

Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 17776

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Local

New prison



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Local newspapers recently published images showing the designs of the new central prison in Kuwait - apparently a 5-star hotel in terms of shape and space. Officials from the interior ministry said the new prison will be the best in the Middle East. I believe that modernization in terms of construction and space, whether by expanding prison cells and adding larger spaces for prisoners to perform sports, religious activities or work are desirable for two reasons.

First, the prison is supposed to be a place of rehabilitation and education to ensure that the criminal will not return to the criminal world again after their release. The second reason is that a prisoner is a human being who has rights that must be respected, and the idea of expanding and improving the place should commensurate with all requirements and needs of human rights.

But prison remains a spot where freedoms are curtailed for a crime that was committed against another human being and which harmed the society, so the issue of putting a person in prison as punishment is something that cannot be disputed. It is known that in Kuwait, the ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs is active in involving the prisoners in Quran workshops by hosting religious scholars to give sermons and hold cultural competitions, in addition to computer courses. The fact that the prison holds computer courses is a good thing, so that the prisoner learns something after the end of the prison term.

Also, learning a craft in jail is important in restructuring the personality of the prisoner. There is an annual exhibition of prisoners' products made of wood, plastic and metal. I think all these matters are in the interest of the prisoners.

But the question remains about what sometimes get published in the news about the situation inside the prison.

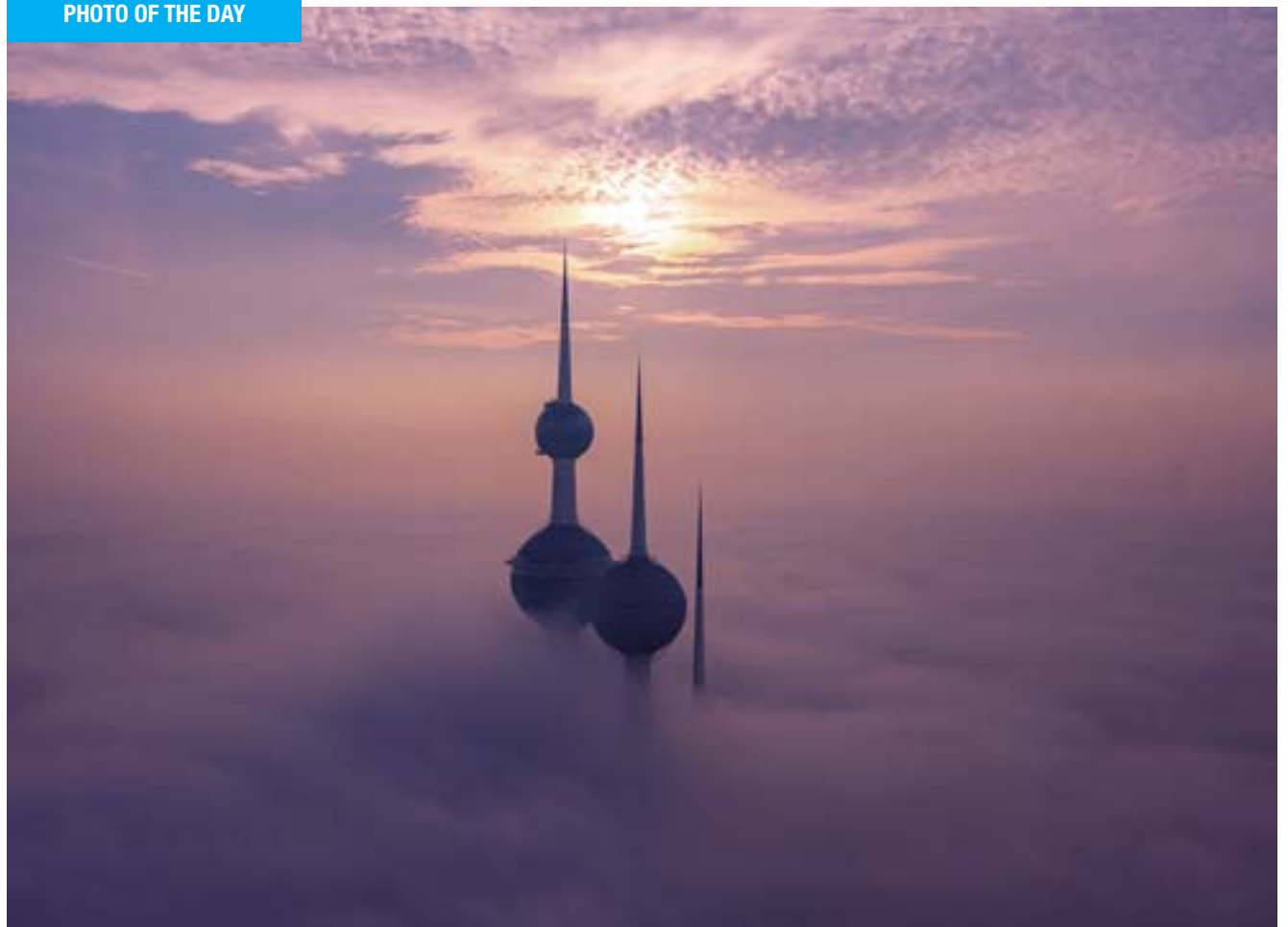
For example, the spread of drugs is worrying for the families of prisoners, especially those imprisoned for traffic or financial cases, especially young people in their twenties. Last year, local newspapers published important news about prison officials who found a secret hideout - a large underground hole in the central prison - containing large quantities of contraband. A large force was equipped as a first stage to evacuate the prison, and then dogs were used for six hours to discover the hideout.

The security force seized the largest amount of banned items, including over 1,056 mobile phones, narcotics, and four small drones suspected of being used to transport narcotics into and out of prison, and drilling tools. An extensive investigation was opened to find out how such a large quantity of contraband existed inside the prison. It was said that the value of seized items was estimated at KD 1.5 million.

I believe that prisons are a place of discipline and rehabilitation, not a place of harm. There are those who believe that prisoners should be allowed to own a cell phone, but how can the prison administration ensure that the phone will not be used wrongly - and lead to another crime. It is known that prisons in the world allow the use of a public telephone with specific conditions.

I think food quality, clothing and level of medical treatment must be at an appropriate level at the new prison and should be reviewed annually for a radical and integrated change. It is important that the interior ministry promotes the institution to be a global example with regards to the level of services provided to prisoners and respect for their needs, so that it would be easier for prisoners to integrate with their families and the community in the future. Prisoners - whether citizens or expatriates - have committed a punishable offense, but we must keep hope before them for a new start after their release.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



The beautiful and iconic Kuwait Towers surrounded by clouds. — Photo by Ramy Khair / KUNA

Death by delay



IN MY VIEW

By Nawara Fattahova

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Until when will the problem of waiting for luggage at Kuwait International Airport persist? Since last year, passengers arriving at Kuwait airport have to wait for long periods that sometimes reaches three hours during the busy summer travel season to collect their luggage. The airport has always been crowded, but passengers never waited for such a long time.

On complaining to the civil aviation, it said transferring luggage from the plane to the airport is the responsibility of a private company. But the private firm said that the customs department is the reason for the delay, as it has implemented a longer procedure for checking the luggage before it reaches the baggage carousel. On contacting the customs department, it said that the new inspection process is not delaying the arrival of luggage, as it's not manual. It explained that the luggage only passes through a machine on a belt, which does not cause any delay. The staff at the customs noted that other problems like a shortage of employees may be causing the delay.

Last year, the new Terminal 4 was launched and is currently handling all flights of Kuwait Airways except

the New York route. But transferring all these flights there didn't bring any relief to the old terminal. Even now, when it's not the high season yet, passengers are still suffering from delays to collect their luggage. After a recent flight, passengers had to wait for more than an hour for their luggage, although the plane was not completely full.

The fact is that everyone is pointing the blame at someone else but at the end of the day it's the passengers who suffer. We are all stuck waiting endlessly and I won't even discuss how bad it might be this coming summer. Something should be done and quick to set realistic time requirements for the delivery of luggage to traveling passengers. Inspections should be conducted and time limits set for all parties involved and they should be either required to meet these requirements or face fines.

The authorities in charge should do something to resolve this issue. This great inconvenience is spoiling the reputation of Kuwait's airport among tourists. For residents, it kills the happiness and satisfaction of the entire travel experience after returning to Kuwait. So please do something to fix this problem.

Kuwait Times

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Hello Spring

'Yellow flowers, butterflies and warmer temperatures as Kuwait enters its short spring'

Essa Ramadhan, a local meteorologist announced yesterday that winter in Kuwait is officially over and spring has begun. For weeks we've been treated to the beautiful blooms of the sparkling yellow Al-Nowair. Along with these bonny yellow flowers have come butterflies, ladybugs and other spring insects and warmer weather.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Photo Feature



Local





A true influencer



IN MY VIEW

by Nejouad Al-Yagout
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Dear influencer,

I don't want to hear how much you get paid to pose and advertise seasonal clothes and bags and shoes and products. I want to hear how much money you raised for refugees and orphans. I want to see a world that pays people for creativity, and where richness is not defined by how much one accumulates, but how much kindness, tolerance, compassion, coexistence, unity and love is garnered along the way.

I don't want you to pretend you don't have any flaws. Speak to the masses of your cellulite, your acne, your bloated belly, even while trying to get rid of them, instead of having all your worshippers look at themselves in the mirror and experience moments of angst and body dysmorphia when they compare themselves to a Photoshopped image.

I don't want to participate in events where I get to meet and greet you so you can teach me how to apply a lipstick that will enhance my pout or teach me how to use an eyelash curler. I want you, instead, to use your influence to meet and greet important people who can change laws that better the lives of the underprivileged or women at risk. Childhood sex trafficking and slavery are still prevalent, and you have the power to raise our awareness of these issues.

You must have heard of the noble initiative - Abolish Article 153 - oh influencer? Five iconic ladies are shuffling to have honor killings considered as a crime locally. Why are you not promoting them on your account, in between your posts about the latest ceramic curling iron or fashion-forward studded, gilded phone cover? Your influence could get the Abolishers more followers and raise the collective influence of the plight of women in our society, who may seem emancipated with respect to other

nations, but are actually shrouded in double-standard patriarchal seams.

I don't want you to fight with other influencers; I want you to fight for the rights of domestic helpers and religious minorities, and use your very, very (might I add very) powerful platform to influence others to do the same. I don't want to see photographs of your wedding - I want to see posts from you that celebrate a world where all lovers are given marital rights.

Why mention the hotels you stay at when you can teach us about other cultures while you continent-hop and remind us that we are the same no matter where we hail from? Why give us pictures of your poached eggs and smoked salmon when you can take a photograph of someone feeding a dog or buying a blanket for a homeless person?

You dictate fashion with the click of a keyboard, so why not make it trendy to provide services to our community, to promote the arts and culture scene, to read books, to research, to fill oneself with awe and appreciation, to help others, to be kind to people not out of pity but as fellow creatures on this journey of life, to speak out for equality, and transcend boundaries? You may say we could do this, but let's not pretend you're the one with the platform, not us. Use that divine power; use that privilege to catapult us higher. Oh, use it!

Dear influencer, you have legions of fans hanging on to your every word and deed. If you want to promote beauty and fashion, by all means, do so. We all want to look the best we can; and yes, even we go out of our way and above our budgets to enhance our appearance, just like you do, influencer. And we all appreciate having a sense of style, but not at the expense of our world.

No. There's a balance between looking better and making the world better. If you want to become rich and famous, that's fine too. We all want attention in our own way - we want to find a way to make a living without busting our butts in a nine-to-five cubicle; but again, not at the expense of our world. No. Please remember that your followers, ever-ready on autopilot, are ready and willing to emulate you in every way. How much you can do, how much!

I know a few influencers do promote goodness, but only after gaining millions of followers first, and by focus-

ing mainly on the superficial to keep the masses entertained. I know that it takes two (or in this case, millions) to tango. And I also know influencers are not the cause, but a symptom of our collective consciousness, so even while we point fingers, let us look into how we have perpetuated superficiality and then lean towards outgrowing our egos.

The fact that these influencers have so many followers in the first place is a sign of mankind's inclinations today. So in this letter, I am asking all of us to wake up so that we can show one another what truly matters on our planet - lipstick that lasts or a world that does? When have long eyelashes become more important than long lives? When has the quality of our skin superseded the quality of our lives?

I have hope in all of us, and I look eagerly towards those souls with few followers who work hard to raise the frequency, even while not being acknowledged. I'm a sucker for the people who are doing everything they can to enhance the vibrations on our planet by finding ways to better themselves and their communities. These are the true influencers - the ones that call us to inner beauty, which stands the test of time and doesn't require a regular Botox upkeep.

Before I sign out, influencer, I want to add that I'm tired of seeing an entire generation taking selfies rather than exploring the self. I'm tired of listening to people talk about the latest caftans and sequined veils when we should be talking about the underpaid women and children and ethnic minorities around the world who are exploited and mistreated, while in some cases, sewing the very clothes we flaunt. I'm tired of inhabiting a world where clothes and cars define us.

Gandhi tells us to be the change we want to see in the world. We need more influencers like him - noble, expansive and worthy of adulation. And even though one might think it is difficult to change in a world when most people are obsessed with the status quo, I say let's fast forward this phase of superficiality and usher in an age of ascension (or else let the two coexist), so that true influencers can take center stage. All it takes is awareness, empathy and camaraderie with one another for us to realize that love is the only positive influence and it doesn't cost a penny (or a fils, for that matter).



The fake lives of influencers and fashionistas

'Imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring.' —Marilyn Monroe



JUST KIDDIN', SERIOUSLY

By Sahar Moussa

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Nowadays, the word influencer is widely known and there are many Kuwaiti and Arab fashionistas and bloggers on social media. Back in the days when the Internet was not a dominant tool subsuming our brains and emotions under its power, we were influenced by artists, writers, philosophers, leaders and human rights activists. If the newbie fashionistas are called influencers, I wonder what Lady Diana, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Marie Curie, Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, Shakespeare, Khalil Gibran, Salvador Dali and Umm Kulthum would be called?!

Lady Diana's legacy of charm and charity endures, especially her campaigns for acceptance of AIDS victims and against landmines. She was able to unite people of all categories and backgrounds with her sudden death. Malcolm X, a courageous advocate for the rights of African Americans, has been called one of the greatest and most influential men in history, because he was able to start a revolution against injustice.

We cannot help but be inspired by the speeches Dr Martin Luther King. Till this day his 'I have a dream' speech sends chills down your spine and gives you goose bumps. Mahatma Gandhi was able to lead India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom by believing in nonviolent disobedience.

Marie Curie fought against discrimination and sex-

ism to win a Noble prize for discovering two elements - radium and polonium. This woman paved the way for all women to stand up and prove that they are able and capable of competing in various fields previously dominated by men.

Oprah Winfrey - this woman worked very hard to climb the ladder of success, and proved that by determination and believing in yourself, you can make it in spite of rejection. She inspires all of us with her generosity, kindness and determination, and isn't called the queen of all media for nothing. The depth, strength and the music of Maya Angelou's words, the American poet, memoirist and civil rights activist, gives you power to face life, cherish, respect and accept yourself as a woman, and embrace your race and religion.

As for William Shakespeare, he is considered one of the greatest (if not the penultimate) playwright and poet of the English language. He gave us another perspective about love and death in 'Romeo and Juliet' and left us very valuable treasures like 'Lady Macbeth', 'Antony and Cleopatra' and 'Hamlet', just to name a few.

The philosophical essayist, novelist, poet and artist Khalil Gibran wrote 'The Prophet', a book of poetic essays that achieved cult status among American youth. His opinion about life, death, children and giving and his poetic style in writing are still taught till this day, because of their depth and value.

If I want to speak about an artist that obliges us to think 'outside the box of the outside box', draw a horizontal world that is parallel to ours and add a futuristic dimensions to our brains, I would be talking about Salvador Dali. This great and innovative man stimulated our imagination and made us believe that the skies are really our limits.

Known for her extraordinary vocal ability and style, Umm Kulthum was one of the greatest and

most influential Arab singers of the 20th century. The Egyptian singer and songwriter was able with her voice, talent and lyrics to reach out to millions of people's heart and spread pure, ethnic and authentic music.

There are so many influential people that really affect and change our lives who deserve to be called "influencers". They inspire us to find our way and educate us to follow our dreams and free ourselves to be better people. I wish I can mention them all, to show them my gratitude.

I feel frustrated, sad and disappointed with some of the so-called influencers these days. Their only worth is due to their fake followers and the amount of likes, shares and subscriptions and the only thing that they offer is a complete shallowness with no depth or talent. We are being brainwashed and deceived by their fake lives that they are trying to show on social media.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not against a talented makeup artist that teaches women how to put makeup in order to feel better about themselves, I myself love to put makeup. I'm not against a good stylist or a fashionista that shows women how to dress in order to look elegant, stylish or sophisticated because personally I love fashion, but I'm against influencers that create an illusion of perfection and flawlessness that no one - not even them - can live up to in reality.

It is okay to go out without makeup because make-up doesn't define your beauty, it's okay to be heavy or have a few extra pounds around your belly or thighs, that doesn't make you less attractive. It's okay if you don't have a perfect skin, scars or a cute wrinkle around your eyes or mouth, these small marks narrate your story, where you came from or what you've been through. Influencers have a responsibility to show the imperfections that make us all human.

Local

British Royal Navy warship ends 6-month stay in ME

HMS Dragon seized 15 tons of illegal drugs



KUWAIT: The British Royal Navy warship 'HMS Dragon' docked at Shuaikh Port. — KUNA photos



British Ambassador Michael Davenport (left) and Commander Michael Carter Quinn.

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: HMS Dragon, a British Royal Navy warship stationed in the Middle East for the last six months, is on a goodwill visit to Kuwait. HMS Dragon is currently deployed in the region to support counter narcotics operations. In fact throughout her six months' stay, the royal navy has seized more than 15 tons of illegal drugs according to her captain Commander Michael Carter Quinn.

"We are in the region since September providing support to our allies. We are currently in Kuwait to celebrate our maritime friendship - this is the last leg of our visit before returning to the UK. We were part of combined forces

providing maritime security in the region with the navies of countries in the Middle East, now being headed by the Kuwaiti navy," said Quinn.

"In the last six months, we conducted six operations where we seized various types of drugs (mostly hashish and heroin) smuggled from the coast of Iran down to Yemen and Africa. The street value of the drugs could reach up to £250 million," he said. According to Quinn, the drug money, if not seized, can ultimately end up in the hands of terrorist and other criminal networks, which could affect the economy of the region and other parts of the world including the UK.

From Kuwait, HMS Dragon will be heading back home and will be replaced by another

frigate - HMS Monroe. "HMS Monroe will be deployed permanently in the region over the next three years. HMS Monroe is a bit smaller but with the same capabilities," Quinn added.

British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport thanked HMS Dragon's captain and his team for successfully completing its counter narcotics operations in the region. "This is yet another proof of how our bilateral relations are growing year after year and from strength to strength across all areas of cooperation. We are pleased to complete the mission with the successful seizures of narcotics. This is part of our commitment to the safety and security of the Middle Eastern region. We are grateful to Kuwait as the host for the two-day visit of HMS

Dragon," he said.

HMS Dragon is the fourth ship of the Type 45 or Daring-class air-defense destroyers built for the Royal Navy. She was launched in Nov 2008 and commissioned on April 20, 2012. Dragon's construction began at the then BAE Systems Naval Ships (later BAE Systems Surface Fleet Solutions) yard at Scotstoun on the River Clyde in Dec 2005, and by Dec 2007 the bow section was in place on the Govan slipway for mating with the other modules. On April 27, 2012, she made her maiden visit to Liverpool, staying for three days. She was opened to the public on April 28, with visitors able to see the inside of the ship, including the operations room.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Russian Minister of North Caucasus Affairs Sergey Chebotarev. — KUNA

Premier receives Russian Minister

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday, in the presence of Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, Russian Minister of North Caucasus Affairs Sergey Chebotarev and his ac-

companying delegation. The Russian group is participating in the Kuwaiti-Russian Joint Committee meeting for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation. Yesterday's meeting was also attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Russia Abdulaziz Al-Adwani. — KUNA

Kuwait Airways sends pilots to train in UK

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the United Kingdom in Kuwait held a farewell ceremony for pilots who will be sent to the UK by Kuwait Airways in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and the L3 Aviation Academy under the patronage of British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport. Davenport expressed his pleasure on sending the pilots to Britain to be trained at the best aviation academies, noting that sending those student pilots to the UK emphasizes the strength of the ties that bind Kuwait and the UK.

"The United Kingdom welcomes the training of student pilots, as there will be cooperation between Kuwait Airways and the L3 Aviation Academy over the next three years, so that 180 students will be flown to the UK to study aviation science," he said.

Assistant Chief Operating Officer Captain Abdul Halim Zaidan said Kuwait Airways is happy to deal with the best aviation academies of the aviation industry in the world - the L3 Aviation Academy - to teach Kuwait Airways pilots the latest aviation technology and information.

"Kuwait Airways is confident of this academy and will receive the largest batch of student pilots - consisting of 45 students - five of them at their own expense under the supervision of Kuwait Airways starting next week. They will be sent to Southampton in the UK in three groups - a batch of 14 students will be sent in three stages every three weeks. The academy has a good reputation in aviation training and all modern equipment and technology in training the pilots well, qualifying them and preparing them to be ready to join Kuwait Airways Company. As we work with the ministry of higher education, we thank them for this cooperation," Zaidan noted. Wafaa Hussain, scholarship director at the ministry of higher education, said the ministry signed a protocol with Kuwait Airways to send 180 pilots, whose expenses are fully covered. The new scholarship plan will provide the number of pilots and assistants Kuwait Airways needs over the next three years. She revealed 5,559 students are studying in the UK and more than 16,000 in the US.

Local

Labor law amendments expected to raise salaries, annual leave days

First 'pro-expat' law to be passed in parliament in nine years

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: As the National Assembly decided to pass the amendments to the private sector's labor law in its first reading in a unanimous vote along with the government's approval, this makes it probable that it will be passed during the sessions of March 19 and 20. Sources described the law as the first legislation to be issued by the National Assembly in favor of expats in nine years. It is expected to raise annual leave for 1.7 million expats working in the private sector to 40 days and increase the monthly salary and indemnity by 15 percent, according to specialized economic sources. This law is among the conciliatory legislations by the government and parliament to strengthen legislative gains despite fears expressed by financial parties that this law will raise the cost of labor in Kuwait and constitutes a burden for some companies.

Residency sticker

The interior ministry is coordinating with the foreign ministry to prepare the plan of implementing the decision of scrapping the residency sticker for expats and use the civil ID information instead, a security source said. The sources said coordination with the foreign ministry will be in case the civil ID is lost outside Kuwait - in the expat's country - because they will not be able to leave the country and will not be allowed

in Kuwait unless they have a civil ID, which will hinder the return of expats, especially teachers, doctors, nurses and others.

The sources said the solution will be to coordinate with the foreign embassy to inform Kuwaiti embassies abroad to receive expats who lose their civil IDs in their countries, provided that they produce a lost certificate from their country. Then the embassy will write to the Kuwaiti interior ministry to enquire about the expat's data and their residency, and when confirmed, they will be given an entry paper from the embassy with the required information.

Housewives' licenses

A security source at the traffic department said no driving licenses will be given to housewives except in eight cases. The sources said the exempted cases include homemakers who have children whose husbands are public prosecution members, advisors, experts, faculty members of universities and institutions, doctors, pharmacists and general managers and their aides, provided that their salaries are not less than KD 600. The source said traffic departments in the six governorates are not authorized to issue driving licenses to

Syrian homemakers, and only the assistant undersecretary for traffic affairs and his assistant for licensing affairs have the authority to make a decision. He said it is not true that engineers' wives can get licenses, adding that engineers are not among the exempted professions in the latest ministerial decision.

KD 110 million

Informed sources said the health ministry collected around KD 110 million from expats in health insurance last year, adding that the money was transferred to the ministry's account through the contracted company. Sources said KD 62.5 million was collected in cash, KD 41 million through electronic stamps from machines available at health

Expats paid KD 110 million in health insurance

centers in Fahaheel, Sabah, Farwaniya, Jahra and Jabriya, KD 107,600 through regular stamps and KD 192,000 through the K-Net. The sources said KD 5.6 million was collected from government bodies in which employees' residencies are renewed, at KD 50 per expat. They said the fee collection continues through the online service or insurance centers that work two shifts during the week, except for holidays.

670 teachers

The education ministry needs 670 teachers of both genders for the 2019-2020 school year to cover a shortage in nine specialties, especially with the opening of new schools. Informed sources said the required specialties are English, French, science, mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, geology and physical education. Educational sources said the ministry will consider those who apply locally, then it will decide on the number of foreign contracts before traveling to three countries - Palestine, Jordan and Tunisia. In case committees cannot get the required number of teachers, and when it is absolutely necessary, they will consider contracting teachers from Egypt.

Framework of coordination

Deputy Director General for Labor Affairs at the Public Authority for Manpower Hassan Al-Khader said that within the framework of coordination and cooperation with the commerce and industry ministry, a meeting was held on Monday, March 4, 2019 to discuss the mechanism of registering licenses related to the files of employers at the authority, besides other subjects. Khader said that the meeting ended with positive results with regards to the rules related to registering commercial licenses issued by the ministry, based on which files are opened.



KUWAIT: An accident was reported yesterday at Fahaheel Expressway, which disrupted traffic on the key road. No injuries were reported. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Ardiya man stabbed to death during fight

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A homicide investigation was opened in the death of a Kuwaiti man whose body was found in Ardiya yesterday. Police reported to the scene in response to an emergency call, and found the body had several stab wounds. Preliminary investigations indicate that the man was stabbed to

death during a fight.

Separately, police are searching for three persons who attacked a high school student and left him bleeding outside his school. The youngster told police that the group attacked him with knives and an axe as soon as he came out of the school, before fleeing. Nineteen stitches were required to close the gashes left across the boy's body.

States entitled to handle domestic issues by national rules: Kuwait

GENEVA: Kuwait has emphasized, during a session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), every State's right to deal with domestic issues according to national rules. The Kuwaiti stand was expressed by the State Permanent Representative to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim, addressing the council's 40th session. He was reacting to the annual report by the UN Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet. Commenting on a part that addressed conditions in Saudi Arabia, Ambassador Ghunaim said the Kingdom has made grand and qualitative leaps in the realm of human rights, particularly women's rights, despite challenges, thus it "deserves all praise and support on our part."

Kuwait affirms communities' right to choosing adequate values, principles and approaches for protecting and boosting human rights, calls upon the council to respect principles of neutrality, dialogue and boosting constructive international cooperation that all warrant averting double standards, cherry picking, attempts to politicize and complicate the council's

tasks. The world is currently at a "decisive phase," preceding the date set by the international community to attain sustainable development goals; such objectives essentially imply human rights that are necessary for attaining security, peace and prosperity for all mankind. Kuwait is convinced the international community's success in this regard basically hinges on capacities of this community to establish an effective international partnership according to common responsibility to deal with the human rights.

The Kuwaiti Constitution stipulates a long list of economic, political, civil and social rights for citizens, namely the right to education, work, possession of private property, freedom of belief, opinion, forming societies and union on bases of guarantees by the laws, in addition to the freedoms of the press and publishing. Many of the constitutional articles are in harmony with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, namely equality, Ambassador Ghunaim continued. Kuwait has turned into a minaret for democracy and freedoms in the Gulf region and has proven, day after another, that it has turned out to be an open country, respecting all types of rights.

Establishment of the National Diwan for Human Rights as a national and independent authority, according to Law 67/2015, is a significant achievement in the realm of human rights. This council, the first kind of which was formed in September, will examine means of boosting human rights in relevant existing legislations in addition to promoting the culture of human rights. Kuwait is alarmed at deterioration of "the humanitarian status" in some parts of the region (the Middle East) where armed conflicts have been raging, breaching basic rights of some sisterly peoples. — KUNA



Death and despair in last IS Syrian bastion

Indian lawmakers get off on wrong foot in 'shoe brawl'

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CARACAS: German ambassador to Venezuela Daniel Kriener speaks to journalists after attending a meeting with Venezuela's opposition leader and self-proclaimed acting president Juan Guaidó (left), at the National Assembly in Caracas.— AFP

Venezuela expels German ambassador

Envoy accused of backing Guaidó; US tightens sanctions

CARACAS: Venezuela has expelled Germany's ambassador, hitting out at international support for opposition leader Juan Guaidó as the US stepped up sanctions in a bid to force out his rival President Nicolas Maduro. Separately, an American journalist was detained by Venezuelan security services for some 12 hours and due to be deported, in an incident condemned by advocacy groups as an attack on free speech. The foreign ministry gave German envoy Daniel Kriener 48 hours to leave for "interference" in Venezuela's internal affairs. He had greeted Guaidó at Caracas airport on his return to the country on Monday.

Guaidó said Kriener's expulsion will be seen "as a threat to the free world." Kriener was among more than a dozen foreign representatives to welcome the National Assembly leader - recognized as interim president by more than 50 countries - but so far the only one deemed "persona non grata." Kriener had helped to try to bring humanitarian aid to the country, Guaidó said in a speech to opposition lawmakers, adding: "It seems that the Maduro regime does

not forgive anyone who wants to help Venezuela."

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that kicking Kriener out only "aggravates the situation." Caracas "is sending a message to the international community that such frontal support would have consequences, but it also carries a risk," said Venezuelan analyst Mariano de Alba. Meanwhile, journalist Cody Weddle, who worked in Venezuela for several years as a correspondent for a variety of US media, "has been released after being detained by Venezuelan authorities," Miami's WPLG Local 10 News, which he reported for, said on Twitter.

According to Venezuela's National Union of Press Workers he was picked up at 8:00 am, his work equipment was confiscated, and he was held for over 12 hours before finally being re-

leased and sent to Simon Bolivar International Airport to be deported. The union said it had been in contact with Weddle and he is fine. He has lived in Venezuela since 2014 and worked as a stringer for ABC News, the CBC of Canada, the Miami Herald and The Telegraph in Britain. Weddle is to be deported on Thursday, the union said. "A journalist who has been in Venezuela for five

Washington revokes visas of 77 people linked to Maduro



years, deported for reporting the news," the guild said. Washington continued to tighten the screws on its campaign of sanctions to force Maduro from power, revoking the visas of 77 people linked to the regime, including officials and their families. "We will continue to hold all of the Maduro regime accountable until democracy and libertad (liberty) are fully restored," US Vice President Mike Pence said in a speech.

The move brings to more than 250 the num-

ber of Venezuelans targeted by US visa bans, a State Department official told AFP. National Security Advisor John Bolton said the US also is putting foreign financial institutions on notice that they will face sanctions if they facilitate "illegitimate transactions that benefit Nicolas Maduro and his corrupt network." The US is already trying to cripple Maduro's access to finances via sanctions on state oil company PDVSA and handing control to Guaidó of Venezuelan bank accounts in the United States.

However, UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said sanctions have worsened Venezuela's crippling economic and political crisis, which has forced 2.7 million people to flee since 2015. "Venezuela clearly illustrates the way violations of civil and political rights - including failure to uphold fundamental freedoms, and the independence of key institutions - can accentuate a decline of economic and social rights," said Bachelet, a former president of Chile. "This situation has been exacerbated by sanctions," Bachelet said in her annual report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva.—AFP

International

Driven to 'help my women,' a midwife in limbo in S Sudan

South Sudan has one of the world's worst rates of maternal mortality

JUBA: In a small classroom in Juba, male and female students listen attentively as Grace Losio launches into a lesson on what it takes to be a midwife. Like Losio, many of the students have come here with a passion. They are driven by memories of women in their villages bleeding helplessly to death, or babies dying from avoidable complications, with no healthcare workers for miles around.

But despite her enthusiasm, Losio, 50, knows that with its three classrooms and crammed makeshift dormitories, the Kajo-Keji Health Science Institute where she is principal is a shadow of its former self. For one, it is now several hours away from where it is meant to be, in the southern town of Kajo-Keji near the Ugandan border. When fighting erupted in Kajo-Keji in 2017, and tens of thousands of people poured over the border into Uganda, Losio and her students tried to wait it out. But the constant gunfire and their increased isolation became too much to bear.

So with about 20 teaching staff and 100 students they fled to Moyo in northern Uganda where they stayed for a month. They then relocated to South Sudan, in Juba—more than 300 kilometers (about 190 miles) by road from Kajo-Keji, with the support of the International Medical Corps (IMC). “We were in a very hard situation. When we arrived in Moyo they (the students) slept without food... moving with a number of people is not easy,” Losio told AFP.

In 2018, 36 of those students graduated as

midwives, and new ones have since joined from across the country. But Losio prays for the day she can return home and serve the women of her community. South Sudan has one of the world's worst rates of maternal mortality, with 780 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to UN figures. Even so, this grim figure is under a third of what it was a decade ago, thanks to a drive to train more midwives. Around 900 have now registered, according to health ministry statistics.

South Sudan's population was last officially estimated at about 12 million, and UN figures show war has scattered millions of them. More than five years of conflict has left many women on their own in childbirth. “In my village, most of the ladies you find they deliver at home because we don't have trained health personnel like midwives. You find most of them losing their kids and even they lose their lives,” said Augustino John Kuluel, 28, one of Losio's male students from a village in central Gok State.

South Sudan is famously nicknamed the world's youngest nation, although it is also one of the most tragic, for it plunged into civil war just two years after gaining independence from Sudan in 2011. The country is the size of France but has only an estimated 200 kilometres (120 miles) of paved roads, with the majority of the population living in traditional villages or as nomadic cattle herders. Losio, like much of the population, has known a life mainly marked by



JUBA: Grace Losio, 50, who teaches a midwifery class at the Kajo Keji Health Sciences Institute, speaks during an interview in Juba. — AFP

war. She was carried as a baby into a Ugandan refugee camp by her mother after her father was killed and their house burned down as war raged between Khartoum and southern rebels agitating for greater autonomy. “When I was a child I admired the nurse's uniform. Nurses used

to come and take care of patients within the refugee camp,” she recalled. Losio said she decided to follow in their footsteps because “I needed to help my women.” After independence, an NGO-backed initiative to train midwives took off across the country.—AFP

After IS, Mosul tackles another attack: Bacteria

MOSUL: Explosives left behind by the Islamic State group in Iraq's Mosul took 12-year-old Abdallah's left leg, but another kind of terror may cost him his arm: antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Doctors around the globe are sounding the alarm over bacterial infections immune to modern medicine, but their prevalence in Mosul—where thousands of patients are struggling to recover from severe war wounds—can be even more dangerous.

“I have a bacteria-bacteria are bad,” said Abdallah Ali Ibrahim matter-of-factly, leaning against the crutches that support his right and only leg. “Whenever I go outside, I have to put on a gown and gloves, and sterilise my hands,” he adds from his isolation room at a Doctors Without Borders (MSF) hospital in Iraq's Mosul. The city was controlled by jihadists for three years until Iraqi forces backed by an international coalition ousted IS in 2017. It emerged ravaged, its streets littered with unexploded mines, one of which detonated in August 2018 as Abdallah and his older brother walked to the market.

The explosion killed Abdallah's brother and

sheared off the younger Iraqi boy's left leg and most of his left arm. But after five surgeries and endless consultations in three of Mosul's hospitals, Abdallah's health kept deteriorating. “My son wasn't responding to medication. Whatever they would give him, his body wouldn't react,” his father recalled. “The kid was collapsing,” the 49-year-old told AFP. It wasn't until January that Abdallah was referred to MSF's special facility in eastern Mosul, where doctors diagnosed him with a bacterial infection resistant to antibiotics.

A deadly cocktail

The World Health Organization says antibiotic resistance constitutes one of the biggest threats to global health, with illnesses like pneumonia and tuberculosis evolving into forms harder to treat with normal medication. In the Middle East, antibiotics are easily available over-the-counter and therefore over-used, allowing bacteria to develop a tolerance.

Zoom in on Mosul and the problem is even more acute. “Conflicts play a huge role in this: we saw antibiotic resistance evolve and spread here,” said doctor Zakaria al-Bakri, the medical supervisor at MSF's facility. He described a deadly cocktail: decades of unregulated antibiotics use among Iraqis, poor health generally across Mosul's population during IS rule, war wounds from months of fighting, polluted water sources, and a healthcare system in ruins. The number of hospital beds in Mosul province dropped from 6,000 before the jihadist takeover to 1,000 by the time IS had been driven from the city.—AFP

Fleeing regime fire, Syrians desert the northwestern town

KHAN SHEIKHUN: During a lull in regime bombardment, Abu Abdu al-Sarmani drove a pick-up hurtling into his wrecked hometown in Syria's Idlib province to grab his family's belongings a day after they fled. The northwestern town of Khan Sheikhun is supposed to be protected by an internationally brokered ceasefire deal, but increased shelling and air strikes by regime forces last month have left its streets near empty. “There was a truce and everything quietened down, and then suddenly the bombardment picked up again and we could no longer stay,” Sarmani said, wearing a maroon bomber jacket.

“The bombardment was so close... I spent two hours hiding in the bathroom,” the 36-year-old said, describing the events that pushed his family to flee last week. Khan Sheikhun lies in the Idlib region, the last major bastion of opposition President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. In September, rebel backer Turkey and regime ally Russia inked a deal to set up a buffer zone around the region, part of which runs just south of Khan Sheikhun.

Russia halted an imminent regime

offensive many feared could lead to the Syrian conflict's worst bloodbath yet, in exchange for which Turkey was to remove jihadists from the edges of the region. The agreement, which Moscow stressed at the time was temporary, prevented the offensive but jihadists have increased their footprint inside Idlib and Russia is losing patience. Clashes and violations of the demilitarized zone have spiked in recent weeks and regime fire on Khan Sheikhun has led thousands to escape.

'No work, no hospitals'

Since the start of February, more than 7,000 women, children and men have fled the town, mostly to other parts of Idlib, the United Nations says. Sarmani said he, his wife and three daughters escaped Khan Sheikhun last week because of the bombardment, but also because the town has become unlivable. “There's no work, no more people about, no hospitals, no doctors, no pharmacies, no basic infrastructure for living,” said the accountant, whose family has relocated to Sarmada, 100 kilometres (62 miles) north.—AFP

International

Algerians eager for 'change' but wary of new Arab Spring

Winds of freedom blowing over Algiers revive Tunisia memories

TUNIS: Massive protests that have gripped Algeria might resemble another Arab Spring but those seeking democratic change are mindful of history and want to avoid more upheaval, analysts say. The winds of freedom that are blowing over Algiers have revived memories of January 14, 2011 in Tunisia, when thousands marched on the Tunisian capital and forced president Zine el Abidine Ben Ali to flee. After a rally of solidarity with the protests in Algeria was stopped by police in Tunis, civil society groups demanded Algerians be allowed "to finally establish a democratic regime supported by the rule of law". But Algeria, which was barely touched by the Arab Spring in 2011, has already experienced uprisings. "Algeria in some ways already went through its spring 15 years before everyone else," said Tunisian political scientist Hamza Meddeb. After bloody riots in October 1988, a new constitution opened the way for a multi-party political system. "The experience of 1988, with a popular uprising that pushed the regime to a democratic opening leading to an Islamist victory followed by a (military) coup, echoes the Egyptian experience of 2011-2013," said Meddeb.

The trauma of the devastating 1992-2002 civil war in Algeria that followed has helped to limit the domino effect of the Arab Spring in the country in 2011. But now "a brick wall of fear has fallen", said Algerian political scientist Cherif Dris. "Algerians have thrown themselves back into the political and public spheres," he told AFP, as students took to the streets of Algiers where protests had been banned since 2001.

The demonstrations ahead of April elections are calling for a more open democracy, taking aim

at ageing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term despite chronic health problems. "We hoped that, like the Egyptians and Tunisians, those who govern us... would sacrifice their 'leader' to save a nation... rather than destroy it," Algerian journalist Ghania Mouffok wrote this week. Since the uprisings that swept away regimes previously considered irremovable, only Tunisia has stayed on the path of democratization, while some countries have descended into chaos.

The Algerian protesters are well aware of this. "Algeria is not Syria!" and "peaceful, peaceful," they have chanted in response to leaders who have raised the spectre of Syria in an effort to discourage them. "This restraint in enthusiasm is remarkable," historian Malika Rahal wrote in a blog. "These hopes, which are possible and reasonable yet contained in a bid to avoid the dangers of the past, reflect their (good grasp) of experience from history," she said.

For Meddeb, the main similarity to the uprisings in Libya, Syria, Yemen or Egypt is the rediscovery of "the people as a force for change" to finally stand up to authoritarianism. But Dris said Algeria's rulers are not as harsh as other Arab autocrats have been. "It is hybrid authoritarianism which marginalizes the opposition without stifling it or repressing it systematically," he said. The situation is heading towards a "groundswell" that has yet to chart its course, falling between fears of violence and a desire for change.

"Everyone wants the movement to keep its peaceful nature," he said. "It remains to be seen if this continues and in what form."

The restrained approach of the Algerian police



ALGIERS: Algerian police disperse a protest by lawyers and journalists against their ailing president's bid for a fifth term in power yesterday. — AFP

in dealing with the protesters contrasts with repression seen elsewhere. "It's a sign that the ruling alliance is cracking," said Meddeb. Michael Ayari, an analyst at the International Crisis Group, said it was difficult to predict what would happen next. Algerians, he said, were "torn by the

memory of their failed democratic spring" of 1988-1991 and "their hopes for freedom". To avoid violence, he said the movement for change would have to "respect the constitutional order while at the same time remaining substantial, gradual and negotiated".—AFP

Iran, France to swap ambassadors after strained ties

TEHRAN: Iran and France are set to exchange ambassadors, officials said yesterday, after months of tensions including over an alleged Iranian plot to bomb an opposition rally near Paris. Bahram Ghasemi, a former envoy to Spain and Italy and current spokesman of the foreign ministry, has been appointed as Iran's new ambassador to France, an official source in Tehran said.

In Paris, the Official Gazette on Wednesday said that Philippe Thiebaud, a former envoy to Pakistan who once represented France at the UN atomic watchdog, had been appointed as ambassador to the Islamic republic of Iran. Ghasemi and Thiebaud will fill posts that had been vacant for more than six months after a series of diplomatic fallout between France and Iran broke out last year. The previous French ambassador left Iran at the end of his mandate in August while Tehran's envoy left Paris last summer before finishing his term. No official reason was given for his abrupt departure.

In June, France accused a branch of Iran's intelli-

gence ministry of attempting to bomb a meeting of the People's Mujahedin, an Iranian opposition group, near Paris. Tehran vehemently denied the accusations and in return slammed France for hosting the group which it calls a "terrorist cult of hypocrites". Relations between France and Iran have also been strained over demands by Paris that Iran limits its ballistic missiles program—which Tehran says is purely defensive.

Iran reined in most of its nuclear program under a landmark 2015 deal with major powers—Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States—that lifted sanctions on the Iran. In May the United States withdrew from the deal and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran. France and the other European partners to the deal, have been trying to salvage the nuclear accord and set up a payment mechanism to maintain trade and business ties with Iran that would circumvent the US sanctions.

But Tehran has accused them of dragging their feet, it has also criticized France for selling advanced warplanes and other weapons to its regional rivals Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. News that Iran and France will exchange ambassadors came a day after the ultraconservative Iranian newspaper Kayhan called for the expulsion of French diplomats from the country. Kayhan claimed that Paris had expelled an Iranian diplomat last autumn. Neither the Iranian nor the French foreign ministries have denied or confirmed the expulsion.—AFP

Bahrain refugee footballer to become Australia citizen

MELBOURNE: A refugee footballer who spent over two months in Bangkok detention under threat of extradition to his native Bahrain will soon become an Australian citizen, he told local media yesterday. Hakeem al-Araibi said he will formally become an Australian at a ceremony in Melbourne on Tuesday, after completing a citizenship test. "I do the test, I pass the test, I am 90 percent a citizen. One more appointment, I will be a citizen," 25-year-old Araibi told The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald newspapers.

"The ceremony (is) next week, because I passed the test." Araibi's return to Melbourne last month ended a tense diplomatic standoff between Thailand, Australia and authorities in Bahrain—where he is accused of offences linked to 2011

Arab Spring pro-democracy protests. His detention by Thai authorities while on honeymoon had sparked worldwide outcry and intense lobbying from sports stars and the Australian government, which had granted him asylum.

Araibi has since resumed training with his second-tier club Pascoe Vale and has been outspoken out against rights abuses in Bahrain, where he claims he is still targeted for political reasons. Last week, writing in The Guardian newspaper, he called on Formula One fans to boycott this year's Grand Prix in Bahrain, claiming that authoritarian states were using sports events to raise their profile. Prime Minister Scott Morrison had told Araibi on his return from detention that his citizenship was not "too far away".—AFP

Confronting sexual violence in a conservative Mauritania

Feminists in Mauritania fighting an uphill battle

NOUAKCHOTT: Feminists in Mauritania are fighting an uphill battle to see tougher penalties for sexual violence and discrimination in a conservative state where criminal law is derived from Sharia. "Few survivors of sexual assault dare to speak out in Mauritania," Human Rights Watch said in a report last September. It blasted "a dysfunctional system that discourages victims from pressing charges (and) can lead to re-traumatization or punishment." Women's groups have helped to draft legislation to combat gender-based violence, calling for stiffer penalties for rape, criminalization of sexual harassment and the creation of specific courts to handle sexual violence.

But the bill has been twice rejected by parliament, despite efforts to craft text which is within the confines of Sharia law - for example, extramarital sex would remain a crime. Lawmakers objected to provisions allowing women to travel without their husbands' permission, and permitting victim support groups to file civil suits. Spearheading the struggle for change is the Association of Women Heads of Family (AFCF), whose president Aminetou El Moctar told AFP: "We need this law, because we know violence against women is soaring" - although statistics on the scourge are seriously lacking.

At AFCF's offices, Zahra (not her real name), related how a neighbor snatched her five-year-old daughter from her home while she was sleeping, and then raped the girl. Because of the girl's young

age and the fact that the rapist was a serial paedophile, he was quickly convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison. But AFCF says that in Mauritania, convicted rapists rarely serve out their sentences. "He will probably do a year at most," said Mariem, a case worker. "After that he'll be able to pay bail and get out on parole. Then, when there's a general amnesty, he'll benefit from it."

That is why specific legislation is needed, women's rights activists argue. They hold periodic sit-ins at parliament to demand passage of the law, noting that it was drafted by civil society, Islamic scholars and jurists and stayed within the bounds of Sharia law. MPs from both the ruling party and the opposition voted down the bill in January 2017.

In December 2018, the draft did not even proceed past the parliament's Islamic Orientation Commission, which vets proposed law for its conformity with Sharia. "We rejected this law because it was not aligned with Sharia and our cultural specificities," said Zeinabou Taghi, an MP of the opposition Islamist party Tawassoul. The penalties "appear to interfere with private life," she said. She objected to punishing a man for forbidding his wife to wear figure-revealing clothes, or for forbidding his daughter to live on her own with no husband.

For her part, opposition MP Nana Mint Cheikhna of the Rally for Democratic Forces (RFD) said she backed the bill, despite reservations about vague text. "Women obviously need protection... in a society where they are considered minors, both in peo-



NOUAKCHOTT: A picture shows the feet of the daughter of Zahra (not her real name) in the office of the president of the Association of Women Heads of Family (AFCF). Zahra related how a neighbor snatched her five-year-old daughter from her home while she was sleeping, and then raped the girl. —AFP

ple's minds and in practice," she said. In September, HRW had praised the bill as a "step in the right direction" but said it "falls short of international standards in several ways." The draft bill "fails to

criminalize other forms of sexual assault" besides rape, it said, adding that it still criminalized consensual extra-marital sex and allowed the law criminalizing abortion to remain on the books.—AFP



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International

Death and despair in the last Islamic State's Syrian bastion

Troops pound Baghouz as thousands flee

NEAR BAGHOUZ: Torched tents, a rain of bullets, the thunderous whoosh of warplanes muffling the call to prayer: survivors say life inside the Islamic State group's dying "caliphate" was a bleak catalogue of despair. The crackle and thud of gunfire and shelling filled the air as plumes of thick black smoke rose over the bombed-out village of Baghouz, the last sliver of territory still under IS control. "The last days were horrible," said Sana, a 47-year-old Finnish woman among the thousands who fled the bastion on Tuesday. "Bombing, shooting, burning all the tents... you would wake up and everything was destroyed."

More than 7,000 people, mostly women and children, have fled the shrinking pocket over the past two days, as US-backed forces press ahead with an offensive to crush holdout jihadists. The operation to smash the last remnant of the "caliphate" that IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed in 2014 resumed Friday after a long humanitarian pause. Veiled from head to toe, Sana mixed milk powder with water to feed her children.

The mother of four said she came to Syria with her Moroccan husband four years ago for the sake of Islam. "In the beginning yes, everything was normal," she said, a narrow slit in her veil revealing honey-colored eyes. "Without bombings, every-

thing was nice, we were happy," she told AFP. She has since lost her husband to a car accident and has followed jihadists across Syria's east and northeast, not settling in one place for longer than 16 months. She said she wished she could reverse her decision to join IS. "But I can't change history. I can't change my past, that is my destiny now."

'I lost everything'

Rudimentary tents and a small cluster of battered buildings, nestled in a palm-lined bend of the Euphrates, are all that remains of the IS proto-state. Its last survivors seek shelter in underground tunnels and inside tents and cars to hide from the shelling. "We dig tunnels underground, and we cover them with blankets, that's the tents," said Abu Maryam, a 28-year-old Syrian man from the coastal province of Tartus. "We lived... on top of each other because there were so many people."

He said he lost his wife and two children during shelling on Baghouz only days ago. "They burned and I lost everything," he said. "I just want to leave and rest a bit." Jihadists allowed women, children and the wounded to quit the bombed-out bastion in recent weeks, but it has prevented men of fighting age from fleeing, according to survivors. But jihadists are now allowing men to leave as death

and destruction take hold. Fatima Abdul Jasem said conditions inside the jihadist encampment were "catastrophic". But the Iraqi woman waited until jihadists released her 20-year-old son before escaping, with him and her two daughters. "Men under 40 who wanted to go out were imprisoned in a guarded tent," she said. "But



NEAR BAGHOUZ: Civilians evacuated from the Islamic State (IS) group's embattled holdout of Baghouz wait for bread and water at a screening area held by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in the eastern Syrian province of Deir Ezzor. — AFP

only two days ago they let them go". Jihadists themselves are among those who have left. Some 400 IS fighters were captured on Tuesday night as they attempted to slip out of Baghouz. The US-backed Syrian Democratic forces said the escape was organized by a network that had planned to smuggle them to remote hideouts. — AFP

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Fear reigns in the heart of separatist Cameroon region

BUEA: In the capital of Cameroon's Southwest Region, people drily say the streets are so dangerous that even the dogs are too scared to go outside. The city has been stalked by violence for 18 months, after English-speaking separatists declared an independent state and took up arms against the French-speaking authorities. In Buea, barely a day goes by without the "Amba Boys" attacking police stations, state-run enterprises and public buildings—anything that is a recognizable symbol of the state. Gunfire is heard frequently, despite army patrols introduced as part of a wide-ranging crackdown, and kidnapping is rampant.

Last month, around 15 rebels entered the city, firing into the air and burning cars. After they left, people found a decapitated head left on the pavement. The victim has so far not been identified. A disturbing video being shared on social media shows a woman in her 30s being disfigured by separatists who accuse her of being an informant for the army. On Tuesday, the EU issued a statement warning about Cameroon's political and security situation, pointing especially to the two restive anglophone regions, where there were "persistent violence and violations of human rights".

Fear

One civil servant, who asked not to be identified, told AFP he had been living in his office for five months out of fear of being attacked. "I spend the night at the office to avoid the trip home," he said. "Informants could see that I was disobey-

ing the Amba Boys' ban on working for the government." Nearby, his camp bed was folded in one corner, just beside his suitcase. Two jackets were hung up nearby while the remains of the previous day's meal sat on a hotplate.

The town, once known as a peaceful haven nestled at the foot of Mount Cameroon, has been transformed by the conflict. "Buea is suffering," one local radio presenter recently lamented on air. Some businesses say they are struggling to survive. Fearing reprisals, they do not dare defy the shutdowns regularly declared by the rebels. The cost of living is mounting. One woman selling mangoes at a crossroads for 1,000 francs (about 1.8 euros, \$2) apiece said the price of the fruit was rising "because there are few people to go and harvest them."

Exodus

The authorities in the Cameroonian capital Yaounde have responded to the rebellion by stepping up the security presence in the region. Troops and rebels alike have been accused of targeting civilians. At least 500 civilians and more than 200 members of the security forces have died in clashes, attacks and a government crackdown, the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank says. At least 437,000 people have fled the two regions, according to UN estimates, with another 32,000 fleeing across the border to Nigeria.

Many people in Buea have fled to the port of Limbe, around 30 kilometers (19 miles) away. The road between the two towns is littered with the burnt-out remains of cars. As night falls on Down Beach, the view over the bay comes with an incessant roar of armored vehicles carrying troops. In the local schools, teachers have got used to pupils turning up wearing uniforms from other establishments. "They come from nearby villages," said a teacher at one secondary school. "We put up with it." — AFP

Saudi sisters stranded in Hong Kong granted extended stay

HONG KONG: Two Saudi sisters marooned in Hong Kong after fleeing their family have been granted an extended stay in the city until next month, their law firm said yesterday, as they urgently seek sanctuary in a third country. The siblings are the latest example of Saudi women escaping the ultra-conservative kingdom only to find themselves stranded in foreign cities and making public appeals for their safety. The young women, aged 20 and 18, said they made a break from an abusive family during a holiday in Sri Lanka last September, with the intention of heading for Australia.

But they only made it as far as Hong Kong. The two women—who use the aliases Reem and Rawan—said they were intercepted at the airport by Saudi consular officials and their air tickets cancelled. The pair, who entered Hong Kong as visitors, also had their passports revoked, leaving them stranded in the southern Chinese city. Their stay was due to expire on the last day of February, their lawyer Michael Vidler had previously said. As that deadline loomed they issued a fresh appeal last week asking authorities to allow them to remain while they seek emergency rescue visas to another country.

In a statement Thursday, Vidler & Co Solicitors said the immigration department confirmed the pair would be "further tolerated" until April 8 but added "the Director of Immigration now asserts that despite being tolerated, the sisters are liable to prosecution and removal as overstayers". Reem and Rawan said they are "in constant fear of being found by the Saudi authorities and our family and forced to return to Saudi Arabia," in a statement provided by the law firm. — AFP

International

Indian govt in new dogfight over French fighter jet deal

Opposition calls for a corruption probe

NEW DELHI: India's opposition yesterday called for a corruption probe into a multi-billion-dollar fighter jet deal, raising pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi as government lawyers threatened a leading newspaper with legal action for revealing details. New Delhi agreed in 2016 to purchase 36 Rafale jets from France but the deal has been embroiled in misconduct allegations, which resurfaced in the wake of air battles last month with arch-rival Pakistan that raised questions about the capacity of the Indian Air Force.

India and Pakistan both struck each other's territory during the skirmishes. Islamabad said it had shot down two Indian fighters, and New Delhi - while confirming the loss of one of its planes - claimed it had shot down a Pakistani jet. Modi said this week that the result of the brief aerial clash with Pakistan would have been "better" if India had Rafales while accusing the opposition of hampering the deal he signed with Paris at an estimated cost of \$9.4 billion. During a Supreme Court hearing late Wednesday, The Hindu newspaper - which ran a series of reports on the deal - was warned it faces charges under the Official Secrets Act over defense ministry doc-

uments it cited in its coverage.

Attorney General KK Venugopal said the files - which indicated the defense ministry was angry because Modi's office had carried out rival negotiations for the Rafales - had been "stolen". "The government claims that the documents were stolen. Doesn't that mean the documents are authentic?" said Rahul Gandhi, head of the opposition Congress party which has led a longstanding onslaught against the deal. He added: "The PM's name clearly figures in the documents, saying the prime minister's office is carrying out parallel negotiations. Let's have an inquiry into that as well."

A newspaper threatened for revealing details



'No force on earth' French company Dassault initially won a contract negotiated under a Congress-led

government in 2012 to supply 126 jets to India, with 18 built in France and the rest in India by state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). But during a visit to France in 2015, Modi scrapped the deal, replacing it with an order for 36 jets - all to be built in France.

The new agreement, formally signed in 2016, named Reliance group, a conglomerate owned by billionaire Anil Ambani, as Dassault's local partner. Ambani is reported to be close to the



AHMEDABAD: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the inauguration of the 'Annapurnadham', a Panch Tatva temple, in Adalaj, some 30 kms from Ahmedabad. —AFP

governing party and Reliance had little experience in the aviation sector. The government has strongly denied any misconduct in its renegotiation of the deal and accuses Congress of undermining national security to win votes. The Hindu published details which indicated the price of the jets had risen because normal procedures were bypassed.

India's attorney-general said an investigation is under way into the newspaper, which has stated it will not reveal where its informa-

tion came from. The Hindu group chairman N. Ram said: "We did not steal the documents from the ministry of defense, we got them from confidential sources and no force on earth can make me or us reveal the source." The Supreme Court is hearing a series of petitions seeking a review of a previous ruling that declined a demand for investigation into the deal. The next hearing is on March 14. The first Rafales for India are scheduled to be delivered in 2019. —AFP

French cardinal convicted of sex abuse cover-up

LYON: The archbishop of Lyon, the most senior French Catholic cleric caught up in the paedophilia scandals that have rocked the church, was convicted of helping covering up abuse and handed a six-month suspended jail term yesterday. Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, who was not in court, was found guilty of failing to report the abuse of a minor between 2014 and 2015. His lawyers announced immediately that he would appeal the judgment. "The reasoning of the court is not convincing," lawyer Jean-Felix Luciani told reporters. "We will contest this decision by all the means possible."

Barbarin, 68, faced long-standing allegations from victims' groups that he failed to report a priest under his authority to police after learning of abuse which took place in the 1980s and 90s. But prosecutors judged that those crimes were beyond the statute of limitations-meaning they were too old to prosecute-and declined to press charges. During the trial, victims accused Barbarin of being aware of the abuse allegations from at least 2010 and then trying to cover up the scandal, under orders from the Vatican, from 2015.

Francois Devaux, who leads a victim's group in Lyon, called Thursday's verdict a "major victory for child protection." The Catholic Church has been roiled in recent years by claims against priests which have come to light in the wake of a global move by victims to go public with evidence. Clerics have been denounced in countries as far afield as Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ireland, and the United States, leading Pope Francis to promise to rid the church of a scourge that has done enormous damage to its standing. —AFP

North Korea's state media airs feature on Trump-Kim summit

SEOUL: North Korea's state media aired a lengthy feature on Kim Jong Un's diplomatic bromance with US President Donald Trump in Hanoi but did not mention that the second summit ended without a deal. The talks between Trump and Kim last week finished abruptly after the pair failed to reach an agreement on walking back North Korea's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. In the aftermath, each sought to blame the other's intransigence, with Trump insisting that Pyongyang demanded an end to all sanctions while the North claimed it had only wanted some of the measures eased. Following the stalemate, researchers said this week that Pyongyang was rebuilding the Sohae long-range rocket site after Kim had agreed last year to shutter it as part of confidence-building measures. But the North made no mention of these issues in a 75-minute documentary of Kim's trip to Hanoi aired late Wednesday on the official broadcaster KCTV.

A 10-minute clip displayed the unlikely amity between Trump and Kim - a sequel to their first encounter in Singapore last June - exchanging warm smiles and handshakes as they took a poolside stroll around the gardens of the luxury Metropole Hotel, the venue of the summit. The meeting had reaffirmed that the US and North Korea can overcome their seven decades of hostility, KCTV said, and "open a new future" if they come to negotiations with "a fair proposal".

The feature showed Kim, puffing a cigarette, holding a late-night meeting at his hotel with his aides on the eve of his summit with the US president. KCTV did not refer to the pair's discussions on denuclearization - the key sticking point between Washington and Pyongyang - but said the two had agreed "to continue productive talks to resolve pending issues". —AFP

Indian lawmakers get off on wrong foot in 'shoe brawl'

NEW DELHI: Two lawmakers from India's ruling party were set to be disciplined today after a fight using a shoe as a weapon went viral on social media. The event has caused embarrassment to the Bharatiya Janata Party led Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a country where shoes are considered unclean and using one as a weapon is seen as especially offensive.

Footage of the altercation in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, dubbed the "shoe brawl" by Indian media, shows MP Sharad Tripathi beating state assembly member Rakesh Singh Baghel with his slipper after an argument over the placement of names on a foundation stone for a new project. "I regret the incident and feel bad about it. What happened was against my normal behavior," Tripathi told Reuters partner ANI. Baghel, who retaliated by repeatedly slapping Tripathi, has also apologized for the fight. The BJP's president in Uttar Pradesh, MN Pandey, said both lawmakers had been summoned to the state capital Lucknow and that "strict disciplinary action will be taken". —Reuters

International

Homing in on health: Homeless prescribed stable, safe housing

Being homeless puts more strain on US health, public services

WASHINGTON: When Catherine Crosland sees patients in the US capital, her key concern is whether they have somewhere to live. "The biggest social determinant of health is housing status," the doctor told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at a clinic below a Washington DC shelter. Being homeless, she said, "causes risks to your health, lack of access to food and hygiene, the threat of violence, depression and substance abuse".

Crosland is the medical director for homeless outreach services at Unity Health Care, a non-profit focused on low-income communities in the capital. In that role she sees patients in clinics, on sidewalks and at encampments - and the effect a lack of housing has. Last year, she said, one patient with several chronic medical problems lost her apartment in a fire. That forced her to move with her son to a motel housing homeless families.

For a month, Crosland said, the woman was dependent on fast food and soup kitchens - and in that time gained 20 pounds (9kg). She died two days after going to hospital showing signs of heart failure and high blood pressure. "To me, she died because she lost her housing - absolutely, 100 percent," Crosland said. That fits research - most recently data from a 2018 study that found "rough-sleeping" adults in Boston were three times more likely to die than those of the same age living in shelters, and 10 times more likely than the state's general population.

Being homeless puts more strain on health

and other public services: the homeless tend to be readmitted to hospital more than the general population, and they stay longer, according to research published in *Health Affairs*, a journal focused on health policy issues. When Oregon provided stable housing, the research showed, it cut certain medical expenditures on the affected population by 12 percent. Their use of emergency rooms declined 18 percent.

Longstanding gap

Last year's annual government survey showed about 553,000 people were homeless nationwide. About a third lived outside of shelters. People without homes are three to four times more likely to die prematurely than the

general population, according to the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, a network of over 200 groups nationwide.

Such findings are pushing officials, housing advocates and doctors to embrace the idea that housing must be considered a health issue. "The homelessness crisis isn't a social one. It's a health issue," said the council's Rick Brown. "Homelessness doesn't just hurt - all too often it kills," said Brown, adding that the health system had for decades failed to take into account housing issues. "Thankfully, we're seeing increasing recog-

nition of the importance of the social determinants of health - and that we need broader solutions to this," he said.

Those determinants are a globally agreed list of factors that affect inequalities linked to health - among them, housing. In November, the World Health Organization updated that list to show how improving housing conditions could cut health risks. Valerie Agostino of Mercy Housing recalled one ex-colleague complaining that, while he could write a prescription for a \$100,000 drug, "what his patients needed was a place to live, and he couldn't write a prescription for \$20,000 for a year". "That was incredibly frustrating for him."

A shift to link housing and health means practitioners can tap a larger pool of potential funding, said Agostino, adding that a lack of affordable housing remained a central problem. For Mercy Housing, a non-profit that focuses on housing low-income and other vulnerable communities, a key point came with the 2010 passage of the Affordable Care Act, a signature policy for then-President Barack Obama. Many felt that the incentives and other policies in the law - better known as Obamacare - would help bring health and housing closer, Agostino said.

Five years later, the federal government announced that Medicaid - which provides health insurance for the poor - could be used for housing-related services for the chronically homeless. But under the Trump administration much of the Affordable Care Act has been weakened, removing some of the momentum seen earlier this decade, Agostino said. And yet, at the same time other partnerships between the health and housing communities have taken off, she said. "There's a recognition on the part of healthcare providers that they can be part of the solution."

'Direct connection'

Those partnerships include investments by insurers and hospital systems in creating affordable housing, such as a joint \$100-million national affordable housing fund unveiled in January by health insurance provider Kaiser Permanente. "We believe ... both in the direct connection of health and housing, and what effect not having that has on physical, mental health and wellbeing," said chief executive Bernard J Tyson. "Our position is we need to solve (homelessness) in this country - and that it is solvable," Tyson told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Hospitals are also getting involved, said think-tank the Urban Institute, with several working to build low-cost housing. Early results from a survey of nearly 70 cities by the Urban Institute found most hospitals indicated that housing issues were a community or patient need, and about half of them thought the healthcare sector should be involved in housing. — Reuters



553,000 people
homeless in US

Indonesia ends mine collapse search as death toll reaches 27

JAKARTA: Indonesia ended the search yesterday for victims of last week's mine collapse on the island of Sulawesi as the death toll climbed to 27, an official said, even as dozens are still feared missing. Rescuers were forced to stop using excavators as conditions deteriorated and it was no longer possible to operate heavy machinery on such unstable ground. "Our assessment found it is no longer possible to search for the victims because of the possible landslides, it is getting more and more dangerous for the rescuers," local disaster mitigation agency official Abdul Muin Papatungan said. "We decided to end the search for the mine collapse victims today."

The remains of 27 miners have been found following the disaster on February 26, while 18 were pulled out alive, Papatungan said. Rescuers have been hampered by steep terrain, unstable soil and dangerously narrow mining shafts. It remains unclear how many miners were in the shafts at the time of the accident as survivors had given varying tallies. Rescue agencies said some miners reported it could be as high as 100. "At least five bodies had been buried in a mass grave because no family had claimed them," Papatungan said.



BOLAANG MONGONDOW: Photo shows Indonesian rescue workers removing a body of a miner from a collapsed mine in Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi. — AFP

The accident happened in the Bolaang Mongondow region of North Sulawesi, where five miners were killed in December after a similar illegal gold mine accident. Mineral-rich Indonesia has scores of unlicensed mines — many with complete disregard for even the most basic safety procedures. In 2016, 11 miners died after a mudslide engulfed an illegal gold mine in Sumatra's Jambi province. A year earlier, 12 people were killed when a shaft collapsed after they tunneled into a disused gold mine on Java island. — AFP

Trump lashes out at 'crazy' opponents

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump branded Democratic opponents "crazy" and guilty of overreach Tuesday in a fevered response to a huge new probe of his alleged crimes. In a burst of early morning tweets, the president said the House Judiciary Committee investigation launched Monday was "the greatest overreach in the history of our Country." "The real crime is what the Dems are doing, and have done!" he said. Another tweet labeled Democratic leaders "stone cold CRAZY."

"PRESIDENTIAL HARASSMENT!" said another. Trump's exclamation mark - and capital letter - laden outbursts indicated a rising temperature in a White House under assault from multiple directions. Democrats, who took control of the House of Representatives last November, suspect Trump of a slew of potentially impeachable offenses, including obstruction of justice and abuse of office. The powerful judiciary committee is demanding information from 81 Trump-connected individuals and entities, including his sons.

The new front opened just as Trump braces for the results of an independent probe into his dealings with Russia by special prosecutor Robert Mueller. Rumors that Mueller is close to ending his two-year investigation have set Washington on edge. Debate over whether the prosecutor's findings should be made immediately public is already underway, with Democrats warning that attempts at a cover-up by the White House could lead them to subpoena Mueller to testify. Trump's response to the pressure has been consistent with his longtime playbook: to insult accusers, admit no weakness, and rely on backing from his ultra-loyal political base. Polls show that the president's support among Republican voters remains strong, even if Democratic voters are just as convinced in opposition. However, cracks in Republican support at the top echelons of the party have appeared. — AFP

International

'Buddhism under threat': Thailand election gives platform to radicals

Politics marks a new trend in traditionally tolerant Thailand

PATHUM THANI: A clothing and cosmetics model and a former monk are campaigning together for Thailand's election at a market outside Bangkok. The message: Buddhism is under threat. Their politics marks a new trend in traditionally tolerant Thailand, where Buddhist nationalist movements have never taken root in the same way as in countries such as Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Buddhism is one of the traditional pillars of Thai society and underpins many aspects of Thai life, but monks have little influence over the state compared to the monarchy and military. The emergence of the Pandin Dharma Party to contest the March 24 election points to the rise of a fringe of Thai society that is at odds with the royalist-military establishment over religion and expresses growing antipathy to Islam.

"I joined this party because of its policy to protect the religion," said Sirima "Grace" Sarakul, 36, the model, who is contesting a seat in parliament as a Pandin Dharma Party candidate. The threat to Buddhism, Pandin Dharma's supporters believe, is from secular authorities they accuse of harassing monks and of caring more about Thailand's tiny Muslim minority than the religion followed by more than 90 percent of Thais.

"Monks have been dealt with heavy-handedly by the state," complains former monk Korn Medee, 47, leader of the party whose name means Land of Buddhist Teaching. "The government has overtly favored the other religion over Buddhism," he told Reuters. The government's

National Office of Buddhism declined to comment on the allegations or the rise of Buddhist nationalism - saying it was a matter of national security.

Two other avowedly Buddhist parties in the election are aligned with the junta, which has imposed measures to bring Thailand's 40,000 temples under control in the name of tackling scandals ranging from corruption to sex to murder. Paiboon Nititawan, 65, of the pro-military People's Reform Party, dismissed Pandin Dharma as "not real Buddhists." "Our party is not even talking about religion per se, but rather about applying the teaching of the Buddha," he said.

Division

Thailand's longstanding political fracture between the establishment and the populism of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra is mirrored in religion. Thai Buddhism itself is divided into two fraternities: the Mahanikaya of the masses and the more conservative Thammayut, bound to the establishment and more influential since its founding by a 19th century king.

"There has been a conflict of interests between factions within the monkhood and the military government," said Buddhist scholar Somrit Luechai. "As long as the monkhood remains under the centralized control of the state, this conflict will not end and could even intensify." Religion has not been among the top issues ahead of a ballot which is largely shaping



BANGKOK: Royal Thai Army Commander in Chief Apirat Kongsompong (center) with other senior officers kneels before the statue of the late King Chulalongkorn, during an oath ceremony at the army headquarters in Bangkok yesterday ahead of the March 24 general election. —AFP

up as a contest between parties that support establishment-backed junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha and allies of Thaksin.

But an electoral system designed to help smaller parties - 81 are standing for election - has given greater room for interest groups. Dressed in white to mark themselves out as de-

vout lay followers of Buddhism, Sirima and another former monk, Boonyatilert Sara, 45, found a ready reception in Pathum Thani province, where northern Bangkok's sprawl gives way to rice fields. "Buddhism has been decaying in this country," said Yuttana Suksa-ard, 66. "A party like this can help purify the religion." —Reuters

Thailand court dissolves Shinawatra-linked party

BANGKOK: A key party linked to Thailand's powerful Shinawatra clan was dissolved yesterday by a court, just weeks before a general election, over its ill-starred bid to front a princess as a candidate for premier. Thai Raksa Chart, which is tied to ex-premiers Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra, proposed Princess Ubolratana as its prime ministerial candidate if its bloc emerged with a lower house majority after the March 24 election. It was an unprecedented move in a constitutional monarchy where royals are officially above the political fray, and prompted a rare public rebuke by her younger brother, King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who issued a royal command declaring the party's move "inappropriate".

Thai Raksa Chart was found guilty of committing an act "hostile to the constitutional monarchy" by the nine-member Constitutional Court, which unanimously voted to dissolve the party. Party executives—including two Shinawatra family members—were also banned from politics for a decade. "The monarchy is above politics and to maintain political neutrality, the king, the queen and princesses can never exercise political rights by casting votes," judge Nakharin Mektrairat said at the end of an extensive ruling.

Dissolution is a hammer blow to the prospects of the powerful Shinawatras winning a parliamentary majority at the polls. Thai Raksa Chart was established to back up the Shinawatras' main political vehicle Pheu Thai, which won the 2011 elections

with a landslide. Conversely, its downfall—the party lasted for just four months—is a major fillip to its army-allied rivals who are fielding current junta leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha as their candidate for premier.

Thai Raksa Chart was set to compete in 174 constituencies with 108 candidates vying for seats through the party list—a system to allocate extra parliamentary seats according to the proportion of votes they scoop up. Grim-faced party executives, all dressed in black suits and led by party leader Preechapol Pongpanich, filed out of the Constitutional Court through the ranks of media. Fighting back tears, Preechapol told reporters the party was "extremely saddened" by the dissolution, a ruling which "will affect the rights and freedoms" of candidates and voters.

'Deja vu'

The same court has disbanded two other parties linked to the Shinawatra dynasty—and toppled two of its prime ministers—in the last 13 years of political turmoil since Thaksin was booted from office by a coup in 2006. The legal moves were "deja vu", said political analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak of Chulalongkorn University, in a country trapped in a spin-dryer of short-lived civilian governments, bloody street protests and coups.

The last army power grab toppled Thaksin's sister Yingluck in 2014. There were tears among the smattering of die-hard Shinawatra supporters gathered near the court. "Can we have democracy? We have fought for it for more than 10 years," Oye, 51, told AFP, giving only one name. Thais have powered Shinawatra-linked parties to government at every poll since 2001 only to be knocked down by the courts and coups. —AFP

Ambush kills 6 Iraqi paramilitary forces

MAKHMUR: Six Iraqi paramilitary forces were killed and more than 30 others wounded in an ambush on a desolate road south of Mosul, a local official and security forces said yesterday. Unidentified assailants on Wednesday night attacked a convoy of Hashed al-Shaabi fighters who were going on leave and therefore unarmed, the security forces' media centre said. "Six fighters were killed and 31 more were wounded and transferred to the Qayyarah hospital," the statement said.

The attack took place on the road between Mosul and the town of Makhmur, areas that Iraqi troops and allied paramilitary units recaptured from the Islamic State group in 2017. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the killings. "It's the first attack of its kind after the liberation," Rezkar Mohammad, a local official in Makhmur said. "The area is vast and open, and we already warned forces here that it hadn't been totally cleared," he said.

Iraqi forces had deployed in the area in pursuit of the attackers, Mohammad said. Baghdad declared victory against IS in late 2017 but jihadist sleeper cells still mount hit-and-run attacks against military positions, particularly in Iraq's north and west. Security forces have also warned that IS fighters could slip across the porous border from neighboring Syria to escape a blistering US-backed assault on their final redoubt there. — AFP

International

Pakistan seizes religious schools in intensified crackdown on militants

Government takes control of 182 religious schools

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan intensified its crackdown against Islamist militants yesterday, with the government announcing it had taken control of 182 religious schools and detained more than 100 people as part of its push against banned groups. The move represents Pakistan's biggest move against banned organizations in years and appears to be targeting Islamic welfare organizations that the United States says are a front for militant activities.

Pakistan is facing pressure from global powers to act against groups carrying out attacks in India, including Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which claimed responsibility for the Feb 14 attack that killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary police. The escalating tension in the wake of the bombing led to a major confrontation between the nuclear-armed rivals, with both countries carrying out aerial bombing missions and even engaging in a brief dogfight that prompted fears of a war. Pakistani officials say the crackdown is part of a long-planned drive and not a response to Indian anger over what New Delhi calls Islamabad's failure to rein in militant groups operating on Pakistani soil.

Previous large-scale crackdowns against anti-India militants have broadly been cosmetic, with the

proscribed groups able to survive and continue operations. The interior ministry said law enforcement agencies had placed 121 people in "preventive detention" as part of the crackdown that began this week. "Provincial governments have taken in their control management and administration of 182 seminaries (madaris)", the ministry said in a statement, referring to religious schools. What to do with madrasas is a thorny issue in Pakistan, a deeply conservative Muslim nation where religious schools are often blamed for radicalization of youngsters but are the only education

More than
100 people
detained

available to millions of poor children. The interior ministry said other institutions from different groups had been taken over, including 34 schools or colleges, 163 dispensaries, 184 ambulances, five hospitals and eight offices of banned organizations. Many banned groups such as JeM run

seminaries, which counter-terrorism officials say are used as recruiting grounds for militant outfits. Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), which operates hospitals and a fleet of ambulances, is estimated to run about 300 madrasas across the country. Pakistan's government banned the group this week. JuD calls itself a humanitarian charity but the US State Department has designated it a "foreign terrorist organization" and



ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani worker (2nd right) of banned militant Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) - an organisation believed by the United Nations (UN) to be a front for the banned Islamist militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba - stands at the main entrance of a mosque belonging to the (JuD) in Islamabad. —,AFP

calls it a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET), a Pakistan-based group accused of orchestrating attacks in India, including the 2008 Mumbai attack that killed 166 people. JuD called the crackdown unfair and said it would seek to counter the government action in courts.

"The whole nation is asking that what message the government wants to send by sealing welfare organizations and kicking students out," said JuD spokesman

Yahya Mujahid. Pakistan has long used Islamist groups to pursue its aims in the region, but it has denied New Delhi's accusations it actively supports militants fighting Indian forces in India's part of Muslim-majority Kashmir. The South Asian neighbors have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947, two of them over Kashmir which they both claim in whole but rule in part. —Reuters

Iranian hackers caused hundreds millions of dollars in damages

WASHINGTON: Iranian hackers working to penetrate systems, businesses and governments around the world have caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damages, a report said Wednesday. Researchers for tech giant Microsoft said the attackers stole secrets and wiped data from computer networks after targeting thousands of people at some 200 companies over the past two years, according to The Wall Street Journal.

Microsoft did not immediately respond to an AFP query on the report. The Journal said Microsoft traced the attacks to Holmium, a group linked to Iran, and that some of the hacking was done for Holmium by another Iranian group known as APT33. John Lambert, the head of Microsoft's Threat Intelligence Center, told the newspaper the attacks were "massively destabilizing events."

The report said the hackers notably targeted oil-and-gas companies, heavy-machinery manufacturers and international conglomerates in Saudi Arabia, Germany, Britain, India and the United States. In 2017, the security firm FireEye blamed APT33 for destructive malware that targeted organizations in the Middle East and elsewhere. The news comes with Iran, according to security experts, seeking to step up its cyber capabilities amid increasing efforts by the United States to isolate the Islamic regime.—AFP

Malaysia PM warns Philippines against foreigner influx

MANILA: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad yesterday warned the Philippines against letting in foreigners who could "disturb" the country's domestic political stability, as President Rodrigo Duterte's Beijing pivot sparks an influx of Chinese workers. At least 200,000 Chinese have flocked to Manila since Duterte's 2016 election, many of them employed by online gaming firms that cater to Chinese players, a Philippine Senate inquiry was told late last year. Some Filipino politicians have alleged this drives up property prices, takes away jobs from locals and even affects tax revenues.

Mahathir, who has suspended several of his nation's major projects with China, warned during an official visit to the Philippines against allowing a surge of foreigners. "Foreign direct investment should not involve bringing huge numbers of foreigners to live in the country, because that might disturb the political equations in the country," Mahathir told ABS-CBN television in an interview. "If huge numbers of any foreigners (come) to live and stay in the country... you have to do some rethinking as to whether it is good or bad, or the limits that you have to impose on them," Mahathir said.

Mahathir, 93, is in the Philippines for the first time since his shock election victory last year. He held talks with Duterte and addressed a business forum after the television interview. The Malaysian leader has taken a cautious approach to relations with China, saying he would discuss "unfair" terms of deals signed by his predecessor, Najib Razak. Duterte's pursuit of closer ties with China for the Philippines — a traditional ally of the United States - has prompted a

surge of Chinese worker arrivals.

Last year legislators said around 200,000 Chinese were working in the country, and vowed to introduce protection for Filipinos. Philippine Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez had also said he would ensure that foreigners working in the nation's offshore gaming industry paid taxes. But Duterte last month said Chinese workers should be allowed to continue staying in the country as Beijing also hosted hundreds of thousands of Filipinos. Most of them are domestic workers in Hong Kong.

Duterte has warmly embraced China despite his nation's long-standing maritime row with Beijing over the South China Sea. Beijing asserts sovereignty over almost all of the resource-rich sea, with competing claims from the Philippines, Malaysia and other nations. Commenting on the sea dispute on Thursday, Mahathir said there should be no impediment to vessels using the strategic waterway, through which trillions of dollars in global trade pass each year. "The South China Sea in particular must be open to navigation," he said in the television interview.

Peace process

At their meeting, Mahathir and Duterte hailed a peace process that put leaders of the Philippines' largest Muslim guerrilla group at the helm of a new self-governing area near the mainly Catholic nation's sea border with Malaysia. The decades-old rebellion in the Mindanao region claimed 150,000 lives, ushered in violent extremist groups and caused tens of thousands of Filipinos to flee to Malaysia to escape the violence and find work. Duterte said he thanked Mahathir for Malaysia's "unrelenting support for development in the south" and playing a key role in the peace process, which included helping monitor a ceasefire and hosting formal negotiations. Mahathir said he assured Duterte "of Malaysia's desire to... address the serious issue of terrorism and violent extremism". —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

www.kuwaittimes.net

A reveler dances in the Marigny Mardi Gras Day in New Orleans, Louisiana. Mardi Gras, also called Shrove Tuesday, Carnival Tuesday or Pancake Tuesday, is associated with Carnival celebrations in New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro and around the world. — AFP

Turkish pop star's case highlights violence against women

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Netflix to film Garcia Marquez's '100 Years of Solitude'

Netflix said Wednesday it has acquired the film rights to "One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Nobel Prize-winning author Gabriel Garcia Marquez and will turn it into a Spanish language TV series. Rodrigo Garcia and Gonzalo Garcia Barcha, the sons of the late Colombian author, "will serve as executive producers on the series, which will be filmed mainly in Colombia," the on-demand streaming giant said in a statement. "One Hundred Years of Solitude," considered a masterpiece that defined "magical realism" as a literary genre, was published in 1967. It centers around seven generations of the Buendia family in the fictional Colombian town of Macondo.

"For decades our father was reluctant to sell the film rights" to the book "because he believed that it could not be made under the time constraints of a feature film, or that producing it in a language other than Spanish would not do it justice," said Garcia. But

in the current "golden age" of TV series, with quality writing and directing "and the acceptance by worldwide audiences of programs in foreign languages, the time could not be better," he said. Garcia Marquez was a leading member of the "Latin American boom" of authors of the 1960s and 70s that included Nobel laureates Octavio Paz of Mexico and Mario Vargas Llosa of Peru.

"One Hundred Years of Solitude" has been translated into 46 languages and sold some 50 million copies worldwide. Netflix has had success with shows and movies that are fully or partially in Spanish, such as the series "Narcos" and their Oscar-winning feature film "Roma." Garcia Marquez, whose work includes "Chronicle of a Death Foretold" (1981) and "Love in the Time of Cholera" (1985), died in April 2014 at the age of 87. —AFP



In this file photo taken on May 30, 2007 Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, sitting with his wife Mercedes Barcha, is asked by admirers to dedicate them books, before boarding the train to his hometown Aracataca in Santa Marta, Colombia. —AFP photos

TURKISH POP STAR'S CASE HIGHLIGHTS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

When Turkish pop star Sila reported her partner's physical violence to police, it was a rare moment in Turkish history: a celebrity speaking out against her abuse. Ahmet Kural, a famous actor, is accused of beating the singer, whose full name is Sila Gencoglu, in October. Kural's trial begins on Thursday in Istanbul, one day before International Women's Day, celebrated with a march in the metropolis, and rallies in other cities. For Sila's lawyer, Rezan Epözdemir, her case is a powerful moment for Turkish women since victims do not usually come forward.

Rights groups say Turkish laws to help protect victims have improved. But traditional patriarchal attitudes dominant in conservative society as well as a lack of awareness often prevent women from speaking out against abuse. "It is extremely significant that a woman who experienced violence freely sought her rights and took legal action, and for her case to be at the centre of debate," Epözdemir told AFP. Kural faces up to five years in jail for charges including actual bodily harm, which the television and film actor denies.

Activists say the number of Turkish women murdered by their partners is rising and more suffer physical or sexual abuse by partners or male relatives. In 2018, 440 women were killed in murders linked to their gender, according to the women's rights group We Will Stop Femicide, compared with 210 in 2012. Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu last November said 133,809 women had been victims of violence in 2017 while in the first 10 months of 2018, the number was 96,417.

A 2014 government study found 38 percent of Turkish women had been subjected to either physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Canan Gullu, head of the Federation of Women Associations of Turkey (TKDF), said after Sila's action, there were "many more calls" to their emergency hotline from female victims of abuse empowered by the singer's actions. Gullu said more women had become aware of their rights and the law that protects them from violence. —AFP



Zorba composer Mikis Theodorakis in hospital with 'heart problem'

Renowned Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis, who wrote the music for the classic 1964 film "Zorba the Greek", has been hospitalized in Athens for over a week after suffering heart problems, a hospital source said yesterday. Theodorakis, 93, was transferred on February 26 to the private Iatriko Kentro clinic in a northern suburb of the capital, the source said. The composer penned what is probably the best-known piece of Greek music, the theme tune to Zorba, an instrumental which is still played and danced to around the world.

He has been hospitalized several times in recent years due to heart problems, including in August last year. Local media said Theodorakis had been taken to hospital in "secrecy" last Wednesday and that his health was under control. The hospital source said an official update is due to be given on the state of Theodorakis's health. Theodorakis is also known in Greece as an icon of resistance against World War II Nazi Germany, as a militant communist in Greece's 1946-49 civil war and as an activist against the military junta that ruled Greece from 1967-74.

Theodorakis has remained a high-profile political campaigner, most recently protesting against the Greek government agreeing to the naming of the newly titled North Macedonia. In 2012 riot police used tear gas against him during an anti-austerity demonstration outside parliament. —AFP

Singapore axes controversial Swedish metal band's gig

Singapore yesterday axed a gig by a Swedish metal band with Satanic beliefs—whose performances have involved throwing pig's blood onto revelers—just hours before it was due to go ahead. Regulators had initially granted permission for the concert by Watain, a group of black-clad, tattooed rockers, as long as they removed songs deemed religiously offensive from their performance. But they decided to cancel the show shortly before its scheduled start after advice from the conservative city-state's home affairs ministry.

The ministry "expressed serious concerns about the concert, given the band's history of denigrating religions and promoting violence, which has potential to cause enmity and disrupt Singapore's social harmony," said the Infocomm Media Development Authority, which regulates public entertainment. "Watain is known for its Satanist views and some of their previous controversial performances involved animal carcasses and throwing pig's blood on its audience," the statement added.

It said the band also "espouses anti-Christian views and advocates Satanism through their songs and endorses violence". Ethnically diverse Singapore has tough laws against criticizing religion or race to prevent a repeat of bloody race riots that rocked the country in the 1960s. Ahead of the event, an online petition was posted on the website change.org calling on the government to ban Watain as they "do not represent the culture which we want in our youths".

The petition said that "subliminal messages in their songs include death and suicide". Some online commentators were angered by the ban, saying that people should be allowed to make up their own minds about the group, but others welcomed it. "Just looking at the stage is enough to tell this is a Satanic performance," wrote Wilkie Ong Keng Soon on the Facebook page of Singaporean broadcaster Channel News Asia, adding the ban was the "right thing to do". —AFP





Hawker Leong Yuet Meng, 90, of Nam Seng Noodle House, poses as she cooks noodles at her shop in Singapore. —Reuters photos



Hawker Leong Yuet Meng, 90, of Nam Seng Noodle House, presents a bowl of wonton noodle soup at her shop in Singapore.

Ageing Singapore: 90-yr old noodle vendor helps keep foodie culture alive

Leong Yuet Meng cannot walk more than 10 meters without assistance. Yet, the frail 90-year-old still runs a wonton noodle stall in downtown Singapore, selling at least 200 bowls on any given day. Leong rises around 4 am to do some accounting and prayers before her son drives her to the local market to buy ingredients for the day ahead. From 8 am to 5 pm, she is hunched over a pot of simmering noodles, slicing char siu - barbecued pork belly - or serving bowls of bargain-price hot food.

"I try to do this as long as I can, but I am old," said Leong, one of many older food vendors or 'hawkers' in the Asian city-state. "I am afraid that all the experience that I have accumulated over the years will be lost. None of my children can take over." The city has about 110 hawker centers - open-air food courts set up to house former street vendors in an effort to clean up the island in the 1970s - and their over 6,000 stalls are mostly packed. The government has said it will submit a bid this month to add its hawker culture to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

"We're putting the finishing touches (on the nomination)," Yeo Kirk Siang, a director at Singapore's National Heritage Board, told Reuters. Nominations will be accepted until March 31 to be included on the list next year. Celebrity chefs Anthony Bourdain and Gordon Ramsay have effused over typically Singaporean dishes like chicken rice; some hawker stalls serve up the cheapest Michelin star meals at \$2; and last year's Hollywood hit film Crazy Rich Asians showed its stars tucking into heaped plates at a famous Singapore night market.

But the enthusiasm cannot mask one underlying problem - Singapore's hawkers are getting older and their better-educated sons and daughters are increasingly shunning cramped, sweaty kitchens for office jobs. The average age of hawkers is 59, according to a government report, well above the national workforce average of 43. "UNESCO is not a silver bullet, it is just one of the things we need to do... to keep hawker culture alive," said Yeo.



Hawker Leong Yuet Meng, 90, of Nam Seng Noodle House, does her daily shopping for ingredients at a market in Singapore.



Hawker Leong Yuet Meng enjoys her weekly game of Mahjong with her friends at home in Singapore.

Facing extinction?

To encourage Singapore's street hawkers to resettle into the centers in the 1970s, the government heavily subsidized hawker rentals. While around 40 percent of older hawkers still enjoy low rents, new hawker stalls are sold in an open bidding process, often making rentals much more expensive, especially at popular sites. One hawker, 38 year-old Lance Ngo, said that finding hawkers in their 20s "is more difficult than finding gold".

The government has introduced schemes in recent years to get veteran hawkers to pass on their skills to the next generation, teach business skills and subsidize equipment and rent to reduce overhead costs. This has attracted some young hawkers looking for an escape route from dead-end office jobs. "A lot of young people do see it as an avenue to be able to create and be their own boss," 32 year-old coffee stall owner Faye Sai said. "This has attracted younger hawkers and career switchers but that's a minority."

But others say more needs to be done to make the business more lucrative longer term. "Before applying for that (UNESCO), I think they have to settle the problems in front of them first. Twenty years down the road when all the older generation pass away, who is going to take over?," said Alan Choong, a 24-year-old owner of Sino-Japanese fusion food stall Prawnaholic. Lee Sah Bah, a hawker in his late 60s who sells Chwee Kueh rice cakes at less than S\$2 a portion, says he also faces the prospect of his legacy dying out.

His two daughters - one a lecturer at a university in Melbourne and the other an accountant in Singapore - won't take over his business. "I don't think hawker centres will exist in the next 50 years," Lee said. "It's too much hard work, we have to put in 16 hours a day sometimes. It's hot. Kids nowadays wouldn't want to work here." — Reuters

Keeping up with Kylie: Jenner is world's youngest billionaire



Kylie Jenner on Tuesday was named the youngest self-made billionaire of all time by Forbes magazine, thanks to the booming cosmetics company she founded three years ago. Jenner, 21, the half-sister of reality television stars Kim, Khloe and Kourtney Kardashian, made it onto the annual Forbes list of billionaires after debuting her Kylie Cosmetics online in 2015 with \$29 lip kits containing matching lipstick and lip liner. Forbes said she was both the world's youngest billionaire and also the youngest self-made billionaire ever. On their billionaires list, Forbes distinguishes between those who inherited much of their wealth and those who made their fortunes on their own. Kylie would be in 2,057th place whether she was self-made or inherited.

Last year, Kylie Cosmetics did an estimated \$360 million in sales, according to Forbes. Jenner, who has a one year-old daughter, owns 100 percent of the company. She also makes money from endorsements and appearances on cable TV's "Keeping Up with the Kardashians," and was ranked at number 2,057 on the Forbes 2019 list. Kylie Cosmetics last year signed a deal with Ulta Beauty Inc to put her products in all of the retailer's 1,163 US stores. Forbes put 2,153 billionaires on its 2019 list, down from 2,208 in 2018, and said their total combined net worth was \$8.7 trillion, down from \$9.1 trillion in 2018.

The richest person in the world remained Amazon.com Inc Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos, whose net worth increased to \$131 billion from \$112 billion in 2018, according to Forbes. Microsoft Corp co-founder Bill Gates remained in the No. 2 position with an estimated fortune of \$96.5 billion, up from \$90 billion last year. Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg dropped three places to No. 8, as his fortune fell by \$8.7 billion to \$62.3 billion. — Reuters



PORTUGAL'S BULLFIGHTING CULTURE WOOS KIDS TO BOOST ITS AUDIENCE



A man performs the bullfight of "Recortadores da Arte Lusa" during the Bullfighting Day at the Campo Pequeno bullfighting arena in Lisbon.

Portugal's bullfighting tradition is on its knees, having seen attendance fall nearly by half in the past decade. Now the stalwarts of the centuries-old practice are reaching out to children, hoping to turn them into future fans, to the dismay of animal rights advocates. Blood was conspicuously absent at a recent "Bullfighting Day" at the neo-Arabic Campo Pequeno arena in Lisbon, Portugal's premier bullfighting venue. It was a family affair, with children enjoying arena-shaped bouncy castles and demonstrations by apprentices of their bullfighting skills, stopping short of sticking the animals with lances called banderillas.

The event drew criticism from animal rights group Basta, which denounced the "exposure of children to the violence of bullfighting" as contravening a 2014 opinion by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Pedro Antunes, 34, a bank employee who brought his five-year-old son Tiago to the event, saw things differently. "I don't go to a bullfight very often but I wanted my son to see what it was like. As the program didn't include anything violent, I thought this would be a good occasion to do so," Antunes told AFP.

For Paulo Pessoa de Carvalho, president of Portugal's bullfighting federation ProToiro, the event was intended "to restore the tie between the bull and Portuguese culture-and increase our audience." He added that ProToiro wanted to "create careers". Last year, nearly 380,000 people attended 173 bullfights across Portugal, according to the culture ministry's General Inspection of Cultural Activities (IGAC).

Basta claims that organizers inflate the figures to hide the true scale of the decline in interest, and that the drop since 2009 is no doubt more than 42 percent. Campo Pequeno, a stunning

neo-Moorish building dating from 1892, underwent a six-year overhaul to become a multi-event venue, reopening in 2006 to host famous bands as well as bullfights, with an underground shopping centre, cinema and restaurants added to the mix. On "Bullfighting Day", however, spectators occupied hardly a third of the 7,000 seats.



A man performs the bullfight of "Recortadores da Arte Lusa".

Lifestyle | Features



A man performs the bullfight of “Capeia Arraiana” during the Bullfighting Day.

Children suited up in traditional matador costumes took a stab at fighting dummy bull heads mounted on two wheels before returning to the stands. Then real bulls were let into the arena and the crowd was treated to a demonstration of all aspects of Portuguese bullfighting—except the bloodletting with banderillas. Killing the bull has been illegal in Portugal for some 200 years. The “final act” in the modern spectacle involves a group of “forcados” who together immobilize the bull with their bare hands, killing it only symbolically.



A group of men perform the bullfight of “Capeia Arraiana” during the Bullfighting Day at the Campo Pequeno bullfighting arena in Lisbon.

‘Politically correct’

Late last year the culture minister of Portugal’s Socialist government, Graca Fonseca, voiced opposition to bullfighting, saying it was “not a question of taste but of civilization”. The remark made the aficionados of ProToiro see red, and they demanded her resignation. “Controversies are normal, but I think they come from a misunderstanding of bullfighting,” president Pessoa de Carvalho said.

“We live in a politically correct era and we are giving in to the radicalism of a minority.” Little Tiago claimed that the spectacle didn’t scare him, and his face betrayed a mix of fascination and tension as he watched the interaction of man and beast in the bullring. But the boy clenched his eyes shut when the bull charged at the “forcados”. — AFP



A man performs the bullfight of “Recortadores da Arte Lusa” during the Bullfighting Day at the Campo Pequeno bullfighting arena in Lisbon.—AFP photos



Stylist Carlyle Nuera (right) with Barbie doll prototype painter Alexandra Stoyan Lopez inspects prototypes at a workshop in the Mattel design center as the iconic doll turns 60, in El Segundo. — AFP photos



A Barbie doll prototype is displayed at a workshop in the Mattel design center as the iconic doll turns 60, in El Segundo.

Barbie will soon be 60 — and is still going strong

She is turning 60 this year and still doesn’t have a single wrinkle. Blonde or brunette, slender or curvy, black or white, princess or president, Barbie is a forever favorite for young girls, even if she has caused controversy over the years. The iconic doll has evolved to keep up with the times—check out her Twitter feed. And despite fierce competition in the toy industry, 58 million Barbies are sold each year in more than 150 countries. “In an industry where success today is three to five years, 60 years is a huge deal!” said Nathan Baynard, director of global brand marketing for Barbie.

Around the world, Barbie is as universally known as Coca-Cola or McDonald’s, Baynard said during a recent visit to Mattel’s design studio in El Segundo, a suburb of Los Angeles. In all, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold since she made her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York on March 9, 1959. She was invented by Ruth Handler, the co-founder of Mattel, who was inspired by her own children to create the doll. “Her daughter Barbara was limited in the choices of her toys—the only ones were baby dolls,” Baynard recounted.

“The only role she could imagine through that play was caregiver, mother,” whereas Handler’s son “could imagine being an astronaut, cowboy, pilot, surgeon.” Barbie is, of course, a shortened version of Barbara. The doll was supposed to teach girls “that they had choices, that they could be anything. In 1959, it was a radical ideal” Baynard said. Barbie was an instant success. In the first year, 300,000 dolls were sold, he added.

Unattainable ideal?

From the start, Barbie’s pinup measurements didn’t immediately seem all that feminist, and would spark criticism for decades to come. “In 1959, her body structure was exaggerated to match the aesthetics of the time and the fabric available,” said Barbie designer Carlyle Nuera. Since the blonde beauty first hit stores, and after a torrent of complaints over what was seen as unrealistic proportions, Mattel has made many changes—introducing multiple body types and dozens of skin tones. MG Lord, author of “Forever Barbie,” also argued that the original criticisms were unwarranted. “She is what the child wants her to be. How a child sees the Barbie doll is often framed by how the mother of that child feels about the idea of femininity,” Lord told AFP.

“The problem here is not an 11.5-inch plastic object. The problem is the larger culture and the idea of femininity.” In 1965, four years before Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon, Barbie became an astronaut. In 1968, the first black Barbie doll, a friend named Christie, hit store shelves. Lisa McKnight, senior vice president and global general manager for the Barbie brand, said that today, 55 percent of the dolls sold around the

world have neither blonde hair nor blue eyes. Mattel has more than 100 people working in the El Segundo design studio, a massive hangar-like building wedged between Los Angeles International Airport and a freeway. Designers begin with a simple sketch. From there on, every bit of a prototype is made by an army of experts—from sculpting the doll using state-of-the-art software and 3D printing to painting the face, styling the hair, choosing fabrics and crafting the clothing patterns.

The entire design process for a new Barbie can last 12 to 18 months. Then, the prototype is sent from the California workshop to factories in China and Indonesia for mass production. “Sometimes, you see her on a shelf and then it gets back to you: oh yes, I designed this one!” Nuera said with a smile.

Instagram photo shoots

Barbie is not only a toy store success—she has a massive social media presence, and is something of an “influencer,” with millions of followers. She has an actual identity: Barbie Millicent Roberts, who hails from the made-up town of Willows in the Midwest. And now, she speaks directly to girls about her life, and important current topics. In 2018, the brand launched a sweeping campaign to help young girls close the so-called “Dream Gap”—using Barbie to teach them to believe in themselves, and not to buy into sexist gender stereotypes.

Barbie has a hair stylist, makeup artist and photographer who travel with her “for real” in the United States and abroad for Instagram photo sessions (check out @barbiestyle). The account has nearly two million followers. So, does Barbie have it all as she hits 60, but remains forever young, still single and without kids (so far)? “The narrative of the Barbie brand is that she’s a young woman and she’s independent and pursuing careers,” McKnight said. — AFP



Barbie doll prototypes are displayed at a workshop in the Mattel design center as the iconic doll turns 60, in El Segundo.



Vendors sell flowers at a flower market in Moscow on March 5, 2019 before of International Women's Day which falls on March 8. — AFP photos

Russians splurge on flowers for International Women's Day

In the first week of March, crowds of buyers line the narrow petal-covered lanes of Moscow's Rizhsky flower market. Men from all over the Russian capital throng to the huge hall to buy flowers for female loved ones and colleagues to be offered on March 8, International Women's Day. A legacy of the Soviet era, March 8 is widely celebrated and a public holiday in Russia. The Russian Women's Day, which is in fact more about offering tulips and roses than women's rights, is the most profitable time of year for florists. Raisa Khetagurova, 53, travels to Moscow from North Ossetia in Russia's Caucasus to sell flowers ahead of all of Russia's numerous state holidays.

She said no other holiday was as good for business as March 8, when vendors can earn up to "15 times" more than in a regular week. Her bright yellow mimosa flowers come from Abkhazia, Georgia's separatist republic now under Russia's de facto control, while her tulips are from neighboring Belarus.

'Times are changing'

For Khetagurova, buying flowers for women on March 8 is a sign of respect. "I'm very happy that women are so respected in Russia," she told AFP. "Of course, men earn more (money). It's always been like that," she added. "But I remember in Soviet times when they earned much more. Now times are changing." Rose seller Akbardzhon Kambarov—originally from ex-Soviet Tajikistan—said he has more than three times as many customers on Women's Day than on Valentine's Day. But barely visible among the hundreds of tulips in her small stand, Crimean teenager Sayora Kurbanova said she disliked International Women's Day "because I have to work all the time".



The 18-year-old travelled with her parents from the Russian-annexed peninsula to Moscow for the holiday, which they prepare for up to three months in advance.

Only 30 percent of flowers on sale are grown domestically. The rest are imported, with around 60 percent coming from Ecuador and 20 percent from the Netherlands, according to Moscow city government's commerce department. Ahead of March 8, flower prices leap and Moscow city authorities planned to pursue unlicensed flower vendors.

The municipal commerce department said this week that it would crack down on unlicensed sales ahead of International Women's Day. "More than 360 people (officials) will take part in the raids," department head Alexei Nemeryuk told state media. Authorities have also set up a hotline for Muscovites to report exorbitant prices, some of which leap by 20 percent from the previous year.

'Good one day of the year'

At Rizhsky market, the best customers were business owners and senior managers buying boxes of flowers for their female staff. Valery Savelyev, 59, bought a bouquet of tulips for each of the 10 women who work at his furniture company. "It's a tradition," he explained, before adding that he considered the holiday to be out-dated and "very Soviet". "It gives our men the chance to be good one day of the year," he joked. In a country where sexism in the workplace is still rife, Women's Day is seen as a rare opportunity for Russian men to show a romantic side, and is celebrated in a similar way to Valentine's Day elsewhere. Even officials wax lyrical about women, with President Vladimir Putin leading the way. "We know that a woman's heart is the most loyal and that her forgiveness is the most precious thing," Putin told Russian women last year. — AFP



Imagine Ibiza

An amazing island paradise

By Ingie Al-Nakhlawi

Grab your sun tanning lotions, flashy sandals, swimsuits and high spirits to embark on a journey to the magical Island of Ibiza. Trendsetters and celebrities visit this island yearly; some of them even spend their entire summer here. Tourists are flocking in groups to the island to experience what splendor is all about and most say that this island never disappoints its visitors. In summer, the world's best DJs arrive to Ibiza making it an ultimate destination for music lovers. Be ready for glamorous beaches, fabulous fusion restaurants and day to night events ahead!

Ibiza is one of the Balearic Islands, off the eastern coast of Spain in the Mediterranean Sea. It has had a party island image for years, but there is another way to experience its beauty without hitting the well-known, crowded night clubs and partying until the early morning.

Instead, you can step foot on a higher hill away from the crowds to revel in the panoramic view of the island, or wander the lovely bohemian market for a peaceful stroll. By evening, indulge in all types of cuisines, especially fresh seafood and the famous paella at stylish, tasteful restaurants. Ibiza town is not to be overlooked where beautiful historic buildings, stand upright as a witness to their respective eras. There are all kinds of cultural events, museums and galleries to explore. Recommended are the Dalt Vila UNESCO Site and the Ibiza Cathedral where history can be treasured.

During the day, the scene is already set with umbrellas and sun-beds lined down the beach front, where spirited tourists walk up and down the strip listening to music playing at differ-

ent hotels or nearby cafes. All types of affordable beach front hotels are positioned on the strip of Playa D'en Bossa, San Antonio bay, Portinatx and others. Some beaches like Talamanca are more child friendly for family vacations. Anticipate admiring clear blue water, light soft sand and a cool breeze while laying on one of the many white modish cabanas. Appreciate the outdoor ambience during a satisfying dinner with glares of the famous Ibiza sunset approaching.

A day trip to Formentera is a must for a visiting tourist of Ibiza. It's the smallest of the Balearic Islands reachable by daily boats or ferry services. 35 minutes away from Ibiza, this island is known for its clear waters and relaxing beaches. Many travelers refer to it as the chic and serene side to Ibiza. One thing that is definite about the island of Ibiza is that the people visiting are open-minded, and eager to meet fellow travelers to create lasting friendships with hopes to meet back on the Island the upcoming year.



Think a hermit is always a rock-hard cookie? Think again

Old-fashioned recipes for hermits often produce rock-hard cookies peppered with bland, tough raisins. We wanted a moist, chewy cookie, gently redolent of molasses and warm spices. Traditional recipes for hermits call for creaming the butter, but this produces a dry, biscuit-like cookie. Melting the butter and then cooking it until it browns delivers a chewier, moister cookie, with a nutty flavor.

Adding cinnamon, allspice, and ginger to the browned butter blooms their natural flavor, which allows us to use a smaller quantity of each for gently spiced cookies that aren't dusty-tasting like so many old-fashioned versions. Hermits are typically studded with raisins, but those raisins can often bake up hard and chewy. For rich raisin flavor in every bite, we puree them with chopped crystallized ginger and then combine the mixture with the melted butter to soften the raisins. This helps distribute raisin flavor throughout the cookies, while the pureed ginger lends pungent sweetness and chew.

HERMITS

Ingredients

Servings: 18

Start to finish: 3 hours

For this recipe, we prefer using mild (or light) molasses instead of the robust or blackstrap varieties.

1 cup raisins
 2 tablespoons finely chopped crystallized ginger
 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 3/4 cup packed (5 1/4 ounces) dark brown sugar
 1/2 cup molasses
 2 large eggs
 1 1/2 tablespoons orange juice
 3/4 cup (3 ounces) confectioners' sugar

Preparation

Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Process raisins and ginger in food processor until mixture sticks together and only small pieces remain, about 10 seconds. Transfer mixture to large bowl.

Heat butter in small saucepan over medium-low heat, swirling pan occasionally, until nutty brown in color, about 10 minutes. Stir in cinnamon and allspice and cook until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Stir butter mixture into raisin mixture until well combined; let cool to room temperature.

Combine flour, baking soda, and salt in bowl. Stir brown sugar, molasses, and eggs into cooled butter-raisin mixture until incorporated. Fold in flour mixture (dough will be very sticky) and refrigerate, covered, until firm, at least 1 1/2 hours or up to 24 hours.

Divide dough into quarters. Transfer 1 piece of dough to lightly floured surface and roll into 10-inch log. Transfer to prepared sheet and use ruler to neatly square off sides. (Each sheet will contain 2 logs.) Repeat with remaining dough. Bake until only shallow indentation remains on edges when touched (center will appear slightly soft), 15 to 20 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Let logs cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes; transfer parchment to wire racks and let cool completely. Whisk orange juice and confectioners' sugar in small bowl until smooth. Drizzle glaze onto cooled logs and let sit until glaze hardens, about 15 minutes. Cut logs into 2-inch bars and serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

212 calories; 51 calories from fat; 6 g fat (3 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 37 mg cholesterol; 113 mg sodium; 38 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 27 g sugar; 2 g protein.





SAFFRON RISOTTO

A classic risotto is creamy and indulgent, thanks to saffron

Risotto is a simple rice dish elevated beyond the prosaic by its voluptuously creamy texture. Of the many risotto dishes that dot northern Italy, risotto alla milanese is at once one of the simplest and most luxurious, because it's flavored with the most globally prized spice, saffron, which perfumes the dish with its floral aroma.

The dish's origin is a subject of debate: One legend claims that it was invented in the 1500s by a Milanese glassmaker who earned the nickname "Zafferano" because he used saffron often to make gold stain. When he was jokingly challenged to add it to risotto, he did! However, the recipe's first appearance in an Italian cookbook wasn't until the 1800s. Perhaps it originated from Milan's ties to Spain, or a Milanese affinity for the golden color, or possibly the idea that saffron was beneficial to health.

Risotto - Milanese or otherwise - achieves its creamy texture through constant stirring, which causes the rice to release its starch. We toasted the saffron in butter, which magnified its flavor, helped break up the threads, and distributed it throughout the rice. This dish is traditionally

prepared using Carnaroli rice, but you can substitute Arborio rice. You may have broth left over once the rice is finished cooking; different rice products cook differently, and we prefer to err on the side of slightly too much broth rather than too little. If you do use all the broth and the rice has not finished cooking, add hot water as needed.

SAFFRON RISOTTO

Servings: 6

Start to finish: 1 hour
 3 1/2 cups chicken broth
 3 cups water
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
 1 onion, chopped fine
 Salt and pepper
 2 cups Carnaroli rice
 1/4 teaspoon saffron threads, crumbled
 2 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated (1 cup)

Bring broth and water to simmer in medium saucepan. Cover and keep warm over low heat. Melt butter in Dutch

oven over medium heat. Add onion and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add rice and saffron and cook, stirring frequently, until grain edges begin to turn translucent, about 5 minutes.

Stir in 3 1/2 cups warm broth, bring to simmer, and cook, stirring occasionally, until almost fully absorbed, 10 to 12 minutes. Continue to cook rice, stirring frequently and adding warm broth, 1 cup at a time, every few minutes as liquid is absorbed, until rice is creamy and cooked through but still somewhat firm in center, 14 to 18 minutes. Remove pot from heat, cover, and let sit for 5 minutes. Adjust consistency with remaining warm broth as needed (you may have broth left over). Stir in Parmigiano and season with salt and pepper to taste before serving.

Nutrition information per serving:

378 calories; 94 calories from fat; 11 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 30 mg cholesterol; 583 mg sodium; 51 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 9 g protein.



London's current skyline is the result of its two thousand years of history

London through the ages: Architectural insights into the capital's history



A statue of Emperor Trajan stands beside the Roman wall, the oldest structure in London today.

Given the various calamities that have befallen London over the last two thousand years, it's remarkable that any of it exists today at all. This is a city that's been ravaged by fire, ridden with plague and bombed to rubble. It's encountered the wrath of angry local Boudicca, the bloodlust of the Vikings and more rebellions and riots than you can shake a pigeon at. And not only has London endured, but it's often done so curiously intact, with architectural clues to its storied past scattered just about everywhere.

First centuries AD: all roads lead to - London

Though small settlements are likely to have been established along the Thames in prehistoric times, London's true history begins with the Romans, who set up camp on the north bank of the Thames in AD 43 and named their new town Londinium. The port flourished, becoming one of the capitals of Roman Britannia and a centre of imperial trade - fitting, given that Londinium occupied roughly the area of the pres-

ent-day financial district known as The City. After a brief hiccup in 60 AD, when a native tribal leader called Boudicca razed the place (we won't get into the ins and outs, but let's just say she had a strong motive), the Romans regained control and rebuilt Londinium, this time as a planned town.

With increasing unrest across the empire, the city was fortified some time around 200 AD with a huge wall built to protect it. The outline of London Wall can be traced in many modern streets and even some segments of it remain to this day, with particularly well-preserved parts just north of the Tower of London, next to Tower Hill tube station. Nothing else from Roman London remains above street level, but you can see the outline of an amphitheatre in the Guildhall Art Gallery and a temple to the god Mithras is open to visitors underneath the Bloomberg building. At its height, Londinium had a population of at least 30,000, and possibly as much as 60,000, but as the empire began to crumble in the 5th century, the Roman legions withdrew from Britain, and by AD 410 Londinium had been abandoned.



Visitors to Covent Garden today are following in the footsteps of the Anglo-Saxon settlers who established their port of Lundenwic.

The 5th to 10th centuries: Anglo-Saxon settlers, Viking marauders

Gradually a new people called the Anglo-Saxons moved in from northern Europe, re-establishing a port just to the west of the Roman city in the area around what is now Covent Garden. Due to their buildings being made of wood and other perishable materials, little evidence of their presence remains, but plenty of information on them can be found at the Museum of London. They had a significant effect on London as we know it today, settling around the original town in remote countryside communities that would eventually grow into the mass of villages making up what is now Greater London. Present day districts whose names end in '-wich', '-ham' and '-ton' are usually Anglo-Saxon in origin (for example Dulwich, Balham and Acton). By the 800s, Lundenwic, as the town was called, was booming - a fact that didn't escape the Vikings. For two hundred years, these intrepid Scandinavian warriors and their longships appeared and reappeared on the Thames, and London was wrestled like a rugby ball in a scrum between native and invading forces.

The Middle Ages: William conquerors, builds to oppress

Power struggles continued to play out until 1066, at which point a duke from Normandy in northern France called William decided to throw his hat into the ring: he invaded and conquered England, and another chapter in London's tumultuous history began. Mindful of the threat posed by the persistent Vikings and the unhappy Anglo-Saxons he now ruled, one of the first tasks for William the Conqueror, as he is best known, was to secure the River Thames, and this is why today we can gaze upon the spectacular Tower of London. Its oldest part, the White Tower, has stood in near perfect condition for almost a thousand years and still captivates the imaginations of locals and visitors alike. There's not much else of Norman London still standing, but what is is worth your attention. In the 12th century the church of St Bartholomew-the-Great was founded, and its chancel has survived the ages, providing an exquisite glimpse at original Norman architecture. St Etheldreda's Church, tucked away nearby on a Holborn cul-de-sac, was built a century later and is also beautifully preserved.

The 16th century: Tudors take charge

As the centuries passed, new scuffles broke

out over who would rule England, and by the end of the 1400s the Tudors were in charge, starting with the reign of Henry VII. He was followed by Henry VIII, whose influence on London is still clearly visible today. He requested his chief adviser Cardinal Wolsey hand over the magnificent Hampton Court Palace, cordoned off what's now Hyde Park to use as a hunting ground, and also built St James's Palace in Westminster, whose original red brick Tudor exterior can be seen from Pall Mall.

The reign of his daughter, Elizabeth I, was something of a golden age for London, as the city became a major European hub for trade, explorers were sent out around the world to reap riches from new lands, and writers like Shakespeare entertained the masses. The capital became extremely wealthy, and immigrants began to pour in. From 1530 to the turn of the century, the population increased from 50,000 to 225,000, and it would double to half a million in the 50 years following that. London was becoming a megacity.

The 1600s: catastrophic blessings

London continued to grow in the 17th century under the Stuarts, Scottish royalty who ascended the English throne in 1603. The city must have seemed like it was unstoppable, but in 1665 the Great Plague broke out. By the time the epidemic had come to its grisly end, one fifth of the population, around 100,000 people, had died. And worse was to come.

It was the conditions so favorable to the spread of the plague - wooden, thatched housing packed along narrow streets - that would set the scene for the next catastrophe. On Sunday 2 September 1666, a fire started in a bakery on Pudding Lane in the heart of the City. Four days later, 80% of medieval London had been incinerated, and with it more than 13,000 houses and almost 100 churches.

Although the Great Fire of London was brutally destructive, it did clear the way for new growth. The ancient street plan remained, but the new buildings were made of stone, and were vastly safer and more sanitary (plague never came back) than their predecessors. Clearly new homes were needed, but so too were churches, and for these, one name rings out: Christopher Wren. A prolifically talented architect, Wren was responsible for designing 52 new churches, including his masterpiece that is St Paul's Cathedral, whose great dome remains an integral and much-loved part of the



St. Paul's Cathedral rose like a phoenix from the flames of the Great Fire and survived World War II bombing, becoming a symbol of the city's resilience.



Buckingham Palace developed as a royal residence in the early 19th century.



Hampton Court is a palace fit for a king but actually built for a cardinal.

cityscape to this day - views of it from different parts of London are protected. He was also the brains behind the Monument, a giant column that commemorates the fire.

**The 18th and 19th centuries:
Georgian digs, Victorians dig**

As London entered the Georgian Era (1714-1830), it continued to expand, and all those outlying villages were gradually subsumed into the vast metropolis we see today. Elegant new neighborhoods like Mayfair began popping up for the aristocracy, and numerous beautiful garden squares appeared, such as Bedford Square, which boasts some of the finest Georgian architecture in the country. Towards the end of this period, the current version of Buckingham Palace was built.

The Georgians were followed by the exuberantly ambitious Victorians, and throughout the second half of the 19th century, London became the most powerful city in the most powerful empire in the world. Rapid development, fuelled by the Industrial Revolution and imperial expansion, created intense pressure on the city's population. Poverty was rampant, and getting around was becoming intolerably difficult. The solution to the latter was the London Underground, today an icon and at the time a global first and engineering marvel (though when it opened *The Times* rather uncharitably called it 'an insult to common sense'). Some of London's most famous architectural set pieces and buildings, including Trafalgar Square, the Houses of Parliament and Tower Bridge, were all constructed during Queen Victoria's long reign.

The 20th century and beyond: bombs, booms and Brutalism

The capital continued to grow well into the 20th century, but the heady heydays of imperial London came crashing down as a result of the century's two world wars. During World War II, the city was mercilessly targeted by the German Luftwaffe, which dropped some 30,000 tons of bombs on the capital. Much was destroyed - one in six buildings to be precise - but, just like during previous disasters, much survived, too. The London Underground provided an incredibly effective sanctuary for the population to shelter from the bombardment, and still occupies a firm place in the hearts of Londoners.

The post-war years were about slowly rebuilding, and the results were mixed. Innovative but ugly concrete housing blocks were criticized almost as soon as they were completed. But others, such as the National Theatre and the British Telecom Tower, have become modern icons reflecting the city's insatiable architectural adventurousness.

Today, London is fully established as one of the world's great cities: a beacon of commerce, culture and enlightened ideal with buildings that show off its globally important status. Construction these days is more often vertical than lateral, with a prime example being the Shard, opened in 2013 and currently the tallest building in Western Europe, along with the other skyscrapers jostling for position in the City. London faces an uncertain few years as it grapples with the outcome of Brexit, but if one thing's for certain, this city has grappled with, and overcome, far worse in the past and still has the buildings to prove it. — (www.lonelyplanet.com)



The White Tower has stood guard over the Thames for almost a thousand years

Comic

Word Search

80's Songs 1 - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|
| ANGEL | KEY LARGO | OH SHERRIE |
| TRUE | KOKOMO | PRIVATE EYES |
| CELEBRATION | KYRIE | ROSANNA |
| COOL NIGHT | LEGS | SUDDENLY |
| DRIVE | LOVE BITES | TAINTED LOVE |
| FIRE LAKE | MANEATER | UPTOWN GIRL |
| HELLO | MICKEY | VALERIE |
| HOLD ON | NEVER | |

Yesterday's Solution

70's Songs 3 - Solution

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

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| BABE | HOT STUFF | RICH GIRL |
| BAD BLOOD | LADY | SAD EYES |
| BARRACUDA | LET IT BE | SIR DUKE |
| CAR WASH | MAGGIE MAY | SKY HIGH |
| DANCING QUEEN | MAIN STREET | TRAGEDY |
| DREAMING | MONEY | VENUS |
| FAME | MY SHARONA | YOUR SONG |
| GREASE | POP MUZIK | |

Crossword 2152



ACROSS

- (usually followed by 'to' or 'for') On the point of or strongly disposed.
- Type genus of the Giraffidae.
- A thin wedge of material (wood or metal or stone) for driving into crevices.
- An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Uganda or its people.
- A stick that people can lean on to help them walk.
- Of or relating to or involving an area.
- In full operation.
- Port city that is the capital and largest city of Latvia.
- French novelist.
- The district occupied entirely by the city of Washington.
- A large Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- (archaic or Scottish) Faithful and true.
- First in order of importance.
- Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
- A member of the Mayan people of the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico.
- Hormones (estrogen and progesterin) are given to postmenopausal women.
- An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
- (Sumerian) Sun god.
- Goddess of dawn.
- (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
- Being of the age 13 through 19.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
- Jordan's port.
- A magnetic tape recorder for recording (and playing back) TV programs.
- United States lawyer and politician who formulated a production code that prescribed the moral content of United states films from 1930 to 1966 (1879-1954).
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
- Not only so, but.
- Small genus of Eurasian aquatic perennial herbs.
- (of roads) Made of logs laid down crosswise.
- A musical notation written on a staff indicating the pitch of the notes following it.
- Black tropical American cuckoo.
- Having a systematic arrangement.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.

DOWN

- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- A genus of Mustelidae.
- A unit of weight used in east Asia approximately equal to 1.3 ounces.
- A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
- A class of proteins produced in lymph tissue in vertebrates and that function as antibodies in the immune response.
- A small piece of cloth.
- Of or at or relating to an anode.
- A federally sponsored corporation that insures accounts in national banks and other qualified institutions.
- A device for creating a current of air by movement of a surface or surfaces.
- Any disease of the throat or fauces marked by spasmodic attacks of intense suffocative pain.
- Having unattractive thinness.
- A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
- Any tree or shrub of the genus Inga having pinnate leaves and showy usually white flowers.
- (statistics) Approximating the statistical norm or average or expected value.
- Any of numerous ornamental shrubs grown for their showy flowers of various colors.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
- A member of the Manchu speaking people of Mongolian race of Manchuria.
- A midwestern state in north central United States in the Great Lakes region.
- A liquid solution that results from elution.
- Grow by addition, as of capital.
- A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
- The state of being under the control of another person.
- Based on the meter as a standard of measurement.
- A unit of pressure.
- The sound made by a gentle blow.
- A Hindu disciple of a swami.
- Wild or seedling sweet cherry used as stock for grafting.
- A blood group antigen possessed by Rh-positive people.
- An Italian poet famous for love lyrics (1304-1374).
- Grind together, of teeth.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- A committee having supervisory powers.
- (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
- A sharply directional antenna.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
- Great in vertical dimension.
- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
- A polyvalent metallic element that resembles chromium and tungsten in its properties.
- A public promotion of some product or service.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



01:30 Galaxy Quest
03:25 Taken Heart
05:05 Carter And June
06:45 Galaxy Quest
08:40 Taken Heart
10:20 Carter And June
12:00 Starship Troopers: Traitor Of Mars
13:35 Stealth
15:40 In The Line Of Fire
17:50 Scorched Earth 2018
19:35 13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers Of Benghazi
22:00 The Big Hit
23:40 Death Wish V: The Face Of Death

08:20 The First 48
09:05 Crimes That Shook Australia
09:50 Homicide Hunter
10:35 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
11:30 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
12:25 The First 48
13:20 I Killed My BFF
14:15 Live PD: Police Patrol
15:10 It Takes A Killer
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 The First 48
19:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
20:00 Cold Case Files
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Police Patrol
23:00 Surviving R Kelly

00:50 People Magazine Investigates
01:45 Dead Of Winter
02:40 Primal Instinct
03:35 Evil Stepmothers
04:30 Reasonable Doubt
05:25 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
06:20 Swamp Murders
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 California Investigator
08:25 Disappeared
09:15 A Crime To Remember
10:10 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
11:05 Swamp Murders
12:00 The Perfect Murder
12:55 Disappeared
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
15:40 Swamp Murders
16:35 Reasonable Doubt
17:30 Disappeared
18:25 A Crime To Remember
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
21:10 Swamp Murders
22:05 Village Of The Damned
23:00 Dead Of Winter
23:55 Welcome To Killer Town



& Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:50 Lolirock



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 The Lion Guard
01:00 Sofia The First
01:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:00 PJ Masks
02:50 The Hive
03:00 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 The Hive
04:40 Zou
05:25 The Hive
05:35 The Hive
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Henry Hugglemonster
06:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
06:35 The Hive
06:45 PJ Masks
07:00 Sofia The First
10:00 Sofia The First: The Mystic Isles
11:15 Whisker Haven Tales
11:20 Sofia The First
11:50 Sofia The First
12:20 Whisker Haven Tales
12:25 Sofia The First
13:55 Whisker Haven Tales
14:00 Sofia The First: Once Upon A Princess
15:00 Sofia The First
17:00 Sofia The First: The Floating Palace
18:00 Sofia The First
21:25 Whisker Haven Tales
21:30 Sofia The First

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
06:29 Marvel's Avengers: Secret Wars
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
07:29 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Gravity Falls
08:29 Gravity Falls
09:00 Supa Strikas
09:29 Milo Murphy's Law
10:00 Milo Murphy's Law
10:29 Lab Rats
11:00 Phineas And Ferb
11:29 Phineas And Ferb
12:00 Supa Strikas
12:29 Gravity Falls
13:00 Gravity Falls
13:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:29 Disney 11
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:29 Furiki Wheels
16:00 Big City Greens
16:31 Space Chickens In Space
16:45 Space Chickens In Space
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:29 Supa Strikas
18:00 Disney 11
18:29 Lab Rats
19:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:00 Big City Greens
20:29 Gravity Falls
21:00 Gravity Falls
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
22:29 Furiki Wheels
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:30 America's Book Of Secrets
01:15 Ancient Aliens
02:00 Ancient Discoveries
02:45 10 Things You Don't Know About...
03:30 UFO Hunters
04:15 Ancient Aliens
05:00 The Universe
05:45 History's Most Hated
06:30 America's Book Of Secrets
07:15 Ancient Aliens
08:00 Ancient Discoveries
08:45 10 Things You Don't Know About...
09:30 UFO Hunters
10:15 Ancient Aliens
11:00 The Universe
11:45 History's Most Hated
12:30 America's Book Of Secrets
13:15 Ancient Aliens
14:00 Ancient Discoveries
14:45 10 Things You Don't Know About...
15:30 UFO Hunters
16:15 Ancient Aliens
17:00 The Universe
17:45 History's Most Hated
18:30 America's Book Of Secrets
19:15 Ancient Aliens
20:00 Ancient Discoveries
20:45 10 Things You Don't Know About...
21:30 UFO Hunters
22:15 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
23:45 History's Most Hated



00:50 Into Alaska
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 Monsters Inside Me
03:35 Growing Up... Polar Bear Orphan
04:25 Into Alaska
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Wildest Europe
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Vet On The Loose
08:25 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
09:15 Animal Cops Miami
10:10 Into Alaska
11:05 North Woods Law
12:00 Wildest Europe
12:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
13:50 Growing Up... Polar Bear Orphan
14:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
15:40 Crocodile Hunter
16:35 Monsters Inside Me
17:30 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
18:25 Animal Cops Houston
19:20 In Search Of The Giant Anaconda
20:15 From Cubs To Kings
21:10 Amanda To The Rescue
22:05 Wildest Europe
23:00 Monsters Inside Me
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees

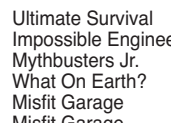


00:25 Takeshis Castle Thailand
00:50 Broad City
01:40 Review
02:05 Takeshis Castle Thailand
02:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:00 Broad City
03:45 Are We There Yet
04:10 Takeshis Castle Thailand
04:35 Impractical Jokers
05:00 Are We There Yet
07:10 Punk'd (Bet)
08:00 Comedy Central Presents
08:25 Comedy 3alwagef
08:25 Comedy Central Presents
08:25 Comedy 3alwagef
08:55 Comedy Central Presents
09:20 Ridiculousness Arabia
09:50 Takeshis Castle Thailand
10:15 Friends
12:20 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
14:30 Disaster Date
15:45 Friends
18:00 Impractical Jokers
19:30 Comedy Central Presents
21:00 Comedy 3alwagef
21:00 Ridiculousness Arabia
21:30 Takeshis Castle Thailand
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 Natasha Leggero: Live From Bimbos
23:20 Wanda Sykes: Tongue Untied



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

00:15 Ultimate Survival
01:05 Impossible Engineering
01:50 Mythbusters Jr.
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Misfit Garage
04:05 Misfit Garage
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Auction Kings
06:00 Storage Wars Canada
06:20 Auction Kings
06:45 Ultimate Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Misfit Garage
12:20 Misfit Garage
13:05 Storage Wars Canada
13:30 Auction Kings
13:55 Alaskan Bush People
14:40 Railroad Australia
15:30 Man v Expert
16:15 Wheeler Dealers
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 American Chopper
21:50 Wheeler Dealers
22:40 Twin Turbos
23:30 Deadliest Catch



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



00:00 Botched
01:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 WAGs Miami
04:00 WAGs
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
22:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:20 Mountain Men
01:05 Pawn Stars
01:50 Ozzy And Jack's World De-tour
02:35 Storage Wars
03:25 Brothers In Arms
04:15 Sean Bean On Waterloo
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Road Hawks
06:45 Mountain Men
07:30 Pawn Stars
08:15 Ozzy And Jack's World De-tour
09:00 Storage Wars
09:45 Sean Bean On Waterloo
10:30 Forged In Fire
11:15 American Pickers Best Of
15:00 Counting Cars
17:15 Cars That Made America
18:45 Counting Cars
19:30 WW2 Treasure Hunters
21:00 Forged In Fire: Knife Or Death
21:50 Forged In Fire: Knife Or Death
22:40 Milwaukee Blacksmith
23:05 Milwaukee Blacksmith
23:30 Cars That Made America



00:20 EastEnders
00:50 Our Girl
01:45 Holby City
02:45 Inside No. 9
03:45 The Last Post
04:40 Father Brown
05:25 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Bad Move
07:25 The Detectorists
07:55 The Moonstone
08:40 Death In Paradise
09:35 Father Brown
10:20 Doctors
11:20 Casualty
12:10 Holby City
13:05 EastEnders
13:35 Inside No. 9
14:10 Death In Paradise
15:00 Holby City
15:55 Doctors
18:30 Agatha Raisin
20:10 The Split
21:05 Line Of Duty
22:05 Luther
23:05 Father Brown
23:55 Doctors



00:30 Xploration Outer Space
01:20 Animal Airport
02:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
03:00 Ultimate Survival
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Xploration Outer Space
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Ultimate Survival
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
10:20 Animal Airport
11:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Xploration Outer Space
14:05 Xploration Outer Space
14:30 How It's Made
14:55 How It's Made
15:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
15:45 Kids Do The Craziest Things
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
16:35 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 Animal Airport
17:25 Animal Airport
17:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:15 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:05 Breaking Magic
19:30 Deception With Keith Barry
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Ultimate Survival
22:00 How It's Made
22:25 How It's Made
22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:15 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 Deception With Keith Barry



00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Surviving R Kelly
02:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
03:50 Crimes That Shook Britain
04:45 The First 48
05:30 Live PD: Police Patrol
06:15 Cold Case Files
07:00 Homicide Hunter
08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol



00:15 What's For Sale?
00:45 Croatia's Finest
01:10 Places We Go
01:40 Miguel's Feasts
02:05 Chasing The Sun
02:35 Bangkok Airport
03:30 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
04:25 Route Awakening
05:20 A House Of Its Time
06:15 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
07:10 Miguel's Feasts
07:35 Chasing The Sun
08:05 Bangkok Airport
09:00 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
09:55 Route Awakening
10:20 Route Awakening
10:50 A House Of Its Time
11:45 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
12:40 Miguel's Feasts
13:05 Chasing The Sun
13:35 Bangkok Airport
14:30 Fish Tank Kings
15:25 Route Awakening
16:20 A House Of Its Time
17:15 David Rocco's Dolce Africa



00:10 Culinary Genius USA
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 This Time Next Year
04:20 Big Star's Little Star
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Culinary Genius USA
07:10 The Chase
08:05 This Time Next Year
09:00 Big Star's Little Star
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
10:55 Culinary Genius USA
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Culinary Genius USA
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Dancing On Ice
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

The moon is playing with you. You're more direct than usual in speech patterns. The only problem is that your workmates might take issue with your usual bluntness which has been amped up by your nice planetary movements. You may be thinking about higher education now. That might include going for a class on something you've wanted and perhaps doesn't involve work. The soul needs nourishment too. It can't always be on logic and work, Aries. You're more impulsive now and that might worry your lover. Try to be less showy of that inclination because, in truth, you're thinking that situation over too. Wait until you've made up your mind completely before jumping into a new lover's arms.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You find yourself with a franker demeanor now and you don't mind that you're this way. Just remember friends and lovers could get their feelings hurt. That would make you feel unkind because you like everything running well. You want change especially if it's good transformation whereas you're generally the one who resist. People are used to habitual behavior and might resist your attempts to make the workplace or your home life better. This mood you're in is not a passing phase but rather something you need to make life better for all involved, you think, Taurus. Even though most agree you'll have dissenters now. Take some needed time for yourself such as taking a walk in the park or sitting in your back yard, anything nature related.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You've had it so easy in terms of making business decisions that you're not taking the time to really think over the ones on your doorstep now. Beware that influence. You've gotten used to the extra intuition you've felt and believe anything is possible. It is but be careful to consider the logical implications. Your workmates and your lover will follow you anywhere, Gemini. Make sure it's the right decision you're making before putting it into practice. It may not be what you need now and may show up later as a loss if you don't take the time to think.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Either you're thinking about or hear from a love you found precious to you in your past. This may be a secret love you've kept to yourself for years. The memory is still fresh though even though you don't allow yourself to think of it often. Perhaps someone reminds you of this person. Your soft spot is showing as you help those who request it, Cancer. But woe to those who don't and charge in as if they are entitled. Today isn't a day to mess with you or they'll get the full brigade action from your unchecked, quick to hit, mouth. At home relish your memories.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Any action you perform now, whether good or bad, will run ahead of you into your future creating your life to come. That could be bad or good in regards to what you put into action now. Make sure that you create the best for you and your family. Your family, friends and lover take on a more relevant part of your life. You want to make the best decisions possible so that you can help them and you have better. You're more emotionally apt to say blunt things now both at work and at home, Leo. Try to reign in that part of your speech but be aware the urge to spill your thoughts without care will be around for a while. Relax.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

When someone goes against an idea of yours today, don't make a public show of putting him or her down. Think for a moment and then ask that person to give you his or her reasoning. It's better to get flies with honey, and all that. Besides you may learn how to make your product better. You surely will make the person engaging you feel better about speaking directly to you as you do with them. Just make sure that the items you're pitching are good for all concerned because you may have to live with them for some time to come.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You're unable to keep your thoughts to yourself now. They come tumbling out of your mouth without much care. You're thinking of new beginnings for you. You don't have much time to waste on those who don't understand your needs. Furthermore, you're not in the mood. That old saying about flies with honey might be one you should look into today, Libra. If you want to change your life, you need others to help. Be kind and watch your words and tone. Usually the diplomat doesn't count now unless you change your attitude.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today may push you to recognize that you have a friend in the higher places you want to occupy at work or more. It will dawn on you that this friend has always been there to give you that extra push up the ladder, so to speak. It's not that they're doing your work for you, but that they believe in you and your abilities. That's a wonderful friend to have, Scorpio. Perhaps you should acknowledge him or her. Looking around you realize that your friends have always been there for you as you have been for them. You're not alone.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You feel more energetic now and ready to go to work. Mind and body are willing to help you do what you need and give you quick information without feeling you're walking in water. You may find that you want to do more physical things now instead of being behind a desk. Stretching your muscles help you to feel alive with each movement. That doesn't mean running to the gym for a good workout. It could be moving boxes at work. Make sure your thoughts are helpful to you today before putting them into action, Sagittarius. You count now as you can tell by your blunt speech.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Being emotional seems to be your nature now. You're unused to these feelings and it's making you speak more plainly than you generally do. Candor is what you think you need, Capricorn, so you give it to others as well even when you might need a little tenderness to go along with it. Powerful feelings push you towards being more impulsive than you are. It's probably all about love. Think, which you are used to doing before you move. Know what you're getting into before you march into something you may live to regret or at least rethink. You want more and it could influence your job.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

"Home is where the heart is," seems to be a true statement for you especially now. You appreciate home and heart more than you have in a while. You realize how those you love are part of your work place because they encourage you to do the best you can, Aquarius. Then they wait for you to show them the attention you're work place gets. The only problem for them is that they have you for less time than work does. Thoughts have been running through your mind about where you'd be without those you love. Express your appreciation to loved ones just as you enjoy being acknowledged at work.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You see life's items and events through a more practical eye but you keep your gut involved. It works to show you in the best light possible at work and at home. Your boss might ask you to lead a work task force using your own thoughts and ideas to create something extraordinary. That's because everyone around you now feels your ability to make it work. You've got anyone involved in the job ready to help you with enthusiasm for your work. You see this spill over into your homelife as well. Take some time to relax, Pisces. You might need the extra energy in the coming days.

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	Niger	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
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- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h.

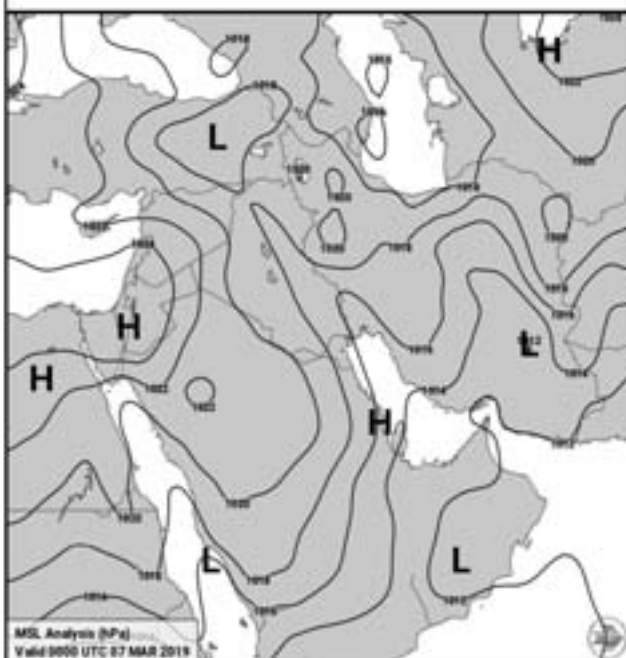
BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind to wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	16 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	25 °C	10 °C
ABDALY	25 °C	11 °C
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C
JAHRA	25 °C	14 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	24 °C	14 °C
SALMIYAH	22 °C	16 °C
AHMADI	22 °C	15 °C
NUWAISIB	24 °C	13 °C
WAFRA	25 °C	13 °C
SALMY	23 °C	08 °C

SFC. CHART 07/03/2019 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	03/08	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	26 °C	10 °C	SW-NW	15 - 40 km/h
Saturday	03/09	Warm	23 °C	07 °C	NW	20 - 40 km/h
Sunday	03/10	Warm	25 °C	10 °C	NW	20 - 40 km/h
Monday	03/11	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	26 °C	09 °C	NW	08 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:49
Sunrise	06:08
Zuhr	11:59
Asr	15:21
Sunset	17:51
Isha	19:08

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	25 °C
MIN. Temp.	12 °C
MAX. RH	67 %
MIN. RH	24 %
MAX. Wind	N 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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EMERGENCY

112

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Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Business

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

38 Under IMF watch, ghost workers sap Tunisia's phosphate wealth



40 No internet and cameras at the door: Ghosn's bail conditions



41 China's Huawei sues US over federal ban on its products



NANTES: A worker is pictured in the flowers area at the MIN (wholesale trading centre) of Reze, near Nantes, western France, yesterday. The European Central Bank yesterday announced fresh measures to juice the slowing eurozone economy, saying interest rates would remain at historic lows at least until the end of 2019. — AFP

ECB acts to curb eurozone slowdown

Interest rates to remain at historic lows until 2019 end

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank yesterday announced fresh measures to juice the slowing eurozone economy, saying interest rates would remain at historic lows at least until the end of 2019 and offering new rounds of cheap loans to banks to keep credit flowing.

Markets have long priced in “lower for longer” interest rates as there has been little sign of inflation perking up in the eurozone. But the ECB’s launch of new quarterly “targeted long-term refinancing operations” (TLTROs) for banks from September is an unexpectedly early move to counteract a euro area slowdown.

ECB staff were expected to offer a slashed growth and inflation forecast for 2019 after the March meeting, matching a gaggle of international organizations like the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and OECD. Geopolitical uncertainty, stuttering output in emerging markets and trade conflicts helped put the brakes on expansion in late 2018, alongside painful one-off effects like new emissions tests that have slowed the car industry.

The weak patch meant that just three months after ending a 2.6-trillion-euro (\$2.9 trillion) “quantitative easing” (QE) stimulus for the 19-nation eurozone in December, the ECB was under pressure to show it still had options to buttress growth. “The measures, as such, are not a major surprise but the moment of the announcement is,” economist Carsten Brzeski of ING Diba bank said.

“It is clearly an attempt to stay ahead of the curve” by preventing the work the ECB has done to loosen financial conditions in recent years from being undone, he added. President Mario Draghi will unveil the central bank’s updated growth forecasts and explain the thinking behind its decision to intervene quickly at a 2:30 pm (1330 GMT) press conference.

Cheap loans to banks

The ECB’s renewal of its TLTRO scheme will allow banks to borrow from the ECB for periods of up to two years once per quarter between September 2019 and March 2021. “These new operations will help to preserve favorable bank lending

conditions and the smooth transmission of monetary policy,” the ECB said.

Like previous rounds of TLTROs, the program “will feature built-in incentives for credit conditions to remain favorable”. In the past, those incentives have included negative interest rates for banks showing they were lending more to firms and households—effectively meaning the ECB would pay them to borrow its cash.—AFP



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank (ECB), giving a press conference following the meeting of the Governing Council in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

Qatar raises \$12 billion in bond sale

DOHA: Qatar has sold bonds worth \$12 billion (nine billion euros), the finance ministry said yesterday, attracting strong demand.

“The state of Qatar has achieved a successful return to the international financial markets with a total of three tranches—worth \$12 billion,” said a ministry statement carried by the official Qatar News Agency (QNA). The sale received orders of more than \$50 billion, it said. In 2018, the gas-rich state raised \$12 billion in its first dollar bond sale in two years. — AFP

Business

Under IMF watch, ghost workers sap Tunisia's phosphate wealth

Govt needs export revenues to cut deficits, help economy

METLAOUI, Tunisia: Tunisia's state phosphate firm CPG pays Abdel-Basset Klifhi a salary of \$280 a month, even though he spends most days in his favorite cafe in the southern town of Metlaoui.

He is one of 21,000 people taken on by the Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa (CPG) since Tunisia's autocrat president Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali was toppled in 2011. Since then, the economy has been in crisis and CPG has lost its spot as the country's top exporter. Unemployment, inflation and deficits have shot up and the value of the dinar currency has plummeted. Loans from the International Monetary Fund have kept the government afloat.

CPG's hiring spree brought its total workforce to about 30,000 and aimed to reduce the number of unemployed to stop protests destabilizing the transition to democracy. Thousands more are still jobless, however, and some block roads to CPG daily to demand work. Others on the payroll want pay rises and frequently go on strike. Phosphate production has halved since 2011 and CPG's losses have accumulated as the wage bill grew. Employees point to other inefficiencies at the company.

CPG's declining fortunes have highlighted the

government's failure to reform the bloated state companies that dominate the economy and have put Tunisia on a collision course with international donors. They have also deprived the government of crucial export revenues needed to turn the economy around and create real jobs to end the daily protests and unrest, which largely target CPG.

"I get 850 dinars (\$279.62) a month without doing any work," said former protestor and CPG employee Abdel-Basset. The company spends about \$70 million a year of its \$180 million annual budget on salaries, Industry and Energy Minister Slim Feriani told Reuters. His ministry oversees CPG. "The hirings that took place after the revolution years were aimed at buying social peace but increased the suffering of the company," he said.

"We are aware that they are not doing anything."

IMF delays

He said the company has lost almost \$1 billion a year since 2011 because of disruption caused by the protests. It has only had 4,500 production days out of a possible 14,000 at its five mines since 2011,

“ I get 850 dinars (\$279.62) a month without doing any work ”



A general view of the Mdhilla phosphate production plant in Mdhilla, Tunisia. —AFP

according to company documents seen by Reuters.

"This...could have prevented us from borrowing from the IMF," said Feriani. Phosphates accounted for about 10 percent of Tunisia's exports before 2011, when olive oil replaced it as the top export. In 2018 phosphate had shrunk to about 4 percent.

Tunisia agreed a \$2.6 billion loan with the IMF in 2016. So far four instalments worth \$1.4 billion

have been paid but each one was delayed because reforms fell behind the agreed program. Public sector salaries and reform of public companies were among the sticking points with the IMF. Analysts expect a new confrontation with the lender after the government raised salaries at public companies, including CPG, state airline Tunisair, and state energy firm STEG in November. —Reuters

'Nearly a third' of UK billionaires moved to tax havens

LONDON: Nearly a third of Britain's billionaires have either moved or are relocating to tax havens, where some have broken UK law by bankrolling political parties, a major investigation said yesterday. The Times newspaper published a series of reports detailing allegations of Britain's ultra-rich hiding billions of pounds from the UK Treasury in taxes over the past decade. The report came out days after the government drew public fury for delaying a vote on proposed legislation aimed at ending secret company ownership in offshore territories.

"We must stop tax evasion so that the wealthiest pay their fair share," Margaret Hodge, a leading lawmaker from the main opposition Labor Party who co-sponsored the tax haven measure, tweeted in response to The Times reports. "Public registers and more transparency are the next big step for fairer tax." Prime Minister Theresa May's government did not immediately respond to the investigation.

Knights and dames

The Times said that 28 out of the 93 British billionaires it found through public records "have moved to tax havens or are in the process of relocating". It said almost half of the 28 have left in the past decade. The Times said those in the process of moving included Jim Ratcliffe, Britain's richest man and a major Brexit supporter. His chemicals firm is valued at £35 billion (\$46 billion). —AFP

China Feb forex reserves rise to 6-month high, eases outflow worry

BEIJING: China's foreign exchange reserves in February rose to their highest in six months as growing optimism over US-China trade talks buoyed the yuan currency, easing worries about capital outflows from the slowing economy. While China's economy continues to cool, analysts believe the risk of strong capital outflows has greatly diminished in recent months as the yuan regained its footing and foreign investors piled back into the country's battered stock markets.

Chinese foreign exchange reserves, the world's largest rose by \$2.26 billion in February to \$3.090 trillion, central bank data showed yesterday, marking the highest level since August 2018.

Economists polled by Reuters had expected reserves would fall \$920 million to \$3.087 trillion. The yuan gained 0.09 percent against dollar in February, and is up more than 2 percent so far this year. The dollar index against other major currencies rose 0.6 percent in February.

Financial markets' bearish outlook on the yuan has seen a remarkable reversal in the last few months due to a host of factors: growing optimism for a US-Sino trade agreement, a soft US dollar and a sharp rise in foreign investors' inflows into Chinese stocks and bonds. A Reuters poll on Wednesday showed the yuan is expected to trade around current levels of 6.70 to the dollar in a year's time, in sharp contrast to January when most analysts forecast it would drop through the 7-mark to decade lows.

As part of a possible trade deal, Washington is reportedly pressing China for a promise that it will not devalue its currency,

which has further underpinned the yuan.

A source briefed on the trade negotiations said on Sunday that the world's largest economies appear close to an agreement that would roll back US tariffs on Chinese goods, as Washington urges China to make structural economic changes and eliminate retaliatory tariffs on US goods.

China's state planner pledged on Tuesday to increase the flexibility of the yuan's exchange rate, setting off speculation that a tweak to official wording could mean changes to its tightly managed currency regime. China's economic growth cooled to 6.6 percent in 2018, the slowest pace in 28 years, and is widely expected to lose more momentum this year.

Go with the flows?

So far, tighter Chinese capital controls have discouraged heavy outflows like those seen in the last downturn in 2015, but the yuan still fell 5.3 percent versus the dollar last year. Though not a major factor, increasing inflows of foreign capital have helped offset some of the pressure this year. Net flows into the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets via the Stock Connect scheme as of end February topped 120 billion yuan (\$17.9 billion), nearly four times that in the first two months of 2018.

Overseas investors are also showing a strong, sustained appetite for Chinese government bonds as the country's debt is added into main global benchmarks this year. For now, analysts are closely watching both trade talks and Chinese economic data for clues on where the yuan goes next.

Even if Washington and Beijing reach a deal to end their trade war, China is expected to implement more measures in coming months to avert the risk of a sharper economic slowdown. More forceful policy easing measures such as interest rate cuts could put the yuan back under the gun.

The value of China's gold reserves rose slightly to \$79.498 billion in February from \$79.319 billion at the end of January, as the central bank increased the total amount of gold reserves to 60.260 million fine troy ounces from 59.940 million troy ounces. The central bank did not explain why it bought more gold. —Reuters

Business

BoE most likely to cut rates in a no-deal Brexit: Tenreyro

Euro clings to \$1.13 as ECB stimulus signal awaited

LONDON: The Bank of England is more likely to cut interest rates than raise them in the event of a no-deal Brexit, rate-setter Silvana Tenreyro said, the latest BoE official to back the idea of coming to the economy's rescue if it suffers a Brexit shock. The BoE has said its response to a chaotic exit from the European Union would not be automatic because a fall in the value of the pound and the imposition of tariffs on trade could push up inflation, making the case for a rate hike.

But some individual rate-setters have said recently that they would probably back a rate cut.

"In my judgment, a situation where the negative demand effects outweigh those other effects is more likely, which would necessitate a loosening in policy," Tenreyro said in a speech given in Glasgow.

"But it is easy to envisage other plausible scenarios requiring the opposite response."

Last week Governor Mark Carney said the BoE would probably give more support to the economy if it suffers the shock of a no-deal Brexit. Monetary Policy Committee member Gertjan Vlieghe has also said rates were most likely to stay on hold or fall in the event of a no-deal Brexit. But on Wednesday his colleague Michael Saunders stuck to the view that they could move up or down.

Britain is scheduled to leave the EU on March 29 but Prime Minister Theresa May is still seeking last-minute concessions from Brussels to secure parliamentary approval for a deal. She has also

opened the way for a possible delay to Brexit.

A Reuters poll of economists published on Wednesday put the chances of a no-deal exit from the EU at 15 percent. In the event of a smooth Brexit, Tenreyro said there would be a "small amount of tightening" needed over the next three years, although she added that she would need to see an increase in price pressures first.

Overall, Tenreyro's comments fitted with a generally more downbeat stance adopted by the BoE last month, spurred not only by Brexit but also by a slowing global economy that she ascribed to trade tensions such as US tariffs on imports from China. Tenreyro said Britain's economy had not been hitting the limits of its ability to grow without generating excessive inflation. Supply grew in line with demand over the last couple of years, if not faster, she said.

"Consequently, I suspect that we ended 2018 with some amount of spare capacity remaining in the economy," Tenreyro said. She said there was some evidence that "acting slightly later" in shifting policy might be less costly to the economy than it once was.

Euro drops

Despite recent weak productivity data, Tenreyro said she saw some evidence of a "mildly improving" trend emerging over the longer term—something that should help to ease inflationary pressures in the economy.

The euro held near three-week lows yesterday,

in places where data is scarce, such as in many poor nations, he added. "If that cost goes up, then it may be yet another factor scaring off private capital from showing up in some countries where we all agree it needs to," Hammer said.

With the right policies, developing countries could provide water, sanitation and electricity for all, expand transport, improve food security and flood protection, and move towards decarbonising their economies - all while limiting annual spending on new infrastructure to 4.5 percent of their gross domestic product up to 2030, a new report from the World Bank Group says.

Local benefits

Morocco's state-owned clean-energy company, Masen, has attracted investment into huge solar power plants in the North African country so successfully it is mulling raising its target for renewable energy to 70 percent of its electricity mix by 2030. Ali Zerouali, Masen's head of cooperation and international business development, said the state had cut risk for commercial energy developers through a range of techniques.

They include acquiring land, providing roads, water and other services, and buying the power the plants generate.

Any project backed by Masen, Zerouali added, is supposed to bring benefits to communities living nearby in the form of jobs, roads, water supplies and grid connections.

"We are trying to advocate a more holistic approach in order to share the benefits of this new trend," he said. "It's not really a matter of lowering carbon emissions: it's mainly a new lever for our economic growth."

Kirsten Snow Spalding, program director for the US-based Ceres Investor Network on Climate Risk and Sustainability, whose members collectively manage more than \$25 trillion in assets, said communities and policy makers must fix their planning priorities to support local green development.

Otherwise, cities will end up with infrastructure projects chosen by private backers, who are not in a good position to decide what is needed, she warned. But investors cannot be forced to put money into locally created plans, noted John Tidmarsh, chief investment officer at R20, an association that supports regions taking climate action.

"You want the right people around the table for specific projects, who are deciding together what each other are going to need for that project to go forward," he said. —Reuters



Silvana Tenreyro



LONDON: Governor Mark Carney said the BoE would probably give more support to the economy if it suffers the shock of a no-deal Brexit.

before a European Central Bank meeting that many hope will signal fresh stimulus and inject some life into currencies stuck in trading ranges.

The ECB is expected to cut growth forecasts and provide its strongest signal yet that more cheap long-term bank loans are coming. "We don't expect the ECB to make any changes but signal that changes are imminent," said Thu Lan Nguyen, a currencies analyst at Commerzbank. "The risks are that the euro gives up a bit more. The risks are to the downside." The euro was little changed at \$1.1313, but euro overnight

implied volatility climbed overnight to its highest since Dec 20. The dollar, measured against a basket of currencies, stood at 96.875. "Waiting for the overvalued dollar to reverse course requires patience, and is itself one driver of the lack of FX volatility," Societe Generale strategist Kit Juckes said.

The dollar should slip over the coming year because US economic growth is slowing and any boost from a resolution in the US-China trade conflict is already priced in, according to a Reuters poll of strategists. —Reuters

Investors fear to tread risky path towards building a greener world

BARCELONA: Build a road to a shopping mall, or more energy-efficient social housing? Convincing investors to bankroll construction and services that do not heat up the climate or succumb to disasters, while boosting jobs and quality of life, is a tough task, international organizations said this week.

Gathered to discuss the challenge in Barcelona, officials from development banks, businesses and governments agreed to work together to push the need for low-carbon, resilient infrastructure up the political agenda. They also said they would explore the development of common standards to help markets pour trillions of dollars into it.

Luigi Carafa, executive director of the Climate Infrastructure Partnership, which hosted the conference, said large investors, such as pension funds and insurance companies, do not know which transport, electricity, water or telecommunications projects tick the right green boxes.

"We really need to define what ... are sustainable infrastructure assets, because we need to reduce the uncertainties for institutional investors," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation after the event.

Tools that measure the environmental, social and economic impacts of projects are emerging, ranging from an online platform run by the Mexican government and the Inter-American Development Bank to a carbon savings registry for cities.

But their use remains fragmented, making it hard to compare projects and decide where to allocate money, forum participants said. Stephen Hammer, global partnerships advisor with the World Bank's climate change group, said some of the rating systems had weaker standards than the bank's own safeguards, meaning the bank could not back projects they green-lighted.

Analyzing infrastructure proposals can take time and money, especially

Rusal Q4 net profit plunged on US sanctions

HONG KONG: Russian aluminum giant Rusal suffered a net loss in the fourth quarter, it said yesterday, citing the "serious" impact of US sanctions and global trade disputes. The world's largest aluminum maker outside of China was hit by sanctions in April following a diplomatic crisis sparked by the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal in Britain.

The sanctions targeted oligarchs close to President Vladimir Putin including Rusal founder Oleg Deripaska. He resigned his seat on the board and divested as the company worked to escape the sanctions, which were eventually lifted in January.

But the blacklisting hit the bottom line of the Hong Kong-listed company, which released its annual results yesterday. The company recorded an adjusted net loss of \$17 million in the last three months of 2018. That compares with a \$338 million profit in July–September and a \$350 million profit in the fourth quarter of 2017.

Adjusted net loss for the full year was down 20.5 percent at \$856 million. "The aluminum market in 2018 was seriously affected by the... sanctions as well as by trade wars and imposed import duties that caused significant growth of premiums and prices," the company said in a statement. Rusal said it expected a more positive outlook for 2019 now that sanctions have been lifted.

Deripaska is one of several oligarchs sanctioned last year in retaliation for what the US called "the Russian government's ongoing and increasingly brazen pattern of malign activity across the world", including its interference in Syria and its seizure of Crimea. —AFP

Business

No internet and cameras at the door: Ghosn's bail conditions

Globe-trotting exec will be restricted to Japan as part of bail conditions

TOKYO: To obtain his freedom, former auto tycoon Carlos Ghosn had to stump up more than just a cool one billion yen (\$9 million) in cash. He had to submit to various conditions that even his lawyer admitted might be "inconvenient" for the former jet-setting executive.

Nevertheless, the conditions proposed by lead defense lawyer Junichiro Hironaka did the trick after two failed bail bids by a previous attorney. Those were rejected by the court on the grounds that Ghosn was a flight risk who could destroy evidence. Prosecutors had strongly opposed his release, arguing that he could seek to contact others involved in the case. If he breaks any of the conditions he could lose some or all of the \$9-million bail, or even find himself back at the Tokyo Detention Centre before his trial—which could still take months to organize.

Here are some of the major conditions of Ghosn's bail:

Residence

Ghosn may have walked free from the Tokyo Detention Centre that was his unwanted home for more than 100 days but there will still be significant restrictions on his movement while he is on bail.

He must stay in a residence in Tokyo designated by the court. A surveillance camera will be installed at the door. Footage from this camera must be submitted to the court periodically. He is not under house arrest, however, and is free to go outside to do his

shopping. He can even take short overnight domestic trips but needs the court's permission if he wishes to be absent for three days or longer.

Stuck in Japan

The globe-trotting executive with residences all over the world will be restricted to Japan as part of the bail conditions. According to the Japanese media, his lawyers will take possession of his passport, preventing him from overseas travel.

No web

As the head of three massive car companies, Ghosn was always on the move and in constant contact with his office. That will certainly change under his bail conditions. He will be allowed access to a computer, but only at his lawyer's office and the machine will not be hooked up to the internet, Hironaka confirmed to reporters. He is allowed to make phone calls but his lawyers will submit to the court the list of all the outgoing numbers dialled—to prevent him making contact with a person of interest in his case. He will not be able to use emails or the internet on any phone he uses.

No contact

Ghosn has on several occasions denounced what he sees as a "plot" within Nissan to bring him down and part of his bail requirements is that he should not meet with anyone involved in the case.



TOKYO: This photo illustration taken in Tokyo yesterday shows Japanese daily newspapers with front page coverage of the March 6 release of former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn. —AFP

This includes his former right-hand man Greg Kelly, who was released on bail on Christmas Day but faces charges of conspiring to under-report Ghosn's salary over a period of eight years.

However, according to local media, he could in

theory attend a Nissan board meeting if he secures the court's approval. He remains technically a member of the board until an Exceptional General Meeting expected April 8 where shareholders will vote on ousting him. —AFP

'Tired' Ghosn recovers, as lawyers ready 'thorough' defense

TOKYO: Former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn's top lawyer vowed yesterday to mount a "thorough" defence to restore his client's reputation, as the "tired" businessman spent his first day out of a Tokyo detention center recovering. "Of course he is tired," Junichiro Hironaka told reporters camped outside his office. "He was taken into custody unexpectedly at the airport, put in that place for more than 100 days. Wouldn't he be tired after all that?"

Hironaka kept tight-lipped on details about Ghosn, who was freed Wednesday afternoon after his shock arrest on November 19 when Japanese prosecutors stormed into his corporate jet.

He was later slapped with multiple charges of financial misconduct. In keeping with conditions for his bail worth roughly \$9 million, Ghosn has promised to live at a residence with surveillance cameras, to stay in Japan, and to use only designated computers with no internet access. Ghosn's bail should help the lawyers prepare better for his trial, Hironaka said.

Japan's judicial tradition allows authorities to keep suspects in custody for a long time to encourage confessions.

The high-profile case has shone a light on the practice often referred to as "hostage justice", sparking criticism from abroad. "I think it's good that the court granted bail even with various conditions attached, as I've been thinking it's unfair to detain the accused over a long period of time before trial in so-called 'hostage justice'," Hironaka said. "I hope 'hostage justice' will be a thing of the past. From now on, I hope we'll be able to conduct more elaborate, more thorough preparations" for the trial, he said. —AFP

UK targets surge in offshore wind power

LONDON: Britain wants offshore wind farms to provide one third of the country's electricity by 2030, the government announced yesterday, at a time when its nuclear energy ambitions are stumbling. Working with the private sector to take advantage of the island nation's surrounding waters to power homes and businesses with increasing amounts of renewable energy, the government said the Offshore Wind Sector Deal will slash the UK's reliance on fossil fuels.

Offshore wind currently provides about seven percent of British electricity. The new initiative "will drive a surge in the clean, green offshore wind revolution... bringing investment into coastal communities and ensuring we maintain our position as global leaders in this growing sector", Claire Perry, Britain's energy and clean growth minister, said in a statement.

"By 2030 a third of our electricity will come from offshore wind, generating thousands of high-quality jobs across the UK," she added. The government said that the deal "will mean for the first time in UK history there will be more electricity from renewables than fossil fuels, with 70 percent of British electricity predicted to be from low carbon sources by 2030".

Additionally, it "will look to seize on the opportunities presented by the UK's 7,000 miles of coastline, as the industry continues to be a coastal catalyst for many of the UK's former fishing villages and ports", the government statement said. Yesterday's announcement came after Japanese giant Hitachi in January froze construction of a nuclear power station in Wales owing to financing difficulties, dealing a major blow to Britain's low-carbon energy strategy. Britain has put nuclear power also at the heart of its low-carbon energy policy, in contrast to Europe's biggest economy Germany, which is phasing it out in the wake of Japan's 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. —AFP

UK insurer Aviva warns outlook weaker

LONDON: British insurer Aviva yesterday warned that its outlook would be weakened by economic uncertainty surrounding Brexit, but added it was well positioned to "minimize" adverse impact.

Aviva, which appointed new chief executive Maurice Tulloch at the start of the week, issued the gloomy warning in its mixed 2018 results statement. "Given current uncertainties, including the unknown future impacts of Brexit on the economies of the United Kingdom and Europe, our near-term outlook entering 2019 is more muted than our outlook a year ago," said chief financial officer Thomas Stoddard.

He added that "it will be difficult" to sustain underlying earnings of seven percent this year—a level enjoyed by the group in 2017 and 2018. Aviva said net profit rose 4.7 percent to almost £1.6 billion (\$2.1 billion, 1.8 billion euros) in 2018 from a year earlier, helped by lower tax charges.

Chairman Adrian Montague admitted however that it had experienced a "difficult" year, with Britain set to leave the European Union at the end of this month.

"Uncertainty in the political and economic backdrop intensified during the year and this was reflected in a difficult year for investment market performance across most asset classes," Montague said.

"In our home market, the UK, the prolonged and fraught process of negotiating Britain's exit from the European Union has weighed down on growth in the economy.

"But Aviva is well placed to deal with this: our locally incorporated and locally regulated businesses in Europe have prepared to minimize the potential operational impact."

Tulloch meanwhile was appointed on Monday with immediate effect, leaving his job as head of the group's international division. He took over from Mark Wilson who stepped down late last year. —AFP

Business

China's Huawei sues US over federal ban on its products

Lawsuit targets an 'unconstitutional exercise of executive and/or judicial power'

SHENZHEN: Tech giant Huawei yesterday opened a legal front in its counter-offensive against US warnings that it could aid Chinese intelligence services, filing suit to overturn a US law that bars federal agencies from buying its products. Huawei said the case was filed in a US District Court in Plano, Texas, challenging what it called an "unconstitutional" 2019 defense bill that prevents government agencies from buying its equipment, services, or working with third parties that are Huawei customers.

The move may send a global signal that Huawei is willing to use all means, including national courts, to prevent exclusion from a race to the 5G market—the future of high-speed telecommunications.

"The US Congress has repeatedly failed to produce any evidence to support its restrictions on Huawei products. We are compelled to take this legal action as a proper and last resort," Huawei's rotating chairman Guo Ping said. Guo added the company was seeking unspecified damages. "The US government is sparing no effort to smear the company," he said at a news conference at Huawei's corporate headquarters in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen.

Guo also said the US government "has hacked our servers and stolen our emails and source code", without providing details. Washington has long

considered Huawei a potential threat due to the background of founder Ren Zhengfei, a former Chinese army engineer. The concerns have escalated as Huawei has risen to become the world leader in telecom networking equipment and one of the top smartphone manufacturers alongside Samsung and Apple. A law recently enacted by Beijing that obliges Chinese companies to aid the government on national security has added to the concerns.

No 'backdoors'

Huawei's lawsuit targets an "unconstitutional exercise of executive and/or judicial power" that deprived it of a "fair hearing" to rebut allegations against it. It also says the National Defense Authorization Act violates a bill of attainder clause by "singling out Huawei for

punishment". Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said in Beijing that it was "entirely legitimate and understandable for enterprises to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests through legal means". He said Beijing had issued an official protest against the defence bill's "negative content concerning China". Washington has warned that Huawei systems could be manipulated by Beijing to spy on other countries and disrupt critical communications, and is urging nations to shun the company in 5G networks.

“ The US government is sparing no effort to smear the company ”



DONGGUAN, China: This picture taken on Wednesday shows a general view of a shuttle train station at Huawei Songshan Lake Campus during a media tour in Dongguan, China's Guangdong province. —AFP

Huawei is expected to play a key role in the coming rollout of ultra-fast 5G networks that will allow wide adoption of next-generation technologies like artificial intelligence. The firm has responded to the pressure with an aggressive PR campaign in recent months, with Ren, its reclusive founder, denying the claims in several foreign media interviews.

This week the company gave news organizations a tour of its production lines and R&D facilities in southern Guangdong province. The clash is heightened by ongoing US-China trade talks and

the December arrest of Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou, Ren's daughter.

A Canadian court on Wednesday set a May 8 date for the start of Meng's hearing into a US extradition request over charges that she and Huawei circumvented US sanctions against Iran. Two Huawei affiliates also have been charged with stealing trade secrets from telecom group T-Mobile. Two Canadians were subsequently detained in China in suspected retaliation over Meng's arrest. —AFP

Russia telecoms giant MTS to pay \$850m in US corruption case

MOSCOW: Russia's leading telecoms firm said yesterday it had agreed to pay \$850 million to settle a US corruption case over huge bribes paid to the family of Uzbekistan's former president.

The case shed light on massive corruption in Uzbekistan under former president Islam Karimov, who ruled the ex-Soviet republic from 1990 until his death in 2016. MTS, based in Moscow and listed on the New York Stock Exchange, said the settlement had been agreed with the US Justice Department and the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The deals "mark the closure of the investigations into the company's acquisition and operation of its former subsidiary in Uzbekistan," MTS said in a statement.

In agreeing to the fine "MTS affirmed its commitment" to complying with anti-corruption legislation, it said. MTS was in a long-running dispute with the Uzbek authorities, which seized the company's local subsidiary in 2012 after cancelling its operating licenses for alleged tax evasion.

The Uzbek subsidiary, which had 9.5 million subscribers by the end of 2011, filed for bankruptcy in 2013.

The SEC said that MTS had "bribed an Uzbek official" related to Karimov to obtain and retain business operations in

Uzbekistan, a Central Asian nation of more than 32 million people. "The company engaged in egregious misconduct for nearly a decade, secretly funnelling hundreds of millions of dollars to a corrupt official," the SEC said in a statement. An investigation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project previously said that the subsidiary, which was known as Uzdurobota before it was acquired by MTS, had paid hundreds of millions of dollars to companies owned by Karimov's daughter Gulnara.

The OCCRP, an NGO that works with investigative reporters mainly in Eastern Europe, alleged that MTS made payments in 2004 and 2007 to purchase stakes in the company. MTS was not the only telecoms company involved. "Karimova squeezed more than \$1 billion worth of payments... out of international telecom-related companies," OCCRP said.

Some commentators in Russia expressed dismay that the US was fining Russian companies for operations in third countries. "What concern does the US have about the far-away Uzbekistan and Russian operators?" said a journalist on BFM business radio, pointing out that "the money will go to the American budget, not the Uzbek one."

Uzbekistan is led by Karimov's former prime minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who has moved to end the country's economic isolation and removed visa restrictions for travellers from European Union countries and the United States.

Gulnara Karimova, once a high-profile diplomat and pop singer, was being held under house arrest after being convicted on fraud and money laundering charges in 2017 and sentenced to five years.

Uzbek authorities this week said she had violated the terms of her house arrest and had been sent to prison where she would remain until the end of her sentence. —AFP

Restructuring costs burden Deutsche Post in 2018

BERLIN: German logistics group Deutsche Post DHL said yesterday that net profits fell sharply in 2018, a year marked by headwinds for its postal arm that implemented a far-reaching restructuring.

Bosses in Bonn said last summer that they would reorganize the postal unit to tackle the long-term decline in traditional post and the surging growth in package deliveries stoked by online shopping.

Pointing to a "short-term burden" on operating, or underlying profit from the restructuring, chief executive Frank Appel nevertheless judged that "we have thus created the conditions for reaching our 2020 targets". Last year net profit across Deutsche Post fell 23.5 percent, to 2.1 billion euros (\$2.4 billion). Underlying profit fell less sharply, shedding 15.5 percent to 3.2 billion euros, while revenues were up 1.8 percent at 61.5 billion.

Although profits fell even faster in the fourth quarter last year, Deutsche Post was confident enough for 2019 to raise its target for operating profit.

The group now expects to make between 3.9 and 4.3 billion euros before interest and taxes this year, saying "the measures initiated to raise profitability in the German post and parcel business are expected to be one of the main factors" in the rise. Further out, Deutsche Post forecast an operating profit of "at least" 5.0 billion euros in 2020. —AFP

Sports

Kenya athletes stumbling over stalled stadium repairs

ITEN: Kenya hosts the world junior athletics championships in just over a year, hoping to showcase its future stars and the potential the country has to stage international athletics competitions. Athletes are training hard, but preparations for the event have stalled amid construction delays and the government's failure to deliver promised upgrades to sports facilities including new stadiums.

"Our athletes have suffered a lot," said Elias Kiptum Mahindi, a two-time winner of the Linz marathon in Austria, who has trained in the high-altitude town of Iten, the cradle of Kenyan champions, for the past decade. Iten, 2,400 meters (7,874 feet) above sea level, has been the training site for Olympic medal winners including David Rudisha, the former world marathon record holder Wilson Kipsang, and current women's marathon record holder Mary Keitany.

"The athletes really like the serenity Iten provides," Mahindi said. "The climate and the conditions here are very good." But ambitious plans to improve facilities have resulted in running tracks being closed for months and no sign of them reopening. "We are urging the national government and those responsible to help us," Mahindi said. When Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta was first elected in 2013, he listed nine stadiums to be built or refurbished. They included the famous Kamariny stadium in Iten, and the two big stadiums in Eldoret and Kapsabet, both named after Kenya's legendary athlete Kipchoge Keino. Six years later, none of the stadiums are ready.

Nowhere to run

In Iten, the Kamariny public training ground — a track that has launched the careers of multiple champions and driven

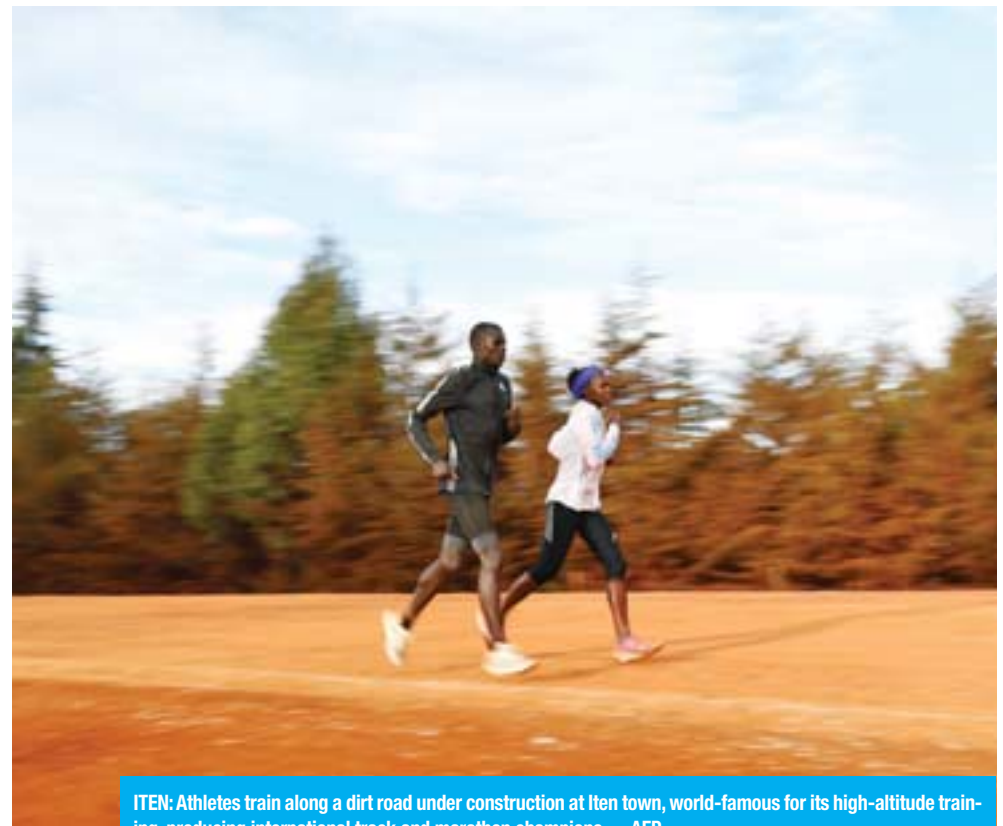
Kenya's dominance in middle and long distance running for over half a century — is closed. Athletes are forced to travel to running tracks in Eldoret, some 35 kilometers away, or in the neighboring town of Tambach, 11 kilometers away. Colm O'Connell, who left Ireland for Kenya's Rift Valley over 40 years ago and has coached over 20 Olympic and World champions, has been forced to hire a bus every day to take his junior athletes for training to Tambach.

"It has become very expensive," said O'Connell, noting that crowding is also a problem as runners from miles around converge on the limited facilities at Tambach. "Even when you reach there you're not assured of getting the space to train," he said. In Eldoret, the athletes have to join a waiting list for training at the small university track each morning and evening.

As the clock ticks down to next year's championships, athletes point out that delayed government plans to upgrade facilities risk damaging a sport that brings intense national pride to the country. "The tracks were supposed to be ready by now — so that at least we can use them to train and prepare all the teams," said athletics coach Kenneth Kibet. "It is a big problem for the whole country."

Fund-raising for own track

Among the projects is an expensive all-weather tartan running track at the iconic Kamariny stadium in Iten. There is little sign of progress: the stadium is closed and construction is stalled. Kibet said athletes would have preferred that the existing dirt track have been simply upgraded, so at least they would have somewhere to train. "We can't come here," Kibet said. "We would have preferred that this track be left as it is." Some fear that Kenya has



ITEN: Athletes train along a dirt road under construction at Iten town, world-famous for its high-altitude training, producing international track and marathon champions. —AFP

not learned its lessons from the past. Kenya lost the hosting rights for the football African Nations Championships (CHAN) in 2018. The overall governing body, the Confederation of African Football, ruled the country was not in a position to host the event since the stadiums were not ready in time.

The government insists, however, that it is doing what it can. Former sports minister Rashid Achesa toured the Eldoret and Kamariny stadiums in Iten in January and

called on the contractors to speed up their work. He said government money allocated for the stadium constructions had been diverted to other priorities and the government was seeking new funding sources.

Frustrated athletes have taken matters into their own hands and have launched a fund-raising campaign to build a basic track nearer to Iten. "Athletes have come together," Kibet said. "We don't need complex rooms, just the field to be upgraded." —AFP

Japan's sumos hit by whisker ban

TOKYO: Japanese sumo officials have introduced a crackdown on beards, calling them "indecent" and telling wrestlers they must look spick and span during competitions under strict, new rules on personal grooming. The draconian whisker ban is part of fresh regulations also barring tattoos and long nails, a sumo spokesman told AFP on Wednesday, as the authorities look to clean up the image of Japan's roly-poly sport.

"It was stipulated that items such as long nails, tattoos and beards grown out of an excessive wish for good luck shall be banned," said the spokesman for the Japan Sumo Association (JSA). Superstitious sumo wrestlers often decline to shave their beards during tournaments as they believe it brings them luck, but the sumo association has decided they will no longer tolerate such slovenliness. "Wrestlers must preserve their personal hygiene," JSA elder Oguruma told reporters after a board meeting. "Officials and referees will be on the lookout. The sumo ring is sacred and it's important spectators don't see anything unsightly." —AFP

Federer shies away from Superman tag

INDIAN WELLS: Roger Federer is still savoring his latest remarkable milestone, but the Swiss great says his 100th career title isn't a sign he's super-human. "The problem is, people always elevate the superstar athlete to like Superman status like we're super-human and all that stuff," Federer said Wednesday as he prepared for his next challenge at the Indian Wells Masters. "I don't see myself like that. Being perfect doesn't exist," Federer said. "Everybody has their flaws. So do I."

Federer, owner of a men's record 20 Grand Slam titles, reached the 100-title milestone with a ruthless 6-4, 6-4 dismantling of Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas in the Dubai Championship final last Sunday. Seeded fourth at Indian Wells, he'll launch his bid for a sixth title in the California Desert exactly one week later when he takes on either Peter Gojowczyk or Andreas Seppi in the second round. He could find himself taking on Swiss compatriot Stan Wawrinka, a three-time Grand Slam champion, in the third round in a quarter that also includes sixth-seeded Kei Nishikori of Japan.

"It is something incredible to see, how (often Federer)

plays at a high level and does not have many injuries," said Nishikori. "For sure, he works so much harder than everybody." Federer, 37, said he never envisioned winning 100 titles — becoming just the second player along with 109-time winner Jimmy Connors to hit triple digits. "It's an achievement that I never thought I was going to make and one I only started thinking about maybe in the last nine months or year or so, ever since maybe I got to 96 or 97," he said.

Federer's 99th trophy had come last October at his home event in Basel. He missed out on the century at the Paris Masters, the ATP Finals in London and then at Melbourne — failing to make the final at any of those events, but when he got there in Dubai there was no room for doubt. "First attempt in a finals it's nice to pass the hurdle and get to 100 rather than going to every single event from now on and going 'Is this going to be the week where you're going to reach 100?' and going 'Yeah, I hope so,'" he said.

"I think all the players would have gotten fed up with that too so I'm happy I got it out of the way. "What I like about it is that it's maybe also a little time to reflect on all these great moments and great titles that I've had," he said. "For me, they're all very important. Some were more important than others, some were nicer than others but at the end everyone has a special meaning for me." —AFP

Sports

Friday, March 8, 2019

LeBron passes Jordan for 4th on all-time NBA points list

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James overtook his boyhood idol and inspiration, Michael Jordan, for fourth on the NBA's all-time scoring list Wednesday, making history with a driving layup for the Los Angeles Lakers in a home loss to Denver. The 34-year-old superstar matched the Chicago Bulls legend's career total of 32,292 points with his first 12 of the game, then made history with 5:38 remaining in the second quarter and sank a free throw to complete a 3-point play.

"A lot of stuff I've done in my career — this ranks right up there at the top with winning the championship," James said. "It's just crazy, to be honest. It's beyond crazy." During the next timeout, James went to the bench and buried his head in a towel, appearing to cry while a video tribute played on the scoreboard and he reflected upon the achievement of surpassing the icon he emulated. "It was very emotional. A lot of things were going on inside me at the time," he said. "I didn't want to show what was going on behind that towel."

Denver, led by Will Barton's 23 points, defeated the Lakers 115-99 to pull within a game of Golden State for the Western Conference lead. The Nuggets (43-21) closed with a 26-12 run to foil a Lakers rally. But the night belonged to James, who drew "Thank You MJ 23" on his shoes. "For a kid from Akron, Ohio that needed inspiration and some type of positive influence, MJ was that guy for me. I watched him from afar, wanted to be like MJ," James said. "Me and my friends, all we ever talked about was MJ. He was everything. 'You have no idea. Some days you don't even think you're going to make it to the next day because of the way things are going.' 'Hopefully I can inspire the next kid like myself.'"

Jordan and James are often compared as

the best players in NBA history. James wears the same No. 23 worn by Jordan and recalled being 15 when he first met his idol. "It was like meeting Jesus. That's what meeting MJ was like, because I never thought I'd ever meet him," James said. "He was like lightning in a bottle for me. 'MJ had a lot to do with me making it out (of poverty) as well as my mother. But Mike had no idea what he was doing for a kid growing up a 45-minute flight from Chicago when he was doing all that work.'"

James finished with 31 points, moving his fourth-best NBA career total to 32,311, and added seven rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers (30-35). James, the top scorer among active players, made his points in 1,190 games compared to 1,072 for Jordan. The next target for James would be retired Lakers star guard Kobe Bryant, who is third on the NBA career list with 33,643 points. Lakers legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar holds the NBA points record with 38,387, with long-time Utah great Karl Malone ranked second on 36,928.

On his current pace, James figures to pass Bryant next season and could overtake Abdul-Jabbar by the end of his Lakers contract in the 2021-22 campaign if he stays healthy. James hit two 3-pointers in the first quarter but also went 0-4 from the free throw line. He added a lay-in and jumper to match Jordan early in the second quarter and then broke the record soon after. "It was a pretty awesome moment," Lakers coach Luke Walton said. "Knowing that moment was a few minutes ahead of him, I think that did something to him, nerve-racking, that he doesn't feel normally at the start of a game."



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers dunks the ball against the Denver Nuggets on March 6 2019 at STAPLES Center. —AFP

LaVine leads Bulls win

In other games, Zach LaVine scored 39 points, making the decisive layup with 1.6 seconds remaining, and host Chicago edged Philadelphia 108-107. LaMarcus Aldridge scored 32 points to power San Antonio over host Atlanta 111-104 and Spencer Dinwiddie netted 28 to lead Brooklyn over Cleveland 113-107. Gordon Hayward's jumper with two seconds remaining gave Boston a dramatic 111-109

victory at Sacramento while Bradley Beal scored 30 points to lead Washington over Dallas 132-123. Canada's Kelly Olynyk scored 22 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to lead Miami's 91-84 win at Charlotte while Andre Drummond scored 31 points to lead Detroit over Minnesota 131-114. Frenchman Rudy Gobert had 22 points and 13 rebounds to help visiting Utah over New Orleans 114-104 and Phoenix beat New York 107-96 in a duel of the NBA's worst clubs. —AFP

China's Lin Dan dumped out of All England Open

LONDON: Chinese badminton superstar Lin Dan crashed out of the All England Open in the first round, losing to Japan's Kanta Tsuneyama. Lin, a six-time winner of the tournament who is now ranked 12th in the world, fell to a 19-21, 21-14, 21-7 defeat in Birmingham on Wednesday. The 35-year-old, nicknamed "Super Dan", said he struggled with his concentration.

"Every player is fighting very hard to win more points because of the coming Olympics," he was quoted as saying by Chinese state news agency Xinhua. "I will play more tournaments for more ranking points." Tsuneyama, 22, who is ranked 17th, said his "physical ability" gave him the edge. "This tournament is the greatest, so I really want to win as much as possible and I feel the atmosphere here is unique, so I want to proceed as far as I can — I feel very confident now," he said.

In front of noisy support the Japanese player struggled against one of the greatest shuttlers ever in the first game but turned the tide after that. Tsuneyama accelerated away midway through game two with five consecutive points and Lin never got close in the decider, with the younger player showing more energy. Current Olympic champion and two-time All England champion Chen Long, the fourth seed, crashed out 21-15, 21-17 to Denmark's Rasmus Gemke. —AFP

British Olympic champion Skinner retires from track

PARIS: Britain's Callum Skinner, a team sprint Olympic gold medalist, has retired at 26 due to health reasons and will now throw his efforts into promoting athletes' rights. "I am calling time on my elite cycling career," Skinner said to general surprise on Thursday, just three weeks after becoming one of the leading members of the 'Global Athlete' rights body.

Alongside Jason Kenny and Philip Hindes, Skinner was part of Britain's trio of team sprint gold winners at the Rio Velodrome in 2016, providing the final kick to the line that sealed their razor's edge win over New Zealand. Skinner, who is dyslexic, also won silver in the Rio individual sprint behind teammate Kenny. While he won a Commonwealth Games bronze in 2018, his days as an athlete have since been cut short by sickness. "I have been on an extended break due to my health deteriorating," the Manchester-based Scotsman said on his personal blog. "I have made incredible progress and I'm pleased to say have almost fully recovered," Skinner said without mentioning his ailment. "I appreciate that 26 might seem to many quite young to be transitioning away from the track, but I have never considered myself just an athlete," Skinner said.

"My focus and effort now lies in working in partnership with British Cycling to continue to make the athlete experience more human," he explained. Global Athlete, a non-profit organization funded by donations, aims to give a greater voice to competitors in Olympic and Paralympic sports. Skinner spoke last year at an emergency summit at the White House, accusing the International Olympic Committee of letting athletes down by refusing to heed calls for reform. —AFP

Former World Series MVP Perez to miss entire 2019 season

LOS ANGELES: Kansas City Royals catcher Salvador Perez, the 2015 World Series Most Valuable Player from Venezuela, will undergo tendon replacement surgery Wednesday and miss the entire 2019 Major League Baseball season. The Royals announced Tuesday that Perez, who suffered the injury a week ago during a workout, will need Tommy John surgery after being examined by a specialist Tuesday in Los Angeles.

The 28-year-old South American standout, a six-time All-Star and five-time Gold Glove award winner for fielding skills, underwent an MRI exam last week that showed damage to the right elbow ulnar collateral ligament. If surgery and rehabilitation go well, Perez might return in time for the start of the 2020 season. Reserve Cam Gallagher and rookie Meibrys Vilorio are set to handle catching duties this season.

"There are going to have to be a lot of guys who have to step up," said Kansas City's Alex Gordon. "It won't just be one guy. You just can't replace a guy like Sal. But Cam is capable of filling in for him and we're excited to see what he can do." —AFP

Sports

India-Pak boycott threat looms over cricket's global showpiece

NEW DELHI: Border tensions between India and Pakistan are casting a cloud over this year's cricket World Cup with the threat of a boycott hanging over their highly-anticipated clash in England. There have been calls for India to forfeit their June 16 match against Pakistan after a suicide bomb attack in Indian-administered Kashmir claimed by a militant group based in Pakistan in which 40 Indian troops died.

Tit-for-tat air strikes and an aerial dogfight followed, igniting fears of an all-out conflict, but the crisis appeared to ease when Pakistan returned an Indian pilot who was shot down and captured. But doubts remain over the fate of the group stage match in Manchester. The ball rests firmly with India's politicians, who are not likely to make any decision until nearer the match, after cricketers and sports officials said they will abide by any government call for a boycott.

Vinod Rai, a senior official of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), told reporters after the Kashmir attack that they had written to the International Cricket Council (ICC) to demand tough security at the World Cup, which begins in England and Wales on May 30. Rai confirmed a boycott decision would only be made at a later date — and after consulting the government. India captain Virat Kohli said the players would respect any instruction from the government or board. "Our stand is simple: we stick by what the nation wants to do and what the BCCI decides to do," Kohli told reporters. "That is basically our opinion. Whatever

the government and the board decide, we will go by that and we will respect that."

ICC involvement 'unlikely'

In the letter to the ICC, the BCCI urged "the cricketing community to sever ties with countries from which terrorism emanates". The Kashmir attack was claimed by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed militant group, which India says operates as a proxy for Islamabad, a charge Pakistan denies. ESPNcricinfo.com senior editor Sharda Ugra believes the ICC are unlikely to get involved and the next move rests with the Indian government.

"I think they won't be able to get the ICC to take on any stand on it and I don't think the BCCI will say that we are not playing there," she told AFP. "It will have to be a government pressure on them to not play. June 16 is still many days off and politics can play any narrative it wants to suit itself." Opinions have differed among prominent figures in Indian cricket.

Former paceman Chetan Sharma told AFP that country comes first for him and he would prefer India giving up two points if need be. "It totally depends on what the government decides. As a sportsman I must tell you that we are Indians first and then comes cricket," said Sharma. Asked what should happen if India drew Pakistan in the semi-finals or the final, Sharma said: "I would still say that it's the country and not the World Cup that is important."

India's greatest batsman Sachin Tendulkar



RANCHI: Indian cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni (2R) speaks with coach Ravi Shastri (R) during a training session ahead of the third one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Australia at the Jharkhand State Cricket Association International Cricket Stadium. —AFP

tweeted he would "hate" to hand Pakistan two points by forfeiting the game, but added, "India always comes first, so whatever my country decides, I will back with all my heart." Former India spin bowler Harbhajan Singh was vociferous in calling for a boycott. "I don't care about losing points as the Indian team is powerful enough to win the World Cup without playing Pakistan,"

said Singh, who took 417 Test wickets.

At the last World Cup in England in 1999, India and Pakistan played in Manchester during the two countries' last conflict. A boycott would be costly for organizers. The match is one of the hottest tickets at the World Cup, which begins on May 30, with demand so far outstripping that for the final, according to ICC officials. —AFP

All Black Coles fumes over Rugby scheme

WELLINGTON: All Blacks hooker Dane Coles slammed World Rugby yesterday for failing to consult players or Pacific island teams about plans to revamp the international Test match schedule. Coles said he was "pissed off" at the governing body for not listening to Pacific island nations and players as it drafted plans for a 'Nations Championship' competition. "The thing that got me was excluding the Pacific nation teams because especially in the (Wellington) Hurricanes we've had a lot of guys play for Manu Samoa and Tonga," said the 60-Test All Black ahead of the Super Rugby team's clash with Otago Highlanders today. "Those countries do a lot for world rugby, so them not being included in any plans was what pissed me off."

Reports last week said World Rugby was looking at a 12-nation competition which would not include Pacific island nations such as Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. World Rugby moved to clarify the plans this week, insisting there had always been a promotion-relegation element to the proposals which would give Pacific nations a pathway to the top tier. But Coles remained unimpressed. "Those Pacific nations deserve something, they deserve games and stuff like that," he said. "It's a long way to go and a lot more planning. The players are trying to put their voice out there and get something going because you can't just have these guys at World Rugby making these decisions and not having the players' input."

Super Rugby has also faced criticism for excluding Pacific nations, even though they are a major source of playing talent in the southern hemisphere. A proposal for a Pacific islands Super Rugby team was scrapped late last year after organizers decided it was not commercially viable. —AFP

New Zealand look to win 'whatever way possible'

WELLINGTON: New Zealand have pledged a win-at-all-costs approach to the second Test against Bangladesh, starting in Wellington today, as they look to wrap up the series with a game to spare. The wicket is green and tailor-made for the early seamers, with New Zealand promising to continue with their short-ball tactic when it flattens out.

"We're looking to win the Test match in whatever way possible. Whatever gives us the best chance that is what we will do," New Zealand opener Tom Latham declared yesterday. Bangladesh, meanwhile, faced further injury concerns to an already fragile batting line-up with Tamim Iqbal under a cloud and Mushfiqur Rahim unlikely to be fit. Captain Mahmudullah described Tamim's issue as "a slight niggle" and accepted that "injury is part of the game".

Although neither side has named their match XV, Mahmudullah indicated Bangladesh would make changes given the color of the wicket and how expensive spinner Mehidy Hasan proved in the first Test. "We are yet to decide but we are thinking of picking four pace bowlers, given the conditions," he said. "If you remember, the 2017 wicket was greenish early on too. Batsmen will find it difficult on the first day. There'll be seam movement and swing."

In the Wellington Test two years ago, Bangladesh sur-

prised after being sent into bat with a first innings of 595 for eight declared, only to eventually lose by seven wickets. Latham, a century-maker in that match, is enjoying another purple home patch with a Test average of more than 200 from three centuries, including an unbeaten 264 in the rain-affected Wellington Test against Sri Lanka.

Short-ball barrage

Rain is again expected Friday morning, but with fine weather forecast for the remainder of the Test. Despite the Basin Reserve's bowl-first reputation, Latham had confidence even if New Zealand lose the toss and are put into bat. "It does look a little bit greener and with a little bit more grass on it (than previously) so, regardless of what the surface plays like it's about us trying to adapt to that surface as quick as possible," Latham said.

"If we are asked to bat it will be a challenge. We haven't batted first a huge amount this summer so if we do I'm certainly looking forward to doing that and taking that challenge on." Although New Zealand won the first Test comprehensively, they did struggle to take a wicket for a long period in the second innings as Soumya Sarkar and Mahmudullah delayed the end with a courageous 235-run stand for the fifth wicket. New Zealand bowling spearhead Trent Boult, who took 10 for 80 against the West Indies in Wellington six years ago, was determined that should not happen again.

"We need to find a way to take wickets and we feel we have the ability in the group to do it," he said, adding the short-ball barrage remained an effective tactic when there was no swing. "You're not left with many other options. We have Wags (Neil Wagner) who is an expert at being able to execute that plan. It's been pretty effective for us so expect it will be more of the same." —AFP

Sports

Out of Europe, Dortmund must resist Bayern's title challenge

DORTMUND: Now out of both the Champions League and German Cup, Borussia Dortmund need to resist the challenge of Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga to win any silverware this season. Chasing a near-miracle at home to Tottenham on Tuesday, the Germans fell short in their bid to overturn a 3-0 last 16 first leg loss as Harry Kane's winner sealed their 1-0 defeat.

Despite passionate support at Signal Iduna Park, who greeted each Spurs attack with deafening whistles, Kane's 24th European goal "pulled the plug" on the Germans' faint hopes, admitted Marco Reus. It was Dortmund's fourth loss in seven games, a bleak four-week spell which has dumped them out of Europe, the German Cup and left Bayern snapping at their heels in the league.

Despite battering the Spurs defence, enjoying 70 percent possession in the first-half, Dortmund failed to convert their 19 chances while Spurs scored off one of just five. "We needed at least one goal before half-time, which we didn't manage although we had an unbelievable amount of chances," said Dortmund captain Marco Reus. Despite a vastly improved display compared to Friday's woeful 2-1 league defeat at Augsburg, Dortmund failed to get past Spurs' rock-solid goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, who kept his 100th clean sheet.

CAF Champions League surprise side on course for quarter-finals

JOHANNESBURG: CAF Champions League surprise side CS Constantine of Algeria will be the first qualifiers for the quarter-finals if they avoid defeat Friday at home to Club Africain of Tunisia. Having already beaten Africain in Tunis through a late Abdenour Belkheir goal, the club formed in 1898 have grounds for optimism.

But France-born coach Denis Lavagne is wary of the third-place Tunis outfit, who must win to get back into contention for a top-two finish and a knockout-phase slot. "We may need only one point to reach the quarter-finals but dare not underestimate Club Africain because it is a do-or-die match for them," he told the Algerian media. Should Constantine at least draw, five-time champions TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo will also qualify from Group C provided they dodge defeat away to Ismaily of Egypt. AFP Sport previews matchday 5, the penultimate round of group play, with 15 of the 16 clubs still in contention for last-eight places.

Group A

Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa and Wydad Casablanca of Morocco, the 2016 and 2017 champions, will progress to the quarter-finals if they win. Leaders Sundowns host Lobi Stars of Nigeria in Pretoria and hope the good form of recent Argentine signing Emiliano Tade can rub off on his wasteful fellow forwards. Wydad have a tougher task, away to former champions ASEC

Goal drought

However, the Dortmund camp saw enough to give them hope for the Bundesliga title run-in with 10 games left and Bayern still to come at Munich's Allianz Arena on April 6. "If you look at both games (against Spurs), we lost a bit of it in London," said team manager Sebastian Kehl. "But we've seen a lot of positives - that should give us momentum and strength."

Favre dropped defenders Dan-Axel Zagadou and Achraf Hakimi, both guilty of bad mistakes at Augsburg, starting Reus, Mario Goetze and Paco Alcacer, a trio who have 30 goals between them. The result was a vastly improved display. "We have shown we have the quality and our first-half performance (against Spurs) is something we can build on after Augsburg, that was a game to forget," said Reus. "We have to deliver in the coming weeks and that starts on Saturday."

A Stuttgart side battling relegation are Dortmund's next opponents at home on Saturday and the hosts could do with a repeat of the 4-0 romp from when the teams met last October. The title race is red-hot at the moment thanks to Dortmund's dip in form while Bayern enjoyed 11 wins from 12 league games. A goal difference of two is all that is keeping Bayern off the top of the table.

Mimosas of the Ivory Coast, who must win to stay in contention and also want to avenge a 5-2 hiding in Morocco.

Group B

Trophy-holders Esperance of Tunisia can seal a last-eight place by defeating Horoya AC of Guinea in the first group match where they will enjoy crowd support. Crowd violence in a couple of Champions League matches last season led to two group matches being played behind closed doors, both of which Esperance won by two goals. Orlando Pirates of South Africa are expected to defeat already-eliminated FC Platinum of Zimbabwe in Soweto, and set up a final-round showdown away to Horoya for second place.

Group C

Constantine, originally the outsiders in a section containing three former champions, have the best record of the 16 clubs in the four groups with 10 points from a possible 12. Remarkably, the 12 goals scored by the Algerians in qualifying and group matches have come from 11 players with only centre-back Nasreddine Zaalani netting twice. The multi-national Mazembe team have experienced a fluctuating group campaign, thrashing Club Africain 8-0 at home and crashing 3-0 away to Constantine.

Group D

Only three points separate leaders and record eight-time champions Al Ahly of Egypt from bottom club V Club of DR Congo in the most intriguing section. Ahly have lost two of three away Champions League matches this season — form that will not inspire confidence before a clash with V Club in an intimidating Kinshasa cauldron. Simba SC of Tanzania have a shocking away record in the group, twice suffering 5-0 hidings, and while the losing margin may be less at JS Saoura of Algeria, another defeat seems likely. — AFP



DORTMUND: Dortmund's Danish forward Jacob Bruun Larsen reacts after the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match between BVB Borussia Dortmund and Tottenham Hotspur. — AFP

The last of the nine-point lead Dortmund held in December was finally eroded last weekend as Bayern, who want a seventh straight league title, drew level on 54 points. "High intensity, enthusiasm, passion, great opportunities," is what Kehl feels Dortmund must take from the Spurs defeat into the league title race. "We can build on that, that's the benchmark now."

Most worryingly, Dortmund's goals have dried up — just four scored in their last four games — which has affected confidence. England winger Jadon Sancho, 18, continues to be a threat on the right wing, but Dortmund are now struggling to finish the chances they created with such ease before Christmas. "We just have to somehow manage to score goals again," said Reus. — AFP

'Angry' Mueller blasts Loew for 'bad taste' axe

BERLIN: Thomas Mueller on Wednesday said he was "angry" over Joachim Loew's "bad taste" decision to axe him and Bayern Munich teammates Jerome Boateng and Mats Hummels from the Germany squad. National coach Loew flew to Munich on Tuesday to tell Mueller, 29, Boateng and Hummels, both 30, that their international careers are over. The World Cup winning trio have earned 246 caps between them.

"The more I think about it, the more the way it was done, makes me angry," said Mueller in a two-minute video message posted on his social networks. "The coach's sudden decision obviously left me puzzled. A coach must make sporting decisions, no problem, I do not have a problem with that. "But it's mostly the character of the decision that I don't understand. Mats, Jerome and I are still able to play at the highest level." The press releases of the German football federation (DFB) and its president (Reinhard Grindel), prepared in advance, were from my point of view in bad taste and showed a lack of consideration." Earlier Wednesday, Bayern chief Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said he was "irritated" that Loew dropped the bombshell on Tuesday — a week before the crunch Champions League home game against Liverpool and in the midst of the Bundesliga title race.

"We consider the timing and circumstances of the announcement, both to the players and public, as questionable", wrote Rummenigge in a joint statement with sport director Hasan Sal-

ihamidzic. "The last international match of the German national team took place on 19 November 2018 — three and a half months ago." Loew made the announcement with Germany to host Serbia on March 20 in a friendly, before playing a Euro 2020 qualifier away to the Netherlands four days later. The 59-year-old Germany boss has been under pressure to make sweeping changes since his side crashed out of the 2018 World Cup in the first round.

'Unannounced visit'

Mueller, Boateng and Hummels were at the core of the side which won the 2014 World Cup, but the trio were off form during poor displays by the entire team in Russia last year. "We were surprised that this happened as part of an unannounced visit at (Bayern training complex) Saebener Strasse," said Rummenigge and Salihamidzic. Bayern are neck-and-neck with leaders Borussia Dortmund on 54 points in the Bundesliga table with only a goal difference of two keeping the Bavarians off top spot. Former Bayern and Germany midfielders Lothar Matthaeus and Stefan Effenberg have also questioned Loew's timing. "The decision is okay, because we are talking about making changes, but the moment is very unfortunate," said Matthaeus, a Sky pundit.

"A week before the game against Liverpool means Loew has only brought unrest to Bayern Munich. "You could have thrown these three players out of the national team two months ago, after so many years of merit, and not a week before the important match in the Champions League." Effenberg questioned the logic of discarding so much experience. "In my view, it wasn't necessary to close the door to the national team for three well-deserving players," said the 50-year-old. — AFP

Sports

Solskjaer makes ManU Champs League comeback kings again

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's name is inseparable from Manchester United's history of late drama in the Champions League and his latest astonishing feat against Paris Saint-Germain will surely secure him the permanent manager's job at Old Trafford. No team in the history of the European Cup had gone through after losing the first leg 2-0 at home.

Yet United under Solskjaer are no ordinary team, even when shorn of the talismanic Paul Pogba through suspension and nine other first-team players due to injury. Romelu Lukaku's first-half double laid the foundations for a famous 3-1 win against Paris Saint-Germain at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday as United progressed to the quarter-finals on away goals. But Pogba's absence meant it was left to 21-year-old Marcus Rashford to land the decisive blow from the penalty spot to complete the comeback deep into stoppage time — 20 years after Solskjaer won the Champions League for United against Bayern Munich in Barcelona.

"There was pressure on the boy but there were no nerves whatsoever. Fearless," said Solskjaer of his prodigy. "With this club, this is what we do. That's just Man United." In the whirlwind three months since the Norwegian was drafted in after Jose Mourinho's sacking to oversee the Red Devils until the end of the season, it is easy to forget that this is not what Manchester United have done in the six years since Solskjaer's mentor, Alex Ferguson, retired.

Where now for PSG after latest UCL horror show?

PARIS: For all the money spent, it is the same old story — another year, another Champions League horror show for Paris Saint-Germain. The bold, brash French giants talk a good game, and their Qatari owners have thrown vast sums over nearly a decade now in an attempt to build the best side in Europe.

Yet for the third year running they are out of Europe's elite club competition in the first knockout round after Wednesday's stunning defeat on away goals against Manchester United. Coaches have come and gone, superstars have been signed, but in the Champions League all PSG seem able to achieve is to invent new and improbable ways to be eliminated.

In 2017, after the promise of four successive quarter-final appearances, there was the capitulation in Barcelona, a 6-1 defeat wiping out a 4-0 first-leg win. Since then, Qatar Sports Investments have spent over 500 million euros (\$565 million) in transfer fees on new signings, including the two most expensive players in the world, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe. There has been no progress, and there must be some uncertainty as to the long-term viability of the Qatari project, especially with the danger of punishment still looming for possible breaches of UEFA's Financial Fair Play rules.

Last year, there was an underwhelming de-

inflicting another year of Champions League pain on a star-laden PSG is all the more remarkable as United had won just one knockout game in the competition since 2011. The aggressive, attack-minded, ambitious football that Solskjaer played under Ferguson and has tried to instil in his own side was not on show.

Instead, given the circumstances, with so many key players missing, the rookie manager showed an adaptability and tactical acumen that proved he is more than just a cheerleader. "We had a game plan before the game and every man knew what he was doing," said United captain Ashley Young. "At times we had to give up possession, I think we frustrated them." United also had fortune on their side. Lukaku pounced on errors by Thilo Kehrer and 41-year-old goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon to twice give his side the lead before half-time and VAR was needed to award the controversial stoppage-time penalty against Presnel Kimpembe for handball.

Faith in youth

There was, however, a United trait of old as Solskjaer showed his faith in youth. As well as Rashford, another academy graduate, Scott McTominay, 22, starred in midfield, while three teenagers, Diogo Dalot, Tahith Chong and Mason Greenwood, were summoned from the bench in search of the goal to win the tie.

It was from Dalot's shot that Kimpembe was adjudged to have handled to give Rashford his

feat against Real Madrid, with Neymar injured for the second leg. This time, with Neymar again injured and Mbappe off form, PSG were ousted by a seriously depleted United. The visitors had two untried teenagers on as substitutes when Marcus Rashford scored the last-gasp penalty — awarded after a controversial VAR review — that gave them a 3-1 win on the night.

Serial bottlers

It feels like Goundhog day, but this time it is somehow different. "Even worse" read the front page of leading sports daily L'Equipe on Thursday, with a nod to that night in Barcelona. Inside, renowned commentator Vincent Duluc said PSG "owe much of their celebrity to these collapses that make them look ridiculous in the eyes of the world." Against United, seven survivors from the Barcelona debacle either started or came off the bench. Was that game on their minds?

"I don't agree that we have a problem from losing at Barcelona that you could see," said coach Thomas Tuchel. "This is for me too easy and I don't want to step into this trap." However, even their exit to Chelsea in the 2014 quarter-finals was similar in nature. Abroad, PSG, founded in 1970, are often derided as having no history, seen as a club with vast amounts of money, but no substance. They are now the serial Champions League bottlers.

'Believe in this project'

So what comes next at the Parc des Princes? Financially, PSG will still have made an estimated 85 million euros from their European run this season, and they recently announced a lucrative, new shirt sponsorship deal with Accor reportedly worth over 50 million euros annually. —AFP



PARIS: Manchester United's Brazilian midfielder Fred (L) celebrates with his teammates after winning the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second-leg football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Manchester United at the Parc des Princes stadium. — AFP

moment of glory. "This was the real Manchester United," wrote Henry Winter in The Times. "Playing with belief, youth, commitment. Playing for one another, playing for the shirt. Making light of absentees, refusing to be overawed by famous opponents. Never, ever giving up. And winning." Solskjaer's record is now 14 wins from

17 matches in charge with his solitary defeat in the first leg of this tie now long forgotten.

Even better could still be to come as United take their place in a wide-open quarter-final draw alongside Tottenham, Porto and Ajax, who ended holders Real Madrid's three-year reign as European champions. —AFP

Four pic round of 16 comebacks

PARIS: Four epic Champions League comebacks after Manchester United knocked Paris Saint-Germain out in the last 16 on Wednesday:

United stun PSG with last-gasp VAR penalty

Marcus Rashford scored a stoppage-time penalty awarded after a VAR review to give Manchester United a stunning 3-1 win away to Paris Saint-Germain as they improbably went through to the quarter-finals on away goals. A seriously depleted United looked to have given themselves too much to do after losing 2-0 in the first leg of their last-16 tie last month, yet a Romelu Lukaku brace in the first half at the Parc des Princes gave them hope.

Even so, Juan Bernat had netted in between for PSG, and it looked as though they would stumble on until the drama at the death. Slovenian referee Damir Skomina awarded a spot-kick after reviewing the images when he had been alerted of a possible handball by PSG defender Presnel Kimpembe in the box. Rashford duly beat Gianluigi Buffon from 12 yards, as United won a European tie after losing the first leg at home for the first time in their history.

Real's three-year grip ends

In seven days, Madrid were knocked out of the Copa del Rey, La Liga's title race and then the last 16 of the Champions League, the competition they had won three times in a row and four times in the last five years. Defeat meant

that Madrid failed to reach the quarter-finals for the first time since 2010. Hakim Ziyech and David Neres put Ajax two up at half-time and Dusan Tadic made it three before Marco Asensio gave Madrid hope. It lasted two minutes, as Lasse Schone sent a bending free-kick into the top corner before Nacho was sent off late on.

Barcelona stun PSG

Barcelona made history as the first team to come back from a four-goal first-leg deficit in the Champions League on a dramatic night at the Camp Nou when Neymar punished his future side PSG with two goals. If PSG's demolition of Luis Enrique's Barcelona in Paris was a shock, the fightback was mind-blowing with the crucial last two goals coming in added time. Sergi Roberto came off the bench to write himself into Spanish football folklore with Barcelona's sixth goal in the fifth minute of added time.

Barca's luck runs out in Rome

Barcelona's luck ran out in dramatic style 12 months after their PSG heroics with Edin Dzeko's away goal at the Camp Nou proving crucial. The Bosnia striker struggled to express his joy at Roma's achievement after his sixth-minute goal in the return leg sparked an incredible turnaround by the Italians. There appeared to be no way back for Roma after they were routed in Barcelona. —AFP

Sports

Telles penalty edges Porto past Roma in extra time

PORTO: Alex Telles converted a VAR-awarded penalty deep into extra time as Porto defeated Roma 3-1 on Wednesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals following a tense 4-3 win on aggregate. Francisco Soares nudged Porto ahead with a simple tap-in on 26 minutes, but Daniele De Rossi equalised from the spot before half-time after Eder Militao chopped down Diego Perotti.

Moussa Marega restored the lead on the night for Porto early in the second half to level the tie as he struck in his sixth successive appearance in Europe. An additional half-hour was required to settle an encounter that looked to be heading for a shootout before Telles tucked home from the spot on 117 minutes after a tug on Fernando by Alessandro Florenzi was spotted upon review.

"It was not just me that scored the penalty, it was the whole team. The Dragao, the full stadium, made me feel at ease. It was a very good energy," said Telles. "We've got to accept it, even if the way it happened is terrible to accept." Roma captain De Rossi told Sky Sport Italia. Porto coach Sergio Conceicao, a former player at Roma's city rivals Lazio, had expressed the need for patience as his side set about attempting to retrieve a 2-1 deficit.

Yet they threatened twice inside the opening 10 minutes at the Estadio do Dragao as Jesus Corona hammered a volley narrowly over, with Telles lashing into the side-netting from a tough angle. Corona again tried his luck from range, his shot again dipping over the top, and the Mexico winger was once more involved as

Soares poked in the opening goal.

Marega, back in the side after missing the first leg with a thigh injury, pinched the ball from Kostas Manolas and was then picked out by Corona on the overlap to square for Soares to slot home. Porto's lead lasted barely 10 minutes as Militao lunged in on Argentine Perotti, with De Rossi coolly rolling his penalty past three-time Champions League winner Iker Casillas.

Marega catches Messi

Porto captain Hector Herrera, who was booked and will miss the quarter-final first leg, tested Robin Olsen with a bending effort just before the break when Roma lost skipper De Rossi following a crunching tackle by Danilo. Soares should have netted a second when his downward header skipped off the ground and flashed over the bar, while Olsen produced a superb fingertip save to claw out a Marega strike.

Olsen was powerless to stop France-born Mali international moments later though as Marega timed his run perfectly to volley Corona's curling cross into the roof of the net. Marega is now level with Lionel Messi and Dusan Tadic with six goals in this season's tournament — and trails only Robert Lewandowski (eight). Pepe and Edin Dzeko were both booked following a theatrical clash near midfield, a caution that also rules the Portuguese defender out of his side's next match in the competition.

A dreadful Pepe error presented Perotti with an opportunity he failed to exploit as Roma searched for a late goal, while Otavio tested



PORTO: Porto's Brazilian defender Alex Telles (R) celebrates a goal with teammate Malian forward Moussa Marega during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match between FC Porto and AS Roma at the Dragao stadium. — AFP

Olsen from distance towards the end of the 90 minutes. Marega went agonisingly close to scoring again early in extra time, while Dzeko dinked the ball over Casillas only for Pepe to race back and clear off the line in desperation.

With penalties seemingly on the horizon, Porto grabbed a dramatic winner after Turkish referee Cuneyt Cakir pointed to the spot upon

reviewing an incident in which Florenzi hauled back Fernando as the substitute stretched to reach a driven low cross. Telles sent Olsen the wrong way to fire Porto into their first quarter-final since 2014-15, although the hosts faced an anxious wait after Patrik Schick tumbled to the ground in the area before Cakir ruled there was no foul. — AFP

Did VAR get it right? Debate rages on after UCL drama

PARIS: Neymar called the decision that led to Paris Saint-Germain being dumped out of the Champions League a "disgrace", while elsewhere on Wednesday Roma were left raging — both clubs are out of Europe and both feel cheated by controversial VAR calls.

"It's a disgrace. They get four guys who don't understand football to watch a slow-motion replay in front of the TV," the injured Neymar wrote on Instagram after watching PSG's shock elimination against Manchester United. PSG were wobbling and trailing 2-1 at the Parc des Princes when Slovenian referee Damir Skomina gave a penalty after reviewing the images when Presnel Kimpembe blocked an apparently wayward Diogo Dalot shot with his arm. Marcus Rashford duly scored the penalty that dumped PSG out on away goals. But should such a crucial decision have been given? "I am a big supporter of VAR and I stay a big supporter of VAR," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel, before admitting: "It was a big decision, a cruel decision."

In England, amid euphoria about the manner in which a depleted United side had gone through, even former players of the Old Trafford club said the penalty should not have been given. "I don't care what any referee tells me, that just isn't handball," ex-United defender Rio Ferdinand said on BT Sport. "I love it that it is handball but I don't get it. The law is wrong."

On the same channel, Michael Owen, another ex-United player, said: "I know there'll be people who will say it's a penalty but for me it's not one in a million years." UEFA bowed to pres-

sure by bringing forward the introduction of Video Assistant Referees into the Champions League from this season's knockout rounds. Back in September, they had announced it would come in from next season, but it was widely a success at the World Cup and is now used in many domestic leagues, including the top flights in Spain, Italy, Germany and France. However, at the very least there remain teething problems when it comes to the interpretation of handball — only last weekend changes were announced to the law from next season, saying it will no longer have to be "deliberate".

Roma denounce 'robbery'

In the meantime, there remained widespread disagreement over Wednesday's crucial calls. "What we're finding with VAR is every ex-footballer thinks something is not a penalty but every referee thinks it is. There's a huge disconnect and that is the worrying thing," added Owen. A year ago, Gianluigi Buffon was in goal for Juventus when they were knocked out by Real Madrid after a debatable, late penalty.

The Italians demanded the introduction of VAR on the back of that, but Buffon, now at PSG, will wish it had not been in place as he was beaten by Rashford's kick. Meanwhile, Roma were left with the same bitter taste as they went out in extra time to Porto, losing 3-1 on the night, and 4-3 on aggregate. The tie hinged on a decision by Turkish referee Cuneyt Cakir to point to the spot late in extra time upon reviewing an incident in which Alessandro Florenzi hauled back the Porto player Fernando.

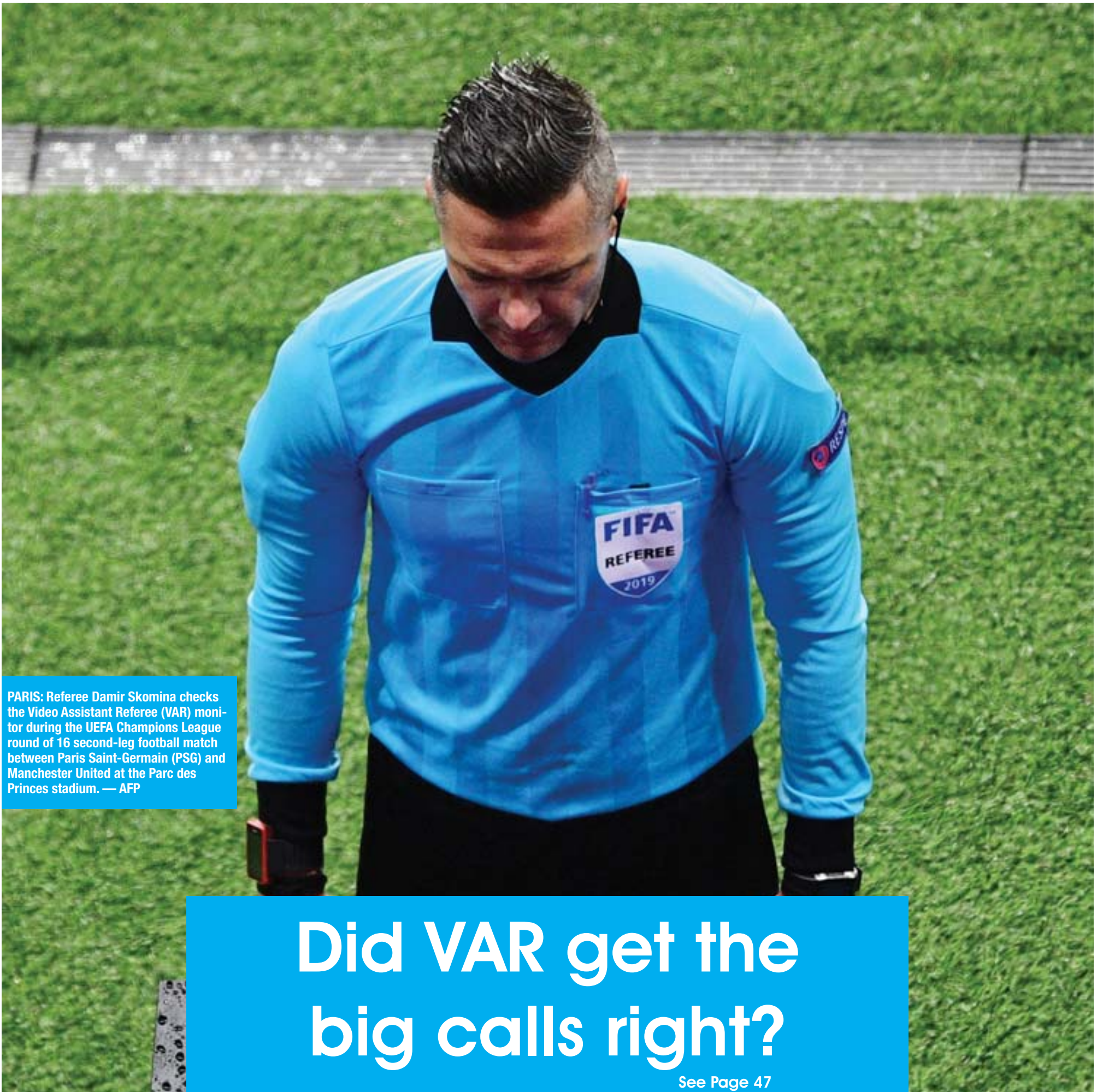
Alex Telles converted the spot-kick, and Roma were then denied a penalty at the other end following a review, after Patrik Schick tumbled to the ground. "Last year we asked for VAR in the Champions League because we got screwed in the semi-final and tonight, they've got VAR and we still get robbed," raged Roma president James Pallotta. "Patrik Schick was clearly clipped in the box, VAR shows it, and nothing is given. I'm tired of this crap. I give up." —AFP

Tense Juve prepare for Atletico battle with Udinese warm up

MILAN: Tensions are running high in Turin as Juventus get ready to take on lowly Udinese in Serie A on Friday just days ahead of their must-win Champions League clash against Atletico Madrid. Massimiliano Allegri's unbeaten champions put one hand on an eighth consecutive Serie A title last weekend by seeing off Scudetto rivals Napoli 2-1 to open up a huge 16-point lead in the Italian league.

But the pressure is on the Juventus coach amid reports of a falling out with club chairman Andrea Agnelli after the club's first-leg 2-0 defeat in Spain two weeks ago. "We have to win to prepare for the match on Tuesday, regardless of the advantage that we have (in the league)," Allegri told a pre-match press conference yesterday. "We still need six victories (to win the title). "The Madrid match has left us with motivation that has helped us in these 15 days. We will be ready on Tuesday and we will have a great game."

The Juventus coach confirmed he had also met with Agnelli to discuss his future. "I met with the chairman yesterday for dinner, we are two intelligent people who have built something important in these five years together," said Allegri. "We decided to talk about the renewal of the contract after the season." —AFP



PARIS: Referee Damir Skomina checks the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) monitor during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second-leg football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Manchester United at the Parc des Princes stadium. — AFP

Did VAR get the big calls right?

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