

Friday Times

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Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Think green

There is no doubt that the heat is intense these days, perhaps in most parts of the world. But the heat in Kuwait seems harsher and drier as well. We shouldn't wonder why Kuwait is hotter than other places - it's due to its desert location! Why don't we use this heat as an opportunity to cultivate greenery in homes and streets? Why not create green thinking to reduce the heat and cope with desertification and climate change?

I think we need to reshape the way we deal with the environmental situation and climate change, with a new green approach. I recently reviewed the UN Environment website for more information on climate change and desertification. I found important information and I quote: "Climate change is expected to have implications on where people can settle, grow food, build cities, and rely on functioning ecosystems for the services they provide. In many places, temperature changes and sea-level rise are already putting ecosystems under stress and affecting human well-being."

Therefore, the demand for serious action in order to face the truth of this matter should not be disputed or ignored. There are also many recommendations concerning the concept of green economy, reduction of chemical pollution, and handling and utilization of waste. We need to have a new approach that understands the seriousness of this subject. We are watching pollutants surrounding us, especially noise and rising temperatures. There should be practical solutions and stringent legal legislation against those who contribute to polluting the environment. The concept of green buildings, using environment-friendly materials and reducing energy consumption should be activated.

In 2014, an official statement was issued by the Environment Public Authority to translate the country's desertification control strategy into integrated projects, including conservation and improvement of soil characteristics, improved pastures, dune stabilization, seed production and protection and rehabilitation of biodiversity. The statement mentioned that there are several cooperation pro-



grams between the government agency and environmental bodies, which is good, but today we are on the threshold of 2020 and I wonder about the role of environmental awareness and public participation in this important subject.

I also support moves to increase our greening efforts and encouraging citizens and expats to form new agricultural areas to boost green thinking and reflect the positive results on the environment. I believe that it is a wonderful call to maintain facilities and spread environmental awareness in the community, especially when we see public beaches after the weekend filled with dirt and trash. This is everyone's mistake.

Every year in October, the country holds a "green week",

but one week is not enough in a country like Kuwait where we need to raise awareness among people about the importance of green thinking, protecting the environment, contributing to increasing green areas and maintaining public utilities and the aesthetic environment. There should be a reduction in acts of sabotage and supporting young children to participate in volunteer teams for the greening of Kuwait. We need to continue activities throughout the year and not be limited to one week.

In Kuwait there are public facilities for walking and it is necessary to exploit these areas as centers for public awareness of greening and preserving the environment. Efforts by the government alone cannot succeed.

Fire safety at home/car

By Ben Garcia

Temperatures in Kuwait are soaring to more than 50 degrees Celsius in the shade and much higher inside a vehicle or under direct sunlight. This summer, there have been several fires already, gutting vehicles, flats and commercial buildings. A recent blaze took place in a parking lot in Maidan Hawally, which reportedly started from a cigarette lighter left inside a vehicle, and as a result, three cars were burned. The caretaker of a nearby building said he saw the fire when it started.

"The fire was small, but in a few seconds it became huge and consumed nearby cars. I called the fire department and they come in a few minutes," Hamoud, a harris (caretaker) of a nearby building told Kuwait Times. The fire fighters were able to extinguish the blaze, but only after three cars were charred.

"My car was near to the one on fire. The firefighters were quick, so thank God my car was spared. If they were delayed a bit, proba-

bly my car would have been next," said Jun, a Filipino resident.

The Kuwait Fire Department has come up with several warnings and guidelines for the public to follow to prevent fires at home or in the car.

IN THE CAR

1) Vehicle maintenance/inspection is number one in preventing vehicle fires. High percentages of vehicle fires are caused by poor maintenance, mechanical or electrical failures or malfunctions. Any cracked or blistered hoses must be replaced. Rubber or plastic wirings and insulations when exposed to metals can melt - they must be checked at all times.

2) Avoid putting flammable materials/liquids in the car such as lighters, sodas, perfumes and any type of lithium batteries or gadget batteries.

3) Park your car in the shade or slightly open the windows to prevent accumulation of excessive heat.

4) Avoid pumping a full tank of gasoline as it could spill out and trigger a fire.

5) Do not put too much air in your tyres.

6) Your car, as directed by law, must have a standby fire extinguisher to easily douse any fire in your car.

7) Avoid throwing cigarette butts.

AT HOME

1) Seal holes that can be used by insects or any animals to penetrate your homes. Not only humans search for a cooler place, animals and insects too, like snakes and scorpions, seek a cooler place.

2) Be hydrated, drink more water and bring along liquids at all time.

3) Don't turn on the water heater.

4) Don't put the gas cylinder in direct contact with the sun (whether the spare or full cylinder).

5) Minimize the use of electricity in the house to avoid overloading/tripping.

6) Don't face the sun directly - cover your

head and face with towels, especially if walking under the sun from 10 am to 4 pm.

7) People should place water outside their houses for birds and stray dogs/cats to drink.

8) Keep a fire extinguisher in the home in a safe and easily accessible location.

9) Install a smoke detector or fire alarm in the home and make sure the batteries are fresh and working.

10) Don't leave appliances plugged in while on holiday. Unplug TVs, microwaves, computers, split A/Cs and other devices when not in use or when traveling to avoid electrical fires.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Manpower in Kuwait has issued a directive informing all businesses and establishments to suspend outdoor work (of any kind) from June 1 till the end of August from 11 am till 5 pm. Last week, the highest temperature was recorded in Kuwait of 52.2 degrees Celsius, according to member of the Arab Union of Space and Astronomy Dr Khalid Al-Zaaq of Saudi Arabia.

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PHOTO FEATURE

The art of ceramics in Kuwait



Kuwaiti women make pottery at a handicrafts center. Pottery as an art and handicraft is growing in popularity in Kuwait with several studios now offering workshops and classes for beginners.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



أنواع البريد وأماكن استلامه		
Types of Mail and Delivery Places		
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قسم الطرود الواردة في منطقة الصديق INWARD Parcels SECTION IN SUDEEQ AREA	طرود Parcel	C
مكتب البريد التابع للمنطقة AREA POST OFFICE	مسجل Register	R
مكتب البريد التابع للمنطقة AREA POST OFFICE	بريد عادي ORDINARY MAIL	U/L

تصميم واعداد : مراقب الطرود البريدية سالم المنان
إشراف المجد الوكيل المساعد لقطاع

The labyrinth logic of Kuwait's postal system

By Nawara Fattahova

Finding a parcel sent through regular post is a hunter's game in Kuwait. You might be lucky and end up receiving your package or you may never know where it went after the tracking stops upon arrival in Kuwait. Oftentimes, packages and parcels sent via regular post arrive in Kuwait only to be lost in the system for days, weeks or months. When one finally is able to track it down, the parcel may have been sent to an area entirely different and unconnected with the recipient's address.

Also, not all post offices have the same procedures for receiving parcels. At the regular post office in the addressee's area, the receiver will not pay for any stamp or custom duties, while in the two main offices, they may have to. Of course, a courier service is faster and more reliable, but much more expensive.

After investigating the distribution of parcels to see why a parcel may be sent to an area that doesn't match the receiver's address, it has been found that the end point is often determined by the way in which the parcel was sent. The

accompanying graph shows the letter codes of parcels according to the shipment method and the post office where it will arrive.

For example, if the parcel contains an item bought online, the recipient sometimes has the option to choose the kind of postal service. But in most orders, the buyer is forced to select a certain type of service, which then decides the receiving post office.

Those renting a PO Box at a post office - if they provided this address to the sender - should receive it at this PO Box address. Those who don't have a box can simply write their home or office address to receive the parcel. If the postman goes to the address and doesn't find the recipient, he will take the parcel back to the post office in this area and call the receiver to pick it up from there.

In both these cases - whether the parcel arrives at the area post office or the recipient collects it personally from the postman - the receiver will not pay any kind of fees. But if they receive the parcel at the Hiteen or Sideeq post offices, the receiver will have to pay custom and stamp fees of KD 3.500.

The receiver can check the code of the parcel by the tracking num-



ber. The first letters will show at which post office the parcel will arrive. So if the sender used the EMS post service, it will arrive in Hiteen. Parcels with the letter C will

arrive in Sideeq, while registered parcels with the letter R and ordinary mail with the letters U/L will arrive in the post office of the addressee's area. The receiver can

also track the parcel by entering the tracking number on the postal shipment tracking section of the official website of the ministry of information (www.moc.gov.kw).

1st



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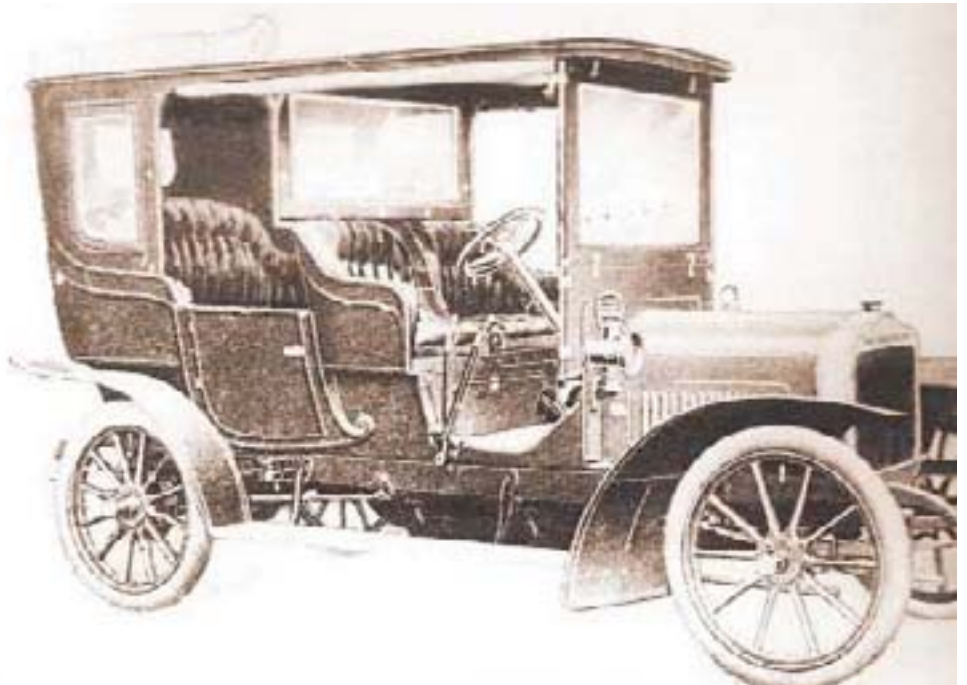
Kuwaitis among first to ride automobiles in Gulf region

KUWAIT: Kuwait took precedence in many fields within the region, including the introduction and usage of automobiles. Kuwait introduced cars over a century ago, when camels, horses and donkeys were still used as means of transportation. In this context, Bassem Abdulaziz Al-Loughani mentions in his book "Cars in Kuwait's history" that the first car appeared in Kuwait in 1911 and Bahrain followed two years later when Sheikh Eisa Al-Khalifa brought one in 1913.

The first vehicle to enter the Najd region (modern Saudi Arabia) was a gift from the Ottoman Empire to the Amir of Hael Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Rashid in 1915. Loughani emphasized that first car used in Kuwait was a Belgian Minerva model imported by Sheikh Mubarak Al-



Hamed Al-Naqeeb, the first Kuwaiti to obtain the right to distribute Ford cars in Kuwait.



The Belgian Minerva automobile was among the earliest vehicles that entered Kuwait. —KUNA photos



The first recorded traffic ticket in Kuwait.

Sabah, but it did not last long because of breakdowns. According to a study conducted by writer Yaqoub Al-Ibrahim, the Kuwaiti people called that particular car the "elephant", because it was a giant vehicle. The second car to enter Kuwait was also a Minerva, which tradesman Jassem bin Mohammed Al-Ibrahim gave to Amir Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, Loughani added.

The first to acquire private cars were Kuwaiti citizens Hamad Al-Khaled and Shamlan bin Saif, each acquiring a Ford, Hilal Al-Mutairi a acquired Hudson, then Hamad Al-Sager and Mulla Saleh bought Overland vehicles. Sheikha Badriya Saud Al-Sabah was considered as the

first Kuwaiti woman to drive a car after her study abroad concluded and she was appointed a supervisor of public health in 1947.

British-made Humber cars were well-known in the fifties and sixties - Kuwait Oil Company workers used them to cross the desert in order to reach oil wells. In the late 1920s, Ali Al-Kulaib Al-Khalid obtained the right to distribute cars under an agreement with Chevrolet, Buick and GMC agents in Iraq. In 1936, Hamed Al-Naqeeb

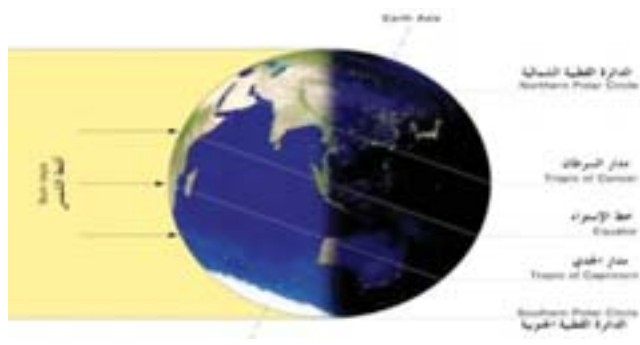
obtained the right to distribute Ford cars.

Loughani mentions the first recorded traffic ticket was handed to Al-Sayed Eisa Yousef Abduljaleel on September 22, 1938, while the first death in Kuwait due to a car accident was in 1937. He adds that Mohammed Al-Sayed Omar, Eisa Saleh and Abdullah Al-Saif were the first Kuwaitis to have a driving license, while the youngest Kuwaiti to obtain a driving license was Sulaiman Al-Othman at age of 14. — KUNA

Kuwait to witness year's longest day

KUWAIT: Kuwait, along with the whole Gulf region, is forecast to witness the longest day of the year tomorrow, when daytime will extend for 14 hours and two minutes and night hours will be nine hours and 58 minutes, Kuwaiti astronomer Khaled Al-Jumaan said on Wednesday. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Jumaan attributed the predicted lengthy day to Kuwait's geographic location in the north of the Arabian Gulf.

Day hours increase in countries located farther north, the remotest region of which, the North Pole, witnesses round-the-clock days for six months in a row. The long day recurs every year due to visible sun movements that also cause extreme heat. — KUNA



Rising temperatures negatively affect productivity, behavior

KUWAIT: A group of academics and physicians agreed that the record rising temperatures in Kuwait have a negative effect on productivity, with the only way out seemingly is to take a leave of absence. On the medical side, health ministry official and spokesman Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti told KUNA the increasing temperature this summer has negative effects on employees, especially those under direct sun exposure like construction workers and others.

Those working outside have a high risk of dehydration and increasing body temperature, which leads to horrific incidents of loss of consciousness and other symptoms, said Shatti, who warned that if left untreated, it might lead to death. At Shuaiba health clinic, between 400 and 500 cases of heat stroke amongst construction workers and emergency staff arrive at the clinic, which is an indication of how serious the matter is, noted Shatti.

He pointed out that Kuwait is carrying out measures to ensure the safety of workers, especially those under direct sun exposure. He mentioned his country recently held the fifth GCC professional safety and healthcare

conference as part of Kuwait's keenness to discuss the matter on a regional level. While heat strokes mainly occur outside, workers within office environments are not safe, considering the record heat wave experienced in Kuwait, commented Shatti, who advised all employees to stay hydrated and avoid direct sun exposure.

Psychologically, most employees in Kuwait have this notion that the summer season equals vacation time, and with the current record temperatures, most Kuwaitis seek havens abroad to avoid the scorching heat, said Dr Nadia Al-Hamdan, professor of psychology at Kuwait University (KU). Heat and exhaustion in general have profound effects on the brain and neurological system, leading to the increase of stress-inducing hormones and other ill effects, Hamdan affirmed.

She added that the increasing heat leads to reactions, which might not be preferable at the workplace; however, the current weather predicament should not dictate one's behavior. Employees should try to compose themselves regardless of the situation and they should avoid conflicts as much as they can, she said.

Providing further academic input, KU's social services professor Dr Hadi Ashkanani called for additional and thorough studies to link heat with negative behavior to determine the causes of conflicts and ways to avoid them. He agreed that the current heat wave had a visible effect on productivity and human activity, noting that it was natural for those working in places which lack methods of cooling to prefer rest than continuing with their tasks. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait upgraded in US human trafficking report

WASHINGTON: The United States yesterday upgraded Kuwait to Tier 2 in its 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report. According to the annual report issued by the US State Department: "The government of Kuwait does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Kuwait was upgraded to Tier 2.

"The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts by deploying its specialized trafficking unit to initiate more criminal investigations of potential trafficking crimes and more prosecutions under the anti-trafficking law. It referred significantly more potential trafficking victims for protective services, operationalized its central recruitment agency in an attempt to hire and better safeguard the rights of hundreds of domestic workers, and increased enforcement of its domestic worker law.

"However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Rather than prosecuting potential criminals for human trafficking, officials continued to routinely use arbitration and administrative penalties to resolve grievances filed by domestic and other migrant workers instead of investigating such cases as human trafficking crimes, and protracted litigation and subsequent appeals processes led most victims to decline to file court cases.

"By not holding traffickers criminally accountable with stringent sentences, the government perpetuated a climate of impunity that failed to deter future crimes. The government did not regularly use standard procedures for proactively identifying victims and continued to detain, pro-

ecute, and deport trafficking victims, including those fleeing forced labor."

In the report, the US added Saudi Arabia and Cuba to its blacklist of countries that it says are not doing enough to fight human trafficking, a designation that could bring sanctions. The State Department faulted ally Saudi Arabia for rampant violations against its vast foreign labor force and accused adversary Cuba of trafficking through its program of sending doctors overseas. Other countries that remained on Tier 3, the worst ranking in the report, included China, Myanmar, North Korea, Russia and Venezuela.

A Tier 3 designation means that the United States can restrict assistance or withdraw support for the country at the International Monetary Fund or other global development bodies. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the United States last year took measures against 22 countries due to the human trafficking designation. "That action and the message that goes with it is very clear - if you don't stand up to trafficking, America will stand up to you," Pompeo said as he presented the report alongside Ivanka Trump, President Donald Trump's daughter and adviser.

Pompeo said that North Korea was involved in human trafficking at the state level through its deployment of workers overseas and said Pyongyang "uses the proceeds to fund nefarious activities". He also renewed criticism of China for its massive incarceration of an estimated one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim members of Turkic-speaking minorities, saying the camps have produced garments, carpets, cleaning supplies and other goods for domestic consumption. China, facing rising international criticism, de-



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Senior White House Advisor Ivanka Trump attend the release of the 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report at the State Department yesterday. — AFP

scribes its camps as vocational training centers aimed at reducing extremism.

Cuba is more frequently in the sights of the Trump administration, which said that the communist authorities threatened or coerced doctors to be part of its medical program, in which Havana sends tens of thousands of low-cost doctors around the world. Cuba ended the program last year in Brazil after Jair Bolsonaro, the country's

incoming right-wing president, described it as human trafficking.

The State Department also upgraded two countries from the Tier 3 designation - Laos and Gabon. It credited Laos with providing restitution and services to victims, while Gabon stepped up investigations and signed agreements with neighboring countries in western Africa to combat cross-border trafficking. — Agencies

Human remains discovered in Iraq possibly of Kuwaiti POWs

KUWAIT: A joint statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)-affiliated tripartite commission announced the recovery of human remains in southern Iraq, offering hope for families of missing people from the 1990-1991 Gulf War, said a statement. According to the commission, more than 28 years after the end of the Gulf War, families of missing people in both Kuwait and Iraq still do not know the fate and whereabouts of their relatives.

The recent recovery of the remains of a number of people in Al-Muthanna in Samawa district in southern Iraq, thought to have gone missing during the conflict, offers hope for some answers. The remains, believed to be of Kuwaiti citizens including civilians and prisoners of war, were found at two burial sites as a result of joint efforts between Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities, and experts from the ICRC conducted within the framework of the tripartite commission.

The remains were fully exhumed and transferred to Baghdad's medico-legal directorate for DNA analysis, said the statement, adding that subsequent com-

parison with the genetic profiles of families of missing people from this period will be made. Forensic analysis will also reveal the number of individuals recovered and provide information on their nationality.

The discovery of the remains is the result of relentless work by the Kuwaiti and Iraqi authorities, and the ICRC in both Kuwait and Iraq, and the sustained joint efforts in gathering and analyzing information, identifying new witnesses and using satellite imagery to guide field teams. It is hoped that the identification of these human remains will help bring closure to the families and relatives of a number of those who went missing during the war and answer questions about what happened to them. The tripartite commission and its technical sub-committee were set up in 1991 and 1994 respectively to help ascertain the fate of people missing in connection with the 1990-1991 Gulf War. They are chaired by the ICRC, and composed of representatives of the Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France. — KUNA



Police inspect a vehicle in Jahra.

Dozens arrested in Jahra raids

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Jahra Security Department launched a campaign in Jahra and Sulaibiya industrial areas as well as the Jahra vegetable market, old Jahra, Kabd Road and Jahra stables under the supervision of Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for General Security Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah. The campaign resulted in arresting 70 persons in violation of residency law and 50 absconders without papers, while 57 citations were issued.

National identity centers ready

The relations and security information department at the interior ministry said the department of nationality and travel documents has completed installing



KFSD and KIPIC sign a cooperation protocol.

equipment at electronic passport centers (national identity centers). The department said starting from July 1, nationality and passports services will be presented at the national identity service centers instead of citizen service centers.

Oil sector emergency plan

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Director General Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad held a meeting to coordinate with several oil sector companies in order to implement cooperation procedures with them and activate them in case of emergencies at any oil facility.

KFSD, KIPIC ink deal

KFSD Director General Lt General Khalid Al-Mikrad signed a cooperation protocol with CEO of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) Hatim Al-Awadhi yesterday morning in the presence of Deputy Director General for Firefighting Maj Gen Jamal Al-Bulaihees and Deputy Director General for Prevention Maj Gen Khalid Fahd.



Xi meets North Korea's Kim ahead of Trump meeting

Belgium to work toward giving visas to Uighur family in China

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In this image released by the US Air Force, a RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned surveillance drone lands at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. The Pentagon confirmed yesterday that Iranian forces shot down a US naval surveillance drone but insisted the aircraft was in international air space, not that of Iran. — AFP

War of words as Iran downs US drone

Fears of wider Mideast war as Washington, Tehran face off

TEHRAN: Iran shot down a US spy drone yesterday near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, with the two sides at odds whether it was in Iranian or international airspace, in the latest incident stoking tensions between the arch-foes. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said the “US-made Global Hawk surveillance drone” was hit with a missile “after violating Iranian air space” over the waters of Hormozgan province.

The Pentagon confirmed a US surveillance drone was shot down by Iranian forces, but it insisted the unmanned aircraft was in international airspace. The incident comes at a time of growing antagonism between Iran and the United States following two waves of still unexplained attacks on Gulf shipping, which Washington has blamed on Tehran.

The incident fanned fears of wider military conflict in the Middle East as US President Donald Trump pursues a campaign of to isolate Iran over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and role in regional wars. It was the latest in an escalating series of incidents in the Gulf region, a critical artery for global oil supplies, since mid-May including explosive strikes on six oil tankers as Tehran and Washington have slid towards confrontation.

Drone debris

The debris field from a US military drone that

was shot down by Iran is in international waters in the Strait of Hormuz, and US naval assets have been dispatched to the area, a US official told Reuters, contradicting Iran’s account of the shoot-down. The US military did not immediately comment about the location of the debris from the Navy MQ-4C Triton drone.

But if the location of the debris field is confirmed, it would appear to provide physical evidence casting doubt on Iran’s account that it shot down the drone over the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan, which is on the Gulf, with a locally made “3 Khordad” missile.

Iran has denied involvement in any of the attacks, but global jitters about a new Middle East conflagration disrupting oil exports have triggered a jump in crude prices. They surged by more than \$3 to above \$63 a barrel yesterday. Saudi Arabia, Washington’s main Gulf ally, said Iran had created a grave situation with its “aggressive behavior” and the kingdom was consulting other Gulf Arab states on next steps. “When you interfere with international shipping it has an impact on the supply of energy, it has an impact on the price of oil which has an impact on the world economy. It essentially affects almost every person on the globe,” Adel Al-Jubeir, Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs, told reporters in London.

Tensions flared with Trump’s withdrawal last

year from world powers’ 2015 nuclear accord with Iran and have worsened as Washington imposed fresh sanctions to throttle Tehran’s vital oil trade and Iran retaliated earlier this week with a threat to breach limits on its nuclear activities imposed by the deal.

Upping the ante, Washington said on Monday it would deploy about 1,000 more troops, along with Patriot missiles and manned and unmanned surveillance aircraft, to the Middle East on top of a 1,500-troop increase announced after the May tanker attacks. Iranian state media said the “spy” drone was brought down over the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan, which is on the Gulf, with a locally made “3 Khordad” missile.

A US official said the drone was a US Navy MQ-4C Triton and that it had been downed in international air space over the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a third of the world’s seaborne oil exits the Gulf. Navy Captain Bill Urban, a spokesman for the US military’s Central Command, said Iran’s account that the drone had been flying over Iranian territory was false.

“This was an unprovoked attack on a US surveillance asset in international air space,” Urban said. The drone, he added, was downed over the Strait of Hormuz at approximately 2335 GMT - in the early morning hours of local time in the Gulf.

Iran has denied any involvement and hinted the US might have orchestrated them itself to provide a pretext for the use of force against the Islamic republic. Russian President Vladimir Putin said any use of force by the United States against Iran “would be a disaster for the region”. The head of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard said the downing of the drone was “a clear message” his country will defend its borders. Iran will “respond to all foreign aggression and our reaction is, and will be, categorical and absolute”, General Hossein Salami said, quoted by Tasnim news agency.

“We declare that we are not looking for war but we are ready to respond to any declaration of war,” he added. The Pentagon said later in a statement that an Iranian surface-to-air missile had brought down a US Gold Hawk high-altitude drone over the Strait of Hormuz.

“Iranian reports that the aircraft was over Iran are false,” it said. “This was an unprovoked attack on a US surveillance asset in international airspace.”

Tensions have been running high between Iran and the United States ever since President Donald Trump abandoned a landmark 2015 nuclear agreement in May last year. The subsequent reimposition of crippling unilateral sanctions has dealt a heavy blow to Iran’s already flagging economy. — Agencies

International

Macron sends senior diplomat to Iran to defuse US tensions

Putin says use of US force against Iran would be 'disaster'

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron sent his top diplomatic adviser to Iran this week as part of European efforts to defuse tensions between Tehran and Washington, the French presidency said yesterday. The adviser, Emmanuel Bonne, held "high-level meetings" Wednesday in Tehran, "with the aim of contributing to the deescalation of tensions in the region", Macron's office said.

The presidency refused to say whom Bonne met, adding only that he left Tehran on Wednesday evening. The strains between Washington and Tehran increased Thursday with Iran's announcement that it had shot down a US "spy drone" that violated Iranian airspace near the Strait of Hormuz.

The United States has yet to respond. The incident marks the latest escalation in tensions following last week's attacks on two oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, which the United States blamed on Iran.

Tehran has denied any involvement. Tensions between the longtime foes, who have had no relations since the hostage crisis that followed the 1979 Islamic revolution, have increased sharply since US President Donald Trump last year abandoned a landmark 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran and reimposed sanctions.

Macron, who is travelling to a G20 summit in the Japanese city of Osaka on June 28-29, will "have contact with the main players" in the standoff, his office said. Before that he will pay

an official visit to Japan on June 26-27, during which he will hold talks with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who recently travelled to Iran to try mediate in the crisis.

Abe met with Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who categorically refused to hold talks with Trump. The EU is under pressure from Tehran to try salvage the 2015 deal, with Iran threatening to breach its nuclear enrichment limits. On Tuesday, Macron urged Tehran to be "patient and responsible".

Putin warning

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said any use of force by the US against Iran would lead to disaster as tensions escalate between Washington and Tehran. "The US says it does not rule out the use of force... This would be a disaster for the region," Putin said during an annual televised phone-in with screened questions posed by Russian viewers.

"It would lead to a surge in violence and an increase in the number of refugees," he said, adding that the consequences of intervention would be "difficult to calculate".

Moscow has backed Tehran in its standoff with the United States since Washington pulled out of an international 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran last year. Putin repeated Russia's insistence that sanctions against Iran are "unreasonable". The comment comes at a time of growing antagonism between Iran and the US

force to the Middle East. "The United States is not seeking war with the Iranian regime, but we are fully prepared to respond to any attack, whether by proxy, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or regular Iranian forces," he says. On May 7, the US says it is deploying B-52 bombers, a Patriot missile battery and an amphibious assault ship in the region.

Sanctions

On May 8, Iran says it is preparing to increase enriched uranium and heavy water production as part of its decision to stop some commitments made under the 2015 nuclear deal with major world powers. A year after Washington unilaterally withdrew from the deal, reimposing sanctions on Tehran, Trump announces new measures against Iran's steel and mining sectors. Washington has since hit Iran's largest petrochemical group PGPIC with sanctions.

Attacks on ships

On May 12, four ships, including three oil tankers, are damaged in mysterious "sabotage attacks" off the United Arab Emirates. Bolton says on May 30 that Iran is "almost certainly" behind the attacks. The next day Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accuses Iran of trying to raise oil prices through these acts.

On June 6, the UAE says the initial findings of a multinational investigation into the attacks point to the likelihood that a state was behind



In this image released by the US Air Force, Staff Sgt. Seth Thurber checks panels of a RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned surveillance drone during a preflight inspection, at Beale Air Force Base, California. — AFP

following two waves of still unexplained attacks on Gulf shipping, which Washington has blamed on Tehran.

Iran has denied any involvement and hinted that the US might have orchestrated them itself to provide a pretext for the use of force against the

Islamic republic. Yesterday, tensions also heightened after the Pentagon confirmed that Iranian forces had shot down a US naval surveillance drone. The US has insisted the aircraft was in international air space but Iran has said the drone had violated Iranian airspace. — Agencies

Iran and the US: Escalating tensions

TEHRAN: Tensions between Tehran and Washington have intensified ever since April when the US added Iran's Revolutionary Guards to its blacklist of "terrorist" organizations and strengthened sanctions against the Islamic republic.

A recap: Blacklist

On April 8, 2019, Washington declares as a "terrorist" group the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Iranian regime's ideological army. President Donald Trump says it is the first time it has branded part of a foreign government a terrorist group. The Guards' prized Quds Force, which operates abroad, is also placed on the blacklist. The next day Iran says US troops serving in the wider Middle East from the Horn of Africa to Afghanistan are "terrorist" organizations.

US deployment

On May 5, White House national security adviser John Bolton announces the Pentagon is sending an aircraft carrier and a bomber task

them, but there is no evidence yet of Iranian involvement. Two tankers, Norwegian and Japanese, come under "attack" in the Gulf of Oman on June 13, the day Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe meets Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran. Washington, London and Riyadh blame Iran, which denies involvement.

American reinforcements

On June 16, the US military command in the Middle East (Centcom) says an Iranian missile had tried to shoot down an American drone on a surveillance mission. Washington says a US drone was shot down on June 6 with a missile fired from Yemen "that we assess had Iranian assistance." The next day, Iran's atomic energy organization says Iran will surpass the uranium stockpile limit set under the 2015 nuclear deal from June 27. On June 18, the US says it will deploy 1,000 more troops to the region, in addition to the 1,500 it had announced in late May.

US drone shot down: Tehran

On June 18, Iran's state news agency IRNA says Tehran has dismantled a US spy network. Iran's Revolutionary Guard says on June 20 it shot down a US "spy drone" which violated Iranian airspace near the Strait of Hormuz, in "a clear message" that Tehran will defend its borders. The Pentagon confirms the downing. — AFP

Yemen's Houthis launch strike on Saudi utility

RIYADH: Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis launched a projectile into southern Saudi Arabia late on Wednesday which the Saudi-led coalition said landed near a desalination plant without causing damage or casualties. The Houthis - who threatened last month to attack 300 vital military targets in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen - announced via their Al-Masirah TV that a cruise missile they fired had struck an electricity station in Shuqaiq.

A Saudi-based industry source said the strike targeted a power transformer station near the plant, which led to a small fire that was quickly doused and did not impact operations.

US President Donald Trump was briefed on the reported strike and the White House was monitoring the situation, spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said, amid mounting fears that a military confrontation could erupt between Tehran and Washington. Pentagon spokeswoman Navy Commander Rebecca Rebarich said such attacks were "a significant cause for concern and (put)innocent lives at risk". — Reuters

International

In rebuff to Trump offer, Palestinian businesses call for freedom, not cash

Palestinians to boycott US-led conference in Bahrain

RAMALLAH: Palestinian businessmen boycotting the Trump administration's Bahrain workshop designed to encourage investment in the territories say only a diplomatic path to statehood can end decades of conflict with Israel. The United States has billed the June 25-26 gathering in the Gulf kingdom as an economic overture to its long-delayed Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, widely referred to as President Donald Trump's "deal of the century". But Israeli government officials have not been invited. Palestinian leaders - and the vast majority of its business community - are shunning the conference spearheaded by Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

While details of the Trump peace plan are still sketchy, Palestinians worry it will jettison the two-state solution - the long-standing international formula which envisages an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza co-existing with Israel.

"Our case is political, 100 percent. It's not economic," said Palestinian tech company executive Murad Tahboub. Tahboub, managing director of ASAL Technologies, echoes arguments made by other members of the Palestinian business community in the West Bank and Gaza - territory Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East War and where Palestinians want to build a future state.

"How (can you) build an economy if you don't have sovereignty? If you don't have access to natural resources, like water, like electricity, like borders?" Tahboub says his company's growth has lagged due to Israeli restrictions. "I have 350 engineers because I don't have a state, right now. If I was in Romania or Ukraine, it'd be 3,500."

The Western-backed Palestinian Authority has exercised limited self-rule in the West Bank since the Oslo interim peace deals of the 1990s, with economic relations between Israel and the Palestinians governed by the Paris Protocol of 1994. Palestinians hoped the Oslo arrangements would lead to full statehood one day, but it never happened, with both sides blaming each other.

The West Bank remains under Israeli occupation, scattered with Israeli settlements and military bases and sealed off by checkpoints and a razor wire and concrete barrier. The Israeli government

cites security considerations for the restrictions it and Egypt impose on Gaza, whose Islamist rulers Hamas refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist.

The Palestinian Authority's heartland is the West Bank, which at 15 times the size of Gaza is the engine of the Palestinian economy. But the World Bank says close to a quarter of Palestinians live in poverty and that the Palestinian economy grew by just 1% in 2018, with a 7% contraction in Gaza. Unemployment in the Palestinian territories reached 31 percent last year, with the jobless rate standing at 52 percent in Gaza, the World Bank says. Palestinians blame huge cuts in US aid under the Trump administration and Israel's decision to withhold tax remittances because of a political dispute for bringing the Palestinian Authority's finances to the brink of collapse.

Israeli analysts say a drop in foreign aid is primarily to blame for the Palestinians' economic woes, as donors lose faith in the prospects for peace and shift their efforts to other crisis areas. "The Palestinians grew accustomed to relying on international aid, which continued to flow so long as there was some chance of a diplomatic accord with Israel," said Oded Eran, a senior research fellow with the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University.

'Economic pace'

At least one Palestinian, Ashraf Jabari, a businessman from the West Bank city of Hebron who has close ties to Israeli settler groups, is expected to attend the conference. Jabari told Reuters he seeks "complete participation between Israeli and Palestinian businessmen in Judea and Samaria", using the biblical term for the West Bank favored by many Israelis.

Jabari co-founded a trade group to boost business between Palestinians and Israeli settlers and the Trump administration has praised him for what it calls his open-minded approach. But the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian business community has backed the leadership's refusal to attend Bahrain, saying the Trump plan repeats past mistakes by putting economic peace before resolving underlying political issues. Ammar Aker, a telecom executive, said only political negotiations

conditions. A further 23 individuals were given customary life sentences, the agency said, while 27 suspects received prison sentences of up to 20 years. Among the suspects was US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen, whom Turkey accuses of ordering the attempted putsch in which left hundreds were killed and thousands more injured.

Gulen strongly denies the claims. Turkey has failed to secure his extradition. Former air force chief Akin Ozturk and Mehmet Disli, the brother of former ruling party lawmaker Saban Disli, who since September has served as Turkey's ambassador to the Netherlands, were among those convicted. Lieutenant Colonel Levent Turkkan, who was the aide to then Chief of Staff General Hulusi Akar, was given one aggravated life sentence, state news agency Anadolu reported. Akar was appointed defence minister in July 2018. There was a tense atmosphere minutes be-



GAZA CITY: Palestinian businessman Abed Alkarim Ashour shows an invitation letter from the United States Department of the Treasury for a US-led conference in Bahrain, in Gaza City.—Reuters

can sort out high-level issues such as cellular frequency distribution, which Israel controls. He said Israel has 4G mobile services but Palestinian mobile operators in the West Bank can only offer a 3G service while in Gaza they are restricted to slow 2G networks. "We cannot launch any service unless we get the approval of Israeli authorities, when it comes to frequency, to equipment imports," said Aker, CEO of Paltel, the Palestinian private sector's largest employer.

In Gaza, Dalia Shurrab, social media coordinator at the Gaza Sky Geeks tech incubator, says the slow internet causes many start-ups to fail. "They want Wi-Fi, they want 3G to provide customers with their services but unfortunately we don't have it in Gaza," Shurrab said.

With Palestinian leaders boycotting the Bahrain conference and Arab states backing their political demands, analysts are pessimistic about the gathering. "It doesn't stand a chance," said Nathan Thrall, director of the International Crisis Group's Arab-Israeli project.

"(The Palestinian cause) hasn't receded so far that the Arab leaders feel like they could betray

the Palestinians on Jerusalem or refugees or any of the core Palestinian issues without suffering blowback." Trump's advisers have slammed Palestinian leaders for boycotting the conference. "The Palestinian leadership portrays participation in the workshop as treasonous. That is preposterous," Trump's Middle East Envoy Jason Greenblatt wrote in an op-ed for CNN.

"Supporters of this workshop want only the best for the Palestinians and the region." Washington has said Egypt and Jordan, which have been key players in Middle East peace efforts, have agreed to attend though Palestinians have urged them to reconsider. Qatar, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are also expected to take part in the workshop.

"If anybody wants to solve the Palestinian problem, they have to solve it through ending occupation, (and) the establishment of a Palestinian state," Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh told Reuters. "If there are people who want to support the Palestinian people, they should lift the financial siege that has been imposed on the Palestinian people," he said.—Reuters

Turkey jails 151 for life in 'coup ringleaders' trial

SINCAN, Turkey: A Turkish court yesterday gave life sentences to 151 people including senior military officers in one of the biggest trials over the 2016 failed bid to overthrow President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The judge handed 128 of those convicted between one and 141 aggravated life terms each over the deaths of 139 people, for "violating the constitution" and "attempting to assassinate the president", the private DHA news agency reported. Such sentences carry harsher prison

fore the judge issued his verdicts with dozens of people including relatives of those killed during the coup bid in July 2016 slamming the court for not allowing them to enter. Saliha Arigan, whose son was killed on the night of the failed overthrow, pressed herself against the gates, crying and shouting to be allowed inside.

"The state should be ashamed," she said. Even as the verdicts were handed down, the strained mood continued with further attempts by individuals to enter the courtroom complex by force. "I say justice should be done. But I have no trust. May my son rest forever and the traitors be executed," Arigan later told AFP.

An AFP correspondent was not allowed to enter the courtroom by police. Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul hailed the verdicts, praising "exemplary" Turkish judiciary and told journalists: "Justice has been delivered."

The trial began in May 2017 in the country's

largest courtroom inside a prison complex in Sincan, outside the capital Ankara. The court also handed down an aggravated life sentence for "violating the constitution" to Colonel Ali Yazici, Erdogan's former military aide, Anadolu reported. Yazici was already sentenced to 18 years in jail in 2017 after a trial of dozens who plotted to assassinate Erdogan at a luxury Aegean hotel during the coup attempt. Former brigadier general Gokhan Sahin Sonmezates, who was suspected of leading an assassination attempt against Erdogan on the night of the coup bid, was given 137 aggravated life sentences and a 540-year prison sentence, Anadolu said.

The judge ordered the case of 13 fugitives including Gulen to be separated from the main coup ringleaders' trial. The failed overthrow left 248 people dead, according to the Turkish presidency, not including 24 coup-plotters killed on the night. —AFP

International

Brexit campaigner Johnson far ahead in race to lead Britain

LONDON: Boris Johnson, a former foreign secretary who helped lead the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign, continued his progress towards the top job yesterday when he trounced his rivals again in the race to succeed Prime Minister Theresa May. In a fourth ballot of Conservative lawmakers, which eliminated interior minister Sajid Javid, Johnson was again way out in front of his rivals. The result of a fifth and final ballot is due at 1700 GMT yesterday.

Johnson, who served as London mayor for eight years, has cast himself as the only candidate who can deliver Brexit on Oct. 31 while fighting off the electoral threats of Nigel Farage's Brexit Party and Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. Despite a series of scandals in the past and criticism about his attention to detail, Johnson has dominated the race since May announced a month ago that she would step down after repeatedly failing to get her Brexit deal ratified by parliament.

Johnson, 55, has increased his share of the vote of Conservative lawmakers at each of the four ballots so far: 114 out of 313 votes in the first ballot on June 13, 126 on June 18, 143 on Wednesday and 157 yesterday. Environment minister Michael Gove was second with 61 votes and foreign minister Jeremy Hunt third with 59. Javid got 34.

After the final lawmakers' ballot leaves just two candidates remaining, around 160,000 Conservative Party grassroots members will vote on who will be their leader - and Britain's next prime minister - by the end of July. Bookmakers give Johnson an 89 percent probability of winning.

Johnson has pledged to leave the European

Union on Oct. 31 with or without a deal. The EU has said it will not renegotiate the divorce deal that May agreed last year and the British parliament has indicated it will block a no-deal exit. He has not addressed how he will solve that riddle.

PM Johnson?

The rise of Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, cast by many as simply "Boris", to pole position for leading the world's fifth largest economy is the grandest twist so far in a career that has morphed from journalism via TV-show fame, comedy and scandal into the brinkmanship of Britain's Brexit crisis. Born in New York, Johnson was educated at Eton, Britain's most exclusive school, and at Balliol College, Oxford. He began his career at a management consultancy in the City of London but dropped out after a week. He then turned to journalism but was sacked from The Times newspaper for making up quotes.

Hired by The Daily Telegraph, Johnson infuriated European officials and delighted then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher by lampooning the European Economic Community establishment with a host of sometimes misleading reports from Brussels.

After entering politics, he was sacked from the Conservative Party's policy team while in opposition for lying about an extra-marital affair. But his sometimes shambolic personal appearance and disarmingly self-deprecating confidence allowed him to survive both gaffes and scandal. He won two terms as London mayor from 2008 to 2016.

implications of the judgment for decision making," he said. "While we do this we will not grant any new licenses for export to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners which might be used in the conflict in Yemen."

Britain is the world's sixth largest seller of arms, after the United States, Russia, France, Germany and China, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Saudi Arabia accounted for 43 percent of Britain's global arms sales in the past decade.

Fox told lawmakers Britain had always taken its export control obligations very seriously and would continue to do so. Britain had "fully and robustly engaged" with incidences of concern. "Our whole assessment has been infused with IHL (international humanitarian law) considerations, indeed everything was looked at through the prism of IHL," he said.

Iran would be the only beneficiary of any end to arms exports from Britain to Saudi Arabia, the kingdom's minister of state for foreign affairs said yesterday, adding that the deployment of weapons in Yemen was legitimate.

A UK court earlier found that Britain broke the law by allowing arms sales to Saudi Arabia that might have been used in Yemen's war. The ruling does not halt Britain's arms exports but means the granting of new licences will be paused.

"The decision by the court in the UK has to do with procedures for licensing, not any wrongdoing that took place," Adel al-Jubeir told reporters in London. "The coalition is an ally of the West and the coalition is fighting a legitimate war at the behest of a legitimate government to stop Iran and its proxies from taking over a strategically important country - so the only beneficiary of a cut-off of weapons to the coalition is going to be Iran." — Reuters



Conservative MP and Conservative leadership contender Boris Johnson leaves his home in London on June 20, 2019. Conservative MPs will decide on June 20 who will join Boris Johnson in the final two battling become Britain's next prime minister, with three contenders jostling for the second spot.

In 2016, he became one of the most recognizable faces of the Brexit campaign which won the referendum with 52 percent of the votes cast versus 48 percent for staying in.

His bid to replace David Cameron, who resigned after the referendum, was foiled by Gove who pulled out of his campaign saying Johnson was unsuitable for the job. After May won the premiership,

she prompted consternation in European capitals by appointing Johnson foreign minister. He resigned in 2018 over May's handling of Brexit. "We must leave the EU on October 31st, with or without a deal, so we can begin to unite our country, restore trust in our politics, and move beyond Brexit to focus on delivering for everyone," Johnson said on Tuesday. — Reuters

Britain broke the law on arms sales to Saudi, rules court

LONDON: Britain broke the law by allowing arms sales to Saudi Arabia that might have been used in Yemen's war, a court ruled, after activists said there was a clear risk the weapons could be operated in violation of human rights legislation. While the court's decision does not mean Britain must immediately halt arms exports to Saudi Arabia, it does mean that there is a stay on the granting of new export licences to sell arms to the kingdom - Britain's biggest weapons purchaser.

The United Nations has described the conflict in Yemen, which has killed tens of thousands of people including thousands of civilians, as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. "The Court of Appeal has concluded that the process of decision-making by the government was wrong in law in one significant respect," judge Terence Etherton said.

Handing down the ruling, he said the government made "no concluded assessments of whether the Saudi-led coalition had committed violations of international humanitarian law in the past, during the Yemen conflict." International Trade Minister Liam Fox said he disagreed with the judgment and would seek permission to appeal.

"Alongside this we are carefully considering the

'Enormous hostility' to new Brexit delay: Irish PM

BRUSSELS: Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar warned yesterday there is "enormous hostility" in the European Union to allowing Britain to delay Brexit once again to seek new concessions from Brussels.

Varadkar spoke as he arrived for an EU summit that could be the last for Prime Minister Theresa May, who has announced her resignation after failing to get her divorce deal approved by the UK parliament. The European leaders met in Brussels as May's Conservative party looked like backing Boris Johnson, a former British foreign minister widely seen as unreliable in Brussels, as their favourite to take over as premier.

"While I have endless patience, some of my (EU leader) colleagues have lost their patience... with the UK and there is enormous hostility to any further extension," Varadkar said. "I think an extension could really only happen if it were to facilitate something like a general election in the UK or something like a second referendum if they decided to have one," he said. At an earlier summit in April, French President Emmanuel Macron argued against granting Britain an extension, but was overturned by his more cautious EU counterparts, most notably Germany's An-

gela Merkel.

Varadkar said that such caution had now gone. "What won't be entertained is an extension for further negotiations or further indicative votes," he said, referring to a series of non-binding votes in UK parliament that failed to end the impasse.

"The time for that is long since past," he said. Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, one of the UK's most vocal critics, warned that the rejected deal on the table was all that was on offer, even after the leadership in London changed. "If they choose Boris Johnson, then he will have to deal with us on the agreement we have done with Theresa May," Bettel said.

In recent campaign promises, Johnson suggested he could reopen May's exit deal and even ditch the "backstop" arrangement concerning Ireland, the most controversial aspect of the deal.

But he seemed to suggest he could negotiate a new arrangement with Ireland during a transition period after Brexit, and idea Varadkar dismissed. "There's no withdrawal agreement without a backstop and there's no implementation period without a withdrawal agreement," he said. — AFP

International

Trump reelection launch heralds political scorched earth campaign

Dems show how they might respond: With a collective shrug

WASHINGTON: With a 2020 campaign launch painting opponents in almost apocalyptic terms, President Donald Trump showed Democrats the scorched earth treatment they can expect in his fight for reelection. And Democrats—barring Trump’s most fiery leftist rival Bernie Sanders—showed yesterday how they might respond: with a collective shrug.

Even for a showman president renowned for exaggerating achievements, insulting opponents and making wildly inaccurate claims, Trump’s speech to 20,000 people at an Orlando, Florida arena stood out. From the opening minutes, he attacked journalists at the venue, encouraging the excited crowd to hurl verbal abuse.

He branded Democrats “driven by hatred” and bent on “radical socialism.” He claimed that illegal immigrants threaten working class Americans, “cutting off their path to the American dream.”

Over nearly 80 minutes, the president delivered no new ideas. Neither did he make the slightest effort to reach beyond his right-wing base. This was about firing up Republican shock troops for what will be a toxic campaign.

“He excited the base and it sends a pretty strong message to the Democrats that this is going to be a pretty tough race,” Committee to Defend the President chairman Ted Harvey said on Trump’s go-to TV channel Fox News.

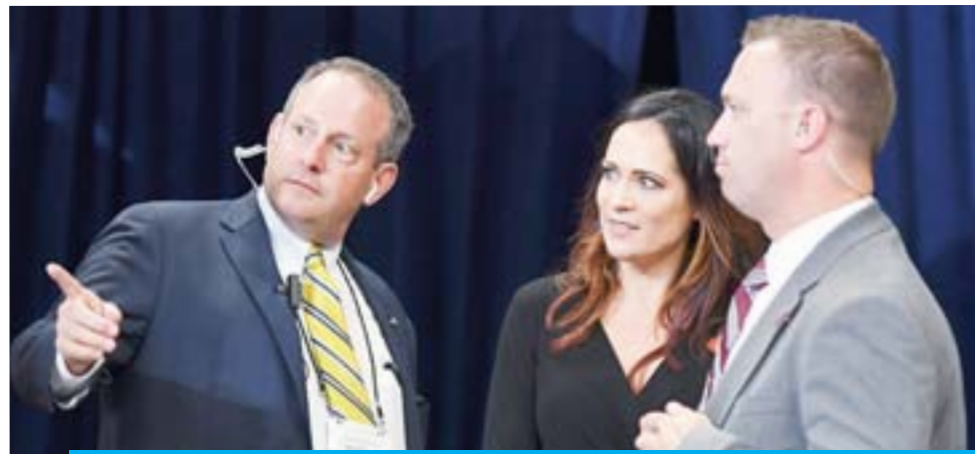
Deafening silence

Trump later dismissed his Democratic candidates in a television interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity on Wednesday night. “I look at some of them, I don’t see George Washington. I don’t see Churchill. I don’t see anybody in particular that I worry about,” he said.

He also justified his use of social media by claiming “it’s really a way of getting the truth out because the media has just gone loco, they have lost all control”, adding that without it “I don’t know that I would’ve been successful”. The 23 Democrats vying for their party’s nomination in the November 2020 vote are facing the conundrum of how to compete with such a rule-breaking player.

Do they get down in the pit and wrestle? Do they debate the false claims? Or do they stay completely aloof? Sanders, sometimes compared to a leftist version of the bomb-throwing right-winger Trump, went for the first option. No doubt his passionate supporters would have been disappointed with anything else.

“An hour-and-a-half speech of lies, distortions and total absolute nonsense,” Sanders said in an immediate video rebuttal. “Our job is to defeat the most dangerous president in the modern history of this country.” The current Democratic frontrunner Joe Biden, who was vice president under Trump’s predecessor Barack Obama, went more



ORLANDO: Stephanie Grisham (center), the Press Secretary and Communications Director for the First Lady, waits for US President Donald Trump to arrive at a rally at the Amway Center in Orlando, Florida to officially launch his 2020 campaign. — AFP

for the second option, zoning in on the president’s claim to have brought an economic miracle.

“Let’s be clear: President Trump inherited a growing economy from the Obama-Biden administration,” Biden’s campaign tweeted. “Now, he’s in the process of squandering it.”

But most Democrats responded with silence, or at best a formulaic tweet—something that

Trump, who seems to thrive on being at the center of attention, might find especially galling. Democratic strategist Dee Dawkins-Haigler, speaking on Fox, said that kind of calm response might be just what mainstream voters really want. “We have seen nothing but craziness in this country for the last two years and we have to get back to normalcy,” she said. — AFP

UN rights chief to survey Venezuela crisis

CARACAS: The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet arrived in Venezuela Wednesday as part of a visit to review the country’s ongoing economic and political crisis. She is set to meet with both President Nicolas Maduro and opposition leader Juan Guaido before making a final statement to the media on Friday.

Bachelet tweeted that she was looking forward to “working with all actors to promote and protect all human rights for all Venezuelans”. According to the UN, some four million Venezuelans have fled the country since 2015 as basic goods have become elusive, public services and health systems have collapsed and hyperinflation has taken hold.

Bachelet first met with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza on Wednesday night, who said he expressed the government’s willingness to work with the high commissioner to “correct what needs to be corrected... in order to preserve the human rights of Venezuelans”.

The pair also discussed the impact of “illegal” US sanctions, including a ban on the sale of Venezuelan oil in the US market, which he said hinders the socialist government’s advancement of human rights in the country. Guaido—who declared himself interim president in January—says Bachelet’s meeting with him can be seen as a “recognition of the catastrophe” in the oil-rich country, despite her coming at his rival Maduro’s invitation. — AFP

Two nights, 20 Democrats: What you should know about the first 2020 debate

WASHINGTON: When 20 Democrats take the stage next week for the first of 12 prime-time presidential primary debates, they will assemble according to months-in-the-making plans by the Democratic National Committee to accommodate its largest-ever field. For two hours each on the nights of June 26 and 27, the candidates seeking the party’s 2020 nomination will go head-to-head at a performing arts center in downtown Miami in debates broadcast live by NBC, MSNBC and Telemundo.

It will be an opportunity for some of the candidates to get their biggest national exposure yet — and for voters to start making decisions about which White House hopeful they will back.

Past studies have shown that as many as 80 percent of voters have not settled on a candidate going into a first primary debate, mainly because they did not know many of the candidates yet, said Mitchell McKinney, a political communication professor at the University of Missouri who studies presidential debates. “That starts to firm up, and after a series of primary debates we start to see people pointing to the candidates that they’re likely to support in the primary,” McKinney said.

Here is what you should know as the Democratic candidates prepare to debate for the first time:

The party chose the format with fairness in mind. When there was a large field of Republican candidates vying for the 2016 nomination, the Republican National Committee opted to hold back-to-back debates on the same day: an earlier “undercard” debate

of lesser-known candidates and a “main stage” debate in prime-time of the front runners. The earlier debate had only a fraction of the viewership as the prime-time debate.

DNC spokeswoman Xochitl Hinojosa said party Chairman Tom Perez met with potential media partners, former party officials, former presidential candidates, consultants and other stakeholders over the past 18 months to determine what would be fairest to the large field of Democratic candidates.

That’s how the party settled on holding debates over two consecutive nights and picking the line-up for each by random drawings. “We wanted to make sure we were putting all the candidates on a level playing field,” Hinojosa said. Candidates had to reach polling and donor thresholds to qualify.

To make it onto the debate stage, candidates had to meet criteria set by the DNC, which required either reaching 1 percent support in three qualifying national polls; or receiving donations from at least 65,000 unique individuals, with 200 donors in at least 20 states. The candidates were assigned stages by a drawing.

NBC last week held a random drawing in New York City. Officials had two boxes, one containing the names of candidates who polled at 2 percent or above and the other those who polled below the 2 percent threshold. The names from the first box were selected at random and distributed between the two nights, and then the same process was followed for the second box to ensure a mix of candidates on each night, those familiar with the process said.

On each night, leading candidates will be center stage. The candidates’ podium positions on stage will reflect their standings in polls as of June 12, with leading candidates in the center positions and trailing candidates at the edges, NBC announced this week.

US Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and former Representative Beto O’Rourke of Texas will be center stage on the first night, debating Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey, former US housing secretary Juli-n Castro, former Representative John Delaney of Maryland, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Representative Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, Washington Governor Jay Inslee, Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Representative Tim Ryan of Ohio. — Reuters

Xi meets North Korea's Kim ahead of Trump meeting

Two leaders face challenges of their own with US president

PYONGYANG: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un welcomed Chinese President Xi Jinping to Pyongyang yesterday on a historic visit to burnish an uneasy alliance, with the two men each facing challenges of their own with US President Donald Trump.

Xi is the first Chinese president to visit North Korea in 14 years, after relations between the Cold War era allies deteriorated over Pyongyang's nuclear provocations and Beijing's subsequent backing of UN sanctions. But as he embarked on a flurry of diplomacy last year, Kim ensured that Xi—the leader of his country's key diplomatic supporter and main provider of trade and aid—was the first head of state he met.

The North Korean has now visited his older ally four times in China and Pyongyang has been increasingly keen for Xi to reciprocate, while according to diplomats Beijing has been biding its time to see how nuclear talks between Kim and Trump play out. But Beijing's own trade negotiations with Washington hit a wall last month and some analysts say Xi is now looking for leverage ahead of his meeting with Trump at next week's G20 summit in Japan.

"When both China & North Korea are confronted by US, they have a lot to discuss with each other," Lijian Zhao, the deputy chief of mission of China's embassy in Pakistan, wrote on Twitter.

Kim met Xi at Pyongyang airport as he began a two-day state visit with his wife Peng Liyuan, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and other officials, according to Chinese state media.

Portraits of the two leaders stood outside the terminal, pictures showed, and a 21-gun salute was fired. Chinese flags hung throughout the capital and hundreds of thousands of residents were lined up along the streets according to CCTV-standard procedure when a foreign leader visits the isolated North, whose authorities are adept at mounting spectacular displays.

But in an unprecedented move, Xi was welcomed at the Kumsusan Palace, the mausoleum where the preserved bodies of the North's founder Kim Il Sung and successor Kim Jong Il—the grandfather and father of the current leader—lie in state.

Kim and Xi went on to hold formal talks, Xinhua reported. The Rodong Sinmun newspaper, the mouthpiece of the ruling party, devoted the top half of its front page to the visit, with a color picture of Xi accompanying a profile. In an editorial, it said the trip at a time of "complex international relations" showed that the leadership in Beijing attached "high importance on the DPRK-China friendship".

"Our people are proud of having a trustworthy and close friend like the Chinese people," it added.

Symbolic visit

Xi's visit will be largely symbolic, with no formal joint communique expected—as was the case with Kim's April summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Vladivostok, Russia. Authorities have imposed tight restrictions on coverage. International journalists in Pyongyang were told they would not be able to cover it, while foreign media organizations initially invited to attend proved unable to secure visas. Sources said the Chinese media delegation accompanying Xi was also reduced in size from initial plans.

The North wants to demonstrate to Trump that it has China's support with nuclear negotiations at a standstill after Trump and Kim's second summit broke up without a deal.

In Hanoi in February the two men disagreed in February on what Pyongyang would be willing to give up in exchange for sanctions relief. For the North the visit "will serve to show the US that China has its back and to send a message to Washington it should stop its maximum pressure posture", said Lim Eul-chul, professor of North



SEOUL: People watch a television news screen showing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un shaking hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping, at Seoul railway station in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

Korean studies at Kyungnam University.

Analysts say the trip is equally a chance for China to showcase its influence in the region and the talks process, at a time when it is at loggerheads with the US over trade.

In clear assertion of Beijing's role, Xi said in a rare opinion piece in the Rodong Sinmun that China would play an active part in "strengthening communication and coordination" between the North and "other relevant parties" to push forward negotiations. Beijing has fretted over being sidelined after the North Korean leader agreed to meet Trump last year, with the US leader going as far as declaring he had fallen "in love" with Kim.

"Xi wants everyone to remain acutely aware that he can influence Kim, and that no compre-

hensive, durable deal with North Korea can occur without China's assistance—and approval," Scott Seaman, Asia director of the Eurasia Group consultancy, said in a research note.

Beijing sees the North as a strategic buffer, keeping the 28,500 US troops in South Korea far from its borders, and Xi's trip will include a visit to pay homage at Pyongyang's Friendship Tower, a monument to the millions of Chinese troops who saved Kim Il Sung's forces from defeat during the Korean War.

But Zhao Tong, North Korea expert at the Carnegie Tsinghua Center think tank in Beijing, said Xi and Kim were unlikely to have substantive discussions on denuclearization, because "China and North Korea do not have enough mutual trust". — AFP

Two Canadian naval vessels sail through Taiwan Strait: Taipei

TAIPEI: Two Canadian naval vessels sailed through the Taiwan Strait, Taipei's defense ministry said, in the latest naval passage likely to irk Beijing. The ships sailed through the narrow waterway separating the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in a "freedom of navigation" operation, the ministry said in a statement issued late Wednesday, without providing any details.

It added that Taiwan's military had closely monitored the "movements of the relevant aircraft and vessels in the region" as the ships passed through the strait. Relations between China and Canada have deteriorated since December when police in Vancouver detained Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou on

a US arrest warrant. Days later China arrested two Canadians—former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor—in what is widely seen as a tit-for-tat move.

China has also blocked Canadian agricultural shipments worth billions of dollars. It was the latest such naval voyage in the Taiwan Strait in recent months. Beijing lodged a protest with Washington in May after a US destroyer and a supply ship sailed through the strait amid rising tensions between the two powers. US warships periodically conduct "freedom of navigation" exercises in the waterway, triggering angry responses from Beijing every time.

Beijing views any ships passing through the strait as essentially a breach of its sovereignty—while the US and many other nations view the route as international waters open to all. China sees Taiwan as part of its territory, despite the two sides being ruled separately since the end of a civil war on the mainland in 1949. In April, China said its navy warned off a French warship that had entered the Taiwan Strait earlier that month and lodged an official complaint with Paris. — AFP

Trump gives tax cuts guru Laffer highest US civilian award

WASHINGTON: Arthur Laffer, a major Reagan-era economist who is seen as the godfather of Republican tax cut policies, received the highest US civilian honor on Wednesday from President Donald Trump. The conservative economist, who championed a theory known as the "Laffer Curve," was given the Presidential Medal of Freedom in the Oval Office.

Trump, who touts tax cuts he ordered early in his first term as one of his main achievements, praised the controversial thinker. "Few people in history have revolu-

tionized economic policy like Arthur Laffer," he said. Laffer, 78, has inspired successions of Republicans with his theory that lowering taxes ultimately raises revenue for governments by stimulating economic activity. He has been dubbed the "father of supply side economics," but also blamed for what critics derided as president Ronald Reagan's "voodoo economics" in the 1980s.

Reagan, who brought in big tax cuts in 1981, George W Bush, and now Trump were among his supporters. Trump called a diagram developed by Laffer to explain his tax theory the "curve that changed history." But the idea has been widely attacked as wrong, leading only to bigger deficits.

When Laffer was invited to advise on tax cuts in 2012 by the Republican governor of Kansas, the state's coffers quickly plunged into the red. The state later scrapped the tax cuts. On receiving the medal in the White House, Laffer declared himself "awed." — AFP

International

India in talks with US on H-1B visas, no official word on limits

New Delhi is not aware of move to cap permits for Indian

NEW DELHI: India is in talks with the United States on H-1B work visas but has not heard anything official from Washington on capping such permits for Indians, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

Reuters reported on Wednesday the United States had told India it was considering caps on H-1B work visas for countries that force foreign companies to store data locally, according to sources familiar with the matter. Asked about the report during a news conference, foreign ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar said there had been no official communication from the United States on the issue.

"We have not heard anything officially from the US government. We continue to reiterate and engage with the US government on this matter," Kumar said, without elaborating. News of the US plan to restrict H-1B visas comes days before a visit to India by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Disagreements between the countries over trade have resulted in tit-for-tat tariffs in recent weeks. Two senior Indian officials said they were briefed last week on the US plan to cap the number of H-1B visas given annually to Indians at between 10 percent and 15 percent of the total number issued.

There is no country-specific limit on the 85,000 H-1B work visas that the United States

grants each year, and an estimated 70 percent of them go to Indians. Indian IT stocks fell on Thursday following concern about any work visa curbs. Indian tech lobby group Nasscom said such a US plan would imply a "further crunch" for businesses in the United States getting skilled workers.

Sources said the US proposal was linked to a push by many governments for "data localisation", in which a country places restrictions on data flows to gain better control over it, and curb the power of foreign firms. The plan, if implemented, would also apply to countries other than India, the sources said.

US firms have lobbied hard against data localisation rules around the world. India's data storage rules announced last year upset US payment companies such as Mastercard. India is also working on a broad data protection law that would impose strict rules for domestic processing of data it considers sensitive. Kumar said the Indian government remained in talks with the United States on the issue of data localisation.

The government would also take a decision on involvement of Chinese telecom giant Huawei Technologies Co in 5G trials, based on India's economic and security interests, Kumar said. The global roll out of



5G technology has been complicated by U.S. sanctions against Huawei. US officials have lobbied allies not to use Huawei network equipment in their 5G networks. The United States has stepped up pressure on its big trading partners since President Donald Trump took office.

Trump has made use of tariffs to punish trading partners like China, the European Union,

Canada and Mexico, saying they flood the United States with cheap products and put up unfair economic barriers at home. Kumar said the overall direction of ties with the United States was positive. Defence relations have expanded with the United States becoming one of India's top arms suppliers, replacing traditional partner Russia. — Reuters

Protesters urge ASEAN leaders to ban trash imports

BANGKOK: Protestors in Bangkok yesterday dumped plastic waste in front of a government building and called on Southeast Asian leaders to ban imports of trash from developed countries.

The protest comes ahead of a weekend meeting of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with many countries struggling to deal with the flood of plastic waste unleashed by China's decision last year to stop importing recyclables from abroad. Countries in ASEAN now receive more than a quarter of global plastic waste, most of which comes from developed economies like Canada, the US, Australia, and Japan.

A group of about 50 Thai activists, some holding placards reading "No Space for Waste", joined Greenpeace campaigners to call for an end to all trash imports to Southeast Asia.

"The communities are here today to reclaim... the right to live in a sustainable environment in Thailand," said Tara Buakamsri of Greenpeace Thailand. They called for ASEAN countries to ban the export of waste "from anywhere in the world into the region", Tara said.

The trash pile-up in Southeast Asia accelerated after China stopped accepting waste in 2018, and Greenpeace says plastic refuse imports have increased by a staggering 171 percent since 2016.

The imported waste is supposed to be recycled, but sometimes arrives mixed with unrecyclable items or is improperly handled and ends up being burnt or leaking into waterways and the sea. —AFP

Himalayan glaciers melting twice as fast: Study

WASHINGTON: Himalayan glaciers are melting twice as fast now as they were before the turn of the century, according to a new study that relied on recently declassified Cold War-era satellite imagery.

The study, which appeared in *Science Advances* on Wednesday, is the latest indication that climate change is eating the Himalayan glaciers, threatening water supplies for hundreds of millions of people downstream across South Asia. "This is the clearest picture yet of how fast Himalayan glaciers are melting over this time interval, and why," said lead author Joshua Maurer, a doctoral candidate at Columbia University in New York.

Scientists combed 40 years of satellite observations spanning 2,000 kilometers (1,243 miles) across India, China, Nepal and Bhutan, and found that the glaciers have been losing the equivalent of a foot-and-a-half (45 centimeters) of ice each year since 2000.

Many of the 20th-century observations came from recently declassified US spy satellite imagery.

The figure is double the amount of melting that took place from 1975 to 2000. Past research has found similar trends, but the latest work is bigger in its geographic and historic scope. It concluded that rising temperatures are the biggest factor.

Though temperatures vary from place to place, average temperatures were one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) higher between 2000 to 2016 than they were between 1975 and 2000.

Other factors the researchers blamed were changes in rainfall, with reductions tending to reduce ice cover, and the burning of fossil fuels which lead to soot that lands on snowy glacier surfaces, absorbing sunlight and hastening melting. "It shows how endangered (the Himalayas) are if climate change continues at the same pace in the coming decades," said Etienne Berthier, a glaciologist

at France's Laboratory for Studies in Geophysics and Spatial Oceanography, who was not involved in the study.

Greenland ice melt

A separate study also published Wednesday found Greenland's ice sheet may have completely melted within the next millennium if greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current rate. The Greenland ice sheet holds the equivalent of seven meters (yards) of sea level. "If we continue as usual, Greenland will melt," said lead author Andy Aschwanden, a research associate professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Geophysical Institute.

It is the most recent warning about warming in the world's coldest regions. "What we are doing right now in terms of emissions, in the very near future, will have a big long-term impact on the Greenland ice sheet, and by extension, if it melts, to sea level and human society," Aschwanden said. The study, which used data from NASA's Operation IceBridge airborne campaign and was published in *Science Advances*, is the latest to suggest a much greater rate of melt than was estimated by older models. The model relies on more accurate representations of the flow of "outlet glaciers," river-like bodies of ice that connect to the ocean.

"Outlet glaciers play a key role in how ice sheets melt, but previous models lacked the data to adequately represent their complex flow patterns," NASA said in a statement about the study. "The study found that melting outlet glaciers could account for up to 40 percent of the ice mass lost from Greenland in the next 200 years."

As ocean waters have warmed over the past two decades, they have melted the floating ice that once shielded the outlet glaciers. As a result, "the outlet glaciers flow faster, melt and get thinner, with the lowering surface of the ice sheet exposing new ice to warm air and melting as well." In the next 200 years, the ice sheet model shows that melting at the present rate could contribute 48 to 160 centimeters (19 to 63 inches) to global sea level rise, 80 percent higher than previous estimates. In October, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) reported that avoiding global climate chaos will require a major transformation of society and the world economy that is "unprecedented in scale," and warned time is running out to avert disaster. — AFP

International

Belgium to work toward giving visas to Uighur family in China

One million ethnic Uighurs are believed to be detained in camps

BEIJING: Belgium says it is working toward providing visas to a Uighur family that went missing after being escorted out of its embassy in Beijing last month under murky circumstances. The woman and her four children disappeared for weeks, alarming her husband, before reportedly being located back home in Xinjiang. An estimated one million ethnic Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are believed to be detained in internment camps in the restive region.

Abdulhamid Tursun, a political refugee in Belgium, said he has not heard from his family since May 31, a few days after they left the embassy. "I am worried about their safety," he said. "I hope they can safely come be at my side as soon as possible, and our family can reunite." Belgium had said one of its diplomats would travel Tuesday to Xinjiang to ascertain the whereabouts of the family. The Belgian Foreign Ministry said Wednesday evening the family had been located in Xinjiang. "The goal of the mission has changed," ministry spokesman Karl Lagatie said. "Our embassy is still willing to travel to the region but to finalize the necessary formalities. Certain documents are still needed and must be in order," Lagatie said, adding that officials were working on arranging the trip. The Belgian embassy in Beijing has come under fierce criticism for allegedly enabling Chinese police to take the family back to Xinjiang, where they could face detention. "The case exposes the additional risk

Uighurs in China face even if they want to seek help from foreign governments," said Patrick Poon, China researcher at Amnesty International. "The Belgian embassy set an extremely bad example of how governments put economic interests above human rights," he said. China's foreign ministry and the Xinjiang government did not respond to AFP requests for comment.

Police fears

The mother, Horiyat Abdulla, and her children travelled to Beijing at the end of May to complete missing paperwork for their family reunification visas. Tursun said they panicked upon learning it would take at least three months for their visas to be approved and refused to leave the embassy. They were afraid to return to their hotel because police had visited them multiple times since they arrived in Beijing, he explained. "The police came in the middle of the night, asking why they came to Beijing, when they would return," he said. "They were very scared, they didn't sleep all night."

The embassy offered to accompany Abdulla and her four children back to their hotel, but they "refused to leave the embassy in a kind of sit-in", a Belgian ministry spokesman said. In an interview published Tuesday, Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders told Le Soir newspaper the diplomatic police "asked the family to leave the premises" and the situation was ex-



A Chinese paramilitary policeman stands guard as a Muslim Uighur family walks past him in the Uighur district of the city of Urumqi in China's Xinjiang region. — AFP

plained to the father the next day. An embassy is not intended to "lodge people" applying for visas, he said. In the end, Chinese police escorted them away, the ministry said. "There was a misunderstanding about the procedures to follow," Lagatie said Wednesday. He said Belgian authorities spoke to the Chinese about "follow-

ing the correct procedure." The family did not have Chinese passports when they first showed up at the embassy, Lagatie added.

A few days after leaving the mission, Abdulla and her children were taken away by Xinjiang police, her husband said, and he has not heard from her since. — AFP

China's former Interpol chief pleads guilty to bribery

BEIJING: Former Interpol chief Meng Hongwei pleaded guilty at a trial in China yesterday to accepting \$2.1 million in bribes—a remarkable fall from grace for the former vice minister of public security. The Tianjin No.1 Intermediate Court said Meng "showed repentance" during the hearing, which was the culmination of a dramatic case that shook the international police organization and put a spotlight on China's opaque judicial system. The verdict will be announced at a "select date or time", said court in northern China in a statement, without specifying further.

Photos released by the Tianjin court showed Meng, who disappeared last year, sitting between two police officers in the courtroom, wearing a light brown jacket. His hair had greyed and he appeared gaunt compared to photos from 2017. Meng is among a growing group of Communist Party cadres caught in President Xi Jinping's anti-graft campaign, which critics say has served as a way to remove the leader's political enemies.

Over one million officials have been punished so far during Xi's six-year tenure. Meng vanished last September during a visit to China from France, where Interpol is based, and was later accused of accepting bribes and expelled from the Communist Party. The court said that between 2005 and 2017 Meng used his status and positions, including as vice minister of public security and Marine Police Chief, to accumulate bribes equivalent to some 14.46 million yuan (\$2.1 million). — AFP

Fall armyworm invades crops across Asia

BAN NONG TOR, Thailand/SINGAPORE: Looking out at his empty, red-earth field, Thai farmer Puang Timdon said his two-week-old maize crop didn't stand a chance against the fall armyworm pest. "All the 8 rai (1.28 hectare) I planted were all heavily infested," said the 42-year-old from his farm in Ban Nong Tor town in Pak Chong district, 180 km (120 miles) northeast of the capital Bangkok. "The worm ate the whole field in three days, leaving so much damage that it wasn't worth saving."

Fall armyworm, a caterpillar that got the name because it invades croplands in droves, much like an army, has rapidly spread across Asia since it was detected in southern India late last year. Fields in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia and Taiwan have fallen victim. In Thailand, it has badly affected the country's corn crop, much of which is sold to the animal feed industry.

In recent months, the pest has also been found in 18 of China's 33 provinces and regions and is now threatening to spread across the key corn region in the northeast. China is the world's second biggest corn consumer and producer.

"It is a major issue for crops. It could pose a food security threat," said Phin Ziebell, an agribusiness economist at National Australia Bank. "Management cost is an issue for small farmers." Marjon Fredrix, an agricultural officer at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said some countries have reported damage to crops hit by the pest at 1.2 percent to about 10 percent, while others had put the figure at 20 percent to 40 percent.

"Once the fall armyworm has arrived, it can't be eradicated, and farmers will have to manage it," Fredrix said. A dip in the production of corn, largely used in Asia to feed animals, could force hog, poultry and cattle growers to rely on expensive imports and dent incomes of millions of small farmers. The fall armyworm in-

vasion comes against the backdrop of planting delays in the United States which lifted benchmark Chicago corn futures by nearly a fifth last month.

"Awful combination"

Asia's millions of smallholder farmers - many with less than an acre of land - are likely to take a bigger hit from the pest than larger growers given their reluctance to adopt new technologies to combat production threats. "There is an inertia about new technologies," said Paul Voutier, Singapore-based director at Grow Asia, a World Bank funded organization that works with small farmers and other stakeholders to improve productivity. "And the treatment for fall armyworm has the awful combination of being both costly and difficult," he said, noting the pest's tendency to burrow low into the stem of the crop made it hard to combat with traditional pesticide sprays. Asia is the world's biggest consumer and importer of corn. The region accounts for 34 percent of global corn imports and nearly 36 percent of world corn consumption, according to the US Department of Agriculture data. The pest, which has been known for almost 200 years in the Americas, was first reported in Africa in 2016 and has since spread across the entire continent, according to FAO. In July 2018, fall armyworm - which can fly up to 100 km in one night - was spotted in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, and by the end of February 2019 it was reported in 10 of India's 29 states. The armyworm has been detected in more than 50 of Thailand's 76 provinces, and is concentrated in six western provinces with large maize areas. It has a preference for corn, but can attack 80 crops, including rice and sugarcane.

The pest thrives in tropical and sub-tropical climates. Its life cycle is 24 days to 40 days, and so two or three generations of it can feed off a single crop during a growing season before moving on. "Fall armyworm attacks the corn crop in all stages, right from the germination of seeds and early establishment of the crop, which is the most vulnerable stage, till the harvesting stage," said Prasanta Patra, who heads the corn and row crops market in Asia for global agrichemicals firm Corteva. — Reuters

International

Tale of two cities: Hong Kong turmoil may boost Singapore

Controversial extradition bill shakes HK's reputation

SINGAPORE: Hong Kong's reputation as a stable financial hub has been shaken by a controversial extradition bill that prompted massive protests, and its loss might just be Singapore's gain, experts say.

The Chinese territory and the Southeast Asian city-state have long vied for the title of Asia's top financial destination, attracting international business from around the world.

But a decision by Hong Kong's Beijing-backed government to introduce a bill allowing extradition to the mainland sparked concern among the business community and brought up to two million protesters into the street. Hong Kong's political crisis is "definitely a dent in its reputation," said Lawrence Loh, director of the Centre for Governance, Institutions and Organizations at the National University of Singapore's Business School.

"There will be some immediate benefits (for Singapore)," he added, pointing to reports that tycoons were already shifting money from Hong Kong. Hong Kong offers access to China but enjoys freedoms unseen in the mainland, under the terms of its 1997 handover from Britain to Beijing. It has a large expatriate community and prides itself on its reputation as a financial capital in the region.

But its status is temporary—the handover agreement expires in 2047 — and in recent years there has been increasing concern about Beijing's influence.

Companies were unsettled not only by the

massive demonstrations, but also by the proposed law, which they feared could undermine Hong Kong's reputation as a safe place to do business.

Opponents of the proposal worry it will entangle people in China's notoriously opaque and politicised justice system, and threaten those critical of Beijing's policies. "Enacting such an open-ended law by fiat will only drive business to places like Singapore," Richard Harris, chief executive of Port Shelter Investment, wrote in Hong Kong's South China Morning Post.

The territory's Chief Executive Carrie Lam has now suspended the bill, but she has declined so far to fully withdraw it from consideration. And that uncertainty could mean firms looking for a first-time base in the region will lean away from Hong Kong and towards Singapore, said David Webb, a Hong Kong-based investor who advocates for stronger corporate governance.

"If you are considering doing it (opening an office) for the first time... then you would probably look at the potential for these laws to be resurrected," he said. Singapore has sought to promote itself as a less crowded, more orderly alternative to Hong Kong, though it is sometimes mocked as dull and criticized for its restrictions on civil liberties. The media is tightly controlled and rights groups say financially ruinous defamation suits are used to silence critics and political opponents.

"Singapore is not known as a bastion of free speech but it does have sovereignty on its side,"



HONG KONG: A general view shows the ICC building (center right), Hong Kong's tallest building, on the Kowloon side of Victoria Harbour yesterday.—AFP

Webb said. The city-state has also built a reputation for a strong rule of law—key in attracting businesses—and a growing number of foreign companies come to Singapore to settle commercial disputes.

The Singapore International Arbitration Centre, one of several similar centers around the world, received over 400 cases last year and has seen its case-load increase four-fold over the past decade.

In Hong Kong by contrast, critics say the ex-

tradition bill is the latest sign that a traditionally sound legal system is being eroded as Beijing seeks to assert greater control. Still, any shift away from Hong Kong is likely to be more of a trickle than a flood, experts said. "Investors in mainland China will still prefer Hong Kong over Singapore due to proximity," noted Abhineet Kaul of consultancy Frost & Sullivan. "I do not believe that the uncertainty and loss of confidence has reached a tipping point where you will see the floodgates open," added Loh.—AFP

HK protesters call for new demo after demands are snubbed

HONG KONG: Hong Kong opposition groups called for another major demonstration yesterday after the pro-Beijing government did not respond to demands of protesters who have shaken the city with massive rallies. Millions have marched this month to oppose a proposed law that would have allowed extraditions to the Chinese mainland, but the huge protest movement has morphed into a larger rebuke of Hong Kong's administration. Under-fire chief executive Carrie Lam has apologized and suspended the controversial bill, but that has failed to quell the opposition, with protesters demanding she step down and completely withdraw the legislation.

A number of protest groups, including student unions, called for supporters to mobilize today, asking people to gather at the city's main government complex to "hold picnics" outside the legislature starting 7:00 am today (2300 GMT yesterday).

They also recommended a go-slow protest on roads and public transport, and urged people to gather in other parts of the city to show their support. "Blossom everywhere," read a statement circulated in a chat group on the messaging app Telegram by eight informal protest groups. "There are many ways to participate. Think carefully about your own ways to show your love to Hong Kong. June 21 is not the end of the fight,



HONG KONG: Protesters march towards the Hong Kong government headquarters. Hong Kong opposition groups yesterday called for another major demonstration after the pro-Beijing government did not respond to demands of protesters who have shaken the city with massive rallies.—AFP

there will be more in the coming days."

The groups also recommended a mass strike, but it was not immediately clear which business or professional groups would support such a call. In addition to Lam's ouster and the extradition law's withdrawal, protesters have also demanded the release of those detained during sporadic clashes with police last week, and an investigation into allegations of police brutality.

"The hope is to apply pressure before civil servants go to work if we have a certain amount of people," said So Tsun Fung, president of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) Students Union.—AFP

Japan opposition leader sees 'double election' unlikely

TOKYO: Prospects are fading for a snap election for parliament's lower house in tandem with a summer upper house poll, the leader of Japan's second-biggest opposition party said yesterday. But Yoichiro Tamaki, head of the Democratic Party For the People (DPFP) told Reuters he would prefer to see a lower house poll soon to boost momentum for unifying the opposition into a viable rival to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative ruling party.

Abe said on Wednesday he was not considering a snap lower house poll but speculation remains that he might call one. Tamaki put the likelihood of a snap, lower house poll at between 10 percent and 20 percent, in part because Abe's government has come under criticism after an advisory panel suggested that many retirees could not live on pension income alone.

"Because of the pension issue, the wind isn't blowing in such a good direction (for Abe)," Tamaki said.

Abe has led his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to five general election wins since returning as party leader in 2012, aided by a fragmented opposition and low turnout. "We are divided, so voters feel their votes would be marginalized and would not lead to any big change" if they opted for an opposition party, Tamaki said. He said he feared a future in which Japan's political sphere was divided into a permanent ruling bloc versus a permanent opposition camp.—Reuters

Lifestyle

Friday Times

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A model presents a creation by Belgian fashion designer Walter van Beirendonck, during the Men Spring-Summer 2020 collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP

**‘Wild Boars’ deal with fame
one year after Thai cave rescue**

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(COMBO) This combination picture shows (clockwise from top left) a player from the “Wild Boar” football team, who was rescued from the Tham Luang cave in Thailand, fighting for the ball with a player from the River Plate youth team during a match in Buenos Aires on October 7, 2018, members of the “Wild Boar” football team posing for a photo with their coach Ekkapol Chantawong (back center) during a press conference in Bangkok on April 30, 2019 regarding a Netflix series about the rescue of the team from the Tham Luang cave, the 12 members of the “Wild Boar” football club greeting attendees at a reception in Bangkok on September 6, 2018, Buddhist monks shaving the hair of the rescued members of the “Wild Boar” football team and their coach at the Phra That Doi Wao Buddhist temple in the Mae Sai district of Chiang Rai province during a religious ordination ceremony on July 24, 2018 and “Wild Boar” coach Ekkapol Chantawong (center) and members of his football team taking their seats for the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Everton at Old Trafford in Manchester on October 28, 2018. — AFP photos

‘Wild Boars’ deal with fame one year after Thai cave rescue

A football team made up mostly of poor or stateless teenagers entered a tourist cave complex in northern Thailand a year ago on a day trip, accompanied by their coach. They emerged 18 days later to global acclaim, courted by film producers, authors and talk show hosts eager to tell the remarkable story of a daring operation that rescued them from the flooded depths. Most of the 12 “Wild Boars”, as the team was known, still live in the poor northern town of Mae Sai, once a sleepy backwater but now inundated with selfie-snapping tourists. They still play football—their coach who led them down the Tham Luang cave complex continues to run training—and they share the same basic homes with their families.

But life for the team has taken an extraordinary trajectory since they were rescued, led out of the cave heavily sedated by teams of expert divers. They have signed a film deal with Netflix, travelled the world, and had their story chronicled in books, documentaries and a pipeline of films. But their new-found fame has also forced silence on them, as the boys and their families can no longer talk freely about their ordeal—the result

of exclusivity contracts that ban them from speaking to the press.

Stateless no more

The boys were on a day trip to the cave complex on June 23, 2018, when up-country rains flooded the complex via underground waterways. They were feared dead until two British cave divers negotiated a series of narrow waterways and corridors and found them on July 2, trapped in a damp chamber, four kilometers (2.5 miles) from the entrance. It was then that Adul Sam-on, aged 14 at the time, became one of the stars of the drama.

He went into the cave complex as a stateless person—like several others in the group, including the coach Ekkapol Chantawong, denied citizenship in Thailand. But he was thrust into the limelight by his gracious “thank you” spoken in English to the British divers who found the group, emaciated, cold, but alive, nine days after they went missing. Born in Myanmar’s self-governing Wa State and raised in Thailand, Adul lived in legal limbo with no birth certificate.

After their dramatic rescue, Adul, his coach and two other teammates were granted citizenship and passports for the first time, allowing them



Books at a bookstore in Bangkok relating to the rescue of the 12 boys from the “Wild Boars” football team and their coach from the Tham Luang cave in the Mae Sai district of Chiang Rai province last year.

to travel to destinations from Los Angeles to Manchester. With the anniversary of the start of the saga this Sunday, those close to the Wild

Boars say fame has not changed them. “He’s an ordinary person just like before,” Adul’s friend Aman Sommol told AFP from his school.



This handout picture from diver Ben Reymentants taken during the June-July 2018 rescue of the 12 boys from the “Wild Boars” football team and their coach trapped in the Tham Luang cave shows the rescue efforts in the cave in the Mae Sai district of Chiang Rai province.

Greatest story ever sold: Media rush to tell Thai cave story

On the shelves

“The Great Cave Rescue”, “The Boys in the Cave” and “Rising Water”, are all available on Amazon. Authors and publishers scrambled to be the first to hit stores. “It was definitely a race to get the book out before Christmas,” said Liam Cochrane, a correspondent for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and author of “The Cave”, which is also about the rescue. “There was a sense of urgency but also pressure to get the story right,” he added.

Australian diver doctors Craig Challen and Richard Harris, who helped sedate the “Wild Boars” team before they were extracted, are due to release “Against All Odds” in November. Ellis Henican, who helped write the book, said it will reveal tantalizing details and “change how

everyone sees the Wild Boar rescue”.

On the big screen

Expected to be released later this year, “The Cave” will be the first film about the drama. Using some of the real-life rescuers, Thai-Irish filmmaker Tom Waller says the movie packs plenty of high drama. “We all know that the boys got stuck in a cave... but it’s how they got out which makes the story so remarkable,” Waller told AFP. It is expected to premiere in Thailand as early as September.

Also in the pipeline is a Netflix production from the producers of “Crazy Rich Asians”. Team members were reportedly paid \$100,000 each, though Netflix declined to comment on the terms of the deal and access

to interviews are now tightly controlled. Also jumping into the fray is the National Geographic team behind the Oscar-winning film “Free Solo”, with a documentary in the pipeline.

On prime time

Audiences all over the world watched the twists and turns of the rescue. The boys emerged to a global media circus, courted by journalists, TV hosts, and sports fans the world over. A trip to Los Angeles that was the most star-studded. There they trained with the Los Angeles Galaxy and star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic during a visit arranged by US television star Ellen DeGeneres, who hosted the team on her show. “I thought I was brave, but these kids, this team is... braver than me,” Ibrahimovic said. — AFP



Family members of the 12 boys and their coach from the "Wild Boars" football team trapped in the Tham Luang cave, pray before a shrine in the cave area as operations continue to rescue them in the Khun Nam Nang Non Forest Park in the Mae Sai district of Chiang Rai province.

A dedicated student, Adul still teaches his friends English and helps them with homework. "He's a role model for the younger kids at school," Aman added. Adul and several other Wild Boars now play for the Ekkapol Academy, a new club founded by Coach Ek, as he is known. As he runs drills Ek smiles at the visiting media, but bound by Netflix's gag order he cannot talk about the cave drama. His peers say he is delighted to have finally realized his dream of running his own football school. "After the storm came calm, this is a new life for him," assistant coach Noppadol Kanthavong told AFP. Coach Ek also now heads a media company which will act as the go-between for the production houses, the boys and their families for a Netflix production that will include "Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. Chu. Rumors have swirled about payments to the boys-US media has pinned the number at \$100,000 for each.

Lucky number 13

Fame has also come to some of the divers who helped rescue the boys. After weighing several options, the boys and the coach were eventually given sedatives and brought out wearing wetsuits and full-face breathing apparatus in a series of relays. Extracting



In this file handout video rescue personnel carry a member of the "Wild Boars" football team on a stretcher during the rescue operation inside the Tham Luang cave in the Khun Nam Nang Non Forest Park in Mae Sai district.

everyone took three days because crews had to replace air tanks and other supplies, requiring up to twenty hours between each run. Many of the rescuers were Thai Navy SEALs, some were experts running tourist dive operations, while others were lifelong cave hobbyists who flew in from Britain and Australia to assist. All found themselves at the heart of a drama without precedent.

"When I arrived, I thought it was a suicide mission," said Ben Reymenants, a Belgian who runs Blue Label Diving in Phuket. Among the rescuers was Saman Gunan, the only fatality during the near three-week saga. Today a statue of the Navy SEAL, who ran out of oxygen in a twisting, flooded passage, stands near the cave's entrance. Other rescuers like Vernon Unsworth were shunted into the media spotlight against their will.

The British diver is suing US tech mogul Elon Musk, who called him a "pedo" on Twitter after Unsworth questioned the billionaire's usefulness when he showed up at the rescue site. Speaking to the BBC, Unsworth played down his central role in helping the trapped thirteen to safety. "None of us are heroes. We just did a job we were asked to do," he said. "Thirteen is not an unlucky number anymore." — AFP



In this file photo rescue workers take a break as operations continue to rescue the 12 boys and their football coach from the "Wild Boars" football team trapped in the Tham Luang cave.



One of the members of the "Wild Boars" football team is carried on a stretcher during the rescue operation in the Tham Luang cave in the Khun Nam Nang Non Forest Park in Mae Sai district.

MAROON 5 PLAY TO 17,000 FANS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

By Abigail Mathias

Earlier this week, Grammy award winning band, Maroon 5 played a sold-out concert to an audience not seen before. The Red Pill Blues Tour is the sixth concert tour by the band, in support of their sixth studio album Red Pill Blues (2017). The tour began on May 30, 2018 in Tacoma, Washington and is scheduled to conclude in August 31, 2019 in Willemstad, after touring North and South America, Australia, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

When it was first announced in April 2019, many closer home weren't sure if a music concert at the hottest time of year (June), made sense. But there was soon talk of an indoor arena and before you knew it, the band was on its way. People from Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, came especially for the event with their families in tow. Many queued up for hours but everything went smoothly. A family from Spain stood in front of us in the line and their young children belted all of the songs.

The concert was held in the brand-new 17,000-seater Coca-Cola Arena, in City Walk, Dubai. The show was the first announced act in this arena and was the first music performance to be hosted here. When did such a large-scale venue open up in the UAE, may wondered?

It was such a unique experience to see people from different countries and ages all under one roof tweeting and calling friends to share the collective experience. Belting out one hit after another, the band seemed to live to their end of the bargain, when they finally hit the stage well past 9.30 pm. (The show was scheduled to begin at 8.30 pm).

Perched on the highest floor, I noticed lead singer, Adam Levine clutching the mic stand a little unusually during some of the band's biggest hits. When Moves like Jagger played, I



attributed it to his ode to the music icon but somehow something didn't feel right. Levine is a well-known host of the show, The Voice, and he is known for his stellar vocal skills. While the crowds continued to sing along and echo most of the hits in the arena on that June 16 night mid-way, Levine was seen heading out of the stage. The Lebanese crowd that sat next to me in the arena said, "This is so much fun and I hope they come back for an encore."

True to the spirit, of 'the show must go on,' the band including Lead guitarist, James Valentine and James Farrar on bass, played some mind-blowing guitar riffs. My son, Daniel looked at me and we knew something wasn't quite right. "This is my first music concert but it can't be over right?" he asked. I've been listening to some of the songs by this band from before 12-year-old Daniel, was born. Luckily moments later Levine came right back and did a rendition of "Forever Young," from the 80's fused with one of their current chart busters, "Girls Like You".

Levine soon told the crowd that he wanted to be honest and shared that he wasn't feeling up to the mark due to severe stomach cramps. He also mentioned being in awe of the audience response saying he never heard people sing so loud. He then dedicated the song, "She will be loved," to the multitude



of women in the audience and yes you could hear a collective sigh (or maybe that's just me). "Last night a dream came true," said Urvashi Khanolkar, a resident of the UAE and a fan from Mumbai, India.

Abloh brings out stars for Off White Paris fashion show

Style superstar Virgil Abloh produced one of the big moments at Paris men's fashion week Wednesday when he had Gigi Hadid walk through a field of white carnations at his Off White show. The black American creator—one of the hottest talents in fashion right now, who also heads Louis Vuitton's menswear line—brought a host of stars to his front row.

Columbian singer Maluma rubbed shoulders with Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton and Chinese K pop star Li Wen Han to see Hadid close the show wearing an oversized white tuxedo adorned with abstract expressionist designs by the legendary New York graffiti artist Futura. Abloh, the first African American to head a major French label, used the veteran artist's work to great effect throughout his brightly-coloured spring summer collection.

Field of carnations

US rapper Sheck Wes opened the show in another Futura-decorated white ensemble, with one of the artist's sculptures called "Nosferatu" looming out of the field of white blossoms Abloh had transplanted inside a converted market in central Paris. His army of models trampled the carnations—which are a symbol of innocence—at the end of the show. Abloh seemed to question what humans were doing to the planet, opening the show to the sound of the steam trains that heralded the Industrial Revolution and ending it with the haunting Beatles song, "Blackbird".

The song is said to have been inspired both by nature and the US civil rights movement. Several of the garments in the show Abloh called "Plastic" had recycling symbols alongside his own four-pointed square logo.

But he later said he was using the word as a metaphor for how in "our generation a banal term all of a sudden turns into a whole different context, basically in a matter of moments".

Socks and sandals

The former architect introduced a line of blanket-like capes to his high-end streetwear, with his usual trainers replaced by sandals with socks and hiking boots. A major retrospective of Abloh's startlingly prolific work in art, fashion and design opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago last week. Maluma, the reggaeton star who appears with Madonna in the "Medellin" track of her new album "Madame X", has been hailed as a "menswear icon in the making" this week by Vogue magazine.



American designer Virgil Abloh acknowledges the audience at the end of Off-White during the men's Spring/Summer 2020 collection fashion show. — AFP

He had already turned up at the Heron Preston show Tuesday and has been sending regular updates to his 43 million followers on Instagram of his progress through the Paris collections. Despite Madonna wearing a Palomo Spain outfit for their video, the Colombian was noticeably absent from the flamboyant Spanish designer's show Tuesday which opened Paris men's fashion week.

Belgian maverick Walter van Beirendonck created the day's most colourful and way out show which he called "Witsblitz", full of wacky atomic superheroes as well as some rather gorgeous one-of-a-kind jackets. Where Van Beirendonck turned heads with avant-garde colour combinations his compatriot Y/Project's Glenn Martens went for the unexpected through deconstruction of everyday garments, so "a pocket becomes a sleeve, a collar opens up and turns into a shoulder pad, a bomber jacket can be worn upside down".

Japanese designer Jun Takahashi of Undercover took a much more conventional look at the classic black and charcoal grey double and single breasted suit/bomber jacket combinations, before adding ecotoplastic prints of peoples and faces which slowly emerge from the fabric as the collection wore on. Former Dior and Calvin Klein supremo Raf Simons is due to round off the day with a late-night show in the Paris suburbs. — AFP



Models present creations by Off-White during the men's Spring/Summer 2020 collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos

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Models present creations by Belgian fashion designer Walter van Beirendonck, during the Men Spring-Summer 2020 collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP

Rihanna opens New York pop-up shop for her Fenty label

Rolling out her concept of fashion that is not a slave to the seasons or the shackles of Fashion Week, Rihanna opened the second pop-up shop of her Fenty brand in New York Tuesday, a month after the launch of the new fashion house in Paris. Fenty, which the Barbados-born diva launched with French luxury powerhouse LVMH, has set up shop in fashionable Soho store The Webster and officially opens to the public from Wednesday until June 30. It provided an occasion for the young fashion house to unveil a new mini-collection, called “6-19” after its launch date, following on from the inaugural “5-19” collection in Paris last month.

Some pieces from the first collection are back, alongside some new items, including a series of dresses and skirts in bold colors like orange or yellow but also some very dense prints. The cuts

are figure-hugging with plunging necklines and the label has chosen soft materials such as satin or mesh. Most of the pieces are available online from Wednesday, with the exception of a set of T-shirts, at \$230 each, which are only available in the store before being marketed online in July.

The prices of the collection are similar to the Paris offerings, which ranged from \$250 for a T-shirt to more than \$1,000 for a denim jacket or pantsuit. Rihanna, the world’s richest female musician, is the first black woman to head up a fashion house for Paris-based LVMH, which owns Dior, Louis Vuitton, Fendi and Givenchy among others. Fenty, named for the 31-year-old singer, born Robyn Rihanna Fenty, is LVMH’s first new luxury brand from scratch since the launch of Christian Lacroix in 1987. — AFP



Barbadian singer/actress Rihanna arrives to the launch of FENTY’s upcoming collection release event at The Webster in New York City. — AFP



Worker putting steamed kozo plants in a water tank during the “washi” paper manufacturing process at the Hidaka Washi factory in Hidaka, Kochi prefecture. — AFP photos

SKIN DEEP: JAPAN’S ‘WASHI’ PAPER TORN BY MODERN LIFE



The world’s thinnest “washi” paper at the Hidaka Washi factory in Hidaka.

Once an indispensable part of daily life in Japan, ultra-thin washi paper was used for everything from writing and painting to lampshades, umbrellas, and sliding doors, but demand has plunged as lifestyles have become more westernized. Despite its 1,300-year history and UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status, washi paper is struggling to attract consumers and the market value has dropped by more than 50 percent in the past two decades.

But at a small workshop in western Japan, Hiroyoshi Chinzei, a fourth-generation traditional paper maker, creates washi with a unique purpose that may help revive interest—both at home and abroad. Chinzei’s product, the world’s thinnest paper, has helped save historical documents at major museums and libraries—including the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum and Washington’s Library of Congress—from decay. “Washi paper is more flexible and durable” than what Japanese refer to as “western paper”, which disintegrates into tiny pieces when it becomes very old, the 50-year-old told AFP. The traditional hand-made paper is manufactured from plants called kozo, or mulberry, which has fibers that are much longer than materials used for paper in the west such as wood and cotton. “Old

Japanese books from the seventh or eighth century remain in good condition... thanks to the fibers of the kozo plants,” the washi maker told AFP at his small factory in Hidaka, a village 640 kilometers (400 miles) southwest of Tokyo.

‘Wings of a mayfly’

The papermaking process begins with steaming the kozo plants and peeling off the bark, which is then boiled until soft, while impurities are removed by hand in clear water. The fibers are then beaten and mixed with glue and water, before being placed on a wooden screen. This screen is then dipped repeatedly in water with the fibers and shaken to spread the liquid evenly to make a sheet of paper, a technique which requires years to master.

Because washi is hard to break, damaged, old documents can be reinforced by attaching a piece of washi or sandwiching them between two sheets of the paper, Chinzei explained. For documents, transparency is key to be able to see the text, meaning the thinner the washi, the better. Chinzei’s washi, a type called tengu-joshi paper also known as “the wings of a mayfly,” is 0.02 millimeters thick and weighs 1.6 grams per



Hidaka Washi president Hiroyoshi Chinzei, a fourth-generation traditional paper maker, displaying the world’s thinnest paper at his factory in Hidaka.



A worker putting steamed kozo plants in a water tank during the “washi” paper manufacturing process.



A worker boiling kozo plants at the beginning of the papermaking process.

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square meter. This compared to a standard sheet of photocopy paper, which is about 0.09 millimeters thick and weighs 70 grams per square meter.

"It's a mesh-like paper mainly made with fibers... It's as thin as human skin," Chinzei said. Using both machines and hand-made techniques passed down for generations, the firm can create ultra-thin paper, which is also used by conservationists to restore and protect cultural objects.

'Pure, strong and lasting'

One such conservationist, Takao Makino, carefully applies washi with a brush onto golden sticks representing the halo of a Buddhist statue estimated to be around 800 years old. Makino said he used washi for the first time in 2007 to protect

the surface of one of the two main statues at Tokyo's historic Sensoji Temple. "The surface was damaged and peeled off. So we covered all of it (with washi) to contain the damage," the 68-year-old said. "Washi naturally fits into intricately-shaped sculptures, but papers with chemical fibers or wrapping films don't," he said.

"The history proves washi is very durable... The material is pure, strong and lasting. It's reliable." The production of the Japanese paper peaked in the Edo period between the 17th and late 19th centuries but declined as papermaking was mechanized. Now, due to the westernization of Japan, the washi market is shrinking again, Chinzei said. "We have no tatami rooms and almost no space to display a hanging scroll in the current lifestyle," he said. "Washi used for those things are now gone."

According to the industry ministry, the total value of hand-made washi dropped to 1.78 billion yen in 2016 from 4.15 billion yen in 1998, while that of washi for calligraphy and shoji sliding screens fell to 5.86 billion yen from 25.1 billion yen. Chinzei didn't plan on taking over his family trade and went to business school in Seattle to study finance. "But I came back... because I felt responsible for passing the baton to the next generation," he said, hoping to find ways to expand the market. The volume of washi used for restoration is still small, but it's been shipped to more than 40 countries and Chinzei is hopeful interest will grow. He explained: "For restoring cultural assets and as a canvas for art... I think washi has the potential to be used more in the world of art." — AFP

Impressionism's 'forgotten woman' shines in new Paris show

The first major show of Berthe Morisot's paintings in France in nearly 80 years puts the forgotten woman of Impressionism back at the center of the movement she helped found. One damning review of the first exhibition by the group that would revolutionize art blasted that it was no more than "five or six lunatics of which one is a woman ...[whose] feminine grace is maintained amid the outpourings of a delirious mind." That 1874 show included such soon-to-be art giants as Monet and Manet, whose brother Eugene later married Morisot.

But after her early death at 54, when she caught pneumonia after nursing their daughter through the illness, Morisot slipped into the shadow of her more famous male peers like Renoir and Degas. Now a new show at the Musee d'Orsay, the first dedicated to her work by a major Paris institution since 1941, puts Morisot back in the rightful place as one of the

most startling and innovative artists of her time. Curator Sylvie Patry said Morisot's work was always seen through the lens of the male artists who taught her like the great landscape painter Corot, or those she worked alongside like Manet or Renoir.

'Giving her back her place'

"We had to clear away some cliches about the woman artist and give her back her place at the heart of Impressionism," Patry added. The show highlights how radical she actually was. Like Degas and the American painter Mary Cassatt—who suffered similarly at the hands of art historians for decades—Morisot preferred intimate portraits to the luminous landscapes that the group pioneered.

The Paris show is full of her penetrating and often ambiguous portraits of women, such as "In The Cradle" where a mother sits over her sleep-

ing baby. Experts say that there is often "more than meets the eye" to her pictures, with the mother peering at her child in a way which could hint at tiredness, boredom or even regret as much as love. Patry said that when Morisot painted her female models like her sister Edma she was looking to capture "what was happening in that moment". She was obsessed with the "passing of time" and her energetic, fast style which so impressed Manet was about suggesting more than it was describing.

Radically modern

This very modern sensibility included daring to leave some of her works so they seemed to look "unfinished".

At the time critics attacked this, believing that it showed a female hesitancy and a lack of confidence. But Patry insisted that it was part of her fascination with the fleeting nature of life and her own determination that it was she as an artist who decided when a work was finished.

The world she painted was mostly the private, intimate one of fashionable Parisian ladies: domestic scenes and tasks, children and flowers, and the snatched pleasures of holiday resorts. Nor was she afraid to show the boredom of her subjects. Morisot was also lucky to be married to Eugene Manet, a minor painter, who did not take umbrage at her talent or her friendships with his brother Edouard, or Degas, Renoir, Monet and Mallarme. Tellingly, the largest ever retrospective of her work was organized just after her early death in 1895 by her Impressionist peers who so admired and respected her.

Unlike theirs, which are scattered among the world's great museums, the 70 Morisot works in the Musee d'Orsay exhibition—which runs until September 22 — mostly come from private collections. Running alongside the show, the museum has organized a week-long itinerary called "Women, art and power" to highlight the work of female artists in its vast collection of 19th-century French art. — AFP

Philippe 'Zdar' of France's Cassius duo dies in fall from window

French DJ and producer Philippe Cerboneschi, a star of the electro duo Cassius, has died after falling from a window in Paris, his agent said. He was 50. "He suffered an accidental fall, from the window of a high floor of a Paris building," said Sebastien Farran of the incident which occurred on Wednesday evening. Cerboneschi, who was better known as 'Zdar', formed Cassius in 1996 with Hubert Blanc-Francard, or 'Boom Bass'.

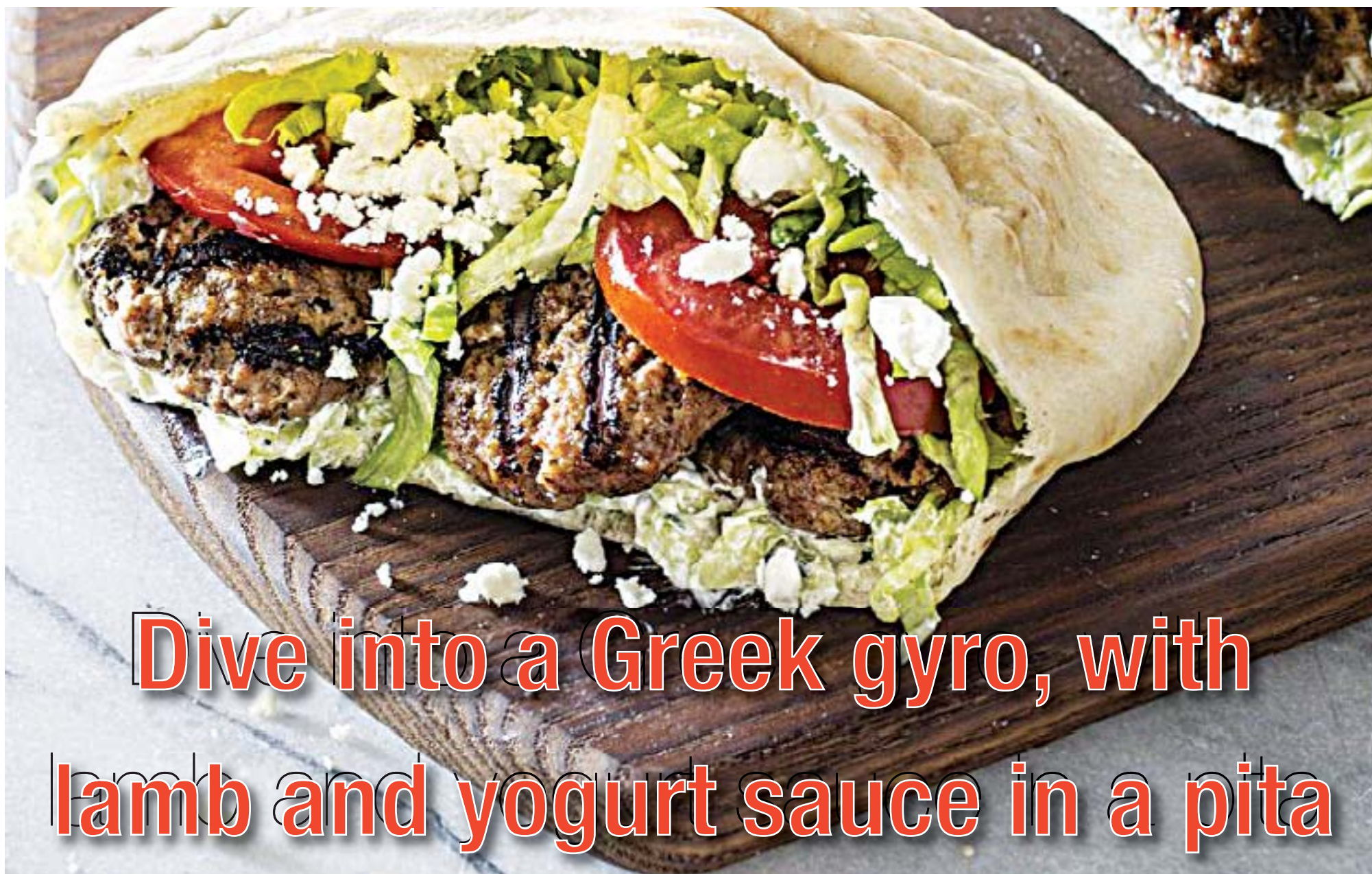
The duo became a staple of the French electronic scene with their first album "1999" released the same year and mixing hip hop, house and funk. They had met a few years earlier when Zdar was already working as a sound engineer for artists such as Serge Gainsbourg and was part of the Motorbass duo with Etienne de Crecy. Three other Cassius studio albums followed, "Au reve" in 2002, "15 Again" which marked a turn towards rock in 2006 with the single "Toop Toop" and "Ibifornia" in 2016. A pioneer of the so-called 'French touch' house music craze, he also collaborated extensively with other artists such as the Beastie Boys, Phoenix, The Rapture, Cat Power, Chromeo, Tiga, M and Franz Ferdinand. —AFP



In this file photo DJ Philippe Zdar smokes backstage during day three of the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival 2010 held at the Empire Polo Club on in Indio, California. — AFP



In this file photo taken on November 3, 1998 visitors look at the painting by Edouard Manet entitled "Berthe Morisot au bouquet de violettes" (1872). — AFP



Dive into a Greek gyro, with lamb and yogurt sauce in a pita

What's not to love about a Greek gyro, a sandwich of seasoned, marinated lamb, tomato, lettuce, and cucumber-yogurt tzatziki sauce stuffed inside a soft pita? The traditional method for cooking the meat employs an electric vertical rotisserie on which layers of sliced and marinated leg of lamb are stacked. After cooking for hours, the meat is shaved with a long slicing knife, revealing pieces with crisp exteriors and moist interiors infused with garlic and oregano.

We wanted to translate this recipe for the home kitchen. Surprisingly, using ground lamb—which we formed into patties and grilled was easy and came close to reproducing the texture of rotisserie lamb. A modified panade, or wet binder, of pita bread crumbs, lemon juice, and garlic gave our patties a sturdier structure and fuller, more savory flavor. For a crisp outside and moist inside, we browned our patties on the grill until a crust formed on each side. Then we grilled the pitas as well to warm them and add a little smoky flavor. If using pocketless pitas, do not cut off the tops; instead, use a portion of a fifth pita to create crumbs.

GRILLED GREEK-STYLE LAMB PITA SANDWICHES

Ingredients

Servings: 4
 Start to finish: 40 minutes
 4 (8-inch) pita breads
 1/2 onion, chopped coarse
 1 tablespoon minced fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried
 4 teaspoons lemon juice
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon pepper
 1 pound ground lamb

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
 1 cup Tzatziki (recipe follows)
 1 large tomato, cored and sliced thin
 2 cups shredded iceberg lettuce
 2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (1/2 cup)

Preparation

Cut top quarter off each pita bread. Tear quarters into 1-inch pieces. (You should have 3/4 cup pita pieces.) Lightly moisten 2 pita breads with water. Sandwich unmoistened pitas between moistened pitas and wrap stack tightly in lightly greased heavy-duty aluminum foil; set aside.

Process pita bread pieces, onion, oregano, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and pepper in food processor until smooth paste forms, about 30 seconds; transfer to large bowl. Add ground lamb and knead with your hands until thoroughly combined. Divide mixture into 12 equal portions. Shape each portion into ball, then gently flatten into round disk about 1/2 inch thick and 2 1/2 inches in diameter.

* For a charcoal grill: Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter three-quarters filled with charcoal (4 1/2 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over half of grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.

* For a gas grill: Turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Turn primary burner to medium-high and turn off other burner(s).

Clean and oil cooking grate. Place patties on hotter side of grill, cover (if using gas), and cook until well browned and crust forms, 4 to 6 minutes per side. Transfer patties to paper towel-lined plate, cover loosely with foil, and let sit while heating pitas.

Place packet of pitas on cooler side of grill and flip occasionally until heated through, about 5 minutes. Using spoon, spread 1/4 cup Tzatziki inside each warm pita. Divide patties evenly among pitas and fill each sandwich with tomato slices, 1/2 cup shredded lettuce, and 2 tablespoons feta. Serve immediately.

TZATZIKI:

Tzatziki is a traditional Greek sauce made from strained yogurt and cucumber, as delicious eaten as a dip for raw vegetables as it is dolloped over grilled chicken or lamb. To make our own classic version, we started by shredding a cucumber on a coarse grater, salting it, and letting it drain to keep any excess liquid from watering down the dip. Greek yogurt gives tzatziki its pleasant tang and richness, but before stirring in our drained cucumber, we enhanced its flavor with minced fresh herbs and garlic. Using Greek yogurt here is key; do not substitute regular plain yogurt or the sauce will be very watery.

Makes about 2 cups
 1 (12-ounce) cucumber, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and shredded

Salt and pepper
 1 cup whole-milk Greek yogurt
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 2 tablespoons minced fresh mint and/or dill
 1 small garlic clove, minced

Toss cucumber with 1/2 teaspoon salt in colander and let drain for 15 minutes.

Whisk yogurt, oil, mint, and garlic together in bowl, then stir in drained cucumber. Cover and refrigerate until chilled, at least 1 hour or up to 2 days. Season with salt and pepper to taste before serving.

Make nicely glazed, unimpeachable peachy GRILLED CHICKEN

Too many recipes for glazed grilled chicken give you meat that's scorched or sickeningly sweet or both. We wanted nicely glazed, unimpeachable peachy grilled chicken. To start, we sprinkled the chicken with salt and pepper and let it sit for at least an hour before cooking to season the chicken and enable it to retain more moisture. Then we faced the main challenge: balancing real peach flavor with the necessity of not incinerating our dinner.

Cooking chicken covered in sweet preserves led to intense scorching on the grill, but just applying a glaze at the end of cooking didn't yield much flavor. We created a setup that cooked the chicken most of the way through in the sauce without exposing it to open flame by using a disposable aluminum pan. We started the chicken skin side down to render some fat before flipping the pieces skin side up to dry off and crisp up. We then finished the meat over the coals for perfect browning. A fresh peach and a jalapeno chile cooked alongside the chicken and incorporated into the sauce added heat and flavor to the finished dish.

PEACH-GLAZED GRILLED CHICKEN

Ingredients

Servings: 4
 Start to finish: 1 hour, 20 minutes
 3 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half, drumsticks, and/or thighs), trimmed
 Salt and pepper
 1 cup wood chips
 1 cup peach preserves
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 1 (13 by 9-inch) disposable aluminum pan
 1 peach, halved and pitted
 1 jalapeno chile
 2 tablespoons cider vinegar

Preparation

Pat chicken dry with paper towels and sprinkle with 2 1/4 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Place in 1-gallon zipper-lock bag and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours. Just before grilling, soak wood chips in water for 15 minutes, then drain. Using large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil, wrap soaked chips in 8 by 4 1/2-inch foil packet. (Make sure chips do not poke holes in sides or bottom of packet.) Cut 2 evenly spaced 2-inch slits in top of packet. Whisk preserves and cayenne

together in disposable pan. Place peach halves (cut side up), jalapeno, and chicken (skin side down) in pan.

• **For a charcoal grill:** Open bottom vent halfway. Light large chimney starter filled with charcoal briquettes (6 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over grill. Place wood chip packet on coals on 1 side of grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent halfway. Heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 5 minutes.

• **For a gas grill:** Remove cooking grate and place wood chip packet directly on primary burner. Set grate in place, turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 15 minutes. Turn all burners to medium. (Adjust burners as needed to maintain grill temperature between 350 F and 375 F.)

Clean and oil cooking grate. Place disposable pan with chicken over side of grill opposite wood chip packet. Cover grill (position lid vent over chicken if using charcoal) and cook for 10 minutes. Flip chicken, and rotate pan 180 F. (Open top and bottom vents fully for charcoal grill.) Continue to cook, covered, until breasts register 155 F and drumsticks/thighs register 170 F, 10 to 14 minutes.

Flip chicken, peach halves, and jalapeno to coat with preserves, then transfer to grill grate (skin side down for chicken). Leave pan on grill to let preserves thicken and caramelize slightly around edges, 3 to 5 minutes, then remove pan from grill.

Meanwhile, cook chicken, peach halves, and jalapeno until well browned on first side, 2 to 5 minutes. Flip and continue to cook until chicken breasts register 160 F and drumsticks/thighs register 175 F and peach halves and jalapeno are well browned on second side, 2 to 5 minutes. Return chicken, skin side up, to pan with preserves, tent loosely with foil, and let rest for 10 minutes. Transfer peach and jalapeno to plate to cool slightly.

Remove any loose skin from peach halves and jalapeno (no need to remove all skin); then chop peach halves, seed and mince jalapeno, and transfer both to bowl. Arrange chicken on serving platter. Pour preserves from pan into bowl with chopped peach halves and jalapeno; stir in vinegar. Season glaze with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon glaze over chicken and serve.





A perfect weekend in BARCELONA

A weekend in Barcelona can only ever be a teaser of what this majestic beachside city has to offer, so here is a grab-bag of highlights, spanning ancient and modern and packaged into a geographically convenient, walkable two-day tour.

It is also all-weather, but in high summer you might want to substitute some sightseeing for an afternoon at the beach, or some fresh air and panoramic views up on Montjuic. We strongly advise that you book all big sights online in advance, both to save money and to avoid disappointment or big queues. A low-level view of the whimsical facade of Casa Batlló in Barcelona; it is sprinkled with bits of blue, mauve and green tiles and studded with wave-shaped window frames and balconies, rising to an uneven roof with a solitary tower.

SATURDAY

10am

There are many things that make Barcelona unique, but foremost among them is the architectural style known as Modernisme, a close relation of Art Nouveau. Start with breakfast at Els Quatre Gats in a building designed by Puig i Cadafalch - one of Gaudí's contemporaries, with his own distinctive spin on the Modernista style.

11am

Wander up Portal de l'Angel to Placa Catalunya, the starting point for the elegant Passeig de Gracia, a long showcase for haute couture shops and Modernista architecture. Three perfect examples of the style, each displaying the distinctive traits of the three main proponents of the movement, sit almost side by side on the Manzana de la Discordia (Block of



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Discord). On the left is Domenech i Montaner's frothy Casa Lleo Morera; in the middle is Puig i Cadafalch's Flemish-inspired Casa Amatller, which houses a small chocolate museum; and to the right is Gaudi's celebrated Casa Batllo, also open to the public.

1.30pm

Continue up to Gaudi's La Pedrera apartment block, and from here it's a short walk to Catalan bistro Embat for a leisurely lunch.

4pm

Get the metro or a bus to the stunning but under visited Recinte Modernista de Sant Pau, a former hospital designed by architect Domenech i Montaner. For a fee, visitors can stroll through the grounds and admire the fanciful pavilions that once served as wards.

6pm

Take a 15-minute stroll from here to Gaudi's unfinished cathedral, La Sagrada Familia. Love it or hate it, it's one of Barcelona's quintessential sights. It's usually essential that you book ahead online; allow an hour or two to see it properly.

8.30pm

By now you might be ready to jump in a cab to Tapas 24, a smart basement haunt from local celeb chef Carles Abell-n serving great-value gourmet tapas.

11pm

Head down into the Barri Gotic to catch some live music at Harlem Jazz Club (which offers music in every flavor, not only jazz) or El Paraigua, which specializes in funk and soul in its cozy basement space. Placa Reial in Barcelona in the late afternoon sun: people are walking round the large paved square, which is dotted with palm trees; restaurants, bars and nightspots lie beneath the arcades of 19th-century neoclassical buildings.

SUNDAY

8.30am

Forget breakfast in your hotel, and head straight out to beat the crowds and see La Rambla at its one peaceful moment of the day. If you begin right at the bottom, you can take a lift to the very top of the Mirador de Colom, Barcelona's answer to Nelson's Column - with Columbus at the top - from which you can see across the entire city and out to sea.

9am

From here head up La Rambla, a tree-lined boulevard that only displays its true elegance early in the morning, before the cruise ships disgorge their masses, and the human statues and pickpockets set up for the day's roaring trade. From bottom to top, look out for the Placa Reial to the right, the Liceu opera house to the left, and the Miro pavement mosaic right in the middle, just after the historic Cafe de l'Opera, where you can stop for coffee and a croissant.

10am

From around the halfway point on La Rambla, follow the Carrer del Ferran, which leads north to the Placa de Sant Jaume. This handsome square is flanked on one side by the ajuntament (city hall) and on the other by the Generalitat, the seat of the Catalan regional government. A sidestreet to the right of the Generalitat takes you to the hidden Temple Roma d'August, with four soaring columns that have stood here since Roman times.

11am

Continuing down this street will take you to the back of La Catedral, a looming Gothic affair, famous for the 13 geese resident in the cloister - one for every year of St Eulalia's life. Joint patron saint of Barcelona, her small corpse is buried in the crypt.

12.30pm

Come out of the main entrance of the cathedral, past the sardana dancers who perform here on Sunday mornings, and head right to the Via Laietana. A short walk uphill takes you





to the fanciful Palau de la Musica Catalana, a Modernista concert hall, where you can take a guided tour or simply admire the stunning facade.

2pm

A couple of blocks south of here is the Mercat de Santa Caterina, a colorful food market with an undulating Gaudiesque roof - walk past it on your way to El Atril, where you can have lunch in a small square in the sunshine.

A perfect weekend in Barcelona should take in the monumental waterfall at Parc de la Ciutadella, a dramatic combination of statuary, rugged rocks, greenery and water; there are trees and a modern building in the background and the greenish water of a lake in the foreground.

4pm

After lunch, stroll it off in the nearby Parc de la Ciutadella, a verdant oasis with a boating lake, a zoo and a rose garden, and then head to the Museu Picasso, which is free to enter on the first Sunday of the month.

7pm

Heading seaward from the Museu Picasso, you'll arrive at the Passeig del Born, a pedestrian boulevard flanked at one end by the 14th-century Santa Maria del Mar basilica and at the other by the Born Centre Cultural. This handsome iron and brick construction was built in the 19th century as a market, and was recently renovated as an exhibition space and restaurant. In the centre you can see the remains of houses razed by the forces of Philip V in the War of Spanish Succession.

8pm

Just in front you'll find laid-back cocktail bar Guzzo, run by one of the city's best-known DJs, often to be found at the decks here. This is the perfect place for a sundowner before dinner round the corner at Casa Delfin, where you can try classic dishes from all over Catalonia.

—www.lonelyplanet.com

Comic

Word Search

Summer - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|----------|------------|------------|
| BARBECUE | FLOWERS | SANDALS |
| BASEBALL | GARDENING | SKATEBOARD |
| BEES | GOLF | SPRINKLERS |
| BICYCLE | HOT | SUNSHINE |
| BLUE SKY | ICE CREAM | SUNTAN |
| CAMPING | INSECTS | SWIMMING |
| FISHING | MOSQUITOES | VACATION |
| FLIES | PICNIC | |

Yesterday's Solution

Spring - Solution

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

- | | | |
|------------|----------|----------|
| APRIL | GOLF | RAIN |
| BASEBALL | GREEN | ROBINS |
| DAFFODILS | GROWTH | SEASON |
| EARTHWORMS | INSECTS | SNOWMELT |
| EASTER | LILIES | TULIPS |
| EQUINOX | MARCH | WARMER |
| FLOWERS | MAY | WET |
| FROGS | PLANTING | |

Crossword 2237



ACROSS

- Edible tuber of any of several yams.
- A motley assortment of things.
- A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
- A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- The edible flesh of any of various crabs.
- Someone who is morally reprehensible.
- The residue that remains when something is burned.
- Material for starting a fire.
- A chronic disease of the nose characterized by a foul-smelling nasal discharge and atrophy of nasal structures.
- A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
- A colorless odorless inert gaseous element occurring in the earth's atmosphere in trace amounts.
- An expert at calculation (or at operating calculating machines).
- A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
- (slang) A batch of things that go together.
- First in order of birth.
- A member of an American Indian people of Yucatan and Belize and Guatemala who once had a culture characterized by outstanding architecture and pottery and astronomy.
- Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- United States mathematician and founder of cybernetics (1894-1964).
- Inflexibly entrenched and unchangeable.
- Italian poet (1569-1625).
- A spacecraft that carries astronauts from the command module to the surface of the moon and back.
- A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
- A white crystalline double sulfate of aluminum.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- Clinical neurological syndrome characterized by muscular twitching and cramps and (when severe) seizures.
- A state in New England.
- Tropical starchy tuberous root.
- Jordan's port.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- A tight-fitting headdress.
- Boas and pythons.
- 1/1000 gram.
- Generic term for inflammatory conditions of the skin.
- A federation of North American labor unions that merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955.
- Pertaining to or resembling amoebae.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
- East Indian sparsely prickly annual herb or perennial subshrub widely cultivated for its fleshy calyxes used in tarts and jelly and for its bast fiber.

DOWN

- Not only so, but.
- A domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building especially the east end of a church.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- The month following September and preceding November.
- The trade name for a drug used to treat upper respirator congestion.
- A native or inhabitant of Denmark.
- A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
- A green transparent form of beryl.
- (Greek mythology) Any of the 50 sea nymphs who were daughters of the sea god Nereus.
- A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
- 1 species.
- The place where some action occurs.
- Sheet glass cut in shapes for windows or doors.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- (or in some classifications family Zosteraceae) Small genus of widely distributed marine plants.
- A formal expression of praise.
- Any member of a ship's crew.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A family of fish in the order Zeomorphi.
- Living quarters reserved for wives and concubines and female relatives in a Muslim household.
- A benign tumor composed of muscle tissue.
- Make numb or insensitive.
- A Ukrainian peninsula between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.
- A woman's dress style that imitates the caftan cloaks worn by men in the Near East.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of the Republic of Chad or its people or language.
- A New England state.
- A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
- (of persons) Highest in rank or authority or office.
- West Indian evergreen with medium to long leaves.
- One of the evil spirits of traditional Jewish and Christian belief.
- A member of a Muslim Turkic people of western Asia (especially in Kazakhstan).
- South American cavy.
- An employee whose duties include running errands.
- Of or relating to or located near a hilum.
- A medium to dark brownish yellow color.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A river that rises in western New Mexico and flows westward through southern Arizona to become a tributary of the Colorado River.
- The girl friend of a gangster.
- (prefix) In front of or before in space.
- Standard time in the 5th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 75th meridian.
- A user interface in which you type commands instead of choosing them from a menu or selecting an icon.
- Half the width of an em.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

OMG MOVIES ACTION
01:25 The Unseen
03:20 Patriots Day
05:35 Andron
07:20 Around The World In 80 Days
09:20 Thor: The Dark World
11:15 Andron
12:55 Boone: The Bounty Hunter
14:25 The Drowning
16:05 The Tuxedo
17:45 Captain America: The Winter Soldier
20:00 Con Air
22:00 The Chronicles Of Riddick

16:00 The First 48
17:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00 The First 48
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
22:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
23:00 Live PD: Police Patrol

COMEDY CENTRAL
00:20 Rocketman
00:45 Takeshis Castle Thailand
01:10 Tosh.0
01:35 Friends
02:25 Kroll Show
02:50 Takeshis Castle Thailand
03:15 Tosh.0
03:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
04:10 Broad City
04:35 Impractical Jokers
05:00 Are We There Yet?
07:05 Lip Sync Battle
07:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
08:20 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
08:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
09:20 Ridiculousness Arabia
09:45 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
10:15 Friends
12:20 Workaholics
14:30 Lip Sync Battle
15:20 Tattoo Disasters
16:15 Tattoo Disasters
17:10 Friends
19:30 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
21:30 Teachers
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 Norm Macdonald: Me Doing Stand-Up
23:25 Broad City
23:50 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah

ANIMAL PLANET HD
00:45 North Woods Law
01:40 Expedition Mungo
02:35 Into Alaska
03:25 Lone Star Law
04:15 North Woods Law
05:02 Wildest Middle East
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 RSPCA: On The Frontline
07:25 Wild Africa: Rivers Of Life
08:15 Mekong: Soul Of A River
11:55 Wildest Islands
12:50 Into Alaska
13:45 Take Back The Harbour
14:40 Extinct Or Alive
15:35 Expedition Mungo
16:30 Flying Wild Alaska
17:25 Red Ape: Saving The Orangutan
18:20 Into Alaska
19:15 Evan Goes Wild
20:10 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
21:05 Wildest Middle East
22:00 After The Attack
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
23:50 Evan Goes Wild

Discovery Family
00:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
00:30 The Food Inspectors
01:20 My Cat From Hell
02:10 Animal Battlegrounds
02:35 Animal Battlegrounds
03:00 Do You Know?
03:50 Mysteries At The Museum
04:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:30 My Cat From Hell
06:20 Animal Battlegrounds
06:40 Animal Battlegrounds
07:00 Do You Know?
07:50 Mysteries At The Museum
08:40 Weather Top Tens
09:30 Weather Gone Viral
10:20 Storm Chasers
11:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
12:00 Insane Coaster Wars: World Domination
12:50 Life On The Line Australia
13:40 Battle Bots
14:30 Strange Evidence
15:20 Do You Know?
16:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
17:00 My Cat From Hell
17:50 Animal Battlegrounds
18:15 Animal Battlegrounds
18:40 Do You Know?
19:30 Guy's Grocery Games
20:20 Breaking Magic
20:45 Breaking Magic
21:10 Tricks On The Streets
21:35 Tricks On The Streets
22:00 The Next Great Magician
22:50 Into The Pride
23:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
Discovery ID

BBC FIRST
00:15 EastEnders
00:45 Press
01:45 Holby City
02:35 Bad Move
03:00 Hold The Sunset
03:30 Death In Paradise
04:25 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Last Tango In Halifax
07:55 Holby City
08:45 Casualty
09:40 Bad Move
10:00 Hold The Sunset
10:30 Death In Paradise
11:25 The Coroner
12:10 Doctors
12:45 Holby City
13:35 The Musketeers
14:30 Bad Move
14:55 Hold The Sunset
15:25 Doctors
18:30 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
19:20 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
20:10 Press
21:05 Trauma
21:55 Les Miserables
23:00 Save Me
23:55 Doctors

crime & investigation network
00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
01:55 Homicide Hunter
02:50 It Takes A Killer
03:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
04:30 The First 48
05:15 Homicide Hunter
06:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
07:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
07:20 The First 48
08:50 Homicide Hunter
10:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
11:25 Homicide Hunter
12:20 Crimes That Shook Britain
13:15 Live PD: Police Patrol
14:10 It Takes A Killer
15:05 Homicide Hunter

06:10 Blood Relatives
07:00 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
08:50 Deadly Secrets
09:45 Deadly Secrets
10:40 Disappeared
11:35 Murder Chose Me
12:30 Murder Chose Me
13:25 Blood Relatives
14:20 Reasonable Doubt
15:15 Deadly Secrets
16:10 Disappeared
17:05 Breaking Homicide
19:00 Dead On Arrival
21:00 Dark Waters: Murder In The Deep
22:00 Dead On Arrival
23:00 Betrayed

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

Disney Junior
00:00 The Lion Guard
00:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
00:30 Trulli Tales S1
01:00 PJ Masks
01:25 PJ Masks
01:50 The Hive
02:00 Zou
02:15 Zou
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 The Hive
03:30 The Hive S2
03:40 Zou
04:25 The Hive
04:35 The Hive
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:10 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 The Hive
05:45 PJ Masks
06:00 PJ Masks S2
06:15 PJ Masks
06:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons S3
07:00 Disney Muppet Babies S1
07:15 PJ Masks S2
07:30 PJ Masks
08:00 Vampirina
08:30 Fancy Nancy S1
09:00 Sofia The First S3
09:30 Elena Of Avalor
10:00 Doc McStuffsins S3 Splits
10:55 Toy Story Toons
11:00 PJ Masks
12:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S1 Splits
12:20 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S1 Splits

12:40 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S1 Splits
13:00 Fancy Nancy Splits S1
14:00 Vampirina S1
15:00 Gigantosaurus S1 Splits
15:55 Toy Story Toons
16:00 The Lion Guard
16:30 Elena Of Avalor
17:00 Gigantosaurus S1
17:25 Mickey And The Roadster Racers - Chip And Dale's
17:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S2
18:00 Fancy Nancy S1
18:30 Vampirina S2 Splits
18:45 Vampirina S1
19:00 PJ Masks
19:30 Puppy Dog Pals
20:00 The Lion Guard
20:25 Mickey And The Roadster Racers - Chip And Dale's
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
21:00 Gigantosaurus S1
21:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers S2
22:00 Fancy Nancy S1
22:30 Vampirina S2 Splits
22:45 Vampirina S1
23:00 PJ Masks
23:30 Puppy Dog Pals

Discovery Channel
00:15 Ultimate Survival
01:05 Incredible Engineering Blunders: Fixed
01:50 How Do They Do It?
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Misfit Garage
04:05 Misfit Garage
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Auction Kings
06:00 Storage Wars Canada
06:20 Auction Kings
06:45 Ultimate Survival
07:35 The Last Alaskans
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Salvage Hunters
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Misfit Garage
12:20 Misfit Garage
13:05 Storage Wars Canada
13:30 Auction Kings
13:55 Salvage Hunters
14:40 Railroad Alaska
15:30 Wildest Europe
16:15 Diesel Brothers
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Misfit Garage
20:15 Misfit Garage
21:00 Wheeler Dealers
21:50 Diesel Brothers
22:40 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
23:30 The Last Alaskans

XD
00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Boyster
01:00 Boyster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Boyster
03:20 Boyster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:10 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
05:29 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Space Chickens In Space
06:35 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Gravity Falls
08:50 Pair Of Kings
09:40 Big City Greens
10:00 Big City Greens

10:25 Kick Buttowski
10:50 Phineas And Ferb
11:00 Gravity Falls
11:25 Gravity Falls
11:50 Milo Murphy's Law
12:05 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
12:30 Supa Strikas
13:20 Lab Rats
14:10 Pair Of Kings
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:30 Space Chickens In Space
15:55 Big City Greens
16:20 Big Hero 6 The Series
16:45 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:31 DuckTales
17:55 Phineas And Ferb
19:00 Gravity Falls
19:50 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
20:15 Lab Rats
20:40 Lab Rats
21:05 Kick Buttowski
21:30 Big City Greens
21:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
22:29 Milo Murphy's Law
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja

E! HD
00:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 WAGs
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Model Squad
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
19:00 E! News
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Botched
23:00 Botched

itv CHOICE
00:10 Dinner Date
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 Kate's Wardrobe Secrets
03:25 Her Majesty's Cavalry
03:55 Gino's Italian Coastal Escape
04:20 This Time Next Year
05:15 Dinner Date
06:15 Couples Come Dine With Me
07:10 Kate's Wardrobe Secrets
08:05 Her Majesty's Cavalry
08:35 Gino's Italian Coastal Escape
09:00 This Time Next Year
09:55 Dinner Date
10:55 Couples Come Dine With Me
11:50 Kate's Wardrobe Secrets
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
14:15 Couples Come Dine With Me
15:10 Royal Wives Of Windsor
16:00 What Would Your Kid Do?
16:55 Cannonball
17:50 Dinner Date
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
20:10 Royal Wives Of Windsor
21:00 What Would Your Kid Do?
21:55 Cannonball
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street

Fox HD
00:15 Clash Of Warriors
01:00 UFO Hunters
01:45 Cities Of The Underworld
02:30 Ancient Impossible
03:15 Ancient Aliens
04:45 Battles BC

05:30 Jurassic Fight Club
06:15 Million Dollar Genius
07:00 UFO Hunters
07:45 Cities Of The Underworld
08:30 Ancient Impossible
09:15 Ancient Aliens
10:00 Ancient Aliens
10:45 Battles BC
11:30 Jurassic Fight Club
12:15 Million Dollar Genius
13:00 UFO Hunters
13:45 Cities Of The Underworld
14:30 Ancient Impossible
15:15 Ancient Aliens
16:45 Battles BC
17:30 Jurassic Fight Club
18:15 UFO Hunters
19:00 Cities Of The Underworld
19:45 Ancient Impossible
20:30 Ancient Aliens
22:00 Search For The Lost Giants
22:45 Jurassic Fight Club
23:30 Million Dollar Genius

HISTORY
00:20 Mountain Men
01:05 Pawn Stars
01:50 American Pickers
02:35 Storage Wars
03:25 Ax Men
04:15 Forged: Iron & Fire
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Counting Cars
06:45 Mountain Men
07:30 Pawn Stars
08:15 American Pickers
09:00 Storage Wars
09:45 Ax Men
10:30 Forged: Iron & Fire
11:15 Forged In Fire
12:00 American Pickers
15:00 Fifth Gear
18:45 Ancient Aliens
19:30 Storage Wars: Barry's Best Buys
21:00 Secret War On Drugs
22:15 Pawn Stars
22:40 American Pickers

NAT GEO people HD
00:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
01:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai
02:00 What's For Sale With A View
02:55 A House Of Its Time
03:50 Access 360 World Heritage
04:45 What's For Sale With A View
05:10 Chasing Time
05:40 The Wine Show
06:35 Island Hunter
07:30 Fish Tank Kings
08:25 Confucius Was A Foodie
09:20 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
10:15 Eat Street
11:10 The Wine Show
12:05 Island Hunter
13:00 Fish Tank Kings
13:55 Confucius Was A Foodie
14:50 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
15:45 Eat Street
16:40 The Wine Show
17:35 Island Hunter
18:30 Fish Tank Kings
19:25 Confucius Was A Foodie
20:20 Fish Of The Day
20:45 The Game Chef
21:15 Eat Street
22:10 Croatia's Finest
23:05 Island Hunter

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL
00:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
00:50 Primal Survivor
01:40 Inside Cocaine Wars
02:30 One Strange Rock
03:20 World's Most Extreme
04:10 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
05:00 Primal Survivor
06:00 Inside Cocaine Wars
07:00 One Strange Rock
08:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
09:00 Jurassic C.S.I.
10:00 Yukon River Run
11:00 Innovation Nation
12:00 Money Meltdown

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Wisdom rather than knowledge is what counts most in your life to you now. You have been down troubled roads and turned each stumbling block into a stepping stone. You have lived and learned and may have an opportunity to share this wisdom with a troubled friend. Don't get discouraged if your advice is overlooked. Remember, no one could have changed your mind about some of the mistakes you made. Realize others too, may have to experience trouble to learn the lessons that are to be learned in their lives. You are a good friend and a good person. You may find today you are shown appreciation and gratitude for who you are to others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may encounter an unusual amount of stress today. Counter it by taking time for yourself to do what you enjoy most. Paint, write, or escape with a good book. Yoga or meditation may even be something you should consider making a part of your daily routine. Be careful not to shut yourself off from those who care about you. Their support is important. Do not try to conquer every problem on your own.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Teamwork is strongly indicated, but those you work with aren't fond of your day dreamy mood today. Your required tasks pull you into a most productive cycle and you overcome any obstacles you may encounter. You could have a secret you're having trouble keeping; consider the consequences of sharing this. Someone - a younger person - could demand that you decide today when you're just not ready; this could lead to some difficulties. You have an understanding heart when it comes to a friend in need. Sticking to your guns in a sticky situation could prove to be your best bet.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Are you getting mixed signals? That's not unusual. Feelings are complicated, and what one wants from you may change daily, or even hourly. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification. Feelings are abstract. Actions are concrete. Find out what you need to do. Take action and do not look back. Keep your eyes on the prize.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today is a day you have been longing for. You need an escape. Let your hair down and head for wide open spaces. Take a ride in a convertible. Just get outside and breathe in the fresh air. You crave a sense of freedom. Decide exactly what you want out of life and make it happen. This is a great time to make clear decisions about your future.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You will make a new acquaintance today. Don't assume the person is insignificant. There may be connections or influence here that will lead to opportunities for you. Or, it may be that this is the very person you need in your life right now. Be accessible. Make it clear that you are open to what the person has to offer. You may find sharing your feelings openly with others, helps them open up to you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You have a great desire for change. Your career or something concerning your profession seem to be preventing it. You have a deep desire for self-growth and change now. It seems if you continue on the same career path this will be a huge interference for you. You may find that your sensitivity is stifled by your job requirements. Too much work and no play is never a good thing. Find your balance.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Wisdom rather than knowledge is what counts most in your life to you now. You have been down troubled roads and turned each stumbling block into a stepping stone. You have lived and learned and may have an opportunity to share this wisdom with a troubled friend. Don't get discouraged if your advice is overlooked. Remember, no one could have changed your mind about some of the mistakes you made. Realize others too, may have to experience trouble to learn the lessons that are to be learned in their lives. You are a good friend and a good person. You may find today you are shown appreciation and gratitude for who you are to others.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today is a great day to just go with the flow. Go ahead and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves to you. Don't be surprised if taking a chance brings great reward. You may feel extra close to a loved one today. Aris, this may be the day you learn to truly learn to love and appreciate yourself for who you have become and where you are in life. You have been feeling a that need to be needed and appreciated and today may just the day you receive that reward you have been longing for.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Let your hair down and take a drive. A horseback ride would be even better. Turn the music up loud and throw your cares out of the window. Find an escape and route to peace. Enjoy this day and all it brings. Spoil yourself. You may find you are more materialistic than usual. A shopping trip is in order to satisfy this need. Head to the mall and go for it! You work hard and deserve to be free from want.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Close relationships take on more emotional depth, power and importance in your world now. You feel as if you are needed and cared for. When these two feelings are missing you automatically have a feeling of uneasiness come over you. You were not made to be alone. Expressing your desires and vulnerability, helps draw your special someone closer to you. You may find the more you allow yourself to open up the closer you two become.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are being noticed in the workplace. It may become very obvious to your superiors at work that you are talented beyond the title you hold. You may find that you are in line for a promotion or you will be assigned a special project due to your leadership abilities. Everyone has their eye on you. From your personal life to your career, you are beginning to outshine those around you. You may find your analytical skills are in top shape and you are not only able to solve every problem you come across but may be finding satisfaction in spending your spare time solving puzzles or playing word games. You are in the mood to exercise your mind.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Friday, June 14, 2019

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
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- Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

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DR KHALED ALMERRI
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Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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

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Email: aahaddad@daralshifa.com

Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

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- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

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Surname Rajan Babu (RAJAN BABU) and given name Raphael Jason (RAPHAEL JASON). (C 5551) 19-6-2019

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I, RAPHAEL JASON, holder of Indian Passport No. M6102415, Hawally, Block-6, Building-2601, Flat Number-10 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare the name change as

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Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
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	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 55 km/h causing rising dust.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 32 km/h .

WEATHER WATCH	Fresh wind	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	44 °C	33 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	32 °C
ABDALY	43 °C	28 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	45 °C	31 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	43 °C	30 °C
SALMIYAH	40 °C	32 °C
AHMADI	42 °C	33 °C
NUWAISIB	46 °C	30 °C
WAFRA	45 °C	30 °C
SALMY	44 °C	26 °C

SFC. CHART 20/06/2019 0000 UTC

MSL Analysis (hPa)
Valid 0000 UTC 20 JUN 2019

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	06/21	Hot	46 °C	31 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Saturday	06/22	Hot	46 °C	30 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Sunday	06/23	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	45 °C	31 °C	NW-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Monday	06/24	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	46 °C	29 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	03:13
Sunrise	04:48
Zuhr	11:49
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:50
Isha	20:23

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	45 °C
MIN. Temp.	34 °C
MAX. RH	26 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 64 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Business

FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 2019

39 Trade disputes to dominate as ASEAN meets in Bangkok**40** Mexico ratifies new trade deal with US, Canada**41** Inditex cuts stores but boosts space in home market Spain

MUMBAI: This picture shows a young Indian boy looking out from his house in Dharavi, Asia's largest slum in Mumbai. —AFP

Mumbai slum-dwellers fear redevelopment

Project to uplift lives, but destroy Dharavi's social fabric

MUMBAI: Residents of Asia's most famous slum fear a multi-billion-dollar plan to transform the area into a Singapore-like enclave featuring luxury skyscrapers and shopping malls will destroy its vast informal economy. Indian authorities have asked a developer to tear down and rebuild Dharavi, a bustling settlement in Mumbai known as the backdrop for Danny Boyle's hit 2008 movie "Slumdog Millionaire".

Supporters say the project will uplift hundreds of thousands of lives, but critics claim it will destroy Dharavi's social fabric and accuse officials of pandering to property developers. "Dharavi is the beating heart of Mumbai... The government wants to grab it," says liquid soap manufacturer Ashraf Sheikh who recently went on an eight-day hunger strike over the redevelopment. Dharavi is one of Asia's biggest slums. Estimates vary but between 700,000 and one million people cram into tiny homes on the 520-acre site; hundreds queue up to use public washrooms.

But the area defies most Western notions of a slum: Dharavi is a hive of economic activity and boasts an estimated annual turnover of more than a billion dollars. Industries include pottery, leather and textiles—about 5,000 businesses operate from around 15,000 one-room workshops, according to estimates. Masses of rubbish are also separated there for recycling.

Mumbai officials first tried to redevelop Dharavi two decades ago. Several attempts failed due to the difficulty of moving vast numbers of Indian slum dwellers who depend on informal work to survive. "We have been living and working here for over 100 years... You'll have to shoot us before building your towers here," says potter Mepa Gudiya, who exports earthenware across India and abroad.

Smart city

The state government of Maharashtra, of which Mumbai is the capital, is trying again and recently put the redevelopment out to tender. A Dubai-based developer

backed by royal families from the United Arab Emirates emerged as the highest bidder. The ambitious scheme, projected to cost around \$4 billion, will include demolishing tens of thousands of dilapidated slum houses and replacing them with several hundred towers up to 30 storeys high.

Around 70,000 families could be eligible for free apartments around 300 square-foot in size "that will be as good as any in Dubai or Singapore," according to Nilang Shah, CEO of SecLink Group, the master developer. He wants to turn the area into a "smart city" with separate commercial and residential zones, as well as creating a "New York-like Central Park" and a "modern marina" in a nearby polluted bay. "Lives will be enhanced without destroying their social fabric. It can be a model for the world," Shah said in a telephone interview from Dubai.

Fifteen-year-old Muskan Sheikh is excited by the prospect. She lives in a bathroom-less one-room house with five relatives sleeping head-to-toe. "I often

have to wait 20 minutes in a line to use the toilet. During the night I just hold it in because I don't want to step outside," she says. Many Dharavi residents are skeptical, however.

They would welcome new homes with private bathrooms and running water but worry that the intrinsic nature of Dharavi, where people live and work out of the same room, will disappear. "We're afraid that it will just become another high-rise area and we'll all be put in one tower," says petroleum businessman Fakhru Islam.

Real estate lobby

Dharavi originated as a swamp and grew rapidly in the late 19th century as migrants moved to what was then called Bombay to work in its expanding British-era factories. Today, dozens of tourists armed with cameras meander through the area's narrow alleys every day, dodging goats and handcarts as they peer into tin-roofed shanties and ramshackle workshops. Dharavi is located in the centre of

the coastal megapolis, close to the Bandra Kurla Complex business district, airport, a main railway station and a crucial waterway, making it appealing to developers.

SecLink estimates that the revenue potential from the free sale of scores of towers is \$15 billion. "Unfortunately it's the interests of the real estate lobby that is guiding decisions about Dharavi's development," says Kalpana Sharma, author of the book "Rediscovering Dharavi". Authorities are soon expected to survey Dharavi to determine how many families settled there before 2000, making them eligible for free homes.

Work will then commence, according to Shah who predicts that all slum dwellers will be rehoused within five years. Residents are still to be convinced though. "We're not against redevelopment," says Malik Abdullah, 55, owner of a plastics recycling unit. "But it was us who turned this creek into an industrial powerhouse. If businesses are taken away then we will be left with nothing." —AFP

Business

Stocks up, dollar, bond yields down on Fed rate cut signal

Oil jumps 3% after Iran shoots down US drone

LONDON: World stock markets rose yesterday after the US Federal Reserve signaled it was likely to cut interest rates next month, and the dollar and benchmark bond yields fell to multi-year lows. The Fed on Wednesday suggested rate cuts might start as soon as next month, saying it was ready to take action in the face of growing economic risks. The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, gained 0.4 percent on the prospects of further stimulus, heading for a third day of gains. The Euro STOXX 600 rose 0.66 percent in early trading and Wall Street futures indicated US stocks were set to open higher.

In Asia, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 1.2 percent, led by gains in China. The dollar fell and benchmark US and euro zone government bonds fell after the Fed's move. The dollar was on course for its biggest two-day drop against a basket of other currencies in 14 months and dropped 0.5 percent to a half-year low against the Japanese yen. The Fed's rate signal came before meetings at major central banks in Asia and Europe that were expected to flag similar moves. The European Central Bank and the Australian central bank had earlier signaled this week more policy stimulus was needed.

"It becomes a race to the bottom for global rates markets, a race to the bottom for FX," said

Peter Chatwell, head of rates at Mizuho. The Bank of Japan left rates unchanged yesterday but stressed that global risks were rising, suggesting it was leaning towards boosting monetary support. But Norway's central bank raised rates, as expected, sending the Norwegian crown up 1.6% against the dollar and 1 percent against the euro.

The Bank of England was due to announce its policy decision at 1100 GMT. It looked set to stick to its message that it was likely to raise rates. Elsewhere, oil prices jumped 3% after Iran shot down a U.S. drone that its Revolutionary Guards said was flying over southern Iran, raising fears that a military confrontation could erupt between Tehran and Washington.

Race to the bottom for FX

trade talks. The world's two biggest economies have imposed increasingly severe tariffs on each other's imports. Chinese and US officials will hold trade talks following instructions from their leaders, the Chinese commerce ministry said on Thursday, adding that Beijing hoped Washington would create the necessary conditions for dialogue. Christophe Barraud, chief economist at Market Securities in Paris, said stock markets had so far mostly dodged fallout from the trade war.

Trade talks
Geopolitical risks elsewhere persisted, although hopes grew for progress in US-China



NEW YORK: Tourists pass the Fearless Girl statue in front of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. —AFP

He warned they could suffer if economic indicators worsen in the second half of the year. "Equities are mainly benefiting from the easy money policy, without too much damage on the economic front," he said. "That may change in H2 ... metrics will likely weaken through the world because of the impact of ongoing tariffs." **BOND YIELDS DROP** The Fed's dovish tone caused the 10-year US Treasury's yield to fall as low as 1.974 percent, its lowest since November 2016. It reached 2.8 percent in January.

Government bonds elsewhere also fell, some

to near record lows. Germany's 10-year government bond yield, a benchmark for sovereign debt in the euro zone, was down 3 basis points at -0.316 percent, testing this week's record low of -0.327 percent. Japanese 10-year bond yields fell to a three-year low of minus 0.160 percent, a drop of 2 basis points. The comparable Australian yield fell to a record low below 1.30 percent. Brent crude futures were up \$1.39, or 2.25 percent, at \$63.28 a barrel around 0815 GMT on the tensions in the Middle East and signs of improving demand in the United States.—Reuters

Emirates Airline provides Kuwait govt employees with travel discounts

KUWAIT CITY: Employees of six different government ministries and entities in Kuwait can now plan and book their holidays and leisure travel on Emirates Airline. The airline will be offering special flight discounts to employees of the Ministries of Interior, Defense, Health, Education, Public Works and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Employees of these government entities can book for travel in Business and Economy class across its network, in addition to benefiting from special offers on Emirates holiday packages. Employees can also receive flight discounts in Emirates First Class from Kuwait to Dubai. Discounts range from 6-12 percent, depending on cabin class and fare.

The offer is valid on bookings made today until September 30, 2019, for travel until November 30, 2019. Employees can book using

a special promotion code online and can also book by visiting the local Emirates sales office and ticketing counters after presenting their ministry identification cards. Emirates Skywards will be offering fixed bonus miles for existing members that are employed in participating Kuwaiti ministries availing the special offer. New members who have just joined the Skywards program from the ministries and travelling during this period will receive double first flight bonus Miles.

Emirates operates to Kuwait with six daily flights to Dubai and onwards to over 150 destinations, and introduced its Boeing 777-300ER 'Gamechanger' aircraft on June 1. From First Class through to the Business and Economy Class cabins, the latest Emirates 777 aircraft features ergonomically designed seats, multi-million dollar upgrades and the latest version of the ice in-flight entertainment system across all cabins. Passengers travelling across all classes on Emirates can enjoy regionally inspired meals, 4,000 entertainment channels on ice - the airline's award winning in-flight entertainment system - and up to 20 MB complimentary Wi-Fi to stay connected with friends and family during the flight.

BoE warns on heightened no-deal Brexit prospect

LONDON: The prospect of Britain crashing out of the European Union without a deal has risen since last month, the Bank of England warned yesterday, as it kept interest rates unchanged. "Domestically, the perceived likelihood of a no-deal Brexit has risen" since May, the BoE said in a statement after its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the central bank's main borrowing cost at 0.75 percent.

"Since the Committee's previous meeting... downside risks to growth have increased. Globally, trade tensions have intensified," the BoE said. "As expected, recent UK data have been volatile, in large part due to Brexit-related effects on financial markets and businesses," it added. The BoE said the UK's "economic outlook will continue to depend significantly on the nature and timing of EU withdrawal".

Britain is scheduled to leave the bloc on October 31, when it will lose access to major markets covered by EU trade agreements. Without a Brexit deal between London and Brussels, the UK will default to "third country" status with the EU, with

trade relations run on World Trade Organization rules. The MPC yesterday added that the prospect of future UK rate hikes had also lessened because of Brexit. "Increased Brexit uncertainties have put additional downward pressure on UK forward interest rates and led to a decline in the sterling exchange rate," it said. Analysts do not expect a rise in British interest rates any time soon, also owing to falling UK annual inflation and against a background of doveish tones from the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank in recent days on their outlooks for US and eurozone borrowing costs.

"Given the drop in (UK) GDP in April and the fall in inflation back to target in May, there was never much chance that the MPC would raise interest rates from 0.75 percent today," noted Thomas Pugh, UK economist at Capital Economics research group. "What's more, the tone of the (BoE) statement and minutes followed the lead from the Fed and the ECB and softened a little compared to May, indicating that the MPC is happy to sit on its hands for the time being" regarding rates.

British annual inflation has dipped to the Bank of England's 2.0-percent target rate, official data showed Wednesday. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rise over 12 months eased back in May from 2.1 percent in April. Official data Thursday meanwhile showed that British retail sales sank last month, painting a downbeat picture of the Brexit-facing economy. Sales by volume sank by 0.5 percent from April, when they had dipped by 0.1 percent, the Office for National Statistics said ahead of yesterday's announcements by the BoE.—AFP

Business

Trade disputes to dominate as ASEAN meets in Bangkok

BANGKOK: Southeast Asian leaders will dissect the impact of the US-China tariff war this weekend at a Bangkok summit, with Beijing determined to drive forward a trade pact sweeping in 40 percent of global commerce—but excluding America. Disputes in the flashpoint South China Sea and Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya Muslims are also likely to make the agenda at the two-day Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting starting Saturday in the Thai capital.

But commerce will dominate, with the trade war between the world's two biggest economies pushing some major manufacturers to flee China to Southeast Asia and casting doubts over the future of free trade. US President Donald Trump has imposed tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese goods, from sneakers and socks to washing machines and furniture, prompting Beijing to hit back with levies on \$60 billion of American imports.

"One of the biggest beneficiaries is ASEAN," said Drew Thompson, a research fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore, in reference to the gains Asia's low-cost manufacturing nations stand to make from trade tensions between China and the United States. Firms including Brooks Running Company and washing machine maker Haier have already started migrating from China, seeking friendlier, lower-tariff markets in Vietnam, Thailand or Indonesia.

With the spat grinding on, Beijing is intensifying its drive to sign a massive trade pact that sweeps in Southeast Asia. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) includes all 10 ASEAN economies, plus India, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. It links about half the world's population and is seen as a way

for China to draft the architecture of Asian-Pacific trade, following a US retreat from the region. Shortly after his election, Trump pulled the US from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) — which would have been the world's largest trade deal—slamming it as an American "job killer".

'Bad news for everyone'

Backers hoped to sign the RCEP deal by the end of this year. But negotiations have become sticky with Australia and New Zealand pushing for "high quality" environmental and labor protections. India is also seeking guarantees the deal will not force its market open to duty-free goods from its main economic rival China through Southeast Asia. In seeking to draw its own perimeters, New Delhi is the "glaring objector" to the free trade deal, Thompson added.

Expectations of concrete progress in Bangkok have dimmed—although RCEP negotiators are scheduled to meet on Saturday. In the absence of a deal, observers worry the short-term gains for ASEAN from the US-China trade war may soon be consumed by falling global growth rates. "If China and the US continue and the world economy suffers... then it's just bad news for everybody," Fred Burke, managing partner at law firm Baker McKenzie in Vietnam, which specializes in investment, told AFP.

As usual, bitter disputes over competing claims in the South China Sea are likely to surface in Bangkok after a collision between a Filipino and Chinese ship in the resource-rich waterway. Some officials in Manila initially blamed Chinese sailors for deliberately ramming the boat and leaving Filipino fishermen stranded at sea. But



BANGKOK: A security officer stands guard during the preparations for the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok.—Reuters

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte this week downplayed the incident, saying it was "just a collision". The flashpoint highlights the urgent need for toughened-up terms in a Code of Conduct for clashes between fishermen at sea, said Manila-based security analyst Richard Heydarian. "If the Chinese don't rein in these fishermen... this is just going to get worse," he said. Myanmar may also face pressure over the stalled repatriation of Rohingya Muslims, currently living in camps in Bangladesh, after more than 740,000 of the per-

secuted minority fled a 2017 army crackdown in Rakhine state.

The country's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi is expected in Bangkok as is Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad who has previously broken diplomatic protocol by criticizing a fellow ASEAN leader. An upbeat ASEAN report leaked to AFP this month was criticized for predicting that half a million Rohingya will soon return, failing to use the word "Rohingya" and glossing over ongoing violence in Rakhine.—AFP

Zimbabwe's currency hits new low, firms demand payment in US dollars

HARARE: Zimbabwe's interim currency fell to a new low on the black market yesterday and local firms were demanding payment in US dollars as a hedge against inflation, which is running at its highest in a decade. The RTGS dollar has plunged 60 percent against the US dollar since its introduction in February, and public sector workers' demands for a second pay rise this year could undermine a government drive to convince lenders of its fiscal discipline.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa won a disputed election last year on a promise to revive a Zimbabwe economy shattered by decades of mismanagement by his ousted predecessor Robert Mugabe. But a year later daily life is harder. Ordinary Zimbabweans are enduring a severe shortage of US dollars, fuel, medicines, bread and daily power cuts that last 10 hours.

The RTGS dollar, introduced by the government on Feb. 22 as the first step towards a new currency by year-end, traded at 10.5 to the US dollar yesterday, 14.3 percent lower than a week ago. On the official interbank rate, the RTGS currency was pegged at 6.2 compared

to 5.9 a week ago. Zimbabwe formally adopted the US dollar as its official currency in January 2009, when most Zimbabweans had already ditched the hyperinflation-wrecked Zimbabwe Dollar. A decade later, analysts see the same situation repeating itself.

More than 80% of Zimbabweans earn RTGS dollars but from bricks to rentals, car parts and many grocers, prices are now pegged in US dollars. That has seen inflation race to 97.86% in May, its highest level in a decade, eroding salaries and savings and causing Zimbabweans to fear a return to the hyperinflation of 2008 when the rate reached 500 billion percent, leaving many destitute. "I earn 400 RTGS\$, where do I get the US dollar? The government should fix this before we all die," said Robson Ndiringepi, a security guard manning a supermarket in Harare. Public sector workers are negotiating a salary hike, the second this year, which the justice minister told parliament on Wednesday would be announced soon. That would put more pressure on the state budget just as the government has started a monitoring program with the International Monetary Fund in a bid to create a track record of fiscal discipline that could secure its future funding.

Patrick Imam, IMF resident representative in Zimbabwe said the central bank should quickly allow the RTGS dollar to float freely, allow exporters to sell dollars at the interbank rate rather than surrender them to the central bank, and raise interest rates to curb inflation and avoid "spontaneous re-dollarization." "Everyone now anticipates the RTGS dollar will weaken further, so businesses increase prices and workers demand more and the cycle continues. We are chasing our tails," John Robertson, a Harare-based economist said.—Reuters

China tells top global CEOs it will 'further open up'

BEIJING: Premier Li Keqiang vowed yesterday to further open up China's economy during a meeting with CEOs of top global companies amid simmering trade tensions with the United States. Washington and other trade partners have long complained about the uneven playing field foreign companies encounter in China, theft of intellectual property and entry barriers that allow state-backed companies to dominate crucial sectors of the economy.

During the meeting in Beijing with heads of 19 multinational companies, Li pledged to make China more attractive to foreign investors. "We welcome more and more foreign investment to come to China," Li told the group representing the Global CEO Council. "We will also relax (restrictions on) access to even more fields to create a market-oriented, law-based internationalized business environment."

Among the industry leaders attending the meeting at Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People were Volkswagen head Herbert Diess, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla, Daimler's Ola Kallenius, UPS chief executive David Abney, Honeywell CEO Darius Adamczyk and Nokia's Rajeiv Suri. Jean-Pascal Tricoire, head of Schneider Electric, told Li that foreign firms are the "best bridges" between China and the rest of the world. "Since some time though, the world has been going through turbulences, tensions and challenges," Tricoire said.

The meeting comes as bruising US tariffs threaten China's status as the "factory of the world," with companies looking to move production outside the country, according to a recent survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China. The Chinese government also convened top tech companies and warned them of consequences if they cut off technology sales to the country, the New York Times reported earlier this month.—AFP

Business

Mexico ratifies new trade deal with US, Canada

MEXICO CITY: Mexico ratified the new North American trade agreement Wednesday, making the country the first to give it final approval despite recent tension with the US. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) passed in the Mexican Senate with 114 votes in favor and just four against, sending what the government called “a clear message in favor of an open economy and deepening economic integration in the region.”

“This means foreign investment in Mexico, jobs in Mexico, access to the US market for our products,” said President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. There was little doubt the new deal would pass easily in Mexico: the very similar agreement it aims to replace, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has helped turn the country into an exporting powerhouse over the past 25 years. It now falls to Canada and the US to ratify the deal.

The three countries signed the agreement on November 30 after a year of tough negotiations triggered by US President Donald Trump’s insistence on replacing NAFTA, which he called “the worst trade deal ever made.” Trump congratulated his Mexican counterpart on the ratification, and called on American lawmakers to do likewise. “Congratulations to President Lopez Obrador-Mexico voted to ratify the USMCA today by a huge margin. Time for Congress to do the same here!” Trump tweeted.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is due to visit Trump and US Congressional leaders Thursday to push for ratification of USMCA,

among other issues. The deal faces a battle in the US Congress, where opposition Democrats have criticized provisions including its worker protections and dispute resolution system. Still, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said he was confident there would be progress on ratification in “the next couple of weeks.”

He called Mexico’s ratification “a crucial step forward.” In Canada, ratification looks assured. The new deal largely resembles the original, but notably establishes new rules for the crucial auto sector, intended to boost US-made content in cars and increase wages for Mexican workers.

Bitterness over Trump’s ‘blackmail’

Tensions between the US and Mexico have been high since Trump threatened last month to impose tariffs on all Mexican exports in retaliation for the number of Central American migrants arriving at the two countries’ border. Mexico managed to negotiate a reprieve from the tariffs—which were due to take effect June 10—by tightening controls at its southern border and expanding its policy of taking back migrants as their asylum requests are processed in the US. “If they didn’t do that I would’ve put tariffs,” Trump said Wednesday night, in a television interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity. “And I still will if they don’t—but they have been doing a really good job and people at the border will tell you that the traffic has really dropped down.” Also with respect to ratification of the new treaty, he said US Democrats “could do that in a bipartisan way.” “It means hundreds of bil-



MEXICO CITY: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador speaks during the opening of the workshop ‘Constitutional Standards for the Performance of the National Guard’ in Mexico City.—AFP

ions of dollars to our country and thousands and thousands of jobs.”

But some Mexican lawmakers accused the executive branch of caving to Trump’s bullying, and put ratification of the USMCA on hold until Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard agreed to testify on the exact extent of the migration deal. Ebrard assured Congress he had not agreed to Trump’s demand for a “safe third country agreement,” in which migrants arriving in Mexican territory would have to seek asylum there rather than the US. Trump has vowed to make Mexico

agree to such a deal if he deems progress on the migration issue insufficient after 45 days. After Ebrard’s testimony, the Senate allowed the USMCA to move ahead. Mexico sends nearly 80 percent of its exports to the United States, and regional free trade is broadly popular here. Analysts saw Mexico’s early ratification of the trade deal as a strategic move. “Mexico wants to show good will and ratifying the USMCA quickly could help somewhat so that the debate focuses on ratification in the US,” said consulting firm Eurasia Group.—AFP

Fed opens door to rate cut amid growing ‘uncertainties’

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve opened the door to an interest rate cut on Wednesday, vowing to act to keep the economy growing as uncertainties about trade and other issues mount. US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell said trade friction and slowing growth worldwide have led many central bankers to feel the case for an interest rate cut has “strengthened” but most still want to see more data before making a move.

But one policymaker dissented in the vote, advocating for an immediate cut—something President Donald Trump has been calling for loudly and which many economists say is necessary given the damage done by the escalating trade frictions. The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee kept the key rate in the 2.25-2.5 percent range but sent a strong signal of possible cuts ahead, saying “uncertainties about this outlook have increased” and the Fed “will act as appropriate to sustain the expansion.”

After the meeting, Powell confirmed monetary policy could soon become more “accommodative,” a byword for

lowering the rate that serves as the basis for all types of lending from autos to homes to credit cards. “Uncertainties surrounding the outlook have clearly risen since our last meeting” and officials are “mindful of ongoing cross currents, including trade developments and concerns about global growth,” he told reporters.

“While the baseline outlook remains favorable,” he said, “many FOMC participants now see that the case for somewhat more accommodative policy has strengthened.” But he cautioned that it is important they not overreact to single bits of data or a “short-term swing in sentiment.” Markets are almost universally predicting multiple Fed moves this year and seem to view the Fed stance as dovish enough for now, with the three major stock indexes closing with modest gains following the announcement.

However, Trump may be disappointed not to get a rate cut, since he has accused the Fed of undercutting his efforts to supercharge the economy. He even hinted Tuesday he might remove Powell from his post, but the

Fed chairman said Wednesday he believes the law is clear that he has a four-year term. “I fully intend to serve it,” he said.

Trump on Tuesday also bashed European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi, saying his signal of more stimulus ahead would put the United States at a disadvantage against a weaker euro, which would make American exports less competitive. Powell declined to wade into that debate or comment on the exchange rate, saying only that the central bank does not use interest rate policy to influence the American currency.

He said “we don’t target the dollar... we will target our domestic economic and financial conditions and not our exchange rate.” However, the dovish comments did impact the exchange rate, as the dollar weakened slightly against the euro and other currencies.

Dovish tilt

James Bullard, president of the Fed’s St Louis regional branch, voted against the decision, saying he wanted to see the federal funds rate cut by 25 basis points at this meeting. Bullard earlier this month was to first central banker to give voice to the expectations of financial markets that economic conditions would require the Fed to act, saying a rate cut could be



WASHINGTON: In this file photo packs of freshly printed 20 USD notes are processed for bundling and packaging at the US Treasury’s Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington, DC.—AFP

needed “soon.”

Diane Swonk, chief economist Grant Thornton, who before the meeting had called for an immediate move, said the Fed’s language “suggests a willingness to cut rates in July.” But with Trump expected to meet China’s President Xi Jinping next week at the Group of 20 summit in Osaka, Japan, there is a chance for good news to deflate trade tensions and clear away some of the gloom.

“There are some within the Fed who wanted to wait out the G20 meetings to see if the president levies additional tariffs on China but their

mood about the economy has clearly darkened,” Swonk said. The quarterly forecasts issued by the central bankers on Wednesday revealed a decidedly more dovish tilt, with committee members were split on whether to keep the key rate where it is now or lower it.

But the projections did not reflect much change in the outlook for the economy: the median estimates for growth and unemployment were essentially unchanged compared to March, while the forecast for inflation was cut to 1.5 percent from 1.8 percent previously.—AFP

Business

Inditex cuts stores but boosts space in home market Spain

Shutdowns lead investors to worry about slowing sales

MADRID: The list of retail casualties shutting up shop seems to grow by the month but Inditex, the world's largest clothing retailer, is still betting on its network of physical stores to drive growth. The Zara owner has shrunk its network in its home market of Spain - by far its biggest portfolio globally - by 297 stores, or 15 percent, since 2012. Shutdowns have led some investors and analysts to worry about slowing sales growth at a company whose business has been built on a rapidly expanding store network.

However, despite the store closures, the company has actually increased its overall selling space in Spain since 2012 by opening or expanding flagship outlets in prime locations, according to a source with knowledge of the matter.

Inditex's net retail space in Spain also increased in the last financial year on an annual basis, said the source who declined to be named because the figures are confidential. No store staff have been cut due to the closures, with employees instead reassigned to other outlets, according to company and union officials.

Inditex's strategy of expanding net space could be risky at a time when shoppers are increasingly chasing bargains online, industry profit margins are declining and Amazon has become the biggest seller of clothing in the United States and Britain. The retailer is bucking the trend in an industry where companies are shrinking their real estate portfolios, either by shutting shops or reducing store sizes. US firm Gap Inc said earlier this year it would close 230 of its namesake brand's stores, the latest in a string of apparel retailers from Victoria's Secret to New Look

that have shut stores without expanding net space.

Meanwhile, Abercrombie & Fitch, Target and Sephora are experimenting with slimmed-down stores in neighborhood locations. The success or failure of Inditex's plan could help determine whether combining online sales with a large store network can prevail in mass-market fashion, where blazers sell for under 30 euros and midi dresses for under 50 euros.

"Consumers are changing shopping habits. Instead of shopping in secondary locations they're shopping online but they're still valuing the super-prime flagship stores," said Alistair Wittet, European equities portfolio manager at Comgest, a top 20 Inditex investor according to Refinitiv data.

"That's the thinking behind the Inditex strategy - to close the secondary stores and enlarge and improve their flagship stores." In Bilbao, for example, Zara opened a three-storey store last year in a historic building in the centre of town - complete with chandeliers, marble columns and stained-glass windows - while shutting three smaller stores in the city. Inditex, whose executives are famously tight-lipped and rarely grant interviews, declined to officially comment on whether it had expanded retail space in Spain.

Falling margins

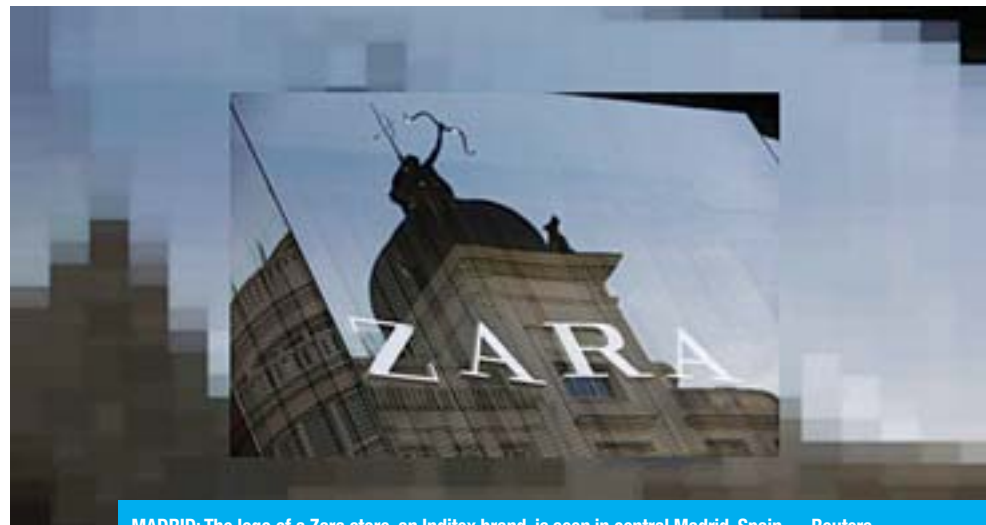
Inditex has nearly 7,500 stores globally, over a quarter of which are fast-fashion leader Zara, with its other brands including Bershka, Stradivarius and Pull & Bear. That is almost twice as many as both Gap Inc and Uniqlo owner, Japan's Fast Retailing,

that killed at least 258 people at three churches and three luxury hotels. The government expects tourism to decline 30 percent this year as a result of the suicide bombings. The loss of revenue has been estimated at \$1.5 billion.

The minister's remarks came as the census department said the country's economic growth in the first quarter of this year was 3.7 percent - better than the 3.5 percent forecast by the authorities. That compares to 1.79 percent in the final quarter of 2018 and 4.02 percent a year earlier. Last month, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka cut its main lending rate by 50 basis points to 8.5 percent to encourage borrowing and mitigate any fallout from the bombings.

Forty-five foreigners were among the dead from the April 21 suicide attacks and nearly 500 people were wounded. The government has begun subsidizing loans to hotels which were already suffering a declining in foreign guests following last year's political crisis. The country had plunged into turmoil in October when President Maithripala Sirisena sacked his Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and called fresh elections.

However, the Supreme Court held that the president's actions were illegal and restored the status quo. But, three international credit rating agencies downgraded the country's debt making it more expensive to borrow abroad. Official figures show that Sri Lanka will have to repay a record \$5.9 billion in foreign loans in 2019. Officials say about two-thirds of it has already been paid.—AFP



MADRID: The logo of a Zara store, an Inditex brand, is seen in central Madrid, Spain. —Reuters

and around 2,500 more than Sweden's H&M. Spain has by far its largest network, with more than 1,600 outlets, and accounts for about a sixth of group sales, but the reduction in store numbers is not limited to its home market.

Last year, for the first time, Inditex shut more outlets than it opened in China - its biggest network outside Spain. Globally, though, Inditex is still increasing overall store numbers - but the rate is slowing and the company surprised investors in March when it said it had shut more stores than expected in the last financial year. It said it had planned to open 300 to 400 stores, and close 200; but ended up opening 370 and closing 355.

"For us, the quality of the space is as important

as the growth rate," Capital Markets Director Marcos Lopez said at the time. In the same month, Zara opened a large two-storey New York store in the upscale Hudson Yards development in Manhattan. Globally, net retail space grew 4.7 percent in the last financial year. This year, the company expects growth of around 4 percent.

The accelerated closure of stores added to concerns that Inditex has lost some of its sparkle as it faces increased competition and falling margins. Inditex's operating margins have fallen in each of the past six years, from 19.5 percent in 2013 to 16.7 percent last year, Refinitiv data shows. The figure, which has been hit by the effects of a strong euro, is still far above many of its competitors.—Reuters

Sri Lanka in talks with China for \$1bn loan

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka is seeking a loan of nearly \$1.0 billion from China for energy and highways as the island recovers from the devastating Easter Sunday bombings, the finance ministry said yesterday. Talks are underway with China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to raise the new loan in addition to the \$1.2 billion obtained from international agencies this year, the ministry said.

"We have been discussing with the AIIB to obtain nearly an additional US\$ 1,000 million for further development of the Power and Highway sectors," the ministry quoted Finance minister Mangala Samaraweera. Sri Lanka's former government borrowed heavily to rollout ports, highways and railroads, but several ambitious infrastructure projects ended up as white elephants and left the country facing a mountain of debt - mainly to China.

Unable to service its loans, the government of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe leased a Chinese-built port at Hambantota to a Beijing company for \$1.12 billion in 2017. Samaraweera said the country was able to maintain economic stability despite the April 21 attacks

Swiss watchdog 'in contact' with Facebook cryptocurrency backers

GENEVA: Switzerland's market watchdog confirmed yesterday that it is in contact with the "initiators" of Facebook's new cryptocurrency, as questions mount over how the money will be regulated.

Switzerland has tried to establish itself as a global cryptocurrencies hub, but the entry into the market of a behemoth like Facebook will increase scrutiny over the rules Switzerland has in place. "We can confirm that we are in contact with the initiators of the project," a spokesman for the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA),

Tobias Lux, told AFP in an email. The Libra coin plan, launched this week by Facebook and some two dozen partners, is being overseen by a Geneva-based nonprofit called the Libra Association. Lux declined to comment on the details of FINMA's exchanges with the Libra Association but said the watchdog's role was to determine "whether the planned services require approval under Swiss supervisory law and, if so, which." —AFP

Sports

Jaguares, Chiefs eye semi-finals place after early-season struggles

BUENOS AIRES: The Argentine Jaguares host the Waikato Chiefs from New Zealand today in a Super Rugby quarter-final pairing that seemed unlikely as the regular season approached halfway. Jaguares suffered four losses in their first six matches and the Chiefs fared even worse, winning one match, drawing one and losing four.

Both teams then turned their seasons around against the Northern Bulls at a ground far from their bases in Buenos Aires and Hamilton, 125 kilometers south of Auckland. Twice champions Chiefs were winless and desperate when they came to the Loftus Versfeld stadium in Pretoria — a venue where they were humiliated 61-17 in the 2009 final. But three months ago there was no repeat of that embarrassing scoreline as the Chiefs scored seven tries in a 56-20 romp that went a long way toward turning the season around.

A couple of All Blacks figured prominently on the scoresheet with lock Brodie Retallick bagging two tries and now-injured utility back Damian McKenzie slotting 21 points. Jaguares arrived in Pretoria two weeks after the Chiefs equally desperate for a win that would halt a multi-season run of losses in South Africa. While they were unable to dominate the Bulls like the Chiefs did, a 22-20 victory for the tourists marked the start of a stunning turnaround. That win was the first of nine in 10 matches since, including a 28-20 triumph over former champions the Wellington Hurricanes in

New Zealand. Between those two matches in Pretoria, the Chiefs flew to Argentina and edged the Jaguares 30-27 to avenge a home defeat by the South Americans last season.

Winning streak

With the Chiefs scoring 59 points and a virtual Jaguares reserve side 52 in the final round of league play last weekend, the stage is set for an intriguing quarter-final. Chiefs coach Colin Cooper acknowledged that his team are on a three-match winning streak when he said: "We need to draw on the confidence gained from our past couple of games." While demolishing the Melbourne Rebels was hugely satisfying, coming from 20 points behind to beat trophy-holders Canterbury Crusaders convincingly must have sent morale sky-rocketing. "We have had a good week over here and there is plenty of energy in the team, especially from our leaders," said Cooper.

"The Jaguares are a quality side. They have performed well and we have the utmost respect for them. "We are no strangers to quarter-finals rugby, we just need to stay focused and deliver a performance our fans are proud of." Winger Emiliano Boffelli spoke of the motivation within the Jaguares camp ahead of a second straight last-eight appearance having lost to the Golden Lions in Johannesburg last season. "Great being able to play a Super Rugby quarter-final," he said. "We did it last year, but this time we are hosting the game. We have great expect-



BUENOS AIRES: In this file photo taken on June 14, 2019 Argentina's Jaguares hooker Julian Montoya (front) runs to score a try against Japan's Sunwolves during their Super Rugby match at Jose Amalfitani stadium. — AFP

tations." But thoughts of a first semi-final appearance for the Buenos Aires outfit are not on his mind: "We focus on this game (Chiefs) — we face a great rival." According to a Super Rugby media release, the winners in Buenos Aires meet the ACT Brumbies of Australia or

the Coastal Sharks of South Africa, who play tomorrow, in the semi-finals. In the other half of the draw, the Crusaders host the Otago Highlanders today in a New Zealand derby and the Hurricanes have home advantage over the Bulls tomorrow. — AFP

Semenya to race 800m for first time since ban

PARIS: Caster Semenya will race in the 800m at the Stanford Diamond League on June 30 in her first outing over the distance since she launched a legal battle against new rules targeting athletes with hyperandrogenism. The double Olympic champion was cleared to compete in the event after Switzerland's top court upheld her appeal against an IAAF ruling obliging women with higher than normal male hormone levels to artificially lower their testosterone before competing in races at distances of 400m to the mile.

"Caster's representation requested that she be moved from the 3,000 meters (where she was originally entered) to the 800 meters and we are happy to comply," Prefontaine Classic's director Tom Jordan said in a tweet on Tuesday. An initial appeal by Semenya was struck down by the Court for Arbitration of Sport in Lausanne, leading to her appeal to the country's top court. Earlier this week the South African accused the IAAF of using her as a "human guinea pig" as they "experiment with how the medication they required me to take would affect my testosterone levels." The race on June 30 in the US will be her first race over 800m since winning gold at the Diamond League in Doha on May 4. This month's meeting has been moved from its usual home in Eugene to California as the stadium in Oregon is being renovated for hosting the 2021 World Championships. — AFP

Crusaders to unleash All Black magic in quest for perfect 10

WELLINGTON: The Canterbury Crusaders have named a full-strength team for the first time this season as Super Rugby's pace-setters take their quest for a third straight title, and 10th in all, into the competition's knockout phase. The defending champions, packed with All Blacks stars, are overwhelming favorites to maintain a daunting home record and down South Island rivals Otago Highlanders in the quarter-finals on Friday.

They have not lost a playoff in Christchurch since Super Rugby launched in 1996 — a sequence of 21 matches — and are currently on a 27-game unbeaten run at home dating back to July 2016. The return of front-row forwards Owen Franks and Codie Taylor will only shorten their odds, allowing the Crusaders to field the entire All Blacks' tight five of Franks, Taylor, Joe Moody, Scott Barrett and Sam Whitelock.

In the other last eight match-ups, ACT Brumbies play Coastal Sharks, Wellington Hurricanes face Northern Bulls and Argentina's Jaguares host Waikato Chiefs. The Crusaders topped the regular season ladder at a canter despite many of their numerous All Blacks being injured or rested for long periods. Senior players such as Kieran Read and Whitelock have been trickling back, with the return of Franks (torn shoulder) and Taylor (broken finger) finally giving the defending champions access to all their stars at the sharp end of the season.

Franks said he was wary of the Highlanders, who scraped into the last eight but have been boosted by the return of All Black fullback Ben Smith after more than a month out with a hamstring injury. "A lot of people thought they might not be in there so they've almost got that nothing-to-lose feel, which is pretty dan-

gerous to play against," he said. Highlanders coach Aaron Mauger bristled at suggestions his side were lucky simply to make the finals, saying his players were itching to "have a crack" at their highly fancied neighbors. "We've had people sticking the knife in but we're confident with our game and where it's at," he said. "The scoreboard is nil-all at the moment."

Brumbies 'representing Australia'

Sharks coach Robert du Preez also took a potshot at critics after a last-gasp win over Western Stormers completed an unconvincing run to the finals, labeling sections of the media "cockroaches". His team faces a Brumbies outfit on a six-match winning streak, bursting with confidence and out to give inspirational captain Christian Lealiifano a victorious send-off.

Cancer survivor Lealiifano, who revealed this week he is off to Japan at the end of the season, has sparked talk among the Brumbies' faithful of the team recapturing the glory days of the early 2000s. Coach Dan McKellar said the Brumbies were also playing for national pride as the sole Australian team to reach the finals. "There's a sense that we're representing the country," he said. "You get a bit sick of rugby getting beaten up in Australia for one reason or another. I'd love for us to keep working hard and put some really positive stories together."

The Brumbies beat the Sharks to win the 2001 title and have never lost a playoff to a South African side. The Hurricanes have won the most matches of any team this season with 12 victories, but did not meet the Bulls, who have troubled them in the past. The Hurricanes, who will be back to full strength after resting several key players last week, have a 11-10 winning record over the men from Pretoria. The last time they met was February 2018, when the Bulls edged a 21-19 victory at home.

The Jaguares will host a playoff match in Buenos Aires for the first time after finishing second on the ladder in a standout season, losing only one of their past 10 matches. However, they were defeated in their only two previous meetings at home against the Chiefs. — AFP

Sports

World number one Koepka says success comes from keeping calm

LOS ANGELES: Brooks Koepka isn't one to sit still as the four-time major champion returns to the Travelers Championship less than a week after falling just short of winning a third straight US Open. World number one Koepka finished three strokes shy of fellow American Gary Woodland who claimed his first major championship at Pebble Beach on Sunday.

Koepka, who is seeking to win his seventh PGA Tour title, joins defending champion Bubba Watson, former back-to-back winner Phil Mickelson, and rising star Viktor Hovland in the field for the \$1.2 million event that begins Thursday in Cromwell, Connecticut. Koepka says keeping busy is his way of staying sharp on the Tour and even though he was in contention in Pebble Beach he's not as tired as he was last year when he won his second consecutive Open.

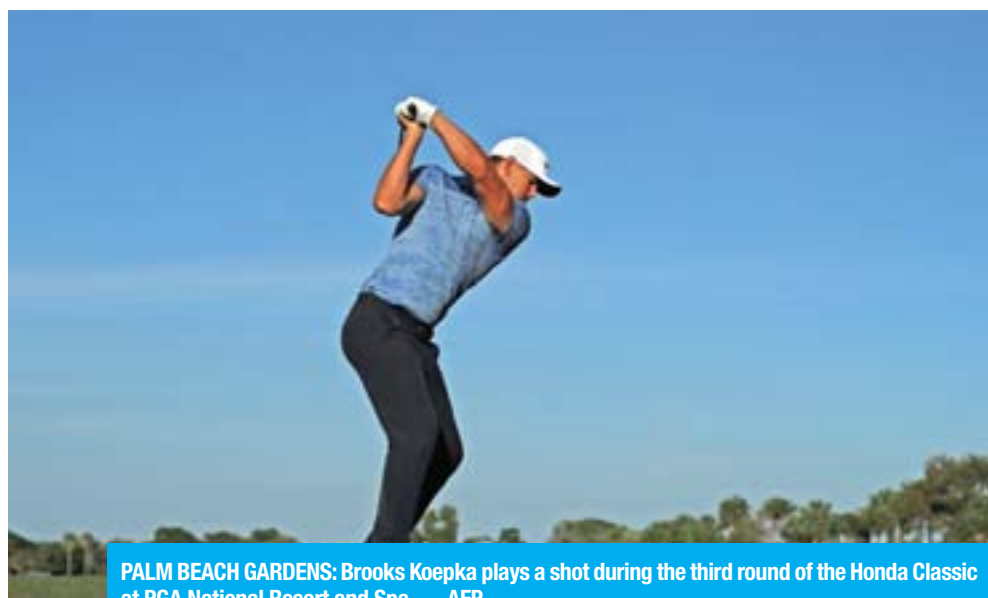
"Last year I don't even think I knew where I was," he said. "It was all kind of a whirlwind. 'It's a lot different when you win and you're trying to play the week after. It's a bit hectic, chaotic. 'This week, it's difficult still. I just feel mentally exhausted from last week just being in contention. But another day of rest today and I'll be fine for tomorrow.'"

Koepka has only two PGA Tour wins outside of his four major titles. He says he now has a rou-

time that allows him to succeed where in the past he might have lost his focus in the middle of a round. "Not everything is results-based with me. It's about the process," Koepka said. "I think that's why I'm able to play so well in the majors, because I'm not worried about winning."

"I'm not worried about the pressure of being in first or trying to do something, accomplish three in a row, whatever it was." Even last week it's just about the process. So if I can get the process down the result is going to come." Koepka said he's matured as a golfer and a person and is no longer the type to get angry if he blasts a tee shot into the water or lands his ball in an awkward divot.

"I look back from college and I had to switch — I was a hot head," he said. "I learned to understand that even if I hit it in the water or out of bounds, I'm not trying to do that. I'm human. 'I'm going to make some mistakes. I can get over that. I think that's part of why I'm not afraid to take chances and go at pins.'" Koepka said he's thinking about the upcoming British Open and how he is going to get ready. He plans to pass on the Scottish Open and arrive a couple of days before the first round begins. "I usually go over to the British a little bit early, a couple days before, and just try to get some work in," Koepka



PALM BEACH GARDENS: Brooks Koepka plays a shot during the third round of the Honda Classic at PGA National Resort and Spa. — AFP

said. "I'm not planning on changing my schedule. It's always been that way. 'It's fun to get over, get acclimated a couple days before. That way

when I get there on Monday I'm used to the time change and feel like I have a good understanding of the golf course.'" — AFP

Hamilton seeks to stretch Mercedes unbeaten run

LE CASTELLET: Lewis Hamilton will seek to stretch his lead and extend Mercedes unbeaten run to 10 races with a victory unaided by fortune at this weekend's French Grand Prix. The defending five-time drivers' champion, a lucky winner in Canada two weeks ago when Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel was controversially penalized, won at the remote sun-baked Le Castellet track last year and is hunting his sixth win this year and the 79th of his career.

If he, or team-mate Valtteri Bottas, succeeds, it will mean the Silver Arrows have won all eight contests this year after finishing last season with two triumphs. But after a testing weekend in Montreal, where four-time champion Vettel claimed pole position and finished the race first 'on the road', Hamilton and Mercedes are wary of any signs of complacency. Team chief Toto Wolff admitted: "Canada was something of a wake-up call for us."

"After a run of very good reliability over the opening six races, we experienced a number of problems almost all of which were of our own making." He said the team would learn from their problems and thanked Mercedes mechanics for their excellent work. "We expect another tough fight in France," he added. "The circuit features some similarities to Montreal and the long straights will present a challenge for us."

"But unlike Canada, the corner characteristics are spread across a range of speeds, which should play to our advantage. We're looking forward to the chance to put a few things right again." Hamilton won from pole last year and is driving with more assurance and maturity than at any time in

his career, leaving even a revitalized Bottas, in the same machinery, struggling to keep pace. The Finn has won twice this year.

Ferrari showed clear signs of their own awakening in Montreal where the power-hungry nature of the circuit suited their engine power, but Mercedes hope to match them and draw level with McLaren's run of 11 successive triumphs in 1988.

Improved Ferrari

The Italian team claimed victory and lodged notice of an appeal against the outcome following the race in which a five-seconds penalty, for the manner in which Vettel rejoined after running off across a grass strip. They later withdrew that appeal notice, but have subsequently sought a review of the stewards' decision, citing new evidence to follow.

Hamilton goes into the race with a 29-points lead over Bottas and 62 on Vettel who is due to arrive in France with an improved Ferrari. "We will have a few small evolutions," said team chief Mattia Binotto. "It won't be a solution to our problems, but the feedback will be important for the future." Max Verstappen will aim to make sure his Red Bull is in the mix at the front after finishing second last year, following a collision involving Bottas and Vettel at the start. "I'm hoping we can be challenging them," he said.

After last year's traffic debacle around the circuit, which left thousands of fans grid-locked for more than five hours, the organisers have said they have a "good plan" to avoid any repeat. Former McLaren team chief Eric Boullier, an ambassador and adviser to the French event, said they had partnered with Swiss experts Citec to find a solution. "They looked after the Ryder Cup in France last year, the 2016 UEFA European Championship and they are working with the Olympics for the 2024 Games in Paris. We have to fix the issues we had last year - that's a given and if we solve those problems and if we pass the second edition without mobility issues it will be forgotten." — AFP

Athletics doping watchdog receives Moscow test files

PARIS: The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), the watchdog set up to police doping in athletics, said yesterday it had received testing data from a Moscow laboratory at the centre of a vast doping conspiracy. The independent body founded by the IAAF, athletics' world governing body, said it had received around 110,000 files from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on June 18.

The data, collected by WADA inspectors from the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) of the Moscow Laboratory, concerns testing samples analyzed in the period 2012 to 2015. "The AIU will start analyzing the LIMS data immediately with a

view to reporting its findings to the IAAF Council in due course," the watchdog said in a statement. The AIU said that no deadline had been set for the completion of the task.

Russia was banned from world athletics in 2015 following revelations of a state-backed doping program dating back years. Although the governing bodies of other sports have re-admitted Russia, the IAAF upheld the ban again earlier this month citing continued problems despite positive developments in anti-doping efforts in Russia. Granting access to data from the Moscow laboratory at the centre of the scandal was noted as part of that progress. — AFP

Kucherov wins MVP trophies at NHL awards

LOS ANGELES: Nikita Kucherov won the Hart Trophy as the MVP of the NHL, but it was bittersweet recognition for the Russian forward after his Tampa Bay Lightning suffered a shocking first-round playoff exit. Kucherov's Russian teammate Andrei Vasilevskiy won the Vezina Trophy for being the top goalie as the Lightning, who earned 128 standings points in the regular season, were left licking their wounds when the

Columbus Blue Jackets eliminated them in a four-game playoff sweep in April.

Kucherov, who finished with 128 points on the season, also picked up the Ted Lindsay Award as the top player voted on by his peers and the Art Ross Trophy as the league's top scorer at the ceremony on Wednesday in Las Vegas. "It's a huge night for me and my family," Kucherov said. "Thanks to my teammates, my coaches, all the trainers, everybody involved in the team. Thanks to them for helping me get here. Without them, without all the work we've done together, I wouldn't be here."

Kucherov, who turned 26 on Monday, beat out two-time MVP Sidney Crosby of Pittsburgh and 2017 Hart winner Connor McDavid for the Hart Trophy. Kucherov received 164 of 171 first-place votes in a runaway victory over runner-up Crosby. — AFP

Sports

South Africa lick their wounds after more world cup agony

BIRMINGHAM: Captain Faf du Plessis was left contemplating the ruins of another World Cup campaign on the ground where South Africa experienced their greatest heartache in the competition 20 years ago. The Proteas' hopes of reaching the semi-finals in England and Wales are all but over after a four-wicket defeat by New Zealand on Wednesday.

One minor consolation is that the recriminations from Wednesday's reverse at Edgbaston are unlikely to be as great as those at Warwickshire's headquarters 20 years ago when a disastrous run-out saw them tie with Australia and miss out on the final due to an inferior net run rate. South Africa are still alive at the World Cup but with just one win from six matches it would take an extraordinary combination of results to see them into the semi-finals from a 10-team round-robin group phase.

On Wednesday, South Africa fought hard to get to 241 for six on a difficult pitch after losing the toss. And it so very nearly proved enough, with New Zealand needing a superbly paced 106 not out from captain and star batsman Kane Williamson to see them home with just three balls to spare. Fans of AB de Villiers will argue this proves the Proteas were wrong to refuse the gifted batsman's offer to come out of international retirement for the World Cup, but others will say the offer came far too late for it to be accepted by South Africa's selectors.

"Kane played a great knock, you know," said Du Plessis. "It's probably the difference between the two sides, just one guy taking it through. You need someone to go further, and we

haven't had that." Inevitably, given their painful World Cup history, the question of whether South Africa "choked" on Wednesday is bound to be asked. "Choking", however, implies squandering a winning position, whereas this match in Birmingham was more of a see-saw contest determined largely by Williamson's knock.

Stuttering campaign

The New Zealand skipper is a world-class batsman and the truth is that South Africa's World Cup campaign was in trouble long before this fixture. Losing Dale Steyn without the veteran fast bowler delivering a ball at the tournament was blow, but South Africa were gambling on the 35-year-old recovering from a longstanding shoulder injury. Having tournament hosts England and another highly fancied side in India as two of their early opponents meant South Africa had a tough start and it was no surprise when they lost both of those matches. But what really derailed their campaign was a 21-run defeat by Bangladesh, where the Tigers piled up 330.

Several South Africa batsmen got starts in reply, including Du Plessis, who made 62, but nobody was able to play the major innings required. The Proteas' painful history at the World Cup is littered with self-inflicted wounds. As well as the 1999 run-out debacle, they exited in 2003 after misunderstanding the rules governing rain-affected matches, and made the controversial decision to drop Kyle Abbott for what turned out to be a nail-biting semi-final loss to New Zealand four years ago. South Africa did not help themselves on Wednesday when Williamson, who had



BIRMINGHAM: South Africa's Lungi Ngidi (R) celebrates taking the wicket of New Zealand's Colin de Grandhomme during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between New Zealand and South Africa at Edgbaston. — AFP

then made 76, got a thin edge off Imran Tahir to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock. The Proteas did not request a review, only for replays to show a nick. "I think I was at long on at the time, and Quinny is the closest to the action," said Du Plessis. "That's not where the game was won and

lost." This World Cup could well mark the last appearance at the global showpiece for players in their mid-30s such as Du Plessis and Proteas opener Hashim Amla, who never really got back to his best after being hit on the head by a bouncer from England's Jofra Archer. — AFP

Williamson is New Zealand's greatest ODI player: Vettori

MANCHESTER: Former New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori has hailed Kane Williamson as New Zealand's greatest-ever one-day player after his match-winning World Cup century against South Africa. Williamson made an unbeaten 106 to guide the Kiwis to a nervy four-wicket win with three balls to spare at Edgbaston on Wednesday as they maintained their unbeaten record.

With the Black Caps needing eight runs to win in the rain-hit 49-over-a-side game, Williamson smashed paceman Andile Phehlukwayo for six to bring up his 12th ODI century and hit the next ball for four to seal the victory. "Kane Williamson has to be New Zealand's greatest ODI player of all time — and innings like that against South Africa tell you exactly why," Vettori wrote in his column for the International Cricket Council.

"He's already there now and by the end of his career his record will far exceed anything we've had in the past or present, he really is that good." New Zealand, the runners-up in 2015, were in trouble at 137 for five in the 33rd over before Colin de Grandhomme (60) joined skipper Williamson at the crease. The pair put on 91 runs for the sixth wicket as



BIRMINGHAM: New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson (C) reacts after scoring the winning runs to end the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between New Zealand and South Africa at Edgbaston. — AFP

Williamson paced his innings to perfection, hitting nine fours and a six in his 138-ball knock. "Kane has done so much in such a short period, whether a captain or not, he's been exceptional and he's an absolute joy to watch," said Vettori. "He plays all the shots, he knows how to manipulate the strike and he's always going to run hard.

"What differentiates him from a lot of batsmen in this day and age is his sole focus is winning the game and he tailors his batting towards that." Williamson, who made his ODI debut against India in 2010, averages an impressive 47.36 in 143 matches. New Zealand, who play the West Indies on Saturday, top the 10-team table in the World Cup round-robin phase, with four wins out of five matches. Their game against India was washed out. — AFP

Tsonga upbeat ahead of his Federer clash

HALLE WESTFALEN: French veteran Jo-Wilfried Tsonga believes he has nothing to lose against Roger Federer as he continues along the comeback trail in the second round of the ATP tournament in Halle. Tsonga, 34, missed seven months of last season due to knee surgery, but has shown solid form this month upon his return to grass court tennis for the first time since 2017.

After reaching the second round in Stuttgart last week, the Frenchman beat compatriot Benoit Paire in straight sets in Halle on Tuesday to set up a second round fixture with Federer. "It is always special to play Federer, I will give everything I've got," Tsonga told AFP. "There is less pressure than usual, because there is no shame in losing to Roger Federer. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

The Frenchman is one of the few players who can boast of a perfect record on grass against eight-time Wim-

bledon champion Federer. The two have met only once on the surface, a grueling battle at Wimbledon in 2011, which Tsonga won after clawing back a two-set deficit. "It's true I have never lost to him on grass, but that is only because we have only played once," said Tsonga. "If we had played ten times, the roles would probably be reversed." "It is a different situation now. I want to do well, but I coming back from a long way away."

Once ranked number five in the world, Tsonga now sits at 77th in the ATP rankings, having slipped as low as 210th after his injury. Tsonga told AFP he was happy with his return to the tour this season, but that he still felt the effects of his spell on the sidelines. "I am still paying for it a bit after a whole year of not playing. It's as if I actually retired last year," he said. "But I am happy, there have been no catastrophes. Physically, I am getting better and better each week." Speaking after his own first-round victory against John Millman, Federer said he was happy to see Tsonga back on court. "We trained together in Miami a few weeks ago, and we get on well," said the world number three. "Jo-Wilfried has shown in the past that he can beat me. Whether on hard court, clay or grass, he is always dangerous." "It's a tough draw for the second round." — AFP

Sports

Argentina break Scots hearts but give Cameroon, Chile and NZ hope

PARIS: Florencia Bonsegundo's twice-taken penalty completed Argentina's dramatic fight-back against Scotland on Wednesday and also opened the door at the Women's World Cup for four winless teams. Also in Group D, England and Japan were already through to the last 16 before meeting in Nice, where two goals by Ellen White secured a 2-0 victory and first place with a maximum nine points.

Argentina fought back from three down to draw 3-3 in Paris to eliminate the Scots as they climbed to third. But they only have two points and are weakly placed in the battle to finish as one of the four best third-place teams. To advance, the Argentines need an unlikely pair of draws in Thursday's final set of group games. England will head to Valenciennes in northern France for a last-16 tie on Sunday against a third-placed side with China, Cameroon, New Zealand, Chile and even Thailand all potential opponents.

High stakes

The permutations are less complicated for Japan, but the Nadeshiko — World Cup winners in 2011 and runners-up in 2015 — will have a stiffer-looking test in Rennes against either the Netherlands or Canada who meet in Reims Thursday to decide the Group E winners. The stakes are higher for Cameroon and New Zealand who play in Montpellier in the group's other game. Victory by two goals — or just one in a high-scoring match — would make either Cameroon or New Zealand one of the four best third-placed teams. "We just need to make sure

we win on Thursday and make sure we do everything possible and get to the next round," Cameroon defender Estelle Johnson said.

The situation is similar in Group F with Sweden and USA, who meet in Le Havre, both on six points. The group winner will face Italy in the last 16 with the runner-up playing the Netherlands or Canada. The Americans will be looking for revenge against Sweden, who eliminated them on penalties in the Olympic quarter-finals in 2016 meaning they became the first US women's team to fail to win a medal. Chile and Thailand, who meet in Rennes, are both pointless. Unless the earlier game in Montpellier ends in a draw, in which case a win by any score will be enough, Chile will need to win by three goals and Thailand, who let in 13 against the USA, will need to win by 14.

Grandstand finale

Scotland looked to be going through as one of the best third-placed sides when Erin Cuthbert's 69th minute goal put them 3-0 up against Argentina at the Parc des Princes in Paris after earlier strikes from Kim Little and Jen Beattie. However, Milagros Menendez replied with Argentina's first goal of the tournament in the 74th minute, and then Bonsegundo's shot went in off goalkeeper Lee Alexander to set up a grandstand finale.

With two minutes left, after an agonizing VAR review, Argentina were awarded a penalty. Alexander saved Bonsegundo's tame first attempt, but VAR caught the goalkeeper straying



PARIS: Argentina's forward Florencia Bonsegundo celebrates after scoring a goal during the France 2019 Women's World Cup Group D football match between Scotland and Argentina, on June 19, 2019, at the Parc des Princes stadium. — AFP

off her line and the Argentine converted her second effort in the fourth minute of stoppage time. The draw left Scotland on one point, bottom of Group D and eliminated. "We gave it our all for 70 minutes of the game. We were very good but we didn't manage to see the game out, but at this moment in time we feel hard done by," said

Scotland's disconsolate coach, Shelley Kerr. England's coach Phil Neville was happier. "We've got another clean sheet, we've won another game, we've played three and won three, and we're just where we want to be, in the last 16, and ready to attack the business end of the tournament," he said. — AFP

Zimbabwe's Kadewere dreams of Cup success

CAIRO: While Tino Kadewere admitted to rooting for Mohamed Salah and Liverpool in this season's Premier League title race, the Zimbabwe forward will be looking to upstage the Egypt star in toay's curtain-raiser at the Africa Cup of Nations.

Zimbabwe will be making just their fourth appearance at the continental showpiece, which has been expanded to 24 nations for the first time, and have never advanced beyond the opening round. Yet, Kadewere is full of optimism as Zimbabwe arrive in Cairo with a much-changed squad from the one that exited in the group stage two years ago with just a point after a tough draw that placed them alongside Senegal, Tunisia and Algeria. "In 2017 we had a few experienced players but now it's more of a young squad. It is a new generation," Kadewere told AFP.

"It's a whole new squad. We have been together for quite a while now, and we have been doing well since last year when we played the Cosafa Cup." Kadewere, 23, scored twice in the final as Zimbabwe overcame Zambia 4-2 after extra time to win the regional tournament in 2018, the second of back-to-back titles in the Southern Africa event.

This time, a Cup of Nations group including hosts and record seven-time champions Egypt, the Democratic of Congo and Uganda has left Zimbabwe believing they can break new ground in Africa.

"Everyone in Zimbabwe really wants us to try and get to the knock-out stages," said Kadewere, who just completed his first season in French football with second division side Le Havre after three years in Sweden. "We, as players, we want to make history. We are hoping to make people remember our names. We are hoping to make good history, to make people know that Zimbabwe is one of the best countries in Africa."

Ajax inspiration

Kadewere, one of just a handful of Zimbabwe players in Europe, is drawing inspiration from the Ajax side that came within seconds of reaching this season's UEFA Champions League final after a run that saw the Dutch giants dump out both holders Real Madrid and Cristiano Ronaldo's Juventus. "We want to make Zimbabwe well known and to do our best. If possible, get to the final," he said. "No one ever knew that Ajax was going to the semi-finals of the Champions League, and they did it, and they were one foot away from the final. Why can't Zimbabwe get to the final also? We never know."

The odds are understandably stacked against a side ranked 109th in the world-below the likes of Palestine, India, Vietnam and the Faroe Islands—but Kadewere is hopeful Zimbabwe can significantly boost their standing over the course of the next month. "It has been very difficult for Zimbabwean football in the past years. We try to manage, to keep up the pace, but it is very difficult," he said. "There are many countries in Africa and we can't compare ourselves to the big ones at the moment. This kind of tournament is the one that can showcase how we can be ranked in Africa. We want people to talk about Zimbabwe in the next two years, three years, they know that Zimbabwe did very well this time." — AFP

Pilot David Henderson named in Sala manslaughter arrest

LONDON: A man arrested on suspicion of manslaughter over the death of Argentine footballer Emiliano Sala was yesterday named by the Times newspaper as pilot David Henderson. Sala, 28, died when a plane carrying him and pilot David Ibbotson came down in the Channel on January 21, just days after he had joined Cardiff City from Nantes.

"As a result of our enquiries we have today, Wednesday 19 June 2019, arrested a 64-year-old man from the North Yorkshire area on suspicion of manslaughter by an unlawful act," Detective Inspector Simon Huxter, of Dorset Police said in a statement. "He is assisting with our enquiries and has been released from custody under investigation." The Times newspaper named the arrested man as pilot Henderson, who worked regularly for Willie McKay, a football agent linked with Sala's transfer. The agent has previously said he asked Henderson to fly the plane, but that he was unable to do so. Sala had been Cardiff's record signing after a fee of £15 million (\$19 million) was agreed with Nantes during the January transfer window. After travelling to Cardiff to complete the deal, Sala returned to north-

ern France to collect belongings and bid farewell to his teammates. It was on his return to the Welsh capital to take part in his first training session that the tragedy occurred. Initial search operations for the player and pilot were suspended in the days after the plane went missing.

However, a crowdfunding effort supported by thousands of donations, including from football stars such as Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe, helped launch a private search. That specialized search saw Sala's body recovered from the wreckage in February but Ibbotson's body has not been found. Two months after Sala's body was discovered, his father Horacio Sala died of a heart attack in Argentina.

Moving tributes were paid to Sala from across the football world with Nantes retiring the number nine jersey he wore for the Ligue 1 side. However, the two clubs have been involved in a legal wrangle over the transfer fee. Nantes reported Cardiff to FIFA after the first installment of the fee, believed to be £5 million, was not paid on time. Cardiff previously stated they were "shocked" at reports that Ibbotson did not have a license to fly at night. — AFP

Sports

Messi rescues Argentina as Paraguay pay penalty

BELO HORIZONTE: A Lionel Messi penalty salvaged a 1-1 draw for Argentina against Paraguay on Wednesday as the two-time world champions once again struggled at the Copa America. Messi swept in a 57th-minute spot-kick at Belo Horizonte's Mineirao Stadium to cancel out a first-half opener from Paraguay's Richard Sanchez.

Argentina also had goalkeeper Franco Armani to thank for a second half penalty save that prevented Paraguay from taking a 2-1 lead in the Group B battle. The draw left Argentina with one point from two games and on the bottom of the table with one game remaining. However with the two best third placed teams advancing to the quarter-finals, Argentina can still reach the last eight with a decisive win over Qatar in their final group game.

"We have to win," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said of his team's date with Qatar. "We will take stock of what we did well and what we did not do well and we will make decisions. We are lucky that we are still alive in this tournament," added Scaloni, singling out goalkeeper Armani for special praise. "We trust Franco," Scaloni said. "He is our starting goalkeeper. He saved a penalty and kept us alive. I'm glad he had a good performance."

The South American giants will need to raise their game however to advance any further after another disjointed performance which followed their opening defeat to Colombia on Saturday. A lackluster opening saw both sides struggle to generate any sort of attacking momentum, with neither side managing to get a shot on goal until

Paraguay striker Derlis Gonzalez's effort was deflected behind for a corner in the 29th minute. From the ensuing set-piece, centre-half Junior Alonso scooped a half-chance wide as Argentina escaped.

Penalty drama

That flurry of activity spurred Argentina fleetingly at the other end, with Lautaro Martinez winning a free-kick in a dangerous position on the edge of the area after a foul by Paraguay skipper Gustavo Gomez. Messi however was unable to conjure anything from the free-kick, floating his effort up and over the wall but without the pace to trouble goalkeeper Roberto Fernandez, who gathered comfortably.

In the 37th minute however, Paraguay's more organized performance got its reward. A swift counter-attack saw the ball transferred to Newcastle United's Miguel Almiron near halfway. The livewire forward turned on the after-burners to roast Roberto Pereyra down the left wing before crossing for Sanchez who drove a low finish into the bottom corner of the Argentina net.

A rattled Argentina were given a huge let-off moments later when Armani came racing out of his area to shut down Gonzalez. A wild kick brought down the Paraguayan player but Armani somehow escaped a red card and was only cautioned. Scaloni went for broke at half-time, bolstering his attack with the introduction of Sergio Agüero and the move paid instant dividends.

Agüero deftly lost his marker on 51 minutes and pulled back for Martinez, whose shot cannoned off the woodwork. Messi pounced on the



BELO HORIZONTE: Argentina's Lionel Messi (C) is marked by Paraguay's Rodrigo Rojas (L) and Richard Sanchez during their Copa America football tournament group match at the Mineirao Stadium. — AFP

rebound but Fernandez blocked with a diving save. The chance appeared to have gone begging but VAR had spotted that Martinez's shot had in fact struck Ivan Piris's arm before hitting the bar and Brazilian referee Wilson Sampaio pointed to the spot.

Messi stepped up to sweep in the spot-kick

and Argentina were level. Yet there was more drama in the 62nd minute when Paraguay's Gonzalez burst into the box and was clumsily hacked down by Nicolas Otamendi for a clear penalty. Armani, who was fortunate to be on the pitch, dived the right way and parried Gonzalez's spot-kick wide. — AFP

Guardado gives Mexico Gold Cup win over Canada

LOS ANGELES: Andres Guardado scored two second-half goals as Mexico went top of their CONCACAF Gold Cup group with a 3-1 victory over Canada on Wednesday. Guardado scored from long-range in the 54th minute added another 13 minutes from time to give the Mexicans a second straight win at Invesco Field in Denver, Colorado, after they had thrashed Cuba 7-0 in the Group A opener.

Roberto Alvarado opened the scoring in the 40th minute as Mexico, without star players Javier Hernandez, Hector Herrera and Carlos Vela, made it two wins out of two on their quest to lift the Gold Cup for an eighth time. Lucas Cavallini pulled one back for the 2000 CONCACAF champions Canada in the 75th minute when he latched on to Jonathan David's pass and slid the ball under goalkeeper Francisco Ochoa. But two minutes later Guardado sealed the victory when his shot deflected up off the foot of Canadian defender Alphonso Davies and into the net.

Canada had beaten Martinique 4-0 in their first match in the continental championship for North American, Central American and Caribbean sides. But Martinique kept their hopes of advancing to the knockout stages from Group A alive with a 3-0 win over Cuba courtesy of goals from Joris Marveaux, Stephane Aoual and Kevin Fortune. — AFP

Zapata sends Colombia into Copa quarters with Qatar winner

SAO PAULO: Duvan Zapata scored for the second match running to send Colombia into the Copa America quarter-finals with a late header to beat Qatar 1-0 on Wednesday. Carlos Queiroz's team became the first side into the knock-out rounds after following up Saturday's 2-0 win over Argentina with another victory over the dogged Asian champions.

It was a deserved success but one that had looked likely to elude the 2001 champions as they toiled against a Qatar side that defended stoically and held on grimly for more than 85 minutes.

"It was difficult, but we showed patience and mustered the winning goal. The win was paramount and we leave happy," said Zapata, who insisted Colombia wouldn't be taking things easy in their final group match against Paraguay on Sunday. "We hope for the best possible finish to the group stage."

Qatar, who will host the next World Cup in 2022, may now need to beat Lionel Messi's Argentina in their final Group B match if they are to reach the last eight. "It leaves a bad taste because the end was close," said Qatar's Spanish coach Felix Sanchez. "Conceding a goal in the final minutes when the game was heading for a draw ... it leaves you bitter at not having taken a point but we also have to appreciate that the team competed with great opponents."

Zapata repaid Queiroz after the Portuguese coach surprisingly picked the Atalanta striker in place of star forward Radamel Falcao. "We are on the right path. When you have Falcao and Duvan in your side, scoring is a given," said captain James Rodriguez. Queiroz's team was off to a flying start, putting the ball in the net

after just six minutes, but Roger Martinez's close-range header was ruled out for offside. James should have given Colombia the lead on 13 minutes as he met Martinez's pinpoint cross just seven yards out, but the playmaker inexplicably headed wide. Much as they had been in the early stages against Paraguay, when they came back from 2-0 down to draw 2-2, Qatar were under the cosh as Colombia spread the play intelligently.

Attack against defense

Juan Cuadrado tried his luck from 25 yards but goalkeeper Saad Al-Sheeb was alert to punch the ball away. Zapata, as he had during the last Serie A season, caused havoc in the Qatar defense with his size and strength but was off target with a pair of headers. At times it looked like a game of attack versus defense but Colombia were struggling to break down the massed ranks of burgundy jerseys. When Martinez did split open the defense with a through ball for Cuadrado, the Juventus winger's first touch was too heavy and Boualem Khouki darted across to clear the danger. Colombia thought they had a penalty early in the second half but VAR — after an interminable delay — overturned referee Alexis Herrera's handball award against Abdulaziz Hatem.

James found Martinez inside the area with a clever pass but the winger fired straight at Al-Sheeb. Qatar started to show greater ambition and Colombia's goalkeeper David Ospina was called upon to make low saves from Hatim and Akram Alif. Queiroz reacted by bringing on Falcao for Cuadrado and moments later James teed up Martinez again, but the Club America forward was denied by Al-Sheeb. Colombia kept creating chances but at times they simply pumped aimless crosses into the Qatar box. The breakthrough finally came four minutes from time as James dinked a chip with the outside of his left foot to the back post where Zapata rose highest to power home a header. "They said we couldn't play together with Falcao, but we showed that we could play with two strikers," said Zapata, who leapt above his strike partner to convert the winner. — AFP

Sports

Friday, June 21, 2019

The Italian Job: Juventus position is 'crowning moment' of Sarri's career

TURIN: Maurizio Sarri said his appointment as Juventus coach was "the crowning" moment of his 30-year managerial career as the former Chelsea manager was presented by the Serie A giants in Turin yesterday. The 60-year-old returns to Italy after just one turbulent season in the Premier League with Chelsea, having previously coached his hometown team Napoli for three seasons.

Juventus is the 20th team that Sarri has coached since the former banker took over at Stia, a team in the Italian eighth division back in 1990. "The offer of Juve, the most important team in Italy, is the crowning of a very long career, which for 80 percent of the time has been quite difficult," Sarri told a press conference at the Allianz Stadium in Turin. Sarri, decked out in a Juventus team suit and tie rather than his usual tracksuit, was asked if he would adapt to the Juventus style.

"I don't know what the Juventus style is," said the Neapolitan who once famously gave the middle finger to some Juventus fans. "Suit and tie or tracksuit? I have to talk to the club. I would prefer not to wear the suit and tie on the pitch. The important thing is that at my age, they don't send me out naked onto the pitch."

Despite his long coaching career Sarri only lifted his first trophy last month when he guided Chelsea to the Europa League trophy. "From an emotional point of view, it was a very long path through the lower divisions and then Serie A and then Premier League." It has been step after step in a gradual way, a very long process."

Chelsea was the only time Sarri has coached

outside of Italy but he failed to win over the English fans despite returning the club to the Champions League with a third-placed finish in the Premier League and winning the Europa League. "The Premier League was a great experience, but in the latter half (of the season), I felt professional and personal needs to return to Italy," he said. "I decided to come back to Italy because such an important club wanted me so strongly. I have never seen so much determination on the part of a club to hire a coach."

'Best coach for Juventus'

Sarri takes over from Massimiliano Allegri, who led Juventus to an eighth consecutive Scudetto title. "He was absolutely the first choice," said Juventus sporting director Fabio Paratici of Sarri. "We chose Maurizio because we felt he was the best coach for Juventus right now, just as Allegri was five years ago and (Antonio) Conte three years before that." "Sarri showed he can win in the Premier League and internationally, so he's the right man for the job.

Allegri paid the price for another Champions League failure despite Cristiano Ronaldo's 100-million-euro (\$115 million) signing. Sarri said he was relishing the chance to coach five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo. "I coached some very strong players, but training him will be yet another step forward," he said. "I'd like to help him break some new records."

The Champions League is the top target for Juventus who have not won the European title since 1996. "At European level we have this



BAKU: In this file photo taken on May 29, 2019 Chelsea's Italian head coach Maurizio Sarri (C) holds the trophy as he celebrates winning the UEFA Europa League final football match between Chelsea FC and Arsenal FC at the Baku Olympic Stadium. — AFP

dream, this target we have to pursue with great determination but also great difficulty," he said. "Juventus will start with the target of winning the Champions League but with the knowledge there are another eight or nine clubs that can win." The former Empoli coach said that he would try to prove his critics wrong once again.

"I arrive surrounded by skeptics, but then I

always am. I had the same at Empoli, Napoli and Chelsea. "In football, I know only one way of removing skepticism from the minds of people by winning convincingly. "I haven't won a lot, but I believe that having fun on the pitch doesn't stop you winning." You can't think that just because a team is having fun they are superficial and not determined." — AFP

FIFA's Samoura to oversee African football reforms

CAIRO: FIFA secretary general Fatma Samoura has been appointed general delegate for Africa for six months starting August 1 as part of ongoing reforms within African football's governing body. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) and its president Ahmad Ahmad have been in the spotlight after recent governance issues, while he was questioned as part of an inquiry into corruption, breach of trust and forgery in France earlier this month.

He was later released without charge and has dismissed the allegations as "false". Ahmad proposed the idea of seeking FIFA's expertise to help assess CAF's current situation and speed up reforms plans aimed at ensuring the organization operates with "transparency and efficiency". The notion was unanimously approved by CAF's executive committee, and Samoura and a group of experts will work in tandem with Ahmad and his team to cover a number of areas, in an agreement that can be renewed with the agreement of both parties.

These areas include overseeing operational management of CAF, ensuring the "efficient and professional organization of all CAF competitions", and supporting the growth and development of football in all African regions. Samoura will remain as secretary general of FIFA but will delegate her functions within the administration, according to a joint statement from FIFA and CAF.

African football's leading club competition was thrown into disarray in the run-up to the Cup of Nations after the announcement that its showpiece game will have to be replayed, with the Tunisian prime minister weighing in to call the handling of the affair a "farce". CAF said that the Champions League final between Tunisian giants Esperance and Wydad Casablanca of Morocco would be replayed at a neutral venue after the Cup of Nations, which runs from June 21 to July 19. — AFP

We are title favorites, says Egypt's coach before Cup opener

CAIRO: Africa Cup of Nations hosts Egypt are confident of defeating Zimbabwe today in the opening match of a tournament expanded to 24 teams and staged in mid-year for the first time. Egypt lie 51 places higher on the world rankings ahead of the Group A clash, top the title betting at 5/1 with Zimbabwe 150/1, and have won three of the four previous Cup of Nations they hosted.

"We are the favorites to win the 2019 Africa Cup," said 60-year-old coach Javier Aguirre, the first Mexican to guide a nation that has won the competition a record seven times. "Egypt are playing at home, can count on passionate support and have Mohamed Salah, the best footballer in Africa." Salah has returned home after another stellar season with Liverpool, which he completed by scoring the first goal in a 2-0 Champions League final triumph over Tottenham Hotspur.

His 22 English Premier League goals last season gave him share of the Golden Boot title with two fellow Africans, Senegalese Sadio Mane and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang of Gabon. Aguirre says fears that his talisman may be jaded after a long season of Premier League and Champions League football are unfounded. "Mohamed took a holiday after the Champions League final, did not play in our first warm-up match and only came on after half-time in the second," he countered. Egypt beat fellow qualifiers Tanzania and Guinea and what pleased Aguirre most was not the results, but the large number of scoring chances the Pharaohs created.

"We had about 20 chances to score against the Tanzanians

and almost as many against the Guineans. That is very encouraging." Aguirre also dismissed the view that Egypt rely too heavily on Salah, saying: "We have selected 23 footballers who are totally committed to the cause of winning the Cup of Nations. "It is impossible for one footballer to win a Cup of Nations on his own. Mohamed will receive tremendous support from his team-mates.

'Mentally and physically ready'

"All the players are mentally and physically ready and we look forward to beginning our campaign with a victory over Zimbabwe." The countries have met only once in a Cup of Nations with Egypt winning 2-1 in Tunisia 15 years ago and both teams were eliminated after the first round. Aguirre expects the Zimbabwe Warriors to be "a well organized team who will seek to score mainly through counterattacks and set pieces.

"We have studied videos of them and identified strengths and weaknesses. I do not believe they will take us by surprise." Zimbabwe coach and former captain Sunday Chidzambwa was keeping his thoughts to himself ahead of the tournament opener. But captain and forward Knowledge Musona, who plays in Belgium, stressed that they must not become obsessed by Salah, despite the huge threat he poses. "We must not just stop Salah, we must stop all the Egyptians. If we concentrate only on one, others will destroy us," he warned.

"My boys must be prepared to contest every loose ball, defend and attack in numbers, and take our scoring chances. "Against Egypt in Cairo we are unlikely to get many scoring chances, so clinical finishing is essential. "We are not here to talk — we are here to play football. We are in Egypt to achieve success and make every Zimbabwean proud of us. "While I would love to add to the three goals I scored in the qualifying competition, it does not matter who scores, as long as they are Zimbabwean." The Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda are the other teams in Group A and they meet Saturday at the same venue as the opening match. — AFP

BELO HORIZONTE: Argentina's Lionel Messi is pictured during the Copa America football tournament group match against Paraguay at the Mineirao Stadium. — AFP

Messi rescues Argentina as Paraguay pay penalty

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