

# Friday Times

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## Local

## Animal care or trade?



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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I got a pet a year ago, and while I was always criticizing those who abandon their pets after a while, now I feel that maybe I wasn't fair to them. I think animal care in Kuwait is difficult in a diverse society with double standards towards animal care and rights. This article is from my real-life experience dealing with a pet in Kuwait for about a year now.

I believe getting a pet in the house means you are ready to add a new member to your family, as it has sentiments and needs like humans and possibly more. You will be on your own without insurance or a hospital that offers your pet free medications or even consultancy. It is your full solo responsibility.

My tip for anyone thinking to have a pet is to ask themselves if they can afford it or not. I do not mean space, but financially. Can you allocate enough of a budget for pet



**Emergency consultations and vaccinations for pets should be free with no charges or minimal fees**

food, waste disposal, vaccination and possibly medical care in case your pet gets sick at any time and for any reason? You will probably end up with a KD 100 bill to pay for consultation, vaccinations and medicine - sometimes more. I don't intend to discourage people from having a pet, but I am trying to convey the message that taking care of an animal in Kuwait is not easy and you will need full family support to keep your pet happy and healthy.

Secondly, I am really surprised that while we have an animal rights law in Kuwait which stresses the rights of animals and owners' duties, animal hospitals don't receive financial support from the government. For example, emergency consultations and vaccinations for pets should be free with no charges or minimal fees. The hospitals will not be in loss as the government will be their guarantor. I know some may think such an idea is crazy, but I really believe it can be possible if we have sincere will.

It is really heartbreaking to see some people put up their pets for adoption because they can't afford taking care of the pet financially, and not as it's usually said that they don't have time, or as someone told me, their mum doesn't like to have a pet around. I sometimes think there is cultural issue too as some people don't like to see a pet in the house.

Can you imagine how hard is it to leave your pet on the street alone and hungry in this hot weather? It will die instantly due to the heat, if not by a speeding car. I believe we need to support those who make such decisions because they can't keep their sick pets under their roofs.

Finally, I think it is time to have a community for animal lovers who are ready to submit a petition to the government to support animal hospitals in Kuwait. I believe we have an ethical duty towards animals and thus we should support those who love to keep a pet but may let go of their beloved animals forcibly after experiencing difficulties.

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



An aerial view of Arabian Gulf Street — Mohammad Al-Hajeri/KUNA

## Thousands fall for job recruitment scams every year

By Faten Omar

Recruitment scams targeting people seeking a better life abroad are common, especially in labor-exporting countries like Egypt and India as well as Bangladesh, Jordan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and other countries.

Kuwait Times was recently informed about one such scam taking place in India. According to a source close to the issue, 41 candidates were recruited without any selection process. The recruitment agency allegedly demanded 280,000 to 300,000 rupees (KD 1,250 to 1,350) from each candidate and it's unclear if they will in fact be hired or have a job if and when they arrive in Kuwait.

Recruitment scams often cost low-income workers thousands of dinars in illicit bribes, only to find upon arrival in Kuwait that no job awaits them.

Sibi U S, Second Secretary at the Indian Embassy in Kuwait, told Kuwait Times that this year the embassy has received 14 complaints regarding recruitment scams. "Many people and companies have contacted the embassy to complain about fake recruitment, where many people came to Kuwait to find themselves jobless or in different jobs other than the ones they signed up for in the contract," he said.

Sibi affirmed the embassy is taking this issue seriously. "There are two procedures that the embassy follows - contacting the sponsors and asking them to give back the passport and letting the worker go back to India, or we send an employee from the embassy with the worker to the ministry of social affairs and labor to translate for both sides and explain the Kuwaiti law to the worker, because many have difficulties communicating," he explained.

"In 2018, the embassy received 1,327 complaints from workers holding article 18 visas. We also had 67 complains about illegal residents holding article 14 visas (family visit visas). In 2017, we received 1,415 work visa and 53 visit visa complaints," he added.

There are nearly a million Indian workers in Kuwait. Visa

traders and human traffickers target populations in labor exporting countries in the region as well as elsewhere in Asia. Sibi said some unscrupulous businesspeople create small businesses just to allow them to sell visas and bring people from outside, and this is a problem for many.

He noted that people must check the visa, company and the contract. "The Kuwaiti system asks for contracts in Arabic; the only thing written in English is the name. Fake recruitment agencies use this to scam people in India. We received an email from a person in India who wanted to check his contract. The contract was written in random Arabic alphabets that made no sense - just to scam the person, as he could only understand his name that was written in English, and as a non-Arabic speaker, did not understand the rest," Sibi said.

In view of the large number of complaints being received by the embassy, the mission suggested some procedures to be followed to safeguard Indian citizens seeking employment in Kuwait and the welfare of Indian workers in Kuwait. The person must be sure of the recruiting agent. Ask them to show the original registration certificate issued by the Protector General of Emigrants, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Do not deal with them unless they are registered and make sure the registration is valid and not suspended or canceled.

Ask the recruiting agent to show to you the demand letter and power of attorney from the foreign employer and the agreement between the sponsor and recruiting agent. Also, carefully go through the employment contract detailing the salary and other service conditions. Women below the age of 30 (Emigration Check Required category) may not be granted emigrant clearance for employment as a housemaid, domestic worker, hairdresser, beautician, dancer, stage artist, general worker, etc.

In case of any doubts about the genuineness of the visa sent to you, check with the Embassy of India to Kuwait (e-mail: labour@indembkwt.org; attachelabour@indembkwt.org).

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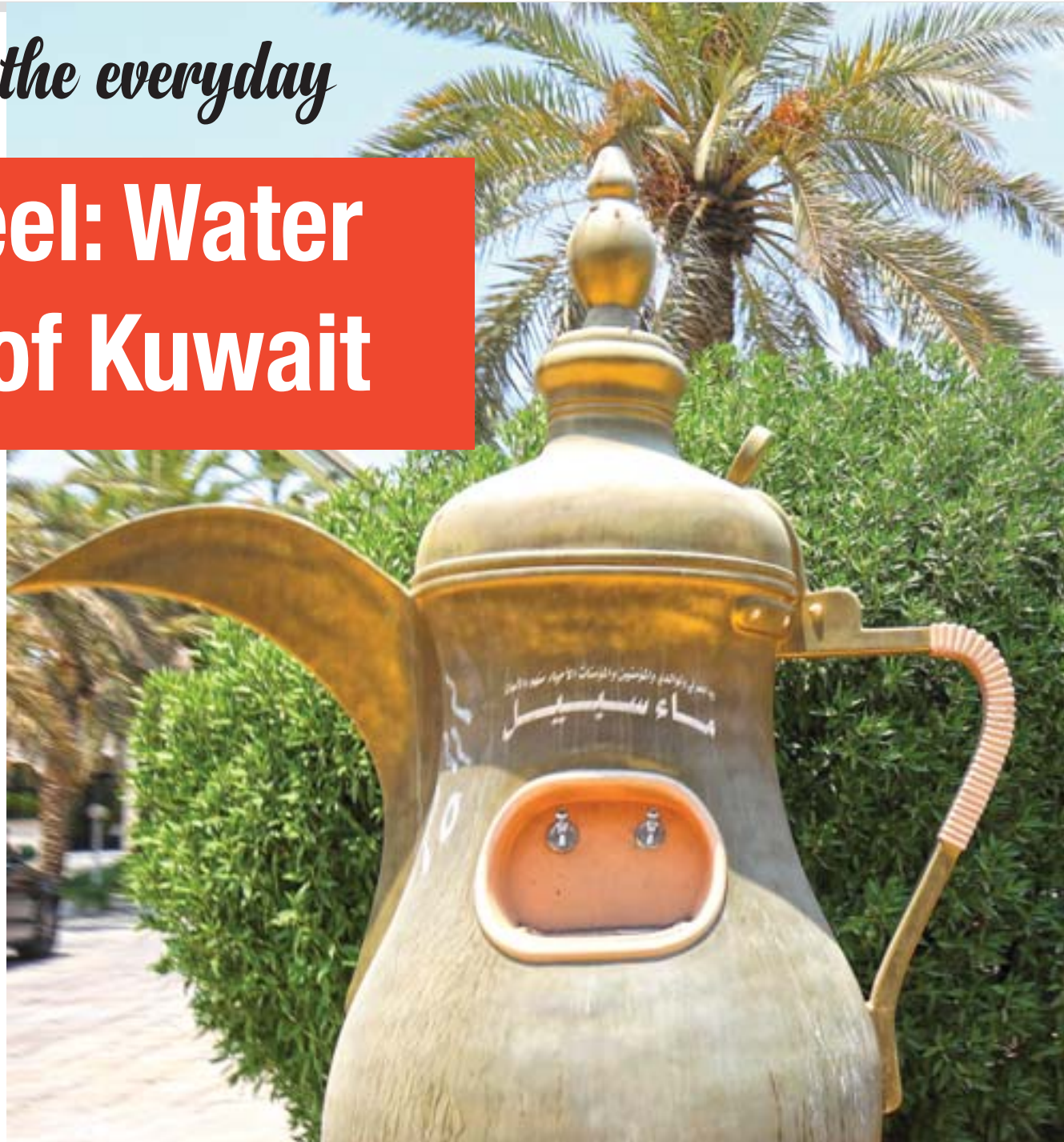
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*The beautiful of the everyday*

# Ma'a Sabeel: Water fountains of Kuwait



In the desert, one of the most important places is where ever water can be found. In Kuwait, a country with almost no natural water resources, fresh water is freely available on nearly every street corner, roundabout and city block. Public water fountains, known locally as sabeel or ma'a sabeel (water fountain of the street or way), they are often sponsored by families in the name of a departed loved one and come in many designs that reflect Kuwaiti, Gulf, Arab and Persian heritages.

The oldest water fountain in Kuwait lives in Kuwait City. The Bin Duaij water fountain was established as a charity by Abdulaziz Mohammad Al-Duaij in 1876. The fountain is a natural treasure and charitable trust, governed by the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation.

Kuwait often showcases ma'a sabeel during international exhibitions and artists and architects from all over the world have designed sabeel for Kuwait both at home and abroad. The water fountain in the shape of the 1970s Kuwait Water Tower was designed by Swedish architect Sune Lindstrom to represent the iconic water towers in Kuwait, for instance.

There's even an Instagram account dedicated to Kuwait's sabeel. The account @drinkingfountainsofkuwait showcases the diversity of sabeel that can be found all over the country - from simple stainless steel water colors to elaborately tiled sabeel as monuments to the departed.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Local



# Defense Minister reviews structural framework of north economic zone

## First Deputy PM stresses significance of scientific research



**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah heads a meeting to review the structural framework of the northern economic zone. — KUNA photos



**Sheikh Nasser receives the founders of the scientific research incubator yesterday.**

**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah reviewed yesterday the structural framework of the northern economic zone of Kuwait. A defense ministry press release said Sheikh Nasser headed a meeting dedicated to the review. Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Boushehri and a number of officials from the defense and pub-

lic works ministries were present at the meeting. The northern economic zone is part of Kuwait's 2035 vision, which aims at transforming Kuwait into a regional center for commerce.

Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also stressed yesterday the need for well-defined scientific research and plans that address the shortcomings and deficiencies in the health and education sectors. This came in a press statement

issued by the ministry of defense after Sheikh Nasser's reception of a number of academics and founders of the scientific research incubator (facts and figures), which is interested in the aforementioned sectors. Sheikh Nasser voiced encouragement and support for such initiatives, pointing out that such endeavors should develop effective solutions to improve the level of health and educational services. — KUNA

## Kuwait reiterates firm support of Palestinian cause

**JEDDAH:** Kuwait reiterated yesterday its firm stand in favor of the Palestinian cause, which continue to top the country's political priorities, a Kuwaiti senior official affirmed. Through its 2018-2019 non-permanent membership of the United Nation Security Council (UNSC), Kuwait has constantly emphasized the need to achieve the legitimate Palestinian right through ending the Israeli occupation, Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hayyen said.

Hayyen made his remarks while addressing participants of the extraordinary meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's executive committee at the level of foreign ministers on the recent escalation of Israeli violations in the occupied city of Jerusalem. Kuwait has also stressed the importance of attaining peace in the Middle East based on the Arab peace initiative, and implementing all international agreements on the two-state solution, which includes establishing an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, he added.

The Israeli authorities continue to violate Muslim sanctities in the occupied Palestinian territories, and recently provoked the sentiments of over one billion and half of Muslims around the world with opening a new tunnel, named "Pilgrimage Road", which runs from underneath the village of Silwan in east Jerusalem, leading eventually to the Buraq Wall in the Old City, said Hayyen. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives at his office yesterday Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait Ghulam Dastgir and German Ambassador to Kuwait Karlfried Bergner. — KUNA photos



## FM receives outgoing Pak, German envoys

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at his office yesterday Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait Ghulam Dastgir, out of respect for ending his term as ambassador to Kuwait. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled commended the ambassador's efforts during his tenure in the

country and his contributions in supporting and strengthening the strong bilateral ties between both sides.

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah also received yesterday German Ambassador to Kuwait Karlfried Bergner on the occasion of his term ending. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled praised the German ambassador's works on strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and a number of high ranking officials in the foreign ministry attended the meetings. — KUNA

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## Local

# KAF honors 'Do the Write Thing' student ambassadors

## Program aims to reduce youth violence in US schools, communities

**WASHINGTON:** The Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF), in partnership with the National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV), hosted its annual ceremony honoring the "Do the Write Thing" (DtWT) National Student Ambassadors under the theme "Of One Voice, Of One Heart". The event recognized and honored 47 young students from across the US who have "committed to making communities safe for themselves and future generations" by participating in the DtWT Challenge, where they shared their compelling stories of distressing and often tragic situations, as well as hope.

This year alone, the program has heard stories from over 85,000 students who shared, through their writings, their experiences with violence and their solutions to reducing violence. KAF Chairman Dr Hassan Al-Ebraheem told KUNA: "What began as a pilot program in 1994 with only 850 students participating in the 'Do the Write Thing' Challenge, has grown into almost 85,000 students submitting writings from 25 communities across the US in 2019." He added: "This year's writings alone are 100 times the amount we received 25 years ago, and since the launch of the program, over two million students have continued to exemplify the work of the Kuwait-America Foundation."

On this year's student ambassadors, Ebraheem noted: "They just like you, have reached deep within themselves and have put pen to paper to say that enough is enough. They have taken a stand for what they believe, united in a cause greater than an individual

with an impact that is far-reaching and life changing. The longevity of DtWT is a testament to its success. It reaches students who live with violence every day and empowers them, through their writings, with the ability to reduce violence and help create an America that is safe for all."

The DtWT Challenge has established itself as a successful program aimed at reducing youth violence in schools and communities across the US as it seeks to empower youth, through their writings, with the ability to reduce violence and create an America in which all children enjoy safe schools, peaceful neighborhoods and loving homes.

Since 1996, the challenge has given over two million students a platform for sharing their experiences. The program reaches out to most vulnerable students, offering them an experience that proves to be both therapeutic and cathartic. The "Do the Write Thing" Challenge was founded by the Kuwait-America Foundation. The connection between KAF and the DtWT is a "proud reminder" of the cooperation that can exist and the ties that can be forged between two nations for a common good. The event was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, his wife Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah and Dean of the World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors Dr Merza Hasan, in addition to several government officials and community service leaders. — KUNA



**WASHINGTON:** KAF Chairman Dr Hassan Al-Ebraheem and Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah are seen during the event. — KUNA

## MoI foils plans to hold yacht party

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry's relations and security information explained that the public morals protection department saw an ad about a party on a yacht and contacted the person who placed the ad, who said the concert was cancelled, but he was summoned to face legal action.

### No-parking patrol being trialed

The interior ministry's relations and security information said the video of a police vehicle seen on social media roaming the streets to check for parking violations is true. It said the vehicle belongs to the traffic department and issues tickets for no-parking violations or parking on pavements, and it is currently on a trial basis. Its implementation will be preceded with awareness campaigns before it is officially introduced.

### Panel to probe custodial death

The interior ministry's relations and security information also said Interior Minister Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah ordered the formation of a committee over the death of a detained expat.

### KFSD shuts 5 facilities

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's prevention sector closed down five violating facilities, as the prevention sector continues its inspection campaigns of all facilities in Kuwait to check for violations. KFSD also concluded a sea rescue course held for commissioned and non-commissioned officers at the National Guard from June 9 to July 17.



The new patrol car for no-parking violations.



KFSD's prevention sector officers close a violating facility.

## Kuwait, Luxembourg initial tax protocol

**BRUSSELS:** Kuwait Ministry of Finance and Luxembourg Ministry of Finance yesterday in Luxembourg, initialled a protocol amending the convention for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and capital. Aseel Al-Munifi, Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Tax Affairs in Kuwait Ministry of Finance, initialled the protocol on behalf of Kuwait, and Paul Roller, Head Manager of Department of International Relations and Tax Administration, on behalf of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

In a phone statement from Luxembourg to KUNA, Munifi explained that Kuwait and Luxembourg had signed the tax convention in 2007, and it was ratified only by Kuwait in 2010, but not ratified by Luxembourg yet. The major articles amended in the protocol are corresponded to the minimum standard of the BEPS project (base erosion and profit shifting), as demanded by the OECD to further develop the economic relationship and to enhance the co-operation in tax matters between the countries specially in automatic exchange of information (AEOI). Munifi said the tax convention between Kuwait and Luxembourg is intended to be signed during the expected visit of the Prime Minister of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel to Kuwait later this year. HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had invited Bettel to visit Kuwait this year during their meeting on the sidelines of the EU-Arab League Summit in Sharm El Sheikh in February. — KUNA



**BRUSSELS:** Kuwait and Luxembourg officials ink the tax protocol agreement. — KUNA



# Iran seizes foreign tanker accused of fuel smuggling

## British defense minister urges Iran to de-escalate Gulf tensions

**TEHRAN:** Iran's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday they had detained a "foreign tanker" and its crew for allegedly smuggling fuel, in the latest incident to send tensions soaring in the Gulf. The announcement follows Iran saying it had come to the aid of a foreign tanker after receiving a distress call - making no mention of the vessel being seized. The Guards did not confirm whether the vessel they detained Sunday in the strategic Strait of Hormuz was the same ship as that mentioned Tuesday by the foreign ministry.

"With a capacity of two million barrels and 12 foreign crew on board, the vessel was en route to deliver contraband fuel received from Iranian boats to foreign ships in farther regions when it was intercepted," the force's Sepahnews website said. It was seized south of the Iranian island of Larak, the Guards said without detailing the name or provenance of the vessel. The Guards' statement came after officials said Iran had come to the aid of an ailing

tanker on Sunday. "Iranian forces approached it and using a tugboat brought it into Iranian waters for necessary repairs," foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said.

TankerTrackers reported that the Panamanian-flagged tanker Riah, used in the Strait of Hormuz "for fuelling other vessels", had crossed into Iranian waters on Sunday. According to the online oil shipment tracking service, at that point the tanker's automatic identification system stopped sending signals. Refinitiv data showed that the last signal received from the vessel was on Sunday when it was in the Strait of Hormuz off the Iranian island of Qeshm, heading towards Oman from Larak Island.

The tanker's registered manager is Prime Tankers in the UAE. That company told Reuters it had sold the tanker to another UAE-based company, Mouj al-Bahar. An employee at Mouj al-Bahar said that the firm did not own it but had been managing the vessel up to two months ago, and that it was now under the management

of a company called KRB Petrochem. Reuters could not reach KRB Petrochem for comment. The Revolutionary Guards said in yesterday's statement they had seized no other ship in the Gulf, as Western countries expressed concerns over alleged Iranian actions in the region.

Britain meanwhile urged Iran to ease tensions in the Gulf yesterday and said it was seeking information about the latest incident. "But it is vital that we send a very clear message to Iran that we want them to step back from this situation, that we want them to de-escalate, but we have always and we will continue to protect shipping and the free flow of goods in that area," Defense Secretary Penny Mordaunt told a defense conference. Iran accused Britain of piracy earlier this month after British Royal Marines seized an Iranian tanker off the coast of Gibraltar on suspicion it was shipping oil to Iran's ally Syria in breach of EU sanctions on that country. — Agencies

## US Centcom chief vows to boost Gulf maritime security



**AL KHARJ, Saudi Arabia:** US Marine Corps General Kenneth McKenzie Jr (left) and Lieutenant General Fahd Al-Saud (center) are shown by coalition spokesman Colonel Turki Al-Malki (right) reportedly Iranian weapons seized by Saudi forces from Yemen's Houthi rebels yesterday. — AFP

**AL KHARJ, Saudi Arabia:** US Central Command chief Kenneth McKenzie pledged yesterday to work "aggressively" to ensure maritime safety in strategic Gulf waters after a spate of attacks blamed on Iran. "We are currently talking with the international community about the importance of the right of freedom of navigation in the Middle East," McKenzie told reporters at Prince Sultan air base near Riyadh. "We are going to work very aggressively with our partners... to come to a solution that will enable the free passage of critical oil and other commodities... through the region."

His comment comes after US General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, last week said the US aims to form a coalition to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Gulf amid fraught relations between Washington and Tehran. Tensions in the area - through which nearly a third of the world's oil is transported - have spiked in recent weeks, with the US blaming Iran for multiple attacks on tanker ships in the region, and Tehran shooting down an American drone.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last

month that he hopes more than 20 countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, would work together on building maritime security. McKenzie said the US was in "exploratory talks" with potential partners to ensure free passage through strategic waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz. This is "not a United States problem, it's an international problem... We're eager to be part of an international solution", McKenzie added.

He refused to confirm a CNN report that US President Donald Trump's administration plans to send 500 troops to Saudi Arabia, in what would serve as a show of force to Iran. The troops will be stationed at the Prince Sultan air base, CNN reported, citing two officials at the US Defense Department. The US announced in May that it was deploying 1,500 additional troops to the Middle East to counter "credible threats" from Iran. McKenzie's visit to Saudi Arabia comes a day after the US House voted to block \$8.1 billion in arms sales to the kingdom and other allies, in a move likely to be vetoed by Trump. — AFP

## US amphibious group patrols Arabian Sea

**ABOARD USS BOXER, Arabian Sea:** At a thumbs-up sign from a sailor, a US Harrier fighter jet takes off from the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer in the Arabian Sea as an oil tanker passes, a nautical mile away. The patrol is "standard" but the situation - growing tension between the United States and Iran - is not. Soon after the roar of the Harrier fades, two combat helicopters and two unmistakable Osprey aircraft with their tiltable rotors land back on the flight deck.

"We want to make sure that we assure allies in the region and to ensure freedom of navigation and free flow of commerce," says Colonel Fridrik Fridrikson, commanding officer of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Attacks on tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, which the United States blames on Iran, have unsettled crucial shipping lanes that link Middle Eastern oil producers to markets in Asia, Europe, North America and beyond.

Iran denies involvement, but has threatened to respond robustly to US sanctions that have followed President Donald Trump's abandonment of a major 2015 treaty, in which Iran agreed to restrict

nuclear work in return for the lifting of sanctions. The United States has beefed up its military presence and is asking allies to help protect the strategic waters off Iran and Yemen. The US Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, says Gulf Arab states have stepped up patrols.

Captain Jason Burns, commander of the Boxer, flagship of the Amphibious Ready Group, said it had left San Diego in May on a Middle East mission planned a year ago, related to "our usual partnerships with our allies in the region". The group includes the USS John P Murtha, the USS Harpers Ferry and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, which has around 4,500 sailors and Marines.

On the Boxer, officers stand on a viewing gallery known as Vulture's Row, using binoculars to follow a traditional Arab dhow sailing by and report its movements. In the hangar bay below, Marines test machine guns. Three hovercraft, each loaded with three Light Armored Vehicles, stand ready to launch, with trucks, Humvees and other gear lined up behind.

Daily training spans the ship's main roles, "whether it's aviation, ground combat or combat support", says Brigadier General Matthew Trollinger, commander of the Fifth Fleet's Naval Amphibious Force 51. Burns insists the deployment is nothing unusual: "We do our standard presence operations and provide stability to the region, as the navy has done since World War Two." — Reuters



**This handout picture released by the US Navy on July 14, 2019 shows the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (left) and amphibious dock landing ship USS Harpers Ferry (right) conducting a replenishment-at-sea evolution with fast combat support ship USNS Arctic (center) in the Arabian Sea. — AFP**



Bangladesh floods worsen after breach, death toll nears 100 in India

## US senator calls for investigation into Russia-made FaceApp



KYOTO: This aerial view shows the rescue and recover scene after a fire at an animation company building killed some two dozen people in Kyoto yesterday. —AFP

# 33 dead in Japan arson attack

## Suspected arsonist shouted 'drop dead' as he doused building

**TOKYO:** A suspected arson attack at an animation production company in Japan killed 33 people and injured dozens more yesterday, after a man reportedly doused the building with flammable liquid and shouted "drop dead." A motive for the apparent attack remained unclear hours after the blaze. If arson is confirmed, the attack will be among the deadliest criminal acts in decades in Japan, where violent crime is extremely rare.

The fire gutted the three-storey building in the city of Kyoto that housed Kyoto Animation, behind famous anime television productions. The incident sparked an outpouring of support from the industry and fans worldwide, including a viral fundraising campaign. Late yesterday evening, a local fire department official said the toll stood at 33 dead. "Of the 33, two were found on the ground floor, 11 on the second and 20 on the third and also on the staircases that lead to the rooftop," the official said.

Another 36 people were injured, including 10 in serious condition, he said, adding that all those inside the building during the blaze were now accounted for. The horrific fire appeared to have been set in the middle of Thursday morning, with the fire department saying they began receiving emergency calls around 10:30am.

The blaze left people with serious wounds, eyewitnesses said. "I saw people who were totally black or covered in blood, or who had suffered burns all over their body," a 53-year-old woman told

the Kyodo news agency. As the fire gutted the building, it sent thick white smoke out through the windows, and the flames charred the facade black before firefighters were eventually able to tame it hours after it began.

### Lost for words

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took to Twitter to express his horror. "It's so dreadful that I'm lost for words," he wrote. "I pray for those who passed away." Police said they were still investigating the cause of the fire but that it was a suspected arson attack. "A man threw a liquid and set fire to it," a Kyoto prefectural police spokesman told AFP.

Public broadcaster NHK reported that a man had been detained in connection with the blaze and was later taken to hospital for treatment. He reportedly suffered serious injuries in the fire. NHK said the suspect had poured a gasoline-like substance around the building and said "drop dead" as he set fire to it. The eyewitness who spoke to Kyodo said one of the injured "claimed to have been splashed with kerosene or something like it". Local media reported that the suspected attacker appeared to also have been armed with knives.

### Why, why, why?

Kyoto Animation's president Hideaki Hatta told reporters

"there have been emails with death threats", without giving further details. He said the building gutted by the blaze was "the core of the company", which has produced several well-known television anime series including "The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya" and "K-ON!" "It's unbearable that those who have led Japan's animation industry were hurt and lost their lives." The blaze prompted an outpouring of support from those in Japan's anime industry, one of the country's best known cultural exports, and fans around the world. "No, I don't know what I should be thinking now," tweeted Yutaka Yamamoto, an animation director who once worked at Kyoto Animation. "Why, why, why?"

An online fundraiser organized by an American anime licensing firm had raised more than \$420,000 by late Thursday night, and anime fans around the world were tweeting their support with the hashtag #KyoAniStrong and #PrayForKyoAni. Japan has a famously low crime rate. Arson is considered a serious crime and people convicted of deliberately setting fires in a country where many people still live in wooden houses can face the death penalty. A man convicted of setting a fire that killed 16 people in Osaka in 2008 is currently on death row. In 2016, a knife-wielding man went on the rampage at a care home for the mentally disabled, killing 19 in the country's worst mass killing in decades. —AFP

## International

# US Congress blocks Saudi arms sales in rebuke to Trump

## Arms sales could aggravate devastating war in Yemen

**WASHINGTON:** The US House voted Wednesday to block \$8.1 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other allies, a rebuke of Donald Trump that will likely lead to a veto by the president. Lawmakers, many of whom are outraged with the kingdom over Riyadh's role in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi last year, approved three resolutions that would prevent the controversial sales announced under emergency measures earlier this year by Trump.

The resolutions blocking the sales have already cleared the US Senate, and now go to the White House, where Trump is expected to issue the third veto of his presidency. While the House blocked the sales with a comfortable majority, it was about 50 votes shy of the two-thirds needed to override Trump's veto. Trump is seeking 22 separate sales of aircraft support maintenance, precision-guided munitions and other weapons and equipment to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan at a moment of heightened tensions in the Middle East.

Critics say the arms sales would aggravate the devastating war in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia is leading a US-backed coalition in a battle against the Iranian-supported Huthi rebels, and which the UN said has triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis. "When we see what's going on in Yemen, it's so important for the United States to take a stand," House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Eliot Engel said on the House floor.

The veteran Democrat concurred that the

threats from the Iranian-backed Huthis were real, "but that doesn't mean we should just look the other way in the face of violence and the slaughter of civilians." Trump's administration took the extraordinary step of bypassing Congress to approve the sale in May, as his administration declared Iran to be a "fundamental threat" to the stability of the Middle East.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had said the administration was responding to an emergency caused by Saudi Arabia's arch-foe Iran. But lawmakers including some Senate Republicans said there were no legitimate grounds to circumvent Congress, which has the right to disapprove arms sales.

### Signal to Saudi Arabia

Last month Senator Lindsey Graham delivered a stinging rebuke of the arms sales and Riyadh, saying he hoped the vote would "send a signal to Saudi Arabia that if you act the way you're acting, there is no space for a strategic relationship." The senator was referring to last year's brutal murder of Khashoggi in Turkey at the hands of Saudi agents, an incident that triggered a full-blown crisis in Riyadh's relations with the West.

But Michael McCaul, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, criticized the resolutions as "dangerous" at a time Iran is expanding its reach. "Iran is stretching its tentacles of terror across the Middle East," he said in a statement. "If we allow them to succeed, terrorism will flourish, instability will reign, and the

ported that mobile internet was down in the city. "There are some fires around the outskirts of the city. Tyre fires in the road and so on. Most of them are on the outskirts," said Dr. Abel Gedefaw, director of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at Hawassa University. "Everybody is not allowed to go out. There are a lot of security forces and nobody is allowed to move." He said the university's medical facilities had not received reports of casualties as of early afternoon.

### Not happy

The Sidama issue is the latest headache for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who is determined to reform the nation after decades of iron-fisted rule, but is facing ethnic violence in the diverse country that has displaced more than two million people. Analysts warn the issue could inflame Ethiopia's political crisis and lead to bloodshed. At present, Ethiopia is partitioned into nine semi-autonomous regions. The constitution requires the government to organize a referendum for any ethnic group that wants to form a new entity within a year of them requesting it.

The Sidama have agitated for years to leave the diverse Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of which they are a part, and create their own state. The group said the deadline for the referendum was yesterday. However Ethiopia's election board said this week it would hold a referendum before the end of the year. It said it had not received the referendum request until November 2018, meaning it still had several months to hold the vote. —AFP



**AWASA:** A young man rides a motorcycle along a parkway as young people of the Sidama ethnic group, the largest in southern Ethiopia, celebrate at Hawassa city over plans by local elders to declare the establishment of a breakaway region for the Sidama later this week, in Awasa. —AFP

security of our allies, like Israel, will be threatened," he added.

In a move that would bolster its support for Riyadh and serve as a show of force to Iran, the Trump administration plans to send 500 troops to Saudi Arabia, CNN reported late Wednesday. The

troops will go to the Prince Sultan Air Base, east of Riyadh, CNN reported, citing two officials at the Defense Department. The move comes after the US announced in May that it was deploying 1,500 additional troops to the Middle East to counter "credible threats" from Iran. —AFP

## Protests as Ethiopian ethnic group seeks breakaway region

**ADDIS ABABA:** Protesters set tires alight and lobbed stones at security forces yesterday in the Ethiopian city of Hawassa, where residents are demanding the creation of their own federal state. The Sidama ethnic group, the largest in the southern region, has been agitating for their own semi-autonomous state, and expectations were high they would declare their own region unilaterally yesterday. While one prominent party earlier said it had agreed to delay the formation of the state, not everyone appeared happy with this decision.

An activist for the cause, Mate Mengesha, said security forces had blocked a planned meeting of Sidama elders and youth activists in the morning, where it was hoped officials would declare the formation of the new region. However the officials never showed, and the activists threw stones at security forces blocking them from the site. "The expectation was today is July 18 and on July 18 they want to have a declaration," he told AFP. "The meeting didn't happen."

Elsewhere protesters set tires on fire, and blocked off roads, while several residents re-

## Six Nigerian soldiers killed in ambush

**KANO:** Six soldiers have been killed in an ambush by jihadists in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, two military sources said yesterday. Heavily-armed fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) group opened fire on a patrol vehicle Wednesday near Jakana, 30 kilometers from the state capital Maiduguri, killing all the soldiers on board. "We lost all six soldiers in the ambush, including a colonel," said the first of two military sources, who both spoke on condition of anonymity.

The soldiers were on their way to Maiduguri from Damaturu, the capital of neighboring Yobe state, when the jihadists attacked them around 1620 GMT, said the source. "The gun truck the soldiers were driving in was destroyed," the second source said. Following the ambush the jihadists attacked a military base just outside Jakana in seven trucks fitted with machine guns, engaging troops in an hour-long battle, the sources said.

The attack was repelled by soldiers at the base, with ISWAP fighters abandoning weapons and one vehicle as they fled. The attacks came hours after a military chief in the northeast warned terrorists in the region to disarm or be destroyed. Major-General Abdulmalik Bulama Biu told reporters in Maiduguri that the jihadists should lay down their arms "or prepare for a fierce encounter with me".

The army have not officially confirmed the attacks. The 120-km Maiduguri-Damaturu road has seen repeated attacks, on military bases and markets in villages like Jakana, committed by ISWAP and Boko Haram fighters—the two jihadist factions operating in the region. In December last year at least 13 soldiers were killed in an ISWAP ambush near Kareto village along the highway. The jihadists have also carried out several attacks on motorists on the highway, killing passengers and burning vehicles.

After nearly a decade, the insurgency in northeast Nigeria rages on, spilling into neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. More than 27,000 people have been killed and some two million forced to flee their homes. Complicating the conflict further was a split within Boko Haram in 2016, which saw the breaking away of ISWAP, a group that has sworn allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. —AFP

## International

# Turkey brands US move to bar Ankara from F-35 program 'unfair'

## Turkish technicians, pilots training in US to be sent back

**ANKARA:** Turkey on Wednesday lambasted an "unfair" US move to exclude the country from the F-35 stealth fighter jet program over Ankara's controversial purchase of a Russian missile defense system. "This one-sided step neither complies with the spirit of alliance nor is it based on legitimate reasons," the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement. "It is unfair to remove Turkey, one of the partners in the F-35 program," the ministry said, as it dismissed claims the Russian S-400 system would be a danger to the F-35s.

Turkey has ordered more than 100 of the F-35 fighter jets, while its defense industry has invested significant sums into

the production of the warplanes. "We invite the US to take back this error which will pave the way to irreparable damage to our strategic relations," the Turkish ministry added. Earlier on Wednesday, the United States confirmed Turkey's exclusion from the program after repeated warnings.

The US-made F-35 Joint Strike Fighter "cannot coexist with a Russian intelligence collection platform that will be used to learn about its advanced capabilities," White House spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham said. Turkish F-35 technicians and pilots training in the US would also be sent back by the end of this month. The first delivery of the S-400 sys-

tem from Russia began last week and further equipment has since been arriving every day by plane to an airbase in Ankara.

Relations between the NATO allies have deteriorated since Ankara's purchase from Russia but there have been strains over multiple issues including US support to a Syrian Kurdish militia viewed as terrorists by Turkey. The Turkish ministry called on the US to show the importance of the Ankara-Washington relationship "not just through words but through action and especially in the fight against terrorist organizations."—AFP

## 'You had the Nobel Prize?' Trump learns of Yazidi activist Murad

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump on Wednesday appeared unfamiliar with the work and cause of Nobel laureate Nadia Murad as she pleaded with him to help the Yazidis of Iraq. Murad, one of thousands of women and girls from the ancient faith abducted by the Islamic State group as they overran swathes of Iraq in 2014, joined a group of survivors of religious persecution who met Trump in the Oval Office on the sidelines of a major meeting at the State Department.

After Murad explained how her mother and six brothers were killed and that 3,000 Yazidis remained missing, Trump said, "And you had the Nobel Prize? That's incredible. They gave it to you for what reason?" With little pause, Murad, who was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year, repeated her story. "After all this happened to me, I didn't give up. I make it clear to everyone that ISIS raped thousands of Yazidi women," she said, referring to the Islamic State group. "Please do something. It's not about one family," she said.

Trump, who has boasted of crushing the self-styled caliphate of the Islamic State group that once stretched across Iraq and Syria, also appeared at a loss when Murad asked him to press the Iraqi and Kurdish governments to create safe conditions for the Yazidis to return. "But ISIS is gone and now it's Kurdish and who?" Trump asked, before later telling her, "I know the area very well."

Murad also explained how Yazidis took dangerous routes to find safety in Germany, whose welcome to refugees has been vocally criticized by Trump. The US leader also appeared unfamiliar when he met a representative from the Rohingya, a Muslim minority targeted in a brutal campaign two years ago in Myanmar. One day earlier, his administration banned travel to the United States by Myanmar's army chief and three other senior officers, calling the violence "ethnic cleansing."

The Trump administration frequently speaks of promoting religious freedom, a key issue for much of his evangelical Christian base. Government ministers and representatives of persecuted groups are spending three days at the State Department for a meeting on religious freedom, which Vice President Mike Pence will address yesterday. —AFP



**WASHINGTON:** Nadia Murad, an Iraq Yazidi once held captive by the Islamic State, speaks during a religious freedom summit at the US Department of State in Washington, DC. —AFP

## Minibus overturns in Turkey killing 15



**VAN:** Rescue workers and Turkish soldiers carry injured migrants after a minibus accident in Van, eastern Turkey. — AFP

**ANKARA:** Fifteen people were killed and 28 wounded after a minibus carrying migrants overturned in eastern Turkey yesterday, the private news agency DHA reported. Women and children figured among the victims and their nationalities were not known. Police and ambulance services were rushed to the scene in Van province near the Iranian border, DHA reported, adding that they had entered Turkey illegally.

The death toll was initially reported to be 14 but Van governor Emin Bilmez was quoted by DHA later saying the death toll had risen to 15. Images in Turkish media showed the damaged minibus in a field with several rescue workers tending to the injured in Ozalp district close to the border with Iran. The agency reported that the driver lost control of the vehicle but there was no immediate details on the cause of the accident which took place at 0900 GMT. —AFP

## International

# US senator calls for investigation into Russia-made FaceApp

## FBI look into national security, privacy risks related to app

**NEW YORK:** The chart-topping Russian-made FaceApp, which allows users to see how they will look as they age, found itself in the eye of a political storm in the US Wednesday, with one senator urging an FBI investigation into its “national security and privacy risks”. A celebrity favorite, the app deploys artificial intelligence to modify users’ photos, adding wrinkles or subtracting years from their faces.

On Wednesday, US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer sounded the alarm over FaceApp’s Russian developer, calling for the FBI and the Federal Trade Commission to “look into the national security & privacy risks” connected to the application. “FaceApp’s location in Russia raises questions regarding how and when the company provides access to the data of US citizens to third parties, including potentially foreign governments,” the New York senator said in a letter to the FBI.

“It would be deeply troubling if the sensitive personal information of US citizens was provided to a hostile foreign power actively engaged in cyber hostilities against the United States,” he added. Currently the most downloaded free app on Google Play with more than 100 million users, FaceApp was launched two years ago and went viral after its latest editing tool, an aging filter, sparked a flood of celebrity selfies.

Its developers, Wireless Lab, are based in the Skolkovo high-tech hub near Moscow, often called Russia’s Silicon Valley—a fact that has stirred concern within the US Democratic Party.

## Argentina still waiting for 1994 bombing justice

**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentina marks the 25th anniversary of the bomb attack on a Jewish center that left 85 people dead with a day of mourning yesterday, but the relatives of victims are still waiting for justice. “What comes to mind when I think of it is this moment of obscurity, a moment that was interminable, a noise, but also the silence of those of us who were there. I don’t think our minds could understand,” Anita Weinstein, a survivor of the attack, told AFP.

“This attack, even if there was a large anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic component—of course—was an attack on Argentina and Argentine society,” said Weinstein, who worked at the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA), where the attack was carried out. A truck loaded with explosives was driven into the AMIA center in a densely populated central area of Buenos Aires, also leaving 300 people wounded.

On Wednesday, three commemorative murals to the victims were unveiled at the adjacent Clinicas Hospital where many of the victims were treated. With its 300,000-strong Jewish community—second only to the US in the Americas—

The Washington Post has reported that the Democratic National Committee has warned campaigners in the primaries ahead of the 2020 presidential election to “delete the app immediately.” The party is particularly sensitive to any possibility of surveillance involving Moscow after some Democratic officials were targeted by Russian hackers during the 2016 presidential election campaign.

Fears of cyber espionage have flared in recent years, with US authorities worried about foreign governments having access to and potentially misusing personal data belonging to millions of Americans. In May a Chinese mobile gaming company that bought top gay dating app Grindr said it would sell it by June 2020 following pressure from US authorities. US officials reportedly feared that people with American security clearances who use Grindr could be blackmailed if China’s government demanded user data from Beijing-based Kunlun Tech.

### Controversial

With millions of users in the US, FaceApp’s Russian backers have not responded to Schumer’s letter. But its CEO told the Post that Russian authorities did not have any access to any user data. Yaroslav Goncharov also told the newspaper that most photos are deleted from its servers within 48 hours and said the app did not use the pictures for any other purpose. Goncharov and Wireless Lab could not immediately be reached by AFP for comment. FaceApp is no

Argentina is the only country in Latin America to have suffered such an anti-Semitic attack. But the AMIA bombing wasn’t the only one.

Two years earlier, in a context of extreme tensions between Israel and Iran, the Jewish state’s Buenos Aires embassy was hit by a suicide bomber driving a truck, killing 29 people and wounding 200. That attack was claimed by the Islamic Jihad group while the later bombing was widely blamed on Iran and its ally, the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah movement. Islamic Jihad is widely believed to have been assimilated into Hezbollah when it disappeared in the early 1990s.

AMIA president Ariel Eichbaum hopes Argentina will soon declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization. On Wednesday, Argentina created a register of people and entities linked to acts of terrorism, an important step in allowing it to declare any group or person a terrorist not already listed as such by the United Nations. But there’s no guarantee this move will ever lead to justice.

Argentina has accused top Iranian ex-officials of being behind the AMIA attack but has never been able to question them. Decades of investigations have been beset by political interference and allegations of high-level corruption. In 2012, then-president Cristina Kirchner signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran, which was never ratified, that would have allowed Iranian suspects in the bombing to be questioned back home. —AFP



**NEW YORK:** This illustration picture shows FaceApp application displayed on the screen of a smartphone. — AFP

stranger to controversy. Soon after its launch, a ‘hot’ filter that automatically lightened faces sparked accusations of racism. The same year, FaceApp’s developers were forced to remove a feature that allowed users to change their ethnicity, prompting some to liken the practice to ‘digital blackface’. But the controversies have done little

to dim the app’s allure among selfie-lovers and celebrities including music superstar Drake, rapper Cardi B and NBA champion Steph Curry. Last week Goncharov commented on his application’s viral success in a rare Facebook post. “Overtake Instagram and WhatsApp once again? A small thing but feels good,” he wrote. —AFP

## Verdicts due in Morocco trial for killing of hikers

**SALE, Morocco:** Verdicts are expected yesterday for 24 suspected jihadists accused over the murder of two Scandinavian women beheaded while on a hiking trip in Morocco. Winding up an 11-week-long trial in an anti-terrorist court in Sale, near the capital Rabat, the defendants are to make their final statements before judges withdraw. Verdicts are expected to be announced later the same day in the case that has shocked the North African country.

“We expect sentences that match the cruelty of the crime,” lawyer Khaled El Fataoui, speaking for the family of Danish victim Louisa Vesterager Jespersen, told AFP. Helle Petersen, her mother, in a letter read out in court last week, said: “The most just thing would be to give these beasts the death penalty they deserve.” Prosecutors have already called for the death penalty for the three main suspects behind the “bloodthirsty” killings in the High Atlas mountains last December. The maximum sentence was sought

for 25-year-old suspected ringleader Abdessamad Ejjoud and two radicalized Moroccans, although Morocco has had a de facto freeze on executions since 1993. Petitions on social media have likewise called for their execution. The three admitted to killing Jespersen, 24, and 28-year-old Norwegian Maren Ueland, whose family has declined to take part in the trial.

The prosecution has called for jail terms of between 15 years and life for the 21 other defendants on trial since May 2. A life sentence has been sought for Abderrahim Khayali, a 33-year-old plumber, who had accompanied the three alleged assailants but left the scene before the murders. The prosecution called for 20 years in jail for Kevin Zoller Guervos, a Spanish-Swiss convert to Islam.

The only non-Moroccan in the group, Guervos is accused of having taught the main suspects how to use an encrypted messaging service and to use weapons. His lawyer, Saad Sahli, said Guervos had cut all ties with the other suspects “once he knew they had extremist ideas” more than 18 months ago. All but three of those on trial had said they were supporters of the Islamic State group, according to the prosecution, although IS itself has never claimed responsibility for the murders. —AFP

## International

# German rescue ship captain questioned by Italy prosecutor over migrants

## Salvini insists Italy's ports remain closed

**AGRIGENTO, Italy:** German captain Carola Rackete, who sparked international headlines by forcibly docking in an Italian port with rescued migrants, was questioned by an Italian prosecutor yesterday over allegedly aiding illegal immigration. The captain of the Sea-Watch 3 arrived at court in the southern Sicilian town of Agrigento just before 10 am. She was met by a media scrum as she climbed the steps to the court under a baking sun but made no comment.

Rackete was arrested on June 29 for entering Italy's Lampedusa port despite a veto imposed by far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, and knocking a coast guard boat out of the way to land 40 migrants who were blocked at sea for over two weeks. A judge overturned the arrest three days later, saying the 31-year-old had merely acted to save lives. Rackete remains in police custody in the Sicilian port of Licata and is still the object of two investigations—one for entering Italian waters despite a direct order to stop, and another for aiding illegal immigration.

She will be heard on the latter yesterday, and will have to explain why her crew rescued the migrants without waiting for the Libyan coastguard, which has jurisdiction over the stretch of water in which they were found. The 31-year-old will also be asked why she then sailed the Dutch-flagged vessel to Italy rather than a Libyan or Tunisian port.

Salvini insists that Italy's ports remain



**AGRIGENTO, Italy:** German captain of the Sea-Watch 3 Carola Rackete, center, gives a press conference in front of the courthouse of the southern Sicilian town of Agrigento. — AFP

closed to people who attempt the perilous Mediterranean crossing. Prosecutors in Agrigento appealed to Italy's highest court this week against the decision to drop charges against Rackete for forcibly entering the port of Lampedusa, in the hope of establishing a precedent to put off other privately run ships. A few days after the Sea-Watch drama, another charity vessel forcibly landed in Lampedusa, a scenario that is likely to recur.

Salvini's hardline stance has led to an upsurge in investigations into charity rescue

vessels. In March 2017, the Spanish vessel Open Arms was seized and its captain and head of mission were prosecuted after the crew refused to hand saved migrants over to the Libyan coastguard, which arrived at the scene during a rescue operation. A month later a judge ordered the vessel be released on the grounds that crisis-hit Libya could not be considered a safe port.

And the prosecutor's office in Catania, eastern Sicily, recently archived the case against the captain and mission head. The same prosecutor closed a similar probe

against the NGO Sea-Watch after a rescue operation in January, concluding that the crew's actions were justified. But the Sea-Watch 3's dramatic port entry in June marked a new chapter in the war between Salvini and charity vessels.

The arrest of the dreadlocked Rackete sparked an online campaign which raised over 1.4 million euros in a few days to pay her legal fees and enable the German NGO to continue its operations—with a new boat if necessary. On Tuesday the parliament of Catalonia in Spain voted unanimously to honour Rackete with a Gold Medal, its highest award. And the city of Paris announced a donation of 100,000 euros to Sea-Watch, as well as a medal for Rackete and Pia Klemp, another German captain prosecuted in Italy.

Paris's move infuriated Italy's far right, which noted that the French government had remained silent throughout the 15 days the ship had been blocked at sea, despite Rackete's numerous appeals for a safe port. Salvini has stepped up his attacks on the rescue charities, which he has accused of aiding people-smugglers, while calling Rackete a "bigmouth" and a "criminal". Rackete filed a complaint last week for defamation and incitement to violence, noting that Salvini's hostile messages on social networks have prompted an outpouring of sexist, violent and threatening comments from users.—AFP

## 'Christ of Theft' statue poses dilemma for Peru

**LIMA:** A giant statue of Jesus Christ that looms over Lima is causing controversy in Peru because of its financing by the graft-tainted Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht and late ex-president Alan Garcia.

The 37-meter acrylic and concrete structure, which cost \$800,000, is viewed by some as a symbol of corruption, giving rise to a local nickname 'Christ of Theft.' Thousands are demanding its removal. A few weeks ago, the Es Momento (It's Time) non-governmental organization began a campaign to have the statue, which sits on the Chorrillos mountain to Lima's south, taken down.

"It's impossible for this to remain as part of the city's public space," said Cristhian Rojas, the Es Momento leader. The statue, whose official name is 'Christ of the Pacific,' was given by company chief Marcelo Odebrecht to Garcia and unveiled in 2011, right at the end of his second five-year term as president. He had

previously held the presidency from 1985-90. Odebrecht has admitted to paying \$29 million in bribes in Peru between 2005 and 2014.

Prosecutors say a former top Garcia official has confessed to acting as a frontman, receiving money from Odebrecht to pass on to the ex-president. Garcia, who committed suicide in April when police arrived at his home to arrest him for money laundering, was one of four Peruvian ex-presidents embroiled in various corruption scandals, along with Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, Ollanta Humala and Alejandro Toledo.

Odebrecht has admitted to paying hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes in a dozen Latin American countries and has agreed to pay even more in reparations in various deals with individual governments. But the company's association with corruption means the Christ statue has become a pebble in the shoe of Peru's government.

Garcia, who contributed \$30,000 to the statue's cost while Odebrecht covered most of the rest, said at the time that it would be similar to the world-renowned figure that overlooks Rio de Janeiro from the Corcovado hill. "I have gathered a group of friends and companies" to build the statue "and also put in some of my savings, because maybe it will be a blessing for Peru," Garcia said.

When it was inaugurated, a month before Garcia's term ended, Odebrecht was almost ready to unveil the Lima Metro, for which it had paid a bribe of seven million dollars to win the tender. Es Momento sent its removal petition, containing 4,700 signatures, to the government a month after Garcia's death. President Martin Vizcarra's government says it doesn't have a budget to do so. Unlike the famous Christ the Redeemer in Rio, this statue attracts few visitors. It also appears neglected and dirty, in stark contrast to two military monuments to heroes of the 1879-83 war with Chile located just 200 meters away.

Rojas says the NGO has nothing against the statue itself—they don't want to upset sensibilities in a coun-



**LIMA:** View of the 'Christ of the Pacific' statue atop a hill in Lima. — AFP

try that is majority Catholic and conservative—but rather what it represents. "We don't want to demolish it or attack the religious aspect of the monument, but rather attack the symbolism of corruption," stressed Rojas. "Alan Garcia used a religious image to clean a symbol of corruption."

When the statue was erected, then-pope Benedict sent a message

of congratulations while the ultra-conservative Peruvian bishop Juan Luis Cipriani urged the faithful to turn the monument into "an object of pilgrimage." Peru's Episcopal Conference thanked Odebrecht and Garcia "for this gift to our Catholicism." Now, though, the bishops have remained silent amid Es Momento's petition. — AFP

## International

# US President Trump fires up base as impeachment bid blocked in Congress

## Trump urges ethnic congresswomen to 'go back'

**GREENVILLE, United States:** A fired-up Donald Trump took aim once more at Democratic lawmakers who "hate" America as he hit the campaign trail Wednesday, hours after an opposition bid to impeach the US president over "racist" attacks was shot down in Congress. Egging on a sea of supporters in Greenville, North Carolina, Trump reeled off the names of the ethnic minority congresswomen whom he has urged to "go back" to their countries of origin in a series of incendiary tweets.

"These left-wing ideologues see our nation as a force of evil," charged Trump—whose tweets were condemned as "racist" a day earlier by the House of Representatives, although a subsequent attempt to launch impeachment proceedings failed in the chamber. "Send her back!" the crowd roared when Trump cited Ilhan Omar—one of just two Muslim women in Congress, whose criticism of Israel has been deemed anti-Semitic by many lawmakers.

"The way they speak so badly of our country," Trump told his supporters, decked out in the colors of the US flag and "Make America Great Again" caps. "They want to demolish our constitution. Eliminate the values that built this magnificent country." Pouring scorn on all four congresswomen—known as "The Squad"—Trump aimed perhaps his harshest taunts at Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the outspoken New York lawmaker who has likened migrant detention centers at the Mexican border to concentration camps. "I don't have time to go with three different names. We will call her Cortez," he mocked, to the crowd's delight.

## US diverts Central America aid to boost Venezuela's Guaido

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump's administration is diverting nearly \$42 million in development aid from Guatemala and Honduras to promote Venezuela's opposition chief Juan Guaido, including paying staff salaries, an internal document showed. In a memo obtained by AFP, the US Agency for International Development called Venezuela's political crisis "a significant, exigent event in the US national interest" that required a switch in \$41.9 million in funds.

The United States and more than 50 other countries recognize Guaido as president of Venezuela, but leftist leader Nicolas Maduro remains in power despite nearly half a year of international efforts. Trump earlier this year declared that he would end all US aid to Guatemala and Honduras as well as El Salvador, blaming the violence-plagued countries for not stopping their citizens from migrating to the United States. A

### Enjoying the battle

Trump's attacks have widely been seen as a bid to rally his right-wing base as the 2020 White House race heats up—at the risk of inflaming racial tensions and deepening partisan divisions in America. He himself has given credence to the notion, telling reporters he was "enjoying" his battle with the congresswomen "because I have to get the message out to the American people." Democratic leaders have rallied around their colleagues—Ocasio-Cortez, Omar, Rashida Tlaib and Ayanna Pressley. All are American citizens and all except Omar, who is of Somali origin, were born in the United States.

But even as anger simmered in Democratic ranks, many in the party joined Republicans in the House of Representatives in voting to block an attempt to launch impeachment proceedings against Trump—illustrating divisions in the Democratic-controlled chamber. Trump meanwhile put a victorious spin on the evening's news as he arrived in Greenville, pumped up for his first rally since announcing his 2020 re-election bid. "We have just received an overwhelming vote against impeachment," he told reporters, calling it a "most ridiculous project." "And that's the end of it. Let the Democrats now go back to work," Trump said.

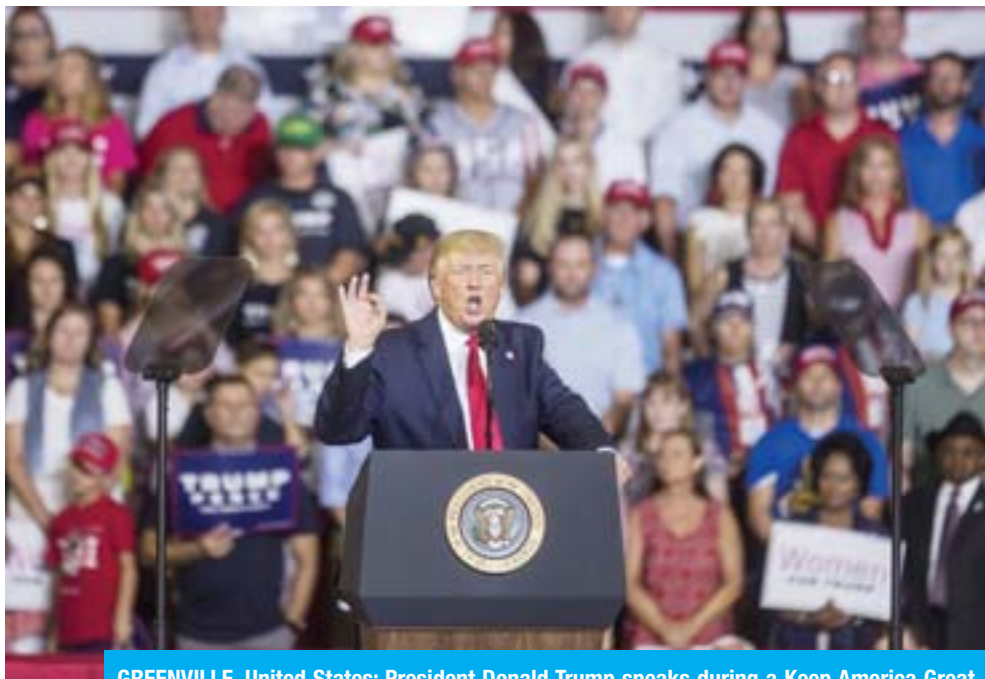
### Those words are racism

Trump's four-day attack on the congresswomen—including taunts such as "if you hate our country, or if you are not happy here, you can leave!"—and the Democratic response have laid bare deep rifts in Washington. While the rhetoric has enraged liberals, just four Republicans voted with the 235 Democrats Tuesday night to con-

State Department official, without confirming the dollar amounts involved, said that the money taken away from Central America would have gone to development, not more urgent humanitarian needs. "This decision is consistent with the president's direction that the United States will not provide new funds for programs in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras," he said. "We are investing in good governance, human rights, technical assistance for the Guaido government, independent media, and civil society," he said.

In the memo, which was first reported by the Los Angeles Times, the US aid agency said that \$19.4 million in the funding earlier intended for Central America would go to "good governance" in Venezuela. Among other uses, that portion will go to "interim government staff salaries or stipends, work-related travel and other costs necessary to ensure full deployment of a transparent financial management system and other activities necessary for a democratic transition."

It will also be directed to non-governmental organizations to "create media content and airtime to provide greater reach to Venezuelan citizens," the memo said. Another \$2 million will go to support diplomatic efforts by Guaido's supporters as they negotiate with Maduro, the memo said. The two sides have been meeting in Barbados in talks mediated by Norway, although limited progress has been seen. — AFP



**GREENVILLE, United States:** President Donald Trump speaks during a Keep America Great rally in Greenville, North Carolina. — AFP

demn Trump for "racist comments that have legitimized and increased fear and hatred of new Americans and people of color." Pelosi stood by the resolution condemning Trump's language. "By its definition, those words are racism," she said.

But she told reporters she would rather see ongoing investigations of Trump play out before launching any divisive impeachment effort. Pushing

back at Democrats, the president—who years ago pushed the "birther" conspiracy that Barack Obama was not born in the United States—has insisted he does not "have a Racist bone in my body!" According to a Wednesday poll from USA Today/Ipsos, two-thirds of respondents disagree, judging that telling minority Americans to "go back to where they came from" is racist. — AFP

## Thousands demand resignation of Puerto Rico's governor

**SAN JUAN:** Thousands marched in Puerto Rico for a fifth day on Wednesday demanding the resignation of Governor Ricardo Rossello, following corruption accusations and the leak of text chats in which he made sexist and homophobic remarks. To the chant of "Ricky, renuncia!" ("Ricky, resign!") large crowds gathered in the capital San Juan clamoring for Rossello to leave office—which he is refusing to do.

Local celebrity performers such as rapper Benito Martinez ("Bad Bunny"), pop icon Ricky Martin and Rene Perez ("Residente") had urged their fellow Puerto Ricans to demonstrate. "Not just me, but many Puerto Ricans will hit the streets to demonstrate for what is correct," Martinez told the Spanish-language Telemundo network before heading to the march. "We want him to leave and we will be here every day until he resigns or is removed," Joan Lopez, a 48-year-old teacher, told AFP at the demonstration.

Police fired tear gas at the crowd on Monday after a fire broke out near the government

headquarters. Five protesters were arrested. The Caribbean island of Puerto Rico is a US territory and residents are American citizens, but it does not have the same congressional representation accorded to states. Rossello is under pressure after US federal agents arrested contractors and government officials—including former education secretary Julia Keleher—on corruption charges.

The protests erupted after the Center for Investigative Journalism on Saturday released 889 pages of text chats on the encrypted messaging app Telegram in which Rossello and 12 other male administration members criticize officials, politicians and journalists. They shared memes, jokes and crude sexual insults, according to the Center and an excerpt published by local daily El Nuevo Dia. In one exchange, chief financial officer Christian Sobrino makes homophobic references to Latin superstar Martin. Martin, of "Livin' la Vida Loca" and "She Bangs" fame, vented his fury in a video posted on Twitter. — AFP

## International

# Bangladesh floods worsen after breach, death toll nears 100 in India

## Floods force millions to makeshift settlements, camps

**GUWAHATI, India:** One of Bangladesh's main rivers breached an embankment, flooding a northern district and forcing thousands from their homes, an official said yesterday, as the toll from monsoon rains in neighboring India climbed to 97 in two flood-hit states. Several million people are living in camps and makeshift settlements in India's eastern state of Bihar and northeastern Assam, officials said, with heavy rains and flooding since last week driving even animals to seek shelter in people's homes.

The monsoon brings heavy rains to South Asia between June and October, often triggering floods later in the season. In Bangladesh, the Jamuna river broke through an embankment on Wednesday night, inundating at least 40 villages and displacing more than 200,000 people, government official Rokhsana Begum said.

"We have enough supply of dry food and drinking water but we cannot reach many areas due to high water levels," said the official in the district of Gaibandha, one of 21 hit by floods. Inadequate supplies are also a concern in the Indian state of Assam, where more than 5.8 million people have been forced out

of their homes, but the situation is improving. "No fresh areas have come under floodwaters since Wednesday night," Assam's health and finance minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, said.

The state's Kaziranga National Park, home to endangered one-horned rhinos and tigers, was waist-deep in water, with animals sheltering in higher areas, and some straying into villages. Yesterday, an adult tiger was found sleeping on a bed in a house on the edge of the sanctuary. "It appears the tiger strayed into a human settlement area to escape the floods and now appears very tired," park director Shiv Kumar told Reuters.

"We are preparing to tranquilize the tiger." The floods have killed at least 43 animals, but authorities worry that poachers could take advantage of the deluge to target animals, especially one-horned rhinos, whose numbers are down to about 3,500 worldwide. "The biggest worry during the floods is from poachers who might take advantage of the rhinos moving to the hills and kill the animals for their horn," said Assam Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya.

The death toll in Bihar, which was swamped by waters from the neighboring



**BIHAR:** Indian residents wade along a flooded street carrying their belongings following heavy monsoon rains at Sitamarhi district in the Indian state of Bihar. — AFP

Himalayan nation of Nepal, jumped to 67, as rescuers reached further into flood-hit areas. "I still feel the chances are that the number

may again increase," Pratyaya Amrit, a state disaster management official, told Reuters, referring to the death toll. — Reuters

## Trump mocked for tweet on arrest of Mumbai attacks suspect

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistanis yesterday mocked US President Donald Trump's claim that the alleged Mumbai attacks mastermind had been arrested "after a ten-year search" while he was actually in the public eye for much of the decade. Hafiz Saeed, a firebrand cleric accused by Washington and New Delhi of being behind the 2008 attacks, was taken into custody on Wednesday, days ahead of a trip by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan to Washington for his first meeting with Trump.

"After a ten-year search, the so-called 'mastermind' of the Mumbai Terror attacks has been arrested in Pakistan. Great pressure has been exerted over the last two years to find him!" Trump tweeted Wednesday. But Saeed, who heads the UN-designated terrorist group Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and has a \$10 million US bounty on his head, has never been missing.

Instead, when he has not been in the custody of the Pakistani authorities, he has courted the limelight, giving public speeches and televised interviews and even attempting to launch a political party to contest last year's general election. Among the wave of social media users pointing this out to Trump were journalists highlighting the easy access they have been given to Saeed over the years.

"It's Hafiz Saeed. Not Jason Bourne," tweeted Pakistani news anchor Amber Shamsi. "I also interviewed Hafiz Muhammad Saeed for @AJEnglish back in 2015 at a JuD-run mosque and school in Islamabad. Did not take a lot of finding that time, either," added Al Jazeera's Islamabad-based correspondent Asad Hashim. "Finding him was never an issue. He operated freely and was highly visible," wrote Pakistan's former ambassador to the US Husain Haqqani, adding that Trump should "immediately fire whoever gave him the wrong information".

The US Foreign Affairs Committee also hit back at the president, citing the eight times Saeed has been arrested and released by Pakistani authorities since 2001. "Let's hold the (applause) until he's convicted," tweeted the committee on its official account. Saeed's freedom to move around Pakistan has enraged India for years, with Delhi repeatedly calling for his prosecution over his alleged role in the 2008 attack that killed more than 160 people.

Many linked his latest detention to Khan's visit with Trump. The pair are to meet in Washington on July 22. Since taking office in 2017, Trump has frequently singled out Islamabad for failing to rein in extremists and being an unfaithful partner in the fight against militants. "Hafiz Saeed was definitely not on the run when I met him at home in Lahore in 2013. His liberty, or lack of, is often a function of international pressure on Pakistan over its support for militancy," tweeted New York Times correspondent Declan Walsh.

The move against Saeed also comes as Pakistan is facing a potential blacklisting by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — an anti-money-laundering monitor based in Paris—for failing to do enough to combat terror financing.—AFP

## Hunger and despair for India flood victims

**MUZAFFARPUR, India:** Chest-deep in brown, flowing monsoon water and holding bags of clothes and utensils above their heads, residents in the Indian state of Bihar are hungry and despairing. "When many of us poor people drown, then the politicians suddenly take notice... But otherwise, nobody cares about us," shopkeeper Raj Majhi told AFP. Majhi's home-like many others—is submerged, with only rooftops remaining above floodwaters. His family have found their way to a small patch of land beside a highway, where they cook on a small stove.

Bihar is no stranger to floods, and is usually one of the worst-affected regions during the monsoons, but as one of the poorest regions in South Asia, residents feel helpless faced with the annual deluge. This year's floods—caused by torrential rains in Bihar and from across the border in Nepal—have been unrelenting. Some 67 people have been killed in the state and 4.5 million residents affected by the floods so far, and water levels are still rising.

Thatched huts have been washed away and entire communities cut-off as roads and bridges are destroyed and crops devastated. In Sitamarhi district, floodwaters cover roads and homes as far as the eye can see. Marooned villagers, tired from hours of wading through the churning waters, wait for help to arrive on small islands of higher ground. Farmer Sonabati Devi managed to save some of her goats, but not much more. — AFP



## International

# India demands Pakistan release accused 'spy' after world court ruling

## ICJ reviews sentence, gives India consular access to the prisoner

**NEW DELHI:** India yesterday demanded that Pakistan release an alleged spy after the International Court of Justice called for a review of a death sentence against him. The arch-rivals each declared victory after the world court ruling made late Wednesday. But with 49-year-old Kulbhushan Jadhav still held in secret, his case risked setting off new tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said Jadhav, a former navy officer, "is in the illegal custody of Pakistan under fabricated charges" as he welcomed the court ruling. "Yesterday's judgment is not only a vindication of India and Mr Jadhav but for all those who believe in the rule of law and the sanctity of international conventions," the minister added.

Jaishankar insisted that Jadhav "is innocent of the charges leveled against him" and had been forced to confess without access to a lawyer. "We once again call upon Pakistan to release and repatriate him forthwith."

The ICJ said Pakistan must give India consular access to the prisoner, give Jadhav proper representation and review the death sentence. But it rejected India's demand that Jadhav be freed.

Pakistan said Jadhav was detained in its southwestern province of Baluchistan in March 2016. It released a "confession" video

in which Jadhav said he worked for Indian intelligence. A military court sentenced him to death in 2017. According to Indian officials, Jadhav retired from the navy in 2001 and was running a "logistics" business in the Iranian port of Chabahar.

India insisted he was taken captive in Iran before being moved to Pakistan and then forced to confess. It started an ICJ case in 2017. Throughout the hearings, Jadhav has been kept under strict lock and key in Pakistan. Apart the video in which he said he graduated from India's premier defense academy and began to help Indian intelligence in 2001, the only sighting of Jadhav was when his mother and wife saw him for 40 minutes on December 25, 2017.

Indian officials say relatives reported that he appeared to have been tortured. Relations between the neighbors frequently boil over. They have fought three wars since independence in 1947 and staged air battles on their border in February. New Delhi frequently says there can be no improvement in relations until its neighbor takes action to rein in militant attacks in India.

Keeping up the rivalry, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said late Wednesday that "truth and justice have prevailed" with the ruling. His Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan hit back through his Twitter account.



**MUMBAI:** In this file photo, an Indian man holds a placard depicting Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian national convicted of spying in Pakistan, in the neighborhood where he grew up, in Mumbai. — AFP

"Appreciate ICJ's decision not to acquit, release and return Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav to India," Khan said. "He is guilty of crimes against the people of Pakistan. Pakistan shall proceed further as per law," Khan added.

Pakistan's foreign ministry said the incident is a "clear case of Indian state terror-

ism". Media in the two countries also claimed victory in the case. "India Wins in World Court," said a Mail Today headline. "Justice in International Court," declared The Indian Express. "Pakistan vindicated" ran a banner front-page headline in Pakistan's Express Tribune.—AFP

## Pakistani ex-PM Abbasi arrested by anti-graft agency

**LAHORE:** Pakistan's anti-corruption agency arrested former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi yesterday, drawing a furious response from opposition parties, which accused the government of trying to silence its opponents. The National Accountability Bureau said in a statement Abbasi had been arrested in a case that was opened last year over a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal project.

The arrest, as Abbasi was on his way to a news conference in the eastern city of Lahore, adds to a political scene already thick with accusations of corruption and abuse of office with opposition parties planning a day of protest next week. "I believe today is yet another black day in Pakistan's history," Ahsan Iqbal, a senior parliamentarian from Abbasi's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, told reporters, accusing Prime Minister Imran Khan of trying to suppress opposition.

"We are not afraid of your fascist acts. Don't think that you will gag our voices through such arrests," he said. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the head of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the other main opposition party, condemned Abbasi's arrest which he said was part of a

government "witchhunt" against elected representatives.

The PML-N was already engaged in a bitter standoff with Khan's government, which came to power last year accusing Abbasi and his predecessor, Nawaz Sharif, of large-scale corruption and mismanagement of the economy. Sharif was disqualified by the Supreme Court in 2017 over accusations that eventually led to a seven-year jail sentence for receiving undeclared income. Abbasi took over as premier and served for less than a year before losing an election to Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in 2018.

The PML-N accuses the government of being behind Sharif's arrest and last week produced video footage that it said showed the judge who heard the case confessing that he had been blackmailed to ensure a conviction. The judge denied the accusation but was sacked from his position with the Accountability Court. The government has rejected opposition accusations of using the National Accountability Bureau, an independent body, to suppress its critics and opponents.

It says corruption by past governments is the main reason for an economic crisis that has forced Pakistan to seek a \$6 billion loan package from the International Monetary Fund, its 13th IMF bailout since the 1980s. Last year, the NAB ordered an inquiry against Abbasi, Sharif and others "for granting a 15-year contract of LNG terminal to a company of their liking in violation of rules and by misuse of their powers, which caused national exchequer a loss of billions of rupees". — Reuters

## India's 'dosa king' dies one week into life term

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian restaurant tycoon known as the "Dosa King" died in hospital yesterday, a week after beginning a life sentence for the murder of a love rival. P Rajagopal, 71, was convicted for the murder of his love interest's husband in 2004, but only went to jail this month when the Supreme Court rejected his final appeal. Rajagopal, who turned his Saravana Bhawan restaurant into a global chain, died at Chennai's Vijaya hospital where he was taken on Tuesday with heart problems.

"We failed to revive him and he passed away this morning due to cardiac failure," a hospital official told AFP. Before beginning his sentence, Rajagopal had pleaded to be allowed to remain free because of his ill-health. When he gave himself up on July 9, he arrived at the Madras High Court in an ambulance with an oxygen mask strapped to his face. Rajagopal rose from rags to riches to create a chain which now has more than 80 restaurants in India and around the world, from London's Leicester Square to New York's Lexington Avenue but also Singapore, Sydney and Stockholm.

The chain became an international success with a winning formula of affordable South Indian delicacies such as dosa pancakes, deep-fried vadas and idli rice cakes. But his success was overshadowed by his conviction for the killing of the husband of a woman he wanted to make his third wife. His trial heard that an astrologer told him to marry the woman, then in her 20s, but she was already wed and repeatedly rejected Rajagopal's advances. — AFP

## International

# DR Congo Ebola outbreak an emergency of global concern

## WHO invokes emergency provision hoping to bring attention to crisis

**KINSHASA:** The World Health Organization on Wednesday declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo a “public health emergency of international concern,” a rare designation only used for the gravest epidemics. The year-old Ebola epidemic in eastern DR Congo, the second deadliest on record, has largely been contained to remote areas, but this week saw a patient diagnosed with the virus in provincial capital Goma, the first case in a major urban hub.

“It is time for the world to take notice,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement, as he accepted the advice of his advisory board to invoke the emergency provision, activated by the UN health agency only four times previously. Those included the H1N1, or swine flu, pandemic of 2009, the spread of poliovirus in 2014, the Ebola epidemic that devastated parts of West Africa from 2014 to 2016 and the surge of the Zika virus in 2016.

The Ebola virus is highly contagious and has an average fatality rate of around 50 percent. It is transmitted to humans from wild animals and spreads among people through close contact with the blood, body fluids, secretions or organs of an infected person. Responders had hoped that this Ebola outbreak would be easier to control, thanks in part to a new vaccine.

While more than 160,000 people in the affected provinces of North Kivu and Ituri have been vaccinated, containment efforts have been hampered by chronic unrest in the region and a lack of trust in communities for health workers. A panel of top WHO officials that met in Geneva on Wednesday to issue the emergency call expressed “disappointment about delays in funding which have constrained the response.”

A fresh UN funding appeal for \$700 million to cover the ensuing six months is expected in

the coming days. Reacting to the emergency declaration, the president of Doctors Without Borders, Joanne Liu, called for “a change of gear” in the response to the outbreak. “We need to take stock of what is working and what is not working,” she said. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies welcomed the decision, voicing hope that the emergency call “will bring the international attention that this crisis deserves.”

### Goma case game-changer

Since August last year, the DRC Ebola outbreak has killed more than 1,600 people out of more than 2,500 cases. WHO has held off on making the emergency declaration on three previous occasions, but the confirmation of a case in North Kivu’s capital Goma escalated the crisis. Tedros this week called the Goma patient a “potential game-changer,” because the city is a “gateway” to Africa’s Great Lakes region and the wider world.

The Goma patient has been described as an evangelical preacher who travelled to Goma from Butembo, one of the towns hardest hit by Ebola. He had reportedly touched several Ebola patients in Butembo and concealed his identity in order to evade health screenings while en route to Goma. The emergency committee cited the patient, who has died, as a “specific cause for concern”.

Even if the risk of global spread is “still low”, the Goma case posed “worrying signs of possible extension of the epidemic,” the committee said. A city of about one million people, Goma sits on the northern shore of Lake Kivu, adjacent to Rwanda’s town of Gisenyi. It has a port that links to DRC city Bukavu and the South Kivu province as well as an airport with flights to the capital Kinshasa, Uganda’s Entebbe and Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.



**GOMA:** A woman gets her temperature measured at an Ebola screening station as she enters the Democratic Republic of the Congo from Rwanda. — AFP

### Checking temperatures at borders

At the Goma-Gisenyi crossing on Wednesday, megaphone announcements instructed all travelers to wash their hands “to prevent Ebola sickness virus,” using basins of water with added bleach. Health workers wearing yellow high-visibility jackets took the temperature of people crossing the border, in both directions. WHO’s announcement provoked a mixed response from DR Congo’s Health Minister Oly Ilunga Kalenga, who has been critical of the motive of some non-governmental organisations in raising donations for the crisis.

He said that while he “accepts” WHO’s decision, he hoped it was not “the result of pressure from different groups... who want to use

the statement as an opportunity to raise funds for humanitarian actors”. “We hope there will be greater transparency and accountability by humanitarian actors in how they use their funds to respond to this Ebola outbreak,” he said in a statement. The WHO’s international health regulations, drafted in 2005, say that the emergency label should apply to a situation that is “an extraordinary event that poses a public health risk to other countries through international spread and that potentially requires a coordinated international response.” Some fear that making the emergency call could trigger border closures, which the head of the WHO emergency panel, Robert Steffen, strongly urged against. —AFP

## India to make new bid to launch Moon rocket

**NEW DELHI:** India will make a new bid to launch a landmark mission to the Moon on Monday, a week after aborting lift-off at the last minute because of a fuel leak, officials said. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) said it had rescheduled the launch of Chandrayaan-2, or Moon Chariot-2, for 2:43 pm (0913 GMT) on Monday. India is aiming to become just the fourth nation after Russia, the United States and China to land a spacecraft on the Moon.

Indian space chiefs called off the planned launch of the rocket 56 minutes before blast-off on Monday morning because of what ISRO called a “technical snag”. Media reports quoted ISRO scientists saying a helium fuel leak had been detected. India has spent about \$140 million on

preparations for the project, which is one of the cheapest among international space powers.

By comparison, the United States spent about \$25 billion—the equivalent of more than \$100 billion in current prices—on 15 Apollo missions in the 1960s and 70s. The rocket will launch from a space centre in Sriharikota, an island off the coast of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. It will carry an orbiter, lander and a rover which has been almost entirely designed and made in India.

The orbiter is meant to keep circling the Moon for about one year, taking pictures of the surface and sending back information on the atmosphere. A lander named Vikram will take the rover to the surface near the lunar South Pole. India’s first lunar mission in 2008 — Chandrayaan-1 — did not land on the Moon, but carried out a search for water using radar.

A soft landing on the Moon would be a huge leap forward in India’s space program, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi determined to launch a manned mission into space by 2022. India also has ambitions to land a probe on Mars. In 2014, India became only the fourth nation to put a satellite into orbit around the Red Planet. —AFP

## Message in a bottle found in Australia 50 years on

**SYDNEY:** An Australian boy who discovered a message in a bottle on a remote beach may have a new penpal after the Englishman who dropped it from an Australia-bound ship 50 years ago was tracked down. But Jyah Elliott, aged nine, may have to wait some time as the message’s now 63-year-old author is once again at sea—this time on a cruise in the Baltic, the ABC reported. Jyah discovered the decades-old treasure in sand dunes on a South Australian beach on Tuesday and by the next day the writer had been located.

Paul Gilmore was just 13 when on November 17, 1969 he dropped the bottle into the Indian Ocean hoping to reach a new friend. The letter, which gave the ship’s location as “1,000 miles east of Fremantle, Western Australia, asked its recipient to “Please Reply”. Although Jyah initially thought the letter was a fake, he was quick to post a reply on Wednesday. “He was so excited,” his mother Carla Elliott told the ABC.

Gilmore’s sister Annie Crossland told the ABC that her brother was currently cruising but would be sure to contact Jyah when he returns home. “It’s amazing, absolutely incredible,” Crossland said. “He’ll be chuffed to bits.” She said the family had long ago moved on from the reply address on the letter. Gilmore sent six bottles from the TSS Fairstar, a ship that transported so-called “10-pound Pom” migrants from Great Britain to Australia. “The last time he was on a ship was probably going to Australia,” she said. “Cruises aren’t his thing.” —AFP

# Lifestyle

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Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex (left) and Britain's Meghan, Duchess of Sussex (right) arrive to attend the European premiere of the film The Lion King in London. — AFP

Taiwanese 'graffiti village' eases elderly loneliness

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## Lifestyle | Feature



Singers perform during the rehearsal of 'The Sleeping Thousand' opera as part of the International Festival of Lyric Art in the French southeastern city of Aix-en-Provence. — AFP

## Hebrew opera takes on Israeli Palestinian conflict at French festival

It features an Israeli prime minister, Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike, a hit squad and a Shin Beth spy chief. But this is not another story on the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict but an opera unusually with a libretto in Hebrew, the official language of Israel. "The Sleeping Thousand", an opera by Israeli composer Adam Maor with the libretto by Yonatan Levy, was premiered at the prestigious Aix-en-Provence opera festival in southern France this month.

"This opera speaks of oppression and above all, its impact on the oppressor," Maor told AFP. "While I'm not trying to campaign through my art, it is definitely a political opera which raises questions about freedom," he added. The chamber opera, which lasts one hour, won critical praise, with the Le Monde daily saying Maor and Levy had "created a singular universe—one which is seductive and provocative and mixes a political fable, philosophical tale and a fictional parable-around the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict".

Maor is hugely critical of Israel's policies towards the Palestinians and spent two years behind bars for refusing to do his compulsory military service in protest at the "immorality of the occupation" of the Palestinian territories.

### 'I chose prison'

In the opera, which inhabits a world between science fiction and fantasy, a thousand Palestinian prisoners begin a hunger strike generating widespread media interest. The Israeli government decides to sedate them "so that the world can move on to something else". "It works very well until the day when the Israelis start having nightmares and wake up in the night speaking Arabic," explained Maor, 36. One day, the government concludes that the Palestinians were seeking to sabotage Israeli dreams. "They are tunneling into the world of Jewish dreams and carrying out terror attacks!" declares an aide to the prime minister in the opera.

The prime minister then decides to send in the aide as a spy in Palestinian garb to kill them. The different characters, all of them Israelis, are taken on by four singers. And at the back of the stage are the "sleeping" Palestinians, all played by volunteers lying on beds. Referring to his

own stint in jail, Maor said: "I chose to go to prison, whereas they (the Palestinians) didn't."

Thousands of Palestinians are held by Israel, some without charge under so-called administrative detention orders. They often go on hunger strike to highlight their plight. Israel insists such detentions are necessary to punish criminals who carried out or planned violent acts, and ensure the Jewish state's security.

### 'Find the origins'

There have been just a handful of contemporary stage productions that have touched upon the conflict and they never failed to be controversial. The great American modern composer John Adams, in his 1991 opera "The Death of Klinghoffer", dealt with the Palestinian hijacking of an Italian cruise liner that ended with the murder of a wheelchair-bound retired Jewish man from New York. And in 2011, prestigious British opera festival Glyndebourne staged in its youth segment the opera "When I am Old" by young British composer Hannah Conway.

It is about the US activist Rachel Corrie who was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer in southern Gaza. Maor, who is from the northern port city of Haifa, embraces an eclectic range of styles in his work. He studied in Geneva and then at the cutting-edge IRCAM in Paris, studying electronic music, computer music and also the oud, the Arab stringed instrument that resembles the European lute.

Maor's family originally came from Damascus, where many Syrian Jews lived before leaving in the years before Israel's creation in 1948. But he is not sure he will ever be able to see his opera performed in Israel itself, complaining about the "the government's growing pressure on dissenting artists" under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The opera's electronic score, which was composed with the help of IRCAM, is both a nod to traditional Jewish melodies as well as to music from the Arab world. "I grew up with the sounds of the Middle East and I feel very deeply the lack of any such connection. In my work, I try to find the origins that I imagine," he said. — AFP

## Blood-soaked 'It' sequel jolts Comic-Con to life

San Diego Comic-Con kicked off with a chorus of shrieks-and gallons of blood-as New Line Cinema unveiled spine-chilling footage from "It: Chapter 2," the sequel to the highest-grossing horror movie of all time. The Warner Bros.-owned studio used Wednesday's preview night of the world's largest pop culture fan gathering to showcase its concluding film of Stephen King's 1986 novel about a terrifying clown who lurks in the sewers, preying on children's most nightmarish fears.

The adaptation was split into two by director Andy Muschietti-the first part, released in 2017, took a stunning \$700 million at the global box office. The sequel, out September 6, stars Jessica Chastain and James McAvoy as grown-up versions of the haunted children returning to their creepy hometown 27 years later to battle Pennywise the clown.

Asked by host Conan O'Brien about a clip showing her character covered head-to-toe in blood, Chastain said she had volunteered for the full immersion-but later regretted it. "I just was like, let's make 'Carrie' on steroids," she told a packed downtown theater. "And that's what he (Muschietti) did. And it literally tortured me through the whole movie." Chastain claimed that a world-record 4,500 gallons of fake blood were used in the production-all of which had to be kept freezing-cold to stop it fermenting in the summer heat.

One haunting clip showed McAvoy's character-an adult Ben Denbrough-racing through a claustrophobic house-of-mirrors in a bid to stop the clown's murderous spree. McAvoy said he pulled muscles and developed tendonitis during an arduous, physical shoot in which Muschietti demanded endless multiple takes. "Zero Dark Thirty" actress Chastain also praised the genre's portrayal of strong women in the age of #MeToo.

"Right now a lot of people are talking about female characters and arcs ... I find that in horror films, they really honor women, in that women beat the monster at the end and usually the men die." The 50th anniversary edition of Comic-Con International brings 135,000 hyped-up devotees to a sweaty San Diego convention center for the next four days, packed with glimpses of the next



In this file photo Actors Linda Hamilton (left) and Arnold Schwarzenegger speak on stage during the CinemaCon Paramount Pictures Exclusive Presentation at the Colosseum Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada.

mega-hit films, TV shows-and a few comic books.

Elsewhere on Wednesday, there was a screening for The CW's upcoming "Batwoman" series, featuring Ruby Rose as an openly lesbian, feminist superheroine. The show's groundbreaking protagonist has already stirred controversy in some of the internet's darker depths, but the early glimpse drew praise. "Ruby Rose is fun as hell. Pilot is an origin story. And it is SPECTACULARLY gay!" tweeted SyFyWire journalist Jacob Oller.

Much-anticipated panels later in the week include a "Terminator" sequel reuniting Arnold Schwarzenegger and Linda Hamilton, a "Star Trek" showcase welcoming back Patrick Stewart, and a "Game of Thrones" reunion. Marvel Studios is also expected to lift the lid on the next set of films in its hyper-successful "cinematic universe" of superhero movies. — AFP



(From left) Cosplayers Faera Adams (Batgirl), Jay Acey (Black Adam) and Derek Shackleton (Wildcat) pose in front of the Convention Center.



Guests attend the 2019 Comic-Con International preview Night at San Diego Convention Center.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II looks at a Victorian illusion technique known as Pepper's Ghost of a waltz danced at the Crimean Ball of 1856 in the Ballroom at Buckingham Palace, as part of an exhibition to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Queen Victoria, for the Summer Opening of Buckingham Palace in London. — AFP photos

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II looks at a Victorian illusion technique known as Pepper's Ghost of a waltz danced at the Crimean Ball of 1856, in the Ballroom at Buckingham Palace.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II looks at portraits of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert by Louis Haghe.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by assistant curator Lucy Peter, looks at paintings from the Crimean War period, including (top left) Queen Victoria distributing medals on Horse Guards Parade.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II looks at a painting of Queen Victoria inspecting wounded Coldstream Guardsmen, 1855, by John Gilbert.

## Buckingham Palace conjures up Victorian ghosts in new show

The ballroom of Queen Victoria's Buckingham Palace has been brought back to life through Pepper's Ghost: a 19th-century illusion recreated by Hollywood animation whizzkids. The dancing, music and color scheme has been revived inside the palace ballroom as part of an exhibition for the 200th anniversary of Queen Victoria's birth. The 1856 ball celebrating the end of the Crimean War has been recreated using a Victorian technique called Pepper's Ghost.

Film is projected upwards and then reflected off a near-invisible glass screen set at 45 degrees, making dancers seem to appear magically in the room. Scientist John Henry Pepper's trick stunned and terrified people in theatres when it first came out.

The palace's original wallpaper, friezes, windows and ceiling decorations are projected onto the walls to complete the recreation, digitally repainting the now-white walls with the reds, golds, blues and greens of the time.

"It's a melding of 21st-century and 19th-century technology," said curator Amanda Foreman. "Victoria had been deprived of normal socialization when young," she explained. "Dancing helped to make her feel alive. She loved the sensation of it."

### Dancing to feel alive

Built in 1854, the palace's largest room is now used for state banquets such as that thrown last month for US President Donald Trump, and for conferring honors such as knighthoods. The central London palace was unoccupied before Victoria moved in on becoming queen in 1837 at the age of 18. The exhibition shows how Victoria and her husband Prince Albert turned it into the palace of today: the headquarters of the monarchy, a family home and a focal point for national celebrations.

Many of the modern British monarchy's hallmarks started with Victoria at Buckingham Palace, such as the balcony appearances, garden parties and public receptions. Victoria's throne is displayed in the Throne Room, in front of those of her great-great-granddaughter Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip. "It's low down, because she was tiny," said Foreman.

### Casket of teeth

Victoria had nine children in 17 years, eight of whom were born in the palace. The exhibition has a gilt casket of the children's baby teeth, marble casts of her children's arms and legs, and the first

shoes worn by her eldest son, the future king Edward VII. Among the items on show never before seen by the public are Victoria's watercolours of trees in the palace gardens.

Victoria all but left Buckingham Palace after Albert's death in 1861. She reigned for a further 40 years until her own death in 1901. Queen Elizabeth visited the exhibition on Wednesday. The palace opens to the public when the royal family retreat to the private Balmoral estate in Scotland for their summer break. The exhibition, which costs £25 (\$31, 28 euros) to enter, runs from Saturday until September 29. More than 500,000 people are expected to visit. — AFP



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II views an exhibition to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Queen Victoria.

## Lifestyle | Feature



People wearing masks of the Spanish TV show "La Casa de Papel" pose before a photocall for the presentation of the 3rd season of the show. —AFP photos



Spanish actress Alba Flores (left) and Serbian actor Darko Peric pose during a photocall for the presentation of Spanish TV show "La Casa de Papel".

## Madrid emerges as TV series production hub

Media firms are racing to set up television production centers in Madrid following the runaway global success of Spanish series such as Netflix's crime caper "Money Heist". Spanish multimedia group Mediapro and its foreign rivals Viacom and Netflix have set up shop or increased their activity in the Spanish capital to meet booming demand for content sparked by the rise of subscription video streaming services. During a recent visit to Mediapro's studios north of Madrid, film crews were busily recording a dialogue between two actresses on a set depicting an upscale law office.

The scene will be used in a series that the company is producing for Spain's most watched television channel, Telecinco. The company used to produce "two or three" series at that studio per year, now it makes 10 — an "unimaginable" amount just a few years ago, said Javier Pons, who is in charge of television production at the firm.

Mediapro is also preparing a sitcom for HBO, which has a streaming service that competes with Netflix, as well as "projects" for other platforms that it could not discuss. Producing series for a streaming service requires the "narration to be a bit different, so viewers get, in a way, addicted to the content" since users of the platforms tend to binge-watch shows, said Mediapro content director Javier Mendez.

### 'Much cooler'

Madrid's status as a new hub for TV series production was thrown into the spotlight when Netflix in April opened its first European production center in Tres Cantos in the outskirts of the city. The third season of "Money Heist", which Netflix will release worldwide on Friday, was filmed in this sprawling 22,000-square-metre (237,000-square-foot) complex. The Emmy-winning series about a long-prepared, multiple-day assault on the Royal Mint of Spain is Netflix's most watched, non-English language show.

Initially broadcast on private Spanish TV channel Antena 3, the US streaming giant bought the series in late 2017 and re-released it worldwide, turning the show into a global phenomenon. The unexpected success of the series weighed heavily on Netflix's decision to set up shop in Madrid, said Elena Neira, a specialist in new media at the Open University of Catalonia.

And the success of other Spanish series on streaming services such as "Elite" about teens at an exclusive private school in Madrid has led Spanish producers to set their sights higher, she added. "For many people in Spain, who suddenly see Spanish content associated to a powerful brand like Netflix, it becomes much cooler than when it is



Spanish actress Ursula Corbero.

broadcast on Antena 3," Neira said.

The number of TV series made in Spain rose to 58 last year from 38 in 2015, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers report. The sector contributed 655 million euros (\$738 million) to Spain's economic output in 2018, up from 429 million euros in 2015, it added. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that Spain could produce 72 series a year once the sector is "consolidated", which would generate over 18,000 direct and indirect jobs, compared to less than 10,000 in 2015. —AFP



Spanish actors Alvaro Morte (right) and Pedro Alonso (left) pose during a photocall for the presentation of the third season of the Spanish TV show "La Casa de Papel" in Madrid.

## Netflix shares slide on disappointing subscriber growth



This file illustration picture taken on February 18, 2019 shows the US Online Streaming giant Netflix logo displayed on a tablet in Paris.

Netflix shares plunged in after-hours trade Wednesday after its quarterly update showed weaker-than-expected subscriber growth for the streaming television sector leader. Netflix said it added 2.7 million new subscribers worldwide in the April-June period, well below expectations, as the sector prepared for offerings from rival groups including Walt Disney, Apple and others. Shares in Netflix skidded 11.97 percent to \$319.07 in after-market trade following the results, which showed revenues and profits largely in line with analyst forecasts.

Netflix said that it still sees long-term growth on target, dismissing concerns that consumers were gravitating to rivals. "I think our position is excellent," Netflix chief executive Reed Hastings said in an earnings presentation. "If investors believe in internet television, then our position in that market is very strong."

Hastings maintained that while there may be a streaming television war going on, the market is so vast that rival services can thrive. He quipped that many Netflix employees are fans of HBO shows.

Netflix, known for its original shows such as "The Crown" and "Orange is the New Black," said the latest shows did not attract as many subscribers. That, along with hikes in the price of subscriptions in some regions, appeared to dampen growth, Hastings and other top executives said. Subscriber growth reignited in the opening weeks of the current quarter, with the release of the latest season of blockbuster original series "Stranger Things," according to executives. "Netflix has a difficult road ahead with looming competition and the removal of popular content, but a strong content schedule in Q3 should draw many former subscribers back in," said eMarketer forecasting analyst Eric Haggstrom. Netflix said revenue for the recently ended quarter grew 26 percent from a year ago to \$4.9 billion and profit fell 29 percent to \$271 million.

### Farewell to 'Friends'

Netflix will be losing some of its hit shows such as "Friends" to rival platforms being launched in the coming months, but argued that it will make up for that with original content. "Much of our domestic, and eventually global, Disney catalog, as well as 'Friends,' 'The Office,' and some other licensed content will wind down over the coming years, freeing up budget for more original content," the company said. "From what we've seen in the past when we drop strong catalog content... our members shift over to enjoying our other great content."

WarnerMedia will launch its new Netflix rival "HBO Max" in early 2020 after reclaiming the rights to stream its popular television comedy "Friends," the company said Tuesday. The new service will enter an increasingly crowded TV streaming marketplace, vying for customers with Netflix, Hulu and Amazon as well as the soon-to-be-launched Disney+, and Apple's upcoming product. —AFP



American-Russian actor, Odin Lund Biron (center) performs during the rehearsal of "Outside" written and directed by Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov.



American-Russian actor, Odin Lund Biron (left) performs during the rehearsal of "Outside" written and directed by Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov.

## For Russian director, facing trial, art is 'resistance'

For Russian theatre and film director Kirill Serebrennikov some one-and-a-half years of house arrest and a serious court case have been no obstacle to artistic creation. Consigned to his Moscow flat as he faced embezzlement charges he strenuously denies, Seberennikov pressed on with staging theatre productions, finishing a film and even operas remotely abroad. His house arrest, which began in August 2017, was finally lifted in April this year to the delight of the supporters of the artistic director of the trendy Gogol Centre in Moscow. Now, Serebrennikov has drawn inspiration from the trailblazing Chinese photographer Ren Hang, who troubled the Beijing authorities but took his own life in 2017.

The play called "Outside" premiered at France's prestigious Avignon Theatre Festival on Tuesday without Serebrennikov, who is unable to leave Moscow under terms set by the court.

The performers, who donned white T-shirts with the slogan 'Free Kirill' at the curtain call, were given a standing ovation by the audience. "Theatre, cinema and photography are always an act of resistance," Serebrennikov told AFP in an interview conducted by email ahead of the premiere of "Outside". "Art is always the resistance of lying, slander and obscurantism because this is the most free territory of human activity where everything is possible," he added.

### 'Became close to me'

Serebrennikov said the inspiration for the play came from messages over social media with Hang and a meeting that tragically never happened when the photographer killed himself in February 2017. "Literally two days before the time when we were supposed to get to know each other personally, he committed suicide," the director said. Hang had in his short life built up an international reputation with erotically-infused photographs that broke taboos on sex in China.

"I had the feeling that a person had died who I had already



American-Russian actor, Odin Lund Biron (center) performs during the rehearsal of "Outside" written and directed by Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov, as part of the 73rd International Theatre Festival in Avignon, southeastern France. — AFP photos

managed to get to know who had already become close to me," said Serebrennikov, adding he wrote the play during the house arrest. "Hang said that he does not try to influence or interfere in the politics of China but China tries to interfere in his work," he said.

### 'Repression makes nothing better'

Serebrennikov is accused of creating an organized criminal group with his colleagues and embezzling more than \$2 million of state funding for a theatre project called Platforma. He has insisted the money was used properly and calls the charges "absurd". For new productions of Nabucco by Verdi at the Hamburg State Opera and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* in Zurich, he sent instructions to

the bar and restaurant. But the phone—which the defense wanted to examine—has disappeared, as confirmed by Little and his parents, who were also called on to testify. A police officer said he returned the phone after extracting all the information but admitted he neglected to ask for a receipt upon its return. The family said they never received it. Little's mother Heather Unruh, a television news anchor in the Boston area, admitted she had deleted some potentially embarrassing photos before handing the phone over, but said she had not erased anything related to the alleged assault.

### Hollywood's reckoning

It is the latest chapter in Hollywood's reckoning over sexual assault and harassment, which has already seen television icon Bill Cosby jailed, with movie mogul Harvey Weinstein's trial set to begin in September. Spacey had insisted on his innocence of the charges, which would have carried a penalty of up to five years in prison. The two-time Oscar-winner—recognized for his supporting role in "The Usual Suspects" in 1996 and his lead role in "American Beauty" in 2000 — was considered one of the finest actors of his generation.—AFP

singers and set designers on a USB stick through his lawyer. But Serebrennikov railed against the notion that suffering and persecution was some kind of necessity to produce great artistic work.

"Persecution and repression does not make anything better. Even in Soviet times I heard the phrase that an 'artist must be hungry'. No! That is rubbish!" said Serebrennikov. And he denied that his own incarceration had helped his creativity. "Pressure can be an obstacle in work. When I was working under arrest I tried to imagine there was no fabricated case against me and no false accusations. And I simply worked."

### 'Force the audience'

Serebrennikov made his name in Moscow with bold and visually dramatic productions of classic plays that sometimes contained explicit scenes and nudity to the anger of conservatives. He also directed a new ballet at the Bolshoi Theatre on the life of the legendary star Rudolf Nureyev that was controversially pulled from the schedules after the rehearsal although it did finally reach the stage. His latest film *Leto* (Summer), released in 2018 to warm reviews, was a snapshot of the Leningrad underground rock scene in the 1980s and appeared to be a hymn to making art in adversity.

Serebrennikov said it was his duty as a director to grab the attention of the viewer, especially at a time when people are so easily distracted by their phones. "For me I think it is possible to use any kind of means that is not illegal and can force the audience to think and to feel." And Serebrennikov, who until his arrest was not regarded as a politically active figure in Russia, said that above all theatre needed to be personal. "I am always happy when the theatre looks not to the crowd but every person in the hall." "Theatre needs every person personally but politics needs crowds and ratings."—AFP

## Charges dropped in US sex assault case against Kevin Spacey

Prosecutors dropped sexual assault proceedings against Kevin Spacey on Wednesday after the case against the Hollywood star collapsed over his alleged victim's refusal to testify. William Little had accused the 59-year-old Oscar winner of groping him in a bar on the upscale resort island of Nantucket in July 2016. But Massachusetts prosecutors filed a formal notice of abandonment of an indecent assault and battery indictment due to "the unavailability of the complaining witness." Little chose to plead the Fifth Amendment, which allows witnesses not to testify so as not to incriminate themselves, after it was revealed that his cell phone—a key piece of evidence—may have been compromised.

Little has said he took a smartphone video of the incident, which he says took place when he was an 18-year-old busboy in



In this file photo Kevin Spacey exits the courthouse after making an appearance during his arraignment on at the Nantucket District Court, in Nantucket, Massachusetts. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Feature



Hakka graffiti painter Wu Tsun-hsien posing for a photo in an empty old house near his home in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao. — AFP photos



Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien painting a wall in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao.

# TAIWANESE 'GRAFFITI VILLAGE' EASES ELDERLY LONELINESS



A basketball hoop and backboard in front of a wall painted by Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien.

Nestled in the mist-covered foothills of Taiwan's central mountain range, Ruan Chiao village is virtually devoid of young people, but artist Wu Tsun-hsien is coaxing the Instagram generation back by transforming local homes into a canvas of color. Dipping his brush into a tin of beige emulsion, he carefully applies new layers of paint to his latest production—a vibrant rural scene depicting farmers in traditional weave hats tending to a flock of animals. Behind him an elderly villager with a walking stick shuffles his way down the main street, which is plastered with Wu's colorful paintings.

"This village is full of old people," the 55-year-old laments, explaining how the vast majority of youngsters—including his own children—have moved to the city, leaving elderly residents listless and lonely. But paintings have started to bring young visitors—always keen for a selfie in a photo-friendly location—back. "These drawings attracted many tourists to come visit. The old people who were left here are no longer so bored. This was my biggest gain," he beams. Wu is not alone in this adopting this strategy.

There are now some half a dozen so-called "graffiti villages" in Taiwan that have been festooned with artwork in a bid to inject some life into rural places that have been emptied of its young.

## Empty villages

Like many industrialized places, Taiwan's remarkable economic transformation over the past few decades has upended rural communities and unleashed huge demographic changes. "It's perhaps a more recent phenomenon than it would have been in some other places," explains Shelley Rigger, an expert on Taiwan at Davidson College in North Carolina, who said much of Taiwan's industrial manufacturing stayed in the villages. "People sewed Barbie doll clothing in their houses and then carried it down to a packaging plant in the middle of a village," she tells AFP, as an example. Ruan Chiao village, for example, used to churn out paper temple offerings.

But once much of the manufacturing shifted to mainland China in the late 1990s and Taiwan moved up the value chain, many of



A local resident walking past a wall painted by Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao.



A local resident walking past a house painted by Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao.



## Lifestyle | Feature



Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien (top right) posing with his family in front of their home in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao.

those jobs left. "That's when you see rural areas kind of emptying out," Rigger adds. Taiwan's 23 million population is also rapidly ageing. The birth rate has plummeted—only 180,000 children were born last year, an eight-year low. The Wu family have experienced this flight first hand. The ancestral home is occupied by his wife's father, 81, and mother, 72, who still work a few plots of land in the hills above the village growing organic vegetables. But Wu's own children both went to university and have left, one to Australia, the other to a nearby city.

Wu's wife Fan Ai-hsiu explains their bid to draw Instagram-happy crowds of youngsters was less about economics and more about giving her parents something to look forward to. "They want to have conversations with people, that's what they miss, it's not about money," Fan says.

But it was not initially an easy task to persuade fellow villagers to use their houses as a canvas. "People here are fairly conservative," she recalls, adding: "But once the first few paintings went up, they could see it brought people in."

#### Political themes

Most of Wu's paintings in the village stick to rural pastiches or traditional symbols of good fortune. It is the family home where he really gets to express himself—and which has quickly drawn a mass following on social media. Perched on a slope overlooking the village, the whole house is covered in images, many of which detail Wu's politics. He's an avid believer that not enough is being done to tackle climate change, so some of the scenes show apocalyptic scenes of environmental devastation. Others are commentaries on social issues like gay marriage—which he opposes—or how the elderly are treated in an increasingly consumerist society.

"This mural depicts the present Taiwanese corrupt society," Wu remarks as he walks along a huge painted wall featuring hundreds of images. "This one is society's mayhem due to mobile



A wall painted by Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien.

phones, computers and television... and this one is our cultural loss where many of our Hakka young generations don't know the culture," he adds. The Hakka are linguistically distinct group of people who trace their origins back to southern China. They have lived in Taiwan for some four centuries and make up 15-20 percent of the population.

Evelyn Sun puts on art and food events in Taipei and found out about Wu's paintings via social media. She visited with friends who all soon found themselves sitting around a table with the Wu family, eating traditional Hakka vegetable dishes and tucking into eggs boiled in a secret recipe of local herbs. The 25-year-old enthuses: "Taiwan has many 'graffiti villages' that are beautiful scenic spots where people will just leave after taking pictures." "But I realized when I came here that every mural here is depicting a social problem faced by society." She hopes other young Taiwanese will explore the nation's rural villages more often. She explains: "These people are our culture, they are our history, we have to get to know them." — AFP



A dog sleeping in the courtyard of a house painted by Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao.



Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien posing for photos at his home in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao.



A man repairing a home which was painted by Hakka graffiti artist Wu Tsun-hsien in the Taiwanese village of Ruan Chiao.

## This chicken and couscous dish is a winning weeknight dinner

**B**ursting with the aromatic flavors of saffron, chorizo and garlic, this chicken and couscous dish is a winning weeknight dinner. When developing this recipe, we started with classic chicken and rice, but found that the rice was not cooking at the same rate as the chicken in the multicooker, we ended up with either stubbornly crunchy rice or egregiously overcooked chicken.

Since tasters loved the Spanish flavor profile of the dish, we went in search of a different grain that would work in tandem with the chicken. A few tests revealed that couscous was the crowd favorite, and it couldn't have been simpler: Couscous doesn't require cooking at all, just soaking, which meant we could add it to the pot after pressure or slow cooking and allow it to simply absorb the ultra flavorful cooking liquid. If using the slow cook function, begin checking the chicken's temperature after 1 hour and continue to monitor until it is done.

### SPANISH-STYLE CHICKEN AND COUSCOUS

#### Ingredients

#### Servings: 4

Pressure cook total time: 1 hour

Slow cook total time: 2 hours, 40 minutes

4 (12 ounce) bone-in split chicken breasts, trimmed

Salt and pepper

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and chopped fine

4 ounces Spanish-style chorizo sausage, cut into 1/4 inch pieces

4 garlic cloves, minced

1/8 teaspoon saffron threads, crumbled

1/2 cup chicken broth

1 1/2 cups couscous

1 cup frozen peas, thawed

2 teaspoons lemon juice

3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

#### Preparation

Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Using highest sauté or browning function, heat oil in multicooker for 5 minutes (or until just smoking.) Place half of chicken, skin side down, in multicooker and cook until browned, 5 to 7 minutes; transfer to plate. Repeat with remaining chicken; transfer to plate.

Add bell pepper, chorizo, and 1/4 teaspoon salt to fat left in multicooker and cook until bell pepper is softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in garlic and saffron and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in broth, scraping up any browned bits. Nestle chicken, skin side up, into multicooker, adding any accumulated juices.

**To pressure cook:** Lock lid in place and close pressure release valve. Select high pressure cook function and cook for 17 minutes. (If using Instant Pot, decrease cooking time to 9 minutes.) Turn off multicooker and quick-release pressure. Carefully remove lid, allowing steam to escape away from you.

**To slow cook:** Lock lid in place and open pressure release valve. Select low slow cook function and cook until chicken registers 160 F, 1 to 2 hours. (If using Instant Pot, select high slow cook function.) Turn off multicooker and carefully remove lid, allowing steam to escape away from you.

Transfer chicken to serving dish and discard skin, if desired. Tent with aluminum foil and let rest while preparing couscous. Stir couscous, peas, and lemon juice into multicooker, cover, and let sit until couscous is tender, about 5 minutes. Add parsley and fluff couscous gently with fork to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with chicken.

**Nutrition information per serving:** 597 calories; 165 calories from fat; 18 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 111 mg cholesterol; 596 mg sodium; 60 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 4 g sugar; 45 g protein.



SPANISH-STYLE CHICKEN AND COUSCOUS

## RICE CRISPY TREATS

# Get that sticky rice crispy chew that kids and adults love

While almost everyone is familiar with the classic recipe for Rice Krispies Treats, slight variations on the original abound. We think our recipe gets them just right, with the perfect ratio of marshmallow and butter to cereal for a bar with the sticky chew that kids love and that adults remember fondly.

The basic procedure is the same as the back-of-the box recipe: Melt butter and marshmallows, mix in cereal, and press into a pan—it couldn't be simpler. But we like a generous portion of these cereal treats; for thick, substantial squares, we pat the mixture into an 8-inch square pan instead of the usual 13-by-9 inch pan. Adding a little salt to the mix kept sweetness in check.

Greasing the knife we used to slice the bars ensured that we were able to produce neat, easy-to-cut squares. These rice crispy treats are delicious as is, but their simplicity also makes them an ideal backdrop for a whole host of flavorings and mix-ins, so we developed several variations sure to please any crowd. Any brand of toasted rice cereal will work in this recipe.

## RICE CRISPY TREATS

### Ingredients

### Servings: 16

Start to finish: 1 hour  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
10 ounces marshmallows  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/4 teaspoon salt

5 cups (5 ounces) crisped rice cereal

### Preparation

Make foil sling for 8-inch square baking pan by folding 2 long sheets of aluminum foil so each is 8 inches wide. Lay sheets of foil in pan perpendicular to one another, with extra foil hanging over edges of pan. Push foil into corners and up sides of pan, smoothing foil flush to pan. Spray with vegetable oil spray.

Melt butter in Dutch oven over low heat. Add marshmallows, vanilla, and salt and cook, stirring constantly, until melted and smooth, about 6 minutes. Off heat, stir in cereal until incorporated. Transfer mixture to prepared pan and press into even layer with greased spatula. Let treats cool for 30 minutes. Using foil overhang, remove treats from pan. Cut into 16 squares and serve.

### Variations

**Almond Joy Rice Crispy Treats:** Stir 1 cup toasted sweetened shredded coconut; 1 cup toasted sliced almonds; and 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips into marshmallow mixture with cereal.

**Chocolate-Cherry Rice Crispy Treats:** Add 1/2 cup white chocolate chips to pot with marshmallows. Stir 1 cup dried cherries, chopped, into marshmallow mixture with cereal. Microwave 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips in bowl at 50% power, stirring occasionally, until melted, 30 to 60 seconds. Drizzle over cooled treats. Let set for 15 minutes before cutting treats.

**Double Chocolate Caramel Turtle Rice Crispy Treats:** Add 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips to pot with marshmallows. Stir 4 1/2 ounces quartered soft caramels and 1 cup pecans, toasted and chopped, into marshmallow mixture with cereal. Microwave additional 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips in bowl at 50% power, stirring occasionally, until melted, 30 to 60 seconds. Drizzle chocolate over cooled treats and let set for 15 minutes before cutting treats.

**Loaded Rice Crispy Treats:** Stir 1 cup pretzels, broken into 1/2-inch pieces; 1/2 cup salted dry-roasted peanuts; 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips, and 1/2 cup toffee bits into marshmallow mixture with cereal.

**Peanut Butter Rice Crispy Treats:** Add 1/2 cup peanut butter chips to pot with marshmallows. Stir 1 cup dry-roasted peanuts into marshmallow mixture with cereal. Microwave additional 1/2 cup peanut butter chips in bowl at 50% power, stirring occasionally, until melted. Drizzle melted peanut butter chips over cooled treats and let set for 15 minutes before cutting treats.

**Salty Cashew-Caramel Rice Crispy Treats:** Stir 1 1/2 cups salted roasted cashews, chopped coarse, and 4 1/2 ounces quartered soft caramels into marshmallow mixture with cereal.

**Nutrition information per serving:** 108 calories; 20 calories from fat; 2 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 6 mg cholesterol; 96 mg sodium; 22 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 11 g sugar; 1 g protein.



# Beyond the ancient capital: The best day trips from KYOTO



**R**enowned as the historic and cultural jewel of Japan, the enchanting city of Kyoto captivates visitors with its shrine-dotted streets and temple-laden paths. But should you have a thirst for a change of scenery, there are plenty of options. Japan's ancient capital city sits in the heart of the Kansai region, home to some of the nation's top destinations boasting magnificent castles, quaint shopping streets, lush hiking trails, and charming hot spring towns. The following day trips from Kyoto can be reached within an hour or two by train. If you make several day trips by train within a five-day period, you may be able to save some cash by using the Kansai Wide Area Pass.

#### Peaceful parks and gardens in Nara

Famed for its inquisitive deer that roam the sprawling grounds of Nara Park (and have even been designated as a national treasure), the tranquil Nara City is home to some of Japan's most historical sites, such as the massive Todaiji temple and the lantern-lined Kasuga Shrine. While making your way to leafy Nara Park, stroll through exquisite Japanese gardens at Yoshiki-en. At nearby Isui-en, see a prime example of shakkei - the Japanese concept of borrowed scenery - with Mt. Wakakusa rising up in the distance as the garden's backdrop. Getting there: From Kyoto Station, take a 55-minute rapid train on the JR Nara line to Nara Station.

#### Eat and shop till you drop in Osaka

Known in Japan as 'the nation's kitchen', Osaka's motto 'kuidaore' literally means 'to eat oneself bankrupt'. Chow down on okonomiyaki (savory pancakes) and takoyaki (fried octopus balls) along the Dotombori River. Try



kushikatsu (fried meat and vegetable morsels on sticks) near the Tsutenkaku Tower in the kitschy, neon-lit neighbourhood of Shinsekai. Wind through the alleys of Ura-Namba to Torame Yokacho (Tiger Alley) where you can try myriad favourite dishes under one roof. After wandering the expansive grounds of the iconic Osaka Castle, browse boutique and vintage clothing shops in the hip hoods of Amerika-Mura, Horie, and Nakazakicho. If you want more bang for your buck, head to the Rinku Town outlets by the airport to grab a bargain.

Getting there: From Kyoto Station, take a 30-minute JR special rapid train bound for Himeji to Osaka Station. Bullet trains also run between Kyoto and Osaka.

#### Harborside and mountaintop excursions in Kobe

Kobe has long been a cosmopolitan hotspot with an infusion of international influences. At the heart of Kobe lie the popular retail districts of Motomachi and Sannomiya. Wander uphill from Sannomiya Station to an area of tree-lined streets with a collection of old-style merchant houses, quaint cafes, and one-of-a-kind shops. The city boasts a well-established Chinatown, Nankinmachi, and nature is close by with Mt. Rokko - a popular hiking spot (featuring a cable car for those less inclined to hike) - towering over the narrow streets. If you happen to have extra time on your hands, consider a trip to the city of Himeji to visit the magnificent World Heritage Site of Himeji Castle.

Getting there: From Kyoto Station, take a JR Limited Express Super Hakuto train for 50 minutes to Sannomiya Station. This service only runs a few times a day, so check the Hyperdia train website in advance. To get to the Kobe Port area, take a short ride on the JR Kobe line to Kobe Station.

#### Get a history lesson in Hiroshima

The Kyoto to Hiroshima leg is a well-trodden path for visitors who want to see the Peace Memorial Park and museum dedicated to the history of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. A good pick-me-up after a tour through the museum is a trip over to the gorgeous little island of Miyajima,





which is home to Itsukushima - a bright orange shrine rising out of the ocean. This is a celebrated scenic spot, considered one of the 'three great views of Japan'. There, you can wander through streets lined with machiya (old wooden town-houses), do plenty of souvenir shopping, eat grilled Hiroshima oysters on the street, and take a cable car up to the top of Mt. Misen for breathtaking views of the Seto Inland Sea.

Getting there: From Kyoto Station, take the 100-minute Shinkansen Nozomi bullet train to Hiroshima. To reach the ferry port from Hiroshima Station, take the JR Sanyo Line for 25 minutes to Miyajimaguchi Station.

#### Kayak or bike around Japan's largest freshwater lake

Lake Biwa in neighboring Shiga Prefecture is the perfect spot for a nature break with kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, cycling, and lake cruises. The Biwaichi bike trails and road networks that circle Biwako make cycling an easy choice, and rental shops at Maibara Station are a convenient place to pick up a set of wheels. Ride south from Maibara to the charming little town of Hikone where you can climb up to Hikone Castle for spectacular views out over Lake Biwa. Or ride north to Nagahama, a town perched on the northeast coast of the lake with highlights including the reconstructed Nagahama Castle on the waterfront, the brewery Nagahama Roman Beer serving craft brews and omi-gyu beef sushi from the Lake Biwa region, and the impeccably manicured garden of Keiunkan. Getting there: From Kyoto Station, take a one-hour rapid train or 19-minute bullet train on the JR line to Maibara Station.

#### Soak in Kinosaki's abundant hot springs

An atmospheric hot-spring town with seven public bath-houses and a whole host of private ones, Kinosaki is the ultimate relaxation getaway. The public baths are esteemed for their remedial properties and promises of good fortune. If you arrive in the picturesque canal town in the winter, enjoy a feast of snow crab freshly caught from the Sea of Japan. Many of the ryokans (traditional Japanese inns) serve delectable kaiseki (Japanese haute cuisine) multi-course crab meals, which are tasty works of art.

Getting there: From Kyoto Station, take the Limited Express Kinosaki train to Kinosaki Onsen Station. It takes around 2.5 hours. This train only runs a few times a



day, so be sure to check the Hyperdia train website before travel.

#### Wander Kurashiki's revered historic canal district

Situated roughly 230km from Kyoto in Okayama Prefecture lies the historic canal town of Kurashiki, known for the white and grey walls of its residences and the willow trees dotted along the banks of the Kurashiki River. During the Edo period, this river formed key trade routes for Japanese merchants. In the 1600s the town's light-colored buildings were rice stores and granaries that have now been restored

as cafes, galleries, craft and pottery workshops, denim boutiques, and accommodation. Admire the historically preserved town centre of Bikan on a traditional boat tour of Kurashiki Canal, and then tuck into a plate of barazushi, a regional speciality of sticky rice topped with over a dozen ingredients, such as seafood from the Seto Inland Sea or vegetables like snow peas, carrots, and lotus root.

Getting there: From Kyoto Station, ride the Shinkansen Nozomi bullet train for one hour to Okayama Station then change to the JR Sanyo line to Kurashiki Station (approx 20 mins).

## Comic

### Word Search

#### Adverbs

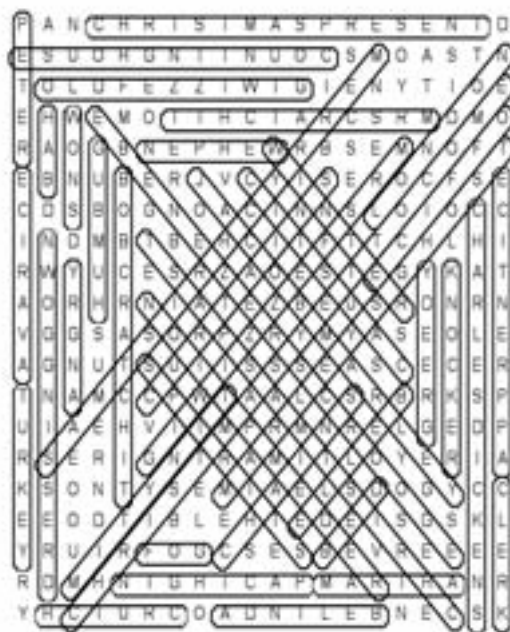
Find and circle all of the adverbs that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

SOONOWHEREADV D H G I H A E  
 RBWISELYSYLTNEGNOLL D  
 THEREMNIAGAIEASILYMR  
 OEYYLKCIUQH YLWOLSDOA  
 IRLFY YONCEDFYVGFERSW  
 FOLDOABNBAHEADRARBTE  
 OFARERDRESYLTNESERP M  
 REEAAAERATNDSRATVADO  
 WBRWRJLVEEFSRETOEESH  
 ACAPLATIETNOIVL D NLSV  
 RYMUYKCA BRSMFEYAAOER  
 OYTOMORROWBEEWSYMLRA  
 WALTNATYORNWYODEEINT  
 HEHTRTLRISTH BHTHTWOH  
 EEEEEETHSORSETI W TOHEE  
 NRLKFIKLAHLRMYLDUOLR  
 CYAOLLUPYOSENEQUITED  
 EVSEYYAQWRSAS YAWLABS

- |          |         |          |           |           |
|----------|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| ACROSS   | BEHIND  | HENCE    | ONCE      | SOMETIMES |
| AGAIN    | BELOW   | HIGH     | PRESENTLY | SOMEWHERE |
| AHEAD    | BRISKLY | HOWEWARD | QUICKLY   | SOON      |
| ALMOST   | DOWN    | HOWEVER  | QUIETLY   | THEN      |
| ALREADY  | EARLY   | LITTLE   | QUITE     | THERE     |
| ALSO     | EASILY  | LONG     | RARELY    | TODAY     |
| ALWAYS   | FAST    | LOUDLY   | RATHER    | TOMORROW  |
| ANYWHERE | FIRST   | MONTHLY  | REALLY    | UPWARD    |
| APART    | FOREVER | NEARBY   | SHORT     | WEEKLY    |
| AWAY     | FORWARD | NEVER    | SLOWLY    | WISELY    |
| BACK     | GENTLY  | NOWHERE  | SOFTLY    | YESTERDAY |
| BEFORE   | GREATLY | OFTEN    |           |           |

### Yesterday's Solution

#### A Christmas Carol



- |                 |                       |                 |              |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ANGRY           | CHRISTMAS PAST        | HUMBUG          | NIGHTCAP     |
| APPRENTICE      | CHRISTMAS PRESENT     | JACOB MARLEY    | OFFICE       |
| AVARICE         | CHRISTMAS YET TO COME | KNOCKER         | OLD FEZZIWIG |
| BAH             | CLERK                 | LONDON          | PETER        |
| BED             | COUNTING HOUSE        | MARLEY'S GHOST  | REDEMPTION   |
| BELINDA         | CRUTCH                | MARTHA          | SNOW         |
| BELLE           | CURTAINS              | MERRY CHRISTMAS | SPIRITS      |
| BOB CRATCHIT    | DRESSING GOWN         | MRS CRATCHIT    | TINY TIM     |
| CAUSTIC         | EBENEZER SCROOGE      | MRS FEZZIWIG    | TURKEY       |
| CHAINS          | FOG                   | NEPHEW          | WINTER       |
| CHARLES DICKENS | GREEDY                |                 |              |

The hidden message is: AND SO, AS TINY TIM OBSERVED, GOD BLESS US, EVERY ONE!

### Crossword 2261



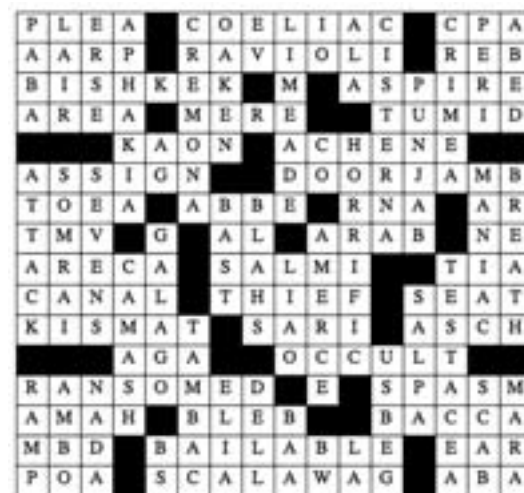
#### ACROSS

- A former monetary unit in Great Britain.
- Stripped of drapery.
- (Roman mythology) Goddess of abundance and fertility.
- A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- Any of two families of large herbivorous aquatic mammals with paddle-shaped tails and flipper-like forelimbs and no hind limbs.
- Type genus of the family Mycidae.
- A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
- A state in northwestern North America.
- Sour or bitter in taste.
- By bad luck.
- A republic in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea.
- Largest known toad species.
- Petty quarrel.
- Fleshy and usually brightly colored cover of some seeds that develops from the ovule stalk and partially or entirely envelopes the seed.
- Imprudently incurring risk.
- Being one more than one hundred.
- The United Nations agency concerned with international maritime activities.
- An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
- Wild ginger.
- Informal terms for a mother.
- Free from favoritism or self-interest or bias or deception.
- Type genus of the Lacertidae.
- A linear unit (1/6 inch) used in printing.
- A midwestern state in north central United States in the Great Lakes region.
- A Mid-Atlantic state.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A city in central Georgia southeast of Atlanta.
- (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
- Largest crested screamer.
- Obvious and dull.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- A monarchy in northwestern Europe occupying most of the British Isles.
- Any of a group of antidepressant drugs that inhibit the action of monoamine oxidase in the brain and so allow monoamines to accumulate.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- A soft silver-white ductile metallic element (liquid at normal temperatures).
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Lean end of the neck.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
- An emotional response that has been acquired by conditioning.
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- The act or process of measuring.
- A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.

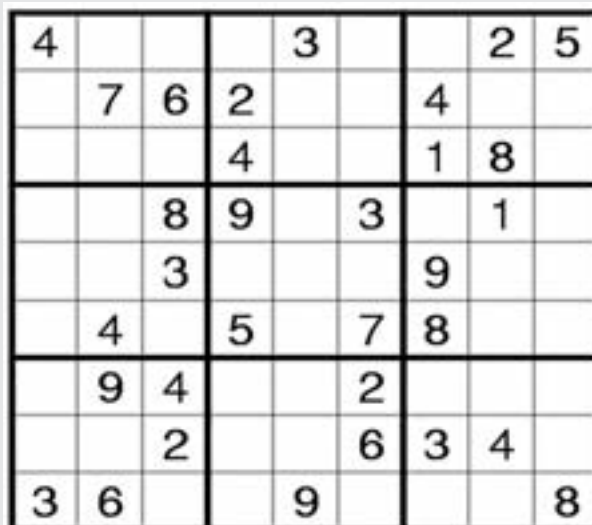
#### DOWN

- English monk and scholar (672-735).
- A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
- A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
- North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in north-west North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- The phenomenon of resistance to motion through a fluid.
- Shape anew or differently.
- The capital of Turkey.
- Performance by or technique of a pianist.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
- The ending of a series or sequence.
- Fruit trees native to the Old World.
- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- A bottle with a stopper.
- A Japanese shrub that resembles members of the genus Spiraea.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- An Asian river between China and Russia.
- Any of various drums with small heads.
- (Old Testament) The first of the major Hebrew prophets (8th century BC).
- The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
- (Assyrian) Chief god of the Assyrians.
- Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinged fruit.
- The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- An awkward stupid person.
- A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
- The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
- (Sumerian and Akkadian) A demon personifying death.
- Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
- The southern part of the ancient Palestine succeeding the kingdom of Judah.
- A state in northwestern North America.
- (South African) A camp defended by a circular formation of wagons.
- (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.
- Dearly loved.
- (usually followed by 'to') Having the necessary means or skill or know-how or authority to do something.
- A rare chronic progressive encephalitis caused by the measles virus and occurring primarily in children and young adults.
- A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
- Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
- In bed.
- An aromatic ointment used in antiquity.
- An accountant certified by the state.
- Before noon.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).

### Yesterday's Solution



### Daily SuDoku



### Yesterday's Solution



TV Listings

**MOVIES ACTION**

00:00 Patriots Day  
02:15 Ultimate Justice  
03:50 Captain America: The First Avenger  
06:00 Beyond The Edge  
07:55 Megan Leavey  
09:55 Captain America: The First Avenger  
12:00 Beyond The Edge  
13:55 Six Gun Savior  
15:40 A Knight's Tale  
18:00 Vengeance: A Love Story  
19:45 Captain America: The Winter Soldier  
22:00 Bloodsport  
23:35 Ryde

**ANIMAL PLANET HD**

00:45 North Woods Law  
01:40 Alaska Monsters  
02:35 Sharkbite Beach  
03:25 Great White: The Impossible Shot  
04:15 North Woods Law  
05:02 Wildest Europe  
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees  
06:36 Escape To Chimp Eden  
07:25 Amanda To The Rescue  
11:00 Wolves And Warriors  
12:50 Sharkbite Beach  
13:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet  
14:40 Nature's Strangest Mysteries: Solved  
15:08 How Do Animals Do That  
15:35 Alaska Monsters  
16:30 The Jeff Corwin Experience  
17:25 Animal Cops Houston  
18:20 Shark Island  
19:15 The Vet Life  
20:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet  
21:05 Wildest Europe  
22:00 Intruders  
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees  
23:50 The Vet Life

**BBC FIRST**

00:20 And Then There Were None  
01:20 Holby City  
02:15 Mum  
02:45 The Detectivists  
03:15 EastEnders  
03:45 EastEnders  
04:15 Benidorm  
05:05 Death In Paradise  
06:00 EastEnders  
06:30 EastEnders  
07:00 Last Tango In Halifax  
07:55 Holby City  
08:50 Casualty  
09:40 Friday Night Dinner  
10:05 The Detectivists  
10:35 The Detectivists  
11:05 Death In Paradise  
12:00 The Coroner  
12:50 Holby City  
13:45 The Musketeers  
14:40 The Detectivists  
15:10 The Detectivists  
15:40 EastEnders  
16:10 Casualty  
17:00 Holby City  
18:00 The Detectivists  
18:30 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators  
19:20 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators  
20:10 And Then There Were None  
21:10 Line Of Duty  
22:10 Les Miserables  
23:35 The Detectivists

**crime investigation network**

00:00 Homicide Hunter  
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos  
01:55 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
02:50 It Takes A Killer  
03:20 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 Cold Case Files  
07:00 Live PD: Police Patrol

07:20 The First 48  
08:05 The First 48  
08:50 Homicide Hunter  
09:35 Homicide Hunter  
10:30 Cold Case Files  
11:25 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
12:20 Crimes That Shook Britain  
13:15 Live PD: Police Patrol  
13:45 Live PD: Police Patrol  
14:10 It Takes A Killer  
14:40 It Takes A Killer  
15:05 Homicide Hunter  
16:00 The First 48  
17:00 Cold Case Files  
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain  
19:00 The First 48  
20:00 Homicide Hunter  
21:00 Live PD: Police Patrol  
21:30 Live PD: Police Patrol  
22:00 The Jail: 60 Days In  
23:00 Live PD: Police Patrol  
23:30 Live PD: Police Patrol

**COMEDY CENTRAL**

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  
07:10 Lip Sync Battle  
07:35 Lip Sync Battle  
08:00 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA  
08:30 Takeshis Castle Thailand  
08:55 Ridiculousness Arabia  
09:20 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef  
09:50 Takeshis Castle Thailand  
10:15 Friends  
12:20 Workaholics  
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 Jo Koy: Don't Make Him Angry  
23:30 Broad City

**Discovery Family**

00:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
00:30 The Food Inspectors  
01:20 My Cat From Hell  
02:10 Bad Dog  
03:00 The Carbonaro Effect  
03:25 The Carbonaro Effect  
03:50 Mysteries At The Museum  
04:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
05:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
05:30 My Cat From Hell  
06:15 Bad Dog  
07:00 The Carbonaro Effect  
07:25 The Carbonaro Effect  
07:50 Mysteries At The Museum  
08:40 Weather Top Tens  
09:30 Bad Universe  
10:20 How The Earth Works  
11:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
12:00 Pawn Queens  
12:25 Pawn Queens  
12:50 The Big Brain Theory  
13:40 Battle Bots  
14:30 Strange Evidence  
15:20 The Carbonaro Effect  
15:45 The Carbonaro Effect  
16:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
16:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
17:00 My Cat From Hell  
17:50 Bad Dog  
18:40 The Carbonaro Effect  
19:05 The Carbonaro Effect  
19:30 Guy's Grocery Games  
20:20 Breaking Magic

20:45 Breaking Magic  
21:10 Deception With Keith Barry  
22:00 Tricks On The Streets  
22:25 Tricks On The Streets  
22:50 Wild Africa: Rivers Of Life  
23:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things

**ID**

00:00 Home Alone  
01:00 House Of Horrors: Kidnapped  
02:00 The Real Story With Maria Elena Salinas  
03:00 People Magazine Investigations: Cults  
03:45 Home Alone  
04:30 Hometown Homicide  
05:20 Border Control: Spain  
05:45 Border Control: Spain  
06:10 Gone  
07:00 People Magazine Investigations  
07:55 People Magazine Investigations  
08:50 The Perfect Murder  
09:45 The Perfect Murder  
10:40 Border Control: Spain  
11:10 Border Control: Spain  
11:35 Hometown Homicide  
12:30 Grave Secrets  
13:25 Gone  
14:20 Nightmare Next Door  
15:15 Nightmare Next Door  
16:10 Border Control: Spain  
16:40 Border Control: Spain  
17:05 Evil Lives Here  
18:00 Evil Lives Here  
19:00 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones  
20:00 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones  
21:00 Twisted Sisters  
22:00 Kiss Of Death  
23:00 Diabolical: Deadly Love

**Disney XD**

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 Fast Layne  
06:25 Tangled: The Series  
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts  
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  
10:15 Bizaardvark  
10:40 Bizaardvark  
11:05 Liv And Maddie  
11:30 Liv And Maddie  
11:55 K.C. Undercover  
12:20 K.C. Undercover  
12:45 Tangled: The Series  
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
13:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
14:00 101 Dalmatian Street  
14:15 Shake It Up  
14:40 K.C. Undercover  
15:05 Disney Mickey Mouse  
15:10 Fast Layne  
16:50 Raven's Home  
17:15 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp  
17:40 Bizaardvark  
18:00 K.C. Undercover  
18:30 Bunk'd  
18:55 Descendants Wicked World  
19:00 Raven's Home

19:25 Liv And Maddie  
19:50 K.C. Undercover  
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse  
20:20 A.N.T. Farm  
20:45 Bizaardvark  
21:10 Tangled: The Series  
21:35 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp  
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
22:50 Lolirock  
23:10 Evermoor Chronicles  
23:35 Binny And The Ghost

**Disney Junior**

00:00 The Lion Guard  
00:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes  
00:30 Trulli Tales  
01:00 PJ Masks  
01:25 PJ Masks  
01:50 The Hive  
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  
04:25 The Hive  
04:35 The Hive  
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster  
05:10 Henry Hugglemonster  
05:35 The Hive  
05:45 PJ Masks  
06:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
07:00 Disney Muppet Babies  
07:20 Paprika  
07:30 Paprika  
07:40 PJ Masks  
08:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
08:15 Puppy Dog Pals  
08:30 Vampirina  
08:45 Fancy Nancy  
09:00 Sofia The First  
09:30 Elena Of Avalor  
10:00 Doc McStuffins  
10:55 Cars Toons  
11:00 PJ Masks  
12:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
13:00 Fancy Nancy  
14:00 Vampirina  
15:00 Gigantosaurus  
16:00 The Lion Guard  
16:30 Elena Of Avalor  
17:00 Gigantosaurus  
17:25 PJ Masks Shorts  
17:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
18:00 Fancy Nancy  
18:30 Vampirina  
19:00 PJ Masks  
19:30 Puppy Dog Pals  
20:00 The Lion Guard  
20:25 PJ Masks Shorts  
20:30 Elena Of Avalor  
21:00 Gigantosaurus  
21:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
22:00 Fancy Nancy  
22:30 Vampirina  
23:00 PJ Masks  
23:30 Puppy Dog Pals

**Discovery Channel HD**

00:15 Ultimate Survival  
01:05 Abandoned Engineering  
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 Wheeler Dealers  
04:50 How Do They Do It?  
05:15 How Do They Do It?  
05:35 Property Wars  
06:00 Storage Wars Canada  
06:20 Property Wars  
06:45 Ultimate Survival  
07:35 The Last Alaskans  
08:20 Gold Rush  
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier  
09:55 Salvage Hunters: The Restorers  
10:45 How Do They Do It?  
11:10 How Do They Do It?  
11:30 Wheeler Dealers

12:20 Wheeler Dealers  
13:05 Storage Wars Canada  
13:30 Property Wars  
13:55 Secret Space Escapes  
18:40 How Do They Do It?  
19:05 How Do They Do It?  
19:25 Secret Space Escapes  
20:15 Secret Space Escapes  
21:00 Unique Rides  
21:50 American Chopper  
22:40 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman  
23:30 The Last Alaskans

**XD**

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 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja  
05:29 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja  
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  
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 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything  
16:00 Big City Greens  
16:25 Big Hero 6 The Series  
16:50 Suite Life On Deck  
18:29 Mech-X4  
19:00 Phineas And Ferb: Save Summer  
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

**EHD**

00:00 Dating: No Filter  
02:00 E! News  
03:00 WAGs Miami  
04:00 Botched  
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 Dating: No Filter  
14:50 Dating: No Filter  
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop  
16:15 Very Cavallari  
17:10 Very Cavallari

18:05 Very Cavallari  
19:00 E! News  
20:00 Dating: No Filter  
22:00 Botched  
23:00 Very Cavallari

**itv CHOICE**

00:10 Culinary Genius  
01:00 Emmerdale  
01:30 Coronation Street  
02:00 Coronation Street  
02:30 The Chase  
03:25 Her Majesty's Cavalry  
03:55 Gino's Italian Coastal Escape  
04:20 Rich House Poor House  
05:15 Culinary Genius  
06:15 Couples Come Dine With Me  
07:10 The Chase  
08:05 Her Majesty's Cavalry  
08:35 Gino's Italian Coastal Escape  
09:00 Rich House Poor House  
09:55 Culinary Genius  
10:55 Couples Come Dine With Me  
11:50 The Chase  
12:45 Emmerdale  
13:15 Coronation Street  
13:45 Coronation Street  
14:15 Couples Come Dine With Me  
15:10 The Chase  
16:00 This Time Next Year  
16:55 Rich House Poor House  
17:50 Culinary Genius  
18:50 Emmerdale  
19:15 Coronation Street  
19:45 Coronation Street  
20:10 The Chase  
21:00 This Time Next Year  
21:55 Rich House Poor House  
22:50 Emmerdale  
23:15 Coronation Street  
23:40 Coronation Street

**HD**

00:15 Weapons At War  
01:00 UFO Files  
01:45 Ancient Top 10  
02:30 The Universe  
03:15 Hangar 1: The UFO Files  
04:00 Ancient Aliens  
04:45 Battles BC  
05:30 Bible Secrets Revealed  
06:15 Modern Marvels  
07:00 UFO Files  
07:45 Ancient Top 10  
08:30 The Universe  
09:15 Hangar 1: The UFO Files  
10:00 Ancient Aliens  
10:45 Battles BC  
11:30 Ancient Aliens  
12:15 Modern Marvels  
13:00 Ancient Top 10  
13:45 The Universe  
14:30 Hangar 1: The UFO Files  
15:15 Ancient Aliens  
16:00 Battles BC  
16:45 Ancient Aliens  
17:30 Modern Marvels  
18:15 UFO Files  
19:00 Ancient Top 10  
19:45 The Universe  
20:30 Hangar 1: The UFO Files  
21:15 Ancient Aliens  
22:00 MysteryQuest  
22:45 Bible Secrets Revealed  
23:30 Modern Marvels

**HISTORY HD**

00:30 Mountain Men  
01:20 Pawn Stars  
02:20 American Pickers  
03:05 Storage Wars  
03:50 Ax Men  
04:35 Forged: Iron & Fire  
05:15 Forged In Fire  
06:00 Road Hawks  
06:45 Mountain Men  
07:30 Pawn Stars  
08:15 American Pickers  
09:00 Storage Wars  
09:45 Ax Men  
10:30 Forged: Iron & Fire  
11:15 Forged In Fire  
12:00 American Pickers  
15:00 Counting Cars  
18:45 The Universe



## Stars



### Aries (March 21-April 19)

If you have vacation days, take one today. You'll find yourself arguing with those you may not be able to win against such as your boss. Go backpacking or fishing something that takes your mind off work pressures and how your life really ought to be. Let go of thinking you're not getting the rewards you think you should right now. Give yourself some time to think your actions over before putting them into gear. This isn't the day that you'll back down peacefully if anyone rubs you the wrong way. Try to turn your thoughts to love especially if you have someone about which you care. Make love not war today.



### Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You feel as if you're boring others today and you could be right. Take the time to assess the situation rather than pouring out your thoughts to those who will listen now. Others always seem to think that a quiet person knows it all and has the wisdom to boot. That's not always true though, which you very well know at this time. Don't worry. Most of the people you're associated with today, especially at work, don't even realize you're having this kind of trouble. There may be one who sympathizes with you today. Hopefully it's your life's partner. It'll get better.



### Gemini (May 21-June 20)

At work tread carefully expressing your thoughts. Others might not be open to new ideas at this time. Do your work by doing what is necessary to get through the day. Make a date for lunch with someone you love, perhaps a picnic by the water with ducks. This will give you the much-needed break you desire away from intimidating coworkers, Gemini. Your day will move much quicker and you'll be home earlier. Take time with to court your lover tonight because mental, emotional and physical love is what you need more than anything now.



### Cancer (June 21-July 22)

At work it seems that everyone is coming to you for suggestions both on the work front and with their lives in general. You're the helper again today. Besides the fact that you're learning more about the people close to you and can truly sympathize, this is like reading a "Dear Abby" column with you being the one giving the answers. You're able to take into account your own life and all the positive things that are happening for you just by it's being a normal work day, Cancer. You may be complimented for something you do or how you look. Take this day in and enjoy.



### Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may be thinking of a new home possibly in a new area right now. You're not as happy with how things are working out in that part of your life. This could be because you're unsure of your love life along with a few other items. Work today leaves you feeling that you're less thought of by your coworkers. This isn't your finest time and you're well aware that affects your life. Perhaps you should take off early and decide what is really best for you now. Once a logical decision is made, then you can act upon it. Leo, without regret.



### Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You can see through any given emotional situation both at work and at home. Having that ability can cause some deep discussions, perhaps you might call them arguments. Be thoughtful of explaining human emotion to someone you know has a problem even if they haven't told you about it yet. Sometimes people don't want to think others know of their problems. Whether you're right or wrong, they don't want to acknowledge anything you say. That could lead to words. At work you won't be seen as helpful if you promote this. At home you might be seen as starting a disagreement which your lover will surely have issues with, Virgo. Keep your opinions like cards, close to your vest.



### Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your management abilities and healthy quick thought processes plus your capacity for understanding what makes others tick puts you on top of the boss's list today. Quick thinking is great but changing your mind at the drop of a hat isn't. That could give coworkers the wrong message. Do this, no do this, no back to the first "Do" item can have people running in circles. Be sure of what you instruct others to accomplish before setting it into motion. Also, watch your temper, Libra. Although it's unlike you to rage you could find yourself going there without what you consider good reason.



### Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Work and being respected for your part in that work is what is sorely needed in your life now. It gives you reason to continue the career you're in now. Obstacles in your work life are quickly overcome and leave you with a sense of self-worth that's hard to beat. You need to be needed and you want to be wanted but you don't know how to go about getting those gifts easily. You don't want to ask but sometimes that's the only way people have of knowing your needs. Your secret side holds you back sometimes.



### Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Though you're ready and willing to do the work that you're doing right now it seems that you're at a standstill trying to get people willing to listen to you. It's like herding cats. No one will cooperate. It's not that you can't explain items in an understandable manner. Your family and friends have told you how good you are at that. Still, you feel inadequate to get your point across at work today. When you're finished on the job try to do something that helps you with your confidence levels like have dinner with those who love and support you.



### Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

At home you're distant from someone you love or thought you loved. You're not sharing as some might expect you to do and the reason you're not is because someone one in the household doesn't really want to hear your feelings, or so you think. You're in a sensitive mood and your lover might not understand your actions now, Capricorn. You don't want to share your thoughts and personal issues with that person now. At work you're able to understand and identify with coworkers giving them the benefit of your life's experience.



### Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Taking the initiative at work today, you immediately upon arrival at work, start putting together the ideas you've worked on all weekend. Plus, you're gotten more ideas to assimilate into your plan also. Coworkers see the value of those ideas and rush to help. Realization is there that this can make everyone more money. Tonight, enjoy time with friends and family again. Expand your ability to get more work done by inviting workmates that you can communicate with for more ideas too. After all, work is at the top of your list now.



### Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Thank goodness you're in the mood for work today after the last few. You've thought life through and you're capable of making good, intelligent work decisions. You have the carry through to make them work. Be careful at work though, because you might find yourself in the midst of an argument that gets emotional. That wouldn't be the best thing for you at any time but more so not now. Don't let another be in control of you or your work situation. Go home and make a light dinner then go walking just to eliminate some of the worktime stress.

## 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**  
248 33 199

Friday, July 19, 2019

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Health & Science

Two-headed turtle born in Malaysia

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A two-headed baby turtle has been born in Malaysia, captivating conservationists, but it only survived a few days after being discovered. It was found Monday on Mabul island, off the Malaysian part of Borneo, in a nest alongside more than 90 other recently hatched green turtles. David McCann, marine biologist and conservation manager for group SJ SEAS-which oversees the nesting site-said the creature was "utterly fascinating".

"The right head seems to control the front right flipper, and the left head the front left flipper. Yet they are capable of coordinating their movements in order to walk and

swim," he said in a statement. SJ SEAS chairman Mohamad Khairuddin Riman added: "We have released around 13,000 hatchlings from the hatchery and have never seen anything like this before." But the turtle died late Wednesday, Sen Nathan, a vet from Sabah Wildlife Department, told AFP.

He said the cause of death was not yet known but added the turtle would have had little chance of surviving long in the wild. "It would have been poached by an eagle because it could not swim well," he said. While rare, it was not the first time a two-headed baby turtle has been found. Nathan said one was discovered in 2014, on an island off Malaysia's east coast, which survived for three months. Green turtles are one of the largest sea turtles, and are mainly found in tropical and subtropical waters. Classified as endangered, they are threatened by habitat loss as well as by poachers who hunt them for their meat and eggs.—AFP



**KUALA LUMPUR:** This handout from Scuba Junkie SEAS shows a turtle with two heads at the Mabul Turtle Hatchery, on the island of Borneo. — AFP

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Turkish Airlines	1884918	Swiss Air	22421516
American Airlines	22087425	Saudia	22426306
	22087426	Middle East Airlines	22423073
Jet Airways	22924455	Lufthansa	22422493
FlyDubai	22414400	PIA	22421044
Qatar Airways	22423888	Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
KLM	22425747	Indian Airlines	22456700
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6	Oman Air	22958787
British Airways	22425635	Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Air France	22430224	Aeroflot	22404838/9
Emirates	22921555		

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Mohamed** Shaik Fareedh, holder of Indian Passport No. J5547264, issued at Kuwait on 30-05-2011 permanent resident of Tenkasi, Tamil Nadu. Correct given name: Mohamed Shaik Fareedh, surname: Mahboob Ali. (C5562)

I, **Sapna** holder of Indian Passport No. M5455537 do hereby change my name to (given name Sapna, surname Abraham) as per my Adhar number 971045631080 for all purpose. (C 5560) 19-7-2019

I, **Alfeeya** currently holder of Indian Passport No. Z1852112, issued at Kuwait on 04-August-2010, permanent resident of Mohammadi Pura Timba, Sagwara, District Dungarpur (Pin: 314025) Rajasthan, Inida and presently residing at Al-Zahra, Block 8, Street 803, House 201, Kuwait, do hereby permanently change my name from Alfeeya to ALFEEYA HASHIMI HUSSAIN (New Name), with immediate effect.

I, **Hashimi M. Hussain** father of Zaina Manager who is holder of Indian Passport No. P9484557, issued at Kuwait on 02-February-2017, permanent resident of Mohammadi Pura Timba, Sagwara, District Dungarpur (Pin: 314025) Rajasthan, India and presently residing at Al-Zahra, Block 8, Street 803, House 201, Kuwait, do hereby permanently change my daughter's name

from Zaina Manager to ZAINA HASHIMI HUSSAIN (New Name), with immediate effect. (C 5559) 18-7-2019

I, **Dudekula** Masthan Basha, holder of Indian passport No.L7719785 and Civil ID No.291031002941. Father Name: Dudekula Syed Basha Mother Name: Dudekula Sarthaj Bagum, have changed our names from Dudekula Masthan Basha Father Name: Dudekula Syed Basha, Mother Name: Dudekula Sarthaj Bagum, to Shaik Masthan Basha, Father Name: Shaik Syed Basha, Mother Name: Shaik Sarthaj Bagum here in after in all our dealings and documents, we will be known by name of Shaik Masthan Basha Father Name: Shaik Syed Basha, Mother Name: Shaik Sarthaj Bagum. (C 5558)

I, **ABBAS** holder of INDIAN PASSPORT NO. Z2809798 hereby declare that I have changed my name from ABBAS to ABBAS SHARAF ALI PAINTER. I shall be known by name ABBAS SHARAF ALI PAINTER in future. (5662) 16-7-2019

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### Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Very hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 25 - 60 km/h causing rising dust.

**BY NIGHT:** Hot to relatively hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 45 km/h.

WEATHER WATCH			Fresh wind	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 18/07/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	33 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	29 °C		
ABDALY	47 °C	29 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	47 °C	31 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	46 °C	29 °C		
SALMIYAH	42 °C	33 °C		
AHMADI	44 °C	32 °C		
NUWAISIB	47 °C	29 °C		
WAFRA	47 °C	29 °C		
SALMY	45 °C	26 °C		

### 4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	07/19	Hot and rising dust	45 °C	34 °C	NW	30 - 65 km/h
Saturday	07/20	Very hot and rising dust over open areas	48 °C	33 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Sunday	07/21	Very hot	49 °C	32 °C	NW-VRB	12 - 38 km/h
Monday	07/22	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	46 °C	31 °C	NW-SE	08 - 30 km/h

### PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	03:27
Sunrise	05:00
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:29
Sunset	18:48
Isha	20:17

### RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	44 °C
MIN. Temp.	34 °C
MAX. RH	22 %
MIN. RH	10 %
MAX. Wind	N 60 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

# Business

FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2019

**38** Turkey's restructuring stalls as banks, government wrestle with bad debt



**40** Instagram hides 'likes' from more users on its platform



**41** G7 ministers reach consensus on digital tax but more work ahead



LONDON: A no-deal Brexit would stunt investment and exports, causing a contraction in economic activity, according to the British government's official forecaster.— AFP

## Britain may slip into year-long recession

### Watchdog warns a no-deal Brexit could blow a 30bn pound hole in UK finances

**LONDON:** Britain might be entering a full-blown recession that a no-deal exit from the European Union would compound, blowing a 30 billion-pound hole in the public finances, a budget watchdog said yesterday.

As lawmakers prepared for a vote that could hinder any attempt by the next prime minister to pursue a no-deal Brexit, the Office for Budget Responsibility said the economy probably flat-lined or might have contracted in the second quarter. Some of that weakness may have been payback after a rush to build up inventories before the original Brexit deadline in March.

"But surveys were particularly weak in June, suggesting that the pace of growth is likely to remain weak," the OBR said it said in a report on the outlook for the public finance.

"This raises the risk that the economy may be

entering a full-blown recession." Britain's economy slowed by less than feared after the 2016 Brexit referendum. But many investors are worried about a sharp downturn now with the latest Brexit deadline approaching on Oct. 31 and the world economy slowing because of trade tensions. A no-deal Brexit could cause the economy to contract by 2 percent by the end of 2020, the OBR said, referring to International Monetary Fund forecasts.

It could also add 30 billion pounds (\$37.4 billion) a year to public borrowing by the 2020/21 financial year, the OBR said, more than doubling the expected deficit. The EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, said in an interview to be published yesterday that he was unimpressed by threats of no-deal Brexit, but that if the United Kingdom opted for such a course it would have

to face the consequences.

Despite previous warnings of the damage that a no-deal Brexit could do to the economy, both contenders to become prime minister next week say they would leave the EU without a transition agreement to soften the shock, if necessary. With a majority of Britain's lawmakers opposed to a disorderly exit, some have questioned whether Boris Johnson, favored to replace Theresa May, would suspend parliament in order to deliver Brexit by the next deadline.

On Wednesday he refused to say whether he would go ahead with such a plan, but he did say it could be convenient for him. Sky News said on Tuesday that Johnson was considering holding the Queen's Speech, in which the prime minister lays out a policy program, in November. That means lawmakers would be sent home two

weeks earlier, hampering their ability to stop Britain's leaving the EU without a deal on Oct. 31. British lawmakers were due to vote yesterday on a beefed-up proposal aimed at making it harder for either Johnson or his rival Jeremy Hunt to force through a no-deal Brexit by suspending parliament.

Concerns about a no-deal Brexit, which have weighed heavily on the value of sterling, have mounted as the leadership contest has progressed. The OBR said promises by the candidates of higher spending and tax cuts would also put a strain on Britain's finances. "The spending control framework seems to be under pressure, with major announcements being made outside fiscal events, and the Conservative leadership making pledges that would prove expensive if pursued," it said. — Reuters

## Business

# Turkey's restructuring stalls as banks, government wrestle with bad debt

## Government says no agreement reached on fund model

**ISTANBUL:** Efforts to clean up Turkey's bad debt have stalled after bankers rejected or put on hold initial plans, according to people familiar with the matter, frustrating the country's attempts to leave behind the worst of last year's currency crisis.

Interviews with more than a dozen bankers, company executives and advisers show that there has been little progress over the past three months with plans to help lenders to Turkey's construction, real-estate and energy companies that can no longer afford roughly \$20 billion of debt.

"Everything is just at a standstill," said a banker involved in discussions between lenders, companies and government officials, who asked not to be named. "The government and everyone is in wait-and-see mode before they take any further action, and people are looking to next year." A key obstacle has been a lack of appetite by both the debt-laden companies and their lenders to take drastic measures to restructure the debt, in part because of hope that the economy will soon rebound and improve business. There has also been scant direction from Ankara, the people say.

How quickly and credibly Turkey can execute the bailout could determine whether the Middle East's largest economy returns to growth later this year, or risks a protracted recession and another crisis that again roils other emerging markets, banking and industry officials say. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's government in April announced that off-balance-sheet funds would be created to help restructure energy and real-estate loans, but it has not presented a detailed strategy.

In a statement to Reuters Wednesday, the Turkish Treasury said banks "have not yet reached agreement on a fund model" but that the restructuring efforts continue. The Treasury said further that it is up to the banks to decide on which solution they choose but that the gov-

ernment supports a fund structure that "will transfer our banks' problem loans to investors, provide entry of fresh resources to our financial system, and allow our banks the opportunity to focus on their primary duties of provision and management of credits."

"The important thing is for the problem to be solved permanently without being pushed back, and for credit channels to be opened again," the Treasury added. Loan restructuring allows a company facing cash flow problems to renegotiate delinquent debts with lenders, enabling it to continue operations and avoid potential bankruptcy.

The government has said it will not directly fund a bailout, but it does have the authority to shape restructuring procedures. Lenders and indebted companies are looking for the state's assistance in areas such as reducing restructuring costs through tax breaks and making it easier for foreign investors to acquire bad debt, three sources say. A draft law currently being debated in parliament removes some obstacles to dealing with the bad debt by introducing tax exemptions for loan restructuring and legal protection for bankers. "A model where the state provides funding for restructuring is not on our agenda at the moment," the Treasury said in its statement to Reuters.

### Construction debt

Turkey's large construction and energy sectors, which had for years indulged in cheap foreign credit, continue to struggle to service billions of dollars of debt after sharp declines in the lira last year. A recent rebound in the currency - albeit modest in comparison to last year's 30% slide - has removed some of the urgency but the size of the bad debt remains significant, a restructuring consultant said.

According to official figures, non-performing



ISTANBUL: A man looks at cheeses at a shop at the historical spice bazaar at Eminonu district in Istanbul. — AFP

loans in the construction industry totaled 15 billion liras (\$2.63 billion) as of May, but some industry specialists say the total could be closer to \$10 billion. The problems for construction companies are particularly acute because unlike energy providers - which continue to earn revenues from customers - they face a lack of cash flow while building projects are stalled, industry specialists say.

One key reason for the lack of progress in restructuring the construction sector's bad debt is sharp disagreement over the value of partly built or vacant condominiums, offices and shopping

malls across the country, leaving banks and companies unwilling to buy or sell assets, several of the people Reuters interviewed said. That led to the rejection in May by private banks of a proposal by state lender Ziraat Bank, which is leading restructuring talks between construction borrowers and creditor banks, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Ziraat had proposed a plan to enable banks to move bad debt from their books into an off-balance-sheet vehicle, guaranteeing them interest income in the near term and repayment of the loans within 10 years. — Reuters



## Golden chance to become skywards gold member

**KUWAIT:** Summer just got better with Emirates Skywards offering all its members the chance to upgrade their membership to the coveted Gold tier. For a limited time, Emirates Skywards Silver and Blue members can now hop straight to Gold when they buy return Business Class Flex or Flex Plus tickets to over 80 exciting destinations on the Emirates or flydubai network.

Members must register for the offer and book between 18 and 26 July 2019 for travel between 18 July and 20 August 2019. The traveller's membership will be updated automatically to Gold after completing the return journey. Not an Emirates Skywards member yet? Not a problem. New members can also take advantage of the fantastic offer by joining for free and registering via emirates.com or the Emirates App between 18 and 26

July 2019. The Emirates App is available for both iOS and Android devices. Love luxury? Then you will love the Emirates Skywards Gold membership. From complimentary Business Class lounge access for member and one guest, priority baggage, check-in and boarding to additional 16kg checked baggage allowance, unlimited Wi-Fi, 50 percent bonus Skywards Miles, complimentary seat selection - members enjoy all these benefits and much more.

Click here for the terms and conditions, including information on the eligible origins and destinations and excluded routes. Photo caption: Experience Emirates' award-winning Business Class to select destinations and upgrade to Emirates Skywards Gold.

Emirates Skywards, the award-winning loyalty program of Emirates and flydubai, offers four tiers of membership - Blue, Silver, Gold and Platinum - with each membership tier providing exclusive privileges. Emirates Skywards members earn Skywards Miles when they fly on Emirates, flydubai or partner airlines, or when they use the program's designated hotels, car rentals, financial, leisure and lifestyle partners. Skywards Miles can be redeemed for an extensive range of rewards, including tickets on Emirates or flydubai plus Emirates Skywards partner airlines, hotel accommodation, excursions and exclusive shopping.

## Business

# Pakistan's austerity policies under IMF bailout send prices soaring

## Price squeeze hits middle class as well as poor

**ISLAMABAD:** Prime Minister Imran Khan's government faces mounting pressure as rising prices and tough austerity policies under Pakistan's latest bailout from the International Monetary Fund are squeezing the middle class that helped carry it to power.

Rashid Mehmood owns a small shop selling children's clothing in Aabpara, the oldest market in the capital, Islamabad. He says he has faced a critical decline in sales over the past year, pointing to Khan's election last August.

The last six months had been "particularly harsh", he said. "Do you see any customers coming into my store?" he asked as he stood in his empty shop, decorated with brightly colored leggings and dresses.

He said had not made a sale in a week. In normal times, Mehmood's store serves the kind of middle-class shoppers who in recent years have been behind an import-led consumption splurge that propped up growth and helped hide the problems of an economy riddled with inefficiency and without a strong export base. Fed by low interest rates, heavy borrowing and an overvalued rupee currency that, for a time at least, allowed imports to pour in, consumption gave an illusion of growth that has now been replaced by a severe economic hangover. Like so many of its predecessors, Khan's government, which came to power vowing to root out corruption and create millions of jobs, has been forced to turn to the IMF to prevent a balance-of-payments crisis as the money runs out.

Economic growth, which reached 5.5 percent in the fiscal year to June 2018, is expected to slow to 2.4 percent this financial year, according to IMF estimates, barely enough to keep pace

with the growth in a population that now numbers 208 million. The rupee has lost about a quarter of its value in a slide that has driven up fuel costs and helped push a relentless increase in prices for food and other necessities.

The central bank, which this week raised interest rates to 13.25 percent, expects inflation to average as much as 12 percent this year. As ever, the poorest have been hit hardest. But the squeeze on middle-income households poses a special challenge for Khan, who has enjoyed wide support among an urban middle class that has grown over the past two decades as poverty levels have come down from two thirds of the population to about a quarter.

Further along in Aabpara market, Abida Jahan has come with her family from Haripur town, a couple of hours drive away, after the food-processing factory her husband worked in was shut down. They are looking for a gift to celebrate their daughter's 13th birthday. However, the surge in prices has meant that they will likely go home empty handed. "This is the same government that promised to decrease oil prices to 45 rupees," says Abida's husband, recalling that Khan's PTI party had promised to halve the price of fuel and build a new welfare state.

### Shopping malls

Pakistan's growing middle class has helped reshape its urban landscape, symbolizing a promise of upward mobility. Shopping malls with foreign retail brands and fast-food franchises have proliferated in recent years, serving a middle class who "define themselves by what they can buy and where they can eat", says Ammara Maqsood, author of *The New Pakistani*



**KARACHI:** Pakistani workers stitch cloths at a garment factory in Karachi. The International Monetary Fund approved a \$6 billion, three-year loan for Pakistan to help right the South Asian nation's economy. — AFP

Middle Class. In the first decade of the century, economic growth fuelled by privatization led families to a new prosperity marked by their ability to buy a motorbike, rent a home or send their children to private school. Now businesses supplying consumers with everything from mobile phones to clothing, motorbikes and cars bought on hire purchase are feeling the squeeze.

"It's a multiple effect," said Fatima Azim, chief executive of Azim Motors, which has a joint venture with Japanese car maker Suzuki Motors supplying small cars and motorbikes to mainly lower-middle-class customers. "Income has not increased at all so no matter what, if they are going to a shopping mall or wherever, they are being affected," she said. — Reuters

## France to search for European candidate to head IMF

**CHANTILLY:** French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire is to lead talks on finding a single European candidate to succeed Christine Lagarde as head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sources said yesterday. The post of IMF managing director, which by convention goes to a European, became vacant after Lagarde was tapped by EU leaders to head the European Central Bank.

Finance ministers of the four European members of the G7 — Germany, France, Britain and Italy—met informally on the sidelines of the meeting of the most developed nations in Chantilly outside Paris to discuss the issue. Sources said after the meeting that the names of several candidates had been floated but no kind of selection had been made.

"We agreed that it was important one European name was put forward. A number of names were informally discussed but no short list was established," a European official, who asked not to be named, said.

### 'Impartial role'

At the same time, the British, Italian and German ministers agreed that Le Maire, whose country currently leads the G7, should head informal discussions with all European countries to "foster a consensus" around a single name, the official added. "The objective remains to agree on one European name by the end of the month." Le Maire has insisted that he is not interested in the job himself and wants to play a completely impartial role in the search.

"Bruno Le Maire does not have a preferred candidate and France will play its coordination role impartially," said a French official, who asked not to be named.

Several high-profile names have already been floated as possible successors to Lagarde who has steered the IMF since 2011. They include the Canadian-born Bank of England governor Mark Carney, who holds Canadian, British and Irish nationality, and former British finance minister George Osborne, who is now editor of the London Evening Standard newspaper. Also in the frame are EU finance commissioner Pierre Moscovici of France and former finance minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem of the Netherlands as well as Spanish Economy Minister Nadia Calvino.

The IMF board tapped Lagarde's number two, American David Lipton, to serve as interim managing director, but by tradition a European always leads the fund while an American runs its sister institution, the World Bank. — AFP

## Indonesia cuts interest rates in bid to boost growth

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia cut interest rates for the first time in nearly two years yesterday as Southeast Asia's largest economy seeks to boost growth. Bank Indonesia (BI) trimmed the key lending rate 25 basis points to 5.75 percent, a decision made ahead of an anticipated rate cut by the US Federal Reserve later this month.

"The policy was taken as we estimate inflation will remain low and we need to maintain the momentum for economic growth," Bank Indonesia governor Perry Warjiyo said. BI also lowered its deposit and lending facilities rates by 25 basis points to 6.5 percent and 5 percent respectively.

Indonesia's economy grew 5.07 percent in the first quarter from a year earlier, amid softening prices for key commodities—including palm oil and coal—and an ongoing trade war between the US and China. Warjiyo said although global uncertainty was improving, the bank was ready for prolonged tensions between Beijing and Washington.

"Bank Indonesia still sees room for accommodative monetary policies," he said. Looking ahead, the slowing economy and muted inflation could lead to more cuts, economists said. "But the uncertain outlook for the currency means that this is unlikely to be the beginning of a prolonged easing cycle," said Gareth Leather, Asia economist from Capital Economics. The country has been wrestling with a weak rupiah, dented by a selloff in emerging-market currencies that saw the unit slump to levels last seen during the Asian financial crisis 20 years ago. — AFP

## Business

# Instagram hides 'likes' from more users on its platform

## Social media giant seeks to ease pressure on users

**SYDNEY:** Instagram started hiding "likes" on its platform in Australia, Brazil and several other major markets yesterday saying it wanted to ease pressure on users, following criticism about its impacts on mental health. The Facebook-owned social media giant's trial changes mean users in the six countries will no longer be able to see the number of likes other people's posts receive.

"We want Instagram to be a place where people feel comfortable expressing themselves," Facebook Australia and New Zealand policy director Mia Garlick said in a statement.

"We hope this test will remove the pressure of how many likes a post will receive, so you can focus on sharing the things you love." Australia, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Brazil and New Zealand are involved in the new trial, which follows an initial test that was launched in Canada in May.

Although Instagram described the hiding of the likes for users as a "test", no deadline was given for when it would end. Instagram, which has more than one billion users worldwide, is a platform that allows users to post images and videos that others can then like or comment on.

But, in the chosen test countries, likes will not be visible on people's profiles, the main image feed or permalink pages. And while Instagram users will still be able to view the total number

of likes on their own posts, they will need to click through to another page in order to do so.

### Social media scrutiny

Social media giants have faced increased scrutiny over the impact their platforms can have on users, and there is some research to suggest Instagram can negatively affect the mental health of young people who use it.

A 2017 study by the Royal Society for Public Health ranked Instagram as the worst social media platform for young people's mental health in the United Kingdom. A 2018 survey of teenagers in the United States by the Pew Research Center found that nearly 40 per cent felt pressure to only share digital content that had garnered a lot of likes or comments.

Another statement from Instagram as it announced the trial changes for the likes also emphasized they were in response to concerns about the pressures that users felt. "We are testing this because we want your followers to focus on the photos and videos you share, not how many likes they get," an Instagram spokesman said.

"We don't want Instagram to feel like a competition." The latest measure came just a week after Instagram implemented new features aimed at curbing online bullying using artificial



In this file photo, logos of US social network Instagram are displayed on a screen of a smartphone in Nantes, western France. Instagram started hiding "likes" on its platform in Australia, Japan and several other major markets yesterday to ease pressure on users, following criticism about the platform's impacts on mental health. — AFP

intelligence. In another effort introduced in February to safeguard the mental health of young users, Instagram clamped down on images related to self harm.

Instagram said the measures to conceal likes would not affect measurement tools used by businesses that use the platform to promote their products. —AFP

## EU fines Qualcomm 242m euros for 'predatory' pricing

**BRUSSELS:** The EU hit US chipmaking giant Qualcomm with an antitrust fine of 242 million euros (\$271 million) yesterday, in another blow against a tech titan that is fighting competition battles in Asia and the US.

The fine is the second mega penalty levied against Qualcomm by Brussels, which made it pay 997 million euros in January 2018. "Our investigation found that Qualcomm abused" its market "dominance between mid-2009 and mid-2011 by engaging in predatory pricing," an EU statement said.

The chips in question in the EU case "are key components so that mobile devices can connect to the internet," EU anti-trust commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in a statement.

"Qualcomm sold these products at a price below cost to key customers with the intention of eliminating a competitor," she added. The EU said that Qualcomm sold the chipsets to Chinese giants Huawei and ZTE, strategic customers, "with the intention of eliminating Icera, its main rival at the time".

Icera was acquired in May 2011 by the US technology company Nvidia, which decided in 2015 to liquidate the business that was subject to the Commission's investigation. In a statement, Qualcomm said it would appeal the decision in order to "expose the meritless nature of this decision". The EU fine "is un-

ported by the law, economic principles or market facts, and we look forward to a reversal on appeal," said Don Rosenberg, general counsel of Qualcomm. Huawei and ZTE chose Qualcomm chips "not because of price but because rival chipsets were technologically inferior," Rosenberg insisted.

### Buried the hatchet

The blow against Qualcomm comes after a US court ruled in May that the firm "strangled competition" and must renegotiate price deals in a case with major implications for the smartphone market. In recent years, Qualcomm was also slapped with fines in South Korea and Taiwan over anti-trust concerns. Qualcomm meanwhile in April buried the hatchet with Apple after two years of legal battles over royalties. For two years, the companies had fought a multi-front brawl that could have required Qualcomm to pay billions. Vestager, the EU's competition czar, has received specific criticism by US Donald Trump for her series of cases against US tech giants that also include Apple, Google and Amazon.

The Commission imposed three major fines on Google totalling 8.25 billion euros in cases involving its Android operating system, Google Shopping and its advertising network AdSense. — AFP

## US labor market strong; factory activity rebounds

**WASHINGTON:** The number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits increased moderately last week, pointing to still strong labor market conditions despite signs that economic activity was slowing. Other data yesterday showed factory activity in the mid-Atlantic region rebounded sharply in July, offering hope for a struggling manufacturing sector. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 8,000 to a seasonally adjusted 216,000 for the week ended July 13, the Labor Department said, putting them in the middle of their 193,000-230,000 range for this year.

Data for the prior week was revised to show 1,000 fewer applications received than previously reported. Last week's increase in claims was in line with economists' expectations. The four-week moving average of initial claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, dipped 250 to 218,750 last week. The Labor Department said no claims were estimated last week. The claims data tends to be volatile around this time of the year because of summer factory closures, especially in the automobile industry, which occur at different periods.

This can throw off the model the government uses to strip out seasonal fluctuations from the

data. Layoffs remain low despite a bitter trade war between the United States and China, which has contributed to a dimming of the economy's outlook and led the Federal Reserve to signal it would cut interest rates at its July 30-31 meeting for the first time in a decade. Last week's claims data covered the survey period for the nonfarm payrolls component of July's employment report. The four-week moving average of claims was little changed between the June and July survey periods, suggesting steady job growth this month. The economy created 224,000 jobs in June.

The dollar held losses against a basket of currencies after the data, while US Treasury yields edged higher.

### Worker shortages

While the labor market remains strong, there are concerns that a shortage of workers and the Trump administration's tougher stance on immigration could impede job growth. The Fed's Beige Book report of anecdotal information on business activity collected from contacts nationwide published on Wednesday showed some manufacturing and information technology firms in the Northeast reduced their number of workers from mid-May through early July.

It said "a few reports highlighted concerns about securing and renewing work visas, flagging this as a source of uncertainty for continued employment growth." Solid job growth is helping to underpin the economy, which is slowing as last year's massive stimulus from tax cuts and more government spending fades. Manufacturing is struggling, the trade deficit is widening again and the housing market remains weak, partially offsetting strong consumer spending. — Reuters



## Business

# G7 ministers reach consensus on digital tax but more work ahead

## France hails agreement but US remains skeptic

**CHANTILLY:** Ministers from G7 top economies yesterday reached consensus on steps towards an accord on taxing digital giants, an issue that has divided the United States and its allies Britain and France. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, who hosted the two-day meeting in Chantilly outside Paris, hailed the consensus as unprecedented, although US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin insisted there was more work to be done.

The French parliament this month passed a law that would tax digital giants for income amassed inside a country even if their headquarters are elsewhere, a move the United States complained discriminated against US firms like Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon.

Britain has announced plans for a similar tax and the G7 meeting in the tranquil French town—usually famed for its horses rather than horse-trading—was dominated by tough talks to find some common ground. Le Maire said finance ministers and central bankers had reached an agreement “to tax activities without physical presence, in particular digital activities.”

“This is the first time that G7 members agree in principle on this,” he told reporters.

### ‘Minimum tax’

France issued a statement saying the G7 had agreed a two-pronged solution—confirming the principle of companies being able to accrue revenues outside their legal base but also on a minimum tax to be agreed internationally for their activities. Ministers “fully supported a two-pillar solution to be adopted by 2020”, the statement said.

“Ministers agreed that a minimum level of effective taxation... would contribute to ensuring

that companies pay their fair share of tax,” it said. A French official, who asked not to be named, said the tax rate would have to be agreed in the future. German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said he was happy with the “progress” achieved and in particular with the reference to the minimum tax level in the final statement.

Further talks would now be needed in the wider context of the G20 group of top economies for an international agreement which would be overseen by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Scholz expressed hope that a full international consensus could be reached next year under the OECD.

### ‘Step forward’

The French parliament’s move infuriated President Donald Trump and the US had announced an unprecedented probe against France which could trigger the imposition of tariffs. Mnuchin struck a slightly more cautious tone than his French counterpart Le Maire while making clear he was well satisfied with the talks. “We made some significant progress at this meeting, there is more work to be done,” Mnuchin told reporters, adding that ministers had made a “big step in the right direction”.

He said the United States has “significant concerns” with the French law and planned British legislation and was pleased that both Paris and London would dump the domestic laws if an international agreement was forged. “Everyone here wants to reach an acceptable international solution,” said Mnuchin. “Creating certainty for global multinationals is very important,” he added.



**CHANTILLY:** British Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond speaks during an interview during the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors’ meeting in Chantilly, near Paris, on Wednesday. — AFP

The G7 ministers had far less trouble agreeing a position on new cryptocurrencies such as Facebook’s Libra, saying such new and untested digital money risked destabilizing the international monetary system and were not ready to be implemented. “They agreed that projects such as Libra may affect monetary sovereignty and the functioning of the international monetary system,” the French statement said.

The other key issue at the meeting was finding a replacement for Christine Lagarde, who has led the International Monetary Fund since 2011 but has resigned to become head of the European Central Bank. Le Maire’s European colleagues at the G7 have decided he should lead the search for a candidate from Europe, although no shortlist has been fixed yet, said a European official. — AFP

## Developing Asia set to meet growth outlook: ADB

**MANILA:** The Asian Development Bank said yesterday developing Asia is on track to meet the lender’s growth expectations for this year and next, even as trade tensions between the United States and China keep casting a shadow over the global economy. Developing Asia, a group of 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, is still expected to grow 5.7 percent this year and 5.6 percent next year, the ADB said in a supplement to its Asian Development Outlook report issued in April. “Even as the trade conflict continues, the region is set to maintain strong but moderating growth”, said ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada.

“However, until the world’s two largest economies reach agreement, uncertainty will continue to weigh on the regional outlook.” The ADB also kept its 6.3 percent and 6.1 percent growth projections for China for 2019 and 2020, even after growth in the world’s second largest economy slowed to 6.2 percent in the second quarter, saying policy support should offset softening growth in domestic and external demand.

The lender cut India’s growth forecast to 7.0 percent in 2019 and 7.2 percent in 2020, from 7.2 percent and 7.3 percent, respectively, seen in April. — Reuters

## In Zimbabwe, risk perception trumps orthodoxy as inflation soars

**JOHANNESBURG:** Zimbabwe’s Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube seems to be doing everything by the book as he pursues orthodox economic policy often prescribed by the global “Bretton Woods” lending institutions to try and turn around a sickly economy.

The government is running a budget surplus for the first time in years and has stopped runaway money-printing, which led to hyperinflation of 500 billion percent in 2008. Last month, the central bank raised its overnight lending rate to 50 percent to protect the local currency after ending a decade of dollarization. Ncube, a former chief economist at the African Development Bank, also agreed to a staff monitoring program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in May, under which Harare promised not to borrow offshore and to cut reliance on the central bank to finance deficits.

All that points to a government willing to break with the ruinous policies of the past under Robert Mugabe, economic analysts say. And yet Zimbabwe’s inflation has soared to its highest level in a decade, hitting an annual 175 percent in June.

For a start, government reforms to set fiscal discipline, which

could earn future funding, include gradually ending fuel subsidies and increasing electricity tariffs to reflect costs – steps that will in the short term lead to more price increases. Also, analysts note, more than 80 percent of Zimbabweans earn a living in the informal sector, from hawking fruits on city sidewalks to selling used clothes on dusty open spaces.

That sector is typically unresponsive to the kinds of fiscal and monetary policy tools used by finance ministers and central bankers to lower prices and stimulate the economy.

Meanwhile, a severe drought has left a third of the 15 million population needing food aid, further pressuring prices. But arguably the biggest driver of inflation expectations in the economy is the lack of confidence many Zimbabweans have in the country’s economic policies and its national currency, said Jee-A van der Linde, an economist at NKC African Economics. “The Zimbabwean consumer is highly skeptical over government policy, and for good reason, and trying to hammer in confidence through regulation and restrictions has historically not proven very successful,” he said.

Although former president Mugabe was ousted after a de facto coup in 2017, many doubt that Zimbabwe’s new rulers can deliver the economic change they seek because they are the same people who propped up the former strongman for decades. Hope that the economy would quickly rebound under President Emmerson Mnangagwa quickly turned to despair as shortages of foreign currency, fuel, medicines and bread persisted. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, which put the printing press into overdrive just over a decade ago and whose hundred trillion notes marked the zenith of hyperinflation, says it will not recklessly print money. — Reuters

## Sports

## Padres' Paddack shuts down Marlins

**MIAMI:** Padres rookie right-hander Chris Paddack had a no-hitter through seven innings before giving up a home run in San Diego's 3-2 win over the host Miami Marlins on Wednesday. Starlin Castro homered to lead off the eighth for Miami's first hit. Paddack (6-4) allowed the one hit over 7 2/3 innings. He issued one walk and had eight strikeouts while throwing 94 pitches in his 16th major league start. San Diego closer Kirby Yates allowed an unearned run in the ninth but still recorded his 31st save. The Padres scored all of their runs with two outs in the fourth inning. Manuel Margot started the rally with a two-out double to right, and he scored on Greg Garcia's single. Austin Hedges followed with a two-run homer.

**DODGERS 7, PHILLIES 2**

David Freese and Justin Turner homered to lead visiting Los Angeles past Philadelphia in a game that featured a 2-hour, 37-minute rain delay. Pedro Baez (4-2) pitched 1 2/3 shutout innings and earned the victory for the Dodgers, who have won two of three in this series. The finale will be played Thursday afternoon, less than 12 hours after the prior game ended. The Dodgers' latest victory featured 16 walks, 10 issued by Phillies pitchers. Los Angeles' Max Muncy walked three times. The Phillies managed just two hits, singles by Scott Kingery in the sixth inning and Adam Haseley in the ninth. Kingery also walked twice.

**ASTROS 11, ANGELS 2**

Michael Brantley hit the 100th home run of his career, and Gerrit Cole pitched seven strong innings as Houston defeated Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. George Springer added a three-run homer for the Astros. Dustin Garneau homered for the Angels, who lost for the first time in six games since the All-Star break. Los Angeles was without All-Star Mike Trout for the third consecutive game because of a right calf strain. Cole (10-5) allowed one run on seven hits with one walk and 11 strikeouts. The right-hander fanned the last five batters he faced.

**INDIANS 7, TIGERS 2**

Mike Clevinger matched a career high with 12 strikeouts, and rookie Oscar Mercado and Greg Allen each drove in a pair of runs as host Cleveland defeated Detroit. Francisco Lindor belted a homer to ignite a four-run eighth inning for the Indians, who have won 10 of their last 12 to move within four games of the American League Central-leading Twins. Nicholas Castellanos launched a solo homer and Jeimer Candelario had an RBI single for the Tigers, who have lost 11 of their past 13 contests overall and 11 of 12 against Cleveland this season.

**RED SOX 5, BLUE JAYS 4**

Rafael Devers homered among three hits and drove in four runs to lead Boston past visiting Toronto. Brock Holt also had three hits for the Red Sox, who have won two of the first three contests in the four-game series. Eduardo Rodriguez (11-4) earned the victory, allowing two runs on three hits and three walks with four strikeouts. Teoscar Hernandez homered twice, and Lourdes Gurriel Jr. also went deep for the Blue Jays, who were outlit 14-5.

**ROYALS 7, WHITE SOX 5**

Danny Duffy continued Kansas City's recent pitching dominance as the Royals defeated visiting Chicago to win the first three games of the four-game series. Whit Merrifield, Jorge Soler, Nicky Lopez and Alex Gordon combined to go 9-for-14 for Kansas City. Soler had three RBIs and Lopez had two. Duffy (4-5), who entered the game with a string of 14 2/3 scoreless innings against the White



**MIAMI:** Fernando Tatis Jr #23 of the San Diego Padres high fives Manuel Margot #7 after defeating the Miami Marlins at Marlins Park. —AFP

Sox, didn't allow a run until Ryan Goins launched a no-out, two-run home run in the sixth. He wound up yielding two runs on six hits in six innings. Duffy struck out five and didn't walk a batter.

**ORIOLES 9, NATIONALS 2**

Trey Mancini homered twice, and Chris Davis hit a tiebreaking single in a three-run, seventh-inning rally as Baltimore defeated visiting Washington. The Orioles broke the game open with five runs in the eighth. Mancini had a two-run homer in that frame, and he finished with three RBIs. Anthony Santander got a sacrifice fly while Stevie Wilkerson had an RBI double and then scored on a Rio Ruiz single. The game was delayed 1 hour, 32 minutes by rain at the start.

**DIAMONDBACKS 19, RANGERS 4**

Arizona scored 12 runs in the first two innings and tied its team record with 21 hits as it belted five home runs in Arlington, Texas. The 12 runs were the most the Diamondbacks had ever scored through the first two innings of a game. Eduardo Escobar drove in five runs and homered from both sides of the plate, including a two-run blast from the left side in a seven-run first inning that Arizona chased Texas starter Jesse Chavez (3-5). Escobar connected from the right side in the sixth, a three-run shot that was good for a 17-3 lead. Christian Walker reached base six times in seven at-bats — two hits, three walks and a hit by pitch.

**ATHLETICS 10, MARINERS 2**

Mark Canha and Jurickson Profar each hit two home runs, and Homer Bailey pitched six solid innings in his A's debut as host Oakland defeated Seattle. Chad Pinder and Ramon Laureano also homered for the A's, who scored all of their runs via the long ball. Oakland swept the two-game series

and has won six in a row overall, outscoring its opponents 47-13. Bailey (8-6), a veteran right-hander, was acquired Sunday in a trade with Kansas City. He allowed two runs on seven hits with no walks and six strikeouts.

**CUBS 5, REDS 2**

Kris Bryant and Addison Russell hit solo home runs, and Yu Darvish snapped his drought at Wrigley Field with six scoreless innings in Chicago's win over visiting Cincinnati. Darvish (3-4) turned in his second straight outing of two-hit ball over six scoreless innings. He struck out seven and got his first career win at Wrigley after 13 starts without one as a member of the Cubs. He had never before pitched in a win at Wrigley, including a loss with the Texas Rangers in 2016. Darvish also earned his first win this season since April 27 after 12 no-decisions and a loss.

**CARDINALS 6, PIRATES 5**

Paul Goldschmidt hit a go-ahead, three-run home run in the seventh inning as host St. Louis beat Pittsburgh. The Cardinals took two of three from the Pirates. The Pirates carried a 4-3 lead into the seventh, and Francisco Liriano (4-2) retired the first batter he faced before giving up a single to Tommy Edman and issuing a walk to Jose Martinez. Goldschmidt then greeted Michael Feliz by homering to left-center field on a 2-2 pitch. The rally made a winner out of John Brebbia (3-3), who threw two perfect innings of relief. Andrew Miller tossed a 1-2-3 eighth before Carlos Martinez earned his sixth save despite allowing a run in the ninth.

**GIANTS 11, ROCKIES 8**

Donovan Solano led off the sixth inning with a go-ahead home run as San Francisco completed its

first four-game sweep of Colorado in Denver since 2011. The win was the Giants' fifth straight and sixth in seven games on a just-completed road trip that began at Milwaukee. San Francisco passed the Rockies in the standings, having won eight of nine and 12 of 14 overall. Derek Holland (2-4), the second Giants pitcher, was credited with the win after throwing 1 2/3 innings of hitless, scoreless ball.

**BREWERS 5, BRAVES 4**

Christian Yelich homered for the third time in four days, one of two struck by Milwaukee hitters, to help the Brewers defeat visiting Atlanta. The win gave the Brewers their first series win over a team other than Pittsburgh since mid-May. Yelich hit a solo homer in the sixth inning against Dallas Keuchel (3-3) to ignite a three-run outburst that allowed Milwaukee to put the game away and ensure a series victory. It was the 34th homer for Yelich, two shy of his career high total from 2018, when he was the NL Most Valuable Player. Chase Anderson (5-2) pitched 5 2/3 scoreless innings and allowed one hit and three walks, striking out three. It was Anderson's fifth straight start in which he has allowed two or fewer runs. He improved to 3-0 with a 3.37 ERA in six career starts against Atlanta.

**Mets 14, Twins 4**

Pinch hitter Dominic Smith belted a three-run homer, Amed Rosario had four hits, and New York routed Minnesota in Minneapolis. With the Mets down 3-2 in the seventh, Smith swatted an 0-2 curveball for his ninth homer. He finished 2-for-3 off the bench, adding a run-scoring single in the eighth to give him a career-high four RBIs. Rosario went 4-for-4 with a homer, triple, four runs and three RBIs. Adeiny Hechavarria had three hits, including two doubles, and scored twice. —Reuters

## Sports

# US swim stars aim to lay down marker for Tokyo 2020 at worlds

**LOS ANGELES:** Caeleb Dressel and Katie Ledecky will spearhead a powerful US assault when the swimming world championships begin Sunday, with the Americans looking to make a big statement before next year's Tokyo Olympics. The event in Gwangju is the biggest meeting on the 2019 calendar, but for team USA it represents a stepping stone on the road to Tokyo — and one they expect to negotiate in characteristically confident fashion.

"While we understand that the worlds is an important competition, the most important competition for us is the Olympic Games," said national team managing director Lindsay Mintenko. There have been no cut-throat trials to produce the US squad, which was selected based on performances in the 2018 national championships and 2018 Pan Pacific Championships. That allows top swimmers to keep their training geared toward Tokyo and, as a result, few Americans feature at the top of the 2019 rankings.

Those that do include superstar Ledecky, who boasts leading times this year in the 400m, 800m and 1,500m freestyle and Lilly King, who is fastest in the 50m and 100m breaststroke as she prepares to renew her rivalry with Russian Yuliya Efimova. Dressel, who two years ago in Budapest joined Michael Phelps as the only swimmer to win seven titles at a single world championships, tops the

100m butterfly rankings at 50.36sec — faster than Singapore's Joseph Schooling clocked to win gold at the Rio Olympics. Dressel's performance in Mission Viejo, California, last month fired a warning to rivals that by the time they complete their training camp in Shanghai the Americans will be a force to be reckoned with in South Korea.

## 'WEIRD SPOT'

"It's just really showing where we're at," said the 22-year-old, whose seven golds in Budapest included individual titles in the 50m and 100m freestyle and 100m butterfly along with four relay titles. "I think I'm just in kind of a weird spot right now. I have to stay focused. I've got to get better. We'll go home, make adjustments, so we'll be ready."

Five-time Olympic champion Ledecky's gold medal haul from the last worlds in Hungary included the 400m, 800m and 1,500m free and two relays. Other returning champions from 2017 — when the US topped the medals table with 18 golds and 38 in total — include Chase Kalisz, who won both men's medleys in Budapest, and Simone Manuel, who stormed to the women's 100m freestyle title.

"I do believe that I'm set up well for worlds," Manuel told SwimSwam after clocking 53.65sec in June. "I've been faster in-season in my events than I was last year and



**BUDAPEST:** In this file photo taken on July 29, 2017 USA's Caeleb Remel Dressel competes in the mixed 4x100m freestyle final during the swimming competition at the 2017 FINA World Championships. — AFP

training's been going really well, so I'm pretty confident with how I'll swim at worlds," added the two-time Olympic champion. "But also just looking forward to swimming well in 2020 at

Olympic trials and Tokyo. "Obviously I want to swim really well at the world championships, but it's kind of also a stepping stone to see where I need to be in 2020." —AFP

## Facing Olympic hotel shortage, Tokyo looks offshore

**YOKOHAMA:** Tokyo is facing a shortage of accommodation when Olympic fans pour into the Japanese capital for next year's Games so officials are looking offshore — to moored cruise ships operating as floating hotels. Despite a construction boom, Tokyo could be short as many as 14,000 rooms given an expected surge of Olympics-related tourism, according to researchers.

Local officials think one solution could be to put people up in giant ships temporarily docked off Tokyo and nearby Yokohama during the Games. Among those on board with the idea is Japan's largest travel agency JTB, which has chartered the 1,011-cabin Sun Princess for the Olympic period, complete with everything from jacuzzis to a theatre. The agency is offering packages that combine rooms with Olympic event tickets, but they don't come cheap.

Two nights in a room with a balcony combined with tickets to an Olympic football match will run 200,000 yen (\$1,850), while two nights in a 50-square-metre suite combined with baseball tickets will go for 724,000 yen (\$6,700). The agency said it was confident about demand, partly because "we will have a shortage of hotels of a certain standard", said Minoru Kuge, head of JTB's Tokyo2020 Project Office.

"Although we can't disclose the actual numbers, we have received an excellent reaction from our customers", he told AFP on a tour of the luxury ship. And Kuge said he expected the package to have a special draw — "a sense of unity" among customers who will all be cheering on Olympic athletes. Elsewhere, plans have been negotiated for the 928-cabin Explorer Dream ship to dock in Kawasaki, in western Tokyo bay. And both Tokyo's local government and officials in Chiba prefecture, east of the capital, are looking into additional cruise ship possibilities.

Japan's hotel business law bans rooms without a window, but the health ministry last year issued an ordinance that allows ships with windowless cabins to be used as hotels during major events. But experts warn that a few cruise ships may not be enough. "It is unclear if hotels ships in the Tokyo Bay will be able to cover hotel rooms shortage," warned a report on the issue published in October by Mizuho Research Institute.

Even the number of tourists the capital can expect remains unclear because the increase in Olympic visitors may be balanced out by other tourists opting to stay away until the Games are done. Regardless, Tokyo officials see the ships as a novel accommodation solution, and are also planning to open a new cruise ship terminal days before the Games began.

Officials and industry experts hope using docked ships for extra hotel space will become common in the country, as a way to cater to visitors during special events, or even help people displaced during disasters. "If a provincial city wants to host an international convention or other big events but doesn't have enough accommodation, hotel ships can be a solution," said Yoshimi Tajima, JTB's senior official at the corporate business department. —AFP

## Japan look to give ailing Ikee a lift at world swim

**GWANGJU:** Japan's swimmers have promised to lift their game at next week's world championships to lift the spirits of ailing team mate Rikako Ikee in her battle with leukemia. The 19-year-old poster girl for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics was diagnosed with the illness earlier this year and is continuing treatment back in Tokyo.

Asian champion Yui Ohashi, one of Japan's biggest medal hopes in South Korea after taking silver in the 200 meters individual medley two years ago, insisted Thursday that Ikee was on the mind of all the swimmers. "It's a huge blow that Rikako can't be here to fight with us but she's battling hard too," Ohashi said. "Hopefully she can see us giving it everything to produce the kind of results that will give her courage and the added motivation — that I'm sure she already has — to return to competition."

Ikee shot to fame at last year's Asian Games where she captured a record six gold medals. But she tweeted in February that she had been diagnosed with leukemia after experiencing problems during a training camp in Australia. Japan's swim queen would have been a favorite to win 2020 Olympic gold in the 100 meters butterfly and a serious medal contender in the 200m freestyle in her home city. Japanese coaches in Gwangju have spoken to the athletes

about Ikee, revealed head coach Norimasa Hirai the morning after arriving in South Korea.

"Coach (Yoji) Suzuki has said in meetings it was important to fight hard for Rikako too," said Hirai. "But knowing Rikako's character she will be anxious about Japan's results. If we give everything we have, and hopefully come away with a few medals, it will give her a lift. But first we have to get the job done."

## ALARMING DIP

In the absence of Ikee and Olympic champion Kosuke Hagino, who has suffered an alarming dip in form since his Rio gold in the men's 400m individual medley, Japan's swimmers could struggle in Gwangju after finishing 14th in the medals table at Budapest in 2017 with four silver and three bronze. "I don't want to predict medal tallies," said Hirai. "I don't want to add pressure. But they're relaxed, they're enjoying the Korean food and they're and in good spirits."

While Hungary's triple Olympic champion Katinka Hosszu has not lost a major final in the women's 200m medley since 2012, Ohashi has medal chances in both the 200m and 400m. "I'll need to be at 100 percent," said Ohashi, who recently completed a spell of high altitude training in Arizona. "I'm trying not to overcomplicate things. I have to be aggressive — if I don't go out strong, I'll struggle over the second half of races." Another potential hope for Japan is Ippei Watanabe, who holds the world record in the men's 200m breaststroke. "I want to leave everything out there," he said. "I want to come back with the gold medal, a new world record and a big smile on my face." —AFP

## Sports

# Tour win 'almost worth leaving Australia for', says new dad Ewan

**TOULOUSE:** Australian Caleb Ewan picked up his first Tour de France stage win in a mass sprint at Toulouse on Wednesday as Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe kept the overall lead. Ewan said at the winning post that victory "almost" made up for leaving his country, his wife and his baby daughter behind to race his first Tour de France.

With defending champion Geraint Thomas and his Ineos teammate Egan Bernal also finishing in the pack on Wednesday, there was no change in the overall top three after a 167km run from Albi to Toulouse. Ewan timed his explosive burst to perfection, catching and overtaking Dutch sprinter Dylan Groenewegen right on the line after a long home straight. Elia Viviani was third on a finish designed for the pure sprinters.

"It took me half the Tour de France to get my win, but I got it in the end," said Ewan. "I let him go, caught his wheel and just had him on the line," explained, the stocky 25-year-old, in his first season with the Lotto-Soudal team. Ewan insisted the stage win was a dream come true, and emotionally rolled off people to whom he owed his win. "When I started cycling at 10-years-old, I used to pretend that I was racing in the Tour de France, and winning it," he said. "Winning this stage almost makes it worthwhile leaving Australia with my wife with our newborn baby daughter, Lee, back home. "My wife is so strong and I could never have done this without her. She's the one I re-

ally have to thank for realizing my dream.

## Thomas favorite for yellow

Ewan has won stages on all three Grand Tours, with three victories on the Giro this season and one on the Vuelta. It was a narrow win with the photo-finish, which takes thousands of shots a second from both sides of the finish line, showing a tiny margin of victory. There are two major mountains on the menu on stage 12 on Thursday with yellow jersey Alaphilippe vowing to defend his lead.

"Geraint Thomas is favourite to win this Tour. He looks so confident, so strong," insisted Alaphilippe when asked if he could keep the overall lead all the way to Paris. The 27-year-old former soldier is looking forward to the first day in the Pyrenees after checking out what awaits the riders yesterday. "It won't be easy tomorrow, there will be attacks, and it will be a big day on the Tour, but I'm up for it," he said.

"I'm awaiting the Pyrenees with impatience. I know what's in store for me. I went to scout out the stage." The defending champion and the current leader both enjoyed a great deal of support on the stage with dozens of Welsh flags almost outnumbering the roadside signs supporting 'Juju' Alaphilippe. Thomas said he was feeling lucky on Wednesday as the stage left Albi after the rest day. "I'm on good form thanks, and gaining 1min 40sec on five rivals in the last stage was like a gift," he said of the



**TOULOUSE:** Australia's Caleb Ewan (front L), past Netherlands' Dylan Groenewegen, wins on the finish line of the eleventh stage of the 106th edition of the Tour de France cycling race between Albi and Toulouse. —AFP

crosswind-hit run to Albi on Monday which saw a split in the peloton.

"I don't think I ever did that even on a mountain stage," said the 33-year-old. Sprint points leader Peter Sagan of Slovakia kept his green jersey after finishing fourth behind Ewan. "I congratulate him, he's too fast for me

on that kind of course, said the 30-year-old Sagan. Colombian Bernal kept hold of the under-25's white jersey and said Ineos would remain calm in their quest for the yellow jersey. "We won't be attacking just yet, but I feel good going into the mountains" said Bernal, who is on his second Tour. —AFP

## Ketones: The stamina booster sparking the Tour debate

**PARIS:** The Tour de France is again embroiled in a debate over what cyclists put in their bodies after Dutch team Jumbo acknowledged they were using a dietary aid believed to boost stamina. The team responded to questions from Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf by saying they were using drinks based on a substance called ketones, which occur naturally in the body. Jumbo team manager Richard Plugge says the use of ketones is nothing unusual and is widespread among Tour de France riders. "It's a food supplement, like vitamins," he told De Telegraaf. Ketones are "supplementary fuel for the muscles," said Jean-Jacques Menuet, the doctor for a rival team, Arkea-Samsic. Jumbo won four of the first 11 stages on this year's Tour de France. Mike Teunissen won the opening stage before Jumbo romped to victory in the team time trial the next day. Dylan Groenewegen won stage six in a sprint and Wout Van Aert took stage 10 on Monday.

On the Tour's rest day on Tuesday, Ineos team principal Dave Brailsford described Jumbo as "the most improved team over the past three years." Brailsford, who has masterminded six Tour de France wins, said Jumbo had an "open-minded and expansive approach." Ketones are produced by the liver during dieting, but a laboratory version is now cheaply and easily available.

Ketones are classified as a food supplement rather than a drug and are not on the World Anti-Doping Agency's list of doping products. Two of three WADA criteria would have to be met before they are added — namely, if it enhances, or potentially enhances, performance, if it violates the spirit of sport or if it is an actual or potential health risk. For the moment, ketones do not appear to be harmful. "They naturally occur when the liver turns lipids (fats) into glucid (sugar)," Menuet, the Arkea-Samsic team doctor, told AFP, adding that this would happen during an extreme diet. Artificial ketones, first created in laboratory conditions in the English city of Oxford, have the same effect. "At first it cost thousands of euros for one bottle, but now you can get a bottle on the internet for between 30 euros and 90 euros," Menuet said.

Simon Verdonck, team doctor at the French team Cofidis, told AFP that ketones work by extending the amount of time before the body starts using its stored sugars as fuel. "When you go full gas, your body uses glucids rather than lipids," said Verdonck. "Ketones delays the use of glucids, saving them for the end of a stage."

Verdonck says he first heard of ketones five years ago but "the effects remain mysterious over the long term" and, until tests have been done on potential negative effects, Cofidis will not be using them. Menuet agrees. "I don't want to receive a letter in 10 years from a rider telling me that his liver is ruined," he says. Vincent Lavenue, of the AG2R team, has called for the use of ketones to be halted immediately. "For equality in this sport we need a swift reaction," he said. —AFP

## Lowry overcomes nerves to seize British Open lead

**PORTRUSH:** Ireland's Shane Lowry said he felt "uneasy" on the first tee before going on to take the early lead yesterday as the British Open returned to Northern Ireland for the first time since 1951. The 32-year-old carded a four-under-par first round of 67 at Royal Portrush to move one shot clear of a group of five players. But Lowry admitted that he felt the pressure early on.

"I felt uncomfortable on the first tee, I was glad it was downwind so it was only a three iron," he said. "It's the British Open, it's in Ireland. I feel like I'm hitting it well. Of course I feel uneasy. "Nerves are a good thing... I hope I'm nervous on Sunday afternoon, that's where you want to be. You have to ask yourself if you'd rather be there or sat at home watching on TV." Organizers expect the second-biggest attendance in Open history this week, with 237,750 fans estimated, and the locals lent strong support to all six players in the field from either the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland. Lowry paid them back in style, making five birdies in the slightly easier morning conditions before the predicted heavy rain in the afternoon. "I thoroughly enjoyed today, the crowds were unbelievable, I was cheered on at every tee box," he said.

"I stand on tees and scan the crowds and see a few familiar faces." It's going to be an exciting few days ahead and I hope I can give them something to cheer for on Sunday afternoon." Lowry has contended at majors before, finishing runner-up to



**PORTRUSH:** Ireland's Shane Lowry tees off from the first hole during the first round of the British Open golf championships at Royal Portrush golf club. —AFP

Dustin Johnson at the 2016 US Open. He slipped to 92nd in the world rankings last year, though, before a string of strong results — including victory in January's Abu Dhabi Championship — saw him climb back to his current mark of 33rd.

"I feel like if I hit a bad shot I can get myself out of trouble. That's a good place to be in," Lowry added. "It would be great to contend this week but it wouldn't be the end of the world if it doesn't happen. "I'm a bit more under the radar than the other guys... But obviously not here." One home hope who did not manage his nerves on the opening hole was pre-tournament favorite Rory McIlroy, as the four-time major winner made a quadruple-bogey eight. "I did hear about that. I don't have much to say about that, I feel for him," said Lowry. "Obviously he's one of the best golfers in the world." —AFP

## Sports

# Curran says World Cup victory will inspire England Ashes team

**LONDON:** Sam Curran believes England's historic World Cup triumph will inspire the Ashes team as attention turns towards their attempt to regain the urn. Sunday's dramatic end to the 50-over tournament has overshadowed the build-up to the five-Test showdown against Australia, which gets under way on August 1 at Edgbaston.

Curran feels the Ashes remains the pinnacle of the cricketing calendar but said the Test team would be galvanized by the World Cup, irrespective of whether they featured or not in the one-day triumph. "I don't think I'm alone in saying that it's probably the greatest cricket match ever and for that to be the World Cup final was incredible," said the 21-year-old all-rounder. "That will provide a buzz for everyone across English cricket going into the Ashes. "Days like Sunday get everyone, whether they were involved or not, more excited and desperate to do well so I'm sure it will rub off as we head into the Test part of the summer. "The Ashes are the biggest thing you can play in as an England cricketer, that's what I've always felt. Hopefully we can be lifting the urn at the Oval in September."

Curran, whose older brother Tom was an unused squad member during the World Cup, has been drafted into England's groups for the one-off Test against Ireland next week and a pre-Ashes training camp. The left-armed England Lions' standout performer against an Australian XI earlier this week, taking six for

95 and contributing a pair of half-centuries in a drawn first-class match at Canterbury. Curran enjoyed a breakthrough summer last year, being named England player of the Test series against India after star contributions with both bat and ball, leading to a bumper pay day in the Indian Premier League.

## BAYLISS TO COACH SUNRISERS

England's World Cup-winning coach Trevor Bayliss will take charge of Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League next year, the team announced yesterday. The 56-year-old Australian will take over a team captained by Kane Williamson, who led the New Zealand team beaten by Bayliss's England in the thrilling World Cup final last Sunday.

Bayliss, who will stand down from his England job after the Ashes series against Australia in August, will succeed compatriot Tom Moody in the cash-rich Twenty20 league. "After very careful consideration, the Sunrisers franchise has decided to take a new direction with the head coaching role and will be parting ways with the services of Tom Moody," the team said in a statement. Bayliss won two IPL trophies with the Kolkata Knight Riders and has also won the Big Bash and Champions League in Australia with the Sydney Sixers in 2010-11.

"He is a proven winner and we feel that his successful track record will be ideal in taking Sunrisers Hyderabad forward," Hyderabad added. Bayliss is understood to have had offers

weather will be at ringside for Pacquiao's world title fight against Keith Thurman in Las Vegas on Saturday, Ellerbe says there is no chance of a rematch.

"Floyd has no interest," Ellerbe told boxingscene. "He has zero interest. He's been doing this all his life. And after a while, you get burned out. He's given the sport everything." Ellerbe said Mayweather was instead happy in his retirement. "He's very content," Ellerbe said. "He's living his best life. I just talked to him earlier today. We went over some business stuff. He's travelling, spending time with his kids, spending time with his family."

"He's doing all the things that he never got a chance to do because boxing has consumed his life ever since he was 5 years old." Speaking to reporters last week, Roach said he was still bothered by Pacquiao's loss to Mayweather, when the Filipino's challenge was hampered by a shoulder problem. "Hopefully we can get Mayweather to come to the table," Roach said. "I would like us to have one more crack at him." "We didn't fight a great fight that night. Manny's shoulder didn't help at all. He's had surgery since then, he's 100 percent now. I would like us to fight Mayweather again because I didn't like the way we performed." —AFP



**LONDON:** Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May and the England cricket team pose for a photograph outside 10 Downing Street with the World Cup trophy as England players arrive for a reception in London on July 15, 2019. —AFP

from Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals. Bayliss took over as England coach in 2015. They won the Ashes 3-2 that year, reached the World T20 final in 2016 and became the top-ranked one-day international side. Before that

he coached Sri Lanka to the World Cup final in 2011. The Sunrisers last won the IPL in 2016 under Moody. As well as Williamson, the team also boast the talents of England World Cup star Jonny Bairstow. —AFP

## Mayweather has 'zero interest' in Pacquiao rematch

**LOS ANGELES:** Floyd Mayweather has "zero interest" in coming out of retirement for a rematch with Manny Pacquiao after their money-spinning 2015 superfight, close confidante Leonard Ellerbe said Wednesday. Ellerbe, the chief executive of Mayweather Promotions, told the boxingscene.com website that not even the prospect of another lucrative payday would tempt Mayweather back into the ring.

Mayweather is believed to have earned an estimated \$300 million from the points victory over Pacquiao, which remains the most lucrative fight in history and generated more than \$600 million revenue. Pacquiao's long-time trainer Freddie Roach said last week he would be keen for the Filipino icon to set up a rematch with Mayweather after a frustrating defeat in the first meeting. However while May-

## Cheika rings changes as Wallabies enter post-Folau era

**JOHANNESBURG:** Australia coach Michael Cheika has boldly gone back to the future for the Rugby Championship opener against South Africa, as Australia seek to put the Israel Folau saga behind them. Cheika named Tom Banks as Folau's replacement at fullback in a vote of confidence for the attack-minded Brumbies flier, who only has three Test caps. He also handed a debut to powerhouse number eight Isi Naisarani and gave prop Harry Johnson-Holmes the chance to win his maiden Test cap off the bench.

But Cheika has also looked to the past in naming a run-on team that has 10 changes from the Wallabies' last outing, a 37-18 loss to England at Twickenham in November. Prop James Slipper plays his first international since 2016 and scrum-half Nic White his first since 2015, while the centres pairing of Tevita Kuridrani and Samu Kerevi have not worked together at Test level since 2017.

Cheika resisted the temptation to pitch James O'Connor back into the fray just days

after the former bad boy re-signed with Australian rugby after six years in the Test wilderness. However, the 44-Test back is sure to feature during the campaign as Cheika seeks to get the misfiring Wallabies humming again. The Twickenham loss capped their worst season in decades and raised alarm bells ahead of the World Cup.

Cheika survived a review but had his wings clipped when he was forced to report to newly appointed director of rugby Scott Johnson and join a three-man selection panel. The off-season was then dominated by Folau's sacking over homophobic social media posts, which generated reports of divisions within the team over the issue. Cheika said his players just wanted to get back on the park.

"We really want to begin building momentum to take us towards our goals in 2019," he said. "The players are impatient to play at Ellis Park where our Wallabies haven't had an opportunity to play for quite a while." The Wallabies last won at Ellis Park in 1963 and have since lost six times at the venue, with their most appearance a 53-8 drubbing in 2008. Their last win in South Africa was in Durban in 2011, although Cheika's men managed a 27-27 draw in Bloemfontein in 2017. "We know we go into the game as heavy underdogs but most of the players have had a touch over three great weeks of training to prepare," he said. "So really they just can't wait to get out and get into the battle." —AFP

## Sports

# Juventus makes Matthijs De Ligt world's most expensive defender

**ROME:** Dutch central defender Matthijs de Ligt, one of the most coveted young players in world football, signed yesterday for Juventus from Ajax for a fee of 75 million euros (\$84.2 million) plus add-ons. The 19-year-old agreed a five-year contract with the Italian champions. Juventus said in a statement the fee would be paid over five financial years, with "additional costs" of 10.5 million euros.

The combined fee makes De Ligt the world's most expensive defender, surpassing the 84 million euros Liverpool paid to sign his Netherlands teammate Virgil Van Dijk from Southampton in 2018. De Ligt is Juventus' third most expensive signing after the 105 million euros they paid to buy Cristiano Ronaldo from Real Madrid in 2018 and the 90-million-euro transfer of Gonzalo Higuain from Napoli in 2016.

De Ligt had also been linked with Manchester United, Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain after his impressive performances for a young Ajax side that reached the Champions League semi-finals last season. His Ajax teammate, 22-year-old midfielder Frenkie de Jong, has already joined Barcelona. In a deal hammered out by his powerful Italian-born Dutch agent Mino Raiola, De Ligt will earn a basic annual salary of 7.5 million euros that could reach 12 million euros with bonuses, according to reports in Italy. "The sporting project proved decisive" in De Ligt's

decision to choose Juventus. "For a defender, Italy is always an ideal place."

## Ageing defense

The Turin-based club, now coached by former Chelsea mentor Maurizio Sarri, were keen to bring new blood into an ageing defense that features 34-year-old Giorgio Chiellini and Leonardo Bonucci, 32. De Ligt played 117 games for Ajax in all competitions, scoring 13 goals. He scored the winner in Turin as Ajax eliminated Juventus in the Champions League quarter-finals.

De Ligt has played 17 times for the Netherlands, forming a formidable central defensive partnership with Van Dijk. He took over the captain's armband at Ajax in March 2018, making him the club's youngest ever captain. De Ligt said Ronaldo had urged him to join Juventus after the two faced each other for their countries in the Nations League final in June won by Portugal. Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman says De Ligt "will become one of the best defenders in the world in a short time".

De Ligt is the latest big-money summer transfer following the 120-million-euro deal that took France striker Antoine Griezmann from Atletico Madrid to Barcelona and the 126 million euros that Atletico splashed out on 19-year-old forward Joao Felix from Benfica. After a disappointing 2018-2019 season, Real Madrid have strengthened with



**AMSTERDAM:** In this file photo taken on April 10, 2019 Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (L) and Ajax's Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt run with the ball during the UEFA Champions League first leg quarter-final football match between Ajax Amsterdam and Juventus FC at the Johan Cruyff Arena. — AFP

the acquisition of Belgian playmaker Eden Hazard from Chelsea for an initial 100 million euros, with another 34 million euros in potential add-ons. Pre-

mier League champions Manchester City bought Spain international Rodri for a club record 70 million euros (£63 million). — AFP

## Captain Lascelles tells Newcastle to back Bruce

**NANJING:** Captain Jamaal Lascelles said that Newcastle United must move on from the Rafael Benitez era and warned the players need to adapt swiftly to new coach Steve Bruce. Bruce was named successor to the popular Benitez on Wednesday but the appointment has gone down badly with Newcastle fans and some are threatening a boycott.

Bruce, a former manager of fierce rivals Sunderland, has just over three weeks before the season begins to get his message across and bring in badly needed signings. The 58-year-old is expected to take charge for Saturday's friendly against West Ham United in Shanghai in the Premier League Asia Trophy. Newcastle fans are furious that hated owner Mike Ashley failed to persuade Benitez to remain at the club, but Lascelles said: "That happened and people got upset.

"But that's gone now, you can't control that, you need to look forward, we've got a great manager coming in and we need to remain positive." Speaking after Newcastle were thumped 4-0 by Wolves on Wednesday in Nanjing, and hours after Bruce was made head coach, Lascelles admitted it had been a difficult summer with the club making headlines for the wrong reasons.

As well as losing Benitez, who has moved to Chinese football with Dalian Yifang, success-starved Newcastle supporters have seen the club lose key forwards Ayoze Perez and Salomon Rondon. The club remains in limbo with Ashley apparently wishing to sell but failing to do so, triggering threats from supporters to stage a boycott at St James' Park.

"It is frustrating because it's always 'Newcastle this, Newcastle that', it's never positive," said defender Lascelles, 25. "We are always highlighted for something or we're not doing something right. "As players we try to ignore all that and try to work hard and do the right things, that is all we can do, we can't control anything else." Newcastle, who have yet to make a major signing this summer and are particularly light in attack, are among the relegation favorites this season.

They begin their Premier League campaign home to Arsenal on August 11, heralding what promises to be another turbulent year on and off the pitch. Bruce's unremarkable managerial record in the Premier League and his time as Sunderland boss in 2009-2011 are the major reasons for fans' antipathy towards him. — AFP

## Sturridge banned for breaching betting rules

**LONDON:** Former Liverpool striker Daniel Sturridge has been fined and suspended for six weeks for breaching betting rules, the Football Association announced yesterday. An independent regulatory commission found that 29-year-old Sturridge, capped 26 times by England, had instructed his brother to bet on a possible move to Sevilla during the January 2018 transfer window.

The commission suspended Sturridge from participating in any domestic football for six weeks, with a further four weeks suspended, and fined him £75,000 (\$94,000). Nine of the 11 charges against the striker were dismissed and Sturridge is free to resume his career on July 31, just before the English season starts. The FA said it believed the punishment should have been stiffer and that it would appeal.

The England international left European champions Liverpool when his contract expired at the end of June and is without a club. A statement from the FA said: "The regulatory commission found proved charges three and four, which alleged that, in that same transfer window, Mr Sturridge had instructed his brother, Leon, to bet on a possible move by him (Daniel Sturridge) to Sevilla FC. "In issuing that instruction, the regulatory commission found that, as a matter of fact, Mr Sturridge had provided his brother with inside information for that purpose."

It added: "The FA respectfully disagrees with the regulatory commission's findings and will be appealing against the charges which were dismissed and the sanction which was imposed." Sturridge ended up switching to West Brom for the second half of the 2017/18 campaign after a move to La Liga side Sevilla broke down. — AFP

## Ighalo boosts Golden Boot hopes as Nigeria finish third

**CAIRO:** Odion Ighalo boosted his chances of winning the Golden Boot at the Africa Cup of Nations on Wednesday after he netted Nigeria's winner to ensure his side third place in the tournament with a 1-0 victory over Tunisia. The 30-year-old Shanghai Shenhua forward struck the only goal of the match just 130 seconds after the kick-off before a small crowd at the Al Salam Stadium in Cairo.

Ighalo pounced from close range when Jamilu Collins' cross led to a mix-up between Tunisia goalkeeper Moez Ben Cherifia and defender Yassine Meriah. It was his fifth goal at the tournament and put him two ahead of closest rivals Riyad Mahrez, Adam Ounas, Cedric Bakambu and Sadio Mane, who have three goals each.

Algerians Mahrez and Ounas and Senegal's Mane have a chance to increase their totals when the two countries face off in Friday's final at the Cairo International Stadium. Ighalo, who was the leading scorer in the 2019 qualifying competition with seven goals, left the field just before half-time with a pulled hamstring. Tunisia had little to offer in attack and it took 57 minutes before they had a goal attempt on target.

Nigeria maintained their perfect record in third place playoffs at the Cup of Nations having won six other matches between the beaten semi-finalists. The first of those successes came in 1978 against Tunisia in a match abandoned just before half-time when the north Africans stormed off to protest a disputed Nigerian equalizer. Nigeria were awarded a 2-0 victory in Ghana and have now won six other playoffs, including three in a row between 2002 and 2006. — AFP

## Sports

# Mahrez, Mane duel in rematch for Africa Cup of Nations glory

**CAIRO:** Riyad Mahrez and Sadio Mane will renew their Premier League rivalry for a second time in Egypt, with Africa Cup of Nations immortality awaiting the victor of today's final between Algeria and Senegal. Algerian star Mahrez was part of the Manchester City team that edged out Mane's Liverpool for the English title last season, grabbing a pivotal goal on the final day of the campaign.

Liverpool standout Mane, however, is attempting to fulfil his "wildest dream" as one of just a handful of Africans to win both the UEFA Champions League and Cup of Nations. For the marquee name in a Senegalese side ranked top of the continent, and a surprising 46 places above Algeria, the ride to the final for Mane and the Teranga Lions has encountered its share of roadbumps.

Two missed Mane spot-kicks, a group stage loss to Algeria, and the loss of goalkeeper Edouard Mendy to a broken finger have tested Senegal's resolve in their quest for the Holy Grail of African football. Coach Aliou Cisse is on a mission for personal redemption. He was the skipper of the side beaten on penalties in the 2002 final, with his missed kick handing the title to Cameroon.

"Having lost that final, I still have it on my mind," said former Paris Saint-Germain and Birmingham City midfielder Cisse. "What motivated me to become a coach was to be able to take Senegal to the final. My players told me they would do better than my generation." A maiden Cup of Nations for his country is a prize for which Mane readily admitted he would trade in last month's Champions

League title.

"I'm ready to even swap a Champions League for a Cup of Nations. Going to Dakar with the trophy would be extraordinary. It would be my wildest dream," Mane told France Football ahead of the competition. Standing in the way, however, is an Algerian outfit that has undergone a remarkable transformation since the arrival of Djamel Belmadi as coach a year ago. The Desert Foxes failed miserably in World Cup qualifying, but the steely Belmadi has healed divisions in the squad to lead them to the brink of a first Cup of Nations triumph since 1990.

## 'I'M NOT A MIRACLE WORKER'

"To the Algerian people, I want to say I'm not a politician, not a miracle worker or a wizard, but that we will fight like we have fought to this point," Belmadi said after the semi-final win over Nigeria. Algeria are the leading scorers in Egypt with 12 goals, including Mahrez's spectacular last-gasp free-kick against Nigeria, and haven't trailed at all in the tournament.

"Algeria are so well organized, so compact, so 'Guardiolaesque' in the way they recover the ball," opined experienced international coach Claude Le Roy. "Perhaps it is the influence of Mahrez." The Algeria captain has been in fine form for his country here, brimming with confidence after helping City to the domestic treble. "We are very happy to be in the final of the Africa Cup of Nations because it is something very special," said Mahrez.

tutelage of Mahmoud El Gohary, defeated Jomo Sono's South Africa 2-0 in Ouagadougou. "It's much more complicated when you're local than when you're an expat. It's up to us (Africans) to have confidence in ourselves, in our boys, in our coaches. Bit by bit the order is changing," said Cisse.

## 'GREAT MESSAGE' FOR AFRICA

"To play this final against my friend, it's amazing. I think it's a great message we're sending to football officials in Africa," added Belmadi. Cisse has carefully constructed his Senegal team since taking over in 2015, making steady progress that included an appearance at the 2018 World Cup following a 16-year absence, and reaching just the country's second Cup of Nations final. As for Belmadi, appointed last year, he inherited a side in turmoil, undermined by a revolving-door policy that saw five coaches come and go in just two years. They may be on the same path now, possibly 90 minutes from a continental crown, but the routes taken to this point vary considerably.

Spurred on by a desire to atone for the agony of the 2002 final defeat, Cisse's only managerial experience has come at the helm of Senegal. Belmadi, on the other hand, spent eight years in Qatar, including a stint with the national team in 2014-15, before landing with the Desert Foxes. "Cisse is the same as a coach as he was in his playing career. He's someone very disciplined. Despite his lack of coaching experience, he's quickly got results and has consistency in his work, which is also down to his brilliant career," said Belmadi. "Djamel is a great tactician, a very good coach. He's able to get his team to play like he wants them to play," Cisse replied. —AFP



CAIRO: Algeria's forward Riyad Mahrez celebrates his winning goal during the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Semi-final football match between Algeria and Nigeria at the Cairo International stadium. —AFP

"It was our goal to do it for the people and for our families. We know they are behind us all the way. It's my dream to win the Cup of Nations." "It's going to be another battle against Senegal," he added. "We've been very good in this competition. The (Nigeria) match has given us more confidence for the final and we're capable of winning it." Their

hopes will be boosted by the absence of Senegal's defensive rock Kalidou Koulibaly, whose yellow card in the semi-final victory over Tunisia cruelly ruled the Napoli star out of the final. "It hurts to not be able to play. But I will be beside my brothers to write history," tweeted Koulibaly, the cornerstone of a defense breached just once so far. —AFP

## Friends collide as Cisse and Belmadi target African crown

**CAIRO:** They were born a day apart, raised in the same city and enjoyed prosperous playing careers, and while both Aliou Cisse and Djamel Belmadi are now experiencing similar success as coaches, only one can lift the Africa Cup of Nations in Cairo today. Cisse was born March 24, 1976 in Senegal, with his Algerian counterpart arriving in the world the following day, in Champigny-sur-Marne. It was in this Parisian suburb, where Cisse moved to at the age of nine, that the pair's destiny would be shaped.

"He's an old acquaintance. I say that with great fondness," said Belmadi, who broke through into the professional ranks at Paris Saint-Germain while Cisse started out with Lille. Despite never playing on the same team, they graced the same pitches in France for nearly a decade. The duo made close to 180 Ligue 1 appearances between them across spells at six different clubs, but it's in Africa where their legacy has assumed a greater dimension.

Cisse, captain of the Senegal team beaten in the 2002 Cup of Nations final, got the better of Belmadi's Algeria in qualifying for that year's World Cup, but the latter gained revenge in the dugout here, claiming a 1-0 victory in the group stage, setting up Friday's decider. The occasion will pit local coaches against each other in a Cup of Nations final for the first time in 21 years since Egypt, under the

## Algerian fans switch their Friday focus from politics to football

**CAIRO:** Algeria's African Cup of Nations final against Senegal will mark the climax not only of the Desert Foxes' campaign on the field, but of their fans' recent political campaign in the stands. In April, long-standing president Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned after weekly Friday protests against his expected candidacy for elections, and football fans have been heavily involved in demonstrations.

When Algeria won their opening group game against Kenya on June 23, one fan was arrested, deported from Egypt and then jailed for a year after holding a sign with one of the anti-government movement's slogans: "So they all go". Two others were also expelled for setting off smoke bombs during the match at the 30 June Stadium in Cairo.

During the semi-final victory over Nigeria on Sunday, the travelling fans chanted verses from 'La Casa del Mouradia' an anthem adapted by the Friday protesters to refer to the Algerian presidential residence. On Tuesday, as Riyad Mahrez and his teammates trained, around a hundred faithful sang a rendition of track 'La Liberté' by Algerian rapper Soukling, which has also been heard on the streets

on a weekly basis during the protests. Demonstrations against 82-year-old Bouteflika, who had been in power for 20 years, have been held on 21 straight Fridays since late February and have their roots in the stands and terraces of football grounds across the country. A banner displayed at a club match in 2017 depicting the Saudi Arabia's King Salman and the US President Donald Trump as 'Two faces of the same coin' sparked a diplomatic incident.

## 'CHALLENGE THE ESTABLISHMENT'

Mahfoud Amara, a professor of social sciences and sport management at the University of Qatar, told AFP the political demonstrations at games trace their history further back. "Since the 1970s-1980s stadia have been a place for political expression in Algeria, maybe more so than other countries where there are more checks and censorship," Amara said. "It's where you can challenge the establishment, deconstruct the taboos of Algeria."

The fans, Amara said, "contributed, a little bit, to the voice of the people at a time when there was a weariness with the political system". The political activism of fans has made football metaphors such as "It's not a match, no to additional time," and "People 3, Power 0" common on the streets of Algerian cities. An additional 4,800 Algerians will arrive in Cairo for the final on military planes organized by Prime Minister Noureddine Bedoui, who has also been a target of the demonstrations. —AFP



AMSTERDAM: In this file photo taken on May 8, 2019 Ajax's Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt reacts after Ajax Amsterdam lost the UEFA Champions League semi-final second leg football match against Tottenham Hotspur at the Johan Cruyff Arena. — AFP

## De Ligt joins Juventus

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