herself admits, a "catastrophist": someone who worries about worst-case scenarios, unbearable outcomes, general humiliations and the perpetual lead weight of anxiety. The novel opens with a gynecological examination introducing three causes for worry: the possible loss of her coil, an undetected pregnancy and a preceding sexual episode bordering on abuse. So begins a difficult and painful journey through Queenie's unfortunate choice of men. There is the Pakistani Muslim BMW driver who addresses her as "big batty" and wants to experience the "forbidden fruit" of sex with a black woman. There's the sex addict she meets at a party who gives her internal bruising; the neo-Nazi encountered on a dating site, also interested in exotic black-girl sex; and the relatively normal nice white boyfriend, who becomes an ex-boyfriend, which is what leads to the flat-hunting, during which she is groped by a Polish estate agent. "Is this what growing into an adult woman is," Queenie asks, "having to predict and accordingly arrange for the avoidance of sexual harassment?"

Predictably enough, the novel has been hailed as the black Bridget Jones, and it does bear loose similarities in its portrayal of the conventional female quest for the love of a good man and the realization that self-acceptance and self-sufficiency are more important. But Carty-Williams goes much deeper than that, casting a full glare on the damaging reductive stereotypes, born of slavery and colonialism, that surround black women's bodies, sexuality and psychology. The gynaecological beginning seems to make a point in itself, and likewise the sexual frankness throughout is refreshing, smartly and accurately rendered by a voice fully in command of its own narrative and intent on setting the record straight.

During her schooldays, Queenie was accused of being "white on the inside and black on the outside like a coconut"; her friend Kyazike assured her that she can "be any type of black girl" she wants to be. Ripped to shreds is the enduring stereotype of the "strong black woman": this heroine flails and weeps in a whirl of panic attacks, sleep paralysis and depression, for which her therapist prescribes various cognitive behavioral exercises. There is a touching theme of women supporting each other, and the camaraderie and empathy Queenie gets from her WhatsApp group of friends "The Corgis" are especially affecting. Their text-speak is hilarious, peppered with "KMTs" (kiss my teeth, Jamaican slang), while sometimes the group's varied backgrounds necessitate translations from white-posh to multicultural London English. Kyazike herself is one of the most alive characters I have come across in any novel; she must be read to be believed.

Amid this centralizing of female experience and friendship there is a sustained awareness of surrounding social and political issues, such as race hatred and gentrification. What happened to that old Caribbean bakery there used to be in Brixton? And how is it that Queenie feels so conspicuously out of place at her local pool, the Brockwell Lido, where she overhears two middle-class white women complaining about the tenants in their second homes? The Black Lives Matter movement crops up several times, and we are called on to mourn the black men dying in droves at the hands of US police brutality. This is an important, timely and disarming novel, thirst-quenching and long overdue: one that will be treasured by "any type of black girl" and hordes of other readers besides. — theguardian.com



Book review

The Porpoise

You suspect that whatever he writes, Mark Haddon will always be best known for his 2003 bestseller *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. But there were strong signs in his 2016 collection *The Pier Falls* - in which he describes a fatal seaside disaster with an impassivity that is all but indistinguishable from relish- that he was keen to shed his child-friendly reputation. And his wondrous new novel, a violent, all-action thrill ride shuttling between antiquity and the present, is another step in a transformation as surprising as any in the book itself.

It starts with a shadowy, super-rich businessman, Philippe, mourning his wife, Maja, a Swedish actor who dies while heavily pregnant in a plane crash that leaves no survivors apart from their child, Angelica, delivered safely. As she grows up, raised in an isolated life of luxury, Philippe's close circle of fixers suspect he's abusing her, but do nothing, even when he murders his art dealer's son, Darius, in a jealous rage after the younger man dares to catch her eye on a rare visit to their Hampshire hideaway.

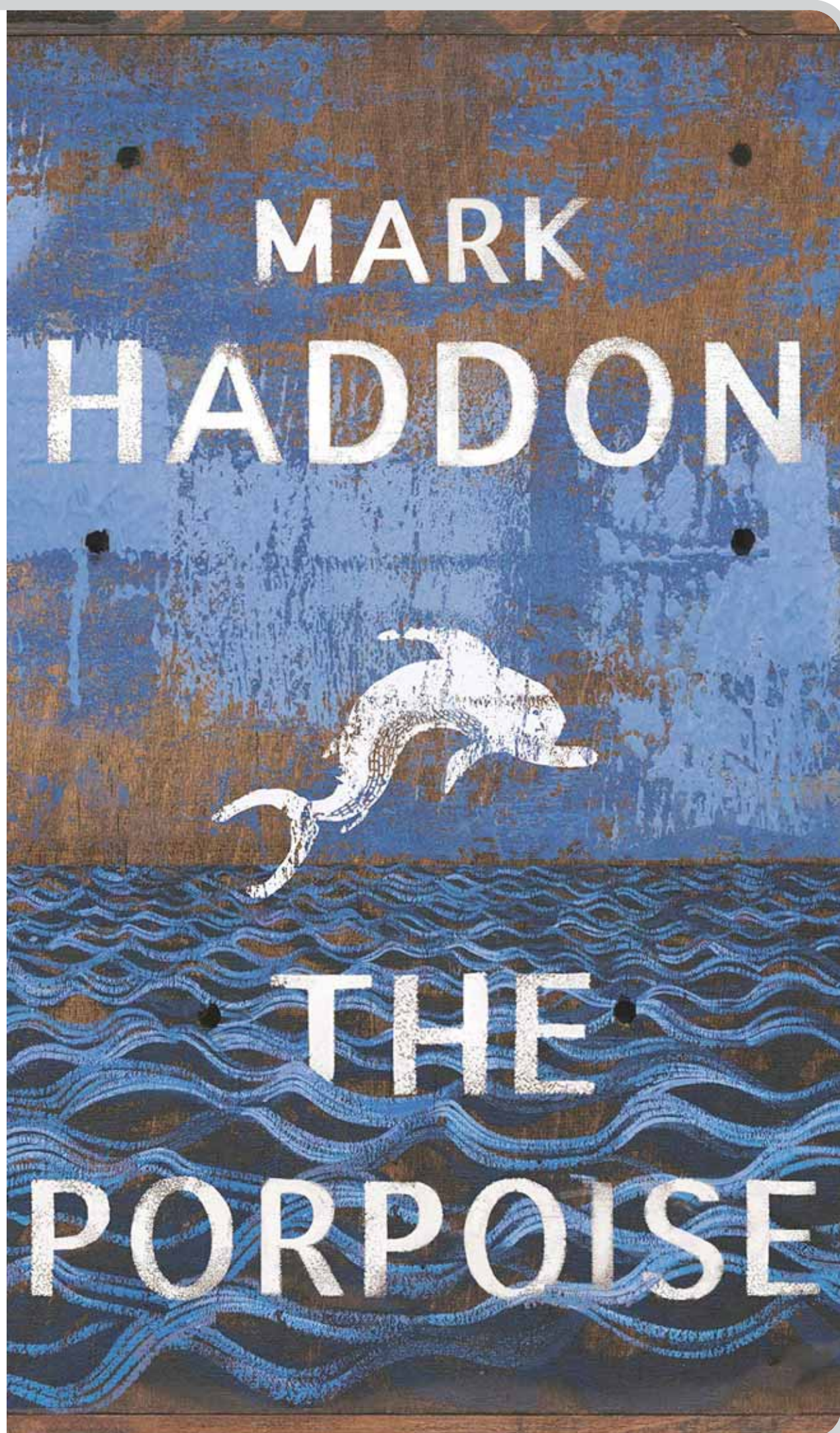
The first 16 years of Angelica's life pass in just 40 pages, and the pace doesn't let up. Haddon's epigraphs tip the wink that elements in this scenario echo the Greek legend of the young prince Apollonius (better known as Pericles, thanks to the Shakespeare play), who risks death after revealing a Syrian king's incestuous relationship with his daughter.

After Angelica witnesses her father's attack on Darius - the first of many fight scenes - the novel enters the "foggy border country between dream and reality", as Angelica, having learned to occupy herself by telling stories, imagines a parallel narrative in which Darius has not been killed. Instead, carrying his broken arm "like a basket of eggs", he escapes on a passing pickup truck and falls in with old sailing buddies. "Something peculiar is happening here," someone thinks. "Time is repeating and rhyming..." Soon, Darius literally turns into Pericles, whose pan-Mediterranean escapades while on the run from a hired assassin - including a star-crossed affair with another princess, Chloé - make up the bulk of *The Porpoise*.

Haddon teams the novel's dreaminess with electrically lucid action: shipwrecks, nick-of-time escapes and combat scenes that would give Lee Child a run for his money. He can be grisly when he wants to but he's no gore-monger, in one case achieving his effects by refraining from describing a pivotal fight, suddenly muting the volume. His present-tense narration confidently inhabits everything from a clogged artery to a lightning bolt. Characterization is brisk and vivid (we're told that Philippe, waiting to leave hospital with baby Angelica after Maja's death, "hasn't stood in a queue or waited in a public place since Cambridge") and Haddon's descriptions are often just downright brilliant: witness the perfection of "buckled crucifix" for Maja's downed jet.

Ethical concerns underpin the adrenaline-fuelled adventure. A startling interlude in Jacobean London features the ghost of Shakespeare on a voyage down the Thames with another dead playwright, George Wilkins, a pimp widely thought to be the co-author of *Pericles*. "Perhaps it was Wilkins who gave the abused princess no name and two empty lines," we're told. Maybe, but it's hard not to feel the novel puts Shakespeare on a pedestal when it lets Wilkins take the rap for victim-blaming lines such as "Bad child, worse father", or for calling rape "incest": errors that Haddon portrays as a symptom of Wilkins's real-life crimes, avenged here in supernatural style.

Carried away in the moment, however, you barely pause for breath, let alone question the novel's deep-lying logic. Line by line, Haddon throws everything at making it a transcendent, transporting experience - which is part of the point, given that *The Porpoise* turns on the consolations of storytelling, which aren't just a cliché in a book that is essentially about a girl seeking to escape her ravaged body. A helix, a mirror ball, a literary box of tricks... take your pick: this is a full-spectrum pleasure, mixing meta-fictional razzmatazz with pulse-racing action and a prose style to die for. I'll be staggered if it's not spoken of whenever prizes are mentioned this year. — theguardian.com





Why carbon offsetting is not going to solve the problem of climate change



There has been a fair bit of uproar about Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's high-carbon travel habits recently. They have faced accusations of hypocrisy following their pronouncements about the urgency of climate change and the importance of our individual behaviors.

Much of this 'outrage' probably has more to do with prejudices about certain members of the royal family than with genuine environmental concern. However, along with Elton John's justification for their flights - he bought carbon offsets for them - the story has been helpful in re-kindling a debate about air travel, its contribution to global warming, and what we ought to do about it.

This is a debate close to my heart. Now aged 37, I've flown quite a lot over my life. Like many relatively well-off Brits of my generation, I've worked abroad and have done my share of backpacking, often clutching a Lonely Planet guide along the way. Yet as I became more aware of flying's huge and growing impact on the environment during my PhD studies, I became increasingly uncomfortable with air travel.



As a vegetarian, cyclist, and someone who tries to consume ethically, my flying didn't seem to fit alongside my desire to minimize my contribution to climate change.

For a few years I actively cut back on flights, and bought carbon offsets when I did fly. But when last year's IPCC report suggested the window of opportunity for avoiding irreversible climate change may close in just ten years, something changed for me. Carbon offsetting, which had for a while seemed to be a viable solution to the problem of aviation emission, now seemed increasingly inadequate in terms of time, effectiveness, and ethics.

A plane that flies today emits carbon today. Trees take years to plant, grow and remove carbon dioxide, and time is one thing we don't have. In terms of effectiveness, a recent EU study found 85 percent of offset projects studied failed to produce the promised carbon reductions. Ethically, carbon offsets seem a way to avoid taking responsibility for our own behavior. Many offset schemes have great intentions, but should probably be seen as another form of charity rather than a scientific means of being 'carbon neutral'. Other charities or campaigns could well be a more effective use of a passengers' money.

After reading through the IPCC report, I soon signed the Flight Free UK pledge not to fly in 2019, and I recently pledged again for 2020. Changing my flying behavior, which for most of us easily comprises the largest part of our individual carbon footprint, felt an appropriately 'dramatic' response to potential climate breakdown, which would affect the world's poor - people who will never have the means to fly on a backpacker's holiday - the hardest. In one sense, quitting flying seems dramatic and radical, a sacrifice. Yet it is, for me and many others, quite banal.

A lot of it depends on geography, viable alternatives to flying, and personal circumstances. The UK, where I live, is relatively well-connected by a range of ferry services, the channel tunnel and, via the Eurostar, to the rest of Europe's vast train network and beyond. Earlier this year I travelled to China by train for a research fieldtrip, and can attest to the amazing rail infrastructure that exists all across Eurasia.

Yet for people who live in more remote countries like New Zealand or countries with poor rail infrastructure like the United States, I concede that non-flying options may be far more constricted, before we even consider those with family dispersed across the world for whom flying is unavoidable. But in the UK at least there are many flights which likely only take off because of cheap prices stimulating demand. Amazingly, in 2018 more Brits flew abroad than any other nationality with the vast majority of those flights being short-haul leisure trips. The ultimate game must be to change the pricing signals so that flying, the most polluting transport mode per kilometer, is not also the cheapest travel mode per kilometer.

In terms of policies, that means three things. Firstly, building an international consensus to amend the so-called





'Chicago convention' which, since the late 1940s has meant that international jet fuel has enjoyed tax-free status. This has enabled very cheap fares and given aviation a huge advantage over alternative modes, meaning that night trains in Europe, for example, are unable to compete on price and many have been cancelled in recent years.

Secondly, it means national governments introducing a Frequent Flyer Levy (FFL) so that those who fly most, pay most. Currently, in the UK just 15% of passengers account for 70 percent of UK flights. A FFL would ensure that the less well-off can still enjoy a family holiday once a year while the international jetset of CEOs, royalty and pop stars who want to fly frequently pay their way. Thirdly, it means investing the revenues raised from these taxes and levies into high-speed rail and sleeper trains and into boosting research into sustainable fuels for aviation, which have so far been unable to gain traction when competing with cheap and untaxed jet fuel.

In the meantime, I believe we ought to strive to minimize flying wherever possible, rather than just relying on offsets to clear up the mess from our travel. Not only can reducing flying demand actually result in airlines cutting back flights (as has happened in Sweden this year), it can also send a cultural signal to our peers and a political message to politicians that there is an appetite for the brave decisions necessary to properly regulate emissions from aviation.

If Harry and Meghan have shone a light on this topic, then that can only be a positive thing. Rather than simply bash the rich and powerful for their 'hypocrisy', we might look at ourselves and realize that, in a global relative sense, those of us with the means to travel internationally are also 'rich' and 'powerful'. With that power must surely come responsibility. — www.lonelyplanet.co

Comic

Word Search

Clothing

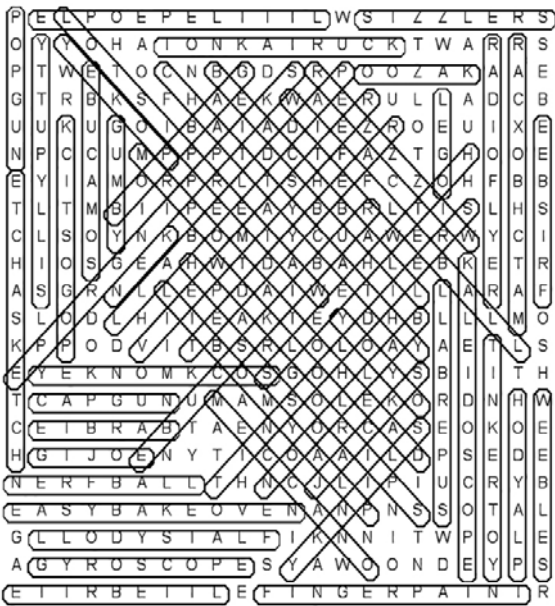
Find and circle all of the clothing items that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional piece of clothing.

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

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| BELT | JACKET | SCARF | SWEATER |
| BLOUSE | JEANS | SHIRT | TANK TOP |
| BOOTS | MITTENS | SHOES | TIE |
| CARDIGAN | OVERALLS | SHORTS | UNDERWEAR |
| CORDUROY | PANTS | SKIRT | VEST |
| DRESS | PARKA | SLIPPERS | |
| GLOVES | ROBE | SOCKS | |
| HAT | SANDALS | SUIT | |

Yesterday's Solution

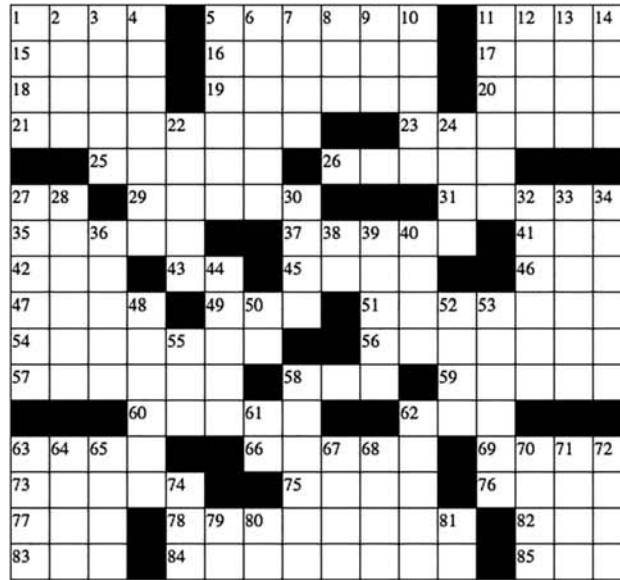
Classic Toys



- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| BALLOON | HOT WHEELS | PLAY-DOH | SPIROGRAPH |
| BARBIE | JACKS | PLAYMOBIL | SUPER BALL |
| BEACH BALL | KALEIDOSCOPE | POGO STICK | TEDDY BEAR |
| BOP BAG | KAZOO | POKEY | TINKERTOY |
| CAP GUN | KEN | POP GUN | TIN SOLDIERS |
| CHATTY CATHY | LEGO | RADIO FLYER | TONKA TRUCK |
| EASY BAKE OVEN | LITE BRITE | RUBIK'S CUBE | VIEWMASTER |
| ETCH A SKETCH | LITTLE PEOPLE | SILLY PUTTY | WATER PISTOL |
| FINGER PAINT | MATCHBOX CAR | SIZZLERS | WEEBLES |
| FLATSY DOLL | MECCANO | SKIPPING ROPE | WIFFLE BALL |
| FRISBEE | MR POTATO HEAD | SLINKY | WIZZLER |
| G.I. JOE | NERF BALL | SOCK MONKEY | YO-YO |
| GUMBY | PADDLE BALL | SOMA CUBE | |
| GYROSCOPE | | | |

The hidden message is:
WHAT WAS WONDERFUL ABOUT CHILDHOOD IS THAT ANYTHING IN IT WAS A WONDER.

Crossword 2294



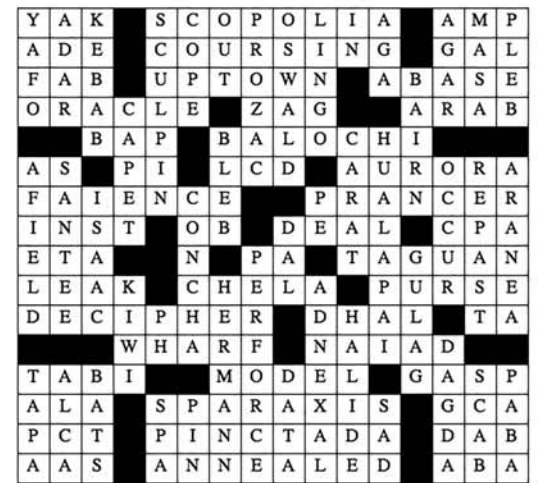
ACROSS

- On, to, or at the top.
- Anything of material value or usefulness.
- East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour; a staple in the Orient.
- Area around the altar of a church for the clergy and choir.
- A city in central Illinois on the Illinois River.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- A submachine gun operated by gas pressure.
- Any of several trees of the genus *Platanus* having thin pale bark that scales off in small plates and lobed leaves and ball-shaped heads of fruits.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- A person who uses scientific knowledge to solve practical problems.
- A port city in southwestern Iran.
- Relating to or having the characteristics of bees.
- Deciduous South African tree having large odd-pinnate leaves and profuse fragrant orange-yellow flowers.
- (chemistry) P(otential of) H(ydrogen).
- Extensive landed property (especially in the country) retained by the owner for his own use.
- Pecuniary reimbursement to the winning party for the expenses of litigation.
- The large trunk artery that carries blood from the left ventricle of the heart to branch arteries.
- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- Hormone released by the hypothalamus that controls the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone from the anterior pituitary.
- A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
- A person forced to flee from home or country.
- A formal dance held for a school class toward the end of the academic year.
- The shape of a raised edge of a more or less circular object.
- A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- Large flaring bone forming one half of the pelvis.
- A stronghold into which people could go for shelter during a battle.
- Tropical American aroid having edible tubers that are cooked and eaten like yams or potatoes.
- A peninsula between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.
- Moth having nonfunctional mouthparts as adults.
- United States tennis player (born in Czechoslovakia) who won several singles championships.
- Informal terms for a mother.
- Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- Jordan's port.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.

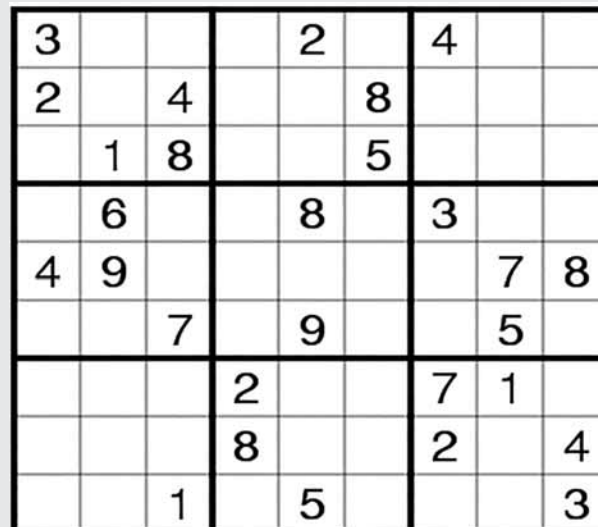
DOWN

- A French abbot.
- Small slender gull having narrow wings and a forked tail.
- The ending of a series or sequence.
- Battle in which the ruler of Afghanistan defeated the Mahrattas in 1761.
- Give a certain impression or have a certain outward aspect.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the moon in ancient mythology.
- The act of rising upward into the air.
- The universal time coordinated when an event is received on Earth.
- Brief episode in which the brain gets insufficient blood supply.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- A wired or starched collar of intricate lace.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
- A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- A rechargeable battery with a nickel cathode and a cadmium anode.
- German organist and contrapuntist (1685-1750).
- One of the Aesir having a strong and beautiful body but a dull mind.
- A rare chronic progressive encephalitis caused by the measles virus and occurring primarily in children and young adults.
- Having strength or power greater than average or expected.
- A genus of Scolopacidae.
- (slang) A batch of things that go together.
- An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- German mystic and theosophist who founded modern theosophy.
- Type genus of the Amidae.
- A formal expression of praise.
- 1 species.
- Being ten more than one hundred forty.
- Humble request for help.
- Capital and largest city of Iraq.
- Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
- A Dravidian language spoken in south central India.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
- A Loloish language.
- A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
- A member of an Algonquian people living in central Canada.
- Earn on some commercial or business transaction.
- Consisting of one of two equivalent parts in value or quantity.
- In bed.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- The residue that remains when something is burned.
- An informal term for a father.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

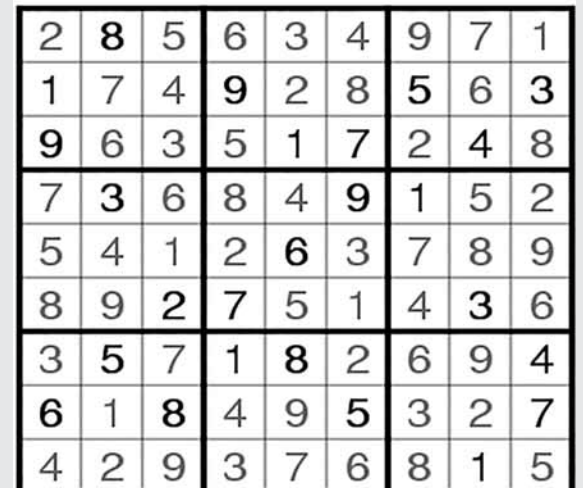
Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



TV Listings



01:10 Ultimate Justice
02:50 Deja Vu
04:55 Faster
06:50 The Drowning
08:30 Faster
10:20 Jack Reacher: Never Go Back
12:20 Last Action Hero
14:30 Deja Vu
16:35 Chasing Gold
18:10 12 Rounds
20:00 Bad Boys
22:00 Child's Play 2
23:45 Saw III



00:45 North Woods Law
01:40 Intruders
02:35 Wolves And Warriors
03:25 Lone Star Law
04:15 North Woods Law
05:02 Wildest Indochina
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 Vet On The Loose
07:00 Animal Battlegrounds
07:25 Evan Goes Wild
08:15 Evan Goes Wild
09:10 The Bronx Zoo
12:50 Wolves And Warriors
13:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
14:40 Nature's Strangest Mysteries: Solved
15:05 Nature's Strangest Mysteries: Solved
15:35 Intruders
16:30 Flying Wild Alaska
17:25 Animal Cops Houston
18:20 Cats 101
19:15 The Vet Life
20:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
21:05 Wildest Indochina
22:00 Intruders
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
23:50 The Vet Life



00:20 The Witness For The Prosecution
01:25 Holby City
02:20 Inside No. 9
02:50 The Detectivists
03:20 EastEnders
03:50 EastEnders
04:20 Father Brown
05:05 Death In Paradise
06:00 EastEnders
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Last Tango In Halifax
07:55 Carters Get Rich
08:20 The Detectivists
08:50 The Detectivists
09:20 Holby City
10:15 Death In Paradise
11:10 Father Brown
11:55 Inside No. 9
12:30 Holby City
13:25 The Musketeers
14:20 The Detectivists
15:20 Casualty
17:05 Holby City
18:00 The Detectivists
18:30 Agatha Raisin
20:10 Ordeal By Innocence
21:05 Line Of Duty
22:10 Cold Feet
23:00 The Detectivists
23:30 Ordeal By Innocence



00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
01:55 Homicide: Hours To Kill
02:50 It Takes A Killer
03:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
04:10 Live PD: Police Patrol
04:30 The First 48
05:15 Homicide Hunter
06:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
07:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
07:20 The First 48
08:50 Homicide Hunter
10:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
11:25 Homicide: Hours To Kill

12:20 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
13:15 Live PD: Police Patrol
14:10 It Takes A Killer
15:05 Homicide Hunter
16:00 The First 48
17:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
18:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
19:00 The First 48
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
22:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
23:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
23:30 Live PD: Police Patrol



00:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
00:30 Broad City
00:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
01:20 Tosh.0
01:45 Friends
02:07 Friends
02:30 Kroll Show
02:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
03:20 Tosh.0
03:45 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
04:15 Broad City
04:40 Impractical Jokers
05:00 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
07:05 Lip Sync Battle
07:30 Lip Sync Battle
07:55 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
08:30 Takeshis Castle Thailand
08:55 Ridiculousness Arabia
09:25 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
09:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
10:20 Friends
12:25 Key And Peele
14:30 Lip Sync Battle
14:55 Lip Sync Battle
15:20 Tattoo Disasters
16:15 Tattoo Disasters
17:10 Friends
19:30 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
21:30 Teachers
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 Daniel Tosh: Happy Thoughts
23:30 Broad City



00:05 Kids vs Film
00:30 Insane Coaster Wars: World Domination
00:55 Insane Coaster Wars: World Domination
01:20 My Cat From Hell
02:10 America's Cutest Pets
03:00 Breaking Magic
03:25 Breaking Magic
03:50 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
04:40 Kids vs Film
05:05 Kids vs Film
05:30 My Cat From Hell
06:15 America's Cutest Pets
07:00 Breaking Magic
07:25 Breaking Magic
07:50 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
08:40 Weather Top Tens
09:30 How We Invented The World
10:20 How The Earth Works
11:10 Kids vs Film
11:35 Kids vs Film
12:00 Xtreme Waterparks
12:25 Xtreme Waterparks
12:50 The Big Brain Theory
13:40 Did I Mention Invention?
14:05 Did I Mention Invention?
14:30 Strange Evidence
15:20 The Carbonaro Effect
15:45 The Carbonaro Effect
16:10 Kids vs Film
16:35 Kids vs Film
17:00 My Cat From Hell
17:50 America's Cutest Pets
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:05 Breaking Magic
19:30 Guy's Grocery Games
20:20 Sci-Jinks
20:45 Sci-Jinks

21:10 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
22:00 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
22:25 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
22:50 Wild Africa: Rivers Of Life
23:40 Kids vs Film



00:00 Home Alone
01:00 Evil Stepmothers
02:00 The Real Story With Maria Elena Salinas
03:00 Body Cam
03:45 Home Alone
04:30 Who Killed Jane Doe?
05:20 Border Control: Spain
05:45 Border Control: Spain
06:10 Blood Relatives
07:00 Murder Decoded
07:55 Murder Decoded
08:50 Reasonable Doubt
09:45 Reasonable Doubt
10:40 Border Control: Spain
11:10 Border Control: Spain
11:35 Who Killed Jane Doe?
12:30 Family Man, Family Murderer: An ID Murder Mystery
13:25 Blood Relatives
14:20 Nightmare Next Door
16:10 Border Control: Spain
17:05 The Perfect Murder
19:00 Disappeared
21:00 Obsession: Dark Desires
22:00 Forbidden: Dying For Love
23:00 Diabolical: Deadly Love



00:00 Alex & Co.
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:15 Evermoor Chronicles
01:40 Alex & Co.
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:20 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:10 Alex & Co.
04:35 Violetta
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Rolling With The Ronks
05:50 Rolling With The Ronks
06:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
06:25 Coop And Cami Ask The World
06:50 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:55 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp
07:20 Penny On M.A.R.S
07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bizaardvark
08:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
09:25 Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure
09:50 Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure
10:15 Bizaardvark
10:40 Bizaardvark
11:05 Liv And Maddie
11:30 Liv And Maddie
11:55 K.C. Undercover
12:15 K.C. Undercover
12:40 Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure
13:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
13:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
13:50 101 Dalmatian Street
14:15 Shake It Up
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:10 Fast Layne
15:35 Penny On M.A.R.S
16:00 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp
16:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
16:50 Raven's Home
17:15 Coop And Cami Ask The World
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 Coop And Cami Ask The World
21:35 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp
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 The Lion Guard
00:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
00:30 Trulli Tales S1
01:00 PJ Masks
01:25 PJ Masks
01:50 The Hive S2
02:00 Zou
02:15 Zou
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 The Hive
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Zou
03:55 Zou
04:10 Zou
04:25 The Hive
04:35 The Hive S2
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:10 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 The Hive
05:45 PJ Masks
06:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons S2
07:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Y3
07:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S2
08:00 PJ Masks
08:30 Vampirina
09:00 Sofia The First S1
09:30 Elena Of Avalor S2
10:00 Fancy Nancy Splits S1
10:20 Fancy Nancy Splits S1
10:40 Disney Muppet Babies S1 Splits
11:00 Connect And Protect
12:00 PJ Masks
13:30 Vampirina S1
14:30 Vampirina
15:00 Puppy Dog Pals S2 Splits
15:20 Puppy Dog Pals S2 Splits
15:40 Puppy Dog Pals S2 Splits
16:00 The Lion Guard
16:30 Elena Of Avalor S2
17:00 Gigantosaurus S1
17:25 Paprika S1 Shorts
17:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S2
18:00 Fancy Nancy S1
18:30 Vampirina
19:00 PJ Masks
19:30 Puppy Dog Pals S2
20:00 The Lion Guard
20:25 Paprika S1 Shorts
20:30 Doc McStuffins
21:00 Gigantosaurus S1
21:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S2
22:00 Fancy Nancy S1
22:30 Vampirina
23:00 PJ Masks
23:30 Puppy Dog Pals S2



00:15 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
01:05 Savage Builds
01:50 How Do They Do It?
02:15 How Do They Do It?
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Wheeler Dealers
04:05 Fast N' Loud
04:50 Diesel Brothers
05:35 Garage Gold
06:00 Shed And Buried
06:20 Garage Gold
06:45 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Garage Rehab
09:10 Kindig Customs
09:55 Salvage Hunters
10:45 Diesel Brothers
11:30 Wheeler Dealers
12:20 Fast N' Loud

13:05 Shed And Buried
13:30 Garage Gold
13:55 Salvage Hunters
14:40 Into Alaska
15:30 Wildest Indochina
16:15 American Chopper
17:05 Kindig Customs
17:50 Garage Rehab
18:40 Diesel Brothers
19:25 Wheeler Dealers
20:15 Fast N' Loud
21:00 Unique Rides
21:50 American Chopper
22:40 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
01:00 Boyster
01:25 Boyster
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Counterfeit Cat
02:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:20 Boyster
03:45 Boyster
04:10 Counterfeit Cat
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Furiki Wheels
05:29 Furiki Wheels
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Space Chickens In Space
06:35 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
07:25 Phineas And Ferb
07:35 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Big Hero 6 The Series
08:25 Mech-X4
08:50 Milo Murphy's Law
09:15 Milo Murphy's Law
09:40 Big City Greens
10:00 Big City Greens
10:25 Kick Buttowski
10:50 Phineas And Ferb
11:00 Gravity Falls
11:25 Gravity Falls
11:50 Milo Murphy's Law
12:05 Furiki Wheels
12:30 DuckTales
12:55 Big Hero 6 The Series
13:20 Lab Rats
13:45 Lab Rats
14:10 Phineas And Ferb
14:35 Phineas And Ferb
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:25 Phineas And Ferb
15:35 Space Chickens In Space
16:00 Big City Greens
16:25 Big Hero 6 The Series
16:50 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
17:15 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
17:40 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
18:05 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
18:29 Mech-X4
19:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
19:25 Marvel's Spider-Man
19:50 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
20:15 Gravity Falls
20:40 Gravity Falls
21:05 Kick Buttowski
21:30 Big City Greens
21:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
22:29 Milo Murphy's Law
23:00 Furiki Wheels
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Dude That's My Ghost



00:00 Botched
01:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 WAGs LA
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian

09:50 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
10:45 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
11:40 E! News
12:35 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Very Cavallari
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
23:00 Very Cavallari



00:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 Martin Clunes: Islands Of America
04:20 Rich House Poor House
05:15 The Jonathan Ross Show
06:15 Royal Recipes
07:10 The Chase
08:05 Martin Clunes: Islands Of America
09:00 Rich House Poor House
09:55 The Jonathan Ross Show
10:55 Royal Recipes
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
14:15 Royal Recipes
15:10 The Chase
16:00 This Time Next Year
17:50 The Jonathan Ross Show
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 This Time Next Year
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street



00:15 Clash Of Warriors
01:00 UFO Hunters
01:45 Ancient Impossible
02:30 The Universe
03:15 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
04:00 Ancient Aliens
04:45 Mummy Forensics
05:30 Lost Worlds
06:15 Million Dollar Genius
07:00 UFO Hunters
07:45 Ancient Impossible
08:30 The Universe
09:15 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
10:00 Ancient Aliens
10:45 Mummy Forensics
11:30 Lost Worlds
12:15 Million Dollar Genius
13:00 Ancient Impossible
13:45 The Universe
14:30 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
15:15 Ancient Aliens
16:00 Mummy Forensics
16:45 Lost Worlds
17:30 Million Dollar Genius
18:15 UFO Hunters
19:00 Ancient Impossible
19:45 The Universe
20:30 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
21:15 Ancient Aliens
22:00 MysteryQuest
22:45 Lost Worlds
23:30 Million Dollar Genius



00:20 Cities Of The Underworld
01:05 Pawn Stars UK
01:50 American Pickers
02:35 Storage Wars
03:25 Ax Men
04:15 Custer: The Final Mystery
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Fifth Gear
06:45 Cities Of The Underworld
07:30 Pawn Stars UK
08:15 American Pickers
09:00 Storage Wars
09:45 Ax Men
10:30 Custer: The Final Mystery
11:15 Forged In Fire
12:00 American Pickers
15:00 Road Hawks
15:45 Detroit Steel
18:45 The Universe

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today and tomorrow are your best times for a vacation. There is introspection and contemplation and you may find yourself letting go of plans and projects started in a more outward phase but as yet uncompleted. You may take an interest in your own psyche, religion and spiritual ideas. You may take the time to absorb and take in new impressions and information. In summary, here is a natural breaking point in life—you let go of what has been occupying you for the last years and assume a new attitude. This is a period that emphasizes an enhanced sense of personal possibilities and potential. There is tremendous psychological growth, which can lead to great personal success if you follow through with it.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Any challenges you have today will bring you insight into plans that are needed for the future. This means personal as well as professional challenges. You gain new insights and realizations. Positive results are just a matter of time. Today is a good time to seek whatever guidance you think you may need. Think through your own ideas and motives. Come from the long-term effects instead of the short-term process. A little exercise before dinner this evening is a fun way to create a change of pace—perhaps bicycling. Over dinner tonight, friends of yours may talk about crop circles, or some other fascinating subject—think about time travel. You find their ideas interesting. Stimulating ideas are created in your mind. This evening is for love.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You have a strong desire for a change of surroundings. You wish to broaden your horizons. This is a time you feel as though you occupy a tiny little spot on this Earth and wish to see and experience all the world has to offer. You need more out of life. You may find your desires to broaden your horizons are met with opposition from someone dear to you. This may be a time to consider a get away for yourself and with yourself, only. You seem very sensitive when it comes to the needs of others. The only thing missing is someone who makes you feel as if you are understood.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is a good time to buckle down and focus on your career. Your organizational abilities and sense of responsibility will guide you and direct you to success. Radical changes in self-care may be helpful. You may learn to cut through the unessential and superficial and get to the core in matters of food and health—attending to the details of your life. You are driven to conserve and take care of yourself. This is a good day to start a new and positive habit. All the energies are working in your favor. Work, health, diet and the other things that take care of us if we take care of them can provide a lot of satisfaction as a new life phase begins. These things can lead to love and a new self-image. A phone call this evening may become passionate.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

There are many rewarding days this month. You will be reaping the rewards of your hard work, even though it may only be the good feeling that comes when you do your best. This is a rewarding day. This is a great time to be with others and to work together. You gain new ideas through listening and helping others. It is easy for you to see which path is the right one for you. There are plenty of opportunities to grow and improve in any area you want. You may find yourself wanting and able to do almost everything. While success is important, don't go overboard—your friends and family may begin to forget who you are—just kidding. You could easily talk a loved one into being romanced this evening—dancing may be in order.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Now is the time to buckle down and concentrate on your career. Your directorial abilities and sense of responsibility will prove to be successful. Your career could assume a much more determined form—a firm foundation. You appear charming and sophisticated. Now could also be the best time to make that date, apply for a particular job or otherwise make yourself known. Ambition and achievement are qualities you hold in special regard. Progress in your professional life gains you recognition. You will enjoy your career and savor its rewards. A career in the category of coordinating events or conducting a well-coordinated party may involve catering, entertaining, etc. The social graces pave your path to success.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You will be pleased at the progress you have made recently—just take a look! This is a satisfying day. You may feel a love of order and law—an appreciation for responsibilities and duty. Problems are valued for the lessons learned at this time. This afternoon there is an opportunity for some future planning to examine the changes you may want to make in your profession—changes are needed. This may mean that you will not want to change the company for which you work necessarily but you may want to change your position within the company. The climb up the corporate ladder can be fun and you are willing to do whatever it takes to make the bigger income. Related courses could find you quite enthusiastic to expand your education.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Other people, or the general circumstances in which you find yourself at present, may unite to call upon your imagination and your creative insights in a work session. If you included all the people around you in solving particular work difficulties you could find that there is more than one answer. Now what you have to do is find an acceptable answer that will be pleasing and have financially favorable results. Today is the challenge you have been waiting for that will give you the opportunity to be acknowledged and appreciated. An authority figure could be hard to connect with now—wait awhile. You will benefit from diagnostic insights and getting to the heart of things—penetrating.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Remember—when you get into a battle of wills, it is time to regroup, rethink, look for the motivating factor and deal with it instead of the surface tension. The battle of wills is also an indication that someone is taking the small things in life much too seriously. This day does turn into a gratifying one and will afford you the opportunity to correct any negative thinking. This is a great time to understand your own situation, just how you feel about yourself. Emotions and feelings, whether they are yours or someone else's, may be very clear now. The energies to gain attention and support for what you want to accomplish are strong. You will certainly feel that you are in touch and in harmony with others.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Extra effort put forth in your career brings greater satisfaction and definitely can gain the attention of those who can influence your success. Beginning new projects or programs now will be favorable at this time. Special interest groups or professional associations provide excellent support, although you must take an active part to profit from the situation. Romance is what you yearn for now. We're not talking just lukewarm. Passion and jealousy may present you with some experiences if you allow it—careful. Break away from habits or attitudes that undermine your happiness. Get rid of any negative energy so that you make good choices... Perhaps through reading a romantic book, taking in a movie or some form of exercise.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This could be a tough day to solve problems or to look for insights. You may feel that your independence is stifled or just not available to you at this time. Being on the go and keeping in tune with the changes that happen all over the world keep you in touch. You are not fond of delays but that is what much of today is about: easy does it. This energy will pass and communication and delays will be corrected. If you think about what you want to say first, your communication to others can be very clear. You have a lot of energy and may come across as one that can be in control. This is a period of great mental activity. Changes in the neighborhood inspire you.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A higher-up is keeping up with your career and may be of great help to you in your profession. This is a real time to bring a focus into your career. Work, achievement and ambition are the things that mean a lot to you. Your organizational abilities and sense of responsibility will be what guides you and proves successful. Your career could assume a much more determined and solid form—a firm foundation. You may find that there is an increasing need to change the way you appear to others in the business world—perhaps a new suit is in order. This is a good time to purchase, select colors, etc. Circumstances may stimulate appreciation and enjoyment of your life situation.

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
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina Faso	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
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	Niger	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
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	Togo	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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Friday, August 30, 2019

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
 Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
 Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
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 A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/Treatment of General Ear, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatric
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- Minimally Invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
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- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

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DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED
 Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

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.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- o Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
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DR KHALED ALMERRI
 Consultant interventional Cardiology
 Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty), Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
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Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
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- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society

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Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
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- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernia 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 department at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

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Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from 9:30 am to 5 pm
Thursday from 9:30 am until 1 pm

Friday is a holiday.

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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic 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.

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Classifieds

Friday, August 30, 2019

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MASCARENHAS (given name) SWEDEL (Surname), holder of Indian passport no J3963803 do hereby change my name as SWEDEL (given name) MASCARENHAS (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents.

I, Javid Khan, Passport No. N5299475 have changed my name from Sadam Hussain to Javid Khan, hereafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name Javid Khan. (C 5582) 30-8-2019

I, ROCHELLE D MELLO (given name) holder of Indian Passport No. Z2814386 do hereby change my name as ROCHELLE (given name) D MELLO (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents.

I, NOREEN MARGARET D MELLO (given name) holder of Indian Passport No. Z2809495 do hereby change my name as NOREEN MARGARET (given name) D MELLO (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents. (C 5581)

My name as per Indian Passport No. Z1847102 is Chodisetty Madhavi and permanent address being, 67-8-5B, Ashok Nagar, Behind GPT, Kakinada-533003, East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh. Hereby correct my given name as Sri Lakshmi Madhavi and surname as Chodisetty. Immediate effect. (C 5670) 28-8-2019

Faiza Abdul Karim holder of Passport No. K7914117. I am changing my name to Faiza Abdul Karim Rajiwate with immediate effect. (C 5668) 23-08-2019

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
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Hot to relatively hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate southerly wind to north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 28 km/h with a chance for mist forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	45 °C	35 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	27 °C
ABDALY	44 °C	30 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	49 °C	33 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	39 °C	31 °C
AHMADI	38 °C	33 °C
NUWAISIB	46 °C	29 °C
WAFRA	48 °C	27 °C
SALMY	47 °C	31 °C

SFC. CHART	29/08/2019 0000 UTC
MSL Analysis (hPa) Valid 0000 UTC 29 AUG 2019	

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	08/30	Hot and Relatively humid	46 °C	26 °C	NW-SE	08 - 38 km/h
Saturday	08/31	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	46 °C	25 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Sunday	09/01	Very hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will	49 °C	28 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Monday	09/02	Very hot + rising dust	49 °C	28 °C	NW-N	15 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:01
Sunrise	05:24
Zuhr	11:49
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:14
Isha	19:34

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	29 °C
MAX. RH	65 %
MIN. RH	11 %
MAX. Wind	SE 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Business

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30, 2019

38 UK economy weakest since 2012 as Brexit fears mount: Survey



39 Turkish economy to contract in Q2, log zero growth this year



41 Privatize state-owned Petrobras? Lofty ambition, higher hurdles



CORPUS CHRISTI: In this file photo, an oil refinery near the Corpus Christi, Texas, Ship Channel. The US economy grew slightly more slowly in the second quarter than previously thought, the government reported yesterday with new data showing weaker oil exports and local government spending. —AFP

US growth revised down to 2.0% in Q2

Retailers howl as US trade agency locks in 15% tariffs on Sept 1

WASHINGTON: The world's largest economy grew a little more slowly in the second quarter than previously thought, the government reported yesterday, with new data showing weaker oil exports and local government spending.

GDP expanded in the April-June period by 2.0 percent, down a notch from the initial 2.1 percent growth estimate and well below President Donald Trump's three percent target, according to the Commerce Department. Recession indicators in recent weeks have begun to flash warning signs, and though the American economy is still outpacing the rest of the industrialized world, it has begun to sputter worryingly in some areas.

Still, corporate profits rose in the second quarter, according to newly available figures, after falling at the start of the year. While largely confirming economists' expectations, the second quarter GDP numbers nevertheless marked a sharp slowdown from the heady pace of growth at the start of the year.

While unemployment remains low, hiring has slowed in 2019, and business investment has dropped sharply. Investors have become increasingly worried a recession in the rest of the world and the Brexit turmoil will spill over into the United

States—already stressed by Trump's grinding trade conflicts with China. But a solid bump in consumer spending—on health care and retail goods—provided a dose of good news and offset the weaker areas.

The numbers confirmed the growing divide between consumers and big business, which have sharply curtailed investment in new factories as the trade war has shaken their confidence, disrupting supply chains and raising prices. While investment in structures was its weakest in more than three years, private consumption of non-durable goods was the strongest since 2003.

Tourism and travel was another sore spot, as falling revenues from foreign visitors helped shave a half percentage point off growth in exports of services, hitting hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions.

Trump has by turns denied that the US economy is weakening or sought to blame the Federal Reserve for failing to cut interest rates fast enough. A real estate magnate, Trump campaigned on his stewardship of the economy, so signs growth is faltering could potentially jeopardize his chances at winning a second term in next year's elections. But economists worry that, with interest rates already very low, the

Fed may have little room to maneuver should a recession arrive, while a divided Congress and soaring deficits may make fiscal stimulus unlikely at best.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration made official its extra 5 percent tariff on \$300 billion in Chinese imports and set collection dates of Sept 1 and Dec 15, prompting hundreds of US retail, footwear, toy and technology companies to warn of price hikes. The US Trade Representative's office said in an official notice that collections of a 15 percent tariff will begin at 12:01 am EDT (0401 GMT) Sunday on a portion of the list covering over \$125 billion of targeted goods from China.

This initial tranche includes smartwatches, Bluetooth headphones, flat panel televisions and many types of footwear. US Customs and Border Protection will also start collecting a 15 percent tariff on Dec. 15 on the remainder of the \$300 billion list, including cellphones, laptop computers, toys and clothing, USTR said in the Federal Register filing.

A USTR spokesman said on Wednesday that the agency would issue a separate Federal Register notice with details of Trump's planned tariff increase to 30 percent on \$250 billion in goods that have already been hit with a 25 percent tariff, including proce-

dures for collecting public comments on the move.

Hundreds of retailers, footwear companies and business groups urged Trump to scrap the proposed tariffs, warning they would jack up consumer prices and trigger job losses. More than 200 US footwear companies on Wednesday said the added 15 percent duties on shoes would come on top of tariffs that already average 11 percent and reach 67 percent on some shoes, boosting costs for consumers by \$4 billion every year. "Imposing tariffs in September on the majority of all footwear products from China - including nearly every type of leather shoe - will make it impossible for hardworking American individuals and families to escape the harm that comes from these tax increases," the companies wrote in a letter to Trump.

More than 160 other business groups, including the National Retail Federation, Retail Industry Leaders Association and Association of Equipment Manufacturers, also urged Trump to postpone the tariffs, warning they would hit Americans in the middle of the busy holiday shopping season.

Global markets remain on edge after the latest flurry of tit-for-tat tariffs, and the lack of firm details on the next round of trade talks. —Agencies

Business

UK economy weakest since 2012 as Brexit fears mount: Survey

Pessimism deepens among services companies, retailers and consumers

LONDON: A gauge of Britain's economic health slumped to an almost seven-year low in August, dragged down by deepening pessimism among services companies, retailers and consumers who expect inflation to rise sharply as the Brexit crisis escalates. The European Commission said yesterday its Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) for Britain fell to 92.5 from 94.3 in July, its lowest level since September 2012.

The drop came despite an uptick in morale in the struggling manufacturing sector, towards which the ESI is heavily weighted. British manufacturers, who account for about 10% of the country's economy, are facing the possibility of a no-deal Brexit which is likely to hurt their supply chains, plus a slowdown in the global economy.

Overall, the ESI added to signs that Britain's economy could struggle to rebound meaningfully from its contraction in the second quarter, the first time it shrank since 2012.

Until recently, consumers had largely taken

Brexit in their stride, helped by wages that have been growing at the fastest pace in more than a decade and modest inflation.

That helped to support growth at a time when many companies were cutting back on investment because of uncertainty about Brexit. But it also left the economy reliant on consumer spending.

"August's ... survey of UK business and consumer confidence raises concern that the consumer sector may soon succumb to the malaise that has taken hold in the manufacturing sector," Gabriella Dickens, economist at consultancy Capital Economics, said. The European Commission said inflation expectations among British consumers hit their highest level since 1990, possibly reflecting the pound's fall to its lowest level in three years against other currencies in the first half of August.

The public's expectations for the economy were the lowest since December 2011, the survey showed. — Reuters



LONDON: In this file photo, a journalist poses while looking at a computer screen showing the Bloomberg display showing the movement of the value of the pound sterling against the US dollar in London. — AFP

Europe cheers Italy pact, bond bulls pause for breath

LONDON: Signs that Italy's latest political drama was over and hopeful noises from China in its trade war with the United States pushed share markets higher yesterday and paused the relentless steamrolling of global bond yields. There was still plenty for bearish investors to chew on, however: A sudden rush from Argentina to restructure its debt thrust emerging market risk back into the spotlight, a downgrade to US Q2 growth kept global recession worries simmering, and the pound was groggy after another Brexit-related tumble.

Nevertheless, European shares and Wall Street futures both rose nearly 1 percent in the slipstream of an almost two percent leap in Italy where government bonds also rallied hard. That was after Italy's president asked Giuseppe Conte, who had only just resigned as prime minister, to return to head up a new coalition of the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and the opposition center-left Democratic Party (PD).

Markets welcomed the quick end to a three-week political crisis that had been triggered by the leader of the hard-right League party, Matteo Salvini, who pulled his party out of its governing alliance with 5-Star after weeks of public bickering. The 5-Star and PD still need to agree on a shared policy platform and a team of ministers, but 5-Star chief Luigi Di Maio and PD counterpart Nicola Zingaretti said they had pledged to find common ground for the good of the country.

"We love Italy and we consider it worthwhile to try this experience," Zingaretti told reporters. Speaking shortly afterwards, Di Maio said: "We made commitments to the Italians...and come what may we want to fulfil them." There was little reaction from the euro despite the surge in stocks and bonds, but in any case there was barely any currency market action generally.

The Japanese yen was a touch softer but heading for its biggest monthly rise since May, while sterling steadied at \$1.22 after Prime Minister Boris Johnson's plan on Wednesday to sus-

pend Britain's parliament re-aggravated worries that Britain could leave the European Union without a transition deal.

China's yuan also managed to snap a 10-day losing streak although only thanks to a late rebound as Beijing said it and Washington were discussing the next round of face-to-face trade talks in September, and voiced hopes Donald Trump would cancel plans for additional trade tariffs.

He spoke after a choppy Asian session where MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 0.15 percent, Singapore shares hit eight-month lows and Japan's Nikkei ended fractionally lower.

Bond markets around the world were also still grappling with recession worries. Yields on 30-year US Treasuries and 10-year German bunds had both hit record lows - 1.905 percent and minus 0.716 percent respectively - and the 10-year Japanese yield was just above its record low of minus 0.300 percent touched in 2016.

"Stock markets on the other hand are supported in the near-term by hopes of more stimulus, notably from the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank," he said.

The two major central banks are expected to cut rates next month, while many investors believe the Bank of Japan could join the fray if market sentiment weakens further. Precious metal investors were still on a quest to buy safer assets. Gold rose as high as \$1,543 per ounce, near six-year highs of \$1,556.1 set earlier in the week, while silver rose 1.2 percent to \$18.55 per ounce - just shy of a 2017 peak of \$18.65 an ounce. — Reuters



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. — AFP

Greece to seek debt relief after confidence restored: PM

BERLIN: Greece's prime minister signalled on Wednesday he would seek further debt relief for Athens, but only after confidence is restored in the Greek economy. During a visit to Berlin for talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel, Greece's new conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said that his country was running large primary surpluses, which exclude debt servicing.

"But I have also said that Greece will maintain its financial aims for 2019 and 2020," he told journalists. "What we need to do first is to win political credibility as a reform government, and to place growth as the priority. "And then, there are questions that will be discussed with the creditors and possibly on the bilateral level."

Greece's out-of-control spending had triggered a major eurozone crisis a decade ago, and nearly led to the demise of the single currency bloc. Since then, Athens has carried out painful reforms in exchange for three bailouts worth 289 billion euros (\$330 billion) from the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The country exited its third and final international bailout in August 2018. Nevertheless, its debt load remains high-with public debt standing at 335 billion euros (\$372 billion) or 180 percent of GDP last year. The debt load is forecast to fall to 168 percent of GDP this year, but only through the belt-tightening brought in by the previous leftist government which Mitsotakis's New Democracy party says is stifling growth.

While in Berlin, Mitsotakis urged German companies to invest in Greece and help the country in its reform path. Asked about the issue of the Greek parliament's demand for World War I and II reparations from Germany, Mitsotakis said he hoped that Berlin would give a "positive reaction" to a request to open negotiations. "I believe that solving this problem will be important in ultimately bringing together our two countries," he said. — AFP

Business

Turkish economy to contract in Q2, log zero growth this year

Country grapples with the effects of recession

ISTANBUL/ANKARA: Turkey's economy is expected to shrink in the second quarter, its third straight quarterly contraction as it grapples with the effects of recession, and a Reuters poll yesterday also pointed to zero growth in 2019 as demand and investment slows.

The poll of 18 economists showed the economy shrinking 2 percent year-over-year in the second quarter, based on the median, and estimated annual growth of 0 percent for 2019, as last year's currency crisis continues to weigh on the major emerging market. Forecasts for the second quarter ranged from a 1 percent to 2.2 percent contraction. Estimates for annual GDP ranged from 1 percent growth to a 2 percent contraction, which on the whole was more optimistic than a July poll predicting the economy would contract this year.

"We expect the weak trend in investments to continue again and therefore have a bigger negative impact on GDP than in the previous quarter," said Ozlem Bayraktar Goksen, chief economist at Tacirler Yatirim. Turkey, the largest economy in the Middle East, has a track record of more than 5 percent growth. But a diplomatic dispute with the United

States last year and the currency crisis that wiped out more than 30 percent of the currency's value triggered a contraction of 3 percent in the fourth quarter.

In the first quarter of 2019, the economy contracted 2.6 percent year-on-year even as it returned to growth on a quarter-on-quarter basis. It may again narrowly log quarter-over-quarter growth in Q2, economists say.

Second quarter GDP growth is due to be announced on Sept. 2. A sharper than expected fall in industrial production in June, shrinking retail sales in recent months, and limited public consumption contributed to weakness in the second quarter. On the other hand net exports, helped by weakness in the Turkish lira, "will continue to be the biggest positive contributor to GDP," Goksen said, predicting a 1.5 percent year-on-year GDP rise in the second half of the year despite risks stemming from weak credit growth.

"At this point, we hold our 2019 forecast as a 0.3 percent annual contraction. We think there are downward risks," she said. A Reuters poll of more than 40 economists in July showed the contraction in Turkey's economy was expected to continue until the third quarter of the year, with positive growth seen



in the final quarter of 2019.

At that time, economists had forecast a 1.5 percent contraction annually for 2019. The government's own sharply-lowered forecast

for the year envisages growth at 2.3 percent in 2019, and 3.5 percent in 2020. Turkey's economy last contracted on an annual basis in 2009, by 4.7 percent. —Reuters

German minister eyes tax cuts for 'Mittelstand' as economy cools

BERLIN: Taxes would be cut for Germany's Mittelstand, the small and medium-sized businesses that form the backbone of Europe's biggest economy, under a proposal the country's economy minister made yesterday.

The plans by Economy Minister Peter Altmaier, who has been criticized by Mittelstand companies for not doing enough to help them in the past few months, include limiting tax on retained profits to 25%.

Hit by trade disputes and Brexit uncertainty, the export-oriented German economy contracted in the second quarter, and Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government disagrees on how to deal with the slowdown. "We are shaped by a strong and world-oriented Mittelstand like almost no other country," Altmaier said. "A corner stone of my Mittelstand strategy is to improve economic conditions. "We must reduce the tax burden on the Mittelstand."

The Mittelstand companies account for 35 percent of corporate turnover in Germany and 60 percent of jobs, Altmaier said. They tend to be family-owned, have up to 500 workers and annual revenues below 50 million euros. He also proposed capping tax for business partnerships at 45 percent, limiting welfare contribution costs to less than 40 percent, and cutting red tape to provide savings of 1 billion euros (\$1.11 billion). He reiterated his desire to completely abolish a solidarity tax, much of which has gone to support eastern states since reunification in



PARIS: German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier delivers a speech during the opening of the French Employers' Association (Medef) "Rencontre Des Entrepreneurs" summer meeting at the Longchamp horse racetrack in Paris. —AFP

1990, after the cabinet last week agreed to exempt most taxpayers from it.

Altmaier, a member of Merkel's conservatives, put no figures on the total savings he had in mind and gave no details on the financing of them.

Some Social Democrats (SPD), junior partners in the ruling coalition, want the government to ditch a long-standing commitment to achieving a balanced budget and be prepared to issue new debt to fund investment, for example in an ambitious new climate package.

However, many of Merkel's conservatives will not countenance loosening the purse strings to help the economy and prefer tax cuts. The BDI industry association welcomed Altmaier's plans, describing them as the "correct instruments" to strengthen small and mid-sized businesses and urged the minister to push through his ideas against any political resistance. —Reuters

British deadline looms for bank payouts over PPI scandal

LONDON: Britons faced a crunch deadline yesterday to claim compensation for mis-sold insurance that is costing UK banks billions of pounds, while tarnishing their battered reputations further following several financial scandals. Customers have until 11:59 pm (2259 GMT) to question lenders whether they have had Payment Protection Insurance added to credit products such as loans, mortgages or payment cards.

While PPI was intended to cover missed payments, for example if a policy holder lost their job, in many cases consumers were unaware the insurance had been added to a product, while others would never have benefitted despite pressured into taking it. UK watchdog, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), this week said £36 billion (\$44 billion, 40 billion euros) had been paid out in PPI compensation since the start of 2011, when banks lost a high court appeal against tighter regulation of the insurance.

Lloyds Banking Group (LBG), a lender bailed out by the UK government following the 2008 global financial crisis, is by far the worst affected, setting aside more than £20 billion, an amount likely to rise.

According to the FCA, an estimated 64 million PPI policies have been sold in the UK, the majority over a 20-year period to around 2010. —AFP

Business

Japan-South Korea trade spat an economic lose-lose: Experts

TOKYO: A diplomatic spat that prompted Japan and South Korea to downgrade trade and military ties is an economic lose-lose, experts say, with both countries already feeling the impact. South Korean firms are now scrambling to find alternative suppliers beyond Japan, while Japan's tourism industry is counting the cost of plunging visitor numbers from South Korea.

The dispute stems from of a long-running disagreement over Japanese use of forced labour in South Korea during World War Two. A series of South Korean court rulings have demanded Japanese companies compensate victims, but Tokyo says the issue was settled by a reparations package agreed decades ago.

As ties worsened, Japan imposed restrictions on the export of chemicals key to the South Korean chip and phone industries, and this week removed Seoul from a favoured trading partner 'white list.'

The moves have forced South Korean electronics giants like Samsung, LG and SK Hynics to hunt for suppliers elsewhere in the hope of reducing their dependence on Japanese manufacturers.

In early August, the South Korean government promised the sector a major injection of funds—around \$37 billion—to help achieve a long-term goal of self-sufficiency for 100 components for the country's industry. In the meantime however, South Korea's "overall business ecosystem" remains vulnerable, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, according to Kwon Tae-shin, head of the Korea Economic Research Institute.

The country's export-oriented economy was already suffering the effects of the US-China trade war and the global economic slow-down. "Six out of 10 small and mid-sized firms will not be able to stand the measures for more than six months," he warned.

Tourism troubles

On the Japanese side, authorities have played down the impact of the moves, insisting the new rules simply put South Korea on the same level as many other trading partners. Japanese industry is also not likely to suffer "serious damage" from retaliatory measures South Korea will implement from September, Yasuo Imanaka, chief analyst at Rakuten Securities, said. That is in part because Japan is much less dependent on South Korean products than vice-versa. A senior official at a leading Japanese firm said the economic impact for both countries was "very overestimated."

"It's essentially a political matter," he said. But parts of the Japanese economy have seen collateral damage, including the tourism industry. South Koreans were the second largest contingent of foreign visitors to Japan last year, just behind visitors from China, according to the Japan National Tourism Organisation.

But their numbers fell 7.6 percent in July from a year earlier, according to JNTO figures, with the trend expected to worsen given the plunge in August and September reservations seen by major Japanese tourism agency JTB.

Beer boycott

In the short-term, the sector can count on a



BUSAN: Containers at a port in Busan, South Korea. —AFP

boost from the Rugby World Cup being hosted from September, which is expected to draw 400,000 foreign fans. And a rise in visitors—numbers were up 19.5 percent in July—as well as next year's Olympic Games in Tokyo may also provide solace.

The diplomatic spat has had other economic impacts in the form of boycotts in South Korea of Japanese products from clothing to alcohol. Major Japanese brewers including Kirin, Asahi, Sapporo and Suntory have found themselves targeted.

South Korea accounted for 61 percent of Japanese beer-makers' exports last year, and

imports were down 45 percent in July from June according to South Korean customs. Japanese fashion giant Fast Retailing has also been hit by a boycott affecting its Uniqlo brand, which counts South Korea as a major market with nearly 190 outlets.

But the effects are also being felt in South Korea, where local airlines have been forced to reduce flights to Japan on declining demand. And even the boycott of Uniqlo has a knock-on effect, because the firm is managed in South Korea by a joint venture in which South Korea's Lotte holds a 49 percent stake. —AFP

New Italian Govt faces tough economic challenges

MILAN: The new coalition government Italy's Giuseppe Conte has been charged with forming faces many challenges in a stagnant economic environment. Here are some of the main obstacles to growth, stability and success:

Stagnant growth

The eurozone's third economy is not well. After a technical recession in the second half of 2018, when output shrank by 0.1 percent, Italy's economy saw zero growth in gross domestic product in the first half of 2019. Both the European Commission and International Monetary Fund predict the Italian GDP will grow by just 0.1 percent this year, while the outgoing government predicted growth of 0.2 percent. Some experts think Italy could slip back into recession.

The country is feeling the squeeze from generally slow European growth and the economic tensions between Washington and Beijing, but also by businesses' reluctance to invest in the

current global environment and domestic political instability.

Unemployment and poverty

Unemployment has declined slightly since the start of the year but in June still stood at 9.7 percent of the active population. That compares with the eurozone average of 7.5 percent and is much higher than 3.4 percent in the Netherlands and five percent in Germany. Youth unemployment is even more worrying. Around 28 percent of young people aged 15-24 who want a job are unemployed, almost double the European average of 15.4 percent.

Five million Italians—or 8.4 percent of the population—live in poverty. There is a yawning gap between the north and south of the country. In the south, 10 percent of families live in poverty, compared to 5.8 percent in the more industrialized north. The new government will have to increase efforts to revitalize the south, which workers are increasingly leaving due to a lack of jobs and infrastructure such as roads, schools and social services.

Massive debt

The economy is further unbalanced by Italy's colossal public debt which stands at more than 2.3 billion euros or 132 percent of GDP, the highest rate in the eurozone after Greece. Brussels is constantly calling on Rome to reduce its deficit, and thus its debt. The outgoing populist government was frequently clashed with the European Commission, mainly over public spending. —AFP

Pound dives on increased prospect of no-deal Brexit

NEW YORK: The pound fell against the dollar and euro on Wednesday as Britain's government moved to extend the suspension of parliament, increasing the likelihood of a no-deal Brexit.

Meanwhile, global stocks had a mixed day, with Wall Street staging a late rally, shrugging off its fears for the slowing world economy. In London, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the annual suspension of parliament would be extended until October 14 — just two weeks before the UK is set to leave the European Union.

Britain's currency slid by more than one percent against the dollar and euro in early business, before paring some of the loss. "The pace of sterling's drop demonstrates yet again the currency's susceptibility to Brexit fears," said Han Tan, market analyst at FXTM trading group.

The pound's plunge helped London's benchmark FTSE 100 index outperform as it features many multinationals with most of their earnings in dollars—whereas construction companies notably saw their shares take a tumble. Anti-Brexit MPs said Johnson's move

amounted to a coup and a declaration of war, branding the prime minister a dictator.

In New York, the gloom lifted as energy stocks benefitted from a plunge in crude oil inventories, pointing to sustained demand for fuel, a sign of economic health.

In light-volume, late-summer trade, Wall Street climbed out of the red and rallied, casting aside worries about Brexit, the escalating trade war and Brexit. Adam Sarhan said the lower prices early in the day had attracted bargain hunters. "Every time the market fell off the last month, we've seen the buyers show up and curb the selling," he told AFP.

Earlier Wednesday, yields on 30-year Treasury bonds touched a fresh all-time low while the spread between 2- and 10-year Treasury notes widened the most since 2007, indicating waning confidence in the longer-term outlook and drawing more attention to this closely-watched recession indicator.

Major European bourses fell. But a poll showed German consumer sentiment is stabilizing after three months of decline and despite fears of a looming recession in Europe's biggest economy.

Energy shares also were supported by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's call for the United States to lift all sanctions against his country before he would meet Trump, after the US leader had said he would be open to talks. In government bond markets, Italian bond yields fell below 1 percent, their lowest level ever, on hopes that a new government can be formed without fresh elections. —Reuters

Business

Privatize state-owned Petrobras? Lofty ambition, higher hurdles

Stiff opposition could stifle effort to sell Brazil's crown jewel

BRASILIA: Brazil's influential finance minister has convinced President Jair Bolsonaro to consider the once-unthinkable step of privatizing state-owned oil company Petrobras, but stiff political opposition could stifle any effort to sell the country's corporate crown jewel. Petrobras, or Petroleo Brasileiro SA, was founded in 1953 by former president Getulio Vargas following a nationalist campaign that began in the 1940s with the anthem "The oil is ours".

Selling the company would cap off the drive by Economy Minister Paulo Guedes, a Chicago school-trained economist and disciple of Thatcherite economics, to maximize privatization, deregulation and free-market activity.

Guedes, who is influential in Bolsonaro's right-wing administration, has said if it were up to him the state would sell "everything". But he needs to build support because unlike other state assets, privatizing Petrobras requires congressional approval. The Brazilian government's stake in Petrobras, including stock owned by development bank BNDES, is worth 135 billion reais (\$33 billion) at current market prices. It is hard to estimate how much a rival would pay for a controlling premium or how much the government could raise from outright privatization. Still, proceeds from a sale would go a long way toward reducing Brazil's budget deficit.

It would also be the clearest signal yet that the government is serious about shrinking the state's size and influence in business. But it is likely to remain a pipe dream, at least over the remaining 3-

1/2 years of Bolsonaro's first term. Petrobras is already raising cash by selling off non-core assets and the government has a long list of other firms it wants to privatize first. Also, politicians of many stripes oppose selling Petrobras, saying it would violate national sovereignty.

"Petrobras is a successful example of a public company ... so I find it hard to make the case that privatizing it will be more profitable for Brazil," said federal deputy Marcelo Ramos of the center-right Liberal Party. "Personally, I am against it and I don't think there will be appetite for this in Congress," he said.

Everything on the table

After a dispute about the sale of Petrobras subsidiaries, Brazil's Supreme Court decided in June that congress must approve any sale of the oil company. Bolsonaro himself has said in the past that he opposed privatizing Petrobras because of its "strategic" nature. Last week, he said the government was ready to discuss a possible sale, and shares of Petrobras briefly jumped.

"Everything is studied, everything is raised, everything is discussed," Bolsonaro told reporters on Thursday last week. "Whether you privatize or not, you have to look at the cost-benefit, what is good for Brazil and what is not," he said. A drive to privatize Petrobras "will embolden the opposition in Congress, which now has more support for its claim that Brazil is being handed over to businessmen and/or foreigners," analysts at Guide Investimentos said in a client note last week.



A logo of the Brazil's state-run Petrobras oil company is seen in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. —Reuters

\$70 billion debt

Currently, the government holds a 43 percent stake - 28 percent directly and 15 percent through BNDES - in what is the world's ninth-largest oil company by market capitalization. That is a controlling stake because it is all voting stock, equivalent to 50.3 percent of common shares, according to information provided by Petrobras to securities industry regulators. Petrobras employs nearly 70,000 people and is Brazil's largest company by revenue, operating profit and market value. It has

taken steps to reduce its huge debt load in recent years, as it began to move beyond the black eye inflicted by its part in the nationwide graft-and-corruption scandal exposed by "Operation Car Wash." But despite unprecedented moves to sell non-core assets, net debt still stands at around \$70 billion. Shares jumped 6 percent on Wednesday last week after local media reports that the government wants to push a sale through in Bolsonaro's first term, but have since slumped back along with the broader market.—Reuters

Argentina asks IMF to restructure debt payments

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina asked the International Monetary Fund to restructure its debt payments on the \$56 billion bail-out loan agreed last year in a bid to calm market turbulence, Finance Minister Hernan Lacunza said Wednesday. Following the announcement, the IMF said in a statement that it will "continue to stand with Argentina during these challenging times."

Recession-hit Argentina has suffered market volatility since business-friendly President Mauricio Macri was trounced in party primaries three weeks ago by leftist challenger Alberto Fernandez.

Debt repayments are due to begin in 2021 while the latest loan disbursement of \$5.4 billion is expected next month. Lacunza said the government has "proposed the start of a dialogue to roll back the debt repayments."

However, he said that while those talks would begin before the October 27 general election, they would not be finished until after the new government takes over on December 10. The request for repayment extensions aims to allow the next government to "deploy its policies without financial restrictions." An IMF delegation was visiting Argentina this week to review the loan, but is now returning to Washington as scheduled, the fund's spokesman Gerry Rice said in a statement that described talks with Lacunza and others as "productive."

"Regarding the debt operation announced by the Argentine authorities today, Fund staff is in the process of analyzing them and assessing their impact," Rice said.

'Important steps'

"Staff understands that the authorities have taken these important steps to address liquidity needs and safeguard reserves," he added. Lacunza also announced other initiatives to postpone the payment of bonds to institutional investors, relieving the pressure on international reserves so they can be used to stabilize the currency. The Central Bank bought \$300 million in pesos on Tuesday to try to calm markets but the currency still depreciated by almost 2.5 percent.

The currency weakened by 20 percent alone in the week after the primaries while the Buenos Aires stock exchange dropped by 30 percent. Just under two weeks ago, ratings agencies Fitch and S&P downgraded Argentina's credit rating from "B" to "CCC" and "B-" respectively.

Fernandez had romped to victory, in what was essentially a de facto opinion poll, with 47 percent of the vote to Macri's 32 percent. Such a result in October's election would send Fernandez—who has been highly critical of the IMF loan—to the presidential palace without need for a run-off in November.

"The loan received by the country and the set of conditions associated with it have failed to generate any of the desired results," Fernandez's team said in a statement on Monday after his meeting with IMF representatives in Buenos Aires. "There has been no letup in the contraction of the economy, a worsening of employment and the situation of businesses and families. There hasn't been a sustained drop in inflation and public debt hasn't ceased to grow," the statement said. —AFP

France, Germany to propose public investment in data centers for AI

PARIS: France and Germany are to make proposals in the coming months to invest public money in data storage facilities in order to wean Europe off of foreign centers and spur artificial intelligence investment, France's finance minister said on Wednesday. France's Bruno Le Maire said the investments would be based on a recent joint initiative to finance the development of batteries, which France and Germany want in order to avoid becoming dependent on Chinese batteries. "We will make proposals with Germany in the coming months to invest public money in data storage for artificial intelligence so that European data is protected," Le Maire told journalists on the sidelines of an annual end-of-summer business forum. German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said that Europe had fallen behind and that alternative had to be found in order not to become dependent on US and Chinese companies.

"We have an interest in Europe to keep our data in Europe. We have an interest in creating sovereign data structures," Altmaier said at the same conference. Neither minister said how much was expected to be put into the project. France has committed to put 700 million euros into the battery alliance and Germany 1 billion euros. The European Commission is due to give state aid approval before October. —Reuters

Sports

‘Moment of truth’: Super-fit Japan aim high at Rugby WCup

TOKYO: Japan coach Jamie Joseph promised the hosts would “give 150 percent” to hit their target of reaching the Rugby World Cup quarter-finals after naming his 31-man squad yesterday.

The Brave Blossoms will be at full strength when they face Russia in the tournament’s curtain-raiser in Tokyo on September 20 after talismanic captain Michael Leitch returned from injury at the recent Pacific Nations Cup.

“The team has set a goal of making the top eight for the first time in the history of Japanese rugby,” Joseph told reporters.

“The staff and players will give 150 percent — we’re under no illusions how difficult that is but it’s definitely our goal. The moment of truth will be upon us shortly.” “Our game is based around speed, skill and structure,” added the former All Black, whose team limbers up for the World Cup with a “must-perform” Test against two-time champions South Africa next week.

“But the key difference this year is we are fit enough now to play that game. We’re training at a level of intensity that’s 25 percent higher than our matches — I think that’s our key weapon.”

Japan famously won three games at the 2015 World Cup under Eddie Jones, including an astonishing 34-32 victory over the Springboks.

Currently ranked ninth in the world after capturing their third Pacific Nations title, the Japanese also take on Ireland, Scotland and Samoa in Pool A as they target a place in the knockout stage for the first time.

They will be boosted by their success at the Pacific Nations, where they beat Fiji (34-21), Tonga (41-7) and the United States (34-20).

PAIN BARRIER

Leitch’s return from a lengthy injury lay-off

also gives Japan a timely lift as they look to go one further than at the last World Cup.

“We were incredibly relieved he got through the Pacific Nations,” said Joseph.

“He’s got a separation of the pelvis which hasn’t gone away — he’s just battling through it. Most days he’s in a level of pain he’s not used to but he’s a tough guy.”

Joseph has consistently been compared to his predecessor Jones since taking over from the Australian. But the 49-year-old warned that Japan, once the whipping boys of the Rugby World Cup, could no longer fly under the radar after their shock over South Africa four years ago. “I’m not sure we can sneak up on a team anymore,” smiled Joseph, who selected 15 foreign-born players among his World Cup squad.

“There’s a reputation now that the Japanese play a good brand of rugby.”

“I’m a different bloke than Eddie,” said Joseph. “Eddie was a great coach for Japan and is for England but he’s been very generous sharing his knowledge with me — he still has a soft spot for Japan.” Joseph insisted Japan would fear no team at the World Cup. “I believe we have improved,” he said. “When I arrived in Japan the question was thrown at me how I could take the team to the next level after the success Eddie had.

“Four years later we have played every tier-one team and had four seasons of Super Rugby,” he added, noting how his side’s “winning mentality” and home advantage would make Japan a dangerous proposition. “That’s helped toughen up the players. I can confidently say we are one team as we go into the World Cup.”

Forwards (18)

Keita Inagaki, Yusuke Kizu, Koo Ji-



TOKYO: Japan’s national rugby team head coach Jamie Joseph (R) explains his message “One Team” in the guest book during a press conference at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo yesterday after announcement of the 31-man squad for the Rugby World Cup. Joseph promised the hosts would “give 150 percent” to hit their target of reaching the Rugby World Cup quarter-finals after naming his 31-man squad. — AFP

won, Isileli Nakajima, Asaeli Ai Valu, Takuya Kitade, Atsushi Sakata, Shota Horie, Luke Thompson, Wimpie van der Walt, Uwe Helu, James Moore, Hendrik Tui, Yoshitaka Tokunaga, Michael Leitch (captain), Pieter Labuschagne, Kazuki Himeno, Amanaki Mafi

Backs (13)

Kaito Shigeno, Fumiaki Tanaka, Yutaka Nagare, Yu Tamura, Rikiya Matsuda, Kenki Fukuoka, Ataata Moeakiola, Lomano Lemeki, William Tupou, Ryoto Nakamura, Timothy Lafaele, Kotaro Matsushima, Ryohei Yamana. — AFP

Uncapped duo to make Wales debuts in Ireland World Cup warm-up

CARDIFF: The uncapped duo of wing Owen Lane and prop Rhys Carre are set to make their Wales debuts after being named in the starting side to play Ireland in a World Cup warm-up match in Cardiff tomorrow.

Wales coach Warren Gatland has made 14 changes to the team that beat England 13-6 at the Principality Stadium on August 17, with Cardiff Blues back-row Josh Navidi captaining his country for the first time.

Full-back Hallam Amos, centre Scott Williams, fly-half Jarrod Evans and hooker Ryan Elias have all been given a chance to prove their worth ahead of Gatland announcing his 31-man World Cup squad on Sunday.

The 21-year-old Carre is regarded as one of the most promising young players in the game and was signed by English and European champions Saracens from Cardiff earlier this year.

Tomorrow’s match will be Gatland’s last home match in charge of Wales, now top of the World Rugby

rankings, before the New Zealander steps down after Japan 2019.

“It is a great opportunity for Rhys and Owen,” said Gatland after announcing his team yesterday. “They have worked hard all summer to get to this point, so it will be good for them to get their first international caps and put their hands up for RWC (Rugby World Cup) selection after the match.”

The former Ireland coach added: “For Josh, it’s a huge honour to be named captain. He has been hugely consistent for us, he has really impressed in the last couple of seasons and he will lead from the front on Saturday.

“There is so much at stake in terms of RWC selection and — with a number of positions still up for grabs — it will be a huge game.”

Victory over Ireland would give Wales a 12th successive home win. They have not lost in Cardiff since November 2017. Meanwhile Ireland will come into the match on the back of a record 57-15 thrashing by England at Twickenham last weekend.

Wales (15-1)

Hallam Amos; Owen Lane, Scott Williams, Owen Watkin, Steff Evans; Jarrod Evans, Aled Davies; Josh Navidi (capt), James Davies, Aaron Shingler; Bradley Davies, Adam Beard; Samson Lee, Ryan Elias, Rhys Carre

Replacements: Elliot Dee, Rob Evans, Leon Brown, Jake Ball, Ross Moriarty, Tomos Williams, Rhys Patchell, Jonah Holmes. — AFP

Smith returns to action for Australia against Derbyshire

DERBY: Steve Smith was back playing in his first match since being concussed by England fast bowler Jofra Archer as Australia faced Derbyshire yesterday.

But with Derbyshire captain Billy Godleman deciding to bat after winning the toss, Smith had to wait for his first innings since being hit on his unprotected neck during the drawn second Test at Lord’s.

Smith, felled by a 92 mph Archer bouncer, was ruled out of the rest of that match — with concussion substitute Marnus Labuschagne taking his place — and his injury meant he also missed England’s dramatic one-wicket win in the third Test at Headingley that levelled the five-match Ashes series at 1-1.

But star batsman Smith is set to make his Test comeback in next week’s fourth Ashes match at Old Trafford provided he comes through this three-day

fixture in Derby unscathed. There was a worrying moment for Smith early Thursday when a ball landed just short of him at second slip and hit him a painful blow on the hand but the star batsman shook off the injury.

Smith also bowled the last over before lunch, with the occasional spinner’s warm-up delivery sailing yards wide before he started the over proper with a friendly full toss.

Derbyshire were 71-3 at lunch, with fast bowler Michael Neser, not expected to make a Test debut next week, taking all the wickets to fall in a spell of 3-20 from seven overs. Smith, 30, marked his return to Test cricket following a 12-month ban that cost him the Australia captaincy with scores of 144 and 142 during Australia’s 251-run win in the series opener at Edgbaston. — AFP

Sports

Vettel hoping to re-boot his season one year on from last victory

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: Sebastian Vettel hopes to re-boot his and Ferrari's season this weekend in pursuit of his first victory in more than a year as Formula One returns to action at the Belgian Grand Prix.

The four-time world champion won last year's race at the majestic Spa-Francorchamps circuit, but has been without a victory since and needs to make the most of Ferrari's power advantage to add to his career total of 52 triumphs.

"This is a legendary track and it is definitely one of my favourites," said the German ahead of Sunday's race after he and the rest of the F1 circus re-grouped following the now-traditional mid-season European summer break.

"It has climbs and drops and so much of it runs through forests - once you learn it and you know it, it is impossible not to love it." To win, however, Vettel knows he must not only overcome his fast Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc, but also series-leading defending five-time champion Lewis Hamilton.

Hamilton holds a 62-point advantage ahead of Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas, who was 30 on Wednesday and is expected to be confirmed as staying with the team next year, in the title race.

Last year, he pulled off a victory, but then plunged to defeat to Hamilton in a fiercely-fought Italian Grand Prix, Ferrari's home event. Monza hosts the next race again a week after the Belgian showdown.

For Vettel, there could not be a more critical scenario than these two Grands Prix, as he battles to save his season, his reputation and, perhaps, his career. His Ferrari team boss Mattia Binotto allowed himself a glimmer of hope when he said: "I think that Spa is more power-sensitive, but there is nothing that is given, of course."

FERRARI PIN HOPES ON POWER

"And I think the situation will be very different to Budapest so we will try to prepare the best we can to seek our first victory." While Hamilton and Mercedes revelled in delivering a tactical master-class in Hungary, Ferrari were again left trailing and will pin their hopes on their greater power and straight-line speed paying off.

Vettel and Hamilton have each recorded three previous wins at Spa where Kimi Raikkonen of Alfa Romeo has won four times, the most of the current grid. Hamilton, however, has also won eight of this year's 12 races to control the title contest. Bottas has won twice and Max Verstappen of Red Bull also has two wins.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, relieved at the Hungarian recovery of form after what he called their "Armageddon" in Germany, said they will be taking nothing for granted now as they go into the final nine races of the 21-race season.

"We're approaching the start of the second half of 2019 more like the start to a new season," he said. "And we are looking forward to the fight." That fight is as likely to come from Ver-



SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel arrives during previews ahead of the F1 Grand Prix of Belgium at Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps yesterday. — AFP

stappen, who welcomes a new team-mate in Thailand's Alex Albon - promoted from Toro Rosso in a swap with Pierre Gasly - as from anyone. The Dutchman will again have massive sup-

port from his orange army and hopes to add to his two wins in four outings, but knows also that he may have a power disadvantage with his Honda-powered Red Bull. — AFP

Scott's our Ben Stokes, says Presidents captain Ernie Els

SYDNEY: Skipper Ernie Els said Australian Adam Scott could be golf's answer to cricket hero Ben Stokes as the Internationals look to turn the tables on the United States at the Presidents Cup. The South African faces a daunting task against Tiger Woods' US team at Royal Melbourne from December 12-15, with the Internationals only winning once before in the event's 25-year history.

Els, a big cricket fan, named Scott when asked who could step up like England's Stokes, whose unbeaten 135 gave England a stunning victory in last week's third Ashes Test against Australia. "He's got so much to give. He's playing in his ninth straight Presidents Cup, so he's the most capped player in the history of the Cup now," he said.

"He's going to be front and centre, one of the leading guys on the team." Els is banking on home fans to get behind the Internationals, with at least three, and likely four, Australians among his 12-man team. "I think it's very important that the crowd understand that their home team for the matches is the International side," he said on a conference call Wednesday.

Australians Scott, Marc Leishman and Cameron Smith were among eight automatic qualifiers and Jason Day is widely expected to be one of Els' four captain's picks.

China's Li Haotong, Taiwan's CT Pan, Mexico's Abraham Ancer, South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen and Japan's Hideki Matsuyama are the others on the team so far.

Els hinted heavily that former world number one Day, who has plunged to 23 in the world after a US PGA Tour season in which his best result was tied fourth, would be part of the team.

"There's a bit of time to go, but Jason is obviously one of my favourite guys," he said. Els mentioned South Africans Erik van



ATLANTA: File photo shows Adam Scott of Australia plays his shot from the second tee during the final round of the TOUR Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

Rooyen and Branden Grace as others on his radar for captain's picks, along with Venezuela's Jhonattan Vegas and Canada's Adam Hadwin.

Scott has encouraged Els to be a playing captain, a role that Woods is considering with the United States. But the big South African isn't keen. "I mean, Scottie has expressed quite a strong mention to me that I should look at myself as possibly a captain's pick, but I keep saying to Scottie, 'I've got a lot of other things on my mind,'" he said.

"It will be very difficult for me to be able to play and captain the side. So there's probably a 99 percent chance I'm not going to play." — AFP

Olympic swim champ Chalmers has heart surgery again

SYDNEY: Australian Olympic 100m freestyle champion Kyle Chalmers was recovering yesterday after a third operation to treat a long-term heart condition. The 21-year-old, who claimed silver at last month's world championships in South Korea, posted a photo on Instagram of himself in a hospital bed giving the thumbs up and saying "third time lucky".

Chalmers said he was hopeful the problem has now been fixed "once and for all" as the clock ticks down to next year's Tokyo Olympics. The Rio 2016 gold medallist underwent surgery on the same condition in June 2017, forcing him to pull out of that year's world championships.

A previous operation had not helped the problem known as supraventricular tachycardia, which occasionally causes his heart to race. Australia's head swim coach Jacco Verhaeren said Chalmers had no problems during the recent world championships, but there were some concerns during his preparations.

"Everything with your heart sounds like a big deal but in this case, it's a very targeted procedure," he told the Sydney Morning Herald. "He's had it done before but it didn't get the result that had hoped for and they knew exactly what to target now."

"They thought it was best to do it now before the (Tokyo) Olympic season kicks off," he added. Several high-profile swimmers wished him well, including top rival Caeleb Dressel, who swam the second-fastest 100m freestyle in history to retain his world title last month, narrowly ahead of Chalmers. — AFP

Sports

Yankees complete winning trip

NEW YORK: James Paxton and three relievers combined on a three-hitter, Aaron Judge continued his tear by hitting a two-run homer in the fifth inning, and the New York Yankees ended their nine-game West Coast road trip with a 7-3 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Wednesday afternoon. The Yankees, who hit four homers in the game, ended their trip at 5-4. They won the final four games and five of the last six after starting the trip with three straight losses in Oakland last week. New York swept three games in Seattle. Paxton (11-6) struck out four, walked five and threw 86 pitches in winning his sixth consecutive start. Judge's homer was fifth in six games and sixth on the trip. Gary Sanchez reached 30 homers for the second time in his career while Mike Ford and DJ LeMahieu also homered as the Yankees ended the trip with 18 homers in the last six games.

ASTROS 8, RAYS 6

Jake Marisnick capped a three-run seventh inning by scoring on a throwing error as host Houston rallied past Tampa Bay. The Astros scored three times in the seventh off Diego Castillo (2-8), erasing a 4-3 deficit and taking Gerrit Cole off the hook for what would have been his first loss since late May. Cole matched his season high with 14 strikeouts and set a franchise record with his 15th double-digit strikeout game of 2019, eclipsing the mark set by J.R. Richard in 1978 and matched by Richard the following campaign. But Cole surrendered four runs on six hits over 6 2/3 innings after allowing just six earned runs over his previous six starts combined.

DODGERS 6, PADRES 4 (10 INNINGS)

Enrique Hernandez scored on a two-out throwing error by San Diego shortstop Luis Urias, leading visiting Los Angeles to a win in the rubber match of a three-game series. Hernandez drew a two-out walk from Kirby Yates (0-5) and stole second. Russell Martin then hit a one-hop rocket to Urias, who made a nice stop on the ball. However, the throw to first sailed over the head of Eric Hosmer, allowing Hernandez to race home. The error was the rookie infielder's fifth in the past eight games. The Padres tied the game in the bottom of the ninth on a wild pitch by Kenley Jansen (4-3). Casey Sadler, the Dodgers' seventh pitcher, pitched around a single in the bottom of the 10th to record his first career save.

BREWERS 4, CARDINALS 1

Rookie Keston Hiura drove in three runs to lead host Milwaukee past St. Louis to avoid a sweep. Hiura delivered an RBI groundout, a solo home run and a run-scoring double as the Brewers snapped the Cardinals' six-game winning streak and moved back to within 5 1/2 games of National League Central-leading St. Louis, which fell for just the fourth time in the past 19 games. Brewers starter Jordan Lyles (9-8) allowed just one run while striking out nine batters in 5 1/3 innings. He gave up six hits and walked one to improve to 4-1 in with a 2.51 ERA six starts since arriving in a trade with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

TWINS 8, WHITE SOX 2

Jonathan Schoop homered twice, and Jake

Odorizzi pitched six strong innings to lift the visiting Minnesota to its fourth straight victory. Odorizzi (14-6) scattered two runs on five hits with two walks and eight strikeouts. Schoop drilled his second home run of the series in the second inning, connecting for a three-run shot that gave him 20 homers this season. The blast allowed the Twins to tie a major league record, giving them seven players with at least 20 home runs.

INDIANS 4, TIGERS 2

Jason Kipnis hit a pair of solo homers, Francisco Lindor hit a go-ahead shot, and Cleveland continued its dominance over Detroit with a road victory. Lindor broke a 2-2 tie in the eighth inning off Buck Farmer (5-5) with his 24th homer. Lindor had three hits and scored two runs. Carlos Santana added two hits and an RBI for Cleveland, which has defeated the Tigers in 14 of 15 games this season. Rookie Aaron Civale (2-3) limited the Tigers to two runs on six hits in seven innings, with no walks and five strikeouts. Both of his career victories have come against Detroit. Brad Hand notched his 32nd save by pitching a 1-2-3 ninth inning.

CUBS 10, METS 7

Ian Happ's two-run homer capped a six-run first inning as Chicago took a big lead early, then withstood rallies by host New York to clip the Mets. The Cubs have won the first two games of the three-game set to open a four-game lead over the Mets in the race for the NL's second wild-card spot. New York has lost five straight. Kyle Schwarber and Nicholas Castellanos also homered for the Cubs. Mets starter Noah Syndergaard allowed 10 runs (nine earned) on nine hits in three innings. He is the first Mets pitcher since Johan Santana on May 2, 2010, to give up 10 runs in a start.

ROYALS 6, ATHLETICS 4

Hunter Dozier capped a three-RBI performance with a tiebreaking single in the seventh inning to send Kansas City past visiting Oakland. A's third baseman Matt Chapman was hit in the head by a Jakob Junis pitch in the first inning but played in the field in the bottom of the first and batted in the second. But he was pulled from the game before the bottom of the second. Thanks to homers by Marcus Semien and Mark Canha, the A's held leads of 2-0 and 4-2 but the Royals were the only team to score over the final 4 1/2 innings to get the win.

BRAVES 9, BLUE JAYS 4

Matt Joyce and Freddie Freeman each homered and were among four Atlanta players with two RBIs as the Braves pulled away from host Toronto. Braves starter Mike Foltynewicz allowed three runs (two earned), eight hits and two walks in 4 2/3 innings and did not qualify for the win as the teams split a two-game set. Reliever Luke Jackson (8-2) allowed two hits and a run in 1 1/3 innings to pick up the win. Blue Jays starter Jacob Waguespack (4-2) allowed five runs (three earned), six hits and two walks in three innings. His undoing was a five-run second inning in which Joyce homered and Rafael Ortega, Ronald Acuna Jr. and Freeman each hit run-scoring doubles. Acuna's driving in two.



SEATTLE: Aaron Judge #99 of the New York Yankees hits a two run home run against the Seattle Mariners in the fifth inning during their game at T-Mobile Park in Seattle, Washington. — AFP

NATIONALS 8, ORIOLES 4

Kurt Suzuki homered and finished with four RBIs, and host Washington rode a five-run first inning to defeat Baltimore and split the four-game season series between Beltway interleague rivals. Washington's Max Scherzer, in just his second start since coming off the injured list after recovering from problems with his upper back and shoulder, was pulled after 4 1/3 innings. He gave up two runs on six hits and struck out eight with one walk. Wander Suero (5-7), who followed Scherzer to the mound, faced one batter and got the win. Baltimore starter Asher Wojciechowski (2-7) went four innings, giving up six hits and five runs. He struck out three and didn't walk a batter.

PHILLIES 12, PIRATES 3

After failing to hold a 7-0 lead in his last start, Philadelphia pitcher Vince Velasquez (6-7) gave up two runs in five innings while the Phillies offense scored five times in the fifth inning and cruised past visiting Pittsburgh. J.T. Realmuto went 3-for-5 with a home run and a triple, and Corey Dickerson added a homer for the Phillies. Cesar Hernandez notched three hits and three RBIs, and Bryce Harper contributed two hits and scored three times in Philadelphia's 17-hit attack. Rhys Hoskins broke out of a 7-for-71 (.099) slump with a triple in the second, then stroked an RBI double in the third for his first two-hit game since July 24. All eight starting position players for the Phillies recorded an RBI.

RED SOX 7, ROCKIES 4

Xander Bogaerts hit two of Boston's four home runs, Eduardo Rodriguez won his third straight start, and the Red Sox beat Colorado in Denver. J.D. Martinez and Rafael Devers also homered, and Rodriguez (16-5) extended his scoreless streak to 20 innings before giv-

ing up his first run in three starts. Boston moved within five games of the second AL wild-card position. Brandon Workman struck out all three batters he faced in the ninth for his ninth save of the season. Colorado's Charlie Blackmon and manager Bud Black were ejected by plate umpire Jerry Meals for arguing a called third strike that produced the first out of the inning.

REDS 5, MARLINS 0

Anthony DeSclafani pitched seven scoreless innings against his former team, leading visiting Cincinnati to a shutout win in Miami and putting the Reds one win from a four-game sweep. DeSclafani (9-7) allowed just two hits — both singles — and one walk while striking out eight batters. He is one win away from the first double-figure-victory season of his career, although this is the third time in five years that he has reached nine victories. DeSclafani was backed by Aristides Aquino, who went 2-for-4 with three RBIs, a homer and a double. Eugenio Suarez was another Reds hitting star, going 2-for-4 with a homer. He leads Cincinnati with 38 homers and has gone deep in four consecutive games.

RANGERS 3, ANGELS 0

Ariel Jurado threw six scoreless innings, and Isiah Kiner-Falefa had a key two-run double to lead Texas past Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim, Calif. Jurado (7-10) entered to begin the second inning after opener Emmanuel Clase narrowly avoided damage in the first inning. Jurado gave up just two hits — a fourth-inning double by Kole Calhoun and a seventh-inning single by Calhoun — on 66 pitches, striking one and walking one. The Angels were without Mike Trout, who was out with a sore right foot. Trout is expected back in the lineup on Friday following the team's day off. — Reuters

Sports

Serena, Federer rally to win, Djokovic hurt at rainy US Open

NEW YORK: Serena Williams nearly crashed out of the rain-hit US Open on Wednesday while top-ranked defending champion Novak Djokovic battled through shoulder pain and Roger Federer advanced despite a weak start.

US eighth seed Serena Williams, seeking her 24th career Grand Slam title to match Margaret Court's all-time record, got a scare before ousting 17-year-old US wildcard Caty McNally 5-7, 6-3, 6-1. McNally, who hadn't been born when Williams won her first Slam at the 1999 US Open, threatened a struggling Williams from the start before the six-time US Open champion won nine of the last 11 games to escape under the roof at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"I survived tonight. I'm not too pleased with the way I played at all," Williams said. "Serena, you made way too many errors today. What were you thinking? But I'm alive. I'm happy. I'll do better next time. I promise."

Djokovic, winner of four of the past five Slam titles and 16 in all, was treated for a sore left shoulder throughout his 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 victory over Argentina's 56th-ranked Juan Ignacio Londero. "It was definitely affecting my serve and backhand," Djokovic said of his shoulder injury. "I was definitely tested." Federer, a 20-time Grand Slam winner who last won the US Open in 2008, rallied to beat 99th-ranked Bosnian Damir Dzumhur 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4.

The 38-year-old Swiss third seed, who also dropped the first set against Indian qualifier Sumit Nagal in his opener, answered the wake-up call despite 17 first-set unforced errors. "It's just a bit frustrating more than anything, especially when the level is that low and there are that many errors and the energy is not kind of

there," Federer said. "But can only do better, which is a great thing moving forward."

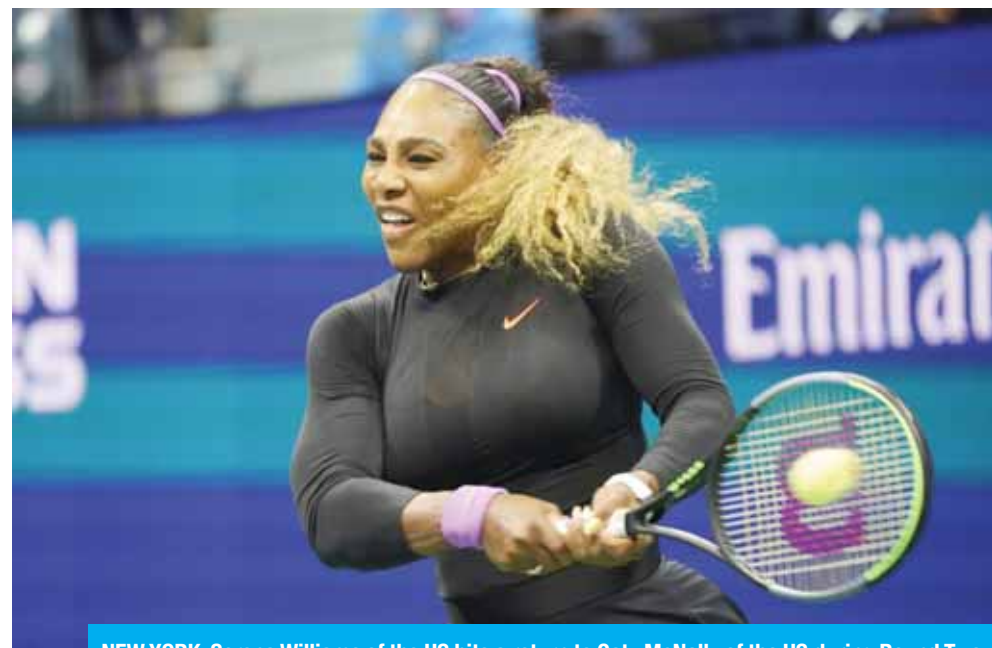
"I clearly have to play better from the get-go." What the year's final Grand Slam event lacked in quantity, with 22 singles matches postponed by showers, it overcame with quality in amazing matches that challenged three of the greatest stars in tennis history.

One point from surrendering a break into a tie-breaker, McNally won six of the final seven points, the last on a service winner, to capture the first set. Both players made 15 unforced errors. "I couldn't play too much worse at that point," Williams said. "I was making so many errors off my forehand. I knew I could play better."

Williams broke on a forehand winner in the sixth game of the second set and, after being denied on four set points on McNally's serve, hit a backhand volley winner to force a third set. Williams opened the third set with a break on the way to a 4-0 edge and cruised home from there.

"She really came out and played really well," Williams said. "She showed no fear." Djokovic's injury casts grave doubts on his bid to be the first US Open repeat winner since Federer won from 2004-2008, admitting he wondered if he would even get through the first set.

"This is something I've been carrying for quite a while now," Djokovic said. "It wasn't easy to play with the pain, but you have to hope you will get some opportunities and some lucky shots. "It's not the first time I'm facing this kind of adversity or challenge. It is what it is and I'm just grateful to be on the court." Five-time US Open winner Federer, who lost to Djokovic in last month's epic Wimbledon final, started poorly but broke early in each of the last three sets and



NEW YORK: Serena Williams of the US hits a return to Caty McNally of the US during Round Two Women's Singles match of the 2019 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York. — AFP

held serve to the end. "I buckled down and told myself I was going to hang tough and not get broken," Federer said. "That made a big difference." Japanese seventh seed Kei Nishikori, the 2014 US Open runner-up, beat 108th-ranked American Bradley Klahn 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

French Open champion Ashleigh Barty, the second seed from Australia, eliminated 73rd-ranked American Lauren Davis 6-2, 7-6 (7/2).

Czech third seed Karolina Pliskova, seeking her first Grand Slam title, ousted 202nd-ranked Georgian qualifier Mariam Bolkvadze 6-1, 6-4.

Ukrainian fifth seed Elina Svitolina defeated seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams 6-4, 6-4 and US 10th seed Madison Keys, the 2017 US Open runner-up, trounced China's Zhu Lin 6-4, 6-1. — AFP

Djokovic troubled by shoulder at US Open

NEW YORK: Defending US Open champion Novak Djokovic complained of feeling "quite rough and unpredictable" as a nagging shoulder problem hampered him during Wednesday's second-round win over Juan Ignacio Londero.

The world number one received medical treatment to his left shoulder throughout the match on his way to a 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 win and said he feared the injury could have forced him to retire.

"It was not easy to play with this kind of sensation, to be honest. I did not experience that too many times in my career," Djokovic said.

"I had obviously, you saw, a medical timeout. At changeovers, I tried to use within the rules as much as I can physiotherapy and medical help. That has definitely helped me stay in the match.

"The way it has started for me, especially midway through the first set, I didn't know if I would be able to finish the match."

Djokovic, who is attempting to become the first back-to-back men's champion here since Roger Federer won from 2004-2008, said the problem affected both his serve and backhand. He also revealed it was an issue he has been dealing with for "quite a while".

"It is new in a sense that I've never had that particular issue in my career. It's not new in a sense that it has both-

ered me now for almost a couple weeks," he said. "I've been experiencing some days of higher intensity of pain, some days less. It has been really fluctuating a lot, going up and down. What happened today on the court, actually how I felt, was quite rough and unpredictable."

Top seed Djokovic will play the winner between 27th seed Dusan Lajovic and American Denis Kudla in the third round on Friday and suggested he would "freeze" his arm for the next 48 hours in the hopes of recovering.

"Good thing about Grand Slams is you have a day off in between the matches. As I said, I'm hoping that with a proper medical help and treatments, I'll be able to get myself in a better state than I was today in few days," Djokovic said.

"I'm going to assess this injury tomorrow even more with further consultations with experts in sports medicine. I'm hoping that in two days' time I will be able to play pain-free, if that is possible."

Djokovic has won four of the past five majors, and 16 overall, but was tested by 56th-ranked Londero, who led 3-0 in the second set before the Serb stormed back by winning the next five games. Londero then broke back, held at love and forced a tie-breaker, but Djokovic won five of the last six points thanks to his opponent's errors and went on to dominate the final set. "It wasn't easy to play with the pain, but you have to hope you will get some opportunities and some lucky shots."

"I was also lucky to find my way back in the second set and to win in straight sets," Djokovic added.

"It's not the first time I'm facing this kind of adversity or challenge. It is what it is and I'm just grateful to be on the court." — AFP

Federer in favor of prize money boost in 'lower ranks'

NEW YORK: Roger Federer added his voice to growing calls for increased prize money for players "in the lower ranks" after battling into the third round of the US Open on Wednesday. A sizeable number of top men's players are backing a petition seeking a larger slice of tournament revenues at Grand Slams and other events, with those outside the top 100 struggling to make money or break even.

"I do believe the challenger players and also maybe qualifying and second-round losers should get more," said Federer, who rejoined the ATP player council along with Rafael Nadal this month.

"So I think if there should be increases it shouldn't be at the top anymore. I feel like we have reached a pretty good level there. So, yeah, I think that's going to be what we're going to fight for." Canada's Vasek Pospisil, another council member who has spoken out on the need for greater transparency and better revenue distribution, says only the top 100 ATP Tour players make money because only 14 percent of the sport's revenues goes back to the players.

"It would be nice if the players could also survive on the challenger tour in the lower ranks and not just at the very top," Federer said. "Even though I'm all for it shouldn't be a losers' tour, but they also sacrifice a lot of their time and they work equally hard as we do at the top. That hopefully we're going to get that right hopefully, as well, in the next sort of five to 10 years."

Controversy has arisen over the past months concerning various issues in the sport, with ATP player council president Novak Djokovic often on the opposite side of discussions from Nadal and Federer. — AFP

Sports

Tears and bitterness as Bury fans attend their beloved club's funeral

BURY: Bury fans descended on their Gigg Lane stadium on Wednesday like mourners at a funeral after the third-tier team were expelled from the English Football League. The supporters, old and young, reflected the sense of community that the club generated at weekends for over 100 years of playing as a league club.

Bury's travails are a world away from the riches enjoyed by Manchester City and Manchester United just nine miles (14 kilometres) around the corner — the epitome of the haves and have nots in football.

This was not lost on some of the fans who milled around in the rain in a funereal atmosphere, "paying their respects" and hanging scarves on the gates or placing bouquets of flowers.

"Football has got out of hand," David Smith told AFP. "There is a player (Alexis Sanchez) up the road at (Manchester) United being paid £537,000 a week and not playing. "The greed needs to stop. The top clubs have done this to

Bury FC and it won't end at Bury."

"The bottom clubs will be wiped out. In future years there will be the English Premier League and the (second-tier) Championship and nothing more," added the 58-year-old emergency services worker.

For Smith's 86-year-old mother Margaret, who recalls as a young girl shouting at the referee from behind the goal, it has been a dreadful few days for her and her husband. "He is 88 and he has been coming here for 84 years to watch the club," she told AFP.

"He is devastated, a lot of tears come down at our house this week. "I was reading a book at home but I could not read the book for the simple reason the club could shut down." The hope that the club might be saved on Tuesday had prompted several hundred fans like 30-year-old Lee Chadwick to come and prepare the ground for a league game with Doncaster Rovers this weekend.

However, the takeover talks collapsed

shortly before the 1600GMT deadline set by the English Football League and their expulsion was announced a few hours later.

For Chadwick, it is a huge blow to the community spirit engendered by the club. "I am absolutely distraught," he said. "I have supported them for 24 years — generations of my family have as well. "My grandfather brought my father and he brought me. I will never get the opportunity to bring my children down here.

"Pubs, local businesses — they could go out of business. It is a small town, the club means everything to it. It is a travesty." Like many Bury fans, Michael Kavanagh did not get any sleep on Tuesday and he told AFP a "bit of creative thinking" could have saved the club.

"The club meant a lot, it was the heartbeat of the town," he said. "The football club gives it a focal point. It is a very working-class town. We don't expect to win the European Cup, but watch a good game, have a couple of pints and have a chat."

Kavanagh is very proud of the two FA Cups (1900 and 1903) the club won and in producing some fine players like Manchester City and England great Colin Bell. "I remember one of the promotion seasons when Stan Ternent was manager (successive promotions in 1995/96 and 96/97)," he said.

"I remember running onto the pitch with my son. He is jumping up and down with the players, he still talks about it. "Pure joy that is what football does, only it can do that — a simple joy."

But Margaret Smith looked to Accrington Stanley, who reformed in 1968 after the collapse of the original club and were promoted back to the Football League in 2006, for inspiration. "We will have to start up from the bottom," she said.

"They used to say 'Who the hell is Accrington Stanley' after they disappeared from the league. "They started from the bottom and made it back." —AFP

Iwobi fires Everton into League Cup third round, Burnley knocked out

LONDON: Alex Iwobi's first Everton goal helped seal a 4-2 win at third-tier side Lincoln in the League Cup second round on Wednesday as the top-flight club survived a scare, while Burnley were dumped out by Sunderland.

Everton, who have scored just one goal in three Premier League games this season and lost 2-0 at Aston Villa last week, fell behind after only 20 seconds before fighting back to lead 2-1. Lincoln's Bruno Andrade scored a stunning 70th-minute equaliser, but Iwobi nodded in and Richarlison scored late on to send Marco Silva's men into round three. "It was a difficult game. Credit to Lincoln. The important thing is we're through. We showed our fighting spirit," said Iwobi. "I'm enjoying this new chapter of my life. Every competition we take seriously."

Close-season arrivals Moise Kean, Djibril Sidibe, Iwobi and Fabian Delph all made their full debuts for Everton, but the visitors suffered a disastrous start at Sincil Bank as Harry Anderson slotted into the net after a burst forward from Jack Payne. Everton quickly began to dominate proceedings, but had to wait until the 36th minute to equalise as Lucas Digne curled a magnificent 30-yard free-kick into the top corner. Teenage striker Kean, signed from Juventus earlier this month for 27.5 million euros (\$31m, £25m), almost scored his first goal in English football shortly before half-time but saw his powerful effort crash against the near post.

But Everton did take the lead in the 59th minute as Morgan Schneiderlin was tripped in the box, with Gylfi Sigurdsson smashing the resulting penalty into the roof of the net. A scuffle ensued inside the goal as Lincoln players tried to take the ball from Sigurdsson, with Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford running the length of the pitch to get involved and earning a booking for his troubles. —AFP

Ajax secure spot in draw for CL group stage

PARIS: Summer signing Edson Alvarez and captain Dusan Tadic scored as last season's semi-finalists Ajax beat APOEL 2-0 in their Champions League play-off second leg to secure their spot in today's draw for the group stage.

Mexican international defender Alvarez, a 15 million-euro (\$16.6 million) recruit from Club America to replace Juventus-bound Matthijs de Ligt, headed home from a set-piece two minutes before half-time as Ajax were rewarded for their first-half domination.

Tadic then controlled a crossfield ball from Klaas-Jan Huntelaar on the edge of the area before rifling home on his left foot with 10 minutes left in Amsterdam as Ajax advanced after a goalless draw in the first leg in Cyprus.

There were nervy moments for Erik ten Hag's team, who thought they had gone 2-0 up just after half-time when Huntelaar headed in off the underside of the bar. However, after a VAR review, the goal was disallowed for an extremely tight offside against Joel Veltman in the build-up.

Moments later APOEL had the ball in the net at the other end, but this time the offside was clear for all to see and there would be no precious away goal for the Cypriot champions. Ajax stunned Real Madrid and Juventus on their way to last season's Champions League semi-finals, where they were beaten by Tottenham Hotspur. They had already edged out Greek champions PAOK in the third qualifying round.

As well as De Ligt, the four-time European champions have lost midfield starlet



AMSTERDAM: Ajax Amsterdam's Dutch forward Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (R) fights for the ball with APOEL's defender Nicolas Ioannou during the UEFA Champions League Group phase football match between Ajax Amsterdam and APOEL FC at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam. —AFP

Frenkie de Jong to Barcelona since last season's remarkable run. Donny van de Beek, who has been linked with Real Madrid, did not play against APOEL, reportedly due to injury.

Ajax will be in the second pot in the draw in Monaco, which is due to start at 1600 GMT. That means they will avoid an early rematch with Tottenham or Madrid, who are both in the same pot. However, they could be drawn alongside holders Liverpool, who are in pot one.

The other clubs in pot one are Manchester City, Chelsea, Barcelona, Juventus, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain and Zenit Saint-Petersburg.

Also on Wednesday, Club Brugge beat LASK Linz of Austria 2-1 to go through 3-1 on aggregate. Leading 1-0 from the first

leg, the Belgians looked to have the tie in the bag when Hans Vanaken put them ahead on the night with 20 minutes left.

Brazilian forward Klauss promptly scored a penalty to set up a nervy finale, but the Austrians were then reduced to 10 men before Emmanuel Bonaventure Dennis's late effort wrapped up the win for the hosts. Beaten European Cup finalists in 1978, Club Brugge will be in pot three alongside the likes of Inter Milan, Valencia and Lyon. Meanwhile, Czech champions Slavia Prague beat CFR Cluj of Romania 1-0, a Jan Boril goal securing a 2-0 aggregate victory.

Slavia's last appearance in the group stage, in 2007-08, notably saw them lose 7-0 away to Arsenal. They will be in pot four in today's draw. —AFP

Sports

Marseille win under new coach at Nice as homophobic chants cause stoppage

PARIS: Marseille won their first match under new coach Andre Villas-Boas on Wednesday thanks to a 2-1 derby win at Nice in a match that was suspended in the first half following homophobic abuse from the home side's hardcore supporters.

Dimitri Payet moved his side up to 13th on four points with a spot-kick with 17 minutes remaining after Nice midfielder Wylan Cyprien had levelled Dario Benedetto's first Marseille goal with his own penalty.

The France international's strike also ended Nice's brief perfect start in the new season's third round of matches, but the clash was dominated by the over 10-minute suspension ordered by match officials as part of a crackdown on offensive chanting from French football authorities.

Players from both teams were escorted from the pitch in the 28th minute of the contest following repeated appeals to Nice fans to stop chants of "Marseille are a bunch of queers" and "Go fuck yourself, Ligue 1".

Fans also unfurled homophobic banners including one which called Marseille an "LGBT club". The second chant, sparked by the French league's attempt to stamp out homophobic chants from the stands, continued as the players returned down the tunnel, where they waited for the still-goalless match to recommence.

Villas-Boas said referee Clement Turpin "did the right thing in stopping the match" adding that the abuse was "above all a societal problem", while Nice coach Patrick Vieira said that he was "absolutely right to interrupt" proceedings. French equalities minister Marlene Schi-

appa also congratulated on Twitter Turpin's "respect for football", and blasted "a homophobic banner (which) dirtied the stands". However, goalscorer Cyprien bemoaned Turpin's decision, saying that "we can't stop every match each time some idiot does something, otherwise we will never play".

"I am against all discrimination, be it against gays or racist abuse," he continued to Canal+. But we can't stop matches as soon as there are insults that have nothing to do with the gay community."

CRACKDOWN ON ABUSE

Instructions were sent to referees before the start of the season to stop matches if homophobic songs could be heard, and the Ligue 2 game on August 16 between Nancy and Le Mans was halted for a few minutes — a first in France.

That match only resumed after Nancy players pleaded with their fans to stop, but the club was still hit late on Wednesday with a one-game closure for one stand by the French league.

The league has mooted the idea of introducing a list of banned words in football stadiums in an attempt to combat homophobia and bad language. On Sunday, a referee threatened to stop Monaco's 2-2 home draw with Nimes after the away fans insulted the league organisers with offensive language.

The controversy comes just two days after Ineos announced their purchase of Nice, who were aiming to maintain their perfect start against fellow south coast side Marseille, yet to win under new coach Villas-Boas.

Bob Ratcliffe, the brother of billionaire Jim



NICE: Olympique de Marseille's Japanese defender Hiroki Sakai (C) vies with Nice's Algerian defender Youcef Atal (R) during the French L1 football match between OGC Nice and Olympique de Marseille (OM) at the "Allianz Riviera" stadium in Nice, southeastern France. — AFP

Ratcliffe who owns petrochemical giant Ineos, looked on embarrassed from the stands as his team were forced off the field due to their fans' behaviour.

Earlier, Nigerian starlet Victor Osimhen shot a brace that took him to the top of the Ligue 1 scoring charts as Lille cruised to a simple 3-0 win over Saint-Etienne.

The 20-year-old fired in the hosts' opener shortly before the break and sealed the points with a fine turn-and-strike 15 minutes from the end, taking his tally to four goals from the season's opening three matches and moving Lille into fourth. Jonathan Bamba had added the second from the spot six minutes earlier after being upended by Mathieu Debuchy. — AFP

City to start League Cup defence at Preston

LONDON: Manchester City will start their defence of the English League Cup with a third-round trip to second-tier side Preston next month, while Wednesday's draw also pitted Liverpool against MK Dons.

Championship outfit Preston will be the first team to attempt to end City's bid for a second straight domestic treble when they welcome the Premier League champions to Deepdale.

Alex Neil's men thrashed 2013 runners-up Bradford 4-0 in the second round on Tuesday to progress, but will next face a City team who scored 27 goals in six games against lower-league opposition last season.

European champions Liverpool were beaten by Chelsea in the third round last term, but will be expected to find life easier at League One outfit MK Dons. Jurgen Klopp's side are the record eight-time winners of the competition.

Elsewhere, the draw threw up the first south-coast derby since April 2012 between bitter rivals Portsmouth and Southampton. Third-division Portsmouth will host Ralph Hasenhuttl's Saints at Fratton Park following Wednesday's 2-0 win at Championship club QPR.

Last season's runners-up Chelsea host either Grimsby or Macclesfield, whose game was abandoned on Tuesday due to heavy rain, while Arsenal welcome Nottingham Forest to the Emirates Stadium and Tottenham visit Colchester.

Manchester United will take on near neighbours Rochdale at Old Trafford. The games will be played during the week beginning on September 23. — AFP

Neymar waits as PSG mull latest Barcelona offer

PARIS: Neymar trained with his Paris Saint-Germain teammates on Wednesday as reports in France and Spain indicated a protracted deal to take him back to his old club Barcelona may still be reached before the transfer deadline.

The transfer window closes on Monday, September 2, leaving Barcelona in a race against time to come to an agreement with PSG that would allow the Brazilian to get his desired transfer back to the Camp Nou.

French sports daily L'Equipe reported that, after previous failed attempts, Barcelona had made a new offer of 160 million euros (\$177.3m), paid in two instalments, which could convince PSG to finally sell, provided at least one player is thrown in as a makeweight.

According to Le Parisien, Barcelona are willing to pay a slightly lower fee, between 140 and 150 million euros, while also offering Croatian midfielder Ivan Rakitic as well as allowing Ousmane Dembele to return to France on loan.

However, the agent of 22-year-old French World Cup-winning winger Dembele insisted his client was not interested in being used as bait in a deal for Neymar.

"Ousmane is 100 percent staying. There is no chance of him leaving. He wants to establish himself at Barca and he will," Moussa Sissoko told French television station TF1.

Dembele has endured an injury-hit two years at the Camp Nou since being signed by Barcelona for an initial 105 million euros from Borussia Dortmund immediately after Neymar's world record 222 million-euro switch to PSG. In Catalonia,

radio station RAC1 has reported that Barcelona have taken out a loan in order to have the funds needed to pay for Neymar's transfer, having already spent 120 million euros in the close season to sign Antoine Griezmann from Atletico Madrid.

Wednesday's reports from both sides of the Pyrenees came after Barcelona director Javier Bordas had raised hopes in Catalonia on Tuesday night as he spoke to reporters after returning from a meeting with PSG counterparts. "We are continuing negotiations, we are closer to a deal," he said. Meanwhile, a move to Real Madrid now seems increasingly unlikely for Neymar, who took part in PSG's training session ahead of the French champions' next league game at Metz on Friday. — AFP

Live		MATCHES ON TV	
		LOCAL TIMING	
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Sevilla FC v Celta de Vigo	21:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
Athletic de Bilbao v Real Sociedad	23:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
Bologna FC v spal	21:45		
beIN SPORTS			
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA			
Borussia Monchengladbach v RB Leipzig	21:30		
beIN SPORTS			
FRENCH LEAGUE			
FC Metz v Paris Saint-Germain	21:45		
beIN SPORTS			



NEW YORK: Serena Williams of the US hits a return to Katy McNally of the US during Round Two Women's Singles match of the 2019 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York . — AFP

Serena, Federer rally to win, Djokovic hurt at rainy US Open

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