



**4** Met keen to provide accurate weather reports, transparency



**6** Trump says congresswomen should 'apologize to America'



**11** Finance minister strikes blow as Johnson prepares to become PM



**26** Tearful Sun roars to gold as Peaty shatters world record



## Just solution for bedoons this summer on Amir's directives

### Ghanem: National identity, rights won't be undermined • Three bodies working on 'roadmap'

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: In a surprising announcement, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that under directions from HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a comprehensive and just solution will be struck this summer to end the decades-old problem of thousands of stateless people or bedoons in a way that wouldn't "inhibit their national identity rights".

Insisting that the solution will not undermine Kuwait's national identity and will not be at the cost of Kuwaiti citizenship, Ghanem told reporters that the Assembly will be called to approve legislation either early next term starting in October or could be invited to an emergency session during the summer recess.

Ghanem declined to provide details about the solution, but said it was initiated with "clear directives by the Amir to resolve this

issue" and that it will be "comprehensive, just and durable". The speaker reiterated that political consultations involving members of parliament have been held for some time about this issue and talks are still ongoing.

Kuwait has recently come under criticism from international rights groups over what they call as "mistreatment" of bedoons after a young stateless man committed suicide two weeks ago after claiming that the central bedoons' agency refused to renew his security ID, and as a result, he lost his job. Bedoons or their forefathers have been living in the country for decades and have in recent years lost many of their basic rights in a government clampdown.

The government says that as many as 34,000 of the estimated 120,000 bedoons qualify for consideration for Kuwaiti citizenship, but the rest belong to other countries, and has put pressure on them to reveal their actual identity. Bedoons however insist that

they have full right to Kuwaiti citizenship and have been appealing and protesting to get it. Ghanem also insisted that the issue of Kuwaiti citizenship will not be involved in political bargaining, an indication that the planned solution may not stipulate naturalization of bedoons, or at least naturalization will be greatly limited.

Informed sources said the bedoon issue is being dealt with by three entities - the interior ministry, the central agency for bedoons and the National Assembly bureau - that are preparing a roadmap and implementation procedures to resolve the matter before the end of the year. They have agreed to hold continuous meetings to reach practical solutions to resolve this issue, which is distorting Kuwait's humanitarian image.

The sources said the roadmap will have two basic aspects. Those who have any official documents that indicate their presence in Kuwait before the 1965 census will be nat-

uralized unless they have security restrictions or another nationality. Permanent residency will be granted to these people, and others included in the 1970 and 1975 censuses and beyond, provided they admit to having other nationalities.

The sources said the bedoons who do not confess to having other nationalities will be confronted with their official documents and old papers kept by security authorities proving that they entered Kuwait with these, and this is proof of their nationalities. Sources expected 20,000 of those included in the 1965 census to be naturalized out of a total of 34,000, but some of them left the country a long time ago, while others have criminal restrictions, in addition to some who obtained other nationalities. The sources said priority will be for bedoons in the military, degree holders and postgraduates, old-time workers in the oil sector and Kuwaiti women's children.



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

## Britain weighing response; Saudis release Iran ship

DUBAI/LONDON: Britain was weighing its next moves in the Gulf tanker crisis yesterday, with few good options apparent as a recording emerged showing that the Iranian military defied a British warship when it boarded and seized a ship three days ago. Little clue has been given by Britain on how it plans to respond after Iranian Revolutionary Guards rappelled from helicopters and seized the Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday in apparent retaliation for the British capture of an Iranian tanker two weeks earlier.

The British government is expected to announce its next steps in a speech to parliament today. But experts on the region say there are few obvious steps London can take at a time when the United States has already imposed the maximum possible economic sanctions,

banning all Iranian oil exports worldwide. "We rant and rave and we shout at the ambassador and we hope it all goes away," said Tim Ripley, a British defense expert who writes about the Gulf for Jane's Defence Weekly. "I don't see at this point in time us being able to offer a concession that can resolve the crisis. Providing security and escort for future ships is a different matter."

A day after calling the Iranian action a "hostile act", top British officials kept comparatively quiet yesterday, making clear that they had yet to settle on a response. "We are going to be looking at a series of options," junior defense minister Tobias Ellwood told Sky News. "We will be speaking with our colleagues, our international allies, to see what can actually be done. Our first and most important responsibility is to make sure we get a solution to the issue to do with the current ship, make sure other British-flagged ships are safe to operate in these waters and then look at the wider picture."

The Iranian capture of the ship in the global oil trade's most important waterway was the latest escalation in three months of spiralling confrontation with the West that began when new, tighter US sanctions took

Continued on Page 24



This image grab taken from a video on Saturday shows Iranian Revolutionary Guards preparing to board the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz. — AFP

## Halal sees growth in Russia economy

SHCHYOLKOVO, Russia: The manager of a sausage factory near Moscow, Arslan Gizatullin says his halal business has been feeling the pinch - not so much from Russia's sluggish economy but competitors vying for a piece of a growing Islamic market. Ever more producers are catering for the domestic Muslim community, which accounts for around 15 percent of Russia's population and is set to expand, and in some cases are also setting their sights on export.

"In the last few years in general, halal's become something of a trend in Russia," said Gizatullin, who has been at the Halal-Ash

plant in the city of Shchyolkovo for seven years. The factory was among the first of its kind when it opened two decades ago, recreating Soviet-style sausages in accordance with Islamic law, among other products. "Now I go to shop displays and I see sausage from one, two, three producers... I see that competition is growing," he adds from the factory, which employs 35 people and puts out up to 1.5 tonnes of produce a day.

The halal economy, worth more than \$2.1 trillion globally, is far from limited to meat. Cosmetics firms and services such as halal hotels have received licenses from the body that oversees Islamic production in Russia, while state-owned Sberbank is looking into creating an Islamic finance entity. The Centre for Halal Standardization and Certification, under the authority of the Russian Council of

Muftis, has approved more than 200 companies since it opened in 2007. The center says that number is growing by five to seven companies a year - from a standing start at the collapse of the anti-religious Soviet Union.

Rushan Abbyasov, the deputy head of the Council of Muftis, told AFP the Russian agriculture ministry was supporting the center in its efforts to increase exports to the Arab world and Muslim-majority ex-Soviet republics. "We've looked at international experience in the Arab world, in Malaysia, and we've developed our Russian (halal certification) standard following that model," Abbyasov said in an interview at Moscow's central mosque. "We're doing it in a way that matches international halal standards as well as the laws of the Russian Federation."

Continued on Page 24



MOSCOW: Rushan Abbyasov, the deputy head of the Council of Muftis, is seen at Moscow's central mosque on May 23, 2019. — AFP

## Israel boasts of 'killing Iranians'; will host Iraqi, Saudi journalists

JERUSALEM: An Israeli minister boasted yesterday that his country was the only one that "has been killing Iranians", after tensions between Britain and Iran rose in the Gulf. Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi's comments to public radio were a reference to Israeli strikes in neighboring Syria against Iranian and Hezbollah military targets. But they came after Iran seized a British-flagged tanker on Friday, adding to tensions between Washington and Tehran linked to a 2015 nuclear deal.

Hanegbi accused Iran, Israel's main enemy, of seeking to create "chaos" and "harm freedom of navigation".

Continued on Page 24

## Philippines goes wild for 'force at 40' Pacquiao

MANILA: Fans in the Philippines roared their approval and rose to their feet yesterday, imitating the punches of Manny Pacquiao, as they declared that their idol was still a boxing force at the age of 40 with his stunning victory over American Keith Thurman. Filipinos from street vendors to lawmakers went wild, pumping their fists in the air during the first round of the welterweight fight as Pacquiao floored the WBA champion 10 years his junior, and went on to win by split decision.

Despite Thurman's threat to send Pacquiao into retirement in the Las Vegas showdown, fans of the eight-division world champion were thrilled to see him eat his words as they packed into gyms, military camps and movie theatres all over the country to watch the fight. "It was wow, wow, wow! He is amazing. He showed himself a true Filipino, a hero," 51-year-old Raquel Sanders told AFP after watching the bout in a Manila sports complex.

The excitement also lit up the online world with



MANILA: Filipino fans watch Philippines' Manny Pacquiao fight against Keith Thurman from the US at a covered basketball court yesterday. — AFP (See Page 28)

fans in the social media-obsessed nation using the hashtag #StillA40rce. "Senator Pacquiao proved that age is just a number and (he) still can make another legend," said Twitter user @rinrin\_irene. However, tragedy dampened the mood in Manila's Marikina suburb where a 68-year-old fan collapsed as he was watching the bout in a gym. He was rushed to the hospital but declared dead on arrival, police said.

Continued on Page 24

## Pakistanis irked by new baggage wrapping policy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's civil aviation watchdog has ordered all air travellers to have their checked baggage shrink-wrapped, drawing scorn and criticism from frequent flyers and environmentalists. Shahrulk Nusrat, director general of Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), said yesterday that wrapping baggage was now "mandatory", and it was being done for "safety" purposes. Passengers would have to pay 50 rupees (about \$0.31) per bag for the wrapping, Nusrat said in a statement. "For this purpose, new plastic-wrapping machines are being installed on an urgent basis," he added.

Pakistan's frequent flyers cast scorn on the edict, suggesting it had been introduced to enrich an unnamed company tasked with doing the wrapping. "What is the logic for this requirement ...if this isn't legalized corruption," one angry traveller tweeted. Asif Nawaz Shah, another social media critic, called the new policy a "corrupt profit-making endeavor". — AFP

# Amir, Crown Prince receive state officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the National Assembly Marzuq Al-Ghanem.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir also received Speaker of the National Assembly Marzuq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the National Assembly Marzuq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

## Deputy FM receives UN official, envoys



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Head of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) mission in Kuwait Eman Erekat. —KUNA photos



Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang.



Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Ukraine's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Oleksandr Balanutsa.

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah received yesterday Head of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) mission in Kuwait Eman Erekat. Then, Jarallah received

Ambassadors of China and Ukraine to Kuwait; Li Minggang and Dr Oleksandr Balanutsa respectively. The meeting with Erekat focused on relations between IOM and Kuwait, while Erekat praised Kuwait's efforts

in humanitarian work. Jarallah then discussed Kuwait's bilateral relations with both the Chinese and Ukrainian ambassadors, in addition to regional and international developments. Present at the meetings were Deputy

Foreign Minister's office director Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar and Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations' Affairs and Minister Plenipotentiary Nasser Al-Hein. —KUNA

## Local

# Lawmakers prepare to grill public works minister over rain crisis

## Anti-Corruption Authority sends 10 government officials to prosecution

By A Saleh and B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** A grilling is expected to be submitted against Public Works Minister Jenan Bushehri during the next parliamentary session due to the government's contradiction in dealing with the November rain crisis, which caused extensive damage to streets and vehicles besides homes, particularly in Sabah Al-Ahmad City, parliamentary sources said. There is an agreement between MPs to grill Bushehri at the start of next term in October, the sources noted, adding that the grilling may include other topics related to the housing issue and lack of services in Sabah Al-Ahmad.

According to the sources, the grilling is based on a quote attributed to the minister in which she reportedly said that the rain crisis revealed that companies did not do a good job in infrastructure projects, which led to a deficiency in drainage of rainwater, apart from flying gravel on the streets, yet the minister did not send any company to the prosecution as she announced, and this contradicts the decision of the Cabinet in depriving these companies from participating in tenders as a punishment rather than being satisfied with repairs.

The sources said a parliamentary majority is not satisfied with the government's statements about the companies and the rain crisis. The sources expect the government to explain its views on this issue before the

new parliamentary term through discussions with the public facilities committee in order to protect Bushehri against any political escalation, adding the trump card in this issue is that the anti-corruption committee has sent senior officials at the ministry of public works to the public prosecution for not doing their job.

In another development, the government yesterday informed the legal and legislative committee that a grilling filed by MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari against the prime minister is unconstitutional because it did not deal with major public policies that the premier is responsible for. Head of the committee MP Khaled Al-Shatti said the panel will submit its report to the National Assembly early in the next term. Kandari declined an invitation to attend the committee's meeting to discuss if the grilling is in line with the constitution or not.



### 299 expat teachers terminated

of departments at the Ministry of Public Works and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), as well as deputy chairman of the board of a private company, to the public prosecution. Assistant secretary general for the corruption discovery sector and official spokesman Mohammad Buzubar said the sector received a statement from Boushehri with attached documents and reports.

### 650 teachers

The education ministry has asked the Civil Service Commission to complete contracts with teachers and get the necessary approvals following the commission's measures issued last year, most importantly withdrawing the exemption given to the ministry for contracting. Official sources said the number of teachers contracted so far is 650 of both genders on both local and overseas contracts, adding the commission did not approve any of the exemptions the ministry gave to teachers whose qualifications differ from what is written on

the work permit in local contracting.

Meanwhile, the education ministry terminated contracts of expats in order to replace them with citizens as part of the ministry's efforts to implement the replacement policy. The number of teachers who were terminated is 299 in Islamic education, computers, social studies and practical studies, while 275 Kuwaiti teachers were appointed in the same specialties.



Minister Jenan Bushehri

### Gone missing

Security authorities in cooperation with the coastguard and US air force located an American man who went missing on a rented jet ski. The American, who works for the US army, rented a jet ski and went out to sea at around 10 pm. He was late returning and was reported missing, prompting authorities to respond. He was found at dawn near Salmiya in good health.

### Possible liquor

Deputy Director General of Customs Detectives Department Usama Al-Roumi ordered a shipment of fizzy water bottles be accounted for as they look like imported liquor bottles, in order to destroy them. Customs information committee member Khalid Al-Rumaih said coordination between the detectives and southern ports administration resulted in confiscating a container at Shuaiba port. Customs department consulted police and the commerce ministry, who said the shipment is not allowed in as 9,264 bottles were found with flavored sparkling water that arrived from China.

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

## Man kills stranger he found in his house

**KUWAIT:** A bedoon died after a Kuwaiti man stabbed him when he found him in his house, according to the latter's statements. The deceased went by himself to hospital, where he died later in the ICU. The citizen was detained for further legal action. The citizen said he found a stranger in his house, so he stabbed him, but the man escaped. A case was filed for investigations.

## Man arrested for 'insulting Kuwaitis' on social media

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** An Asian man who insulted Kuwaitis on social media was arrested in Nugra, along with four others who are in violation of residency law, the interior ministry's relations and security informa-

tion department said.

They are facing legal action and will be deported, while their sponsors will be held to account. Meanwhile, the ministry indicated that a number of people seen on social media uttering indecent words against Allah (SWT) and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were identified, arrested and taken to the proper authorities to face legal action. In the meantime, the department denied reports on social media that an Arab national is running the affairs at Shuwaikh police station. It added the said person is a legal representative of a car rental company and his job requires him to frequent the police station to process transactions.

## Gold prices hit 6-year high: Report

**KUWAIT:** Gold price has hit its highest level in six years on Friday, peaking at \$1,452 following a sharp rise in prices since last Thursday, a precious metals trade company said yesterday. Such a rise has had an impact on local gold markets in Kuwait, of which one-gram of 21-karat gold is now estimated at KD 12.2 (\$40), Sabayik Al-Kuwait said in its weekly

report. Meanwhile, one gram of 18-karat gold is currently estimated at KD 10.5 (\$34.4), the report added, noting sales have decreased lately in most local gold stores due to the recent peak in global gold prices. It also mentioned that one kilogram of gold has recently reached KD 14,100 (\$46,200) in local markets, noting a large number of people sold their own gold to earn revenues of their old purchases. Investors tend to buy gold, which has relatively little practical value and yields no income, in times of geopolitical uncertainty such as the current tension between the United States and Iran along with recent events that took place at the Strait of Hormuz.—KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Airways recently honored Captain Abdulhadi Al-Mutairi for his professional handling of the incident that the carrier's B777-30 aircraft flight number KU182 went through during a trip to Nice, France on June 24, 2019, which helped prevent negative consequences.

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: An aerial view of Kuwait City. — Photo by Ayman Atallah (KUNA)

# Kuwait Meteorological Center keen on transparency, accurate weather reports

## 60 degrees Celsius rumors 'not ultimate truth' considering factors involved

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Meteorological Center is keen on providing the masses with transparent and accurate weather reports, officials said yesterday. Rumors and social media clips regarding the weather and rising temperatures should not mislead the public, said officials from the

Kuwait Meteorological Center, which is affiliated with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), pointing out that machines of various purposes were used to bring accurate information and data about the climate in Kuwait.

Deputy Director at DGCA Khaled Al-Shuaibi revealed that internationally approved gadgetry were in use to accurately measure temperature and predict the weather. What is being

spread on social media outlets in regards to soaring temperatures over 60 degrees Celsius should not be the ultimate truth especially taking into consideration the factors involved, affirmed the official who indicated that to measure temperature one must look into the circumstances and equipment used in the process. He stressed that using vehicles' thermometers or other gadgets to measure heat were not reliable, adding that the DGCA's Meteorological Center takes into account several factors, including exposure to the sun, shade, and wind activities, before coming up with their numbers.

In similar fashion, climate observer at the Meteorological Center Hussain Dashti affirmed that they

would go through various processes before any statement on the weather and temperatures was delivered. Tools of various purposes, whether underground or in the direct sun, were gathering data, he indicated. Stations in the sea, islands, and mainland Kuwait were all linked via complicated networks and servers with the goal of studying the climate and observing the weather, Dr Dashti affirmed who added that all of the stations were regularly moni-



### Various machines for accurate readings

tored and maintained to ensure the best data possible. Dr Dashti added that other than local efforts, the center was cooperating with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), exchanging data and information regarding Kuwait's weather to attend to various functions one of them being the suitability of the country's weather for aviation. It is worth mentioning that the first meteorological center in Kuwait was established in Shuwaikh area in 1953. In 2006, 27 weather centers were operating in Kuwait. The highest temperature recorded in the country was in 2016 at 53.9 Degrees Celsius, while the lowest was recorded in 2009 at 4.8 degrees below zero. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A Kuwait Meteorological Center employee inspects a station as part of regular monitoring and maintenance to ensure the best weather data collection possible. — KUNA



A device used by the Kuwait Meteorological Center to provide precise weather data.



A Kuwait Meteorological Center employee inspects a weather device.

## ABK launches IT academy to develop graduates' technology skills

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced yesterday that it has launched the ABK IT Academy, the first program designed to prepare new Kuwaiti graduates for information technology jobs within the banking sector. The ABK IT Academy's first batch of students began training on 1st July, with the program running until October 1, 2019.

Training is given on the main IT systems used at ABK, including the Finacle Core Banking solution, the PowerCARD payment processing system, and key Oracle and Microsoft solutions. The program also provides graduates with the human and soft skills needed to prepare them for entry into the workplace, and to enable them to develop careers as IT professionals in the banking industry.

ABK launched the ABK IT Academy as part of its commitment to supporting the Kuwaiti education sector and its active role in driving workforce Nationalization within the country, by providing Kuwaiti graduates with the support they need to develop careers in sectors that lack local talent. The bank is investing in technology and innovation in line with its 'Simpler Banking' and digital transformation strategy, and continuously strives to improve its customers' digital experience.





KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the meeting yesterday. — KUNA

# First Deputy Prime Minister chairs 10th Supreme Planning Council meeting

## Kuwait Petroleum Corporation plan on human resources reviewed

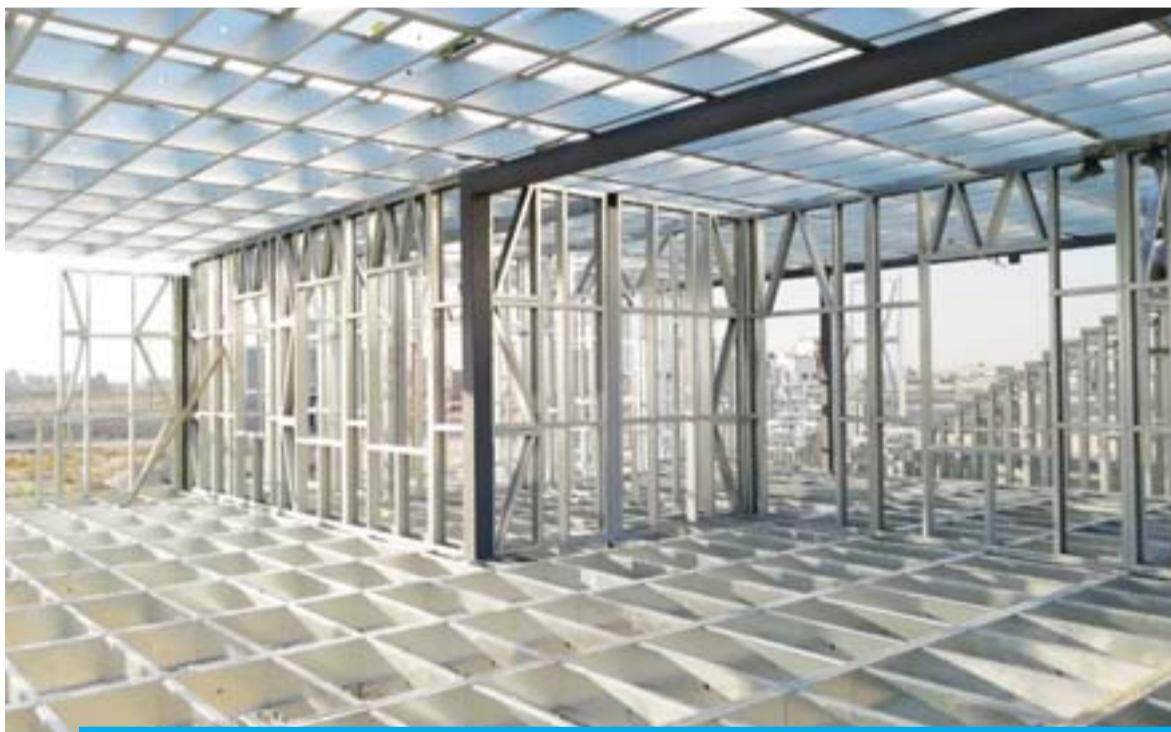
KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, chaired yesterday the 10th meeting of the second term to review Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) plan on human resources. During the meeting, previous achievements and plans, as well as the KPC's plan for human resources in the oil sectors were discussed, in addition to the work program of committees for the upcoming period, the General Secretariat of the SCPD said in a press release. The Council recommended coordination with a number of government and international agencies and advisory organizations to aggregate studies over the past years to benefit from them for New Kuwait 2035 Vision, noted the release. — KUNA



Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad (center) speaks during the meeting.



Supreme Council for Planning and Development members attend the meeting.



KUWAIT: Galvanized steel manufactured at a local factory. — KUNA photos



Galvanized steel suitable for additional structures within homes.

## Galvanized steel, construction material made popular in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Galvanized steel has been widely used in construction projects throughout Kuwait due to claims of cost-efficiency, renowned durability, and topnotch quality. The material is said to save up around 70 to 80 percent of the construction process when compared to regular concrete constructions. The cost is also around 60 percent lesser.

Galvanized steel - with various shapes processed by machines - is compatible for use in old houses with weak foundations and it is suitable for the construction of chalets, farmhouses, and other structures. Galvanized steel technology is fairly new in Kuwait and is widely used in Europe, Asia and some parts of the Gulf region, said architect Issa Al-Hajab in an interview. Time and effort is of essence and galvanized steel saves in both aspects, said Hajab who indicated that in recent years more people were using this technique in constructing their houses and other places of dwellings.

Similarly, architect Hamad Al-Enizi, the CEO of a local construction company said that galvanized steel material were shaped by machines, which mostly cancels human error and leads for a safe construction environment. Buildings constructed via galvanized steel are lighter than concrete counterparts and are still sturdy in face of say earthquakes and heavy loaded materials, indicated the Enizi. The construction process is 80 percent faster when using galvanized steel than in its concrete counterpart, stressed Enizi who added that the cost would be at around 30 to 43 percent less. Enizi claimed that more clientele are leaning towards using galvanized steel in their constructions, saying that the technology was mainly used in building new floors at houses as well as chalets. Compared to the lifespan of regular steel, its galvanized counterpart's durability goes up to around 120 years, he added.

Heaping more praise for galvanized steel, Faisal Abdulqafour - a construction company owner - and contractor Hussain Askar both said that galvanized steel was the way forward when it came to construction in Kuwait. Not only the material was eco-friendly, it is also recyclable to about 90 percent, they affirmed. While such praise was positive coming from business owners, clients such as Abdullah Al-Enizi and Mohammad Waleed confirmed that using galvanized steel was a game changer for them personally. The speedup in construction time and the quality of the material all made it worthwhile, they indicated. — KUNA



Galvanized steel is used to add a second floor at a house in Kuwait.



Construction workers install galvanized steel at a house in Kuwait.



Female suicide bomber kills eight in Pakistan

Massive heat wave bakes central and eastern US



HONG KONG: A policeman fires tear gas at protesters to disperse them after a march against a controversial extradition bill in Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP

# Protesters deface Beijing's Liaison Office

## Hong Kong's black-clad activists defy police orders

**HONG KONG:** Thousands of protesters descended on China's representative office in Hong Kong yesterday, as anger over an extradition bill morphs into a fresh front against what many see as a broader erosion of freedoms by the city's political masters in Beijing. Millions have rallied over the past two months in an unprecedented show of force against Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam, triggering the worst social turmoil to rock the former British colony since it returned to Chinese rule 22 years ago.

Black-clad activists, many wearing masks, defied police orders and marched beyond the official endpoint of a rally that took place earlier in the day to make their way toward Beijing's Liaison Office, close to the heart of the financial centre. When asked if the protesters would attempt to force entry into the building, one 30-year-old man dressed head to toe in black, said, "No," as he mimicked a throat-slitting action.

"That would be the death of Hong Kong," he added. Some protesters pelted eggs at the walls of the Liaison Office, while others spray-painted graffiti in a direct challenge to the Communist Party in Beijing. Hundreds of riot police took up positions close to the Liaison Office. Nearby, activists daubed graffiti on massive concrete pillars leading up to it, with the words "Restore Hong Kong, Revolution of Time."

Yesterday's protest, which had proceeded peacefully along the police-mandated route, is the latest in a wave of unrest that has plunged the Asian financial hub

into political crisis. Some held up banners that said, "LIAR" and "No excuse Carrie Lam". A poster plastered on a lamppost called for an "Investigation on police brutality". Many ignored the official end-point of the rally as the demonstrations show no sign of let-up, posing the greatest popular challenge to Chinese leader Xi Jinping since he took power in 2012.

Authorities used blue and white water-filled barriers to barricade government and police headquarters, while global bank HSBC, in a rare move, pulled down large metal barriers on the street level of its gleaming skyscraper building. While most of the rallies have passed off peacefully, some have erupted into violence late at night when more radical protesters have clashed with police.

The city's police force has come under scrutiny after officers fired rubber bullets and tear gas last month to disperse demonstrators in some of the worst violence to roil Hong Kong in decades. The police are struggling to cope amid haphazard decision-making, worsening morale and anger among rank-and-file officers that they are taking the public heat for government unpopularity, serving and retired officers,

politicians and security analysts told Reuters.

### 'Kill bill' call

The latest protest comes a day after tens of thousands gathered to voice support for the police, whom some have accused of using excessive force against activists, and demand an end to the violence.

Yesterday's march focused on calls for the full withdrawal of the extradition bill, which would allow people to be extradited to mainland China for trial, and an independent investigation into complaints of police brutality. Other demands include charges against protesters to be dropped and universal suffrage.

"I came back to Hong Kong this summer because of the protests," said Mandy Ko, 27, who is originally from Hong Kong and now lives in Australia. "My spirit is still with Hong Kong people." Last weekend, two initially peaceful protests degenerated into running skirmishes between baton-wielding police and activists, resulting in scores of injuries and more than 40 arrests. Those fights followed larger outbreaks of violence in central Hong Kong last month, when police forced back activists

with tear gas, rubber bullets and bean-bag rounds.

Lam has apologized for the turmoil the extradition bill has caused and declared it "dead". Opponents of the bill, which they fear could be used to silence dissent, say nothing short of its withdrawal will do. Under the terms of the handover from Britain in 1997, Hong Kong was allowed to retain extensive freedoms under a "one country, two systems" formula, including an independent judiciary and the right to protest. But for many Hong Kong residents, the extradition bill is the latest step in a relentless march towards mainland control.

The protests have at times paralyzed parts of the financial district, shut government offices and disrupted business operations across the city. Officials have also warned about the impact of the unrest on the economy. A commentary published in the Chinese Communist Party's People's Daily newspaper yesterday said: "If violence continues, it will inevitably deal a greater blow to Hong Kong's prosperity and stability."

China has condemned the violent protests as an "undisguised challenge" to the one country, two systems formula. Police late on Friday seized explosives and weapons in an industrial building in the New Territories district of Tsuen Wan. Three people were arrested. Police described the seizure as the largest of its kind in Hong Kong. They said it was unclear whether the explosives were related to the protest. —Reuters



### Extradition bill revives grievances

## India villagers kill 4 over witchcraft

**NEW DELHI:** Four members of a family including two women were killed by fellow villagers in central India's tribal heartland over allegations of witchcraft, authorities said yesterday. Four elders of a tribal family, all aged in their 60s according to local media reports, were attacked by around a dozen stick-wielding villagers outside their home late Saturday.

"It is linked to some local occult practitioner(s) who blamed some negative development in the tribal village to the members of this family," Shashi Ranjan, deputy commissioner of Jharkhand state's Gumla district said. Gumla is a densely forested tribal-dominated region some 100 kilometers from the regional capital Ranchi.

"Additional forces have been at the Siskari village since authorities found out about the incident," he added. "It is peaceful but no one, not even survivors from the family, are saying anything, probably out of fear." The senior-most district official said no one had been arrested so far as investigations continue. Experts say belief in witchcraft and the occult remains widespread in impoverished rural communities across India, especially in isolated tribal communities.

In the past, women have often been branded witches and targeted by locals. Some believe in the occult, or have other motives including usurping their rights over land and property. More than 2,000 people - many of them women - were killed in India on suspicion of witchcraft between 2000 and 2012, according to the National Crime Records Bureau. Some states, including Jharkhand, have introduced special laws to try to curb crimes against people accused of witchcraft and superstition.

### Mob in kills three

In another development, a mob beat to death three men suspected of trying to steal cattle in India's eastern state of Bihar, police said, the latest in a spate of attacks that have provoked alarm among religious minorities. In recent years angry mobs have lynched many people from marginalized groups in India, especially Muslims and the Dalits who occupy the lowest rung of the ancient caste system, often over suspicions of cow slaughter.

The three men were caught by some villagers early on Friday while trying to load cattle on a pickup truck, police official Har Kishore Rai said. "They were trying to load a buffalo and a calf when some villagers woke up and took the three into their custody and beat them up," he said, adding that the men had died.

Police have arrested three people from the village of Pithauri and have filed a case of murder against four more from the village, administrative official Lokesh Mishra told Reuters. Police have filed a case of theft against the three men, and the villagers face a separate case of murder filed by the victims' families, naming three accused people, although more names are likely to be added, Mishra said.

Hinduism, India's dominant religion, considers cows sacred, and killing them is taboo. Activists have tracked a rise in the number of mob lynchings in the last five years that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government has been in power. Critics accuse it of not having done enough to rein in such violence. The Supreme Court last year recommended making mob lynching a separate offence. In July, opposition parties in Bihar demanded a separate law against mob lynching in the state, where they say the problem is growing. —Agencies

## US congresswomen urged to 'apologize'

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump renewed attacks yesterday on four Democratic congresswomen he launched xenophobic tweets against last week, demanding they apologize "for the horrible (hateful) things they have said." "I don't believe the four Congresswomen are capable of loving our Country," Trump tweeted of ethnic-minority first-term Democrats Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar and Ayanna Pressley.

"They should apologize to America (and Israel) for the horrible (hateful) things they have said. They are destroying the Democrat Party, but are weak & insecure people who can never destroy our great Nation!" the president tweeted. The comments came a week after Trump sparked a firestorm of outrage when he attacked the left-leaning lawmakers with a series of tweets, saying they should "go back" to their countries of origin. The group—three of whom were born in the United States—are of Hispanic, Arab, Somali and African-American descent.

In a rare move, Trump was rebuked by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives on Tuesday for "racist comments" against the women, who are known as the "Squad." The following day chants of "Send her back!" broke out at the president's "Make America Great Again" rally in Greenville, North Carolina, when he again attacked the women. To the delight of his thousands of supporters, Trump described Omar and the other Democrats as "left-wing ideologues (who) see our nation as a force of evil."

Trump later said there was "great energy" at the rally but claimed he was not pleased by the taunts. "I was not happy



WASHINGTON: US Representatives Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) speaks as, Ilhan Abdullahi Omar (D-MN) (left), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) (2nd right), and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) hold a press conference, to address remarks made by US President Donald Trump at the US Capitol. —AFP

when I heard that chant," he said. "I didn't like that they did it, and I started speaking quickly" to move on with his speech. Television footage showed, however, that Trump let the chant continue for more than 13 seconds, only resuming speaking as they died down. The president demonstrated in Greenville that without a Democratic presidential candidate to focus on yet, he plans to make inflammatory attacks on the Squad a centerpiece of his 2020 re-election strategy.

Several of the Democratic presidential hopefuls who plan to run against him and a few of the Republicans have urged Trump to tone down the rhetoric. But the president has made it clear despite the risk of inflaming racial tensions and widening the partisan divide—that he believes he has latched on to a winning strategy. Trump tapped into grievances among white blue-collar and rural Americans to eke out a narrow victory in 2016, winning 57 percent of white voters while his rival Hillary Clinton won 37 percent. —AFP

International

# Is a new US-led war looming with Iran? Gulf tensions soar

## Washington and Tehran locked in a standoff

**DUBAI:** The United States is deploying troops in Saudi Arabia as tensions soar with its arch-rival Iran raising concerns over navigation in the Gulf's strategic Strait of Hormuz. It will be the first deployment of its kind since 2003, when American forces withdrew from the kingdom after a 12-year presence and two US-led wars with Iraq that culminated with the toppling of dictator Saddam Hussein. Is a new war looming in the region?

### Is this preparation for war?

Separate statements from Riyadh and the US Central Command, or CENTCOM, say the Saudi deployment aims to ensure stability in the turbulent Gulf. "Based on mutual cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, and their desire to enhance everything that could preserve the security of the region and its stability... King Salman gave his approval to host American forces," the Saudi defence ministry said.

CENTCOM said the deployment "provides an additional deterrent, and ensures our ability to defend our forces and interests in the region from emergent, credible threats". But for Andreas Krieg, a professor at King's College London, the troop movement "is part of posturing and the US trying to increase its military options in case of a strike on Iran". Washington and Tehran have been locked in a standoff since May 2018, when US President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran and began ratcheting up sanctions against the Islamic republic.

Trump and his oil-rich Saudi ally have also accused Iran of attacking tankers and drones in the Gulf since last May. Iran denies the charges and has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz—a chokepoint for around a third of the world's sea-borne oil—if attacked. Riyadh and Washington have not revealed the number of troops that will be deployed in the kingdom, which lies about 200 kilometers from Iranian shores. But US media reports said 500 American troops will be based at the

Prince Sultan military air base, south of Riyadh.

"Five hundred US troops in Saudi Arabia are hardly a buildup, particularly when we are thinking about a war with Iran," said Krieg. "These troops are there to prepare the Prince Sultan air base for potential deployment of an air squadron," he added. The base housed thousands of US troops and squadrons of jet fighters from 1991, starting with Operation Desert Storm after Iraq invaded Kuwait, to 2003 when the US-led invasion of Iraq toppled Saddam.

### What is the message?

Analysts say the deployment is aimed at bolstering ties between Washington and Riyadh—particularly military relations—strained in the past year. "The Saudis... are saying: if you stick with us we will stick with you," said James Dorsey, a researcher at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies. "The Americans are trying to say: we have your back," he added. Trump's administration has faced anger from lawmakers at home for not doing more to punish Saudi Arabia over last year's killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

CENTCOM chief Kenneth McKenzie pledged to work "aggressively" to ensure maritime safety in the strategic Gulf waterway during a visit Thursday to Prince Sultan air base. The visit came a day after the US House of Representatives voted to block \$8.1 billion in arms sales to the kingdom and other allies, in a move likely to be vetoed by Trump. There has been growing outrage in the US, and around the world, over American arms sales to Saudi Arabia, with critics saying they are being used for its offensive in Yemen. The UN says the Yemen conflict is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

### Is MBS a reliable partner?

Despite the criticism, Trump has repeatedly hailed Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, who is also the kingdom's defense minister. For



This image grab taken from a video provided by Iran's Revolutionary Guard official website via SEPAH News on Saturday shows Revolutionary Guard Corps boarding the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz. —AFP

the crown prince, also known by the acronym MBS, the deployment "is about showing that the US is still an important security guarantor and committed to Saudi security", said Krieg. MBS, he said, has long been trying to divert some US troops from Al Udeid air base in Qatar, home to Washington's largest Middle East military base. "It is important for MBS to get some US assets to show that he is relevant as a security partner for Washington," said Krieg.

Around 10,000 US troops are deployed in Al Udeid, from among some 35,000 stationed in Gulf states including Kuwait and Bahrain, the latter being the home base of the US Fifth Fleet. Al Udeid was set up in 2005 when the US was looking for a new air base in the region after it pulled troops out of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and its allies cut relations with Qatar in 2017 over Doha's alleged support for Iran and Islamist movements—charges Qatar staunchly denies. —AFP

## Bats hang where Israeli soldiers once stood in Jordan Valley

**HEMDAT:** The whoosh of wings disturbs the quiet of an abandoned, pitch-black maze of corridors next to the Jordan River in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is the hallmark of what this former Israeli military outpost on a dusty, yellow marlstone hill in the West Bank has become: a man-made bat cave.

The outpost is one of a dozen or so mini-fortresses that were built among the hills above the Israel-Jordan border after the 1967 Six-Day War and abandoned by Israel following a 1994 peace accord between the countries. It wasn't long before they became full-time bat sanctuaries, helped along by Israeli rangers and ecologists in an effort to help the species whose habitats had been reduced.

Israel and the Palestinian territories are home to some 33 bat species, all but one insectivores, which are at global extinction risk—in many cases due to human activity, said Amos Sabah, an ecologist for the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. In the area dotted with outposts, roadworks and other development has damaged natural caves, said Shmulik Yedvab, director of the mammal department at the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI). The thinking was to "create alternative spaces" by repurposing the outposts, Yedvab said. Palestinians see these kinds of projects very differently. They accuse Israel of harming their environment in the Jordan

Valley, including through the use of water resources. Anton Khalilieh, executive director of Nature Palestine Society, said while any individual project to protect animals was to be welcomed, this was taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories and could not be divorced from politics.

"If the Israelis are doing any conservation activities to protect animals, in my opinion as a conservationist this is fine," he said. "But this is the Jordan Valley, which is a part of the West Bank—an area that should be under complete Palestinian control. "So it should be the Palestinians doing the conservation activities in this area. How can Palestinians do conservation here? We can't, it is impossible."

### 'Like the heat'

With walls and ceilings of sheet metal or smooth concrete, the conditions in the outposts were not ideal for bats. The SPNI worked with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the army—still the landlord of the vacant structures—to provide footholds for the bats using plastic netting, construction foam, thin ropes and plaster scraped with a fork. The winged mammals now hide from the day's harsh sun in the corridors and cavernous rooms of the former outpost, coming out at night to feast on the area's rich variety of insects. At least a dozen types of insectivore bats can be found in the oppressively hot Jordan Valley from spring to autumn.

"They like the heat," said Sabah, during the visit to the first of the three former military positions he showed AFP. Some outposts are now home to populations in the dozens to hundreds during peak bat season, with approximately 30 lesser mouse-tailed bats living in one complex AFP visited halfway between the Dead Sea and the Sea



HEMDAT: Horseshoe bats are pictured inside an abandoned Israeli army outpost next to the Jordan River in the occupied West Bank. —AFP

of Galilee. Hundreds of trident bats roost in another outpost further to the south, while an abandoned civilian structure near the border is now home to an estimated 5,000 greater mouse-tailed bats.

### Environmental signals

Most of the outposts that have become bat lairs are in fenced-off property controlled by the Israeli military and barred to civilians, leaving the creatures largely undisturbed. Gaining access to the outposts is rare, as even the mere presence of humans can disrupt the bats and their routine, according to Yedvab.

The environmentalists' cooperation with the army includes advising forces on when, and how, to approach the structures, still used

from time to time for training. "We try to disturb them as little as possible," he added. While bat populations grow slowly and the six years of close monitoring are "a footnote" in the relatively long life-cycle of the species, the area has "a stable population with a small increase", Yedvab said.

As "bio-indicators" bats provide valuable information to scientists on the local ecosystem as a whole, said Sabah. "They are essentially our indication to the condition of the bugs, which are one of the important foundations of the ecological system," he added. "If the bats aren't in the territory, or the population is diminishing, the meaning is that the ecological system is not healthy, something here is wrong." —AFP

## SOS Mediterranee relaunches migrant rescue missions

**PARIS:** Humanitarian group SOS Mediterranee said yesterday it has relaunched rescue efforts off Libya seven months after it abandoned operations using its ship Aquarius and despite a refusal by European ports to accept the migrants. The Norwegian-flagged Ocean Viking will "conduct search and rescue activities in the central Mediterranean" for SOS Mediterranee and Doctors Without Borders (known by its French initials MSF), the group said in a statement.

"As people are still fleeing Libya on one of the most perilous sea crossings in the world, and with almost no available rescue assets present in the central Mediterranean, it has been an imperative for both SOS Mediterranee and MSF to return at sea following the ending of their operations with the Aquarius in December 2018."

After nearly three years of operations in which it rescued some 30,000 migrants, the Aquarius was forced to cease operations because of what the group said was obstruction by some European countries. The International Organization for Migration says at least 426 people have died trying to cross the central Mediterranean this year. SOS Mediterranee said the migrants were attempting "to escape the escalating conflict in Libya and the deplorable conditions

of Libyan detention centers".

The new operation comes a month after the arrest in Italy of Carola Rackete, the German captain of the Sea-Watch 3, for docking without permission to land rescued migrants. Rackete was held for several days after the Sea-Watch 3 hit an Italian police speedboat while entering the port of Lampedusa island despite being banned from entering Italian waters. She argued she was compelled to avert a human tragedy and bring ashore 40 migrants who had been rescued in the Mediterranean on June 12.

### 'Harsh campaign'

"For a year now we have been witnessing a deterioration in the European Union's response in the evolving human tragedy in the central Mediterranean," said the head of operations at SOS Mediterranee, Frederic Penard. EU states have "continued a harsh campaign of criminalization against civil society rescue ships and most importantly, there is still no coordinated, sustainable and shared mechanism of disembarkation in accordance with maritime law". He told AFP the Ocean Viking would not enter Libyan territorial waters.

"Our presence at sea is to save lives. We hope that the countries will understand and join with us as there is no other solution in the central Mediterranean. "To say that it's the rescue vessels that are encouraging (migrant) crossing is false. Even without the boats, the departures continue and huge number of a drownings are reported." Funded in partnership with MSF, the Ocean Viking has 31 people on board, including 13



AT SEA: File photo shows a rigid inflatable boat at the Aquarius rescue vessel, chartered by French NGO SOS-Mediterranee and Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in the open sea, some 46 km south of Lampedusa. —AFP

search and rescue team members from SOS Mediterranee, nine MSF staff and nine marine crew.

Libya, which has been wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising that killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi, has long been a major transit route for migrants, especially from sub-Saharan Africa, desperate to reach Europe. Italy has become increasingly hostile against accepting undocumented migrants on its territory under a populist government. Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has been outspoken about the burden Italy has had to bear, being the point of entry for many migrants arriving by sea

while the rest of the EU is divided on attempts to redistribute asylum-seekers among member states.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Salvini railed against what he said was France and Germany setting EU migration policy. "Enough of making choices only in Paris and Berlin. Italy is no longer willing to accept all the migrants that arrive in Europe," he wrote, accompanied by a letter sent to his French counterpart. "France and Germany cannot decide migration policy by ignoring the demands of the most exposed countries such as us and Malta," the far-right minister wrote. —AFP

## 37 villagers killed in Nigeria's North

**KANO:** Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday "strongly" condemned recent attacks by cattle raiders on three villages in the country's northwest that officials said killed 37 people. He offered commiserations to the survivors and vowed a firm response to "these brutal and remorseless enemies of humanity".

"These frequent and large scale killings of poor villagers by gangs of mass murderers must be met with the fiercest force the government can mobilize," presidential assistant Garba Shehu quoted Buhari as saying. On Wednesday, armed men on motorcycles raided three villages in the district of Goronyo in the Nigerian state of Sokoto, district chief Zakari Chinaka said. "The bandits opened fire on the villages and set shops and grain stores ablaze. They took away all the cattle in the villages," he said.

"They operated for two hours unchallenged (by any security forces) because of the difficulty of the terrain which makes it hard to access," said the chief. Alu Ibrahim, a resident of the village of Kamitau, where 23 people died, said villagers had pursued the bandits in a bid to recover their stolen cattle — key to survival in the poor, remote region. "The bandits turned their guns on them and killed many. This was the reason for the high death toll from Kamitau," said Ibrahim.

Criminal gangs of cattle rustlers have increasingly targeted rural communities in Sokoto state. Last month, motorcycle-riding bandits killed 43 people in two days of attacks on five villages in Rabah and Isa districts, according to police and locals. Rural communities in the north of Nigeria have for years been terrorized by gangs who raid villages, stealing cattle, kidnapping for ransom and burning homes after looting food supplies.

Villagers have taken up arms to defend themselves, but these vigilantes are now accused of extra-judicial killings of suspected bandits. The bandit gangs are one of a string of security challenges facing Nigeria, including attacks from an Islamic State-backed Boko Haram faction and renewed clashes between livestock herders and farmers. This has left the military overstretched and Buhari criticized for failing to protect lives and property, despite promises to boost security. —AFP

## Twitter blocks accounts of Iran media

**WASHINGTON:** A day after Twitter suspended the accounts of several Iranian state media outlets, the social networking service said Saturday it acted after harassment of people linked to the Baha'i faith. Amid soaring tensions in the region, heightened by Iran's seizure on Friday of a British-flagged tanker, some of the affected media outlets had speculated that the suspensions were related to their coverage of the seizure. But Twitter cited what it said was the coordinated and targeted harassment of people linked to the Baha'i faith, a religious minority that has long faced persecution in Iran.

It did not name the suspended accounts, and said it was continuing to investigate the matter. "Account suspended," Twitter suspends accounts which violate the Twitter Rules," read English-language messages on each of the Iranian media outlets' accounts. Mehr news agency, which is close to moderate conservatives in Iran, said its Farsi-language account appeared to have been blocked late Friday following its reports on the seizure of the tanker Stena Impero in the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said it seized the Swedish-owned tanker for breaking "international maritime rules" in the strait, a chokepoint for around a third of the world's sea-borne oil. Mehr's Farsi-language Twitter page was inaccessible on Saturday, along with those of the official IRNA news agency and the agency of the Young Journalists' Club. —AFP

## International

# Sink-or-swim showdown beckons for fractious Italian coalition partners

## League and 5-Star split over autonomy reform

**ROME:** Italy's fractious coalition partners are gearing up for a showdown this week that is likely to determine if the government will collapse, triggering autumn elections, or survive to the end of the year. The far-right League and anti-system 5-Star Movement have been at each other's throats for months, but tensions have risen even further this month with each accusing the other of betrayal and ill faith.

League leader Matteo Salvini warned last week he would quit the 14-month-old government unless 5-Star dropped its opposition to projects close to his party's heart, including a drive to hand greater autonomy to the League's wealthy northern heartland. With 5-Star fearing the planned reform would cut funding to its bastions in the poorer south, the issue has become a major flashpoint. League leaders deny they are favoring the north, and say 5-Star is using the reform to tarnish their reputation. "I am deeply offended that these charlatans are portraying us as fraudsters scamming the country and the south," Attilio Fontana, the League chief in the rich Lombardy region, said on Saturday.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is due to

hold another round of consultations yesterday and has said he hopes to present a final proposal on the reform to a cabinet meeting penciled in for Friday. "Either (Conte) puts forward a proposal or else he throws in the towel. If he does that, then everything will blow up," said Luca Zaia, the League head of the northeastern Veneto region. The dispute dominated Italy's newspapers at the weekend: "Government blocked," financial daily *Il Sole 24 Ore* said in a frontpage headline. "Close to a breakdown," said *Il Messaggero*.

### Rising far right

Salvini has promised to see 5-Star leader Luigi Di Maio to discuss the tensions, but no date has been set for the meeting. Almost all national papers said the League chief was facing mounting pressure to bring down the coalition, with his closest advisers arguing the party's surging popularity would see it triumph in any early election.

An opinion poll in *Corriere della Sera* newspaper on Saturday showed the League at 35.9%, more than double what it won at an inconclusive national election last year, while

support for 5-Star has almost halved to 17.4%. The poll put the far-right Brothers of Italy, which is not part of the ruling coalition, on 6.0%, suggesting it could win an election in alliance with the League, a long-time ally.

Brothers of Italy leader Giorgia Meloni called yesterday for immediate elections. "It would be an historic opportunity to give Italy one of its very few governments capable of surviving five years," she told *La Verita* newspaper. Salvini has stayed quiet this weekend and aides said he was considering his options. If he does not move swiftly, the window for an early vote will close as budget discussions take centre stage, making it almost impossible to dissolve parliament.

Italy has never held a national election in autumn or winter. Besides autonomy, Salvini is also preoccupied by allegations that his party sought funds via an illicit oil deal with Russia. He has dismissed the accusations and is expected to address the scandal in parliament on Wednesday in a debate initiated by Conte - a move that angered the League leader who had argued that the question did not warrant scrutiny by the legislature. — Reuters



**HELSINKI:** Italy's Interior Minister and deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini arrives for an informal meeting of EU ministers for Home Affairs in Helsinki. — AFP

## Washington girds for Mueller's testimony

**WASHINGTON:** Special Counsel Robert Mueller will submit to questions for the first time Wednesday on his explosive report detailing numerous links between President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign and Russian election meddling, and Trump's efforts to obstruct his investigation. The stakes are high with the next presidential election 16 months away. With a huge national television audience expected, Democrats want Mueller to help swing public opinion against the president, with some lawmakers hoping he will provide more firepower for an impeachment case against Trump.

But the former FBI director's deep reticence to become embroiled in politics, and Republican plans to turn the hearings into a reality TV-like partisan brawl, threaten to leave Americans no less confused than when Mueller's dense, 448-page report was released in April. "The public has a right to hear the truth, from Mueller himself, about Trump's misconduct and ongoing national security risks," said Adam Schiff, chair of one of the two House committees hosting Wednesday's marathon testimony.

### Was Trump exonerated or not?

The final report of Mueller's investigation detailed extensive Russian interference in the 2016 election to boost Trump, and multiple instances of attempted collusion between the campaign and Moscow's agents. But in the end Mueller, a veteran federal prosecutor, found no crime in that - simple collusion is not a criminal offense, and his team concluded there was not enough evidence to support charges of criminal conspiracy with the Russians. They also enumerated at least 10 instances where Trump sought to impede the investigation, with strong evidence in support of obstruction of justice allegations.

But Mueller declined to recommend obstruction charges, saying he was blocked from doing so by Department of Justice policy that says a sitting president cannot be charged. That allowed Trump to declare that he was "exonerated" by Mueller and say the investigation was always a political "witch hunt," claims that have gone far in convincing much of the public that it was much ado about nothing. "This Witch Hunt must now end. No more Do Overs. No Collusion, No Obstruction. The Great Hoax is dead!" Trump tweeted in early July.

Margaret Taylor, a governance expert at the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington, said the hearings are an opportunity to clarify Mueller's findings. "I don't think that Americans fully understand the systematic attempts by the Kremlin to interfere, and how the Trump campaign reacted to that," she said in an interview. "The vast majority of Americans did not read the report," she said. "I think there is a large portion of the country who hears the president say 'no collusion, no obstruction' and that's the end of the story for them."

### Getting Mueller to talk

The much-anticipated hearings will unroll on Wednesday, starting at 8:30 am before the House Judiciary committee and then moving to Schiff's House Intelligence Committee at 12 noon. Both parties were reportedly rehearsing their tactics in the week before to blunt each other's efforts. Democrat and Republican committee members will likely alternate for five minutes of questions each, a format which will challenge Democrats to deliver to the television audience a coherent narrative of collusion and obstruction, while Republicans try to disrupt it and change the subject.

Democrats need to figure out how to get the cagey and disciplined Mueller to say in clear terms that Trump likely broke obstruction laws, while Republicans are expected to try and undermine Mueller's credibility and the original basis of the investigation. Mueller, much-trusted in Washington circles but with a sphinx-like image, has already signaled he will be a tough nut to crack.

"Any testimony from this office would not go beyond our report," he said on May 29, as he announced the closure of the special counsel's investigation. "The work speaks for itself. And the report is my testimony." "What he won't do is go beyond the four corners of the report, as he's already said," former FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe, who has worked closely with Mueller, told CNN. But McCabe said that cannily phrased questions could draw Mueller out - especially on the issue over whether he personally believes Trump broke the law. — AFP

## Gargantuan heat wave bakes central, eastern US with sweaty night

**NEW YORK:** A gargantuan heat wave hunkered down over the central and eastern United States on Saturday, sending residents to cooling centers and inflicting on Washington a heat index of 106 degrees F (41 C) with even steamier conditions in the forecast. "It's pretty hot right now from the Plains states all the way through the Mississippi Valley to the East Coast," said Alex Lamers, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center.

Heat is the deadliest of all weather phenomena, according to the weather service, and cities from Chicago to New York urged residents to seek refuge at cooling centers set up in locations ranging from libraries to shopping malls. Tourists visiting the monuments and museums on the National Mall in Washington endured temperatures approaching 100 degrees F (37.8 C).

About 250 senior citizens returned home on Saturday a day after having to leave a retirement community in

Philadelphia when a power failure disabled the air conditioners, forcing many of them into a shelter at West Philadelphia High School, said city spokeswoman Deana Gamble. Nighttime temperatures have remained so high in the heat wave, which started midweek in the Midwest, that Rockford, Illinois, for the first time since 1918 matched its all-time record by failing to fall below 80 degrees F (27 C) on Friday.

High temperatures combined with high humidity make it feel even hotter, called the heat index. "Heat stress tends to have a cumulative effect so if you're not recovering at night, especially if you don't have an air conditioning unit, you'll accumulate more heat stress," Lamers said. "When it stays warm overnight, it provides a higher launch for temperatures the next day," he added.

By midday Saturday, Boston's heat index was 102 F (39 C) and forecast to rise to 105 F (40 C) by late afternoon. New York's heat index was 100 F (38 C) and forecast to rise to 110 F (43 C), and Washington's was 106 F (41 C), expected to climb to 111 F (44 C), Lamers said.

Some outdoor activities, including the New York City Triathlon and a running race outside Washington, were canceled. Others bent their rules to keep attendees cool and safe, including Yankee Stadium, which allowed fans to bring their own bottled water and shading umbrellas and offered hydration stations on all levels of the ballpark.



**NEW YORK:** People cool off near the fountain at Washington Square Park during a hot afternoon day in New York City. — AFP

Sizzling temperatures were expected to persist through Sunday, but relief is in sight, Lamers said. "A cold front north of us will start shifting south and by Sunday evening, it will make progress toward Boston, Pittsburgh, St. Louis. By Monday morning, it might be reaching Washington, Cincinnati with some rain and thunderstorms," he said. — Reuters

## Meddling, collusion, obstruction: What the Mueller probe found

**WASHINGTON:** Special Counsel Robert Mueller's 448-page report capped an investigation that began in July 2016 after the FBI took alarm at Russian meddling in the presidential election battle. It expanded to include obstruction of justice allegations against President Donald Trump after Trump fired FBI director James Comey, who had overseen the investigation. Mueller was then named to lead the effort in May 2017.

Mueller's investigation charged in total 34 people. Six were deeply involved in Trump's presidential campaign, including his personal lawyer Michael Cohen, campaign chairman Paul Manafort and national security advisor Michael Flynn. But only Russians were charged for election meddling, the focus of the investigation: Americans were charged mostly with lying to investigators or wrongdoing unrelated to the election. The first volume of his report detailed the investigation into Russian meddling and explained why Russians were charged with criminal conspiracy but not Americans. The second volume examined the obstruction allegations.

### Russian election meddling

The report says that as early as 2014, arms of the Kremlin and Russian intelligence, at the instigation of President Vladimir Putin, began actively interfering in US politics. One operation, by the Russian Internet Research Agency, involved manipulating social media to influence American voter views, aiming to damage Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton and boost Republican Trump.

The second operation involved hacking by the GRU, Moscow's military intelligence agency, into election systems and campaign computer networks. The hackers obtained large volumes of documents and communications from Clinton's campaign that were leaked online, primarily through WikiLeaks, during the race to harm her campaign. The report lays out detailed evidence backing the decision to charge 12 GRU agents and 13 from the Internet Research Agency with conspiracy against the United States.

### Collusion with Russians

The report details scores of willing contacts between the Trump campaign and Russians, including efforts to obtain dirt on Clinton, negotiations for a massive Trump Tower real estate deal in Moscow, liaising with WikiLeaks on the materials stolen by the GRU, secret calls with the Russian ambassador to Washington, sharing campaign data with a Kremlin-linked businessman, and talks on arranging a



**AMENDOA:** Firefighters monitor the progression of a wildfire at Amendoa in Macao, central Portugal yesterday. — AFP

## Firefighters battle Portugal wildfires

**AMENDOA:** Planes and helicopters joined more than a thousand firefighters in central Portugal Sunday to battle huge wildfires in a mountainous region where over 100 people died in huge blazes in 2017. By 12:30 pm, one of the biggest mobilizations ever seen in the area - including 1,300 firefighters and 400 vehicles - had been deployed to fight the blazes in the heavily forested Castelo Branco region, 200 kilometers north of Lisbon, the rescue services said.

Around 20 people were injured in the blaze, including eight firefighters and 12 civilians, according to interior ministry figures. One badly burned civilian was evacuated by helicopter to Lisbon. The biggest effort - 800 firefighters, 245 vehicles and 13 planes and helicopters - battled to douse flames in the municipality of Vila de Rei, which had spread nearly 25 kilometers.

"Only the fire at Vila de Rei remains active," Interior Minister Eduardo Cabrita told a news conference. Authorities were looking into whether the fires may have been started deliberately, Cabrita said. "The cause of the fires is being investigated... there's something strange. How is it that five such large fires broke out in areas that are so close to each other?" he asked.

The commander of the Civil Protection for the region, Luis Belo Costa, said that "given the difficult terrain, we have not succeeded in getting the fire in Vila de Rei under control, but have only contained about 60 percent of it, despite a lull in the wind." The army said it was dispatching 20 soldiers and machinery to open routes "to facilitate access" for the firefighters.

In a message, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa expressed his "solidarity with the hundreds fighting the scourge of the fires". Two other forest fires reported on Saturday have since been brought under control. While a number of small villages were evacuated as a precaution overnight, no additional measures were planned on Sunday. But that could change "if the situation deteriorates," Belo Costa said. Five regions of central and southern Portugal were on maximum fire alert Sunday because of the dry weather and winds.

### Inaccessible terrain

However, temperatures are currently below the threshold of 41 degrees Celsius (105 Fahrenheit) at which a red alert is triggered. The fires, fanned by strong winds, had broken out on Saturday afternoon in the more inaccessible areas in the Castelo Branco region. The centre of Portugal is hilly and covered in dense forest and is regularly ravaged by fires, including the deadliest in the country's history where 114 people died in two separate blazes in June and October 2017.

Portugal is still traumatized by those deaths, with authorities taking extra precautions. Much of the population in the area is elderly, as young people move to the cities. The forests are largely eucalyptus, a highly flammable wood used in the paper industry. Despite the combustion risks, the trees are planted because they are fast-growing and represent an important source of income for locals.

With fields and pastures abandoned, the forests are poorly maintained, with the dense undergrowth facilitating the spread of the fires. According to the EU's European Forest Fire Information System, more than 250,000 hectares of land were destroyed by fire across Europe between January and April this year, more than the 181,000 hectares recorded for the entire fire season in 2018. — AFP



**WASHINGTON:** Street art of former special counsel Robert Mueller is seen outside a construction site in Washington, DC. — AFP



## International

# Female suicide bomber kills 8 in northwestern Pakistan

## Pakistan to reform madrassa, tackle hate speech and extremism

**DERA ISMAIL KHAN:** A female suicide bomber in northwestern Pakistan killed at least eight people and wounded 26 more in an attack outside a local civilian hospital yesterday, local officials said. The attack in Dera Ismail Khan early yesterday was claimed by Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan, often known as the Pakistani Taliban, which is separate from the insurgent movement across the border in Afghanistan.

Local officials said the attack happened after two police were killed at a roadside checkpoint outside the city. "When their bodies were taken to the main hospital, a suicide bomber, believed to be a female, wearing a burqa, triggered an explosive-laden jacket and caused huge losses," said Waqar Ahmad, a local police officer. He said the blast had damaged the emergency ward of the hospital and forced some of the wounded to be transferred to other cities.

Muhammed Khurasani, a spokesman for the TTP, claimed responsibility for the attack, which he said was carried out in revenge for the killing of two Taliban commanders by counter terrorism police around a month ago. However he denied the bomber was female. Dera Ismail Khan has seen a number of suicide attacks over the past decade as the Pakistani military carried out a campaign to suppress militant attacks in the area, an important hub in the \$60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

### Religious school reform

In another development, Pakistan said it has agreed with the country's clergy to introduce reforms in madrassa religious schools to bring them in line with conventional

schools, curbing hate speech and extremist narratives. The announcement came just before Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Washington for a Monday meeting with President Donald Trump, whose administration continues to press Pakistan over terrorist financing and curbing militancy.

The government will register more than 30,000 madrassas, which will teach subjects like English, mathematics and science, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafiqat Mehmood said. He said the government will conduct their exams and is aiming for a first batch next June, although that is not a firm goal. Pakistan's madrassas have long been accused of promoting extremist narratives and have been dubbed "nurseries of extremism".

"There will be no preaching of hate speech against any religion or sect," the minister said. "We will look at their curriculum to see there is no hatred against any sect or faith," he added. Pakistan pledged to crack down on religious seminars suspected of fostering extremism following a school massacre by the Taliban in December 2014 that left more than 130 children dead, but the move faces stiff resistance from conservatives.

Madrassa reforms attempted by the past governments have failed due to pressure from the clergy. Pakistan is a deeply religious Muslim-majority society and, despite misgivings about madrassas, clergy are generally well respected. In another move ahead of Khan's US trip, Pakistan on Wednesday detained Hafiz Saeed, the alleged mastermind of an attack on the Indian city of Mumbai in 2008 that killed more than 160 people. — Agencies



**DERA ISMAIL KHAN:** Pakistani security officials examine the site of a suicide bomb attack at the entrance of a hospital in Kotian Saldan village on the outskirts of the northwestern city of Dera Ismail Khan yesterday. — AFP

## Puerto Rico leader urged to step down; protests roil island

**SAN JUAN:** Several US Democratic presidential candidates and lawmakers have demanded Puerto Rico's governor step down over offensive chat messages, as thousands on the Caribbean island staged a seventh day of protests to seek his resignation. Banging pots and pans and chanting "Ricky Resign!" Puerto Ricans streamed into San Juan's old city on Friday night and called on Ricardo Rossello to quit over the misogynistic and homophobic messages.

The chats, from a Telegram message group and referring mainly to politicians and officials, were published on Saturday. The leak, running to 889 pages, added to Rossello's woes after two former officials were arrested by the FBI last week as part of a federal corruption probe in the US territory. The protests have also tapped into simmering resentment over Rossello's handling of devastating hurricanes in 2017 and alleged corruption as Puerto Rico's fragile economy struggles to recover from the island's bankruptcy.

US Representative Tulsi Gabbard joined the protests in San Juan, saying she wanted to "stand up to corruption," as other Democratic presidential candidates including Julian Castro and Elizabeth Warren also called for Rossello to quit. "We must stand with la isla. Rossello must resign," tweeted US Representative Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, whose mother was born in Puerto Rico.

The island's nonvoting representative in the US Congress, Jennifer Gonzalez, earlier called for his resignation, while Rossello's press secretary Dennise Perez resigned, saying she could no longer hold the position after she was called corrupt in front of her son. "It's your turn, Ricky," protesters chanted on the street after word spread that Perez had stepped aside. Rossello, who is affiliated with the US Democratic Party, has refused to step down but said he would hold an emergency meeting with leaders of Puerto Rico's New Progressive Party, which he leads.

Puerto Rico House Speaker Carlos Mendez on Friday announced the creation of an independent committee to



**SAN JUAN:** Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin (center), Puerto Rican rapper Rene Perez, aka Residente, (right), Puerto Rican reggaeton singer Bad Bunny (top), take part in a demonstration demanding Governor Ricardo Rossello's resignation in San Juan. — AFP

determine whether the center-right politician engaged in illegal activity in the chats. The group has ten days to deliver its findings. The island's bar association published a report citing clear grounds to impeach the 40-year-old former scientist, based on the "depravity" of his messages. The chats, revealed by Puerto Rico's Center for Investigative Journalism, showed how Rossello and allies exchanged vulgar memes and comments as well as privileged information.

While opposition legislators back impeachment, the process has yet to gain critical support from lawmakers in Rossello's ruling party. But politicians like Gonzalez are

increasingly concerned about Puerto Rico's "anarchic" image after clashes in San Juan this week and allegations the two administration officials arrested by the FBI stole government funds.

The violence and political turmoil comes at a critical stage in the US territory's bankruptcy process. It has also raised concerns with US lawmakers who are weighing the island's requests for billions of federal dollars for health-care and hurricane recovery efforts. "The island cannot afford to lose already approved federal resources, nor the ones we are working to obtain," Gonzalez said in her letter to Rossello urging him to step aside. — Reuters

## New Zealanders hand over 10,000-plus guns in buy-back scheme

**SYDNEY:** New Zealanders have handed over more than 10,000 guns, weapons parts and accessories in the first week of a buy-back scheme prompted by the country's worst peacetime mass shooting, police figures released yesterday show. A gun reform law passed in April banned most semi-automatic firearms, parts that convert firearms into semi-automatics, magazines over a certain capacity and some shotguns. Owners have until Dec 20 to hand in their weapons and the government has set aside NZ\$208 million (\$140.63 million) to compensate them for up to 95% of the original cost.

The buy-back comes four months after a lone gunman with semi-automatic weapons attacked Muslims attending Friday prayers in Christchurch on New Zealand's South Island, killing 51 people. More than 2,000 people have surrendered 3,275 firearms, 7,827 parts and accessories and in return authorities have paid them slightly more than NZ\$6 million (\$4.06 million) since the buy-back began last Saturday, a police spokesperson told Reuters by telephone yesterday.

Police said they were pleased with the turnout yesterday, as 684 people handed in 1,061 guns and 3,397 parts and accessories at events across the country. Police superintendent Karyn Malthus said hundreds of firearms had been surrendered in Auckland. "The feedback from firearms owners at the event has been very positive," she said in an emailed statement. Media reported on Wednesday that Christchurch residents were upset about the proposed opening of a Gun City mega store in the city.

Brenton Tarrant, accused of the March 15 killings, bought four weapons and ammunition from the Gun City chain online from December 2017 to March 2018, owner David Tipple said in March. Tarrant, due to stand trial in May, has pleaded not guilty to 92 charges over the attacks, including New Zealand's first terrorism charge. With a population of just under 5 million and an estimated total of 1.5 million firearms, New Zealand ranks 17th in the world in terms of civilian firearm ownership, the Small Arms Survey shows. — Reuters



**MUZAFFARPUR:** An Indian resident swims in floodwaters following heavy monsoon rains at Muzaffarpur district in the Indian state of Bihar. In India, the death toll rose to at least 120 and entire communities were cut off by rising floodwaters which damaged or submerged roads. — AFP

## 'Nobody cares about us': Hunger, despair for flood victims

**MUZAFFARPUR:** 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 said. Majhi's home - like many others - is submerged, with only rooftops remaining above floodwaters. His family has 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. "We left the house to save ourselves and left everything behind," she said, sitting under a makeshift tent - one of many that have popped up around Sitamarhi using meagre household materials that villagers managed to salvage.

In areas where floodwaters have eased slightly, villagers cram into small, wooden boats or swim home to retrieve belongings. Some have received kichdi - an Indian porridge made with rice and lentils - from the government. "My children keep asking me for food and say they are hungry, but what can we do?" said Nima Devi, who only eats once a day with her children when the kichdi is distributed. But many others are going hungry, with next to no food supplies and only the clothes on their back. In a rare spot of good news, no extreme warnings have been issued by national weather bureau for the days ahead, although rains could continue. But even when the water retreats, villagers face the daunting task of cleaning up homes - now littered with rubbish accumulated by the flood - that weren't swept away. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Iran executes convicted nurse

**TEHRAN:** Iran has executed a nurse convicted of murdering a six-year-old boy, the judiciary's official news agency reported yesterday. The woman was found guilty of carrying out the murder in June 2016 while working for the boy's grandmother at her home in Kelardast city, in the northern province of Mazandaran. The nurse was sentenced to death a year later. She confessed to the premeditated murder and said she did it out of "anger", the prosecutor said, quoted yesterday by the Mizan Online news agency. "The verdict was finalized as it was not appealed," the prosecutor added. The executed woman was not identified in the report. She was in her early 40s. Iran does not publish official statistics on the number of people it executes. But according to Amnesty International, while secretive China is the world's "leading executioner", Iran had the highest known figure in 2018 with at least 253 people put to death. — AFP

#### 2 dead in clash with 'terrorists'

**TEHRAN:** A member of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and a Basij militia fighter have been killed in a clash with a "terrorist group" in the country's southeast, state media reported yesterday. The firefight took place late Saturday in Saravan county of Sistan-Baluchistan province, which straddles the border with Pakistan, said the official IRNA news agency. The two dead were identified as Guards commando Mohsen Naghibi and local Basij member Abdolkhalagh Derazehi. Sistan-Baluchistan has long been a flash-point, where Pakistan-based Baluchi separatists and jihadists carry out cross-border raids. The jihadist outfit Jaish al-Adl ("Army of Justice") has in the past attacked and abducted Iranian security personnel. The most recent attack killed 27 Guards in a February 13 suicide bombing which targeted a busload of the unit in the volatile region. — AFP

#### Ethiopia unrest kills 17

**ADDIS ABABA:** At least 17 people have been killed in clashes between Ethiopian security forces and activists seeking a new autonomous region for their Sidama ethnic group, according to a local official and hospital authorities. A local district official told Reuters on Saturday that at least 13 people were killed in a town near Hawassa city, 275 kms from the capital Addis Ababa, while hospital authorities said on Friday that four protesters had died of gunshot wounds in the city itself. Emboldened by political reforms introduced by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed since he took power in 2018, Sidama activists wanted to unilaterally declare a new regional state on Thursday. While the threat of large-scale violence in Hawassa was largely averted after a Sidama opposition party agreed to delay the declaration and accept a government offer to hold a referendum in five months, not all Sidama people accepted the delay. — AFP

#### Vatican opens ossuaries

**VATICAN CITY:** Forensic experts extracted bones from two ossuaries within the walls of the Vatican yesterday as part of an investigation aimed at resolving the case of a girl who vanished in 1983. Following an anonymous tip-off, the Vatican earlier this month opened two tombs to see if the body of Emanuela Orlandi, the daughter of a Vatican clerk, was hidden there. Instead, they ran into a new mystery when nothing was found, not even the bones of two 19th century princesses who were supposed to be buried in the Vatican's tiny Teutonic Cemetery. After consulting its records, the Vatican announced last week they had located bones under the floor of the Pontifical Teutonic College, which flanks the graveyard. Structural work was carried out in the cemetery at the end of the 19th century and again about 60 years ago. — Reuters



## Business

MONDAY, JULY 22, 2019

**12** CMA grants KAMCO and Global approval on draft merger contract**13** High stakes in gas standoff between Cyprus and Turkey**14** Turkish Airlines adds Indonesia's island Bali to its flight network

LONDON: In this handout photograph received from the BBC yesterday, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond gestures during a television interview at the BBC studio in London. — AFP

# Hammond to quit if Johnson becomes PM

## 'Cannot support a leader happy to take Britain out of EU without a deal'

LONDON: Finance minister Philip Hammond said yesterday he would resign if Boris Johnson became Britain's new prime minister because he could not support a leader happy to take the country out of the European Union without a deal.

Hammond's decision underlines the strength of feeling in parliament against a no-deal Brexit, which some lawmakers and many businesses say would be catastrophic for the economy.

A loyal Conservative who has served in a number of ministerial roles, Hammond is an unlikely rebel. He said his fears over a no deal had forced him to vote against the government for the first time in his 22-year political career last week. Britain's new prime minister is tipped to be former London mayor Johnson, who has promised to leave the EU "do or die" by an Oct 31 deadline. That leaves him facing a tricky Brexit challenge from the moment he takes office on Wednesday.

Hammond has become an increasingly fierce critic of

Johnson's Brexit strategy-leaving the European Union with or without a deal on October 31 — and would never have expected to remain as chancellor of the Exchequer in a Johnson government. But the fact that the second-most senior figure in the government is making a point of resigning rather than wait to be moved on in the incoming prime minister's reshuffle is a significant gesture—and an indicator of the opposition Johnson could face in pursuing his Brexit strategy. "I'm sure I'm not going to be sacked because I'm going to resign before we get to that point," Hammond told BBC television.

"Assuming that Boris Johnson becomes the next prime minister, I understand that his conditions for serving in his government would include accepting a no-deal exit on the 31st of October. That is not something that I could ever sign up to. It's very important that the prime minister is able to have a chancellor who is closely aligned with him in terms of policy, and I therefore intend to resign to Theresa May before she goes to the palace

to tender her own resignation on Wednesday."

Johnson has said he would ramp up preparations for a no deal if he becomes prime minister to try to force the EU's negotiators to make changes to the deal that Prime Minister Theresa May sealed with Brussels and UK lawmakers voted down. But parliamentary opposition to a no deal is growing and the EU is refusing to budge over that Withdrawal Agreement.

"I am sure I am not going to be sacked because I am going to resign before we get to that point," Hammond told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show, adding he would resign to May before she tenders her own resignation to the Queen on Wednesday. "Assuming that Boris Johnson becomes prime minister, I understand that his conditions for serving in his government would include accepting a no-deal (EU) exit on the 31st of October. That is not something I could ever sign up to."

Hammond, who according to sources close to Johnson often infuriated the former mayor who felt the finance

minister was "talking Britain down", said he did not believe his former colleague could win a deal with the EU by the deadline. He instead advised the new prime minister to ask the EU for a little longer if there were signs that the two sides could agree on a compromise position - something Johnson's rival for the premiership, Jeremy Hunt, has said he is open to.

If not, Hammond said he would work with other lawmakers to make sure Britain was not taken out of the EU without a deal against parliament's wishes - a pledge welcomed by the Brexit policy head of the opposition Labour Party, Keir Starmer.

"Yes, (I will campaign) to stop no deal happening on Oct. 31 without the consent of parliament," Hammond said. "I want to be a loyal supporter of the next Conservative government and if (it) can deliver a negotiated Brexit deal that protects our economy then I will strongly support that government. And I hope I will be able to." — Agencies

## US firms find ways to skirt Trump's tariffs

NEW YORK: Big US companies are accelerating efforts to move more of their supply chains from China to neighboring countries in light of Trump administration tariffs. Companies in sectors such as technology, clothing and footwear are exporting more goods from emerging giants including Vietnam and Malaysia, data show. At the same time, the shift has exposed the murkiness of trade export rules, putting a premium on lawyers expert in the minutiae of US customs rules.

"We have a lot of questions from our members," said Sage Chandler, vice president of international trade at the Consumer Technology Association. "Companies are trying to find ways to avoid having to pay 25 percent."

Some companies may be pushing the envelope a little too much, violating US rules against "transshipments," the routing of China-made goods through other countries to evade tariffs, legal experts say.

### Speeding shift from China

President Donald Trump since last year has slapped 25 percent duties on \$250 billion worth of Chinese imports and threatened additional levies on all other Chinese items coming to the United States—though the two sides agreed last month to hold their fire for now. Trump's trade measures have led some multinationals to fortify their North American operations and others to transfer some manufacturing capacity from China to any number of countries, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India and Ethiopia. Exports of computers and electronics from Vietnam to the United States have risen 71.6 percent in the first five months of 2019 compared with the year-ago period, according to government data. The pattern has also held for other machines and equipment, with exports from Vietnam rising 54.4 percent over that period.

Even before Trump targeted China on trade, US companies had been reducing their dependence on China because of increasing production costs and elevated transport expenses compared with other Asian countries.

But the trade war has sped up those moves. Ralph Lauren has "accelerated the diversification of our supply chain to miti-

gate the long-term impact of any potential tariff outcomes," said a spokesperson for the clothing company, adding that tariffs have so far not hit the company's goods.

Xcel Brands, which owns Isaac Mizrahi, Judith Ripka and other fashion houses, will cease manufacturing in China in 2020, a big shift from two years ago when the country was the source of 100 percent of its merchandise. The company has moved clothes-making operations to Vietnam, Cambodia and Bangladesh, and is exploring adding capacity in Central America, Mexico and Canada.

This retooling, which was in the works prior to the tariffs, could boost profit margins, said Xcel chief executive Robert D'Loren. The trade war with China "accelerated our sourcing diversification efforts," he said. A decade ago, more than 90 percent of US footwear was made in China. But today, the figure is 69 percent, said Matt Priest, president of Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America.

### Problem solved?

Yet shifting production outside of China to other Asian centers is not necessarily a panacea. Many of these countries lack the roads, airports and other vital infrastructure of the world's second-



SHANGHAI: This aerial photo taken shows the Tesla factory under construction in Shanghai. The electric-car manufacturer is building its first overseas car factory in Shanghai to ramp up annual production, tapping into the world's biggest auto market and avoiding some of the impact of Sino-US trade tensions. — AFP

biggest economy. And there is no guarantee that the emerging manufacturing venues will be safe from US tariffs down the road. Companies can also run afoul of US law if goods are made in China and then sent to an intermediate destination to

dodge US tariffs.

"I have noticed an upswing in the number of tariff evasion cases that have been made public and also in the number of inquiries my firm has received," said Jeff Newman, a Boston attorney. — AFP





## Business

# Turkish Airlines adds Indonesia's famous holiday island Bali to its flight network

Global carrier to operate seven direct flights weekly on Istanbul-Bali route



**KUWAIT:** Flying to more countries and international destinations than any other airline in the world, Turkish Airlines inaugurated its direct flights between its home base Istanbul and world-renowned tourist destination, Bali (Indonesia) on July 17, 2019. Having operated with the airlines' first Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, which joined to its ever-expanding fleet a few weeks ago, TK

066 coded first flight conducted with 84 percent load factor and carried 250 passengers.

Commenting on newly commenced Istanbul-Bali flights, Turkish Airlines Senior Vice President Sales (2nd Region), Kerem Sarp said: "While our new generation aircraft continuing to join our fleet, we feel highly encouraged to launch new direct flights to farther desti-



nations in the world. By inaugurating direct flights to Bali, our second destination in Indonesia, we keep strengthening our mission to reach all corners of the world."

Introductory flight fares are available from Istanbul to Bali starting at \$748 (including taxes and fees). Bali, Indonesia's most popular holiday island, is flooded by tourists and explorers from all around the world every

year. Welcoming its guests with its exotic nature, the city offers cultural richness with its historical temples and palaces. Volcanoes and tropical forests in the inner parts of the city are the source of unforgettable memories for travelers traveling to the city. The center of the island increases its charm with its cultural and exotic beauties as well as its beaches.

## Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma account

**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank conducted the weekly draws on Al-Najma Account and the draw on the "Salary and Cash on Top" campaign. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The results of the draw were as follows:

1- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 and was for the share of Akil Diyap Oglu.

2- The "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign prize of KD 1,000 and was for the share of Faisal Abdullah Mohammad Jassim.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees as well as the retirees and which is valid until 31 December 2019 and the mechanism of joining this campaign for availing its benefits, the Bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 & above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000. As for the expatriate customers categorized under Premier Banking Account with a salary KD of 1,700 and above, they will get instant cash gift. The retirees with pension KD 1,000 and above will also get an instant cash gift of KD 150 when transferring their pension to the Bank and automatically enter the weekly draw on a prize of KD 1,000 and avail the benefits of this campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in private & public sector as well as the retirees. Further, the campaign provides customers with the opportunity to get additional benefits and take advantage of the advanced and unrivalled services and products the Bank provides to its customers to meet their needs and expectations.

## NBK offers for credit and prepaid cardholders

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is rewarding its customers with new bundle of exclusive offers and discounts tailored to their needs, giving eligible NBK Credit and Prepaid Cardholders access to discounts of up to 40 percent this summer.

NBK's seasonal deals grant customers up to 10 percent discount on their flight reservations on Kuwait Airways on all cabins and destinations, when using their NBK Credit or Prepaid Cards and by simply booking through the dedicated link: <http://www.kuwait-airways.com/en/nbk>.

Customers will also receive up to 5 percent cash-back when using their eligible NBK Credit or Prepaid Cards for bookings through the global hotel booking platform Booking.com with the dedicated link [www.booking.com/nbkcards](http://www.booking.com/nbkcards).

The seasonal offers don't stop there. Customers can benefit from exclusive discounts when booking a car with Careem and using the eligible NBK Credit or Prepaid Card. Discounts reach up to 40 percent on car rides (three times per month) valid for 30 days by



Prasad Srinivasa

entering the promotional code "NBKNEW" for those using the Careem app for the first time in Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman. Registered users on Careem receive a 25 percent discount on their car rides (four times per month) using the promotional code "NBK" in Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman or the promotional code "NBKGCC" in Qatar and UAE.

The offers also include a discount of up to 11 percent at select hotels booked through Hotels.com, when booking with the eligible NBK Credit or Prepaid Cards and entering the promotional code "NBKHOTELS" on the portal: <https://ar.hotels.com/page/nbk-discount/?rfrid=mdp.hcom.m2.884>.

To further assist customers with their plans during travel season, customers will receive up to 10 percent discount on travel and hotel bookings when using their eligible NBK Cards to book through the Clear Trip booking app and website [kw.cleartrip.com](http://kw.cleartrip.com) and using the promo code: CTNBK.

Speaking of NBK's latest summer offers, Prasad Srinivasa, Head of Payments Acceptance and Customer Loyalty, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are always looking at ways to reward our customers and enhance their experience through exclusive discounts and offers that we launch all year long. The summer discounts are a continuation of these efforts as we ensure to reward customers when planning for their summer getaways, giving them great offers on a variety of flight and hotel booking platforms to meet their needs during the travel season."

"We promise customers with dedicated offers that will meet their banking needs and lifestyle and would enhance their experience with NBK Credit and Prepaid Cards," confirmed Srinivasa.

He added that NBK Credit and Prepaid Cards offer a wide range of benefits and exclusive promotions throughout the year, which enable customers to enjoy a

## Infiniti Al-Babtain continues the summer offers on Infiniti vehicles

**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, invites its customers to indulge in the best deals and enjoy popular features of Infiniti models ranging from Q50, QX50 to QX60 during the summer season.

Starting at only KD 9,999, the Q50 is driver centric, powerfully elegant coupled with a striking performance and is available with 2.0-liter 208HP turbo-charged engine at 5,500 rpm with 350 Nm peak torque from 1,250 rpm. The Infiniti Q50 is also available at 3.0 Litre Turbo generating 300 HP. The INFINITI Q50's fuel efficient engine is designed to offer enhanced performance while maintaining high levels of efficiency.

The steering wheel is sleeker and more performance based than ever, ensuring flawless drivability that triggers the senses. The Q50 delivers a confidence-inspiring and personalized experience behind the wheel, which epitomizes INFINITI's dedication to developing innovative driving technologies. The INFINITI Q50's engine is designed to offer enhanced performance while maintaining high levels of efficiency and consists of four grades: Luxe, Sport, Blue Sport, and Red Sport 400 which comes with four packages: wood trim, sunroof, sensory and pro-active.

Starting at only KD 12,999, the popular and highly awarded INFINITI QX60 offers the best of both luxury and practicality with a combination of family-oriented features as well as a welcoming, carefully crafted design inside and out. With a third row of seating, the spacious interior adjusts to customers' needs. Standard on all QX60 models is a breakthrough technology designed especially for active families - Rear Door Alert. The new Rear Door Alert system, first introduced on the 2018 QX60, can help remind customers of things that may be forgotten in the rear seat, such as pets, valuables, dry cleaning, groceries and more. Other



available driver assist technologies include: Around View Monitor with Moving Object Detection; Lane Departure Warning and Lane Departure Prevention; Backup Collision Intervention; Blind Spot Intervention; and Intelligent Cruise Control (Full-Speed Range). Also offered are the advanced Predictive Forward Collision Warning system and Forward Emergency Braking with pedestrian detection.

Recently, two INFINITI models received recognition in the 2019 Vincentric Best Value in America(tm) awards: the 2019 INFINITI Q50 sport sedan was named a winner in the Luxury Mid-Size Sedan segment, and the 2019 INFINITI QX60 was a winner in the Luxury Large SUV/Crossover segment for the third consecutive year.

Starting at only KD 13,950, the INFINITI QX50 is the world's first variable compression ratio engine in a production vehicle which was created to fully meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver on their desire to own the latest masterpiece of technolo-



unique lifestyle, thanks to the range of advantages and features, especially those launched during the holiday seasons. Srinivasa said: "Our offers and promotions ensure as well the highest levels of security, protection and privacy of personal information as guaranteed by every NBK Credit Card."

NBK offers a wide variety of banking products and services that are tailored to the lifestyle of customers. Customers can choose between NBK Credit Cards that are designed to meet their different needs and provide them with an array of benefits and rewards, including the NBK Rewards Program, NBK Miles Program, discounts, concierge services, international services and much more.

gy. The VC-Turbo engine delivers the strong and convincing performance of a V6 and the fuel economy of a 4-cylinder engine - transforming on demand and based on the input of the drivers. Instantly adapting to their needs, the VC-Turbo lets them harness the exhilarating performance of 268 hp and 380 nm at 4,400 rpm of torque. Developed on an entirely new platform, the QX50 features the sophisticated and assuring INFINITI Intelligent All-Wheel Drive. Drive Assist technologies react instantaneously to critical driving situations, supporting the drivers with a range of empowering 'co-pilot' features, and enabling them to always be in total control. Driver-centric, yet passenger-minded, the QX50 offers a package of technologies to enhance the driving experience, while a calm, connected, and relaxing cabin features an asymmetric layout - designed to meet different needs of the driver and the passengers.

Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to discover the advantage of the exclusive deals by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.

What's On



# GSB Sabha Kuwait celebrates 16th annual celebration of Konkani Sourabha

GSB Sabha Kuwait takes pride to celebrate its 16th Annual function "KONKANI SOURABHA" along with Chief Guest Shri Uday Jadugar". The function was held recently at Indian Community School Auditorium, Salmiya, Kuwait with a lot of exuberance and ardors.

It was truly a day of accomplishments and celebration. The auditorium was filled with GSB member families and invited guest Artist Smt Sparsha Shenoy from Mysore. The program started invoking the blessings of the Almighty God which was compered by Vibha Vishwanath Prabhu and Disha Girish Shenoy and invocation dance was performed by Guest Artist Vidushi Sparsha Shenoy.

Shri Uday Jadugar, was the honored Chief Guest for the event. The ceremonial lighting of the lamp was performed by the Chief Guest along with the President of the GSB Sabha, Shri Palimar Vishwanath Prabhu along with the com-

mittee members, Vice President - Shri Girish Shenoy, General Secretary - Smt Spoorthy Deepak Kamath, Treasurer - Shri Vinayak Prabhu and PRO - Shri Ganesh Padiyar. In his welcome address, the President thanked and briefed his tenure as president for the year 2018 and 2019.

The Chief Guest Shri Uday Jadugar was given a warm welcome. In his address, he conveyed gratitude for inviting first time in his life as Chief guest for any GSB community functions. The stage was very much set for magic world of Shri Uday Jadugar and scintillating natya performance by invited guest artist and Vidushi Smt. Spasha Shenoy. Both the Chief Guest and Guest Artists were felicitated by GSB advisory Committee members Shri B. Prakash Pai, Shri Rajaram Pai Kateel, Shri Gokuldas Bhat, Surendra Nayak and Shri Anil Prabhu.

Acknowledging the meritorious students who excelled in 10th and 12th Grade, mementos were

distributed respectively by Chief Guest. During the stage program GSB kids performed scintillating dance step for the famous medley tune of hindi and Kannada songs, skit "Punya Koti", Yakshagana and medley dance by GSB Ladies members.

"MILITARY MAMU" which was written by Shri. Arun Prakash Nayak, Mangalore and directed by our own local talent Shri Manjeshwar Mohandas Kamath and co-directed by Shri Naveen Prabhu. The Konkani drama was much appreciated by all the audience. With its first stage play out of Mangalore, the Konkani drama was very well played by local GSB members. The Drama was very much helped by technical expert Shri Jagadeeshwar Shanbhag.

The program came to a close with the sumptuous dinner served by SANGEETA Restaurant and Vote of Thanks by Spoorthy Deepak Kamath.



## Pakistan Mango Festival held at SaveCo

Pakistan Business Stars organized a Pakistani Mango Festival on 17th July 2019 at SaveCo, Grand Avenues. Ghulam Dastgir, Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait was the chief guest and inaugurated the launching of the festival, organized by Raja Raees, Nauman Khan, Farukh and other members of the Pakistani community in Kuwait.

## Farewell party in honor of Sharma

Some of the members of the Executive Committee of former Association of Indian Professionals (AIP) got together on July 17, 2019 for dinner at the Soul and Spice Indian Restaurant of Courtyard Marriot Hotel to bid farewell to Umesh Sharma who is leaving Kuwait for good. Sharma was at the helm of affairs of AIP and commanded a great respect and love due to his team work capacity and abilities.

Sharma came to Kuwait in 1980 and worked with several organizations since then at various capacities in the field of Mechanical Engineering (Design and Construction). Sharma completed his Masters (post-graduation) in Mechanical Engineering from the Kuwait University, Kuwait. Apart from his professional contributions and achievements, Sharma has been very active on social and sports fronts.

He had been the President of UPKAR, President of Writers' Forum (WFK) and the Chairman of the AIP. Lately he was working as the convener of Education and Career Guidance Committee of the Indian Business and Professionals (IBPC), Kuwait. Sharma

used to be a good player of squash and won several awards in the tournaments organized by the Kuwait Society of Engineers.

When asked about his plans for future, Sharma came out with a number of alternative plans depending upon the situation back home. Sharma expressed his gratitude to Kuwait, its people and the Government of Kuwait for his comfortable stay in Kuwait - 'a home away from home'. (From left to right): Umesh Shahani, Sushil Kumar, Dr Kamlesh Kumari, Umesh Sharma, Jagdish Joshi, Sangeetha Joshi, Rajeshwari Subbaraman and Sajeev K Peter attended the farewell dinner.



## Suresh Shyam Rao Neramballi conferred with Aryabhata Int'l Award

In the 44th annual Aryabhata international award ceremony that was held recently at Ravindra Kalakshetra of Bengaluru under the joint auspices of Aryabhata cultural organization and government of Karnataka, Suresh Shyam Rao Neramballi was awarded the prestigious Aryabhata international award of this year for his relentless service towards the Kannada land, language and culture, especially in the social field.

Suresh S. Rao Neramballi is serving the society as a member of executive committees of various organizations in Kuwait for

the past 17 years. He is also a Kannada and Tulu movie distributor and actively involved in literature, culture and social work.

Nagamohan Das, retired judge of high court, Dr Mahesh Joshi, S. A. Channegowda, president of Karnataka state commercial movies association, Dr H.L.N. Rao, founder president of Aryabhata cultural organization were present on the occasion and conferred the coveted award to Suresh S. Rao Neramballi.

Suresh S. Rao Neramballi works as a freelance reporter and news translator from Kuwait for various dailies, web news portals and electronic media.

## CRISPY OVEN FRIED CHICKEN

Servings: 4  
Prep Time: 10 minutes  
Cook Time: 1 1/2 hours

### Ingredients

2 cups buttermilk  
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
Salt and pepper

1 teaspoon garlic powder  
3 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts, drumsticks, and/or thighs)  
Vegetable oil spray  
4 cups cornflakes  
1 teaspoon poultry seasoning  
1 teaspoon paprika

### Preparation

In large bowl, whisk together buttermilk, mustard, 2 teaspoons salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, and garlic powder. Use paper towel to grasp skin on one piece of chicken, then pull off and discard skin. Repeat with remaining

pieces of chicken. Add chicken to buttermilk mixture and turn to coat well. Wash your hands. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or overnight.

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 F. Line rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and set cooling rack inside baking sheet. Spray rack with vegetable oil spray. Place cornflakes in large zipper-lock bag. Add poultry seasoning and paprika. Seal bag and shake to combine. Use rolling pin to crush cornflakes into small pieces. Pour cornflake mixture into second large bowl.

Remove one piece of chicken from butter-

milk mixture, add to bowl with cornflake mixture, and toss to coat. Use your hands to gently press crumbs onto all sides of chicken. Place chicken on greased rack in baking sheet. Repeat with remaining pieces of chicken. Wash your hands. Spray chicken all over with vegetable oil spray until each piece is shiny. Place baking sheet in oven and bake until chicken breasts register 165 F on instant-read thermometer and drumsticks/thighs register 175 F, 35 to 45 minutes. Use oven mitts to remove baking sheet from oven (ask an adult for help). Place baking sheet on second cooling rack and let cool for 5 minutes. Serve.



Health & Technology

# 'Stronger than ever': India set for fresh Moon launch attempt

## India seeking to be the 4th nation to land a spacecraft on Moon

**SRIHARIKOTA, India:** India will make a second attempt today to send a landmark spacecraft to the Moon after an apparent fuel leak forced last week's launch to be aborted. The South Asian nation is bidding to become just the fourth nation after Russia, the United States and China to land a spacecraft on the Moon.

The mission comes 50 years after Neil Armstrong became the first person to step foot on the moon, an occasion celebrated by space enthusiasts globally on Saturday. The fresh launch attempt for Chandrayaan-2 — Moon Chariot 2 in some Indian languages including Sanskrit and Hindi—has been scheduled for 2:43 pm (09:13 GMT) today, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said.

"Chandrayaan 2 is ready to take a billion dreams to the Moon — now stronger than ever before!" it said on Thursday. The first launch attempt was scrubbed just under an hour before the scheduled lift-off because of what authorities described as a "technical snag". Local media, citing ISRO officials, said that issue was a fuel leak. The agency tweeted Saturday that a rehearsal for the launch was completed successfully. Chandrayaan-2 will be launched atop a Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) MkIII, India's most powerful rocket.

Experts said setbacks were to be expected in such missions given their complexity, and that it was more prudent to delay the launch instead of taking risks that may jeopardise the project.

"In such an ambitious and prestigious mission like Chandrayaan, one cannot take a chance even if a small flaw is detected," Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, head of space policy at the New Delhi think tank the Observer Research

Foundation, told AFP. Former NASA scientist Kumar Krishen said India's space agency should be praised for taking on ambitious projects like Chandrayaan-2. "We should keep in mind that space exploration is risky as many systems have failed in the past and many lives lost," he said.

**National pride**

Aside from propelling India into rarefied company among spacefaring nations, Chandrayaan-2 also stands out because of its low cost. About \$140 million has been spent on preparations for the mission, a much smaller price tag compared with similar missions by other countries—whose costs often run into billions of dollars. Chandrayaan-2, and India's space program as a whole, are a source of national pride in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has outlined an ambitious plan to launch a crewed space mission by 2022, and India hopes to seek out commercial satellite and orbiting deals. The new mission comes almost 11 years after the launch of India's first lunar mission—Chandrayaan-1 — which orbited the Moon and searched for water. The rocket carrying Chandrayaan-2 will launch from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, an island off the coast of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. The spacecraft will carry an orbiter, lander and a rover, which has been almost entirely designed and made in India.

The orbiter is planned to circle the Moon for about one year, imaging the surface and studying the atmosphere. The lander, named Vikram, will head to the surface near the lunar South Pole carrying the rover. Once it touches down, the rover will carry out experiments while being



**BANGALORE:** In this file photo, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) scientists work on the orbiter vehicle of 'Chandrayaan-2', India's first moon lander and rover mission planned and developed by the ISRO, in Bangalore. India will make a second attempt today to send a landmark spacecraft to the Moon after an apparent fuel leak forced last week's launch to be aborted. — AFP

controlled remotely by ISRO scientists. It is expected to work for one lunar day, the equivalent of 14 Earth days, and will look for signs of water and "a fossil record of the early solar system". — AFP

## The exploration of space in 10 key dates

**PARIS:** From the Soviet Union's pioneering satellite to the first man on the Moon 50 years ago, here are 10 key dates in space exploration.

**1957: Sputnik**

On October 4, 1957, Moscow launches the first artificial space satellite, Sputnik 1, ushering in the Cold War tussle for the cosmos. The beach ball-sized aluminium sphere takes 98 minutes to orbit the Earth and sends back the first message from space, simple "beep-beep-beep" radio signals.

On November 3, Sputnik 2 carries the first

living being to fully orbit the Earth, a small street dog called Laika. She dies after a few hours.

**1961: Gagarin, first man**

On April 12, 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin becomes the first man in space, completing a single, 108-minute orbit. Twenty-three days later, Alan Shepard is the first American in space when he makes a 15-minute trip on May 5. The Cold War rivals are only joined in space by a third country in 2003 when China sends up Yang Liwei onboard Earth orbiter Shenzhou V.

**1969: On the Moon**

On July 21, 1969, US astronaut Neil Armstrong is the first man to step onto the Moon, his teammate Edwin Aldrin joining him around 20 minutes later. Between 1969 and 1972, 12 astronauts—all American—walked on the Moon as part of NASA's Apollo program.

**1971: Space station**

On April 19, 1971, the Soviet Union launches the first orbital space station, Salyut 1. Construction of the still-operating International Space Station (ISS) starts in 1998. The biggest man-made structure in space, it orbits Earth 16 times a day. The ISS, in which 16 countries participate, took over from the Russian space station Mir, which was brought back to Earth in 2001 after 15 years in orbit.

**1976: Mars**

On July 20, 1976, US spacecraft Viking 1 becomes the first to successfully land on Mars and send back images of the Red Planet. The robot Opportunity explored Mars between 2004 and 2018, with NASA's Curiosity Rover still active there. About 40 missions have been sent to Mars, more than half failing.

**1981: Space Shuttle**

On April 12, 1981, the US space shuttle

Columbia, the first reusable manned spacecraft, makes its first voyage. It is followed by Challenger, Discovery, Atlantis and Endeavour, which serve the ISS until the shuttle program winds up in 2011. The United States has since depended on Russia to transport its astronauts to the ISS. Two US shuttles were destroyed in flight, with the loss of 14 astronauts: Challenger in 1986 and Columbia in 2003.

**1990: Hubble**

On April 25, 1990, the Hubble is the first space telescope to be placed into orbit, at 547 kilometres (340 miles) from Earth. Thirteen meters (42 feet) long, Hubble revolutionizes astronomy, allowing scientists to observe the planets and most distant stars and galaxies.

**2001: Space tourist**

On April 28, 2001, Italian American multi-millionaire Dennis Tito, 60, becomes the world's first space tourist. He pays Russia \$20 million to

stay on the ISS for eight days. In all, seven space tourists have taken Russian flights to the ISS.

**2008: Private SpaceX**

On September 29, 2008, US company SpaceX is the first private venture to successfully launch a rocket into Earth's orbit, the Falcon 1. SpaceX's Dragon cargo ship on May 22, 2012 becomes the first commercial spacecraft to visit the ISS.

**2014: Comet landing**

On November 12, 2014, the European Space Agency places a small robot, Philae, on a comet more than 500 million kilometers from Earth. The first comet lander is part of a mission aiming to explore the origins of the Solar System. The man-made object that is furthest away from the Earth is the unmanned US spaceship Voyager 1, launched in September 1977 and still travelling. In August 2012 it made it into interstellar space, about 13 billion miles from Earth. — AFP

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248 33 199

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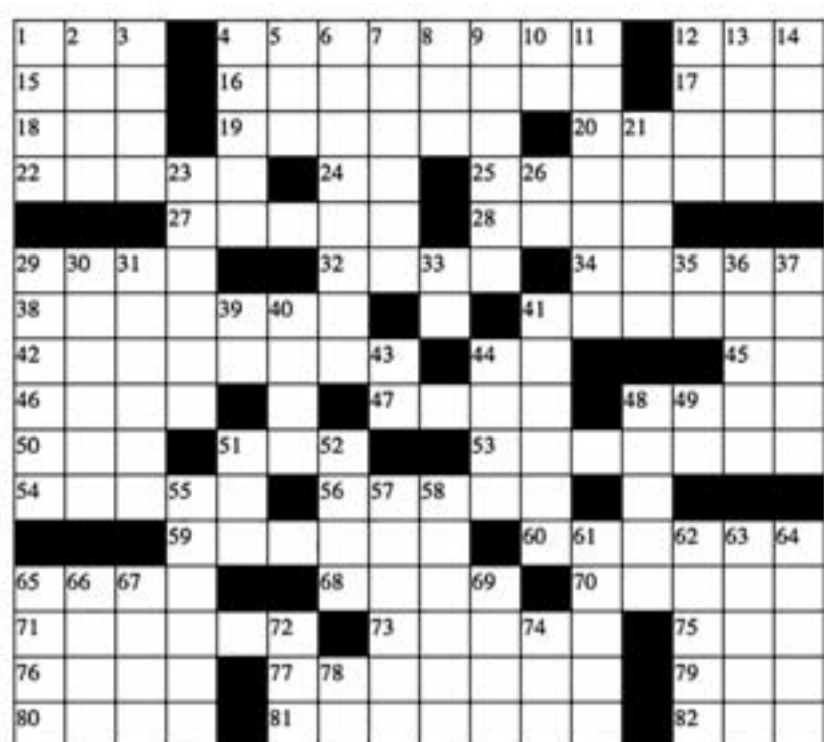
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ACROSS

1. The United Nations agency concerned with international maritime activities.
4. An unexpected slide.
12. A magnetic tape recorder for recording (and playing back) TV programs.
15. Of southern Europe.
16. Stork with a grooved bill whose upper and lower parts touch only at the base and tip.
17. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
18. A unit of force equal to the force exerted by gravity.
19. Reduced to liquid form by heating.
20. State in northeastern India.
22. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
24. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
25. A pseudoscientific forerunner of chemistry in medieval times.
27. A spirit believed by Muslims to inhabit the earth and influence mankind by appearing in the form of humans or animals.
28. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
29. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
32. A network of intersecting blood vessels or intersecting nerves or intersecting lymph vessels.
34. Offering little or no hope.
38. Put into a proper or systematic order.
42. (Greek mythology) Daughter of Helios and mother of Ariadne.
45. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
46. The largest continent with 60% of the earth's population.
47. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
50. Being one more than nine.
53. Discrimination in favor of the able-bodied.
54. Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
56. Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
59. Roman Emperor who was the adoptive son of Trajan.
60. The Mongol people living the the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
65. Chief port of Yemen.
68. Flowing in drops.
70. Distance travelled per unit time.
71. The eighth month of the Hindu calendar.
73. Italian violin maker in Cremona.
75. A master's degree in business.
76. Unusually great in size or amount or degree or especially extent or scope.
77. An ancient country in central Italy.
79. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
80. Little known Kamarupan languages.
81. Of or pertaining to the Avesta (sacred text of Zoroastrianism).
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. The villain in William Shakespeare's tragedy who tricked Othello into murdering his wife.
2. One thousandth of a second.
3. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
4. Battle of World War II (1944).
5. A corporation's first offer to sell stock to the public.
6. 1 species.
7. The principal dish of a meal.
8. The compass point that is one point east of due south.
9. The number of lines in a piece of printed material.
10. Being nine more than forty.
11. An innocuous or inert medication.
12. An open jar of glass or porcelain used as an ornament or to hold flowers.
13. Burrowing marine mollusk living on sand or mud.
14. Covered with frost.
21. Be going to.
23. (Greek mythology) One of the three Graces.
26. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
30. An implement used to erase something.
31. A poisonous colorless flammable gas used in organic synthesis and to dope transistors and as a poison gas in warfare.
33. A metallic element of the rare earth group.
35. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
36. American Revolutionary patriot.
37. A member of a formerly tribal people now living in south central India.
39. A radioactive transuranic metallic element.
40. Clarified butter used in Indian cookery.
41. An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
43. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
44. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
48. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
49. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
51. A boy or man.
52. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
55. An smooth 3-beat gait.
57. The capital and largest city of Zimbabwe.
58. A feeling of ill will arousing active hostility.
61. A city of central China.
62. A subsidiary proposition that is assumed to be true in order to prove another proposition.
63. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
64. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
66. Material used to daub walls.
67. (used as a sentenced connector) Therefore or consequently.
69. Relating to only part of a whole.
72. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
74. Brief episode in which the brain gets insufficient blood supply.
78. Broadcasting visual images of stationary or moving objects.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You have a deep desire to be respected. You have a knack for not only organizing your surroundings but also organizing the people around you. You seem to know who will make the best fit for each task that needs to be accomplished. You may find a sense of ambition takes hold of your life. Work and what you can achieve become a major focus. You are determined to be successful in everything aspect of your life. You are very practical when it comes to dealing with others and your way of life seems very appealing to those who surround you. You may find you are sought out to lead a project or a team in the workplace. Success is right around the corner.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a day you find you are very convincing. You may be forceful in what you say and what you think. You should be able to get your point across with ease. Others will want to hear what you have to say. A great day to convince someone to see things from your point of view. This is a great day and time to be able to get things off of your chest and know that you will be able to speak and be understood.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This seems to be one of the rare times you do can not find one negative thing about who you are, how you feel, or how you look. You are powerful and self confident. Lovers, children, and others dear to you are where your focus seems to be. You want others to be able to see the beauty you see in them. Others seem drawn to you and to the way you make them feel. You may have an opportunity come your way today. Take the risk. This is one time taking a risk could bring reward.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have always been wise beyond your years. It is wisdom rather than knowledge that counts most in your life now. This may be a time you will find you are finally able to make peace with your past. This could be a mystical and spiritual time in your life as well. You will be able to move forward once you are able to bury the hatchet and leave the past in the past. This is a positive step in the right direction for you. Great reward will come from a change of attitude. You will look back with pride on this time in your life.



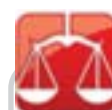
Leo (July 23-August 22)

Dream on dreamer. You may find that in times of emotional overload your mind will lead itself into a dreamy state. This is an automatic defense mechanism that you seem to have no control over. Just as pain makes you aware of when you are pushing your body too hard, your mind has a tendency to just check out, when you overload it. Too much of anything can be a bad thing and stress is a bad thing. This is not a good time to make any decisions for you, Leo. Spend your energy on finding an outlet of expression. Find the best method of relaxation for you and do it! You have pushed yourself too far and too hard and now is the time to rest.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may not get much praise for the work you are doing. The reasons are more about other people than about you. Don't be discouraged. The important thing is that you will do the work and learn from it. It will not be wasted. The things you learn will serve you in good stead in the future. Be sure your hard work and dedication will pay off.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may have been so focused lately you have been missing out on a social life. Today is a great day to get out and about. Hit the town but choose your company wisely as not to experience any conflict while doing so. Surround yourself with like-minded friends. Choose friends who are positive and share your love of life. You may find yourself experiencing a real spiritual awakening and the desire to share this with others. You should be pleasantly please at how receptive your friends are. A great day for you where the lines of communication open in all aspects of your world.



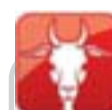
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have a deep desire to be respected. You have a knack for not only organizing your surroundings but also organizing the people around you. You seem to know who will make the best fit for each task that needs to be accomplished. You may find a sense of ambition takes hold of your life. Work and what you can achieve become a major focus. You are determined to be successful in everything aspect of your life. You are very practical when it comes to dealing with others and your way of life seems very appealing to those who surround you. You may find you are sought out to lead a project or a team in the workplace. Success is right around the corner.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Frustration seems to be your middle name. It seems as if you are met with a new obstacle at every turn. You are unable to find comfort at home or work. Poor decisions seem to be the only decisions you are able to make today. It may be one of those days you feel like crawling back in bed and starting all over again. Tensions are high. This would be a great time to step away from everything and get a breath of fresh air. Clear your mind and find a soothing way to relax this evening. Tomorrow is a new day. Face it with a positive attitude and look at it as a new beginning.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You dreamy and other-worldly qualities do not seem to sit well with others. You are definitely marching to the beat of your own drum. You may find you are challenged by someone close to you who sees you as impractical and not down-to-earth. You may be caught between the devil and deep blue sea. You yearn to broaden your horizons. You know there is a big world out there. You want to see there is to see and experience all there is to experience. Surrounding yourself with friends from different religions, cultures, and races may be a wonderful start to this spiritual search you are on. This is a wonderful experience for you. Keep an open mind during time spent with others who see things differently from you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Lovers, children and other people and things you hold dear are where your focus turns today. You have a deep desire to be appreciated for your gifts and talents. You are a giving and loving person and do not always feel as if those you care for truly appreciate what you do. This is a time you may find taking a risk can bring a great reward your way. Take the chance on this one. You really have nothing to lose.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find your progress being slowed or blocked by one individual. You are fighting to get ahead and be successful and do not have time nor space for this person. This distraction may make you feel as if you are spinning your wheels and no matter how determined you are that you are making no progress. Push on, Pisces. You are too dedicated to your goals to let anyone stand in your way. You may feel a strong desire to take care of someone close to you. In turn you may receive the support from the you need to help you succeed.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Animals 1

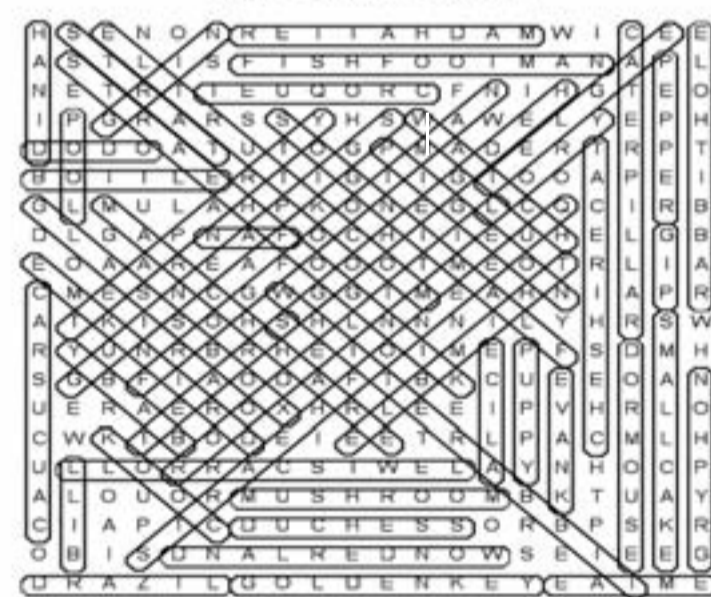
Find and circle all of the animals that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional animal.



- |            |         |             |            |            |
|------------|---------|-------------|------------|------------|
| AARDVARK   | DONKEY  | HIPPOTAMUS  | OTTER      | SALMON     |
| ALLIGATOR  | DOVE    | JACKAL      | PANTHER    | SLOTH      |
| BABOON     | EAGLE   | JELLYFISH   | PARROT     | SWAN       |
| BARRACUDA  | ELK     | KIWI        | PEACOCK    | SWORDFISH  |
| BEAR       | FERRET  | LEOPARD     | FELICAN    | TIGER      |
| BISON      | FOX     | LION        | FIG        | TORTOISE   |
| CAMEL      | GECKO   | LLAMA       | PORCUPINE  | TROUT      |
| CHIMPANZEE | GOAT    | MACAW       | QUAIL      | TURKEY     |
| CHINCHILLA | GOPHER  | MEADOWLARK  | RACCOON    | VULTURE    |
| COBRA      | HAMSTER | MINK        | RAVEN      | WOLVERINE  |
| COUGAR     | HAWK    | MOOSE       | REINDEER   | WOODPECKER |
| CROW       | HERON   | NIGHTINGALE | ROADRUNNER | WREN       |

Yesterday's Solution

Alice in Wonderland



- |              |              |                |                 |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ALICE        | DUCHESS      | KING OF HEARTS | POOL            |
| BABY         | EAGLET       | SHRIVE         | PUPPY           |
| BILL         | EAT ME       | LEWIS CARROLL  | QUEEN OF HEARTS |
| BOTTLE       | FAN          | LITTLE DOOR    | RABBIT HOLE     |
| CATERPILLAR  | FISH FOOTMAN | LIZARD         | SMALL CAKE      |
| CAULCUS RACE | FLASHINGOS   | LORY           | TARTS           |
| CHESHIRE CAT | FROGFOOTMAN  | MAD HATTER     | TEA PARTY       |
| COOK         | GLASS BOX    | MARCH HARE     | TEARS           |
| CROQUET      | GOLDEN KEY   | MOCK TURTLE    | THIMBLE         |
| SHAH         | GRIN         | MUSHROOM       | WATCH           |
| DODD         | GRYPHON      | PEPPER         | WHITE RABBIT    |
| DORMOUSE     | GUINEA PIGS  | FIG            | WONDERLAND      |
| DRINK ME     | HEDGEHOGS    | FIGION         |                 |

The hidden message is:  
NO WISE FISH WOULD GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT A PORPOISE

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

MONDAY, JULY 22, 2019



A mural by French street artist Popay adorns the side of a building in Vigo, northwestern Spain. — AFP

## Lavender BACK IN FASHION WITH FRENCH FARMERS

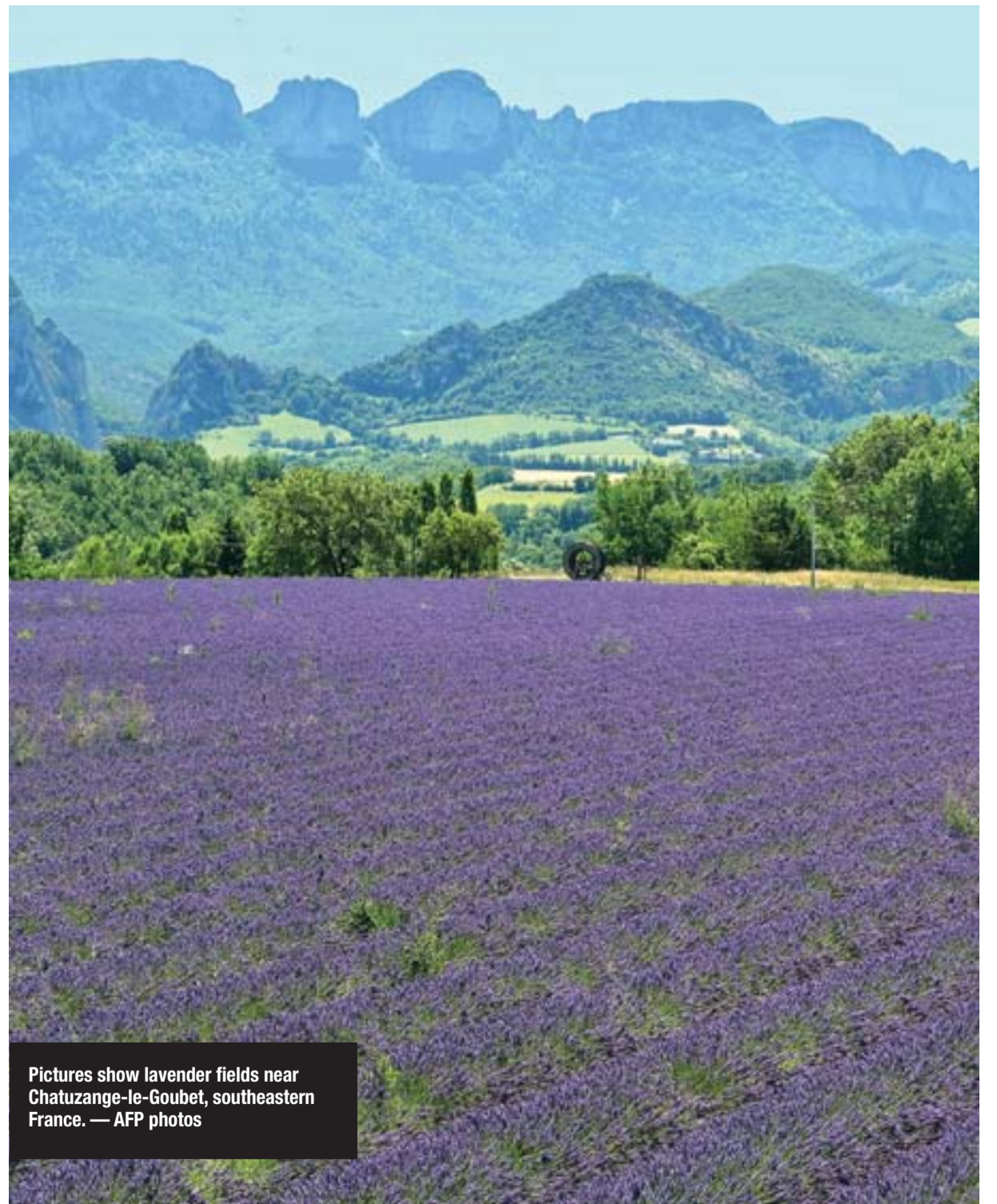


Working its way across a purple-green field in southern France, a claw-fitted tractor harvests plants of lavender destined to become essential oil as a traditional sector stages a modest comeback. "They are slightly grey because they are starting to wilt, it is the best point for the quantity and quality of essential oils," explains Vincent Jamonet who runs the operation in the Drome region of southeastern France. The plants are fed into a hopper and taken to a nearby distillery.

Also nearby, fields of lavandin, a hybrid variety that provides greater quantity and resists bacteria, soak up the sun against a muted backdrop of the Vercors mountain range. The scent of Lavandin resembles that of camphor, which is not a sweet-smelling as lavender. The Jamonet family have planted 100 hectares (250 acres) of aromatic plants, one-fifth of which are organic. They hope to extend their crop surface to 150 hectares in the future.

One motivation is to improve regional biodiversity, another is that "revenues are a little better than with crops like corn, wheat or barley," Jamonet says. Thanks to the increasing popularity of aromatherapies, French lavender is staging a comeback from years of decline brought on by bacterial infestations. Perfume plants that can also be used in cosmetics, medicines and household products "are the only crop in France whose surface is increasing," notes Laurent Quadrio of the regional Drome agriculture organization.

They still represent a tiny fraction of the country's millions of hectares of cultivated land, but have expanded from 2010 to 2016 by around 40 percent to 53,000 hectares (130,000 acres), while cropland in general is being nibbled away by spreading urban areas. The number of producers has grown from 1,000 to around 1,400 and France now also has 120 distilleries. "It's a sector where you can earn a living, and where young farmers can get started," says Alain Aubanel, head of the Cihel federation that follows essential oil production.



Pictures show lavender fields near Chatuzange-le-Goubet, southeastern France. — AFP photos

### Bulgarian challenge

Oil from lavender destined for perfumes, aromatherapy and cosmetics sells for around 100 to 150 euros (\$110-\$170) a kilo, while lavandin, used in detergents and soaps, sold last year for 28-40 euros, which was nonetheless a rise of 20 percent from the previous year and 30 percent over the past five years, Aubanel says. However, France now has to contend with Bulgaria, which became the world leader in traditional lavender production last year and is aiming for a record crop in 2019, he notes.

With Bulgaria aiming to produce 600 tonnes this year, double its output in 2018, it will surpass French production by five times. Instead of trying to compete on volume or cost, French farmers are aiming to produce a higher quality product. "A modest wine from the Ardeche region is not the same as a great Bordeaux," Aubanel says by way of analogy. "The big French companies, Dior, Chanel, Guerlain, L'Occitane, L'Oreal, Yves Rocher all buy French lavender," he adds. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Music &amp; Movies

## 'Avengers' to break 'Avatar' all-time record this weekend: Disney

Marvel's "Avengers: Endgame" will become the highest-grossing film of all time this weekend, parent company Disney said in a statement Saturday. The smash hit was just \$500,000 behind the decade-old \$2,789.7 million record set by James Cameron's "Avatar" as of Friday, and "will close this gap by tomorrow," it said. The announcement was timed to coincide with the appearance of Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige at San Diego Comic-Con, the world's biggest pop culture fan convention, where he set out a packed schedule of new movies and television shows set in the "Marvel Cinematic Universe."

"I've just heard from our folks in Disney distribution that within a matter of days 'Avengers: Endgame' will be

the biggest film in history," said Feige. "You have to shout out to James Cameron who held that title for a long time. If you adjust for inflation he still holds the title, and he'll probably get the title again as soon as he puts out another movie." "But for right now today in Hall H, thanks to you, Avengers: Endgame is the biggest film of all time," Feige added to a loud ovation.

The Disney statement announcing the imminent record said the Avatar box office figure had been adjusted upward to reflect additional reissue grosses in overseas territories over the past several years. The figure for Endgame had also been altered by "reconciliation" of overseas grosses "as the film approaches the end of its run," the statement said. Both films are now owned by

Disney following its takeover of 21st Century Fox. Disney co-chairman Alan Horn thanked "fans around the world who lifted Avengers: Endgame to these historic heights." "Of course, even with the passage of a decade, the impact of James Cameron's Avatar remains as powerful as ever, and the astonishing achievements of both of these films are ongoing proof of the power of movies," he added. — AFP

President of Marvel Studios Kevin Feige (left) and US actress Scarlett Johansson speak on stage for the Marvel panel in Hall H of the Convention Center during Comic Con in San Diego, California. — AFP



## Trump offers to guarantee bail for rapper ASAP Rocky

US President Donald Trump offered Saturday to guarantee the bail of rapper ASAP Rocky, detained in Sweden on suspicion of assault following a street brawl. Trump tweeted that he had spoken with Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, who he said gave assurances that the singer would be treated fairly. "Likewise, I assured him that ASAP was not a flight risk and offered to personally vouch for his bail, or an alternative," Trump wrote. There is no system of bail in Sweden.

Trump said he and Lofven had agreed to speak again over the next 48 hours. Lofven's spokesman Toni Eriksson described the 20-minute phone call as "friendly and respectful". The prime minister "made certain to emphasize the complete independence of the Swedish judicial system, prosecutors and courts," Eriksson said in an emailed statement. "He underlined that in Sweden everyone is equal before the law and that the government cannot and will not attempt to influence the legal proceedings." Follow-up conversations may take place, "but nothing has been booked or planned," he added.



In this file photo ASAP Rocky attends Rihanna's 4th Annual Diamond Ball at Cipriani Wall Street in New York City. — AFP

Fans, fellow artists and US Congress members have campaigned for the 30-year-old artist, whose real name is Rakim Mayers, to be freed since his arrest on July 3 following the fight on June 30. Prosecutors had faced a deadline on Friday to press charges or release the artist. They requested an extension to finish the probe, and the Stockholm District Court granted it, setting a new deadline of July 25.

Trump intervened after an appeal to him from rapper Kanye West and his wife Kim Kardashian. Mayer has claimed he was acting in self-defense after two young men harassed and followed him and his entourage. Three other people were arrested alongside Mayer and one of them-the rapper's bodyguard-was later released. Part of the incident was captured on amateur video published by entertainment outlet TMZ.

In the video, the rapper, who was in Stockholm for a concert, can be seen throwing one of the men into the street and then aiming several punches at him while he is down. But Mayers posted his own videos on Instagram showing the lead-up to the clash, in which the young man can be seen arguing with the rapper, who repeatedly asks the man and his friend to stop following them. One of the young men can also be seen hitting a member of the artist's entourage. — AFP

## Emotional Patrick Stewart unveils new Star Trek

An emotional Patrick Stewart said he was "deliriously happy" to be returning to Star Trek a generation later, telling San Diego Comic-Con that "you cannot have too many franchises in a career." Stewart will reprise his fan-favorite role as Jean-Luc Picard in CBS's "Star Trek: Picard" after almost two decades, and presented unseen footage to a packed theater at the world's biggest pop culture fan convention. "We never know, do we, when our best moment will be—and that is now," he said.

His voice choking, Stewart described battling overwhelming emotions when shooting the final scenes of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" years ago, and how he had felt reluctant to return to the sci-fi franchise until meeting a writing team including Pulitzer-winning author—and now showrunner—Michael Chabon. "As soon as we began talking in the writers' room, that powerful emotion came surging



US actress Angelina Jolie arrives on stage. — AFP photos



US-Mexican actress Salma Hayek arrives onstage.



British actor Benedict Cumberbatch reacts on stage as the crowd sings Happy Birthday to him during the Marvel panel.



British actor Tom Hiddleston during the Marvel panel.



(From left) Florence Pugh, O. T. Fagbenle, Rachel Weisz and Scarlett Johansson speak at the Marvel Studios Panel.

## STAR-STUDED MARVEL FILMS STORM COMIC-CON AS 'ENDGAME' CLAIMS RECORD

Marvel's all-conquering superheroes ripped through Comic-Con Saturday as the next batch of blockbuster movies were revealed to a hysterical crowd and Disney declared the wait for "Avengers: Endgame" to break the global box office record over Hollywood A-listers Angelina Jolie, Salma Hayek and Rachel Weisz will join the most lucrative franchise in film history, it was revealed in an announcement prompting a collective fan meltdown and ending frenzied speculation over the films' future. They appeared on stage in San Diego alongside Scarlett Johansson. Chris Hemsworth, Natalie Portman and others who will return in the upcoming—and sure to be multi-billion-grossing—movies.

"I can spend 90 minutes talking about what we've done or I can spend some time talking about what we're about to do," Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige told the world's largest pop-culture fan convention. Giant screens in Hall H revealed a timeline of films and television shows scheduled for the next two years including new outings for popular characters Thor, Black Widow, Doctor Strange and Loki.

Feige also confirmed sequels to "Black Panther," "Guardians of the Galaxy," and "Captain Marvel" without providing details. He finished the show—the most anticipated of the four-day event—by announcing that Oscar-winner Mahershala Ali will front a "Blade" reboot.

## Record wait over?

The Marvel films have collectively grossed over \$22 billion at the global box office. Jolie and Hayek will front ensemble film "The Eternals" in November 2020. It will be

followed in February 2021 by "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," the first Marvel superhero film to be led by an Asian actor. Mega-budget shows to air on Disney+, the new streaming service from Marvel's parent company, include "Wandavision" starring Elizabeth Olsen, and Tom Hiddleston's "Loki."

Marvel's next round of new films kick off with Johansson's "Black Widow" in May. Disney simultaneously announced that the series' most successful film, Endgame, will become the highest-grossing movie of all time this weekend. It was just \$500,000 behind the \$2,789.7 million record set by James Cameron's "Avatar," and "will close this gap by tomorrow," it said. "You have to shout out to James Cameron who held that title for a long time," said Feige. "But for right now today in Hall H, thanks to you, Avengers: Endgame is the biggest film of all time." Both films are owned by Disney following its takeover of 21st Century Fox, and had their box office figures revised upwards due to new receipts data, it said.

## 'Tripping out'

Earlier, an emotional Patrick Stewart said he was "deliriously happy" to be returning to "Star Trek" a generation later, declaring that "you cannot have too many franchises in a career." British actor Stewart, 79, will reprise his fan-favorite role as Jean-Luc Picard in CBS's "Star Trek: Picard" after almost two decades.

His voice choking, Stewart said he had felt reluctant to return to the multi-billion-dollar sci-fi franchise until meeting a writing team including Pulitzer-winning author—and now showrunner—Michael Chabon. "As soon as we

began talking in the writers' room, that powerful emotion came surging back," he said.

The trailer revealed the surprise return of other popular characters including Data (Brent Spiner) and Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan). Unseen footage showed an age-worn, soul-searching Picard struggling to adjust to life back on Earth. Elsewhere, producers of The CW's "Batwoman" screened a pilot of the first superhero TV show led by an openly lesbian character. The pioneering show has stirred controversy in some of the internet's darker depths.

Star Ruby Rose missed the event due to ongoing filming, but executive Caroline Dries told a panel event that the studio was proud to promote diversity and representation. HBO revealed a trailer for season three of smash futuristic sci-fi Westworld, where the action has shifted from a Wild West-inspired theme park to one set under Nazi occupation. New cast member Aaron Paul said joining the show had been an "out of body" experience.

"I'm tripping out right now, I'm such a psychotic fan of Westworld," said the "Breaking Bad" actor, who plays a construction worker. TBS unveiled thriller "Snowpiercer" in which survivors circle a post-apocalyptic frozen Earth in a continuously rolling train. Based on a 2013 film and starring Oscar-winner Jennifer Connelly, the TV show depicts conflict between the train's starkly divided classes. Released in spring 2020, it has already been renewed for a second season. — AFP



Alex Kurtzman, Dominic Patten, Patrick Stewart, Isa Briones, and Santiago Cabrera speak at the "Enter The Star Trek Universe" Panel during 2019 Comic-Con International at San Diego Convention Center. — AFP

back. And it's still right here on this platform and it's not going to go away," he said.

The trailer revealed the surprise return of other popular characters including Data (Brent Spiner) and Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) who then joined the cast and producers on stage. It showed an age-worn, soul-searching Picard living

back on Earth on his vineyard, and struggling to reacquaint. A mysterious young woman comes to him for help, before a few brief clips showing him seemingly back aboard a spaceship. Jonathan Del Arco and Jonathan Frakes will also return, it was announced.

Star Trek, a multi-billion-dollar cultural phenomenon

beloved by fans worldwide, turned 50 years old in 2016. "The Next Generation" ran from 1987 to 1994 with 178 episodes, and spawned several films, the last in 2002. The new show is not a direct sequel, and will be more character-driven, said executive producer Akiva Goldsman.

Stewart recalled how his children had explained to him what Star Trek was when he was first approached as a Shakespearean stage actor in the 1980s. "I'm deliriously happy that now I have four grandchildren who have the same attitude to what we're doing," he said, describing how his grandson Mason had begged to be allowed to see the trailer first. "That gave me great satisfaction." Addressing his decision to return after years of dismissing the possibility out of hand, the "X-Men" star said: "I knew that something very unusual was going to happen. I wanted to be a part of it."

"To imagine that something like this might go ahead and I wouldn't be there, would have been just too defeatist." The panel also featured footage from the upcoming third season of "Star Trek: Discovery," set a thousand years further into the future, and new light-hearted animated Trek comedy "Lower Decks" from Mike McMahan ("Rick and Morty"). "Picard" will be released in early 2020. — AFP



People take part in the annual rowing 'Regatta on Drina' near Bajina Basta, east Serbia. — AFP photos



People take part in the annual rowing 'Regatta on Drina'.



People hold a giant rose inflatable flamingos as they take part in the annual rowing 'Regatta on Drina' near Bajina Basta.



People take part in the annual rowing 'Regatta on Drina'.

## WITH NO SEA, REGATTA ON DRINA IS EQUALLY GOOD FOR SERBS

Having no natural access to sea does not stop Serbs from organizing a regatta: thousands this weekend boarded a motley fleet of craft floating on river waters for the "Regatta on Drina". The annual celebration of exuberance and excess starts with pallets of beer, often consumed before the improvised fleet casts off by the end of the morning in the western Serbian town of Bajina Basta on the Drina river, a natural border with Bosnia.

With Serbian flags fluttering in the wind and "turbo-folk" music cranked up, hundreds of inflatable dinghies, makeshift rafts, lorry inner-tubes, even giant inflatable flamingos and the occasional boat float and row for hours on the Drina cheered on by the crowds and bands on the bank. The flotilla is lit up by torches and flares that cover the river with a multicolored mist as the boom of firecrackers echoes across the water. Tying up their boats together,

the participants turn them into dancing podiums, floating slowly toward the foot of the Bosnian mountains.

The landlocked Balkan state cannot claim to be a tourism power like neighboring Croatia with its spectacular Dalmatian coast, but the sector is growing with 3.4 million tourists in 2018, half of whom were foreigners. Considered as a European capital known for its night-life and strong contemporary art, Belgrade is one of Serbia's

attractions. But green tourism in often mountainous and wild landscapes, such as Bajina Basta, is becoming increasingly popular. The authorities hope that tourism will bring 2.5 billion euros (\$2.8 billion) in 2020 and the double in 2025. — AFP

## Cardin retrospective at NY museum aims to revive his once-bold image

The Brooklyn Museum in New York is staging the first big Pierre Cardin retrospective in decades in an effort to help refresh a once-bold image that had faded a bit over the years. "Who is Pierre Cardin?" That is the question museum curator Matthew Yokobosky said he wants to answer with "Pierre Cardin: Future Fashion," which opened Saturday and continues until January 5, 2020. The exhibit takes visitors back to the designer's beginnings, with no sign of the more than 850 licensed Cardin products cranked out since the late 1960s.

Those mass market products helped popularize Cardin's name but they also diluted his identity, so much so that his vast contribution is rarely if ever mentioned, with the notable exception of Jean-Paul Gaultier, who once worked for Cardin. Rather than focus on the mass-market fashions, Yokobosky concentrated on one-of-a-kind couture pieces from the personal archives of the fashion house, generously opened to him by the 97-year-old creator himself.

At center stage are the bold, inspired, avant-garde choices of the 1960s, as the museum introduces a generation that knows Cardin mainly through his classic shirts to

the radicality of his early days. "The '60s were so innovative for him," Yokobosky said. "I don't think he ever slept. He had so many ideas. He didn't stop, he just kept creating."

### 'It's all about movement'

A tailor's apprentice at the age of 14, Cardin knew how to make the clothes he designed, a rare skill in today's fashion world but which helped him translate ideas into reality. "That's the reason he was able to do new designs," Yokobosky said, "because he really understood construction."

Among his most emblematic creations: the high-waisted dress titled "Carwash," with its vertical cords that swished back and forth when a woman moved; and the dress with a "kinetic back," reminiscent of a Calder mobile made of wool crepe. "It's all about movement," Yokobosky explained. Cardin also made playful use of new materials, notably vinyl and Cardine - his own invention.

### 'No small imagination'

The exhibit plays on Cardin's fascination with futurism

and space exploration. Some tight-fitting outfits are reminiscent of the uniforms worn on TV series "Star Trek," with a unisex spirit ahead of their time. His "Computer" coat was inspired by the integrated circuit boards Cardin had seen in IBM computers. Yokobosky wanted to show both "who Mr. Cardin is and how fantastic his designs are."

The exhibit pays homage to Cardin not just as designer but as creator—someone who found inspiration in everything from rubberized molds of food from Maxim's—the famed Paris restaurant he bought in 1981 after frequenting it for years—to Chinese pagodas. "He thinks really big all the time," Yokobosky said. "There's no small imagination." The museum aims to take the exhibit to other US cities, then to Asia, where Cardin has long been popular. Yokobosky hopes the show will end up in France, where Cardin, who hates flying, would himself be able to see it. "It'd be amazing." — AFP



Brazilian theater director Roberto Alvim gestures during an interview with AFP in Sao Paulo, Brazil. —AFP

## Brazil's new performing arts chief in anti-left 'crusade'

Creating a "cultural war machine" in Brazil's performing arts is renowned theater director Roberto Alvim's mission as he seeks to eradicate progressive ideas from the stage. Recently handpicked by President Jair Bolsonaro to head the performing arts center at the National Arts Foundation, Alvim's appointment is the latest salvo against artists since Bolsonaro took power in January. One of Alvim's first acts has been a call to arms on social media to likeminded professionals in the sector to stop the spread of "cultural Marxism."

"I did not invent the cultural war. It has been brutally waged by the left for at least 30 years," Alvim, 46, told AFP. "Any artist that is not aligned with the left is boycotted, defamed and prevented from working—like what happened to me." Now, Alvim wants to "balance the game." His weapons will be "fostering and giving material means for the creation of works of art" that are not based on progressive ideas.

It will also involve "stimulating the creation of companies with a classical repertoire, as well as the writing of contemporary works based on the technical complexity and depth of those of Shakespeare" and others. Likening his mission to that of the Crusades, Alvim says he is fighting "for our Judeo-Christian civilization, against its destruction by the progressive forces."

### Left-right tensions

The ultraconservative wave that swept Bolsonaro to power in the 2018 elections has alarmed artists, who are concerned about potential funding cuts and restrictions on their freedom of expression. Kleber Mendonca, director of the satirical western "Bacurau" which premiered at Cannes in May, has compared life in the Bolsonaro era to "dystopia." "The film was screened at a time when there's this whole idea of destroying culture in Brazil, and the arts in general," Mendonca told reporters at the time.

Soon after taking power in January, Bolsonaro scrapped the culture ministry, which was absorbed into the new citizenship ministry. The former army captain said Thursday that public money should not be used to produce films such as "Bruna Surfistinha"—called "Confessions of a Brazilian Call Girl" in English—which was released in 2011 and tells the story of a prostitute.

Eduardo Wolf, a philosopher and arts editor in Sao Paulo, said the left is partly responsible for triggering the "cultural war." "The ideological radicalization of the left has fueled tensions" and provoked "a reaction of a regressive right, adept at conspiracy theories and authoritarian responses," Wolf said. Veteran film-maker Luiz Carlos Barreto said "the idea of cultural Marxism is nonsense." "Art is manifested by the free flow of ideas," Barreto said. "No government can treat artistic expression with pre-conceived ideas, ideologies." —AFP



Clothes and dresses are displayed at the Pierre Cardin's "Future Fashion" Exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. — AFP photos



Gold, silver and other metal coins of a Holocaust victim's collection are seen on a velvet tray in the Balatoni Museum.



Metal coins of a Holocaust victim's collection are seen on a velvet tray.

## Buried treasure poses Holocaust puzzle for Hungary museum



An archaeologist, Hungarian Ferenc Redo examines a metal coin of a Holocaust victim's collection in the Balatoni Museum in the town of Keszthely, 200 km west of Budapest. — AFP photos

A vast and "unique" trove of antique and Roman-era coins, unearthed in what was one of Hungary's wartime Jewish ghettos, is proving a conundrum for historians. Thrilled with the chance discovery of the 2,800 gold and silver coins spanning decades and continents, researchers are in the dark however about who collected and then hid them. That the coins were buried under a house whose one-time owner, the likely collector, is presumed to have been murdered in the Holocaust deepens the mystery.

According to a Hungarian Jewish organization, the hoard also exposes how gaps remain in what is known about Hungary's Jews during World War II. The current owners of the house in the town of Keszthely, 190 kilometers (120 miles) southwest of the capital Budapest, stumbled across the coins in February during work on the cellar. They were likely hidden by a Jewish owner who was later deported to a Nazi German death camp in 1944, said Balint Havasi, director of Keszthely's Balatoni Museum where the items are currently exhibited. "It's a priceless collection that can also help us learn about the Holocaust," Havasi told AFP.

### 'Sealed and buried'

In a letter to the museum, the building's current owners explained how they had been digging a hole in the cellar after pumping out groundwater when they came across the hoard. "We slowly dug out five carefully sealed and buried glass jars," reads the letter seen by AFP. "When we opened one of them, we were greeted by an amazing sight, just like in a fairy tale: hundreds of coins, real treasure," it continued. "We hope that it can return to its legal owners one day."

The finders have requested anonymity,

according to the museum, which also declined to reveal the exact location of the house. Although the coins have not been valued, Havasi said that the collection was "unique... in terms of geographic spread, time period—from antiquity to 20th century—and the large volume".

### 'Tragically, not continued'

Almost half of the coins are from Pannonia, which was a province of the Roman Empire that covers modern-day western Hungary, according to Ferenc Redo, an archaeologist and coin expert. The others are mostly antique coins from around the world, including pre- and post-revolutionary France, 19th century German territories, and both Tsarist- and Soviet-era Russia. Many are from even farther afield, including South America, Africa, Asia and British-ruled India. "It's sad that someone put together such a worldwide collection but tragically could not continue," Redo told AFP.

### Engraved clues?

As well as the owner's identity, how the collection was amassed is unknown. Engravings on jewelry also found in the jars suggest that the items may have belonged to the Pollak family, who were well-known Jewish traders in Keszthely before World War II. Almost all of the town's once flourishing Jewish population died in the Holocaust, and no descendants of the possible owners have yet been traced.

In May 1944, the town's Jews were forced into a ghetto, of which the house where the coins were found was a part, said Gabor Rejto, head of the EMIH Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation in Keszthely. Two months later, they were transported from Hungary to the Auschwitz death camp, he added. A total of 829



Jews—around 15 percent of the town's population at the time—were deported from Keszthely. Only 64 of them survived. Today, the community has around a dozen members, Rejto said.

Metal coins of a Holocaust victim's collection are seen on a velvet tray.

### 'Unanswered questions'

"The discovery shows how there are still many unanswered questions about the Holocaust in Hungary," he told AFP. An estimated 600,000 Hungarian Jews were killed in the Holocaust, most in Auschwitz. Many victims were never identified or remains found. The museum plans to digitalize the collection and enlist archivists and historians to scour the Pollak family tree in search of descendants. If no owner can be found, the collection will revert to ownership by the state. "We also hope the exhibition will spread the word about the coins, and that a legal owner will turn up," Havasi said. — AFP



Water buffaloes participate in a race in Chonburi.

## Prized Thai buffaloes show off speed in muddy race

Splashing across a muddy field with men sprinting behind them, prized water buffaloes blow past cheering spectators in eastern Thailand yesterday in a rare display of bovine speed. Tractors have largely replaced the big beasts in daily work but farmers in Chonburi have preserved the more than 100-year-old racing custom to mark annual rice plantings. "Before, we used buffaloes to plough rice fields. When our work was done, we held the buffalo race as relaxation," said owner Thanin Sae-tiew, 52. "It has since become our tradition."

Pairs of horned buffaloes thunder to the finish line while a racer grasping a red plough tries to hold on until the end or face disqualification—and excited laughter from the crowd. It's less about winning the 3,000 baht (\$100) prize than pride in victory, though the best buffaloes can fetch higher prices when sold. And they are treated to fancier food than most livestock. Racer Noppadol Pornpaipan, 22, says his animals are fed boiled rice, eggs and chicken extract in the evening.

But come race day they get a special meal of rice mixed with a little shark fin soup that supposedly boosts buffalo energy. The normally slow-moving buffaloes can still be seen dotting the rural landscape but the rise of mecha-



A handler tends to water buffaloes as they participate in a water buffalo race in Chonburi. — AFP photos

nized farming has made them less essential. Some worry that younger generations will lose touch with older ways of life but the race provides a way of keeping the history alive. "I feel good that I'm preserving the Thai buffaloes so they will not disappear," Noppadol said. — AFP



Water buffaloes participate in a race in Chonburi.



Handlers tend to water buffaloes as they participate in a water buffalo race.



A handler tends to water buffaloes as they participate in a water buffalo race.





A US flag flies overhead as people enjoy the Astoria Pool on a hot afternoon in the borough of Queens, New York City, on Saturday. The US is sweating through a weekend of extremely hot weather, with major cities including New York and Washington bracing for temperatures close to or exceeding 38 degrees Celsius. — AFP

## Camel dung fuels cement production in northern UAE

**RAS AL-KHAIMAH:** Thousands of tons of camel dung are being used to fuel cement production in the northern United Arab Emirates, cutting emissions and keeping animal waste out of landfill. Under a government-run

scheme, farmers in the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah drop off camel excrement at collection stations. It is then blended with coal to power the boiler at a large cement factory. "People started to laugh, believe me," said the general manager of Gulf Cement Company, Mohamed Ahmed Ali Ebrahim, describing the moment the waste management agency proposed the idea.

But after running tests, the company found two tons of camel waste could replace one ton of coal. "We heard from our grandfathers that they used cow dung for heating. But nobody had thought about the camel waste itself," said Ebrahim, whose factory now uses 50 tons of

camel dung a day. Cow dung has been tapped as a resource to generate energy from the United States, to Zimbabwe to China. Camel dung is a rarer fuel but one well suited to Ras al-Khaimah, one of the seven emirates that make up the UAE, home to around 9,000 camels used in milk production, racing and beauty contests.

Each camel produces some 8 kg of feces daily - far more than farmers use as fertilizer. A blend of one part dung to nine parts coal burns steadily - essential for cement ovens that work continuously at up to 1,400 degrees Celsius. The main aim of the project is to prevent camel waste from ending up in the dump, with the

government seeking to divert 75 percent of all waste from landfill by 2021.

"We don't make use of it. The most important thing is for the area to be clean, for the camels to be clean," said farm owner Ahmed Al-Khatiri, stroking camel calves in the afternoon sun as a farm worker sifted dung for collection. Authorities want more cement plants to adopt the practice and start using chicken and industrial waste, as well as sludge from water treatment, said Sonia Ytaurte Nasser, executive director of the waste management agency. "Waste is just a resource in the wrong place," she said. — Reuters

## Philippines goes wild for 'force...'

Continued from Page 1

The man had a heart illness and could have gotten "excited" and "overjoyed" upon watching Thurman getting knocked down, Marikina police said, but added doctors had yet to issue a medical report. Pacquiao is considered a national hero by many as his athletic feats have put the Philippines on the boxing map. His rags-to-riches rise from high school dropout to millionaire champion is a source of inspiration in a nation mired in poverty.

In Pacquiao's heyday, authorities said his fights stopped traffic and crime. But Pacquiao, also an elected

senator, stirred controversy when he entered politics as he endorsed the death penalty and issued gay slurs in 2016 for which he later apologized. President Rodrigo Duterte's spokesman hailed his ally's victory. "Our pound-for-pound King did not show any signs of intimidation as he embodied what a Filipino spirit is all about - a fighter," Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

Some Pacquiao fans said while their idol had proven his mettle, he showed signs of ageing. "He can still fight but not a long bout because he gets tired. A younger fighter would have more endurance than an older fighter," said Willieboy Ramos, 50. Pacquiao, who reversed a 2016 decision to retire, repeatedly says boxing is his passion and he still feels young. Philippine boxing chief Ed Picson said only Pacquiao could decide on his future. "His place in world boxing as a legend is secure ... He has nothing more to prove," said Picson, secretary general of the Association of Boxing Alliances in the Philippines. — AFP

Britain's warship in the Gulf, the HMS Montrose, contacted an Iranian patrol vessel in an effort to ward off a boarding of the Stena Impero, according to radio messages provided to Reuters by maritime security firm Dryad Global.

"Please confirm that you are not intending to violate international law by unlawfully attempting to board," the Montrose said in the radio message. The Iranian patrol boat is heard instructing the Stena Impero to alter course. Responding to the Montrose, it says it intends to "inspect the ship for security purposes".

Separately, Iran said one of its tankers held in Saudi Arabia since being forced to seek repairs at Jeddah port has been released and is returning to the Islamic republic. The Happiness 1 tanker "has been released following negotiations and is now moving toward Persian Gulf waters," said transport minister Mohammad Eslami, quoted by state news agency IRNA. The ship had been forced to seek repairs in Saudi Arabia in early May after suffering "engine failure and loss of control", the Iranian oil ministry's SHANA news agency said at the time.

The rare docking came despite escalating tensions between staunch enemies Iran and Saudi Arabia. "Yesterday, with follow-ups from the ports and maritime authority the issue was resolved," Eslami said. "The tanker is moving towards the Persian Gulf with the permission of the Jeddah port, towed by two Iranian tug boats."

Iran's national tanker company said in a statement that on top of "political and diplomatic negotiations" the tanker's release required "the payment of related costs" demanded by Saudi Arabia. According to a July 2 report by Mehr News Agency, Iran paid "over \$10 million to Jeddah port for repairs and maintenance" of the tanker.

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016, after its missions in the country were attacked in demonstrations over the kingdom executing prominent Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. They still lack direct diplomatic channels, and Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi yesterday thanked "Switzerland and Oman as well as related Saudi parties for offering services and facilities" to resolve the issue. — Agencies

## Israel boasts of 'killing Iranians'...

Continued from Page 1

Asked if he feared that Israel would not receive the backing of the United States in the case of a conflict with Iran, Hanegbi suggested that Tehran would avoid such a scenario. "Israel is the only country in the world that has been killing Iranians for two years," he said. "We strike the Iranians hundreds of times in Syria. Sometimes we acknowledge it and sometimes foreign reports reveal it." He added that the Iranians "understand that Israel means business".

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria against what it says are Iranian and Hezbollah military targets. It has vowed to keep Iran from entrenching itself militarily there. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke in a similar vein last week with cadets at the national security college. "At the moment, the only army in the world to fight Iran is the Israeli army," he said. Earlier this month, Netanyahu warned that Israeli fighter jets "can reach anywhere in the Middle East, including Iran".

Meanwhile, Israel's foreign ministry said yesterday the country will this week host six journalists from Arab coun-

tries including, for the first time, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The visit comes as Israel seeks to improve ties with Gulf Arab countries, with which it has no formal diplomatic relations. Those states have resisted offering Israel formal recognition due to its continuing occupation of Palestinian territory, but their relations have warmed of late, largely due to common concerns over Iran.

The journalists will visit Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, parliament and holy sites, among others, the foreign ministry said in a statement. It said it had "the aim of exposing the journalists - some of whom come from countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel - to Israeli positions on diplomatic and geopolitical issues". Jordan is also participating, the ministry said. Jordan is one of only two Arab countries, along with Egypt, that have diplomatic relations with Israel.

In another recent sign of a thaw, a group of Israeli journalists attended the US-led economic conference on Israeli-Palestinian peace in the Gulf state of Bahrain in late June. The Palestinian leadership boycotted the conference, citing a series of moves against them by US President Donald Trump's administration. On Thursday, Israeli foreign minister Israel Katz said that he had met his Bahraini counterpart publicly for the first time during a visit to Washington last week. Katz also recently visited Abu Dhabi for a UN climate conference, where he met United Nations chief Antonio Guterres and an unnamed "high ranking UAE official". — AFP

## Britain weighing response; Saudis...

Continued from Page 1

effect at the start of May. Washington imposed the sanctions after President Donald Trump pulled out of a deal signed by his predecessor Barack Obama, which had provided Iran access to world trade in return for curbs on its nuclear program.

European countries including Britain have been caught in the middle. They disagreed with the US decision to quit the nuclear deal but have so far failed to offer Iran another way to receive the deal's promised economic benefits. Britain was thrust more directly into the confrontation on July 4, when its Royal Marines seized an Iranian tanker off the coast of Gibraltar. Britain accused it of violating sanctions on Syria, prompting repeated Iranian threats of retaliation.

While Iran's official line is that its capture of the Stena Impero was because of safety issues, it has done little to hide that the move was retaliatory. The tactics it used - with masked troops rappelling from helicopters - matched those the British had used two weeks before. Parliament speaker Ali Larijani spelled it out more clearly yesterday, telling a parliament session: "The Revolutionary Guards responded to Britain's hijacking of the Iranian tanker."

Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, blamed Washington and Trump's hawkish national security adviser John Bolton for luring Britain into conflict. "Having failed to lure @realDonaldTrump into War of the Century ... @AmbJohnBolton is turning his venom against the UK in hopes of dragging it into a quagmire," Zarif wrote on Twitter. "Only prudence and foresight can thwart such ploys."

In a letter to the UN Security Council, Britain said the Stena Impero was approached by Iranian forces in Omani territorial waters, where it was exercising its lawful right of passage, and that the action "constitutes illegal interference".

## Halal sees growth in Russia economy...

Continued from Page 1

The multi pointed to an annual exhibition of halal goods and producers in the Muslim-majority Russian republic of Tatarstan, which this year saw its biggest ever turnout, as an example of the sector's growth. Tatar officials told Russian media the halal food market accounted for around 7 billion rubles a year (\$110 million) - or just over three percent of the region's gross agricultural output. But they said the sector was growing at a rate of between 10 and 15 percent a year.

The certification center said Russia's overall halal economy was also growing at a rate of 15 percent every year, but declined to give a breakdown of its figures. Russia's overall economy is stagnant, with the government predicting growth of only 1.3 percent this year, after 2.3 percent growth in 2018.

Alif, a Moscow-based cosmetics firm, is a new company at the forefront of the move towards exporting halal goods from Russia. Manager Halima Hosman told AFP that, a year after launching, Alif's products were being sold in the Muslim-majority Russian republics of Dagestan and Chechnya, as well as ex-Soviet

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. "Our priority targets for export now are France, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia," she said, adding that the company had non-financial support from the halal certification center.

The 28-year-old, who was born into an Orthodox Christian family in southern Moldova but converted to Islam as a teen, said promoting halal products was about more than business. "It's a way for people who don't know about Islam, who aren't Muslim, to find out about what 'halal' actually means," Hosman added of the alcohol- and animal fats-free cosmetics. Lilit Gevorgyan, principal economist for Russia and former Soviet states at IHS Markit, said the growth in Russia's halal economy seemed impressive but was coming from a "very low base".

Further growth in the sector was likely to be driven more by export than by domestic demand, she said. This is mainly because household incomes have yet to recover from a 2014 crisis caused by a fall in global oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's annexation of Crimea. "Halal food is more expensive due to its production costs, and for Russian consumers... every ruble counts," she said, adding that much of Russia's Muslim community was non-practicing. Changing Muslim countries' perception of Russia will be key if Moscow is serious about increasing halal exports, Gevorgyan added. "Branding is important," she said, adding that Russia - as yet - is not seen as a major halal producer. — AFP





## Sports

# Tearful Sun roars to gold as Peaty crushes world record

## The challenge for England is to embrace the hype

GWANGJU: China's Sun Yang captured a record fourth 400 meters freestyle world title in an acrimonious final yesterday, before Britain's Adam Peaty produced an eye-popping world breaststroke record. Sun pumped his fists and let out a visceral roar after a pulsating race brimming with bad vibes and capped by rival Mack Horton's refusal to join the Chinese giant on the podium after the medal ceremony in Gwangju.

"Not everyone likes me — I don't care," growled Sun when asked about Horton's snub. "It's OK if you don't respect me personally, but at the victory ceremony — which is a sincere occasion — you should show respect to my country." The controversial triple Olympic gold medalist slapped the water in delight, pointing to his flag-waving Chinese fans as he savored an emotional victory over Australian Horton and his 10th world championship gold medal.

Sun's latest career milestone comes after fresh allegations in a leaked FINA doping report that claimed the Chinese giant smashed blood samples with a hammer after being visited by testers last year. The defending champion clocked three minutes, 42.44 seconds with Horton taking silver in 3:43.17 and Italian Gabriele Detti bronze in 3:43.23 in a repeat of the 2017 podium in Budapest. As he climbed out of the pool, Sun belatedly at the crowd before breaking down in tears.

The bad blood between him and Horton continued with the Australian refusing to take part in the traditional photo after the playing of the Chinese national anthem. The pair have clashed in the past with the Aussie, before beating him at the 2016 Rio Olympics, calling Sun a "drug cheat" over a three-month suspension for a banned stimulant Sun said he took for a heart condition. "I don't think I need to say anything," sniffed

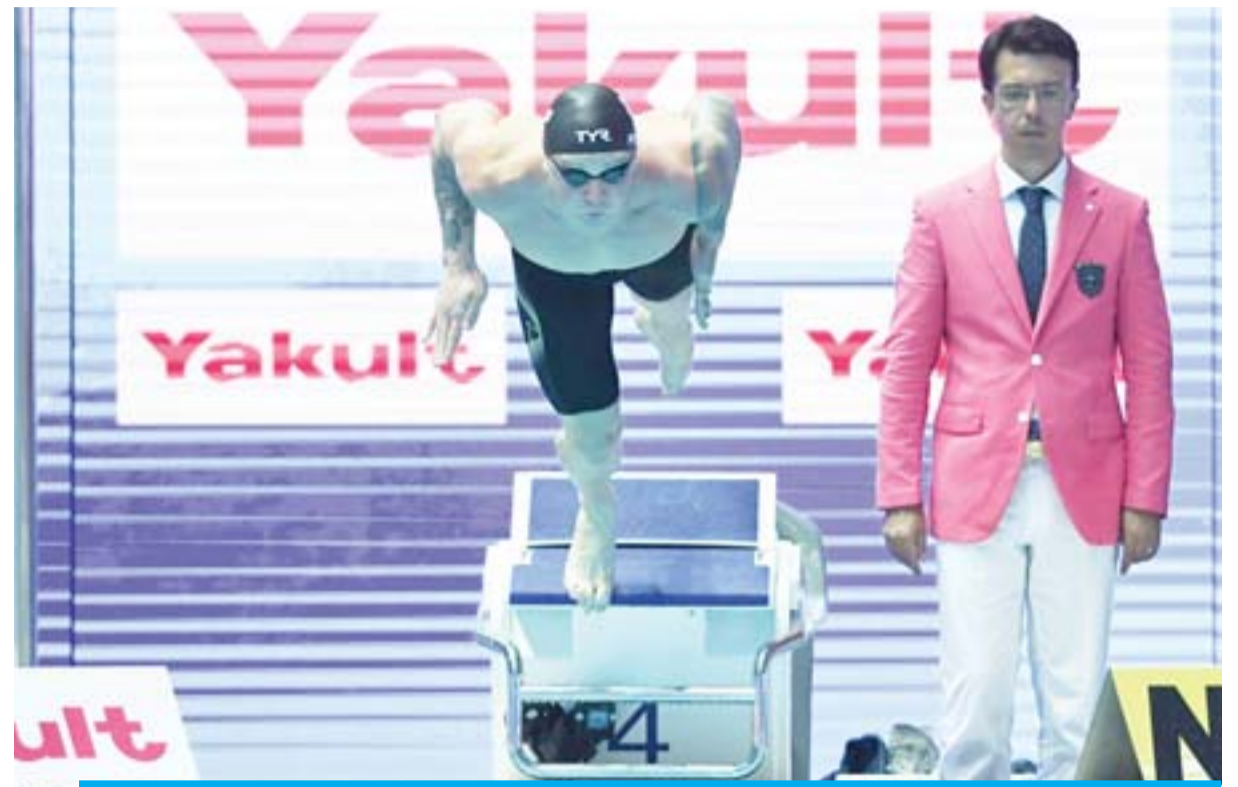
Horton. "I think his actions and how it's been handled speaks louder than anything I could say."

### Peaty magic

Peaty smashed his own 100 meters breaststroke world record, the Olympic champion storming home to win his semi-final in a time of 56.88 seconds — becoming the first swimmer to break the 57-second barrier and eclipsing his previous mark by more than two tenths. The tattooed pin-up, who has not been beaten for five years over the 100 meters in major competition, turned 0.12 inside world record pace as fellow Briton James Wilby struggled to keep up.

"There's no other word except for incredible," said Peaty. "I've been chasing that for three years now, ever since I touched that wall in Rio and I knew I could go faster." After the tension of Sun's gold medal — the first of the eight-day pool competition — Aussie teenager Ariarne Titmus stunned American great Katie Ledecky to win the women's 400m freestyle final. The three-time champion looked in complete control until she faded coming off the final turn, allowing Titmus to storm past her to bag her first world title.

"The time wasn't a surprise," said Titmus, who clocked 3:58.76 to beat Ledecky by more than a second. "I knew I probably had that in me but it's pretty surreal at the moment — Katie's a true champion." A deflated Ledecky admitted: "This stings a little. I need to rebound from this, get my fight back." Caeleb Dressel, who swept seven medals at the 2017 world championships, led the American men's 4x100m freestyle team to gold in a meet record of 3:09.06, retaining their title by almost a second from Russia in silver. Hearing of the latest spat between Sun and



GWANGJU: Britain's Adam Peaty dives to compete in the semi-final of the men's 100m breaststroke event during the swimming competition at the 2019 World Championships at Nambu University Municipal Aquatics Center. — AFP

Horton, Dressel said: "I'm sure there's some strong feelings there — swimming's getting intense, jeez!" Cate Campbell anchored Australia to gold in the women's 4x100m free in the evening's final race. — AFP

## Asian Boxing Championship preparations praised

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Supervisors at the Asian Boxing Federation lauded preparations for the Asian Boxing Championship, which will be held from Aug 1st until the 9th, under the patronage of President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, during their visit and listened to detailed explanations by heads of sub-committees.

Executive Director of the Asian Boxing Federation Ali Salama, Sports Director Omar Al-Jabri, and Administrative Director Bassam Ghanim toured the hotels where delegations are set to stay, as well as the Kuwait Sports Club hall where the matches will be held. The tour was accompanied by Kuwait Boxing



Federation Chairman Mohammad Al-Enezi.

Al-Enezi lauded the cooperation of AFB in order to ensure the tournament's success, adding that the supervisors did not notice any issues and expressed their appreciation of the preparations. Al-Enezi said Kuwait Boxing Team returned from its foreign camp in Azerbaijan, which was successful as per

the matches held there and contributed to increasing their technical and physical readiness and hoped for good results during the tournament. The technical department selected 14 boxers who will participate in the tournament and will be in a local camp to continue their training until the championship starts.

## India look to the future with West Indies squad

NEW DELHI: Indian selectors yesterday announced fresh, young faces for the upcoming West Indies tour following the shock semi-final exit in the recent World Cup, and amid speculation about the future of veteran MS Dhoni. India start a tour of the West Indies on August 3 that includes two Tests, three T20 internationals and three one-day internationals.

Chief selector MSK Prasad said Virat Kohli would continue to lead in all three formats against the West Indies. The tour is seen as the start of India's rebuilding process after the World Cup disappointment. Rishabh Pant, a young and flamboyant wicketkeeper batsman who was also a part of India's recent World Cup campaign, was named in all three squads for the upcoming tour. The other youngsters are Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey and the yet uncapped fast bowler Navdeep Saini, who were included in the white ball T20 and ODI squads.

The selectors also included uncapped leg spinner Rahul Chahar for the T20s. Prasad brushed aside speculation about the future of former skipper and wicket-keeper batsman Dhoni after his form dipped during the World Cup. "Retirement is purely individual. Legendary cricketer like MS Dhoni, he knows when to retire," Prasad said. "We don't need to discuss anything on it, because first of all he is not available. Second, we have already started grooming some youngsters." Reports on Saturday said Dhoni was skipping the West Indies tour to spend two months in the army, but is not planning to walk away from the game. There have been calls from some quarters for Dhoni, 38,



MUMBAI: India's cricket captain Virat Kohli (C) leaves after attending a selection committee meeting. — AFP

to retire. He remains very popular across India for leading the side to 2011 World Cup triumph.

### India Test squad

Virat Kohli (captain), Ajinkya Rahane, Mayank Agarwal, KL Rahul, C Pujara, Hanuma Vihari, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Wriddhiman Saha, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav

### India ODI squad

Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma (VC), Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kedar Jadhav, Mohammed Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Khaleel Ahmed, Navdeep Saini

### India T20 squad

Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Krunal Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Rahul Chahar, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Khaleel Ahmed, Deepak Chahar, Navdeep Saini — AFP

## Fraser-Pryce cruises as Obiri shines in 5000 meters

LONDON: Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce fired a warning to her sprint rivals ahead of the world championships as Hellen Obiri set the fastest time of the year in the 5000 metres at the London Anniversary Games yesterday. Jamaica's Fraser-Pryce got away quickly in the 100m final and never looked like being caught by home favourite Dina Asher-Smith, winning in a time of 10.78 seconds.

World 200m champion Dafne Schippers was disqualified after a false start at the Diamond League event. "It's a long season and I've been training and training," said 32-year-old Fraser-Pryce, who won Olympic 100m gold in 2008 and repeated the feat on the same London track four years later. "To come out here and run 10.78 is a fabulous time. I feel good. The aim is to make sure when I get to Doha (world championships) that I'm on point." No Americans were in the 100m field at the London Stadium because their world championship qualifiers are coming up this week. Kenya's Obiri, world champion in the women's 5000m, posted a time of 14 minutes 20.36 seconds — the best of the year so far. Dutch runner Sifan Hassan, who broke the 23-year-old women's mile record in Monaco last week, had to settle for bronze.

"I am so happy because this is my favourite track and I have done my best and I ran the way I wanted to," said Obiri. "In the last lap I was thinking, work hard and I said to myself when I went past Hassan: 'let me go and see if you can catch me'. I have been training well and this will help when I defend my title in Doha." Britain's Lynsey Sharp was a popular winner in the women's 800m, outlasting Australia's Catriona Bisset to win in a time of 1:58.61. In other women's track events, Jamaica's Rushell Clayton won the 400m hurdles in 54.16 sec. Germany's Malaika Mihambo won the women's long jump with a leap of 7.02 meters. — AFP

## Refugee swimmer Mardini rising fast after fleeing war

GWANGJU: Syrian refugee Yusra Mardini, who almost drowned at sea fleeing her war-torn country four years ago, heaved a deep sigh after failing to set a personal best at the world swimming championships yesterday. Representing FINA's independent athletes team, the 21-year-old looked up at the giant scoreboard and winced at her time of 1min 8.79sec in the 100 meters butterfly heats in South Korea. "I'm not very happy actually," Mardini said.

"I had some problems with my shoulder but I'm back in training. I still have the 100m freestyle and I'm looking forward to that." Mardini's time was more than 12 seconds slower than that of reigning champion Sarah Sjöström and 47th overall, but she has come a long way since risking her life crossing from Izmir in Turkey to the Greek island of Lesbos in the summer of 2015. Thirty minutes into that treacherous journey, the motor on their dinghy cut out and the tiny vessel, carrying 20 people rather than the six or seven it was designed for, threatened to capsiz.

As the only people who could swim, Mardini and her sister Sarah jumped into the water to push and pull the stricken dinghy for over three hours until they finally reached the shore. "I arrived in Greece in only jeans and a T-shirt," said Mardini, who also swims in the 100m freestyle later this week. "Even my shoes were gone." Mardini famously competed at the Rio Olympics a year later under the refugee flag.

### Rocket strikes

"In the beginning I refused to be in a refugee team because I was afraid people would think I got the chance because of my story," said Mardini, who now lives with her family in Berlin. "I wanted to earn it. But then I realized I had a big opportunity to represent those people — so I took the chance and I never regretted it," she added. "Rio was amazing. It was really exciting to see the reaction of people to the team. Now I'm representing millions of displaced people around the world and it really makes me proud." — AFP



GWANGJU: Syrian refugee Yusra Mardini reacts after competing in a heat for the women's 100m butterfly event during the swimming competition at the 2019 World Championships at Nambu University Municipal Aquatics Center. — AFP

## Cricket World Cup final umpire admits 'error'

COLOMBO: The umpire who awarded England six runs from a freak overthrow in the last over of the World Cup final has admitted he made an "error" and should have given one run fewer, a report said yesterday. A throw to the stumps deflected off the bat of a diving Ben Stokes as he tried to complete a second run and raced to the boundary, with Sri Lankan umpire Kumar Dharmasena awarding six.

Three balls later the scores at 50 overs were tied as England reached 241 all out replying to New Zealand's 241-8. It took the nail-biting final to a Super Over which again was tied but England lifted the trophy by virtue of having scored more boundaries. Critics, including former leading umpire Simon Taufel, said England should have been awarded five runs, not six, as the batsmen had not

crossed for the second run at the moment the ball was thrown.

Former Sri Lankan Test player Dharmasena told the Sunday Times he did not have the benefit of television replays which showed the batsmen had not crossed. "I agree that there was an error of judgment when I see it on TV replays now," Dharmasena, who was umpiring the final with South Africa's Marais Erasmus, told the local Sunday Times. "But we did not have the luxury of TV replays at the ground and I do not regret the decision I made."

Dharmasena said he signaled six after consulting the other match officials. "So, I did consult the leg umpire (Erasmus) through the communication system which is heard by all other umpires and the match referee," he told the newspaper. "While they cannot check TV replays, they all confirmed that the batsmen have completed the second run. This is when I made my decision." Taufel had told Fox Sports Australia the umpires made a "clear mistake" as the batsmen had not crossed for their second run. — AFP

Sports

# Kane 93rd minute stunner earns Spurs the victory over Juventus

'It's probably one of the best goals of my career'

**SINGAPORE:** Harry Kane scored a stunning 93rd minute winner from the halfway line as Tottenham Hotspur edged Juventus 3-2 in an entertaining pre-season friendly in Singapore yesterday. The England captain latched onto Lucas Moura's short pass and launched a first-time shot high over a scrambling substitute keeper Wojciech Szczesny as Spurs rallied past new manager Maurizio Sarri's Italian champions in front of a delighted National Stadium crowd.

"It's probably one of the best goals of my career. I noticed the keeper was often off of his line and thought if I get a chance to shoot I will and it just went in," Kane said in a post-match interview. A youthful Spurs dominated the first half as Juventus struggled to adapt to their new coach's "Sarri-ball" tactic of playing out from the back with short, quick passes. Instead of moving the ball forward, Juventus often found themselves defending desperately after being caught in possession as Spurs pressed high up the pitch with the Premier League side going on to take a deserved lead on the half-hour mark.

**'Very competitive'**

Son Heung-min started the move by holding up play and feeding Troy Parrott for a clear run at Gianluigi Buffon in the Juventus goal, with the 17-year-old forward's low strike parried by the veteran keeper straight into the path of an unmarked Erik Lamela for a routine

tap-in. "It was a very good game, very competitive. To be honest, we are still short in our preparations and I wasn't planning to play this way so early in the pre-season ... we were still hoping to give some players more rest after a long campaign," Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino said.

"The result was not the most important thing today, the performance was and how we continue our preparations for the upcoming season." Juventus had more success after the break when they increased their tempo and went more direct, and halftime substitute Gonzalo Higuain levelled the score in the 56th minute with a drilled strike after exchanging neat passes with Federico Bernardeschi.

Buoyed by the equalizer, Juventus were soon ahead when Cristiano Ronaldo arrived late to drive home Mattia De Sciglio's cutback four minutes later, leaving to rapturous applause by an adoring crowd when he was substituted immediately after scoring. Spurs were level in the 65th minute, however, when Champions League semi-final hero Lucas Higuain fired home record signing Tanguy Ndombele's low cross, the French midfielder finding the Brazilian with his first touch after coming on as a substitute. Kane and Higuain both squandered good chances to score winning goals in the final 10 minutes before the England striker prevented the contest going to a penalty shootout with the most brilliant of strikes. — AFP



**SINGAPORE:** Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane (R) kicks the ball during the International Champions Cup football match between Juventus and Tottenham Hotspur. — AFP

## Bayern beat Madrid in Hazard's Real debut

**LOS ANGELES:** Bayern Munich spoiled Eden Hazard's Real Madrid debut, downing the Spanish giants 3-1 in a friendly in Houston Saturday despite goalkeeper Sven Ulreich's sending off. Corentin Tolisso, Robert Lewandowski and Serge Gnabry had given Bundesliga champions Bayern a comfortable 3-0 lead before recent Real Madrid signing Rodrygo grabbed a consolation goal with a brilliant free kick.

That followed Ulreich's departure in the 81st for a foul on Brazilian teen Rodrygo outside the area. Rodrygo, Luka Jovic and Ferland Mendy all made their debuts for rebuilding Real Madrid — all coming on at halftime as Zinedine Zidane changed his entire side. Hazard's first outing in a Madrid jersey since his high-priced move from Chelsea had dominated the headlines.

But despite getting a starting nod he made little impact at the NRG Stadium — home of the NFL's Houston Texans, where the European giants produced plenty of lively end-to-end action from the kickoff. It needed a stellar display from Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer to keep Real Madrid at bay. Bayern led at the interval thanks to Tolisso's 15th-minute strike.

Thomas Muller freed Kingsley Coman whose cross made it to Tolisso — who was denied by Real Madrid keeper Thibaut Courtois on his first attempt but slotted home the rebound. Down a goal with half-time approaching Real Madrid poured it on. Karim Benzema let a golden chance go



**HOUSTON:** Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema (L) and Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng fight for the ball during their International Champions Cup match. — AFP

begging in the 43rd, meeting a cross from Isco but knocking his effort wide. Neuer came up with another impressive save in the 45th, diving to his right to grab Luka Modric's effort from 10 yards out of the air.

Courtois fended off a blast from Coman in first-half injury time to keep Bayern from stretching their advantage before the break. While Real Madrid applied plenty of pressure, Hazard was circumspect, often opting to pass off to his new teammates. The closest the 28-year old Belgian came to his first Real Madrid goal was in the 39th minute, when he found space on the

left and bent a shot toward the far post only for Neuer to punch it away.

Zidane's wholesale changes at the interval did nothing to further Real Madrid's cause, even though they controlled possession early in the second half. Lewandowski doubled Bayern's lead in the 67th controlling a high ball from Niklas Sule, turning and firing into the bottom corner. Two minutes later Madrid gave the ball away deep in their own end and an unmarked Gnabry was able to control the ball and fire past Kyleor Navas in goal. — AFP

## Arsenal Next Gen ready to 'take on the world': Saka

**CHARLOTTE:** After impressing in a starting role for Arsenal in their 3-0 win over Fiorentina on Saturday, 17-year-old Bukayo Saka said he is ready to "take on the world" as part of an exciting next generation of talent. Arsenal made it three wins from three on their tour of the United States, including two in the International Champions Cup, with victory in humid conditions in Charlotte, where youngsters again came to the fore.

With Arsenal yet to make a major signing in the summer transfer window, coach Unai Emery has instead utilized some of the young talent at his disposal in the US, and has been rewarded as all eight of Arsenal's pre-season goals have been scored by youngsters. One of those is Saka, who again shone in a wide role against Fiorentina, and now believes that he and his fellow proteges have what it takes to go far.

"The players coming up from the academy are so special," Saka said. "The next generation of us can be in this Arsenal team and take on the world. The boss is doing a good job of managing all of us, helping us to progress every day and to learn. I just have to keep pushing. Showing the boss what I can do and when the time comes I am ready to play. When I get the chance then I can take it." Saka also hailed the influence of new Arsenal assistant coach Freddie Ljungberg, who has been promoted from the

Under-23s role to work alongside Emery, bringing a wide knowledge of his former charges.

"From the Under-15s I worked with him," Saka added. "It has been a long journey but I feel like we both deserve it. Freddie helps Unai know who we are, tells him our strengths and weaknesses and comes to us individually and tells us what we need to do from Unai. Unai does not have to speak to us directly, Freddie comes to us and tells us what we need to do. It makes the transition from the academy to the first team much smoother."

**Emery being patient**

Arsenal manager Unai Emery said he is happy to be patient in the transfer market and will wait for the right player to become available. "Really I am with patience because we want to choose the best solution," Emery said. "Some players are very expensive and we are waiting for this possibility. We don't want now to go to the second line of players. We are waiting. We have very good players. We have very good young players."

"We are aware also that we need to improve some players in this squad. I want to sign one, two, three or four players only if we can be sure they are coming to improve our team." Arsenal have been linked with William Saliba in the British press, in a deal that would see the defender return to current club Saint-Etienne in France on loan as part of the deal.

Emery, however, said there were a number of possibilities floating around and he was in constant contact with sporting director Edu and head of football Raul Sanllehi, while they also spoke with the club's owners the Kroenke family. "There are a lot of names. The club is working. Edu is very close to me and Raul," Emery said. — Reuters

## Solskjaer targets more signings in search for fast start

**SINGAPORE:** Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said Friday the club is working on one or two more signings as he hopes to hit the ground running in the new campaign after stuttering badly towards the end of last season. Solskjaer enjoyed a stellar start after replacing Jose Mourinho in December, winning 10 and drawing two of his first 12 Premier League fixtures.

But a stunning slump in form saw the side finish sixth in the standings, 32 points behind champions Manchester City. Aware that his imbalanced squad needed a major overhaul, Solskjaer has already recruited midfielder Daniel James and fullback Aaron Wan-Bissaka, with the club strongly linked to England central defender Harry Maguire and Portuguese playmaker Bruno Fernandes. "We are working on one or two (signings). My objective here though is we have got to get ready for the games and the training sessions," the Norwegian told reporters in Singapore on the eve of a pre-season friendly against Inter Milan.

"We are working on putting a squad together which can compete, we have lots of ways which can play. The Premier League is a very competitive league. Our aim is to focus



**SINGAPORE:** Manchester United's manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (C) sits with his coaching staff during the International Champions Cup football match between Manchester United and Inter Milan. — AFP

on ourselves, we have to be better and be our only focus. I am sure we will get closer to the top." United have already seen midfielder Ander Herrera depart for Paris Saint-Germain and while question marks remain over the futures of Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku and the talismanic Paul Pogba, Solskjaer is continuing to prepare for the new season with the Frenchman central to his plans.

"I am looking to get everyone to get their form back to when we first came in. It is not just about Pogba, it is about all of us as a team," he said, adding that Lukaku was not fit

to face the Italian side on Saturday. "Everyone has been spot on in pre-season in training and the games. I have been very encouraged. The start of the season is important, I don't think many of these players have had a pre-season like this in many years. In the first eight or 10 games, you don't win anything but you can lose the chance to win anything." United complete their pre-season program with matches against Tottenham Hotspur, Kristiansund and AC Milan before opening their Premier League campaign at home to Chelsea on August 11. — AFP

## Griezmann 'cried' when Barca move finally happened

**MADRID:** Antoine Griezmann admitted yesterday that he was moved to tears of happiness when his big-money move to Barcelona finally came through after a controversial exit from former club Atletico Madrid. The World Cup winner is in Tokyo with Barca ahead of a clash with Chelsea on Tuesday after the La Liga giants shelled out 120 million euros (\$135 million) to match his release clause amid a blistering row between the player and the two clubs.

"I called my father and I started crying with joy because the transfer was all done, it all was over," Griezmann said in an interview with sports daily Marca. "I was with my friends, with my wife, with my children and it was an incredible moment." The 28-year-old added he was targeting European glory with Barcelona after two humiliating exits for the Catalans from the Champions League in the last two years-to Roma and Liverpool-after throwing away commanding first-leg leads. "If you ask the fans, they will tell you (they want to win

all three titles (La Liga, Champions League and Copa del Rey), and that goes for the players and the leaders too, and me too," he said. "We have a team to win everything. It's difficult but we will have to work for it."

Shortly after Barca had announced the signing of Griezmann, Atletico complained they and the Frenchman had negotiated the deal before the buy-out price dropped from 200 million euros at the start of July, adding that they had already "begun appropriate procedures" to defend their "rights and legitimate interests". Spanish media claim that Atletico will go to FIFA to argue that Barca owe them more than the fee they eventually paid earlier this month.

Griezmann almost signed with Barcelona a year ago but instead opted in June 2018 to sign a new five-year deal at the Wanda Metropolitano. But in May this year he announced he would be leaving at the end of the season, with Atletico claiming he told them of a deal with Barca before a 3-0 defeat to Juventus which dumped them out of the Champions League at the last 16 stage.

Griezmann scored 133 goals in 257 appearances for Atletico since he joined them in 2014 from Basque club Real Sociedad, who scouted the attacker when he was just 14. He helped Atletico lift the Europa League in 2018 and won the World Cup with France last year. He was top scorer at Euro 2016 despite hosts France losing in the final to Portugal. — AFP

**25** Depleted New Zealand survive onslaught to win 450th Test

**26** Tearful Sun roars to gold as Peaty crushes world record

**27** Kane 93rd minute stunner earns Spurs the victory over Juventus



LAS VEGAS: Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao (C) celebrates after defeating US boxer Keith Thurman during their WBA super world welterweight title fight at the MGM Grand Garden Arena on July 20, 2019 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Pacquiao won a 12 round split decision. — AFP photos

## Pacquiao downs Thurman to capture WBA crown

### 40-year-old Filipino legend comes through with a vintage performance

LAS VEGAS: Filipino legend Manny Pacquiao rolled back the years to become the oldest welterweight champion in boxing history with a thrilling split decision victory over WBA champion Keith Thurman on Saturday. The 40-year-old Pacquiao, 10 years older than the previously undefeated Thurman, delivered a vintage performance before a sell-out MGM Grand Garden Arena crowd of 14,356 which included former welterweight king Floyd Mayweather.

Pacquiao floored Thurman with an electrifying combination in the first round and remained on the front foot throughout a pulsating 12-round duel. Although the bloodied Thurman rallied in the later rounds to narrow Pacquiao's lead, the judges scored it in the Filipino's favor. Two judges scored it 115-112 for Pacquiao with the third scoring it 114-113 for Thurman. "It was fun," Pacquiao said afterwards. "My opponent is a good fighter and boxer. He was strong."

Thurman had riled Pacquiao in the build-up to the fight by vowing to "crucify" his deeply religious opponent, and later promising to send the Filipino icon into retirement. Pacquiao, who improved to 62-7-2

with 39 knockouts, was gracious in victory. "I'm not that kind of boxer who talks a lot; we were just promoting the fight," he said. "I want to clap my opponent. He's very tough. He can fight. This guy is a warrior." Pacquiao, who earned an estimated \$20 million from Saturday's fight, is now a major player in the competitive welterweight division once again after capturing Thurman's WBA welterweight 'super' champion belt.

The eight-division world champion said he will now return to the Philippines to resume his work as a senator before deciding on his next move inside the ring. "I think I will fight next year," said Pacquiao, who was due to fly out of Las Vegas for the Philippines shortly after the fight. "I will go back to the Philippines and work and then make a decision."

#### No complaints

Thurman meanwhile had few complaints in defeat, embracing Pacquiao after the final bell in recognition of an epic contest. "I knew it was too close," Thurman said. "He got the knockdown so he had momentum in round one. "This was a beautiful night of

boxing. I wish I had a little bit more output to go toe to toe. I felt like he was getting a little bit tired, but he did have experience in the ring. I would love the rematch."

Official statistics showed Pacquiao landed 195 of 686 punches thrown, while Thurman connected with 210 of 571. "My numbers just weren't up to par to be victorious tonight," Thurman said. "The fight just flew by. I knew I had to do something big in the later rounds but he was just too good." Earlier, a pumped-up Pacquiao had danced into the ring to the strains of Rocky movie anthem "Eye of the Tiger" to bring the crowd to its feet.

Deafening chants of "Manny, Manny" rolled around the packed arena as Pacquiao immediately set about building an advantage. Towards the end of the round, the crowd erupted as Pacquiao sent Thurman crashing to the canvas, uncorking a left to the ribs before detonating a right hand on the American's jaw. That set the tone for the early rounds, with Pacquiao urging Thurman on before using his superior handspeed and footwork to bamboozle his rival.



LAS VEGAS: Manny Pacquiao (R) slams a right to the face of Keith Thurman during their WBA super world welterweight title fight at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

A dazzling combination wobbled Thurman again at the end of the second, and Pacquiao delighted the crowd with an Ali shuffle as the round closed. Although Thurman improved, Pacquiao was able to control the tempo and had Thurman in

trouble again in the fifth round with blood pouring from his nose. Thurman though was in no mood to surrender and he came back strongly, snapping Pacquiao's head back with a right cross-left jab combination in the seventh round. — AFP

## Zidane is a 'disgrace' over Bale exit comments: Agent

LOS ANGELES: Gareth Bale's agent has branded Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane a "disgrace" after the Frenchman revealed that the La Liga giants were ready to offload the Wales star in a matter of days. Zidane left Bale out of the Real squad for Saturday's 3-1 exhibition loss to Bayern Munich in Houston, and after the match he revealed he had been dropped because the club were "working on his departure", adding that he hoped it happens soon, "for

everyone's sake".

"Zidane is a disgrace, he shows no respect for a player that has done so much for Real Madrid," Bale's agent Jonathan Barnett told AFP. Asked whether Bale is close to leaving Madrid, Barnett added: "We are working on it". Bale has been frozen out in Madrid by Zidane despite helping his side to a Spanish title and four Champions League titles since arriving from Tottenham Hotspur six years ago. His brace, including a brilliant bicycle kick, sank Liverpool in the 2018 final, but he was shunted aside by Zidane as soon as he returned to the Real bench in early March.

After Zidane's reappointment, Bale played 90 minutes in just three of the remaining 11 matches, was left out completely four times and frequently substituted when he did play. He was denied a chance to say goodbye at the end of last

season when he was left on the bench in a 2-0 loss to Real Betis that saw Zidane's side submerged with boos and whistles. However Zidane insists that his treatment of the 30-year-old forward "is nothing personal", even though Bale would be welcome at some of Europe's biggest clubs.

"There comes a time when things are done because they need to be done," Zidane added after the Bayern defeat. "I've not got anything against him. We have to make decisions and change things, that's all there is to it. "I don't know if this will happen in 24 or 48 hours' time. The situation will change and it's for the best for everyone." Bale joined Real Madrid to much fanfare, a blockbuster transfer fee and a big salary that may prove to be an obstacle for all but the richest teams. He has three seasons left on his deal and has been linked to Tottenham, Manchester United and Bayern. — Reuters



HOUSTON: Real Madrid head coach Zinedine Zidane coaches against Bayern Munich during their International Champions Cup match on July 20, 2019 at NRG Stadium. — AFP