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Amir hails efforts by youths, announces creativity center

Sheikh Sabah delivers speech at 'Kuwait is Proud' ceremony



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the closing ceremony of the "Kuwait is Proud" national youth project yesterday. — Amiri Diwan

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday delivered a speech during the closing ceremony of the national youth project 'Kuwait is Proud' at Bayan Palace's Liberation Hall. In his address to the closing ceremony, the Amir affirmed that he was very proud to address the youth during the event, saying that their efforts will help elevate the country's status. He commended the youth's efforts to provide proposals and inputs to the leadership in the national project 'Kuwait Listens', affirming that he has instructed the government to look into the concerns of the youth.

HH the Amir called on the youth to continue on their path in building the country through their unique

efforts and creative energy, bearing in mind the necessity of carrying on this responsibility through national unity and cooperation. The great developments in the domains of technology, science and creativity have led to the emergence of new economic activities, which required an updated stance to encourage the spread of science and culture in Kuwaiti society.

HH the Amir took the opportunity to announce the Kuwait Center for National Creativity, an entity charged with supporting the youths' creative outputs and transforming them into economic projects in line with Kuwait's 2035 vision. He indicated that the Amiri Diwan will be responsible of assembling groups dedicated to the establishment of the center. — KUNA (See Page 3)

Lawmakers fret over dominance of some expat communities

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed parliamentary sources said some lawmakers discussed the increase in expat numbers in Kuwait during a meeting with the government and how some communities make up more than half of the total number of citizens, which threatens both security and public services. The sources added that lawmakers expressed dissatisfaction with what they described as the government's foot-dragging in resolving the demographic imbalance as well as replacing expats with citizens in various jobs.

"Lawmakers warned that the government is mak-

ing the same mistakes again by letting the population of a certain community grow beyond solutions, the way it did with the Palestinians, who made up half of Kuwait's population before the Iraqi invasion," the sources said, noting that lawmakers urged the government to stop recruiting workers from those countries and only limit recruitment to doctors and technicians, if necessary. The lawmakers demanded following in the footsteps of Saudi Arabia and UAE in taking practical measures and imposing more fees to help limit the number of expats.

But the sources said the government does not approve any proposal to set a certain quota for each expat community or impose more fees amid fears that such measures will lead to a shortage of skilled laborers in the local market and negatively affect its plans to attract more foreign investment. Finally, the sources said the government stressed that its plans to employ citizens in the private sector are still in progress but noted that many Kuwaitis prefer to work for the government and reject private sector jobs.

News in brief

'Abducted' girl found with boyfriend

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's PR and security media department said a young Arab girl reported missing in Fintas last Friday was found with someone she had willingly run away with. The department said that the girl's father had reported that his daughter was kidnapped from his vehicle while he was praying in a mosque. The department explained that investigations showed that the girl had willingly left with a man for an unknown destination, adding that further investigations revealed the family had been involved in begging. "Both the girl and her boyfriend were detained and referred to relevant authorities pending further investigations," it said. — MoI

Kuwait bans Boeing 737 MAX 8 jets

KUWAIT: The Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced Tuesday the suspension of operations of all Boeing 737 MAX 8 jets from Kuwait's airspace after two planes of the same type crashed in five months. DGCA said in a statement all Boeing 737 MAX 8 flights, including those in transit, were suspended until further notice. Meanwhile, the Aviation Lease and Finance Company (ALAFCO) said yesterday that its fleet, consisting of 64 planes, did not include Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft. ALAFCO added 118 planes will be delivered this year, including 40 Boeing 737 MAX 8 jets, affirming that the transaction is still intact and there are no immediate renegotiations over it. — Agencies

Saudi women activists on trial

RIYADH: Ten Saudi women appeared in court yesterday for the first time since being detained last year in a sweeping crackdown on activists. Prominent activists Loujain Al-Hathloul, Hatoon Al-Fassi, Aziza Al-Yousef and Eman Al-Nafjan were among those who attended Riyadh's criminal court, where they heard charges raised against them, court president Ibrahim Al-Sayari said. Family members of the women - some of whom allegedly faced torture and sexual harassment during interrogation - were permitted to attend the opening court session, but reporters and Western diplomats were barred from entering. — AFP

Court refuses to defer by-election

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The administrative court yesterday rejected a petition calling to postpone a by-election to elect two MPs in the second and third constituencies, which fell vacant after two lawmakers were stripped of their seats. The petition asked the court to postpone the election scheduled for Saturday until another court rules in a case challenging the interior ministry's deci-

Erdogan slams Netanyahu as 'tyrant', 'robber'

ANKARA: Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday blasted Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu as a "tyrant" who "massacred" Palestinian children as the two leaders exchanged insults in their latest spat. Erdogan was responding to earlier comments from Netanyahu who slammed the Turkish leader as a "dictator" and "a joke", after a day of tit-for-tat exchanges between government officials in both countries. Turkey and Israel have tense relations and Erdogan, who regards himself as a champion of the Palestinian cause,

sion to not update the electoral rolls. After announcing March 16 as the date for the by-election, the interior ministry cancelled the annual update of the electoral lists - which normally takes place in the month of February - because of the by-election.

MPs and activists criticized the ministry's action and demanded legislation to plug the legal loophole, while some filed a lawsuit at the court to force the ministry to update the electoral lists before the election date. About 47 candidates, including some ex-MPs, are competing for the two seats held by former Islamist opposition MPs Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, which were declared vacant after the court of cassation jailed them for taking part in storming the National Assembly building in late 2011.

is a vocal critic of Israeli policies. The two leaders have exchanged barbs in the past over Gaza.

"Hey Netanyahu, behave yourself. You are a tyrant, you are a tyrant who massacred seven-year-old Palestinian children," Erdogan told a rally of supporters in the Turkish capital Ankara. Erdogan also referred to clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians in Jerusalem, denouncing Israeli security forces for entering a "holy place". "Do not provoke. Look, we have not oppressed any of the Jews in this country. We have not done anything you did to any synagogues here. Don't provoke us. We will not fall into this trap."

Netanyahu swiftly hit back on Twitter later yesterday. "Erdogan, the dictator who sends tens of thousands of political opponents to prison, commits genocide against the Kurds, and occupies Northern Cyprus, preaches to me, to Israel, and to the Israel Defense

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In another development, MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei yesterday criticized some fellow lawmakers for using their influence to pass some illegal matters and the government for not stopping them. Tabtabaei was commenting on a letter reportedly sent by members of the medical council, who claimed that they had been subjected to political pressure and intimidation by some MPs to make illegal decisions.

The lawmaker said he learnt that secretaries of some MPs have threatened members of the medical council if they do not take the illegal decisions they had asked them to make. Tabtabaei described such actions as blatant corruption and called on the ministers to stop them, adding that he had informed the health minister of such incidents.



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Resignations, arrests over US college scam

BOSTON/LOS ANGELES: "Full House" actor Lori Loughlin and the former head of financial firm Pimco faced criminal charges yesterday related to a \$25 million scheme to help wealthy Americans secure places for their children in top US colleges. The two are among 50 people charged for taking part in the largest such scam in US history, which the scheme's mastermind said in court documents steered some 800 students into elite universities including

Yale, Georgetown and Stanford by cheating the admissions process.

Loughlin was taken into custody by FBI agents in Los Angeles yesterday morning, Laura Eimiller, a spokeswoman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said. Former Pimco Chief Executive Douglas Hodge is due to be arraigned in federal court in Boston, officials said. Another parent charged in the scheme, Manuel Henriquez, resigned as chief executive officer of the finance company Hercules Capital, the company said early yesterday.

The mastermind of the scheme, William "Rick" Singer, on Tuesday pleaded guilty to racketeering charges. Prosecutors in the US attorney's office in Boston say his company, Edge College & Career Network, amassed \$25 million

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LOS ANGELES: Actress Felicity Huffman is seen inside the Edward R Roybal Federal Building and US Courthouse on Tuesday. — AFP

Local

Amir, Crown Prince meet state officials



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



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince

received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. —KUNA



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



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



NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel (third from left) participates in an event at the UN. — KUNA

UN briefed on Kuwait's women empowerment efforts

NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel displayed, during an event at the UN, her country's efforts to empower women. During the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Aqeel focused on Kuwait's national project to implement the fifth goal of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) connected with achieving "gender equality and empower all women and girls." This goal is also part of the Kuwait Vision 2035 spearheaded by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, affirmed Aqeel who expressed her government's keenness

on eradicating all forms of discrimination against women. She indicated Kuwait was coordinating with concerned UN authorities and partners to empower women and enable them to achieve full potential. Aqeel related to the meeting of the 2015-2020 national plan to boost women's status within the political, economic, and social domains, highlighting the achievements within the period. Similarly, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khaled Mahdi and chairwomen of Kuwait University's center for women studies and research briefed the meeting on Kuwait's efforts within the fifth goal of the SDGs. — KUNA

Foreign Minister heads to Brussels for 3rd Syria conference

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah headed yesterday to Brussels to head a Kuwaiti delegation to participate in the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's delegation consists of Acting Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

Ambassador Saleh Al-Loughani, Kuwait Ambassador to Belgium and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Jassim Al-Bedawi, Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hayyen and a number of Foreign Ministry officials. The Foreign Minister was seen off by a number of Foreign Ministry officials including Assistant Minister for Protocols Affairs, Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah leaves for Brussels yesterday. — KUNA

Indian embassy to hold 'Best of Indian Healthcare Expo 2019'

By Staff Reporter

KUWAIT: A high-profile medical services exhibition titled 'Best of Indian Healthcare Expo 2019' will be held by the Embassy of India in Kuwait, in association with the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), Kuwait Medical Association (KMA), Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), disclosed Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Jeeva Sagar at a press briefing at the embassy premises yesterday.

The two-day exhibition will be held at the Radisson Blu Hotel on 17 and 18 of March 2019 and will witness participation from more than 20 exhibitors including the leading Indian hospitals and healthcare centers, alternative healthcare providers, wellness centers and prominent medical package planners, from several cities in India.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Salem Kandari, secretary general at Kuwait Medical Association, pointed out that India was proving to be an excellent destination for health care with its highly experienced medical workforce and value for money treatment.

Indian doctors have been excelling the world over for the good treatment that they have been imparting and in Kuwait as well Indian doctors have gained the confidence and trust of the local population.

Speaking to the press, Dr Grover of the Indian Doctors Forum said the exhibition will show the great medical advancement that has taken place in India and also provide an opportunity to witness first hand these accomplishments. Dr Amir Ahmed, Ex-President of IDF, added that healthcare in India was of the best quality and value that was second to none.

President of Indian Business Council Shivy Bhasin also reiterated India's development and progress in the medical field and was now a preferred destination for



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Jeeva Sagar (right) speaks at the press conference.

treatment because of the quality and value of the services being rendered. The Indian ambassador pointed out that India received more than half a million medical tourists in 2017 and the number was fast growing.

The list of exhibitors includes globally reputed health care providers like Apollo Hospital, Max Super Specialty Hospital, Aster DM Healthcare, Kerala Institute of Medical Sciences, Saifee Hospital, Unity Care and Health Services, Iqraa Hospitals, AJ Hospital, Children's Hospital, Manipal Health Enterprises Pvt Ltd, Asten Orthopaedic Hospital, Metromed International Cardiac Center, Advancells, Aryavaidyasala Kottakal, Somatheeram Ayurveda Village, Ayur Green, and a whole host of other healthcare providers from India.

These internationally acclaimed exhibitors have been imparting advanced healthcare services at world class facilities, at a competitive and affordable price to millions of patients annually, including hundreds of thousands of international patients. Some of the exhibitors are also world leaders in many medical disciplines like solid organ transplant, private cancer care, ayurvedic treatments and a host of other super specialties. The high-end healthcare system in India ranks at the top of the international rankings. Indian doctors are widely acknowledged and globally reputed as amongst the most highly skilled and the world's finest. Along with specialist doctors, India has the largest pool of well-trained paramedics in South Asia. Cutting edge

technology to support medical diagnostics and medical procedures are employed by specialists in medical facilities. Various medical advancements in areas like robotic surgeries, radiation surgery or radio therapies with cyberknife stereotactic options, IMRT / IGRT, transplant support systems, advanced neuro and spinal options are all available in India.

This Exhibition will provide an excellent opportunity for citizens and residents in Kuwait to witness some of the most highly advanced medical technologies which would be on display, and also to interact with some of the top Indian medical experts from various medical disciplines. The exhibition will also facilitate networking and information exchange opportunities between healthcare professionals from India and their counterparts in Kuwait. It will give a welcome opportunity for patients and their caregivers in Kuwait to make timely choices regarding the best and most cost-effective treatments that are readily available in Indian hospitals and health care centers. India, widely-regarded for its culture of welcoming guests and according warm hospitality, offers an unmatched, fast-tracked, personalized, affordable, high-quality healthcare service, and is also home to a unique, traditional system of healing and rejuvenation, known as Ayurveda, one of the oldest medical systems in the world, offered in serene surroundings. The exhibition will be open to the public on a free-entry basis from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm.



A general view of the press conference.



RABAT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem meets with President of the Moroccan House of Representatives Habib El-Malki. —KUNA

Ghanem meets with Moroccan counterpart

RABAT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and his accompanying delegation held talks yesterday with President of the Moroccan House of Representatives Habib El-Malki. The talks dealt with cooperation between Kuwaiti and Moroccan parliaments, in addition to vital issues to be discussed at the 14th Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) conference. The meeting was attended by Parliamentary Caucus deputy chairman MP Rakan Al-Nisf and its Secretary General Dr Awdah Al-Ruwaie, Treasurer MP Mohammad Al-Dalal, Observer Nayef Al-Mardas Al-Ajmi, Kuwaiti legislator Ali Al-Daqbasi, MP Safaa Al-Hashem and Kuwait Ambassador to Morocco Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya.

Ghanem also held talks with Moroccan Prime Minister Saadeddin Othmani on cooperation between Kuwait and Rabat in different domains. The two men also discussed Arab and international affairs. The meeting was attended by delegates from both sides. Furthermore, Ghanem held talks with Dr Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sheikh, speaker of the Saudi Shura Council. The meeting was attended by delegates from both sides. — KUNA

Local

Amir attends 'Kuwait is Proud' ceremony, announces 'national creativity' center

Amir youth honoring to involve them in development: Advisor



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top state officials attend the conclusion ceremony of the National Youth Project 'Kuwait is Proud.' —Amiri Diwan photos

KUWAIT: The National Youth Project 'Kuwait is Proud' concluded at a ceremony under the patronage and with attendance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace's Liberation Hall yesterday. His Highness the Amir was welcomed and greeted by Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri and Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Yousef Hamad Al-Ibrahim. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Acting Speaker of the National Assembly Essa Al-Kandari and senior state officials attended the ceremony.

The ceremony began with the National Anthem: Quran Recitation followed by a speech by His Highness the Amir, affirming that he commended the youth's efforts, and called on them to continue their approach in building the country. His Highness the Amir also took the chance to announce the 'Kuwait center for national creativity,' an entity charged with supporting the youth creative outputs and transforming them into economic projects in line with Kuwait Vision 2035. During the ceremony, a film on 'Kuwait Listens' was screened, as His Highness the Amir was handed the 'national youth policy document,' followed by prizes' distribution by His Highness the Amir to the 2019 Kuwait Youth Excellence and Creativity Award winners.



Winners hail honoring by Amir

Youth involvement

His Highness the Amir's patronage and honoring of winners of 2019 Youth Excellence and Creativity Award stresses his care to involve youth in the development process to achieve Kuwait future vision, Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Yousef Al-Ibrahim said. Efforts witnessed today came upon directives of His Highness the Amir to launch the National Youth Project, supervised by the Amiri Diwan, between 2012-2013 under the slogan 'Kuwait Listens,' Ibrahim said. 'Kuwait Listens' concluded with the National Youth Conference, held on March 13, 2013, where youth recommendations were presented to His Highness the Amir in ten areas, promoting citizenship, education, small projects, housing, health, legal and administrative development, human development, sports and environment, culture, arts and literature, he added.

About 80 percent of these recommendations have been implemented, most importantly the establishment of Youth Ministry and Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium

Enterprise Development, he said. Since the launching of the National Youth Project 'Kuwait is Proud' last January, many activities and initiatives were held, the most importantly was His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's meeting with people with initiatives that contribute in achieving Kuwait Vision 2035, he said. A gold coin by Central Bank to commemorate the occasion were given to all the attendees, where ten winners of Youth Excellence and Creativity Award 2019 were honored by His Highness the Amir in addition to handing His Highness the national youth policy document, he said.

Youth achievements

Director General of the General Authority for Youth Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said meanwhile that honoring youth under the patronage and with attendance of His Highness the Amir stressed Kuwait's interest in youth to achieve the Kuwait 2035 vision. He added that the 'Kuwait is Proud' has become a platform to highlight youth achievements and unifying the state efforts. This project provides spaces and opportunities for youth to show creativity, and it is a starting point for them to show their potentials, he added. The Authority and the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs are keen to establish programs, forums and activities that support youth and to cooperate with the other institutions sponsoring youth to achieve the sustainable development of this important group, he said.

Great pride

The honoring of His Highness the Amir is an honor and a great motivation for Kuwaiti youth for more creativity in various fields, said the winners of Youth Excellence and Creativity Award 2019 fourth edition, on the sidelines of the closing ceremony. The winner of health promotion award, Abdulrahman Al-Qashaan, said the honoring by His Highness the Amir is a pride for Kuwaiti youth, especially at the beginning of their "scientific and practical journey." Qashaan said that he presented cardiopulmonary resuscitation project, as he and his volunteer team had trained 4,600 citizens from different age groups within one month on this skill, pointing out that it was the biggest campaign in the Middle East and Africa in collaboration with the American Heart Association.

Meanwhile, winner in science and technology Salman Al-Otaibi said he received this award "as a group of



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a speech.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures at the ceremony.

Kuwaiti students studying at the United States, for their graduation project, which is a device that helps travelers to wash their clothes." The machine which they submitted as a team is now in the process of obtaining a patent, where a Kuwaiti company will be launched to release the project in global markets, Otaibi added. He expressed thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir and Ministry of Youth for adopting youth energies, which is a great motivation for Kuwaiti youth in various scientific and practical fields.

In the meantime, the winner in culture, arts and literature Dalal Mustafa Nasrallah, translator in English and Italian, said she won this award after presenting a book she has translated into Arabic, as she also has five translated books and working on translating two others. Winner in education field, Noor Saad Al-Humaidi said this is a great celebration of His Highness the Amir to youth, as she praised his unlimited support to the youth through these initiatives and awards.

Also, winner for voluntary work as a group Zainab Qarashi said her team (Engineers without Borders) won the first place in initiative to implement sustainable human engineering project, concerned in human development inside and outside Kuwait. The winner for Islamic science, Nasser Al-Ajmi, said the patronage of His Highness the Amir through this important award is a step to build active generation. The winners expressed thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for his patronage and unlimited care and support to Kuwaiti youth through the programs of the Ministry of State for Youth affairs and the General Authority for Youth, that show the youth creative abilities which serve Kuwait in several humanitarian fields. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is handed the 'national youth policy document.'



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri pose in a group picture with winners of the 2019 Youth Excellence and Creativity Award.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is briefed on a project by one of the participants.



Young people perform on stage.



A traditional performance on stage.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Seagulls fly over the Arabian Gulf waters at a beach in Kuwait. —Photo by Joseph Shagra

Kuwait stresses UNSC's key role in preventing disputes

Kuwait reiterates full support to UN, EU cooperation

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed on Tuesday that the UN Security Council (UNSC) has a special role to avert the eruption of disputes, and maintain international peace and security. This came in Kuwait's speech delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Bader Al-Munayekh before the UNSC on Arria formula meeting of the Council, entitled 'Human rights, accountability and justice: contributions to international peace and security.' The UNSC's role can address the disputes before they aggravate through preventive diplomacy, mediation and good endeavors, he said. Holding such meetings periodically have become more important than ever to make a comprehensive review and assessment of human rights situation so as to identify obstacles against its preservation in order to create new ideas that strengthen human rights, accountability and justice, he noted.

Major violations

Unfortunately, there are major violations committed against human rights across the world that affected greatly efforts made by the United Nations, Munayekh

made clear. It is clear for those who are following up the UNSC's activities that the Council is holding several emergency sessions either to discuss a conflict in which a violence and its negative effects on humanitarian situation increased or discuss a new conflict erupted in a place that refers to new violations and crimes against humanity, he stated. Such conflicts always include major violations without accountability, consequently justice is lost, he said.

Today, conflicts are no longer restricted by their geographic borders, but are rapidly moving to the entire world, Munayekh mentioned. The conflicts are growing rapidly faster than the rapid response by the UN and international community, he explained. There are several examples of violations against human rights and the total absence of accountability, he said, referring to Rohingya Muslim minority who are facing killing, torture and forcible displacement that lead to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis posing a direct threat to international peace and security, he pointed out. There are several crises, like the Syrian crisis and the Palestinian cause, that included violations which

were heavily discussed by the UNSC, but they remained unsolved, he said.

Without solving such crises in accordance with the international law and the UN Charter, neither human rights will be boosted, nor justice and the rule of law will be established, and therefore international peace and security will not be achieved, he stressed. "The peace agreement in Colombia to end a conflict lasted for more than 50 years is currently facing several threats we hope that Colombia would overcome them," he said. Undoubtedly, the UN's role to confront the deadly conflicts, humanitarian crises and heinous crimes was important to achieve peace and stability in some parts of the international community, he affirmed. This was shown through either establishing courts tasked with international crimes or mechanisms pertaining to accountability, he made clear.

UN, EU cooperation

Separately, Kuwait reiterated its full support for the continuation of bilateral cooperation and coordination between the United Nation (UN) and

European Union (EU), as well as the trilateral discussions with the African Union regarding the conflicts in Africa. This came on late Tuesday during Kuwait Representative to the United Nations headquarters Mansour Al-Otaibi's speech in the UNSC annual session about UN-EU cooperation. He said that he looked forward on seeing tripartite cooperation between UN, Arab league and EU on the security, political and economic levels to achieve peace, stability and development to all nations and people. He added that in these days the world faced serious challenges such as terrorism, violent extremism, illegal migration, and many other threats which necessitate concerted regional and international efforts to reduce them. Otaibi expressed his appreciation for the effort and joint cooperation between UN-EU in Africa, especially in the peacekeeping operation in Mali and Central African Republic, in addition to providing logistical support and training for security forces in Mali. He pointed out that Kuwait and EU shares goals of promoting international peace and security based on the UN charter. —KUNA

KFH takes part in career fair at GUST

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to attract talented Kuwaiti graduates, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) took part in the 21st Career Fair organized by the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST). The participation confirms KFH's distinguished role in the private sector to localize and qualify its cadres and reflects its contribution to the national economy where human

resources development is its top priority.

KFH's booth received many job seekers who explored the job opportunities and the special training courses it provides. With high participations from the private sector, the annual Career Fair aims to enable employers to meet graduate job seekers in order to fill various jobs and specialties in the labor market.

A Human Resources team at KFH was available at the Career Fair in order to answer job seekers' queries and educate them on KFH's role in the national economy, the Kuwaiti youth recruitment and the nature of its banking work. The job seekers were able to know the procedures and requirements for direct and quick submission of available jobs on the KFH website.

ABK rewards 'Best of the Best' employees

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its Annual 'Best of the Best' Awards ceremony on February 17, 2019 at the Four Seasons Hotel. This event is held each year to recog-

nize the tremendous efforts of customer service employees and to thank them for their hard work, commitment, and consistent performance and efforts made to deliver on the bank's commitment to a 'Simpler Banking' experience. The 'Best of the Best' awards are based on two award categories namely, "The Best Branch in Sales and Service" and "The Best Staff in Sales and Service."

Stewart Lockie, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said "We are very happy to see such committed staff working at ABK.

Their hard work and competence is a key driver of success and it is a pleasure to be able to recognize their outstanding efforts."

Fawzy Al-Thunayan, General Manager of Board Affairs at ABK praised the outstanding efforts of ABK staff and pointed out that these awards are an endorsement of the efforts of ABK employees and their commitment to provide customers with the best products and service available. He commended the team for their consistency and innovation.



KUWAIT: From KFH's participation in Career Fair at GUST.



KUWAIT: ABK's 'Best of the Best' employees for 2019.

Burgan Bank celebrates Int'l Women's Day

KUWAIT: In honor of the annual celebration that highlights the role of women in society, Burgan Bank recently treated its dynamic

female staff to a fun and engaging day out, organized by the Internal Communication Department. A group of female employees were hosted to a movie of their choice on March 7th at the Grand Cinemas in Al-Hamra Luxury Center. Burgan Bank remains an avid supporter of its growing female personnel, gender equality, and women's empowerment in the workplace. Constituting of 401 female employees in its branches across Kuwait, the bank has incorporated an inclusive corporate

culture wherein women hold more than 38 percent of all leadership positions. Burgan Bank presently holds a strong record of active female engagement, contribution, and participation, including in training and development workshops, where more than 45 percent of participants in all internal and external workshops held in 2018, were women. Burgan Bank congratulates the women of Kuwait on the occasion of International Women's day.

Local

459 people arrested in Jleeb, Fahaaheel crackdowns

Including 130 without IDs, 51 in violation of residency law, 26 absconders



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's general security department carried out two campaigns against makeshift markets and 'suspicious' apartments in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Fahaaheel under the leadership of Assistant Undersecretary Maj Gen Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Sabah. The campaigns resulted in arresting 459 persons - 130 without IDs, 51 in violation of residency law, 26 absconders, 15 over liquor, 10 wanted on civil cases and four for vice acts, while 164 citations for traffic violations were issued. Three persons were caught in possession of drugs and eight vehicles were impounded.

False information

The interior ministry denied a citizen's claims that instructions were given to place state security, criminal detectives and special security at all social security offices. It said that spreading such false information is totally rejected.

Smuggling foiled

Customs detectives foiled an Arab driver's



attempt to smuggle one kilogram of the drug shabu as he arrived from a Gulf country. Officers acted on a tip about the drugs, and were informed the truck in which the drugs are hidden arrived and they were found.

Fire extinguished

Jahra fire stations responded to a blaze in a popular store at dawn yesterday. The fire was located in a basement containing children's clothes and toys. It was put out without injuries.



Harasser deported

The Interior Ministry deported a guard for harassing a woman at a mall, as he was caught on surveillance cameras. Al-Rai reported yesterday. The woman was accosted by the man in a Hawally mall, so she started screaming,

and he was caught. Separately, Hawally police arrested two people for using drugs. Al-Rai reported. They were caught under the influence and in possession of heroin. The two were seen in a vehicle and were pulled over. Both claimed the drugs were for personal use.

Man arrested with sheikh's jewelry worth KD 3 million

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Airport detectives yesterday arrested an Indian man who had stolen jewelry and precious stones worth KD 3 million from a ruling family member, said security sources. The source explained that the sheikh had reported the theft without pressing charges against anyone. However, detectives found that the Indian who works for the sheikh was missing, and that nobody knew his whereabouts until a travel ban was imposed on him and he was arrested at the airport while trying to flee the country. A case was filed and the suspect was referred to relevant authorities.

Fake banknotes

A department store operating at a major mall filed a case accusing a female customer of paying for her pur-

chases in cash using fake KD 10 and KD 20 notes, said security sources. The sources explained that on discovering the forged notes, the store investigated the matter and managed to identify the customer who paid them through the purchase receipt, and then reported the matter. A search is on for the woman.

Area development

Kuwait Municipality approved a request to develop the open yard next to Wataniya Complex in Qibla's block 10 in downtown Kuwait City. Commenting on the proposal, the municipality's deputy director for project affairs Nadia Al-Shareeda said the project's total area is 6,000 square meters and that coordination is in progress with the cleaning department to relocate garbage collection points.

Fingerprint devices

Upon a request from Minister Khaled Al-Fadhlah, the Ministry of Electricity and Water's fingerprint department installed 35 new fingerprint devices on the ministry's three floors, said informed sources, noting that the aim of distributing the devices is to reduce crowding for using the devices at the ministry's entrance during rush hours.

Phone bills

The Ministry of Services urged all landline subscribers to pay their bills to avoid disconnection of the service as part of March's programmed disconnection system. The ministry explained that subscribers with overdue bills will receive the first automated warning message on Sunday, March 17, followed by a second one on March 24 before disconnecting the service for those who do not comply by March 31. The ministry explained that subscribers whose bills exceed KD 50 for house lines and KD 100 for commercial lines will have the service disconnected, in addition to those who had already rescheduled their bills and failed to pay the monthly installments. In addition, those who have not paid their annual subscription for over six months will have the service disconnected. Notably, phone bills can be paid online at www.moc.kw and www.e.gov.kw.

Graduates lament denied bids to join oil sector

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Scores of citizens who recently graduated with degrees in petroleum specialties yesterday gathered outside Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) headquarters in Shuwaikh in protest of being excluded from the admission exams to apply for jobs in the oil sector. Chairman of the oil sector employees syndicates union Mohammed Al-Hajri said the union had repeatedly urged KPC to employ the annually growing number of graduates. "It is unacceptable that petroleum engineers remain jobless in an oil-producing country," he said, calling for making the admission tests easier.

KPC CEO Hashem Hashem had earlier announced launching the use of the '360 evaluation system' known as 'VICAT' at KPC and its subsidiaries. In directives issued to all KPC staff, Hashem pointed that the new system will be a major investment in employees' careers and stressed that it will provide opportunities to keep developing skills, leadership capabilities and present and future aspirations.

Sharia College

Head of Kuwait University's Sharia Society Ahmed Al-Azmi expressed total rejection of what he described as calls to close down the Sharia College and stressed the labor market is widely open for the college's graduates to work as imams, preachers, jurists and sharia scholars, who are as needed in a society just like as doctors, engineers and other graduates.

CHAILLOT PRIZE 2019

The European Union Delegation in Kuwait announces the launch of the eleventh Edition of the Chaillot Prize for the Promotion of Human Rights in the GCC Region. The Prize honours local civil society organisations, public or private institutions, as well as individuals for their efforts in promoting general awareness of human rights and the rights of vulnerable groups in the GCC region. The deadline for submitting applications for this years edition is 30th of April 2019.

Interested candidates are invited to refer to the Award Rules and Procedures and the Application Form at: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/saudi-arabia/58627/announcement-chaillot-prize-2019_en

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Facebook and Twitter are 'buzzer' battlegrounds as Indonesia elections loom

From chits to apps, new measures for India mega-election

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MIAMI: An American Airlines Boeing 737 Max 8 prepares to land at the Miami International Airport in Miami, Florida. — AFP

Boeing faces serious consequences

Safety fears about Boeing 737 MAX grip US passengers

NEW YORK: American aviation giant Boeing predicted in January that 2019 would be a record year for aircraft profits and deliveries thanks to the 737 MAX, an update of its best-selling model. But now, less than two months later, the manufacturer is going through one of the most serious crises in its history because of two crashes involving one version: the 737 MAX 8. A growing number of airlines and countries have banned or grounded the plane after Sunday's deadly crash of an Ethiopian Airlines flight killed 157 people, which came after a fatal accident in October of a Lion Air MAX 8 that claimed 189 lives.

What is the 737 MAX?

The 737 MAX, which debuted in May 2017, is Boeing's response to the Airbus A320 NEO, which allowed the European manufacturer to surpass Boeing in the medium-haul market. It has four variants—MAX 7, 8, 9 and 10 — distinguished by the number of passengers they can carry. The MAX 8 costs \$121.6 million at list price and last year made up a third of Boeing's profits. By the end of January, 4,661 of the planes had been ordered, representing approximately 80 percent of the company's orders. The manufacturer produces 52 of the planes each month, and planned to increase that

monthly pace to 57 this year, key to the goal of delivering 895 to 905 aircraft this year, which would be a record. The model "is perhaps the most important program for Boeing and its suppliers," Canaccord analyst Ken Herbert said.

What changed after the crash?

The Ethiopia Airlines accident has led to the grounding of the majority of the 350 MAX 8s in service, with some countries even banning the plane from their airspace, regardless of where the flight originated. The United States continues to allow the plane to fly, but regulators have asked Boeing to modify the flight controls, including the stall prevention system called "MCAS."

What about orders?

For the moment, no airlines have officially cancelled any orders for the MAX, but press reports indicate Lion Air is looking to replace its MAX 8 with Airbus. "All Boeing can do now is devote all its resources to cooperating with the investigators, and... continue to work with customers on any outstanding issues related to MAX performance," said Richard Aboulafia of the Teal Group.

What is the financial impact?

Boeing shares lost more than 11 percent since the accident, causing nearly \$27 billion of market capitalization to go up in smoke. It is difficult to estimate the financial impact, but the analysts are looking at different scenarios. If the Ethiopian Airlines and Lion Air accidents were found to have the same cause, the economic consequences would be minimal since Boeing would just have to roll out the updates to the flight control software and the flight manual already underway.

That would amount to less than \$1 billion because the cost of the changes would be about \$2 million per device, Canaccord analyst Herbert estimates. Boeing is aiming for a cash flow of about \$15 billion this year. But if investigators find a different cause, Aboulafia said the cost would be much greater, since it is likely to oblige the aircraft to be grounded for an extended period, and would involve repairs and major compensation, forcing airlines to find alternative aircraft to fly their routes. That scenario also would undermine Boeing's goal of producing 57 aircraft a month by June.

What about Boeing's reputation?

This crisis tarnishes the image of Boeing, which celebrated its centenary in 2016, as the accidents raises

doubts in the general public about the safety of its airplanes, Herbert said. The company, which also manufactures fighter jets, tankers, aerospace equipment and Air Force One, the plane that carries the President of the United States, is an American industrial flagship.

What happens to suppliers?

In addition to Boeing and its 150,000 employees, many direct and indirect suppliers to the 737 MAX are likely to be affected by the crisis, especially if orders are cancelled. They include General Electric (GE) and Safran, whose joint venture CFM manufactures the LEAP engine on the aircraft, US companies United Technologies (sensors) and Spirit AeroSystems (fuselage, cockpit).

Safety fears about Boeing

Meanwhile, US airlines are standing behind Boeing despite the wave of countries and carriers that have grounded the 737 MAX, but fear has gripped crews and passengers, and many are refusing to fly on the plane. Following the second deadly crash of one of its aircraft, some US politicians also have called for the plane to be grounded while the investigation continues, but regulators so far have not taken that step. —Agencies

Political incivility, racial hostility roil US high schools

CALIFORNIA: Political grudges and racial animosity have divided students at US high schools and President Donald Trump has exacerbated the problem with his rhetoric, a study released on Wednesday showed. Researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) surveyed 505 high school principals for the study. More than 60 percent of them reported some of their students had made derogatory remarks about immigrants.

More broadly, more than 80 percent of principals said some of their students had disparaged other ethnic groups. The UCLA study is called "School and Society in the Age of Trump," but its author said the Republican president is not solely responsible for tensions at secondary schools. "The report is a story of this particular time, not narrowly a story of the actions of this one president, although this president's actions contribute to it," John Rogers, a professor of education at UCLA, said by phone.

A White House representative declined to comment. The UCLA report described a charged environment at high schools, with most principals having to deal with students who make hateful or hostile remarks about other people's ethnic background or political beliefs. Groups of white students at some schools have chanted "Build the wall!" to demean students of color, according to accounts from several principals to researchers.

Rise in hate crimes

Those and other instances of racial hostility at high schools bear a resemblance to Trump's



CALIFORNIA: Kimbal Musk (right), wife Christiana and daughter Stella, 6, look on as students at Eucalyptus Elementary School learn to plant a vegetable garden in preparation for Plant a Seed Day in Hawthorne yesterday. —AFP

rhetoric on immigration, the study said. To bolster their contention that some hostility at schools is due to Trump's positions, the study points to a 17 percent rise in hate crimes across American society in 2017, the first year of Trump's presidency. Some conservative students have also encountered venom from classmates. Nearly half of principals told their students to respect students with unpopular political views, and one third emphasized the importance of tolerating the views of conservatives.

In Wisconsin, one principal reported a small

group of his students arrived at school one day wearing Trump's signature "Make America Great Again" hats, which offended some liberal teenagers and led to a fistfight. In another episode, some students in Connecticut made demeaning comments to a white student after she showed support for Trump, a principal told researchers, and the pupil felt her teacher did not defend her right to express herself. The report also found high schools are affected by other social problems, such as opioid addiction and firearms violence. — Reuters

Scores missing and trapped as building collapses in Lagos

LAGOS: At least 10 children were among scores of people missing yesterday after a four-storey building collapsed in Lagos, with rescuers trying to reach them through the roof of the damaged structure. The children were attending a nursery and primary school on the top floor of the residential building when the structure collapsed. Police said they believed scores of people were trapped under the rubble. The incident took place near Itafaji market on Lagos Island in Nigeria's economic capital at around 10:00 am (0900 GMT).

In chaotic scenes, panicked parents, local residents and shocked onlookers rushed to the area as police, firemen and medics staged a massive rescue operation. It was not immediately clear how many people were inside at the time of the collapse, nor were there any figures for the tally of dead or injured. "We are still trying to find out how many are trapped inside," said police officer Seun Ariwoye, who added that the number was probably scores. He said "at least 20 have been brought out" but did not say whether they were alive or dead.

A young man helping rescue efforts who gave his name only as Derin said "at least 10 children" were trapped inside but "thought to be alive." An AFP reporter at the scene saw at least eight people pulled from the wreckage, including a small boy with blood on his face. Covered in dust, he was alive but unconscious and appeared to be badly hurt. One local resident who witnessed the moment of collapse said there was no warning. "We were smoking outside when the building just collapsed," Olamide Nuzbah told AFP in pidgin English.

As rescuers worked furiously to reach those inside, distraught parents begged them to find their children. "Please, save my child, save my child!" wept one traumatized mother whose seven-year-old daughter was trapped inside, as people tried in vain to console her. School bags, toys and clothes could be seen among the piles of rubble as a bulldozer tried to clear a path through some of the wreckage to help the rescue efforts. As the day wore on, an AFP correspondent saw several children being brought out, at least one of whom appeared to be dead. Elsewhere, hundreds of local residents tried to help, passing water and helmets through to dust-covered rescuers working tirelessly to sift through the rubble, some of whom appeared to be distressed. — AFP

International

Israel uncovers Hezbollah unit led by a notorious commander

New unit 'set up to launch attacks against Israel'

JERUSALEM: Israel's army said yesterday it has uncovered a unit created by Hezbollah across the ceasefire line in the Syrian Golan Heights and led by a commander previously jailed over an attack on US forces. With President Bashar Al-Assad regaining control of southern Syria with the help of Russia and Hezbollah backer Iran, Israel is concerned a front against it could be established there. Hezbollah, based in neighboring Lebanon, has also been supporting Assad in Syria's civil war.

The Shiite group is among Israel's main enemies and the two fought a war in 2006. Israel said the new unit had been established without Assad's knowledge, and some Israeli media reported that part of the aim in publicizing it was in hopes Syria and Russia would move to stop it. It alleged the new unit, "masterminded" by Hezbollah, had been set up "to eventually control teams of Syrian operatives who will launch attacks against Israel". "We are not going to allow Hezbollah to establish a terror infrastructure on the Golan capable of striking Israeli civilians," said Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus, Israeli military spokesman. "We

hold the Syrian regime responsible for anything that happens inside Syria aimed at Israel."

The army said the unit was in the establishment and recruitment stage and was not yet operational. Hezbollah began establishing it in the summer of 2018,

Daqduq was captured in 2007 on suspicion he had helped organize an attack that led to the deaths of the five soldiers. He was held by American troops until he was handed over to Iraqi officials in December 2011.

'Now and forever'

Israel says a previous such unit was established in the Syrian Golan under the command of Samir Kantar and Jihad Mughniyeh. Kantar was killed in a 2015 air strike in Damascus blamed on Israel. Mughniyeh was also killed in an air raid attributed to Israel earlier that year.

According to Israel's military, the new unit was seeking to revive infrastructure left behind by the former one. "The field operatives who fill the ranks of the network and act exclusively in Syria are composed of various groups and networks who previously took part in terrorist activity in the Golan Heights under the notorious network of Kantar and Mughniyeh," the army said. Some have had training in sabotage, sharpshooting and firing Grad rockets, it said in a statement.

Syria, Hezbollah and Iran had not responded to

Israel's allegations. The suspected unit is a part of a complex series of challenges Israel says it is facing in war-torn Syria. It has pledged to stop its main enemy Iran from entrenching itself militarily there, carrying out hundreds of air strikes against what it says are Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria. With elections approaching in Israel on April 9, some suggested Wednesday's announcement may have had political motivations since it could help burnish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security credentials.

Foreign Minister Israel Katz dismissed such suggestions. The announcement also comes amid a new push by Netanyahu to have Israel's sovereignty over the part of the Golan it has occupied since 1967 recognized internationally. Lindsey Graham, an influential US senator allied to President Donald Trump, toured the Golan with Netanyahu this week and vowed to work to have Washington recognize it as part of Israel "now and forever". Israel seized 1,200 square kilometers from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed it in a move never recognized by the international community.—AFP



Israel worried over Golan Heights front

it said. It said it is led by Hezbollah commander Ali Musa Daqduq. In 2012, Daqduq was released by Iraq due to lack of evidence after being accused of plotting to kill five US soldiers in the Iraqi city of Karbala.

Algeria since its independence

PARIS: Key dates in the history of Algeria since its independence, after President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced he is abandoning his bid for a fifth term and postponing indefinitely the election.

Independence

On July 5, 1962 Algeria proclaims its independence after 132 years as a French colony and following a bloody independence war which lasted nearly eight years. In September 1963 Ahmed Ben Bella, secretary general of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the single party which had led the struggle against colonial rule, becomes independent Algeria's first president. In April 1964 the FLN congress adopts a

charter enshrining socialism in the country.

Nationalizations

In June 1965 defense minister Houari Boumediene overthrows and jails Ben Bella. He becomes head of the Revolutionary Council and the government. In 1971, Algeria's French oil companies are nationalized. In December 1976 Boumediene is elected president. He dies two years later and is succeeded by Chadli Bendjedid.

Riots

In October 1988, after a summer punctuated by strikes and shortages, protests rock the capital Algiers and then spread to other cities, prompting authorities to declare a state of emergency and the army to crack down. Nearly 170 are killed according to an official toll and 500 according to the media. In February 1989, two months after the re-election of Bendjedid for a third term, a new consti-

tution establishing multi-party rule is introduced.

Civil war

In June 1990, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) sweeps the first multi-party municipal elections. A state of emergency is proclaimed in June 1991 following clashes between the security forces and FIS protesters. In December 1991 the FIS comes close to an absolute majority in the first round of the first multi-party legislative polls. Bendjedid resigns, the election is cancelled, emergency rule is established and the FIS is dissolved. A civil war begins in 1992 and lasts for a decade, leaving officially 200,000 dead including many civilians who were victims of attacks or large scale massacres blamed on Islamist groups. In April 1999 Abdelaziz Bouteflika, backed by the army, is elected president and seeks to restore peace. Thousands of Islamists agree to benefit from two amnesty laws and lay down arms.—AFP



ALGIERS: Algerians sit in a cafe as teachers and students protest in central Algiers yesterday against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid to prolong his two-decade rule.—AFP

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International

Floods in southern Africa kill 115; 843,000 affected across southeast

At least 66 killed in Mozambique; 45 die in Malawi

MAPUTO: At least 115 people were killed in Mozambique, Malawi and South Africa after heavy rains affected 843,000 people across southeast Africa, officials and the UN said, prompting calls for emergency aid. At least 66 people have been killed in Mozambique, 45 in Malawi and four in South Africa following torrential rains that have triggered flash floods.

Mozambique cabinet spokeswoman Ana Comoana said the "government has decreed a red alert due to the continuing rains and the approach of the tropical cyclone Idai, expected to reach the

country between Thursday to Friday". She spoke to reporters late Tuesday after a cabinet meeting in Maputo to discuss the emergency.

The floods in Mozambique, one of Africa's poorest countries, have already destroyed 5,756 homes, affecting 15,467 households and 141,325 people. In neighboring Malawi, floods have left over 230,000 people without shelter and affected around 739,000 people, according to the UN. Malawi's Meteorological Department has warned of more rains and flooding in the country's south between Thursday and Sunday. In Mozambique, 111 people

have been injured, 18 hospitals destroyed, 938 classrooms destroyed and 9,763 students affected.

More than 168,000 hectares (415,000 acres) of crops were destroyed, the government spokeswoman added. Authorities there have ordered the compulsory evacuation of people living in flood-prone areas. "Sixteen accommodation centers have been opened in the provinces of Zambezia and Tete to accommodate the displaced," Comoana said. "The government needs 1.1 billion meticais (\$16 million) to assist 80,000 families affected by the rains".

Mozambique is prone to extreme weather events. Floods in 2000 claimed at least 800 lives while more than 100 were killed in 2015. "Tropical Cyclone Idai, which formed over the Northern Mozambique Channel on March 9, is expected to make landfall near Beira (eastern Mozambique) on March 14 or 15," said the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "The cyclone was located over the Mozambique Channel on March 12 and is expected to strengthen into intense tropical cyclone status (Category 4 equivalent) again prior to making landfall." —AFP

News in brief

33 Boko Haram 'terrorists' killed

NIAMEY: Niger said yesterday it had killed 33 Boko Haram "terrorists" and seized vehicles and weapons in an operation in the Lake Chad region in the country's south-east. "Offensive actions carried out on Tuesday inflicted heavy losses on the enemy," a defense ministry statement read on state television said. "Thirty-three terrorists (were) killed" while there were no losses on the army's side, it said. An "armored vehicle" was destroyed, while two other vehicles, two motorcycles, a 120-millimetre mortar, 10 AK-47 assault rifles, two 60mm shells and 3,736 rounds of all calibers were seized, it said. The operation began on Saturday, it said—a day after seven police and 38 jihadists were killed near Gueskerou in the southeastern region of Diffa, according to a government toll. —AFP

Malaysia shuts 34 schools

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has closed 34 schools after hundreds of people fell ill when toxic waste was dumped into a river, the education minister said yesterday, warning the situation was getting worse. A lorry is believed to have dumped the waste in southern Johor state last week, sending toxic fumes across a wide area and causing those affected to display symptoms of poisoning such as nausea and vomiting. About 300 people, many of them children, received medical treatment after inhaling the fumes and scores have been admitted to hospital, according to official news agency Bernama. Reports said it was unclear what type of poisonous gas had been emitted near the industrial town of Pasir Gudang. Education Minister Maszlee Malik said he visited the area and saw scores of students being brought by ambulance to a makeshift emergency centre. —AFP

Turning competition into rivalry

BEIJING: China yesterday urged the European Union not to turn "beneficial competition" between the two partners into a "rivalry" after Brussels outlined a shift to more assertive relations with Beijing. Top European policymakers on Tuesday released a 10-point plan for addressing relations with Beijing as fears grow about Chinese investment and influence on critical infrastructure, including new communication technology. China is both a cooperative partner and an "economic competitor in pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance," the EU said, outlining its plan. Yesterday, China's foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang responded, saying: "In the era of globalization, benign competition will exist between different economic systems. "We don't want competition to turn into a rivalry type of competition." —AFP

Migrants kidnapped in Mexico

MEXICO CITY: Nineteen passengers who were kidnapped from a bus last week in northern Mexico were migrants, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Tuesday, as investigators worked through the murky details of the case. The men were crossing the violent state of Tamaulipas, on the US-Mexican border, on Thursday when four vehicles blocked the road and forced their bus to stop, according to authorities. Armed men then boarded the coach and kidnapped 19 passengers whose names they had on a list. "I can confirm that they were migrants," Lopez Obrador said, referring to the abducted men, without specifying their nationalities. The bus was traveling from the port of Tampico to Reynosa, a border city across from McAllen, Texas. Although the bus driver told authorities that 19 passengers were kidnapped, investigation sources have indicated the real number of victims could be as high as 25. —AFP

Indian women claim inheritance

NEW DELHI: Rising property prices in parts of India have helped achieve what women's rights groups have tried and failed to do for decades — get more women to claim their inheritance. A 2005 law gave Hindu women across India equal inheritance rights but few have made claims because they are unaware of the law, or have been forced to give up their claims by male family members, according to analysts. But an increase in property prices near the Indian capital, New Delhi, has pushed more women in Haryana state to claim their share, gender and land rights experts said on Wednesday. "Despite laws that give rights of inheritance to women, low levels of education and a strong patriarchal tradition can rob women of these rights," said Prem Chowdhry, a gender expert who has researched women's inheritance in Haryana. "But because prices of land have sky-rocketed in these areas, women are being pushed by their husbands or fathers-in-law to claim their share of the family property, or at least be compensated in some way for it," she said on the sidelines of a land conference in New Delhi. Property prices in the three Haryana cities that are closest to Delhi have risen by more than half in the past decade as more migrants flocked to the capital and transport links improved, according to Anarock, an Indian property consultant. —Reuters

California on frontline in 2020 presidential battle

LOS ANGELES: California has been a thorn in President Donald Trump's side ever since he took office, challenging him at every turn. The liberal-leaning and most populous state in America never seems to tire from filing lawsuits against his policies, whether on immigration, climate issues or abortion.

Now, it is gearing up to play an even bigger role in the 2020 general election by moving up its primary vote to March 3, the earliest date possible. Previously, the delegate-rich state was all but an afterthought in presidential primaries. This is because by the time its June primary vote took place, the nominations for either party-Republican and Democrat-were all but locked in.

"I think those that made the decision in California to shift the date saw that as a way of elevating the state that had been up front about its resistance to some of the things the Trump administration is pursuing," said Josh Putnam, lecturer in the Department of Public and International Affairs at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington.

"This will put California voters in a position of standing up to the Trump administration early on, at least in choosing who may face off against him in the November 2020 general elections." The new date puts California on equal footing with other states that hold their presidential primary on what is known as Super Tuesday.

Nations grounding their Boeing 737s

PARIS: A number of countries have grounded Boeing's 737 MAX 8 medium-haul workhorse jet in response to the Ethiopian Airlines crash that killed all 157 people on board. The Nairobi-bound plane was the same type as the Indonesian Lion Air jet that crashed in October, killing 189 passengers and crew—and some officials have detected similarities between the two accidents. There are some 350 of the 737 MAX 8 planes currently in service around the world.

While some countries and airlines have opted to ground the planes, others are continuing to fly the aircraft pending an investigation into the crash and possible guidance from Boeing itself. Boeing, which has sent experts to assist in the Ethiopia probe, says safety is its "number one priority". Countries that have grounded 737 MAX 8s — Singapore:

Singapore's aviation regulator Tuesday completely banned the use of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft in the country's airspace. The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) said it was "temporarily suspending operation of all variants of the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft into and out of Singapore" in light of the two recent accidents.

China

Beijing Monday ordered domestic airlines to suspend operation of the Boeing 737 MAX 8, citing the two crashes. Noting "similarities" between the two incidents, China's Civil Aviation Administration said operation of the model would only resume after "confirming the relevant measures to effectively ensure flight safety". China is a hugely important market for the US aircraft company, accounting for about one-fifth of worldwide deliveries of Boeing 737 MAX models.

Indonesia

Indonesia said it was grounding its 11 jets of the 737 MAX 8 type. Inspections of the aircraft would start Tuesday and the planes would remain grounded until they were cleared by safety regulators, Director General of Air Transport Polana Pramesti told reporters.

Impact Latino vote

And given that California has an early voting system, ballots will start being mailed to voters 30 days before the primary, which coincides with the all-important caucuses in Iowa, the state that votes first in the nominating process. "In the past, by the time Californians voted in the primaries, the nominee was almost certainly identified and that won't be the case in the 2020 election," said Sonja Diaz, founding director of the Latino Policy and Politics Initiative at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"With a push up of the California primary earlier in the cycle, you get a ton of delegate votes and that will certainly sway who the Democratic nominee is," she added. Eight other states, including Texas—the second most populous state—will be holding primaries on the same day as California, with the results setting the tone for who might win the nomination at the national conventions and who might flop.

Experts say the calendar change in California could play in favor of any Democratic nominees from the state, giving them more visibility early on in the campaign. So far, Senator Kamala Harris, a staunch Trump opponent, is the only homegrown Democratic presidential contender. Putnam cautioned, however, that any advantage for California-based candidates might be limited as victory hinges on them doing well in four other early-voting states—Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina.

"When California has moved up the primary like this in the past, it has tended to amplify the result coming out of those early states," he said. "I

South Korea

South Korea's transport ministry said Tuesday it had advised Eastar Jet, the nation's only airline to operate Boeing 737 MAX 8s, to ground its two planes. The budget airline had agreed to suspend its use of the aircraft starting Wednesday, it added.

Mongolia:

The Mongolian Civil Aviation Authority said on Facebook it had ordered the state carrier MIAT Mongolian Airlines to ground the sole Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft in its fleet.

Australia

Australia on Tuesday barred Boeing 737 MAX planes from its airspace. Fiji Airways is the only 737 MAX operator affected by the Australian ban, according to Australia's Civil Aviation Safety Authority, as Singapore-based SilkAir's planes were already covered by a ban imposed by the city-state.

Ethiopian Airlines

Ethiopian Airlines said Monday it had grounded its Boeing 737 MAX 8 fleet "until further notice". "Although we don't yet know the cause of the accident, we have to decide to ground the particular fleet as an extra safety precaution," said the state-owned carrier, Africa's largest.

Comair

South African airline Comair said it had "decided to remove its 737 MAX from its flight schedule".

Cayman Airways

Cayman Airways CEO Fabian Whorms said it would suspend flights for its two 737 MAX 8 planes "until more information is received".

Gol Airlines

Brazil's Gol Airlines said it was temporarily suspending its commercial operations with the plane.

Aeromexico

Aeromexico, which has six 737 MAX 8s in its fleet, announced that it was grounding the aircraft.

Aerolineas Argentinas

Argentina's flagship carrier said late Monday that it had suspended the operation of its five 737 MAX 8s pending the result of investigations into the crash of



WASHINGTON: US Senate Minority Leader Sen Chuck Schumer (D-NY) holds up a copy of US President Donald Trump's FY2020 budget request during a news briefing after the weekly Senate Democratic policy luncheon at the US. —AFP

strongly suspect that that's going to be the case this time. Diaz said the calendar change in California will also impact the vote of minorities in the state, notably the Latino vote. "The Latino vote and the Latino electorate is poised to be critical for any successful candidate on the Democratic side," she said. "We saw in the 2018 mid-term elections, the Latino electorate increased the ballots cast from 2014 to 2018 in remarkable numbers across the country."

'What America is becoming'

Also adding to California's allure,

especially for Democrats, is the fact that the state, which boasts at having the fifth largest economy in the world, is home to some of the country's most prolific donors and has positioned itself as one of the president's most fervent opponents. "Although Trump comes here to raise money from some very wealthy donors from the Republican Party, he also sees California as an example of what America should not be," Diaz said. "And I think that he does that because of the fear that that is precisely what America is becoming." —AFP



FARNBOROUGH: Visitors watch as a Boeing 737 Max lands after an air display during the Farnborough Airshow, south west of London. —AFP

the Ethiopian Airlines plane. Earlier its pilots had refused to fly the jet.

Italy

Air Italy said it would follow all directives "to ensure the maximum level of safety and security". In the meantime, the planes remained in the air.

Iceland

Icelandair operates three Boeing 737 MAX 8. Its operations chief told Frettabladid newspaper it would be "premature" to link the crashes in Ethiopia and Indonesia together. This could change depending on the outcome of an ongoing probe but "for now, there is no reason to fear these machines".

Norway

Norwegian Air Shuttle, which operates 18 Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, said it would keep them in the air.

Dubai

Airline Flydubai said it was "monitoring the situation" and it was "confident in the airworthiness of our fleet".

Oman

Oman Air said it was in contact with Boeing "to understand if there are any implications for other airlines operating the same model".

India

India's aviation regulator said Monday that it had imposed additional "interim" safety requirements for ground engineers and crew for the aircraft, but stopped short of ordering their grounding. —AFP

Russia

Russian airline S7 said it was closely following the crash investigation and was in contact with Boeing, but had received no instructions to stop flying the 737 MAX 8.

Turkey

The CEO of Turkish Airlines, which flies 11 Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, said in a tweet that the carrier would fly the planes as scheduled, adding that the airline was in touch with Boeing and that passenger security was paramount.

International

In Indonesia, Facebook and Twitter are 'buzzer' battlegrounds; elections loom

Campaign teams deny using buzzers or spreading fake news

JAKARTA: Almost every day, "Janda", a self-described Indonesian housewife with 2,000 Twitter followers, dispenses lifestyle tips, complains about city life, and praises how the government of President Joko Widodo has improved her life as a young mother. But Janda the housewife does not exist. The Twitter account's real owner is an unmarried middle-aged man who offers political social media services backing Widodo's re-election campaign.

He is a leader of one of the many so-called "buzzer" teams, named for the social media buzz such groups aim to create, that have sprung up in Indonesia ahead of the presidential election next month in the world's third-largest democracy. "Our battleground is social media. The content we are making for the election is reaching at least a million people per week," said the owner of the Janda account, declining to be named because his work is legally in a gray area.

In interviews with Reuters, over a dozen buzzer team members, social media consultants and cyber experts described an array of social media operations that they said were spreading propaganda on behalf of both Widodo and his challenger, retired general Prabowo Subianto. Widodo enjoys a comfortable lead in most opinion polls over Prabowo, as the challenger is widely known. The two contested the previous election in 2014 as well, and Widodo won narrowly. Fake news was spread in that election as well, although social media was less far-reaching than it is now.

Under Indonesia's broad internet defamation law, creating and spreading fake news is illegal, but holding social media accounts in false names is not, unless a real person is being impersonated. Social media companies however

mostly bar holding accounts under false names. Three buzzers directly involved in the current campaign described how they operate hundreds of personalized social media accounts each on behalf of the candidates. One denied propagating fake news, while two said they didn't care about the accuracy of the content. Both campaign teams deny using buzzers or spreading fake news.

Ross Tapsell, an expert on politics and media at Australia National University, said that it has become normal for candidates in Southeast Asia to hire online campaign strategists, who in turn tap an army of people to spread content on social media. "So there is no direct link at all to the candidate," he said. The buzzer campaigns have far outstripped the efforts of Facebook and other social media companies to curtail creation of fake accounts and spread fake news, cyber experts say. Reuters found that while robot accounts were occasionally deleted, personalized fake accounts like "Janda" are widespread on Twitter and Facebook platforms, despite violating the companies' rules.

“Our battleground is the social media”

On the edge

Misinformation spread by real accounts - which are often coopted by buzzer teams - is rampant on Facebook as well as on its Instagram and WhatsApp affiliates and rival service Twitter. The companies say they are working

with the government and fighting back against false content. Representatives for Twitter, Facebook and Whatsapp told Reuters they regularly delete fake accounts in Indonesia, but declined to share removal numbers.

A Twitter spokeswoman told Reuters it is working to remove networks of accounts engaged in misinformation and disinformation. Facebook, which counts Indonesia as its third-largest market globally with an estimated 130 million accounts, says it trains election management bodies how to flag fake news to the company, which is then evaluated by moderators and deleted if it breaks its community standards.

For Indonesian Communications Minister Rudiantara, those efforts are not enough. He said the government had asked social media companies to work with authorities to create a standard operating procedure that would allow fake news and hoaxes to be flagged and resolved. They have yet to comply. "We expect it to get much worse as we get closer to the election," said Harry Sufehmi, co-founder of Mafindo, an Indonesian organization fighting fake news, which listed nearly 500 social media hoaxes related to politics in 2018.

He was one of three experts whose research found that a larger proportion of the misinformation targets Widodo, with some posts depicting him as anti-Islam, a Chinese stooge or a communist. All are inflammatory accusations

in a country that has the world's largest number of Muslims, where the communist party is banned and suspicions linger over the influence of Beijing. A smaller portion of the misinformation campaigns target Prabowo.

Buzzing for money

On a recent afternoon in Jakarta, one buzzer team leader scrolled through two mobile phones that had over 250 Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube and Twitter accounts, each with a fake persona. He updated five of them with posts praising Widodo's achievements or mocking Prabowo and his running mate. He denied disseminating misinformation, focusing instead on content that gushed about his clients's virtues. But he admitted he does look for dirt on opponents as part of a "complete package" of posts and videos that he sells for 200 million rupiah (\$14,000) a month. His staff of 15, whom he refers to as "cyber troops", in turn have subcontractors, throughout Indonesia, many of whom are unaware of the ultimate identity of clients, he said. He told Reuters he was hired by an adviser to Widodo's campaign.

Ace Hasan Syadzily, a spokesman for the president's campaign team, denied knowledge of such groups, but said "the campaign had an obligation to counter false or negative narratives" against Widodo. Another buzzer said he had been hired by advisers to Prabowo, while the third said he supplied services to a social media agency used by both campaigns. Anthony Leong, the Prabowo digital team's coordinator, denied they use buzzer teams, noting that the campaign required its "10,000 digital volunteers" to use real names and only allowed them to post "positive content". — Reuters

Indonesian terror suspect's wife and children die in blast

JAKARTA: The wife and two children of a suspected Indonesian militant are believed to have died in a suicide bombing at their home following an hours-long standoff with authorities, police said yesterday. The suspect, who is in police custody, was identified as a member of Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an Islamic State-linked jihadist network blamed for a series of deadly suicide bombings in Indonesia's second-biggest city last year.

In May, two families carried out attacks at churches in Surabaya, killing a dozen people and children of the attackers, including two young girls whose parents brought them to the bombings. The explosion yesterday morning came after police had arrested the militant who was suspected of planning terror attacks. Officers then surrounded the man's home in Sibolga on Sumatra island when the confrontation began.

During a nearly 12-hour standoff, the woman lobbed an explosive device at security personnel, wounding a police officer, said national police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo. "The information we have is that the wife of the suspect blew herself up at around 1:30 am (Wednesday)," he told AFP, adding that



SIBOLGA: An Indonesian policeman keeps watch as bystanders look on following an explosion at the home of a suspected militant in Sibolga on Sumatra island early yesterday. —AFP

authorities could not immediately enter the home over fears of another explosion. He added authorities had later found the remains of a woman and female toddler at the scene. Prasetyo said authorities believed there were at least two children in the home at the time of the blast.

Local resident Samsul Pasaribu said the force of the blast was felt through the neighborhood. "We thought it was an earthquake,"

he added. Indonesian president Joko Widodo said he hoped other jihadist cells in the area would be discovered, but dismissed suggestions that any planned attacks were linked to presidential elections next month. Since the 2002 Bali bombings, which killed over 200 people including scores of tourists, Indonesia has seen a string of deadly attacks that have tested its long-held reputation for religious tolerance. — AFP

From chits to apps, 'new measures' for India mega-election

NEW DELHI: Holding the world's biggest democratic election is no mean feat, with 900 million Indians across the country eligible to vote between April 11 and May 19. To iron out some of the hiccups of India's previous 16 national ballots - and increase public trust in the democratic process - the Election Commission has introduced a slew of new measures.

Mug shots

With an estimated 300 million illiterate adults across India, photos of candidates will now feature alongside party symbols on electronic voting machines. The devices have been dogged by claims they can be hacked, but will now print out a chit for each voter, who can confirm the details before dropping it in a sealed box inside the polling booth. Random matching of the chits and numbers of votes on the machines should verify no tampering was done. Vehicles transporting the voting machines will also be fitted with GPS devices to monitor their movements.

Criminal candidates

In the outgoing parliament there were 186 lawmakers facing criminal charges or being investigated - some 112 of them involving serious cases such as murder or rape. This time, candidates under a legal cloud have to issue three newspaper and

TV advertisements detailing any charges they face in the constituency where they're standing. The Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) charity reported in 2014 that candidates facing criminal charges had a higher chance of winning elections compared to those without - either by intimidating voters or from buying influence. Candidates have to declare income and tax returns for the past five years - the information is made public before the vote - as well as submit details any of assets and liabilities in their name abroad.

Citizen monitors

Webcams broadcasting live on the internet will monitor 5,000 polling stations and all counting halls, allowing voters to keep a close eye on proceedings in real time. A smartphone app will allow citizens to record any polling misconduct or malpractice such as distributing liquor or drugs - a common method of vote buying. The complainant, who can remain anonymous, can upload a photo or video to the app and officials are obliged to respond with action taken within 100 minutes. A toll-free helpline number for voter information, feedback and complaints will also operate for the first time. Apart from citizen monitors, some 3.7 million polling staff were involved in running the 2014 election. — AFP

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Iran hunts for ships to keep oil flowing

Iran is discreetly scouring the globe for second-hand oil tankers to replace its ageing fleet and keep crucial crude exports flowing as US sanctions start to bite, Iranian and Western sources said. Since US President Donald Trump reimposed sanctions in November, exploratory talks with South Korea for up to 10 new supertankers have stalled, Panama has removed at least 21 Iranian tankers from its registry and Tehran is now looking for extra vessels in places such as Vietnam, the sources said.

Washington has put restrictions on Iran's port, energy and shipping sectors but it has given waivers to the country's eight biggest oil customers, which include China, India and Japan, so they can keep buying Iranian crude. With oil exports accounting for an estimated 70 percent of Iran's revenues, maintaining an effective fleet of tankers to store and move that oil is crucial for Tehran. But potential sellers of used vessels are more wary this time round after a Greek network that helped Iran buy tankers under previous sanctions was blacklisted. Western insurers are also steering clear, complicating Iran's attempts to export crude to US-approved buyers.

If Iran runs into difficulties exporting its oil it could have a significant impact. Besides the importance of oil for its budget, Iran is estimated to produce about 2.8 million barrels a day, more than 9 percent of OPEC's output. "Whatever sector you look at, companies will be in mind being cut off from the US financial system when deciding whether to trade with Iran," said Mehdi Varzi, an independent oil consultant who has previously worked at the state-run National Iranian Oil Co.

'Happy to do business'

Israel warned this month that its navy could take action against Iran, which it said was smuggling oil using clandestine measures similar to those employed during the previous round of sanctions. According to maritime specialists, methods used for skirting sanctions in the past have included changing the names of ships, switching off AIS (Automatic Identification System) location transponders and conducting ship-to-ship transfers of oil. Since the previous round of sanctions in 2012, ship tracking has become more sophisticated and more available. Washington has also cracked down on more Iranian networks, making it riskier to get involved with Iran, according to bankers. Iran reached an agreement with world powers in 2015 over its nuclear program which led to the lifting of sanctions in 2016 but Trump pulled out of the deal in May last year and reimposed US restrictions in November. "Many big oil traders are very worried about going into Iran due to Trump, and even the Chinese are trying to comply with what the Americans want," said Varzi, who is based in Britain. A senior Iranian official played down the threat to its oil exports because of pressure on its fleet. "Plenty of countries are happy to do business with Iran," the official said. "As we have done in the past, there are several ways to overcome the shortage, including using tankers of other countries."

More scrutiny

A second Iranian official said discussions with South Korea over the possibility of ordering as many as 10 supertankers, each able to carry up to 2 million barrels of oil, had been delayed by US sanctions. "We are working on it," the official said. After Western sanctions were lifted, Iran also started talks with South Korea's Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Co about forming a joint venture to establish a shipyard in Iran. A spokesman for Daewoo said it signed a preliminary agreement with Iran in December 2016 to cooperate on developing the shipyard, but said no progress had been made since then. A third Iranian official said talks were still ongoing. According to one shipping source, Iran has been searching for more ships in places such as Vietnam and two sources said it had also been looking for middlemen in the Greek market, one of the main hubs for second-hand ship deals. "Iran has been looking for ships, but this time round it is going to be harder - there is so much more scrutiny now. It is going to take them longer," one of the shipping sources said.

When asked about Iran's efforts to secure ships, a third Iranian source said they were looking at all options. Vietnamese officials did not respond to requests for comment. Iran has more than 50 tankers, but needs them for both transporting oil and storing unsold stocks in its territorial waters - given its limited onshore storage capacity. Data based on AIS tracking by shipping intelligence platform MarineTraffic showed 12 Iranian tankers, or more than a fifth of its fleet, were being used for floating storage in March.

'Floating liability'

Iran is struggling to keep its ships flagged to foreign registries too. All commercial ships have to be registered - flagged in a particular country - partly to comply with safety and environmental laws. Following the reimposition of sanctions, Panama, the world's leading flag state for commercial shipping, decided to de-flag Iran's ships, a fourth Iranian official said. Shipping data shows nearly all Iran's tankers had been registered with Panama. A source at Panama's flag registry said the cancellation, "affects approximately 60 Panama registered ships that are related to Iranian and Syrian owners". The source did not provide further details. A US Treasury spokesperson said: "We intend to fully enforce these sanctions and we encourage the cooperation and compliance of our allies and partners."

Renewed US sanctions have also meant Iran has been unable to secure vital certification services from foreign providers to ensure its ships remain seaworthy, shipping officials said. Shipping records show that 16 of Iran's tankers are at least 19 years old - and three of those vessels have been in service since 1996. Iranian tanker Sanchi sank off China in 2018 after colliding with another vessel while five of the eight tankers Iran bought via the Greek network under previous sanctions have since been scrapped, adding to the need for more ships to fill the gaps. US Special Representative for Iran, Brian Hook, described Iran's tanker sector as a "floating liability" in November. —AFP



People collect water from a broken pipe, flowing into a sewage canal at the Guaire River in Caracas on March 11, 2019, as a massive power outage continues affecting some areas of the country. —AFP

In Caracas, water an obsession amid blackout

Plastic bottles and containers at the ready, Keisy Perez ignores the stench from the brown river as it slips slowly through the grimy San Agustín district of Venezuela's capital. The quest for drinkable water has rapidly become an obsession for millions like her in Caracas days after a crippling power blackout stalled the city's pumps. In this part of Caracas, the Guaire River is effectively an open sewer. The crisis has led many to seek water in places they would previously not dream of going. People here are undeterred.

A burst water main has brought a feverish crowd, equipped with every kind of plastic container they can find. The water courses through an underground culvert to emerge as a stream. In their desperation, they are content to ignore its proximity to the murky river. In their rush, some slipped down the bank and into the river. For Perez, it's just another indignity of Venezuela's crisis. "We came to get water and I fell in. And look, it didn't kill me," she said cheerily. But she can't hide her exasperation after days without electricity or running water following years of food and medicine shortages. "Are they waiting for us to die?" she asks.

'Nothing to drink'

"We have no water and nothing to drink," Marcel Galindez told AFP as he filled a 4.5-gallon (20-liter)

container. "We'll have to boil it," he said, looking doubtfully at the contents. Alongside him, a girl washed her hair. "This has been going on for a long time," said Omar Feralines, a local resident. "But they discovered this, and we've come to get some for the bathroom, for the children. We can boil it, we can even drink it. What else are we going to do?"

To get at the stream means getting close to the fetid river. "But just thinking about getting into that river, you have to think about it like three times," said Eduardo Escalona. "It's crazy. People are desperate," sighed the 43-year-old, looking at the crowd around the canal. Every day of the blackout has brought more people to take a chance on the water from the burst pipeline. But then soldiers deployed and ordered them to move on so workmen could fix the pipe. An angry crowd of around 300 people blocked the road on Monday. "They're not letting us get water," said Carlos, a local resident. "We are thirsty," the crowd yelled at security forces. "We need water for our kids."

'We're hungry here'

At Los Caobos park in the center of Caracas, a woman arrived with a bag of laundry at one of the orna-

mental fountains, where hundreds of people had come to fill their containers and bottles. "We're managing... tomorrow I'll come back to wash the sheets and towels in the fountain," said the woman, who declined to be identified. Hundreds of people were trying their luck on the northern outskirts, at the foot of Mount Avila, which separates Caracas from the Caribbean.

There they wait every day in long lines to take turns to fill their containers from the trickles emerging from the wooded slopes. All the scampering around for water is too much for Yulimar, who sinks down in despair. "I have nothing to feed my children," she says. On Saturday, the socialist government of President Nicolas Maduro announced an emergency plan to distribute food and water to the poorest neighborhoods and the distribution began on Monday.

Riot police use shields to corral lines of people as they waited to fill up from tankers in several neighborhoods. But Keisy, still waiting for a water delivery, said she had received nothing from the social government's subsidized food program for weeks. "Maduro talks, but we don't see anything. We're hungry here, nobody gets anything, whether they are Chavists or opposition." —AFP

As herds struggle, Maasai try swap to dairy cattle

In this Maasai village, where cattle have long been a symbol of wealth and pride, "I hope your cattle are well" is the most common greeting among friends and neighbors. But raising large herds, the tradition in this region, is becoming more difficult, in part as climate change brings harsher droughts and other extreme weather. In 2017, Joel Ngeengi lost most of his cattle herd as prolonged drought dried up access to grass, he said. He is now trying a new - and contentious - approach advocated by government officials and some non-governmental organizations: Keeping far fewer, but more productive, dairy cattle.

Last year, using his savings and cash provided by his children, he bought four part Holstein-Friesian dairy cattle. His animals now produce more than 40 litres of milk a day, each liter selling for about 40 Kenyan shillings (40 US cents). He says life has gotten easier as a result of the change, particularly as his land now provides enough fodder for his smaller herd. Before, "I was ever on the run," looking for food or water for his herd, he said. "Now I am a relaxed man. I have all I need in this small package."

A growing number of herders in Oloimayian have now made a similar switch to smaller herds, said Maclean Egesa, who, as part of his work for child sponsorship charity Childfund, coordinates efforts to help farmers in Kajiado and Makueni counties make the transition. Michael Santeto, national coordinator for the Pastoral Development Network of Kenya, a non-governmental advocacy group, said pastoralists have long kept large herds not only out of pride and as the basis of their economy but also to act as insurance against diseases and pests.

With large herds, even large losses usually leave at least some animals behind to rebuild a new herd, he said. But ever-shrinking areas for pastoralists to graze their animals, as farms encroach traditional grazing areas, combined with harsher drought and growing populations, mean a large herd is now more difficult to maintain. "Reducing herds is a reality pastoralist have to grapple with. Because of the bulging population ...

space is shrinking, and so adaptive strategies have to be sought and herds have to be reduced to manageable sizes," he said.

The reality, he said, is that "modern pastoralism is minimizing extensive movements. This has helped herders rethink pastoralism." Large herds mean rangelands have less time to recuperate from grazing and drought, he said, noting that replanting traditional drought-hardy grasses in some areas may be a way to cope with the growing stresses.

More milk, more work?

Santeto's organization believes switching to fewer, higher-value livestock is one way of coping with changing conditions. Persuading herders of that, though, can be difficult, both because of traditional views about the status of large herds and the harder work involved in maintaining dairy cattle. The new high-value dairy cattle - often high-producing foreign breeds or crosses between them and harder local varieties - can be fussy eaters and more vulnerable to problems the former range cattle would have shrugged off.

"Though the hybrid animals have countless benefits they also come with an equal measure of challenges. For one, they require lots of care, plenty of clean water, lots of green fodder, silage and concentrates," Ngeengi said. "They are selective on what they take, which makes running of the farm a bit expensive." But "the benefits outweigh their disadvantages", he said.

To buy the more expensive animals, herders in the community have taken loans or in some cases sourced money from community savings groups, said Duncan Sinkeet, who has worked as an animal health worker for Childfund. Milk produced from the new cattle is for now sold in local towns, though farmers are hoping to begin selling to a larger milk cooperative in the area, Sinkeet said. Calves produced from the hybrid animals and sold as adults also can fetch prices up to three times higher than traditional cattle if sold at market, Santeto said.

Egesa, of Childfund, thinks dairy farming is an idea whose time has come as conditions grow more unpredictable. "In this community a person's entire life revolves around cattle," he said. But the principles in both the old system and new are the same, he said: Care for cattle, earn a reliable income from them and use that cash to pay for what's needed. —Reuters

Bitcoin baron brought down with a bump

Once described as a geek who stuffed himself with snacks in front of his computer, Mark Karpeles rose to head a firm that once claimed to handle 80 percent of the world's bitcoin transactions. But his lavish Tokyo lifestyle came to an abrupt end when prosecutors charged him with creaming off millions of dollars of customer deposits from his cryptocurrency exchange MtGox. In many ways, the trajectory of the Frenchman, now 33, mirrors the volatile rise and fall of the bitcoin currency itself.

According to his mother, he had few friends at school, as he was "unable to find a buddy who could talk like he could about IT and quantum physics". The "only thing that interested" her "talented" son was computer science, according to his mother, speaking in a 2017 documentary. Karpeles, whose real first name is Robert, himself admitted to French television that he would spend entire days in front of the computer screen without the slightest bit of physical activity.

Entering the professional world, he quickly found himself at odds with his French company Linux Cyberjoeurs, which found irregularities in its data and pointed the finger at Karpeles. The firm brought the case to the authorities and in 2010, he received a year's suspended sentence in absentia in France for "fraudulent access of an automated data processing system" and "fraudulent altering of data". But by this time, Karpeles was in Japan, which he had visited several years previously and found the people and culture to his liking. Once in Japan, he founded his own company, called Tibanne - after his cat.

'Magic'

But his life really changed the day a customer asked if he could pay in bitcoin - a new virtual currency that was just taking its own baby steps. The virtual currency appealed to the computer whiz and he began to delve into the technical and IT aspects of the new trend. By 2011, he had bought his own cryptocurrency exchange MtGox, which stands for "Magic: The Gathering Online eXchange" - referring to a "magic" card-swapping platform beloved by Japanese "otaku" or "geeks".



Mark Karpeles

This grew rapidly until, at the height of its powers, it claimed to control 80 percent of all global bitcoin transactions. "He was excited by the money that could be generated on this exchange market," one of his associates told a television documentary under the cover of anonymity. And Karpeles enjoyed the trappings - reportedly lodging in an \$11,000-per-month luxury pad with a king-sized bed worth tens of thousands of dollars.

He married a Japanese woman and became a father but everything came crashing down in 2014, when MtGox suffered what Karpeles said was a "massive" hack attack and lost around 850,000 bitcoins, worth just under half a billion dollars at that time. MtGox collapsed and filed for bankruptcy protection. Prosecutors are not pursuing Karpeles for that but for allegedly falsifying data and pilfering around \$3 million from customers' accounts. He had tried to take the traditional path of bowing deeply and apologizing profusely - in Japanese - for the losses. But this earned him only mockery online and did not deter the authorities.

He was arrested in August 2015 and spent a year in Japanese detention after being re-arrested several times, as is possible under the legal system in Japan. When he was finally released on bail, he had lost a huge amount of weight and at his first high-profile hearing offered up a clean-cut image. Since then, Karpeles has been active on social media but has largely avoided commenting on his case in detail as he awaits the court's verdict, which is expected on Friday. —AFP

Business

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LONDON: A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Phillip Hammond (left) delivers his Spring Budget statement in the House of Commons in London yesterday. — AFP

Stop Brexit 'circus', businesses sound alarm

Britain slashes 2019 economic growth outlook

LONDON: Britain's finance minister and business chiefs yesterday urged the country to avoid a "no deal" Brexit after another crushing parliamentary defeat for Prime Minister Theresa May over her EU-divorce deal with Brussels.

The fast-moving Brexit saga eclipsed the government's budget update that slashed the 2019 economic growth forecast, with the UK economy also hit by China's slowdown and trade war tensions.

MPs will decide whether the country should leave the European Union without a deal, with analysts expecting parliament instead to favor delaying its departure beyond the March 29 exit date, in a further vote due today.

Britain's economy is expected to expand by just 1.2 percent this year, down sharply from prior guidance of 1.6 percent, finance minister Phillip Hammond revealed in his budget update.

The downgrade, widely expected after a similar move by the Bank of England, came one day after parliament overwhelmingly rejected May's draft Brexit divorce agreement.

'Cloud of uncertainty'

"Last night's vote leaves a cloud of uncertainty hanging over our economy and ... our most urgent task in this House is to lift that uncertainty," Chancellor of the Exchequer Hammond said in a budget thin on policy announcements. "Leaving with 'no deal' would mean significant disruption in the short and medium term, and a smaller, less prosperous economy in the long term than if we leave with a deal—higher unemployment, lower wages, higher prices in the shops.

"That is not what the British people voted for in June 2016" in the referendum to leave the EU, the chancellor added. Earlier, Carolyn Fairbairn, director-general of Britain's biggest employers' organization, the Confederation of British Industry, slammed the politicians' handling of Brexit.

"It's time for parliament to stop this circus," said Fairbairn after MPs rejected May's divorce deal for the second time. May needed to extend the Article 50 deadline for withdrawal from the bloc to allow sufficient time for an acceptable deal, she added.

"A new approach is needed by all parties. Jobs and

livelihoods depend on it. Extending Article 50 to close the door on a March no-deal is now urgent."

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), which represents thousands of firms, also insisted that a "no deal" exit had to be avoided. And they too voiced anger that politicians were still grappling with implementation of the 2016 referendum result, issuing a stinging rebuke to Hammond's Conservative party, traditionally regarded as a big supporter of private enterprise.

"The government must now urgently set out in concrete terms what it will do to avoid the damage that a messy and disorderly exit on March 29 would cause to businesses, communities, and the UK economy," the BCC said.

Zero-tariffs

In a bid to soothe fears of a chaotic departure, May's government yesterday said it would temporarily slash most import tariffs in the event of a "no deal" Brexit. Britain also vowed not to apply customs checks on the border with Ireland, albeit temporarily.

The new tariffs regime is aimed at avoiding both a jump

in prices of EU imports for consumers and any disruption of supply chains. It is intended to last up to one year pending negotiations on a more permanent system.

Under the proposal, 87 percent of imports into Britain will be eligible for zero tariffs, compares with the current level of 80 percent. But the tariffs pledge also drew an angry response from business leaders. "These are being imposed on this country with no consultation with business with no time to prepare," Fairbairn told BBC radio.

And the BCC lambasted the "abrupt" move as an "unwelcome shock" for many businesses.

In the auto sector, the government said that carmakers reliant on EU supply chains would not face tariffs for imported parts used to make vehicles in Britain. That news failed to convince UK car industry body, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. It said a "no deal" would spark disruption and job losses in a sector already plagued by collapsing demand for high-polluting diesel vehicles. Japanese carmakers Honda and Nissan have both recently decided to slash investment in Britain, partly owing to turmoil created by a possible "no deal" Brexit. — AFP

Kuwait money supply at \$127bn: CBK

KUWAIT: Money supply in its broad concept (M2) dropped 0.1 percent last January, in contrast to December, where it posted KD 38.5 billion (\$127 billion), according to the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). Private sector's deposits in local banks dropped, in January, by 0.3 percent, amounting to KD 34.2 billion (\$112 billion).

Those in foreign currency rose, also in the same month, by 2.8 percent to KD 2.6 billion (\$8.6 billion), where aggregate deposits by this sector amounted to KD 36.8 billion (\$121 billion). Aggregate claims by domestic banks on the CBK, in the form of the CBK bonds, settled at KD 3 billion (\$9.9 billion) in January. Total assets at the local banks dropped one percent,

KD 65.9 billion (\$217 billion). Net foreign assets at the domestic banks declined by 2.4 percent, also in January, reaching KD 7.5 billion (\$24.7 billion). Forward assets at the CBK dropped 2.6 percent to KD 1.5 billion (\$4.9 billion). Balance of utilized cash credit facilities to residents rose 0.2 percent in January, as compared to the December level, amounting to KD 36.9 billion (\$121.3 billion), while the interest rate on one year treasury bonds settled at 3.25 percent.

Financing of imports fell, in January by 0.5 percent, reaching KD 302 million (\$996.6 million), while the average USD exchange rate against the KD, in January, fell 0.2 percent recording 303.1 fils per one USD. Aggregate total assets at the CBK rose 0.7 percent reaching KD 10.8 billion (\$35.6 billion), while net foreign assets increased at the CBK by 1.2 percent, recording KD 10.5 billion (\$34.4 billion). M2, or "broad money," refers to current, time and saving accounts, as compared to the "narrow money" index that alludes to coins, banknotes and money deposited at the banks. — KUNA

UAE regrets inclusion in EU tax blacklist

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates has slammed a European Union decision to add it to a tax haven blacklist despite the Gulf state's efforts to meet EU requirements. The UAE was one of 10 more countries which the EU on Tuesday put on the list, created in 2017 as part of efforts to battle tax evasion by the wealthy.

"This inclusion was made despite the UAE's close cooperation with the EU on this issue and ongoing efforts to fulfill all the EU's requirements," said an official statement cited by state news agency WAM late Tuesday.

"The UAE remains firmly committed to its long-standing policy of meeting the highest international standards on taxation," it said. The UAE "will continue to update its domestic legislative framework in this regard," it said.

The EU had included the UAE on the first list drawn up in 2017, but later removed it after Emirati officials assured their European counterparts it would meet EU require-

ments. The inclusion of the second-largest, most open Arab economy on the revised list came despite the objections of EU member Italy, a major destination for Emirati investment.

The EU statement argued that it has "shared with the EU a detailed timeline of actions that it is currently implementing in accordance with its sovereign legal process and constitutional requirements." In a separate statement, the finance ministry said it was confident the EU will remove the UAE from the blacklist.

"The UAE has made outstanding achievements in 2018, in line with its commitment to transparency and international tax standards," it said. The statement listed a number of agreements linked to tax cooperation it has signed with the EU and said it will complete related legislation in the second half of this year.

The blacklist was first drawn up in the wake of scandals including the Panama Papers and LuxLeaks, which had pushed the EU into doing more to fight tax evasion by multinationals and the rich.

The latest decision moved seven countries, including the UAE's neighbor Oman, back from a grey list because reform commitments had not been met. — AFP

Business

Kuwait Cement Company begins marketing of Oil Well Cement

First delivery made to NAPESCO

KUWAIT: Kuwait Cement Company ("KCC") has announced the commencement of marketing of the Oil Well Cement, and supplying its first delivery on 13/03/2019 (yesterday) to National Petroleum Services Company (NAPESCO). KCC started production of Oil Well Cement locally in its plant located in the eastern Shuaiba industrial area after the company obtained the API Monogram issued by the American Petroleum Institute (API) to produce this type of cement. KCC is the first Cement Company to have this Certificate in Kuwait to cater to the requirements of Oil Sector in Kuwait and the Middle East.

Ali Al-Kandari, Manager of Marketing and Sales of KCC, said that the production of this type of Cement comes in addition to other locally produced products at our company's plant, to meet all the requirements of the local market for all types of cement. This achievement coincides with the golden jubilee of the Company, to complete the success and excellence of the first half-century in the life of the most prominent event in Kuwait in the field of cement manufacturing, and what provides the service of industrial and urban renaissance and economic development in the country.

Rajesh Kumar Singh, Executive Director - Operations, said that KCC is the only integrated industrial company in Kuwait that manufactures and produces the Clinker (the essential raw material for the manufacture of cement) in all stages of manufacturing, starting with raw materials for the production of various types of cement, where it is currently producing

Ordinary Portland Cement, Sulphate Resistant Cement Type V, White Portland Cement, Oil Well Cement and GGBS, the total operational capacity of the Company for producing Clinker has reached over 5 million tons annually and same for the Cement.

Eng Saad Al-Suwaidan, Deputy Executive Director - Operations pointed out that this certificate has added to the quality certificates obtained by the company previously, namely the quality mark certificate from the Public Authority for Industry and the ISO 9001:2015 certificate. This confirms the quality of all the company's products of cement and their conformity with local and the international standards. Al-Kandari added that Oil Well Cement produced within the product of phrase "Kuwaiti Cement". This is an indication of full nationalization of cement manufactured in Kuwait.

The Company's products over the past 50 years have been characterized by high quality, strength and durability, which has supported its position in the Kuwaiti market and has got the confidence of all its customers for its high-quality products, consistent specifications, conformity to the standards and distinctive service. Al-Kandari explained that the company is marketing its products directly to all segments of customers and consumers, as the company has contributed over the past five decades in many government development projects in all sectors, as well as housing and private investment projects, in addition to the distribution of cement subsidized by the Government to citizens benefiting from the support.



UK no-deal tariffs a 'potential disaster' for Irish farmers

DUBLIN: Plans by Britain to levy import tariffs on beef, lamb and dairy products if it crashes out of the EU without a deal would be potentially disastrous for Irish farmers, Agriculture Minister Michael Creed said yesterday.

Britain laid out plans to temporarily eliminate tariffs on many goods and keep the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland free of customs checks as lawmakers prepared to vote on Wednesday on it should leave the European Union without a transition agreement.

But protections would remain in place for, among others, carmakers and meat and dairy farmers. Ireland's 3.1 billion euros (\$3.5 billion) of trade in food and live animals with Britain last year represented over 40 percent of all exports in that category. The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) estimated the additional cost to beef producers alone from the tariffs would be almost 800 million euros.

"This is potentially a disaster, yes," Creed told national broadcaster RTE. "We're involved now in a

very detailed analysis of what the implications are (and ...it's not a pretty picture... But this is in the event of no deal and we're not there yet." IFA President Joe Healy said in a statement that Ireland's most exposed sectors, particularly beef, "simply will not survive" the kind of tariffs being talked about and that it would have a devastating effect on the rural economy.

Creed said officials from his department were in Brussels yesterday for further discussions on interventions that would be required in response. The European Commission President has promised to assist Irish farmers and other businesses under a no-deal Brexit.

London said Northern Ireland would not be subject to the tariffs, a feature the province's Federation of Small Businesses said would likely lead to a rush of Irish exporters using Northern Ireland as a backdoor to avoid the British duties. The British government said those arrangements can only be temporary and that it would seek to enter urgent discussions with the European Commission and Dublin to agree long-term measures to avoid a hard border.

Ireland's position - that it will not make plans for managing the currently seamless border in a no-deal Brexit until such an outcome emerges - remains unchanged, European Affairs Minister Helen McEntee told RTE. She said London's temporary plan to keep Northern Ireland aligned with EU-member Ireland replicated what was already on offer in the Irish "backstop" arrangements opposed by British lawmakers. — Reuters

Japanese firms offer smaller pay raises as economy wobbles

TOKYO: Big Japanese firms offered smaller pay increases at annual wage talks yesterday as the economy sputters, tempering hopes that domestic consumption will offset external risks to growth.

Major firms are set to raise wages for a sixth straight year as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe kept up the pressure on businesses to boost pay in an effort to beat deflation that has dogged Japan for nearly two decades. But as economic growth slows, firms have grown wary about offering big pay increases because that commits them to higher fixed costs at a time of uncertainty as company profits are leveling off.

Caught between the fear of a profit squeeze and the need to raise pay scales for low-paid part-timers and those employed at small firms to address the country's labor shortages, Japanese firms cannot afford to hike wages much for full-time workers, analysts say. "Momentum towards wage hikes may weaken as underlying inflation remains weak," said Hisashi Yamada, senior economist at Japan Research Institute.

"Uncertainty is high on the external outlook such as the US-China trade war and Europe's unstable politics. On top of that, a national sales tax is scheduled to increase in October. Without enough wage hikes, it's difficult to defeat deflation."

The results of the "shunto" talks between management and unions - announced by major companies in sectors such as cars and electronics - set the tone for full-time employees' wages across the nation, which has implications for consumer spending and inflation.

Global uncertainties

A slowdown in the global economy, the Sino-US trade war and trepidation over the final shape of a deal to seal Britain's exit from the European Union have sharply increased strains on businesses worldwide.

Faced with the heightened uncertainty about the growth outlook, cautious Japanese firms focus more on the annual total sum payment including bonuses than monthly base pay, which will determine retirement payment and pension benefits. Bellwether Toyota Motor Corp, Japan's largest automaker, offered yesterday a pay raise of 10,700 yen (\$96.21) on average, down

1,000 yen from last year. "We made the decision as the sales tax rises in autumn, while taking into account the need to raise productivity, competitiveness and respond to unionists' motivations," Tatsuro Ueda, chief officer at Toyota's general administration and human resources group, told reporters.

Honda Motor Co offered a base salary increase of 1,400 yen, down 300 yen from 2018, while Nissan Motor Co came up with a rise of 3,000 yen, unchanged from last year.

Electronics giants such as Panasonic Corp, Hitachi Ltd and Mitsubishi Electric Corp all offered a base pay raise of 1,000 yen, down 500 yen from last year.

"The trend of wage hikes remains intact. I hope wage growth will continue to boost the economy's virtuous cycle," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters. A survey by the Institute of Labour Administration, a think tank, predicted wage growth will slow to 2.15 percent this year, pulling away from last year's 2.26 percent and the 17-year peak of 2.38 percent in 2015, despite hefty corporate cash piles.

A Reuters Corporate Survey last month found a slim majority - 51 percent of firms polled - saw wages rising around 1.5-2 percent this year. But while companies are conservative with pay raises, many have directed their large cash piles toward share buybacks to ensure better returns for their investors.

Pay hike or work-style reform

In the coming fiscal year from April 1, Abe's government will start to implement work-style reform to curb Japan's notoriously long work hours. The reform also includes "equal pay for equal work" aimed at narrowing the pay gap between full-time employees and contract workers or part-timers, and raising the retirement age to cope with the ageing population.

The move has shifted focus away from pay hikes with both unions and management, dashing policymakers' hopes of stoking a virtuous cycle of a tight job market boosting wages to stimulate consumption and spur inflation to the BOJ's 2 percent target.

Japan's unions tend not to be so aggressive in pressing their demands as those in the West because they attach greater importance to job security and retain a sense of company loyalty.

The dwindling union membership has deprived unionists of bargaining powers, with companies hiring more non-unionized part-timers and non-regular employees, who represent nearly 40 percent of workers. "At this year's shunto, both companies and unions don't seem to put greater emphasis on wage hikes than before," said Kiichi Murashima, economist at Citigroup Global Markets Japan. — Reuters



DUBLIN: Ireland's 3.1 billion euros (\$3.5 billion) of trade in food and live animals with Britain last year represented over 40 percent of all exports in that category.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.		
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		
US Dollar/Transfer	304.600	
Euro	345.420	
Sterling Pound	403.290	
Canadian Dollar	228.760	
Turkish Lira	57.040	
Swiss Franc	303.840	
US Dollar Buying	303.400	
ASIAN COUNTRIES		
Japanese Yen	2.740	
Indian Rupees	4.367	
Pakistani Rupees	2.223	
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.701	
Nepali Rupees	2.728	
Singapore Dollar	225.380	
Hongkong Dollar	38.804	
Bangladesh Taka	3.608	
Philippine Peso	5.779	
Thai Baht	9.649	
Malaysian Ringgit	77.903	
GCC COUNTRIES		
Saudi Riyal	81.281	
Qatari Riyal	83.716	
Omani Riyal	791.683	
Bahraini Dinar	809.350	
UAE Dirham	82.986	
ARAB COUNTRIES		
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.700	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.438	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223	
Tunisian Dinar	102.910	
Jordanian Dinar	430.230	
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.030	
Syrian Lira	0.000	
Morocco Dirham	32.370	
DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD		
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate	
US Dollar	304.340	
Canadian Dollar	227.535	
Sterling Pound	398.595	
Euro	344.495	
Swiss Frank	309.360	
Bahraini Dinar	809.355	
UAE Dirhams	83.265	
Qatari Riyals	84.500	
Saudi Riyals	82.055	
Jordanian Dinar	430.540	
Egyptian Pound	17.378	
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.706	
Indian Rupees	4.343	
Pakistani Rupees	2.194	
Bangladesh Taka	3.617	
Philippines Peso	5.827	
Cyprus pound	18.105	
Japanese Yen	3.735	
Syrian Pound	1.590	
Nepalese Rupees	2.722	
Malaysian Ringgit	75.315	
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.730	
Thai Bhat	10.580	
Turkish Lira	56.375	
Singapore dollars	223.485	
BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.395043	0.408943
Czech Korune	0.005333	0.014633
Danish Krone	0.041849	0.046849
Euro	0.335070	0.348770
Georgian Lari	0.112472	0.112472
Hungarian O.000994	0.001184	
Norwegian Krone	0.031101	0.036301
Romanian Leu	0.055169	0.072019
Russian ruble	0.004618	0.004618
Slovakia	0.009109	0.019109
Swedish Krona	0.028423	0.033423
Swiss Franc	0.294623	0.0305623
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.206857	0.218857
New Zealand Dollar	0.201959	0.211459
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.221698	0.230698
US Dollars	0.300500	0.305800
US Dollars Mint	0.301000	0.305800
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003055	0.003856
Chinese Yuan	0.043858	0.047358
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036715	0.039465
Indian Rupee	0.003655	0.004427
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002649	0.002829
Korean Won	0.000259	0.000274
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070668	0.076668
Nepalese Rupee	0.002611	0.002951
Pakistan Rupee	0.001539	0.002309
Philippine Peso	0.005802	0.006102
Singapore Dollar	0.219132	0.229132
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001364	0.001944
Taiwan	0.009737	0.009917
Thai Baht	0.009272	0.009822
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.793387	0.809887
Egyptian Pound	0.017206	0.019806
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211	0.000271
Jordanian Dinar	0.424715	0.433715
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022148	0.046146
Omani Riyal	0.784851	0.790531
Qatar Riyal	0.079376	0.084316
audi Riyal	0.080140	0.081440
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.095963	0.103963
Turkish Lira	0.049592	0.061092
UAE Dirhams	0.081507	0.083207
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070



NBK celebrates outstanding employees of 2018 during annual awards ceremony

Ceremony recognizes efforts and achievements of CBG employees in 2018

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait held its annual elite awards ceremony honoring outstanding employees in the Consumer Banking Group (CBG) in recognition for their efforts during 2018. The ceremony was held at Arraya Ballroom- Courtyard Marriott Hotel and attended by leaders of the bank, Isam Jassim Al-Sager, NBK Group Chief Executive Officer, Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Deputy Group CEO, Salah Al-Fulaij, NBK Chief Executive Officer-Kuwait, Sulaiman Al-Marzouk, Deputy Chief Executive Officer-Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, Emad Al-Ablani, Group General Manager-Human Resources, and Hanadi Khazal, Chief Marketing Officer, National Bank of Kuwait.

The ceremony recognized the efforts and achievements of CBG employees for 2018, and included entertaining segments.

Speaking at the annual ceremony, Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, said, "The Elite Awards ceremony is one of the significant events organized by NBK annually to honor our employees for their exceptional efforts and performance during the year.

"NBK's employees are an example of efficiency and progress, and we are committed to investing in their capabilities and careers, which in turn supports our leadership position and the quality services and products we offer to our customers."

During the ceremony, Al-Othman congratulated the employees on their excellent achievements which reflected on the new services and products launched by NBK during the year, notably on NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking App, providing customers with a faster and more convenient services while maintaining the highest standards of quality and security, as well as always exceeding customers' expectations.

On her part, Hanadi Khazal, Chief Marketing Officer, National Bank of Kuwait, said, "We are committed to this annual event to honor those who have played a crucial role in providing the best customer service. We focus on attracting talented professionals and helping them grow opportunities that express their promising potential."

Khazal pointed out that the positive work environment at NBK and the culture of motivation encour-



age employees to give their best service. The results were clear with the launch of many services and campaigns during the past year, which have all gained the satisfaction of customers.

Khazal congratulated employees who were honored and stressed that the talents working at NBK helped in launching leading products, and affirmed that the bank will launch unique campaigns and services this year that will continue to meet the needs of every banking segment.

Hisham Al-Nusf, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, added: "NBK employees look forward to this event every year as a reward to their performance and stimulator towards excellency, this will help in maintaining NBK's leadership position in the banking sector in Kuwait."

NBK's Consumer Banking Group launched and updated many services and products during 2018, including 14 new services and updates on the NBK Mobile Banking App such as the NBK Swift Tracking which allows customers to track their money transfers conveniently anytime, anywhere, and the e-Payments Service to make electronic payments for purchases at a large number of local and international companies such as telecoms, retail facilities, entertainment and more.

NBK also launched the NBK Quick Pay, providing customers with an easy way to receive or transfer amounts from and to friends, or make payments for bills immediately even on weekends or public holidays. And for the first time in Kuwait, NBK enabled its customers to activate their dormant accounts instantly and at their convenience. This is done by logging in to the NBK Mobile Banking App and selecting the "Dormant Account Activation" feature under "Self Services".

Customers can also update their phone number or email address through the NBK Mobile Banking App saving the trip to the branch. The NBK Mobile Banking App is a safe method to manage accounts. Customers can conveniently open a new account, view transactions made on accounts and credit cards,



check their NBK Miles Points and NBK Rewards Program Points, pay outstanding credit cards receivables, pay bills online, find the nearest branch, ATM or CDM in Kuwait, as well as submit an account statement request, checkbook and other requests.

Always innovating for its customers, NBK also ensured it stays in touch with customers through live Video Chat with service agents, while also launching the NBK SelfiePay through which customers can authenticate their online transactions by a simple face or fingerprint recognition. In addition to these services, NBK has made new enhancements to ATMs

and CDMs for customers to enjoy cardless withdrawals using Civil ID or mobile phone number, and use the NBK Tap & Pay debit card or any NFC-enabled debit card to withdraw or deposit money with only a tap and without inserting their card in the machine.

The bank was also the first to launch the NBK Direct Remit using RippleNet's Blockchain technology, to deliver fast cross-border transfers to customers. NBK's direct transfer service is completed in record time and is available to all customers 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Business

Huawei Mate 20 series shipments exceed 10m units since its launch

Innovative ID design, excellent performance

KUWAIT: Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) yesterday announced total shipments of the HUAWEI Mate 20 series has exceeded 10 million units. Thanks to its innovative ID design and excellent performance, the HUAWEI Mate 20 Series has achieved not only exceptional sales performance since launch but also received widespread recognition and praise from the world's top technology media.

The HUAWEI Mate series combines the cutting-edge technology innovation Huawei is renowned for with breakthroughs in ID design. Emerald Green and Midnight Blue colors were debuted with the HUAWEI Mate 20 series, giving the devices a renewed sense of style to complement the technology and science-inspired design DNA of the Mate series. This new aesthetic has seen the HUAWEI Mate 20 series win more fans amongst business users and the fashion-conscious alike.

In addition to consumers, a number of leading

professional organizations have acknowledged the HUAWEI Mate 20 series for its unique blend of technology and design. At Mobile World Congress 2019, the GSMA - organizers of MWC and the leading mobile industry body - named the HUAWEI Mate 20 Pro the 'Best Smartphone' of 2019, beating out flagship phones from many other leading manufacturers. This award comes as a result of Huawei CBG's focus on creating value for consumers through innovation which has culminated in breakthroughs in performance, photography, AI and more - all of which can be seen in the HUAWEI Mate 20 Series.

Kevin Ho, president of Handset Business of Consumer Business Group, said: "Looking to the future, everything we do in Huawei CBG will continue to begin and end with consumers. Our ultimate goal is to lead the transformation of the smart device industry and deliver an inspired, intelligent experience to consumers across all scenarios."



US business spending on equipment rises in Jan

WASHINGTON: New orders for key US-made capital goods rose by the most in six months in January and shipments increased, pointing to solid business spending on equipment at the start of the year.

The stronger-than-expected report from the Commerce Department yesterday could prompt economists to upgrade their very low growth estimates for the first quarter. Still, it will probably do little to change views that the economy continued to lose momentum early in the year, with retail sales rising moderately in January and inflation broadly tame in February.

Orders for non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft, a closely watched proxy for business spending plans, rebounded 0.8 percent, the biggest gain since July. These so-called core capital goods orders fell 0.9 percent in December. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast core capital goods orders edging up 0.1 percent in January. Core capital goods orders increased 3.1 percent on a year-on-year basis.

Shipments of core capital goods jumped 0.8 percent in January after edging up 0.1 percent in the prior month. Core capital goods shipments are used to calculate equipment spending in the government's gross domestic product measurement.

The January report was delayed by a 35-day partial shutdown of the federal government that ended on Jan 25. The February report, which was scheduled for release later this month, will now be published on April 2. The surge in core capital goods shipments suggests spending on equipment maintained its solid pace of growth after accelerating in the fourth quarter. That could provide a lift to first-quarter GDP growth estimates after they were slashed to as low as a 0.2 percent annualized rate after a report on Monday showing a small rise in January retail sales.

The economy is losing steam as the stimulus from a \$1.5 trillion tax cut fades. A trade war between the United States and China, slowing global economies and uncertainty over Britain's exit from the European Union are other factors hurting activity. The economy grew at a 2.6 percent pace in the fourth quarter. A second report from the Labor Department yesterday showed its producer price index for final demand edged up 0.1 percent in February, lifted by a rebound in the cost of gasoline. The PPI had dropped for three straight months.

US Treasury prices fell slightly after the data, while the dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies. US stock futures were slightly higher.

Tame inflation

In the 12 months through February, the PPI rose 1.9 percent. That was the smallest gain since June 2017 and followed a 2.0 percent increase in January. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the PPI rebounding 0.2 percent in February and advancing 1.9 percent on a year-on-year basis.

A key gauge of underlying producer price pressures that excludes food, energy and trade services rose 0.1 percent last month after climbing 0.2 percent in January.

The so-called core PPI increased 2.3 percent in the 12 months through February, the smallest rise since December 2017, after advancing 2.5 percent in January. Data on Tuesday showed consumer prices rising moderately in February, with the consumer price index posting its smallest annual gain in nearly 2-1/2 years.

Slowing domestic and global growth are keeping inflation contained even as a tight labor market boosts wage growth. An improvement in productivity is curbing labor costs for companies and the dollar strength last year is weighing on prices of imported goods. Slowing growth and tame inflation support the Federal Reserve's "patient" approach towards further interest rate increases this year. The U.S. central bank raised interest rates four times in 2018. —Reuters

Al-Raya Al-Mutameyeza Holding Group expands into food and beverages

KUWAIT: Al-Raya Al-Mutameyeza Holding Group expanded its activities by adding a new division: Al-Salam Partnership Company, which is specialized in importing and distributing food, non-food products and beverages from well-reputed international brands. This is in tune with its vision and strategy to diversify its business and sources of income.

Al-Raya Al-Mutameyeza Holding Group's CEO, Jassem Al-Fajji expressed his pride in expanding the company's activities to include food and beverages into its business portfolio and enhancing its economic activi-

ties as a key player in Kuwait's private sector. He also emphasized the company's keenness in entering new economic sectors to diversify its business activities that ensuring assured returns and revenues for both shareholders and clients. "At the same time, the new venture will provide more job opportunities for the Kuwaiti youth and thus will play a pivotal role in boosting the state's economy," he said.

Al-Fajji added that the Kuwaiti market is capable of absorbing leading food companies and helping them grow amidst professional and elegant competition. "Expanding the group to include new sectors opens new horizons for development," he underlined. Al-Fajji explained that the group's executive management fully believes in constant development based on clearly defined strategic expansion plans that can be a role model for businesses in terms of cooperation with employees and working hand-in-hand for more achievements and successes.

Al-Raya Al-Mutameyeza Holding Group now includes Al-Raya United Company for Operation and Development in KSA, Turkey, Egypt, European markets and Al-Salam Company for Food Products Import & Distribution.

With the aim of expanding its activities and diversifying its sources of income for its clients' best interest, Al-Raya Al-Mutameyeza Holding Group has also acquired a stake in Midaf Holding Group, which is headquartered in Egypt and owns a number of subsidiaries engaged in investment, money market and other sectors.



Jassem Al-Fajji

Gulf Bank announces winner of its second salary account draw of the year

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the winner of its second monthly Salary Account draw of the year. Nayef Obaid Sameer Al-Dhafaeri was announced as the winner of a cash prize of up to 12 times her salary. The draw took place at the Bank's Mishref branch, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

The salary account gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and will be eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a free of charge Visa or MasterCard credit card for a year, as well as a chance to apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000, or a consumer loan



Gulf Bank team members along with Ministry representative.

of up to KD25,000.

With the new 2019 Kuwaiti salary offer, new customers, who transfer

their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance of winning cash

prizes of up to 12 times their salary, and a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize of 100 times their salary.

Production bottlenecks to hobble Adidas in 2019

FRANKFURT: German sporting goods maker Adidas said yesterday it booked vaulting profits in 2018, but crimped its expectations for this year as it runs into limits on production capacity.

Net profit at the Herzogenaurach-based group leaped 45 percent year-on-year, to 1.7 billion euros (\$1.9 billion), Adidas said. The firm booked an 8.0-percent increase in revenues to a record 21.9 billion euros last year, a figure it aims to lift by "between five and eight percent" in 2019.

But while Adidas claimed in a statement to see a "strong increase in demand" for its clothing, "supply chain shortages" in the US especially mean it will not manage to keep up. A "capacity problem in the manufacturing plants" means "we cannot cover the full demand in the short term... we're in catch-up mode in America," chief executive Kasper Rorsted said.

He added that the effect in the first six months would cost between 200 and 400 million euros of sales or one to two percentage points of growth in 2019. North America had been one of the "strategic growth drivers" contributing double-digit expansion to 2018's result alongside China and the group's growing e-commerce operation, Rorsted said.

Across the world, Adidas' flagship three-stripe brand saw sales grow 9.0 percent adjusted for currency effects. But subsidiary Reebok's turnover fell 3.0 percent, continuing a struggle for growth that has persisted since Adidas took it over in 2005.

Rorsted said Reebok had returned to slight prof-



Sports shoes by German sporting goods maker Adidas are presented in a showroom on the sidelines of the company's annual press conference yesterday in Herzogenaurach, southern Germany. —AFP

itability ahead of a 2020 target date as it built up margins and closed 250 "low-performance" retail stores. Meanwhile the brand was spending more on marketing than Adidas proportional to its size, he added. Looking ahead to 2019, Asia will defend its title as the Adidas group's sales powerhouse with double-digit expansion, while North America and emerging markets are expected to add high single-digit figures.

Meanwhile the firm hopes to turn a corner in Europe—which accounts for one-third of sales—after a 6.0-percent decline in sales in the final quarter of

2018, forecasting "a slight increase" in currency-adjusted revenues. Adidas aims for a bottom line between 10 and 14 percent higher than 2018, at up to 1.95 billion euros. And it said it would offer investors a dividend of 3.35 euros per share for last year, up 29 percent on 2017.

After a sharp fall after trading opened, Adidas shares recovered slightly in Frankfurt around 12:45 pm (11:45 GMT), shedding 2.4 percent to trade at 204.70 euros—making the stock the second-worst performer in the DAX index of blue-chip firms. —AFP

What's On



Abdulhameed Ali Al-Qattan held a wedding ceremony for his son Ahmad at the Al-Baraka ballroom in the Crown Plaza Farwaniya on Sunday, March 10th. It was well attended by Sheiks, foreign diplomats, dignitaries, family and friends.

Jaber Al-Ali hosts 5th Uni-Expo



Doctors Al-Ajmi, Al-Harbi and Omar Fowzi honoring Omar Al Faresi from AUK.

By: Hassan Abdel Bari

Under the auspices of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone director, Mansour Al-Daihani and with the attendance of the areas secondary schools director, Hameed Al-Fadhli and the School Libraries supervisor, Muneer Al-Omar, Jaber Al-Ali Secondary School for boys recently hosted the fifth Educational Opportunities Expo with the aim of enlightening senior high school students on learning opportunities provided by various public and private universities in Kuwait. The two-day Expo opening was also attended by Jaber Al-Ali School director, Dr Abdullah Al-Ajmi, his assistant directors, Dr Mohammed Al-Harbi, Thamer Bohamad and Thamer Akroof in addition to directors of neighboring high schools.

The exhibition included representatives from Kuwait University, PAAET, the ministry of higher education, ACK, AUK, AOU, AUM, ACM, Kuwait Technical College (KTC), The College of Aviation Technology, KFSD and the Cabinet's Social Development Bureau. The expo attracted considerable media attention from local dailies and TV channels.

Speaking to Kuwait Times after opening the exhibition and touring various sections, Jaber Al-Ali director, Dr Abdullah Al-Ajmi expressed happiness for holding such exhibitions that eventually benefit students and help them make the right decision on the next level of education they preferred after leaving high school. He added that, in addition to the annual Edu-Expo held at Mishref fair Grounds, this one would help both students and their parents make better decisions on the lines of study.

"The fact that the exhibition includes both public and private universities gives students wider choices", he underlined pointing out that the exhibition is a great opportunity for students as it saves time and effort they would have to exert visiting each individual university's headquarters to explore their chances there. He also noted special invitations had been sent to school students' parents to visit the Expo on the second day to explore it themselves and help their sons choosing.

Al-Ajmi also thanked the head of the organizing committee; Jaber Al-Ali librarian, Omar Fawzi and the libraries supervisor, Muneer Al-Omar for being so creative in

meeting students' need to make better choices.

"We have also given students from grades 10 and 11 the chance to explore the exhibition to get proper guidance before they even studied their final year in grade 12", he added pointing that the school administration decided holding the 5th cycle of the exhibition after the great success achieved in previous cycles. Al-Ajmi also noted that this year's expo includes representatives from KFSD to allow students with military ambition explore their chances, as well. "Next year, God's willing, we will also come with new ideas and participants to improve the services students can get from the expo", he concluded.

Speaking to the exhibition organizer and the school's senior librarian, Omar Fawzi, told Kuwait Times the idea had first come to him when he escorted his students to the Islamic Book Fair that coincided with the annual Educational Expo held at Mishref International Fairgrounds. "It was then that I noticed our students' eagerness to get such information about university studies", he added noting that the idea was greatly welcomed by both the school administration and the educational area officials.



Lulu Hypermarket launches 'Beautiful Britain 2019'



Lulu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, launched its much-anticipated 'Beautiful Britain 2019' festival yesterday at its Egaila outlet. Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kuwait HE Michael Davenport inaugurated the festival in the presence of top Lulu management, well-wishers and media personnel. The 11-day promotion, which showcased the best products and produce from Britain, ran till 23 March at all LuLu outlets in Kuwait. Adding to the atmosphere of British shopping festival were large cardboard cutouts of iconic British landmarks.

A wide selection of high-quality and popular British brands, including Baker

Street Billington, Bisto, Branston, Coldpress, Costa, Delamere, Doves Farm, Groovy Food, John West, Infinity Foods, Minvita, Onken, Rachels, Rowse, Soysolei, St Pierre, Vimto, Walkers and Warrior Crunch among others were available at very competitive prices during the festival. The 'Beautiful Britain 2019' is part of Lulu Hypermarket's commitment to create unique and special shopping experiences for their customers, while providing a range of quality products at affordable prices. In addition, the hypermarket has consistently undertaken various innovative initiatives and special promotions as part of its approach to enhancing customer relations.

Health

Environment damage behind 1 in 4 global deaths and diseases, says UN

NAIROBI: A quarter of all premature deaths and diseases worldwide are due to manmade pollution and environmental damage, the United Nations said yesterday in a landmark report on the planet's parlous state. Deadly smog-inducing emissions, chemicals polluting drinking water, and the accelerating destruction of ecosystems crucial to the livelihoods of billions of people are driving a worldwide epidemic that hampers the global economy, it warned.

The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) — a report six years in the making compiled by 250 scientists from 70 nations — depicts a growing chasm between rich and poor countries as rampant over-consumption, pollution and food waste in the developed world leads to hunger, poverty and disease elsewhere.

As greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise amid a preponderance of droughts, floods and superstorms made worse by climbing sea levels, there is a growing political consensus that climate change poses a future risk to billions. But the health impacts of pollution, deforestation and the mechanized food-chain are less well understood. Nor is there any international agreement for the environment close to covering what the 2015 Paris accord does for climate.

The GEO compiles a litany of pollution-related health emergencies. It said that poor environmental conditions "cause approximately 25 percent of global disease and mortality" — around 9 million deaths in 2015 alone. Lacking access to clean drinking sup-

plies, 1.4 million people die each year from preventable diseases such as diarrhea and parasites linked to pathogen-riddled water and poor sanitation.

Chemicals pumped into the seas cause "potentially multi-generational" adverse health effects, and land degradation through mega-farming and deforestation occurs in areas of Earth home to 3.2 billion people. The report says air pollution causes 6-7 million early deaths annually. "Urgent action at an unprecedented scale is necessary to arrest and reverse this situation," said a note to policymakers accompanying the report.

'Massive human damage'

"If you have a healthy planet it supports not only global GDP but it also supports the lives of the very poorest because they depend on clean air and clean water," Joyeeta Gupta, GEO co-chair said. "If you turn that around, an unhealthy system has massive damage on human lives." The report called for a root-and-branch detoxifying of human behavior while insisting that the situation is not unassailable.

Food waste for instance, which accounts for 9 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, could be slashed. The world currently throws away a third of all food produced. That figure is fuelled by 56 percent in richer nations going to waste. "Everyone is saying that by 2050 we have to feed 10 billion people, but that doesn't mean we have to double production," Gupta said. "If we reduce our waste and

perhaps have less meat you could immediately reduce that problem." The report also called for a rapid drawdown in greenhouse gas emissions and pesticide use to improve air and water quality, and a move towards more sustainable industry. "There is a clear prognosis of what will happen if we continue with business as usual," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

Tale of inequality

The GEO draws on hundreds of data sources to calculate the environmental impact on over 100 diseases. Its unveiling at the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi is likely to add to the debate over who bears the greatest responsibility for the damage already borne by Earth. Sources close to the negotiations told AFP some developed nations, led by the United States, had threatened not to "welcome" the GEO report — a procedural but nonetheless significant hurdle if nations are to agree on the necessary cuts in waste, overconsumption and pollution.

Gupta said that nations, however big or small, would all have to adapt to the environmental reality facing every human on the planet. "If you look at land, it's fixed," she said. "If the population is going to go up we have to redistribute, one way or the other. If you look at freshwater, it's more or less fixed. You have to end up sharing. This is a discourse that many developed countries don't like."

Mohamed Adow, climate lead for Christian Aid,



NAIROBI: Estonia's Environment Minister and President of the UN Environment Assembly, Slim-Valmar Kilsler (L), and Tanzanian microbiologist and Acting Executive Director of UN Environment Programme Joyce Msuya pose as they unveil the Global Environment Outlook report after the opening plenary session of the 4th UN Environment Assembly at the UN headquarter. —AFP

said while the report highlighted many dangers and solutions, it stopped short of directly naming the problem. "Our environmental and climatic breakdown is driven by an economic model that pursues endless growth at all costs," he said. "Without reform and transformational change it's not sustainable and the UN needs to spell out these hard inconvenient truths." —AFP

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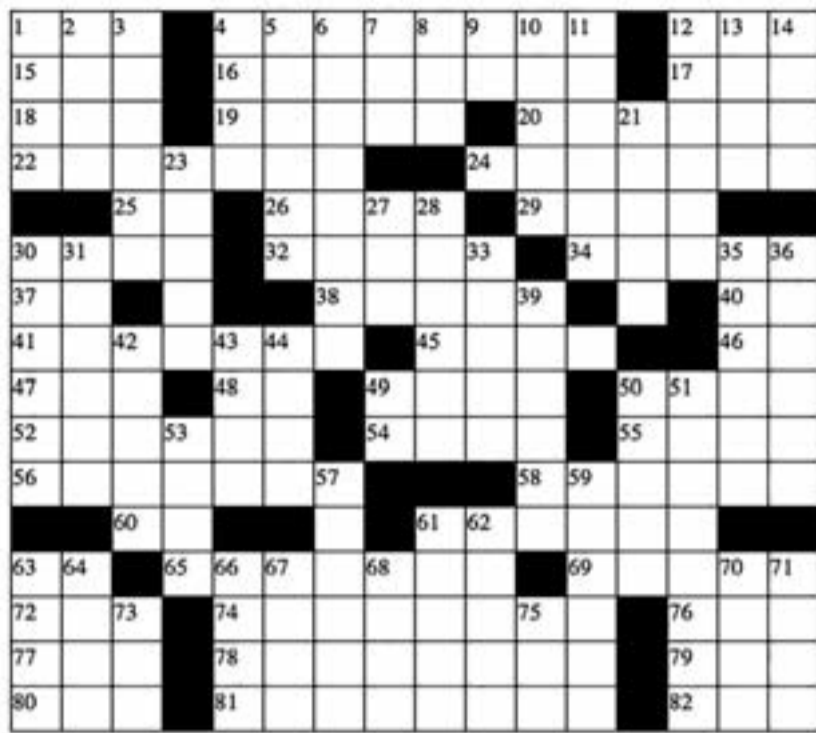
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Stars

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ACROSS

1. The unit of frequency.
4. The hard inner (usually woody) layer of the pericarp of some fruits (as peaches or plums or cherries or olives) that contains the seed.
12. Not reflecting light.
15. Towards the side away from the wind.
16. A porch along the outside of a building (sometimes partly enclosed).
17. United States musician (born in Japan) who married John Lennon and collaborated with him on recordings (born in 1933).
18. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
19. American civil rights worker in Mississippi.
20. Characterized by jokes and good humor.
22. A very attractive or seductive looking woman.
24. An active volcano in southeastern Colombia in the Andes.
25. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
26. The lower house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
29. A small cake leavened with yeast.
30. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
32. A communist state in Indochina on the South China Sea.
34. The main city of ancient Phoenicia.
37. The 17th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
38. (trademark) An alloy of iron and nickel having a low coefficient of thermal expansion.
40. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
41. Loose-fitting nightclothes worn for sleeping or lounging.
45. Type genus of the Aceraceae.
46. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
47. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
48. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
52. Intensely or extremely bad or unpleasant in degree or quality.
54. A sandal attached to the foot by a thong over the toes.
55. (sport) Used of your own ground.
56. Excessive desire to eat.
58. Submerged freshwater perennials.
60. A state in southeastern United States.
63. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
65. The principal bullfighter who is appointed to make the final passes and kill the bull.
69. A shot in billiards made by hitting the cue ball with the cue held nearly vertically.
72. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
74. A republic in northeastern South America on the Atlantic.
76. A branch of the Tai languages.
77. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
78. Not firmly fastened or secured.
79. How long something has existed.
80. Having much flesh (especially fat).
81. English physicist who studied the density of gases and discovered argon.
82. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.

DOWN

1. Burrowing marine mollusk living on sand or mud.
2. Having nine hinged bands of bony plates.
3. A meeting of spiritualists.
4. At any time.
5. A state in the western United States.
6. A genus of Drepanididae.
7. An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
8. The portion of the vertebrate nervous system consisting of the brain and spinal cord.
9. A public promotion of some product or service.
10. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
11. Type genus of the family Pholadidae.
12. The 3 goddesses of fate or destiny.
13. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
14. Informal terms for clothing.
21. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
23. Genus of tropical plants with creeping rootstocks and small umbellate flowers.
27. A hotel providing overnight lodging for travelers.
28. A basin for washing the hands ('wash-hand basin' is a British expression).
31. Somewhat ill or prone to illness.
33. An official who carries a mace of office.
35. Source of a tough elastic wood.
36. A genus of orb-weaving spiders including common garden spiders and barn spiders.
39. The feeling that comes when something burdensome is removed or reduced.
42. Of or relating to or characteristic of Java or its inhabitants.
43. A member of a rural Finnish people living in eastern Russia.
44. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
49. The azimuth of a celestial body is the angle between the vertical plane containing it and the plane of the meridian.
50. Type genus of the Phocidae.
51. Guiding star.
53. Electronic warfare undertaken to insure effective friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum in spite of the enemy's use of electronic warfare.
57. Occurring or payable every year.
59. The 12th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
61. Informal terms for a human head.
62. Of or relating to Iraq or its people or culture.
64. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
66. An ancient Assyrian city on the River Tigris and traditional capital of Assyria.
67. Tropical American flat-jointed prickly pear.
68. Any of a class of alcohols having 2 hydroxyl groups in each molecule.
70. An narrative telling the adventures of a hero or a family.
71. Having an eye or eyes or eyelike feature especially as specified.
73. Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
75. The number that is represented as a one followed by 6 zeros.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It's the middle of the week and by the end of this day you'll be wishing you were on vacation or on an adventure made just by and for you. People will do the one thing they shouldn't where you're concerned. Your unwillingness to be pushed on any subject will be sorely tempted today. If you can take a day off, then by all means, jump on it. Aries. You make good decisions today but others want to challenge all you say. It's almost like a dare. You know all about dares. Being with your lover at home is no better. Sensitive issues cause issues. Things you thought resolved raise their ugly heads again. Closet out tonight alone if possible.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If you're in a loving relationship try to build upon it or you may find yourself looking at someone new now. All the pieces of your life are coming together for wanting more out of life including more money too. Not only may you be looking for a new career, you may want to change your life completely. Taurus. Consider the problems, as you always do, this might present before making your move. If children are involved, that's a whole other can of worms. Your life is not always your own when you've made that sort of commitment. Seek out a friend who can assist you in making a very important decision. Try to enjoy your situation.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

If you can work where you can take a trip today, do it and you'll be in hog heaven. Having to stay inside is a bummer now. Being able to work where you have independence makes you feel great. While traveling you get to think your world over, make improvements in your mind and start the process of adjusting your life for those advances. Gemini, today is a great time to put yourself in others places. You can understand their conditions more easily and think of how you can help them accomplish better situations in life. That's part of the fun of living. When you do help, take the praises with humility when given.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Watch your words and try to work alone today. This isn't the best time to try to get your point across especially with your boss. Your best advice is to try to get your work done without complications and get through this day. This is a good time to get organized and prepare to work on new projects later. Home and family mean more to you now than much of anything else. When you're able to get home tonight you might want to pick up dinner so that you can enjoy having your family close without any obligations other than being with them. Talk away or just soak up the ambience.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Work is the best part of your life right now. It's where you feel needed or at least appreciated. Home isn't the limelight you seek. Be gentle with your life's partner because there may be some upset with the love in your life. Friends and family gather more closely to help you get through this trying time without even knowing the sensitivity of the situation. They and those you like at work are the ones you can lean on now to be there when needed. Get out with friends and seek reassurance from those you love.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a good day. You feel lucky and know that luck will pay off through making wise decisions, which you're fully capable of, today. Someone, your boss or father, you trust gives you good advice which you follow but add some of your own tidbits to in order to make it yours. Problems take a back seat because you're capable of putting out any wildfire that may emerge to darken your day. After this good day at work, go home to make the most of your night thinking back over decisions you've implemented today. Life is good.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Don't be surprised if you're not asked to travel for your job or just for the sake of relaxation. Jump on making the plans either way. You need a change of scenery. If you're going with a friend make sure it's someone you can get dirty around not in the lustful sense but in the relaxing sense. You want someone close enough to see you in the same clothes and without makeup. In other words, someone who knows you and doesn't mind you're being yourself, Libra. You may decide to visit the great cathedrals in Europe or take a university course for work. Both options are wonderful. Make sure your passport is up-to-date.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your mothering instincts are on fire right now. You want to take care of others and further you need to be taken care of too. You have needs and you sense the needs of others. Putting the two together in a business sort of way is your forte. Knowing just the right words to communicate your desires to those who may be faltering is one of your best features. Irritation with others is right under your skin. Scorpio, and you try to keep a lid on that particular can of worms. You know you need to be cognizant of what you're doing and you work hard at it.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Pressure is on you to make decisions that may not be for your best in the coming days. Your solace is at home with people you love. Seek their company and discuss your feelings before making any sweeping changes. If a new boss wants you today and feel you're a good fit for them at work then ask for time to make an intelligent decision. That shouldn't be a stopping point for your next employer. They realize that you won't leave at the drop of a hat if you're working with them as well. That's a selling point for you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You've got drive and energy to spare. That's great because you're going to need to carry the load today and somehow innately knew it. Conversation will be kept to a minimum by you because you find it's not easy to communicate your desires to your coworkers now. Generally, your matter-of-fact attitude is all it takes to get work mates started and you don't have to explain but today you find you're not getting your point across. That's a frustration, Capricorn. Keep on being your assertive self. Move on with your ideas. Tomorrow will be better.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Perhaps you should speak with new friends and acquaintances about taking a group trip to further your education. This schooling excursion could be on a topic your group has decided might be fun and enlightening. You need the time to enjoy yourself and you need the opportunity to learn. If you take some coworkers, this trip can even be better. You're well-rounded and want every part of your life improved, Aquarius. This is only part of the manner in which you can encourage and stimulate your life's growth in the material, spiritual and emotional.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You look very good at work today. Communication on skills you use at work is part of your job today. You're too good at what you do. Your boss may want someone else to be able to fill in when you're unable to do that particular job. You're feeling frustrated today but that won't last long. Try to keep anger at a minimum. It won't help. Think of items to smile about so that you stay in a better mood. You've got strength to do your job and the vitality to complete it admirably. Keep ahead of the game and try to enjoy the process, Pisces. Get out tonight.

Wordsearch Puzzle

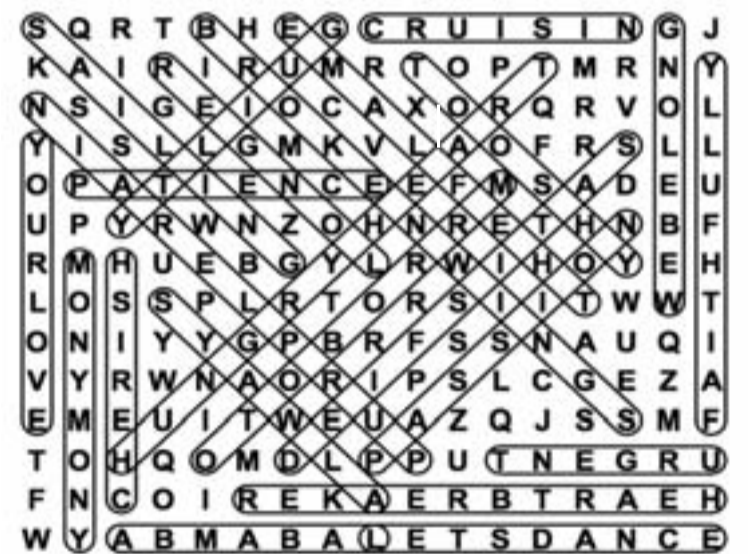
90's Songs 1 - Word Search



- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| ALL STAR | JOYRIDE | SUMMERTIME |
| CARNIVAL | MACARENA | TENNESSEE |
| FREAK ME | MMMBOB | TOM'S DINER |
| HAZARD | MR. WENDAL | TORN |
| HEARTBREAKER | NEVER EVER | WICKED GAME |
| HOLE HEARTED | RHYTHM NATION | WONDER |
| I WISH | RUN AWAY | YOU LEARN |
| INVISIBLE MAN | SCAR TISSUE | |

Yesterday's Solution

80's Songs 5 - Solution

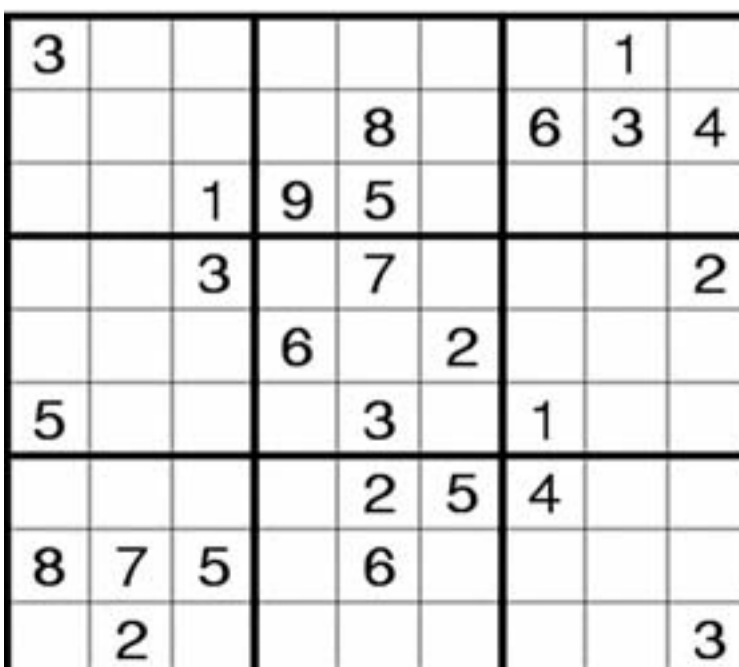


- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| ALWAYS | LA BAMBA | SAILING |
| BROKEN WINGS | LETS DANCE | SATISFIED |
| CHERISH | LONGER | THE FLAME |
| CRUISIN | MONY MONY | TOO SHY |
| FAITHFULLY | MR ROBOTO | URGENT |
| GUILTY | PASSION | WE BELONG |
| HEARTBREAKER | PATIENCE | YOUR LOVE |
| HUNGRY HEART | PURPLE RAIN | |

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2019



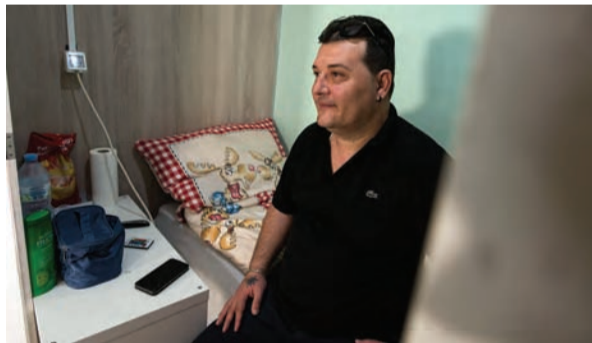
Handout picture released by Centre Terre Association shows French scientists touring Madre de Dios archipelago in southern Chile. The Chilean government seeks special UNESCO natural world heritage status for Madre de Dios, an archipelago in the Chilean Patagonia. The intense rain that falls almost every day, strong wind and the effect of the melting and retreat of surrounding glaciers, since about 12,000 years ago, make this archipelago a geological paradise. — AFP

Contested 'beehive' housing arrives in Barcelona on the sly

For the past few weeks Harry Kajevic has been sleeping in a 2.4-square-metre capsule flat in a clandestine location. He is one of the first residents of a "beehive"-style housing project, inspired by those in Japan or Hong Kong, which has opened in Barcelona despite not having a permit from the city authorities. The initiative by the Spanish start-up company Haibu is made up of around 20 tiny living pods, which include a bed and nightstand. They are housed side by side in a building with a shared kitchen, bathroom and terrace—all for 200 euros (\$225) a month, at least in Kajevic's case. Furniture is sparse, limited in the communal area to a few tables, chairs and a wardrobe for each resident which is too big for the rooms. Haibu, which means beehive in Japanese, argues that the project is a solution to a shortage of affordable housing in the Spanish city. But Barcelona's left-wing city hall says that such tiny accommodation is unfit for humans and violates local building laws. "For me, this is decent housing. I go out into the streets clean and fed, I rest when I sleep," said Kajevic, a 42-year-old burly Austrian truck driver, who just moved back to Barcelona after a previous period in the city. Faced with the opposition of city hall, which forced Haibu to close its showroom, the project's promoters are cautious. For fear of being spotted, entry to Haibu's first "beehive" is through a shop. The blinds of the building, which is still undergoing work, are drawn to hide the tenants' presence. And promoters of the housing project switch their mobile phones to flight mode when they go to the building because they are afraid of being tracked.

'Better than the streets'

"It's alright for a while, until I find something better," said Hector Cabanol, boiling water in a microwave in the communal kitchen to prepare an instant coffee for lack of



Harry Kajevic, a 42-year-old burly Austrian truck driver, sits on the bed of a capsule flat of a "beehive"-style housing project. —AFP photos

a stove. The 36-year-old electrician, who got divorced last year, earns 800 euros per month at his part-time job. Almost all his salary, 600 euros (\$900), goes to pay child support for his daughters and a mortgage he still shares with his ex-wife. "If it wasn't for this, I don't know what I would do. I survived by dipping into my savings, but they ran out. This is better than being on the streets," said Cabanol. At the end of last year, the average rent in Barcelona was 954.29 euros, a 40-percent jump over the end of 2013, according to figures from the regional government of Catalonia. Real-estate websites rarely list rooms for rent in a shared apartment for less than 300 euros a month.

But 30 percent of all workers in Spain earn less than 1,230 euros a month, making it hard for many to find a place to live even if they work full-time. Last year, more than 37,000 evictions were carried out in Spain due to unpaid rent, nine percent more than two years ago,

according to court figures. Several charities in Barcelona say that the city's homeless figures have risen since 2015 as rents have soared.

'Not dignified'

But the capsules violate the law, which states that a person must live in at least five square meters (54 square feet). Not even the largest pods aimed for couples are that size. The smallest are two meters long, 1.2 meters wide and just 1.2 meters in height, meaning an adult cannot stand up in them. The monthly rent varies between 125 and 325 euros depending on the size, number of residents and location. "They are slums, they are not dignified housing," said Barcelona's councilor in charge of urban planning, Janet Sanz. "We agree that there must be affordable housing but there are limits," she added. Haibu presents the project as a social initiative. The company says it will offer residents professional counseling and that it will not exceed a five-percent profit.

"The goal is for people to come for just a brief period, get on their feet financially and move on," said Marc Oliver, one of Haibu's founders. The company cannot sign rental contracts, so instead it sells a monthly membership fee in a legal association which gives people the right to live in the housing. Haibu is registered as a foundation in the Netherlands. It says it has 1.2 million euros to invest and employs 40 people. Despite the risk of legal action, Oliver said the company was "charging ahead". "We have opened this beehive and we are going to open 17 beehives in total in Barcelona. "As they close them, we will open more," said Oliver, who plans to set up similar projects in Paris, Washington or Copenhagen. — AFP

Major Rome exhibition to celebrate Leonardo da Vinci

A major exhibition dedicated to the scientific genius of Leonardo da Vinci opened in Rome yesterday, part of festivities to mark the 500th anniversary of the death of the artist and inventor. The show at the Scuderie del Quirinale palace, entitled "La scienza prima della scienza" (the science before science), traces the technological and scientific work of da Vinci and reflects on how "the myth of Leonardo" was developed. More than 200 pieces will be on display including some of his most famous works, which are credited with developing the parachute, helicopter and tank, the museum said ahead of the launch. Da Vinci was a "European citizen of the world," said exhibition curator Claudio Giorgione.

The polymath was a driving force behind the Renaissance and worked in numerous fields, including painting, sculpture, architecture, science, mathematics and astronomy. His most recognizable artworks include the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper. The exhibition devotes an entire room to da Vinci's "military genius" with several reproductions of his designs, including his famous "giant crossbow". Da Vinci was born in the Medici-ruled Republic of Florence in 1452. He died in France in 1519 and is the most famous left-handed painter in history. French President Emmanuel Macron has said he will host his Italian counterpart Sergio Mattarella at Amboise, central France, on May 2 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of da Vinci's death "with French and Italian youth". — AFP



Hector Cabanol, a 36-year-old electrician, prepares coffee in the kitchen of a capsule flat.



One of the rooms of a capsule flat of a "beehive"-style housing project.



A visitor watches a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's 'Garzatrice continua' (Horizontal wool-weaving machine) during the exhibition. — AFP



Mike Rutherford: Never say never to Genesis reunion

Mike Rutherford says a Genesis reunion could happen as Phil Collins is "in good shape". The Mike + the Mechanics star has given hope of the 'Land of Confusion' stars getting back together as the band's singer and drummer has been on much better form in regards to his fitness to perform, following his operation in 2009 to repair a dislocated vertebrae in his neck. Appearing on 'Good Morning Britain' on Wednesday (13.03.19), the bassist discussed the changes of them getting the band back on stage, admitting: "I've always said, for years, never say never and we did the tour 10 years ago, and Phil is in good shape. 'We're all fit and healthy and we get on well, so who knows?' Phil - who has been performing solo

shows sat down, including British Summer Time Hyde Park 2017 - had always been adamant that if he did return to Genesis, he would have to sing because he's unable to play drums. The band's keyboardist Tony Banks previously admitted it would be "fun" to get the band - whose modern line-up is comprised of Phil, Mike and Tony - back together. Referring to his bandmate Phil's 'Not Dead Yet' tour, he said in 2018: "We don't rule it out. It'd be fun to try. But Phil's gotta survive his tour first of all and we'll see where it goes." However, Tony did acknowledge a "slight problem", with Collins not able to play drums. The 65-year-old star added: "Phil's our drummer and he can't drum anymore... His [15-year-old son Nick] did a very good job for him. He sounds

incredibly like Phil when he plays." It's not the first time Banks has echoed fans calling for a reunion, as he admitted in the past he would "love" to deliver news of them getting back together. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz at the Progressive Music Awards 2015 in London, he said: "I'd love to say that we are, but I know nothing of it. 'It's never a problem for me really. Mike and I see each other a lot and we are always up for anything really. The problem really is Phil is not quite able to do what he did in the past, but we never say never.'"

Louis Tomlinson to design merch for his tour

Louis Tomlinson is set to design the merchandise for his tour. The 'Just Hold On' hitmaker has teased fans that he is the "early" stages of planning the designs and promised he's "definitely" going to hit the road, as he's missed touring since One Direction went on hiatus in 2015. He told the Daily Star newspaper: "There will be a tour at some point definitely as I've missed being on the road. I've always been involved on the merch side of things anyway and I'm really excited to start getting into that. 'It's pretty early on but we've had initial conversations about that. 'I'm keen to get some merch out ASAP.' Meanwhile, Louis - who makes up one fourth of One Direction with Harry Styles, Liam Payne and Niall Horan - recently released the emotional song 'Two Of Us', which helped him with the grief of losing his mother Johannah Deakin, and he revealed he was inspired by Liam Gallagher to bare his soul on the single. The former Oasis rocker's debut solo album 'As You Were' gave him the strength to work his own raw emotions into his lyrics. He said: "I don't like being clever for the sake of being clever. Sometimes it's cool to read between the lines." My lyrical style, naturally, is to just be matter of fact, honest and sometimes blunt. I kind of shied away from writing that song because I didn't really think I was ready to go through that process yet. "I got into a session and we ended up getting into it, and it was going perfectly. I really did want to write this song. I was just intimidated at first because it had to be perfect." Liam's introspective LP - which featured marriage breakup songs like 'For What It's Worth' and 'Paper Crown' - inspired Louis to try and make a similar kind of impact with his own writing. He added: "There had to be little things in there that were really thought-provoking for me. I feel like we got the whole message across per-



fectly." The 27-year-old singer tragically lost mum Johannah in 2016, when she passed away aged 43 after losing her battle with leukaemia, and on 'Two of Us' he painfully sings about wishing he was the one who died. He belts out: "You'll never know how much I miss you, the day that they took you, I wish it was me instead." On the chorus, Louis sings: "I will be the best of me, always keep you next to me, I'll be living one life for the two of us."



Aoki working with Sigala

Steve Aoki has revealed he is collaborating with Sigala. The EDM legend has joined forces with the British house DJ - whose recent hits include 'Just Got Paid' and 'Come Here For Love' - to create a soundtrack for the summer months, which is pencilled in to be released in June. Speaking to The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column, the 'Cake Face' hitmaker said: "We've been working on it for a good time. It's an amazing song, very positive. I can imagine groups of people humming and singing it. It's a big singalong anthem." Meanwhile, Aoki - who has previously collaborated with the likes of Louis Tomlinson, Adam Lambert, Linkin Park and K-pop superstars BTS - recently revealed that he has Sam Smith and Adele at the top of his wish list of dream collaborators. He said: "My dream collaborator would be Adele or Sam Smith." In June 2018, it was reported that 'Chasing Pavements' singer Adele is working on a fourth studio album, which could be released later this year, and would act as her first new music since 2015's '25' LP. An insider said at the time: "She's back in the UK and intends to write here. 'A number of studio musicians have been approached to work with her and she's already penned some of the songs.' Whilst Sam recently teamed up with Fifth Harmony's Normani on their recent hit and has previously collaborated with dance group Disclosure twice on 2013's 'Latch' and 2015's 'Omen'. So there is plenty of potential for Aoki to get in touch with both stars. Meanwhile, despite teaming up with One Direction star Louis on his 2016 debut solo single 'Just Hold On', the 41-year-old producer recently admitted that the pair haven't been able to spend time together yet - but regularly communicate over the phone. He said: "We haven't been able to connect properly due to our crazy schedules. 'But when we do connect over text or phone it's always nothing but love and support for each other.'"



Flint's 8 dogs 'whining and barking' after him

Keith Flint's eight dogs are reportedly pining for their late owner. The Prodigy frontman was tragically found dead at his home in Essex on March 4, with an inquest hearing that the 'Firestarter' hitmaker died from hanging. Keith's canine pack have been affected by the 49-year-old singer's absence and are said to have been heard "barking and whining" after him by locals in the village. A special dog minder, hired by his estate, has been staying at his sprawling mansion to fend for the mutts until it's decided what will happen to them. A source told the Daily Star newspaper: "Keith loved his dogs. 'You would always see him walking them in the fields. 'They seemed utterly devoted to him. 'People in the village have heard them barking and whining, as though they know something is just not right. 'The band seem to be doing everything they can to look after them, but they must miss him so much.' Fans have visited the property and laid out tributes outside, including flowers and letters, to pay their respects to the 'Omen' rocker. According to the tabloid, one of the notes reads: "Mate, gutted that you felt the time had come, that 'you are done'. 'You are one of the most genuine people to grace this planet. 'Your music will live with me forever.' On Monday), Keith's provisional cause of death was ruled as hanging at an inquest, which was opened and then adjourned. Coroner's officer Lynsey Chaffe revealed his provisional cause of death in the two-minute hearing. She added: "Police attended, all protocols were followed and his death was confirmed as not suspicious." A post-mortem examination was carried out at Broomfield Hospital three days after the singer's death, and further investigations are still under way. A full hearing will take place on July 23 when toxicology results are in. Keith's bandmate, Liam Howlett, previously told fans his friend had taken his own life. He wrote on Instagram: "The news is true, I can't believe I'm saying this but our brother Keith took his own life over the weekend. I'm shell shocked, angry, confused and heart broken r.i.p brother Liam #theprodigy. (sic)" The 'Breathe' group - which also includes Maxim Reality - hailed Keith as a "true pioneer" and a "legend" in a tribute post on Twitter. They wrote: "It is with deepest shock and sadness that we can confirm the death of our brother and best friend Keith Flint. A true pioneer, innovator and legend. He will be forever missed. We thank you for respecting the privacy of all concerned at this time." In the wake of the tragic news, his band mates have decided to axe their upcoming tour dates.



Rihanna gives friend's baby 'first listen' of her album

Rihanna gave a friend's baby the "first listen" of her eagerly-awaited new album. The 'California King Bed' singer took to Instagram to tease her 68.8 million followers with a picture of her close pal Jennifer Rosales little boy Joshua sat on the mixing desk with ear defenders. Alongside the studio snap, Rihanna wrote: "Thank you @jennrosales and @the_aa for blessing my day a lil mo (sic)." His mom Jennifer added: "When tia @badgalriri gives you the first listen. #newmusic (sic)" The Bajan star has been dropping little hints about her record, but her producer The-Dream recently revealed that she is "super close" to finishing the long-awaited album. The 30-year-old singer has kept fans waiting for new music for three years, since her last album 'Anti' in 2016, and according to The-Dream - who has worked with Rihanna since 2007 - her newest record is "about done". He said: "She's cooking, she's about done. She's about done. Super close." And although the versatile songwriter refused to give any more details about the 'Work' hitmaker's upcoming new music, he did also tease that Beyoncé is "doing something" in the studio too. He said: "She's doing something. I actually haven't talked to her about it - I've talked to the team about it because it's kind of just being coordinated. But she's doing something." For Rihanna, the news that her album is close to being finished comes after she recently teased her fans by joking that her Internet connection was poor when asked about the whereabouts of her new music. The singer posted a video to her Instagram Stories that featured her waving a wad of cash, smiling and blowing a kiss to the camera and wrote: "'Where the album?'" "Me: sorry my connection poor. (sic)" Meanwhile, Kuk Harrell - who worked with the star on 'Anti', as well as co-writing her hit songs 'Umbrella' and 'Only Girl (In the World)' - recently responded to one of the singer's fans who asked for an update on Rihanna's new music. During an Instagram Live, they asked him: "How's R9?", to which he replied: "R9 is great. R9 is amazing. It's incredible. And that's all I'm going to say." Although The-Dream believes her record is almost finished, there has been no official announcement from Rihanna about a release date for her ninth studio album.

David Bowie's Starman demo up for auction

David Bowie's 'Starman' demo is up for auction. A collection containing one of the first recorded versions of the hit song - which featured on his 1972 album 'The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars' - will be sold at Omega Auctions in Merseyside tomorrow and it is expected to fetch over £10,000. The demo - which also contains early versions of 'Moonage Daydream' and 'Hang Onto Yourself' - was discovered after languishing in a loft for 50 years. It's said the tape recording was made in 1971 by Bowie with his guitarist Mick Ronson, who later gave it to his friend Kevin Hutchinson who wanted to learn how to play 'Starman'. Speaking to the Press Association, Hutchinson said: "Now I'm 65 and I played it. I just couldn't believe how good it is, but at the time, I thought: 'it's not bad'. At 16 you're not totally impressed, nothing impresses you. 'I found it and got my old tape recorder out of the loft as well and threaded the tape into the machine. We couldn't believe it when we heard it. It's superb." The demo ends with the iconic musician telling his pal Ronson that the song isn't finished when he tries to end the track. Hutchinson explained: "You can tell that Mick has never heard the song before because at the end he is just about to turn the tape recorder off and Bowie says: 'Hang on. There's a little bit more.'" Dan Hampton, assistant auction manager, confirmed the validity of the

demo saying: "In consultation with a Bowie expert, we can say with confidence that this tape contains a very early and possibly the first ever demo version of 'Starman'. 'There's a lot of Bowie mythology around the writing of this timeless classic, and the raw and truly beautiful version heard here helps to provide a fascinating insight into the creative process of a bona fide genius.'"



Lifestyle | Gossip

Jordan Peele says Us had five times the budget of Get Out

Jordan Peele revealed that 'Us' had five times the budget of 'Get Out'. The 40-year-old comedian turned filmmaker says that although his hit 2017 satirical horror 'Get Out' was made with \$5 million, he thought it was "key" to have a bigger budget for his upcoming psychological fright fest 'Us' - which was made with \$20 million - as it allowed him more "freedom". Speaking at the SXSW Conference and Festival, he said: "I had about five times the budget on this one, which by movie standards is still not that expensive of a film. That was the key for me. Otherwise, I may not have had my freedom." Peele star went on to

explain that although he requested more money for his forthcoming film, he was careful not to "overreach" as he "thrives with certain restrictions" and didn't want the film to be such a risk producers would "be with my story". He said: "As a filmmaker, I also thrive with a certain restriction. I didn't want to overreach with the budget and all of a sudden have a studio being responsible on me. There's never been a point where they've expressed anything but wanting to make this. I was like, look, I want to be able to take my filmmaking up a notch, so I want to be able to make a bigger budget movie. But I don't want to make such a big budget movie that all of a sudden

we've crossed this line where the risk means you're going to be with my story." The horror flick stars Lupita Nyong'o (Adelaide Wilson) reunited alongside her 'Black Panther' co-star Winston Duke (Gabe Wilson) as they take their children on vacation to Adelaide's childhood home and are tormented by monsters which look exactly like them. 'Us' will be released on March 22.



FOSTER AND HOPKINS SCARED EACH OTHER IN SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

Jodie Foster and Sir Anthony Hopkins were "really scared" of each other when they filmed 'The Silence of the Lambs'. The 56-year-old actress played Clarice Starling in the 1991 psychological thriller: an FBI student who is forced to interview convicted cannibal murderer Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Hopkins) from his cell at a hospital for the criminally insane to gain information about an active serial killer called Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine) in a bid to end his murderous rampage. Foster explained that the pair's acclaimed interrogation scenes didn't take place face-to-face during filming as the complicated set design took 20 minutes to get the British actor in and out of his prison cell and she admits her interactions with Hopkins, 81, and his "disembodied, scary voice" terrified her. Speaking at the SXSW Conference and Festival, she said: "The movie didn't scare me, but Anthony Hopkins scared me. You'll notice, if you look at the movie

again ... instead of the person looking at the person off-screen, that the actors are actually looking down the lens. "And that means I am there, but way behind the camera and I'm just a voice, he can't see me. And the same is true on my side. So when I'm doing scenes with Dr. Lecter, I just hear this disembodied, scary voice, but I don't actually see his face. I have to look into the camera and pretend that he's in the camera." "The last day of shooting, we were having lunch, I was having my tuna fish sandwich and he's next to me, and I said to him like, 'I was really scared of you,' because I never talked to him the whole movie, and he was like, 'I was really scared of you!'" Foster's performance earned her the Best Actress Oscar. Hopkins' turn as Lecter landed him the Best Actor Oscar and the movie won a further three Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Director for Jonathan Demme.



Dark Knight trilogy returns to cinemas to celebrate Batman's 80th birthday

Christopher Nolan's 'Dark Knight' trilogy will return to theatres to celebrate Batman's 80th birthday. Warner Bros announced on Tuesday that 'Batman Begins', 'The Dark Knight' and 'The Dark Knight Rises' - which starred Christian Bale as the titular hero - will return in IMAX 70mm this month for a limited run back-to-back on March 30 at Universal Cinema AMC at CityWalk in Hollywood. The 48-year-old filmmaker will take to the stage for a Q&A in between the last two movies which will be taped and shown at other screenings at New York's AMC Lincoln Square and San Francisco's AMC Metreon, Toronto's Cinesphere Ontario Place and the Indiana State Museum's IMAX Theatre in Indianapolis. Warner's President of Domestic Distribution Jeff Goldstein said in a statement: "Christopher Nolan broke new ground with the 'Dark Knight' trilogy, and this is a rare chance for today's audiences to experience these extraordinary films as they were meant to be seen. To have the added privilege of hearing Chris' insights firsthand makes this a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." The Batman character was created by artist Bob Kane and writer Bill Finger and made his first appearance in Detective Comics issue #27 in 1939. Nolan previously admitted that he

felt perfectly suited to the 'Batman' franchise more than any other comic book movie because Bruce Wayne became The Caped Crusader with no actual powers other than a desire to protect his home Gotham City and somehow make amends for his parents murder at the hands of a mugger. Asked about his experiences of working on Batman, he previously confessed: "It's a superhero, but it's based on ideas of guilt, fear, these strong impulses that the character has. Bruce Wayne doesn't have any super powers other than extraordinary wealth. "But really, he's just someone who does a lot of push-ups. In that sense, he's very relatable and human. I think that's why I gravitated towards it." Revealing why he wanted to focus on the villains in the sequels, he added: "I hadn't planned on doing a sequel. So shifting genres and the nature of the antagonist felt the way to take the audience on a journey and tell them something different about Bruce Wayne." The late Heath Ledger played the Joker in second film 'The Dark Knight' and his performance earned him a posthumous Best Supporting Actor Oscar following his tragic death in January 2008 at the age of 28.



Oh baby, baby... Britney Spears hits set for Broadway

Britney Spears is heading to Broadway, the singer announced Tuesday, in the form of a fairytale jukebox musical with a feminist bent set to the pop star's hits. "Once Upon a One More Time" begins previews and then a limited run in Chicago from October 29 before setting its sights on New York. "I'm so excited to have a musical with my songs-especially one that takes place in such a magical world filled with characters that I grew up on, who I love and adore," Spears, 37, said in a statement. "This is a dream come true for me!" It will fill the slot in Chicago that had been slated to host "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough" about Michael Jackson, a musical whose tryout was canceled over "scheduling difficulties" linked to a labor dispute with actors, according to its producers. The cancellation came just prior to an HBO documentary however that detailed pedophilia allegations against Jackson. Producers say they are hoping to

take the musical straight to Broadway in 2020. In the meantime, the Britney show will see a "rogue fairy godmother" enlighten its protagonists on progressive views on the notion of happily ever after. The title of the show references "...Baby One More Time," the 1998 breakout single for Spears, who went on to become one of the best-selling pop artists in history. A statement explaining the show on Spears' website invoked Betty Friedan's manifesto credited with ushering in second-wave feminism in the United States. "Once Upon A Time... Cinderella, Snow White, and the other fairytale princesses gather for their book club, when-oh, baby baby! — a rogue fairy godmother drops The Feminine Mystique into their corseted laps, spurring a royal revelation," it read. "Could there really be more to life than bird-made dresses and true love's kiss?"

Laughter can bring attention to global refugee crisis, US comic says

Most people wouldn't consider the global refugee crisis a laughing matter, but American comic actor Ben Stiller says humor can help draw people's attention to it. Humor can help tell the stories of the more than 25 million refugees around the world, said the actor in an interview with the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Tuesday. "I do think you can reach a



lot more people that way," said Stiller, who recently returned from a visit with Syrian refugees in his role as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations' refugee agency (UNHCR). He has held the role since last year. "I don't want to get people depressed. I want people to see that these are human beings," he said. "Humor's an important part of it." People might shut out the refugee issue because it is overwhelming but humor can capture their attention, Stiller said. "I'm trying to find that," he said. "It's interesting to try to find humorous ways to tell the story." Stiller, 53, an actor, producer and director known for such films as "Zoolander," "Meet the Fockers" and "There's Something About Mary," visited Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Photographs and videos from his trip, posted on Twitter, show him visiting students in an art class and playing soccer with refugee children. "The memories I take back from these trips are of laughing with the kids and families," Stiller said. "We're finding things in common and laughing about things that are funny, and humor is a part of life." Using humor to talk about refugees does pose a challenge, he added. "You don't want to in any way make it seem trivial or make fun of it." But a little humor can help in grim situations like those facing refugees, he said. "People I find have really wonderful resilient attitudes towards their experiences, and the ones who find the humor in it are able to find a way to survive." More than 5.6 million people have fled Syria since 2011, when civil war erupted, according to UNHCR. More than a million of them live in neighboring Lebanon, most in poverty. Stiller, a New York native, said he would like to see Americans be less fearful and more welcoming of refugees, more supportive of countries hosting refugees and open to more resettlement in the United States. He also has visited refugees in Jordan and in Guatemala with UNHCR. "I walk away feeling it is important to get the word out about what these people are going through," Stiller said.

James Bond to drive eco-friendly car

James Bond will drive an eco-friendly car in next installment of the franchise. Director Cary Fukunaga is reportedly planning to put the suave spy - who will again be played by Daniel Craig - behind the wheel of the limited-edition £250,000 Aston Martin Rapide E, the manufacturer's first electric vehicle, of which just 155 will be made. A source told The Sun newspaper: "The decision was spearheaded by the film's new director, who's a total tree-hugger. "He is working directly with Aston Martin to get one of their electric cars ready for its big close-up." The new car will be at the heart of an "incredible" action sequence within the film, which is believed to have the working title 'Shatterhand', and will boast a number of "high-tech" features. The insider added: "It's going to be the center of an incredible action sequence in the movie. James Bond is known for driving amazing cars and this one won't disappoint either. "It's going to have all the high-tech gadgets. To be clear, this is something Cary pushed for and Daniel and the producers are going along with. "Everybody is afraid of Bond getting labelled 'too PC' but they all felt the time was right to put him in a zero emission vehicle." Cary took over as director on 'Bond 25' after Danny Boyle walked away last year due to "creative differences". And it was recently

claimed the "Trainspotting" filmmaker quit because producer Barbara Broccoli refused to let him go ahead with a plan to have the spy die in the arms of returning Bond girl Lea Seydoux. A source said recently: "Boyle thought that killing 007 would be a brilliant way to pave to introduce a new Bond. "When the dust settled there was push back from Barbara and Daniel. The feeling was that the audience should be left guessing as to the plight of their man." Filming is scheduled to begin on the movie next month.



OSCAR ISAAC WANTS TO MAKE SPANISH MOVIE

Oscar Isaac wants to film a movie in Spanish. The 'Triple Frontier' star is keen to make a movie in his native tongue, following the success of 'Roma' during the recent awards season as it is also filmed entirely in the Spanish language. He said: "I hope to make a whole movie in Spanish." And like 'Roma' found its home on streaming service Netflix, Isaac has praised these sites for being a platform for films that wouldn't be traditionally financed in the cinema. He added: "I got to see 'Triple Frontier' on a big screen with an incredible sound system and that was really amazing to see, but, you know, we are living in a very transitional time. I think that regardless of the debate ... there's a lot more opportunities to do different kinds of movies and movies that often wouldn't get financed theatrically." Isaac previously insisted there is an "issue of representation" in Hollywood and he

thinks that more needs to be done in order to challenge the lack of diversity in the movie industry. He explained: "I think it really needs to start more with the writers and directors. They're the ones that write the stories. I don't think the reasons actors are interesting is for their representational qualities; it's for their transformative ones. That's where the magic trick is, where the craft is ... It's so messed up what happens, how people who don't look like the stereotypical white American get marginalised. It's the corporate entities and the studio entities that allow this to happen, who have ideas about what the lead needs to look like. Time and again, those things are disproven. So yeah, you've got to make them put more diversity in there. You have to knock it into their brains that it's a better business move to do that." — Bang Showbiz



'Style muse': Meghan's rise to a royal fashionista

Her jackets and jeans, bangles and bags can instantly send tongues wagging and designers' sales soaring. Since being catapulted into the global spotlight as Prince Harry's girlfriend in 2016, Meghan's outfits have been scrutinized and copied, often crashing websites selling her apparel. Fashion blogs and social media accounts dedicated to the American's style have mushroomed, just as they sprang up for her sister-in-law Kate, Prince William's wife, allowing followers to comment on her latest sleek looks usually in a monochrome palette. "The Meghan effect is this economic phenomenon similar to the Kate effect...where if she wears it, it turns to gold," said Christine Ross, co-editorial director of Meghan's Mirror fashion blog, describing Meghan's style as "very on trend and modern". Almost everything she wears up to and around the \$300 or 300 pound-mark, a pretty high price point, sells out, she added.

Designer dresses, luxury handbags and stylish stilettos are the fashion dream of many women, but for a young royal they are the staple of an everyday wardrobe. For her busy royal diary, the now Duchess of Sussex usually wears expensive labels, namely French couture house Givenchy whose British artistic director Clare Waight Keller designed Meghan's wedding dress. Dior, Ralph Lauren, Carolina Herrera and Oscar de la Renta are among other formal and eveningwear go to brands. "Meghan's wardrobe is really unique because there are so many bespoke pieces in it and we'll really never know how much

those cost," Ross said. She estimates her wardrobe at about 500,000 pounds (\$657,750) a year.

'Style muse'

While becoming a trendsetter, Meghan, named 2018's best dressed woman by People magazine, has stayed loyal to smaller brands she wore before her global fame. The 37-year-old, who used to film drama "Suits" in Toronto, has worn Canadian labels Mackage, Arizia and Line the Label. For casualwear, she has worn J.Crew and brands known for their environmental and social credentials: a Reformation dress, Veja sneakers, Outland Denim jeans and jewelry made from recycled metal. "Meghan carved this niche for supporting these sustainable fashion brands," Holly Rains, digital editor at magazine Marie Claire UK, said. "People are now going to Meghan as a style muse...She crashes sites." It is particularly her more affordable accessories that are snapped up by consumers. "The jewelry, the bags, the belts is where we can dip in and get that kind of Meghan touch to our outfits," Rains said. Ross said Meghan's casual jean looks proved popular with readers. Her maternity wear as she awaits her first child is also eagerly followed. "She's done a lot of bespoke pieces, a lot of customization pieces that aren't maternity at all and it's really been a difference," Ross said.

Royal fashion expert Michael Talboys said he hoped to see Meghan wear more British labels. She has worn items from UK brands Victoria Beckham, Strathberry, Marks &



Meghan Markle

Spencer and her second wedding gown was a halterneck dress by Stella McCartney. "She should, as an English duchess, really be patronizing English designers and promoting them in the eyes of the world," he said. Kate frequently wears British high street dresses. On the streets of

London, student Savannah Edwards said Meghan's "classic" style was having an impact. "I personally cannot afford anything that she wears but it does influence me to try new pieces," she said. — Reuters

Fashion Pakistan Week (FPW)



Models present creations by Pakistani designer Sana Safinaz on the first day of the Fashion Pakistan Week (FPW) in Karachi on March 12, 2019. —AFP



Clean-cut K-pop embroiled in S Korean sex scandal

With wholesome looks and increasingly global fanbases, K-pop has sold its stars as the ultimate squeaky clean pin-ups. But a burgeoning sex scandal in the industry shows how pervasive discrimination and abuse are in South Korean society, activists say. In the space of just two days, singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young and BIGBANG boy-band member Seungri have announced their retirements from showbusiness. Jung, 30, admitted filming himself having sex and sharing the footage without his partners' consent, while Seungri—real name Lee Seung-hyun—is embroiled in a sex-for-investment criminal investigation. Both were members of the same chatroom where Jung and others shared illicit content of at least 10 women, according to broadcaster SBS. The South has been battling a growing epidemic of so-called "molka", or spycam videos—mostly of women, secretly filmed by men. But K-pop stars generally cultivate clean-cut images—and are actively promoted by the South Korean government as a key cultural export. Many face tremendous pressure to look and behave perfectly in an industry powered by so-called "fandoms"—groups of well-organized admirers at home and abroad who spend enormous amounts of time and money to help their favored stars climb up the charts and attack their perceived rivals.

With fortunes at stake they would have more to lose than most by being embroiled in a scandal, even after a wave of #MeToo accusations in the still socially conservative South over the past year. Lee Moon-won, a popular culture critic in Seoul, said the multilingual Seungri—who has multiple business interests—was popularly seen as "ideal cultural export". "Most of his fans would agree that Seungri is an exceptionally hard working star," Lee told AFP. "On top of his singing career, he somehow mastered Japanese and Chinese, which made him a very useful member whenever BIGBANG visited those countries." "Learning two foreign languages while being a K-pop star is definitely not an easy thing," Seungri was interviewed by police at the weekend over accusations he lobbied potential investors by offering them the services of prostitutes at nightclubs in Seoul's posh Gangnam district. The 29-year-old is also linked to a police investigation into Burning Sun, a nightclub where he was a public relations director, where staff are alleged to have filmed women with hidden cameras and used alcohol and drugs to sexually assault them. Before the scandal, Seungri had been nicknamed the "Great Seungsby" after the protagonist of the Scott Fitzgerald novel the Great Gatsby, for his good looks, his seemingly successful business and the lavish parties he had thrown. "It's ironic how Seungri and Gatsby turned out to have more things in common

after the scandal broke," Lee said. "Both have engaged in illicit and corrupt activities to gain fame and wealth."



This picture shows Seungri, a member of popular K-pop boy group Big Bang, arriving for questioning over criminal allegations at the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency in Seoul. — AFP

Revenge porn

Reaction among BIGBANG fans has been divided, some expressing anger and disappointment, others disbelief and support. Some overseas admirers posted online photographs of flowers and a hand-written note saying "I'll wait for you on this flower road"—a BIGBANG lyric. Another tweeted that they did not want to believe the accusation, adding: "I'm tired of all this and in pain. I admired Seungri for a long time and he made me smile in my worst days." But a group of South Korean fans urged his expulsion from the band, saying he had "significantly damaged the team's reputation". For South Korean women's activists, the scandal is unsurprising. As well as secretly filming women in schools, toilets and offices, "revenge porn"—videos men take of themselves having sex with their exes or partners filmed without the women's consent—is believed to be equally widespread. In a society where patriarchal values are still deeply ingrained, circulation of such content can significantly damage a woman's reputation. According to Han Sol, an activist at Flaming Feminist Action, spycam videos have long been watched and shared by South Korean men as a form of entertainment and a way to strengthen their "brotherly ties". Last year, Seoul several times witnessed thousands of women protesting against spycam videos as part of the country's ongoing #MeToo movement. "This case just shows that male K-pop stars are no exception when it comes to being part of this very disturbing reality that exploits women," women's rights activist Bae Bok-ju told AFP. — AFP

US: China's treatment of its Muslim minority worst abuses 'since 1930s'

Washington drops reference to 'Israeli-occupied' Golan Heights

WASHINGTON: The US State Department yesterday slammed human rights violations in China, saying the sort of abuses it had inflicted on its Muslim minorities had not been seen "since the 1930s". US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo highlighted abuses in Iran, South Sudan, Nicaragua and China in the department's annual "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," but told reporters that China was "in a league of its own when it comes to human rights violations".

"For me, you haven't seen things like this since the 1930s," Michael Kozak, the head of the State Department's human rights and democracy bureau told the same briefing, referring to abuses of China's Muslim minority. "Rounding up, in some estimations ... in the millions of people, putting them into camps, and torturing them, abusing them, and trying to basically erase their culture and their religion and so on from their DNA. It's just remarkably awful."

Kozak said China had initially denied there even

were camps, and is now saying "there are camps, but they're some kind of labor training camps and it's all very voluntary". The governor of Xinjiang said on Tuesday that China is running boarding schools, not concentration camps, in the far western region of China. The vast area bordering Central Asia is home to millions of Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities. "That does not match the facts that we and others are saying, but at least we're starting to make them realize there is a lot of international scrutiny on this," Kozak said, adding: "It is one of the most serious human rights violations in the world today."

The report said that in the past year, the Chinese government had significantly intensified its campaign of mass detention of members of Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang region. It said authorities there were reported to have arbitrarily detained 800,000 to possibly more than two million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs and other Muslims in internment camps designed to erase

religious and ethnic identities. The State Department report said government officials in China had claimed the camps were needed to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism. However, international media, human rights organizations and former detainees have reported that security officials in the camps abused, tortured and killed some detainees, it said.

Pompeo also said the Iranian government had killed more than 20 people and arrested thousands without due process for protesting for their rights "continuing a pattern of cruelty the regime has inflicted on the Iranian people for the last four decades". In South Sudan, he said that military forces inflicted sexual violence against civilians based on their political allegiances and ethnicity, while in Nicaragua, peaceful protesters had faced sniper fire and government critics had "faced a policy of exile, jail or death".

The report also revised its usual description of the Golan Heights from "Israeli-occupied" to "Israeli-con-

trolled". Israel has been lobbying US President Donald Trump to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which it effectively annexed in 1981. Israel says the area, captured from Syria in a 1967 war, is a critical buffer zone to defend its territory. A separate section in the report, on the West Bank and Gaza Strip - areas that Israel also seized in 1967 - also did not refer to those territories as being "occupied" or under "occupation".

Any change in US terminology on the West Bank and Gaza Strip is certain to raise Palestinian concern over the strength of Washington's commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state envisaged by interim peace agreements in the 1990s. Kozak, commenting on the language used in the report, said: "The policy on the status of the territories has not changed." The US uses the term "territories" when it refers to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Kozak said Washington was seeking "a negotiated settlement" there. — Reuters



DAMASCUS: Mugs bearing the portraits of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin are sold in the capital on Tuesday. — AFP

Eight years on, Assad clings on but beleaguered

BEIRUT: Bashar Al-Assad has won his war for political survival but as Syria's conflict enters its ninth year, his country is fractured, cash-strapped, and prey to both friend and foe. The civil war reaches its eighth anniversary this month with more than 360,000 people killed, millions more displaced, and devastation worth \$400 billion. As the war winds down, Syrians in regime-held areas may no longer have to worry about bombardment, but they face fuel shortages, frequent power cuts, unemployment and rampant poverty.

From the brutal repression of anti-Assad protests in 2011, the war spiralled into a complex conflict involving jihadists. Syria's president may have reversed the initial gains of the armed opposition and jihadists, but foreign powers have entered his turf. "The Syrian conflict is more complicated because there are now powerful foreign actors that control large zones inside Syria," said Nicholas Heras, an analyst at the Centre for a New American Security. "And these foreign actors are not likely to leave Syria any time soon."

Backed by Russia and Iran, Assad's forces now control almost two-thirds of the country. But key areas remain beyond his control, including a swathe of the oil-rich northeast held by US-backed Kurdish-led forces fighting the Islamic State group. The northwestern region of Idlib, held by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, is protected by a ceasefire deal, which has seen Turkish troops deployed to the area. And Ankara's Syrian rebel proxies hold several northern cities near the border. Joshua Landis, of the University of Oklahoma, painted a grim picture. "The Syrian map is one of division and despair," he said. "Over 30 percent of the country is occupied by foreign governments who have built and funded local militaries."

Various foreign powers are competing to reap a return on years of military investment, or protect their interests. Russia has backed Assad with troops and air strikes since 2015, while Iran has dispatched advisers as well as Shiite fighters from Lebanon and Iraq. "Russia wants to stabilize Assad to keep a steady local partner to guard its expanding bases in Syria" and project power region-wide, Heras said. Iran wants a foothold in Syria, in case of a war between its Lebanese ally Hezbollah and Israel to the southwest, he said. Both allies hope to play a key role in reconstruction and have signed deals including for electricity, oil and infrastructure projects.

Turkey and the United States, who have traditionally backed non-state actors, have other interests. President Recep Tayyip "Erdoğan wants to rip the Kurds out of America's embrace" and impose Turkey in northern and eastern Syria, Heras said. Washington backs Kurdish-led fighters who control a large and oil-rich northeastern swathe, and has US troops in Syria as part of the anti-IS fight drawing to a close near the Iraqi border.

Turkey views Kurdish fighters as "terrorists" and has long threatened to attack the Kurds south of its border. Washington is to dial down its presence to 200 "peace-keeping" troops after IS is expelled from its last pocket. As well as shielding the Kurds from Turkey, a US presence piles pressure on Assad. "Assad needs the water and wheat that the United States controls in eastern Syria," Heras said. But "it is US policy to keep these resources from him and force the economy of Assad's statelet to collapse around him," he added.

Along with the European Union, the United States has ramped up sanctions on Syrian officials and companies, including by seeking to prevent oil shipments to the country. Landis said those measures were compounding post-war challenges, chief among them relaunching a devastated economy. "The US is imposing one of the strictest sanctions regimes on Syria which will continue to deepen the misery of the people," he added. Plus "the worst characteristics of the regime have been strengthened in the struggle to win the civil war: corruption, violence, and the absence of the rule of law," he said. — AFP

Erdogan slams Netanyahu as...

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Forces, about democracy and the ethics of war. A joke," Netanyahu wrote. "It's best that he doesn't get involved with Jerusalem, our capital for 3,000 years. Erdogan can only learn from us how to respect every religion and protect human rights."

The latest exchange came after Netanyahu called Israel the nation-state of "the Jewish people" only, not all its citizens. That comment prompted Turkey on Tuesday to accuse the Israeli leader of "blatant racism". Netanyahu struck back in a statement from his office early yesterday, calling Erdogan a "dictator".

This spurred Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin to accuse Netanyahu of attacking Erdogan "for exposing him" after the Israeli premier's "racist remarks" towards Arabs and Muslims. "The apartheid state he leads occupies Palestinian lands, kills women & children & imprisons Palestinians in their own land," Kalin wrote on Twitter. The two countries in 2016 ended a six-year rift triggered by the Israeli storming of a Gaza-bound ship that left 10 Turkish activists dead and led to a downgrading of diplomatic ties.

Netanyahu has been accused by critics of demoniz-

ing Israeli Arabs, who make up some 17.5 percent of the population, in a bid to boost rightwing turnout for April elections. After the polls, Netanyahu will face a hearing to defend himself against corruption allegations which have dogged his campaign. "That robber at the helm of Israel is currently on trial in his country," Erdogan said of the Israeli leader. Netanyahu is facing a tough challenge from a centrist political alliance led by former military chief of staff Benny Gantz and ex-finance minister Yair Lapid.

Netanyahu's initial comment that sparked the tiff came during an online spat triggered by Israel's rightwing firebrand culture minister Miri Regev. Regev, a member of Netanyahu's rightwing Likud party, had warned voters not to support its main rival because it would ally with Israeli Arab parties - a highly unlikely scenario. Israeli model and actress Rotem Sela responded on Instagram, asking: "When the hell will someone in this government convey to the public that Israel is a state of all its citizens and that all people were created equal?"

Netanyahu reacted with his own Instagram post, telling Sela: "Israel is not a state of all its citizens." "According to the basic nationality law we passed, Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people - and only it," he said, referring to a deeply controversial piece of legislation passed by his rightwing government last year. Israeli Hollywood actress Gal Gadot jumped to Sela's defense. "Love your neighbor as yourself," the star of "Wonder Woman" wrote on Instagram late Sunday. — AFP

Sistani tells Rouhani Iraq-Iran ties must respect sovereignty

BAGHDAD: Iraq's top Shiite cleric told Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday that Iraqi sovereignty must be respected and weapons kept in state hands, a veiled reference to increasingly influential Iran-backed militias. It was the first meeting between an Iranian president and the 88-year-old Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who rarely weighs in on politics but exerts wide influence over Iraqi public opinion.

Sistani welcomed "any steps to strengthen Iraq's relations with its neighbors ... based on respect for the sovereignty of the countries and no interference in domestic affairs", a statement from his office said. "The most important challenges facing Iraq are fighting corruption, improving services and keeping weapons in the hands of the state and its security services," it added.

The meeting came on the third day of a visit by Rouhani to Iraq which aimed to project Iran's political

and economic dominance in Baghdad and expand commercial ties to help offset renewed US sanctions meant to isolate and weaken Tehran. Iran and Iraq, both majority Shiite countries, signed several preliminary trade accords on Monday, Iraqi officials said, including deals on oil, health, and a railway linking the southern Iraqi oil city of Basra and an Iranian border town.

Sistani's comments will chime with the concerns of many Iraqis that powerful Shiite militias, which are increasing their military and political influence after the defeat of extremist group Islamic State (IS), remain subservient to their Iranian patrons. Sistani issued a decree in 2014 calling up Iraqis to volunteer to fight against Islamic State. Many answered the call, joining mostly Shiite paramilitary groups.

Since the US-led invasion of Iraq that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iran has come to dominate Iraqi politics through allies in the government and parliament and has built up considerable influence over parts of the security forces. Dozens of mainly Iran-backed paramilitary groups which played a key role in defeating IS in 2017 were brought formally into the security forces last year. Critics say they have also begun to control parts of the economy. The groups deny this. — Reuters



NAJAF, Iraq: Iraqi Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani (left) meets Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (center) and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in this central Iraqi city yesterday. — AFP

Resignations, arrests over US...

Continued from Page 1

through the fraud. Singer ended up cooperating with investigators last year, helping them record incriminating conversations he had with Loughlin, Henriquez and other parents.

The elaborate scheme involved bribing the administrators of college entrance tests to allow a child's wrong answers to be corrected and bribing university athletic coaches to attest a child was a gifted athlete even if he or she was anything but. In some instances, Singer helped doctor photographs to make a child appear athletic. Parents made their payments to a sham charity that Singer ran, prosecutors said, which also allowed them to make a fraudulent tax write-off. The sham charity, the Key Worldwide Foundation, purported to help provide an education to "underprivileged students".

Loughlin is accused of paying Singer \$500,000 to help cheat her daughters' way into the University of Southern California by bribing rowing coaches at the school to pretend the girls were gifted rowers. Her husband, the designer Mossimo Gianulli, is also charged with fraud, and appeared in court in Los Angeles on Tuesday before being released on \$1 million bail.

One of the daughters, Olivia Gianulli, has become a prominent influencer on social media under the name "Olivia Jade". "Officially a college student!" she captioned an Instagram photograph she posted in September, which showed her in her USC dorm room decorated with items she had ordered from online retailer Amazon, which paid her for the post.

Other prominent parents charged by the Boston US attorney's office include Felicity Huffman, the actress who starred in "Desperate Housewives"; Gordon Caplan, the co-chairman of international law firm Wilkie Farr & Gallagher; and Bill McGlashan Jr, who heads a buyout investment arm of private equity firm TPG Capital. Representatives of accused parents either declined to comment or did not respond to inquiries. Several of the coaches accused of accepting bribes have been fired, placed on leave or have resigned.

Some 300 law enforcement agents swept across the country to make arrests in what agents code-named "Operation Varsity Blues". Prosecutors have so far named 33 parents, 13 coaches and associates of Singer's business. On a call with a wealthy parent, prosecutors said, Singer summed up his business: "What we do is help the wealthiest families in the US get their

kids into school."

No students have been charged and authorities said some of them were unaware of the scams. Prosecutors said it was up to the universities what to do with students admitted through cheating. Yale University and the University of Southern California (USC) said that they were cooperating with investigators. "The Department of Justice believes that Yale has been the victim of a crime perpetrated by its former women's soccer coach," Yale said in a statement.

The coach, Rudolph Meredith, resigned in November after 24 years running the women's soccer team. Meredith, who is accused of accepting a \$400,000 bribe from Singer, is due to plead guilty, prosecutors said. His lawyer declined to comment. John Vandemoer, a former Stanford University sailing coach who worked with Singer, pleaded guilty to racketeering conspiracy on Tuesday.

Prosecutors said the scheme began in 2011 and also helped children get into the University of Texas, Georgetown University, Wake Forest University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Part of the scheme involved advising parents to lie to test administrators that their child had learning disabilities that allowed them extra exam time. The parents were then advised to choose one of two test centers that Singer's company said it had control over: One in Houston, Texas, and the other in West Hollywood, California.

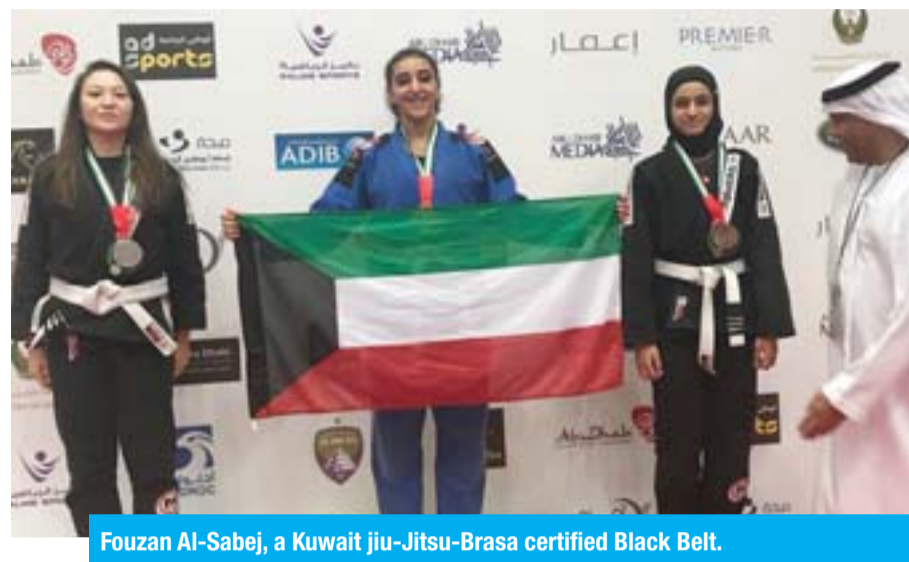
Test administrators in those centers are accused of taking bribes of tens of thousands of dollars to allow Singer's clients to cheat, often by arranging to have wrong answers corrected or having another person take the exam. Singer would agree with parents beforehand roughly what score they wanted the child to get. In many cases, the students were not aware that their parents had arranged for the cheating, prosecutors said, although in other cases they knowingly took part. None of the children were charged on Tuesday.

Singer also helped parents stage photographs of their children playing sports or even Photoshopped children's faces onto images of athletes downloaded from the internet to exaggerate their athletic credentials. Wake Forest said it had placed head volleyball coach Bill Ferguson on administrative leave after he was among the coaches accused of accepting bribes. According to the criminal complaint, investigators heard McGlashan of TPG Capital listening to Singer tell him to send along pictures of his son playing sports that he could digitally manipulate to make a fake athletic profile. "The way the world works these days is unbelievable," McGlashan said to Singer, according to court papers. — Agencies

Sports

Brazilian Jiu-jitsu gaining traction amongst female martial artists

Jiu-Jitsu in Kuwait has a bright future



Fouzan Al-Sabej, a Kuwait jiu-jitsu-Brasa certified Black Belt.



Sarah Al-Adwani



Seham Al-Kharyef

KUWAIT: Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, or BJJ, has been gaining traction amongst female martial artists in Kuwait due to its effectiveness and global appeal. Like their male peers, Kuwaiti women have put in the legwork to compete in BJJ's regional and international tournaments, gaining recognition for their skills and prowess. Speaking to KUNA, a number of BJJ top figures and practitioners as well as other martial artists and professionals highlighted Kuwaiti female martial artist's achievements in the region and the world, stressing that Jiu-Jitsu in the country has a bright future. Fouzan Al-Sabej, a Kuwait jiu-jitsu-Brasa certified Black Belt, told KUNA BJJ emphasized the grappling aspect of martial arts, subduing the opponent via chokeholds or limb-breaking techniques through minimal usage of the body's energy. Since 2004, Al-Sabej has been competing in global tournaments such as the Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship, winning two bronze medals, two gold medals in the Asian tournament, and two other gold medals in the Arab BJJ tournament. Al-Sabej, who teaches BJJ to anyone willing to learn, said that an increasing number of females were seeking Jiu-Jitsu in Kuwait. He indicated one of the prominent BJJ female practitioners in Kuwait was MMA fighter Seham Al-Kharyef, who uses BJJ as one of many weapons in her arsenal including kickboxing and Kyokushin Karate. On her part, Al-Kharyef-fighting of Vikings MMA Gym-stressed that BJJ was an integral part of her

MMA training, which requires her to be very intelligent when taken to the ground or vice versa. BJJ has no requirements other than dedication to training and confidence, affirmed Al-Kharyef who started BJJ just a few months ago and participated in 2018 the UAE's Al-Ain and Fujairah Jiu-Jitsu tournaments snatching gold on both occasions. Also speaking enthusiastically about Jiu-Jitsu, practitioner Sarah Al-Adwani said that she began practicing BJJ when she was 12 years-old. She affirmed that Jiu-Jitsu gave her confidence and enabled her to excel in the 2018 Abu Dhabi Grand Slam Jiu-Jitsu World Tour and the national "Kimura" challenge, winning gold in both tournaments. Amna Al-Saeed, a fellow BJJ practitioner under Jiu-Jitsu Black Belt and head of Absolut Team Professor Remus Corbei, said that she had a similar experience through her participation in numerous tournaments including the 2019 Abu Dhabi Grand Slam, 2018 Al-Ain tournament, and the Kimura challenge, winning gold and silver medals. Regarding the challenges facing BJJ, contrary to other countries in the region, Jiu-Jitsu in Kuwait lacked funding for practitioners who have to pay from their own pockets to take part in international tournaments, revealed Al-Saeed who suffered a minor injury hindering her from currently competing. Providing an overall perspective on women BJJ in Kuwait, Jiu-Jitsu trainer Qassem Al-Aryan applauded the increasing interest in the martial arts especially on part of women. He

affirmed that BJJ female practitioners began to rival their male counterparts, predicting a promising future for this particular martial arts. While many might have a confused idea of what BJJ is really about, Karatekas Ali and Mohammad Al-Mousai provided their valuable input on the matter. BJJ is a grappling based martial arts, which has some striking techniques taught for self-defense, however, it is unlike Karate, which emphasizes striking techniques, the Karate instructors said. They added that BJJ practitioners, seeking to improve their grappling skills, might do via cross training with other grappling based arts like wrestling, Judo, or others. On the other hand, the two commended Kuwaiti women's increasing interest in the martial arts, saying that their BJJ enthusiasm was a positive thing. Speaking from a medical perspective, physical therapist Dr. Ali Al-Attar said that injuries varied from sport to sport, but indicated from his experience that females tend to recover faster than their male counterparts; however, this all depended on the methods of recovery and eagerness to overcome obstacles. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu has its roots in Japanese Kodokan judo's ground techniques referred to as "newaza". It was developed by various Brazilian martial artists, namely the Gracie family, who had popularized the martial art through no holds barred contests in Brazil, the US and elsewhere. BJJ was brought to Kuwait in 1999 by Professor Ahmad Al-Houli who formed the first jiu-jitsu school in Kuwait. —KUNA



Amna Al-Saeed

Vettel says Ferrari feeling good as new Formula One season launches

MELBOURNE: Sebastian Vettel said yesterday that Ferrari have "tried to turn the page" after being dominated by Mercedes in 2018 and their new car "feels good" ahead of the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

The German four-time world champion was speaking as the new Formula One season officially launched with all 20 drivers taking part in a first-of-its-kind public meet-and-greet with fans in the heart of Melbourne.

"For the whole team we have tried to turn the page," Vettel told the thousands of fans who turned up for a glimpse of their heroes in the city's Federation Square. "We had some weaknesses here and there last year and we have tried to fix those and do much better," he added after the drivers arrived by boat on the Yarra River, signed autographs and posed for pictures with the event live streamed on Formula One's social media channels.

"The team is on track and the car feels good," he said of his Ferrari, which was fastest in pre-season testing and is the bookmakers' favourite going into Sunday's race. Sports-mad Melbourne has hosted the season-opening Grand Prix every year, bar two, since 1996.

"I love it here. There's a great energy and it gets better through the week," said Mercedes' five-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who was beaten by Vettel to the chequered flag at the Albert Park circuit last year.

After losing out to the German again in the second race of the season in Bahrain, the Englishman roared back to sweep to the 2018 drivers' championship by winning 11 of the remaining 19 grands prix.

The 2019 calendar features a gruelling 21 races, with the sport celebrating its 1,000th Grand Prix later in the year in China. The new launch event was a chance to interact with fans, said Formula One's commercial manager Sean Bratches.

"The passion, knowledge and enthusiasm of the Melbourne crowd deserved a special thanks and this is why we decided to organise the first-ever season launch event in the history of the sport," he said.

"It's vital that we put them at the heart of everything we do, and this event provides us with a platform to engage with fans not just locally but also globally."

Meanwhile, three-time world champion Jorge Lorenzo suffered a fractured rib at the weekend's season-opening Qatar MotoGP, his Honda team announced on Tuesday. The Spanish rider tweeted that he is confident about his fitness for the second race in Argentina on March 31, despite admitting he would be out for three weeks to a month. "Fissure of the first rib on the right side, 3 weeks/1 month to recover. We will fight in Argentina," Lorenzo wrote. The 31-year-old joined Honda at the end of last year to form a formidable partnership with five-time MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez, who was beaten into second place in Qatar by Lorenzo's former Ducati teammate Andrea Dovizioso.

Lorenzo crashed in the third practice session last week in Doha and ended up finishing the race in 13th place. He had already been recovering from a broken wrist suffered during the off-season. — AFP



Toyota Yaris WRC dominates stage at FIA World Rally Championship

STOCKHOLM: GAZOO Racing World Rally Team celebrated its first win of the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship season recently after Ott Tanak clinched a dominant victory in round two at Rally Sweden in the No. 8 Toyota Yaris WRC. It is the second win in three years for the Toyota Yaris WRC at the event, which was the scene of its maiden triumph in 2017. Tanak also won the rally-ending Power Stage to secure maximum points.

The drivers faced difficult conditions throughout the race, as warm temperatures caused the ice and snow to melt. Tanak ended the second day by taking the No. 8 Toyota Yaris WRC within two seconds of the rally lead, and capitalized on his better road position on the third day to open up an advantage of nearly a minute over the competition.

On the last day, he drove the No. 8 Toyota Yaris WRC carefully through the opening two stages and was the fastest on the Power Stage by 3.5 seconds to claim the five available bonus points. Co-driven by Martin Jarveoja, Tanak now leads the drivers' championship standings for the first time in his career. The victory also places GAZOO Racing at the top of the manufacturers' leader board, sealing a spectacular start to the season for the team.

Akio Toyoda, Team Chairman, commented: "We are delighted to achieve our first victory of the season at the second round of the WRC, Rally Sweden. I would like to congratulate and thank Ott, Martin and the team for bringing this result. I'd also like to extend my appreciation to all the fans and our partners for their support; thank you very much! It was beyond my imagination when the team won here two years ago during the second rally of our comeback. I still remember clearly the surprise and joy we felt at that time. This year's victory is different; we fought for the victory from the beginning. Comparing this year's rally to the joyful one two years ago and a very tough one last year, I can see how the team has grown. And this gives big

power to GAZOO Racing to move forward. The season has just started. In the rest of the season, over 12 rounds, we will have tight battles with our strong rivals. This will make the WRC even more exciting and help us to make ever-better cars. Thank you in advance for your continuous support."

Tommi Makinen, Team Principal, said: "It is brilliant to get a win here in the second round of the season and to be leading both the drivers' and manufacturers' leader boards. Ott has dominated the whole weekend, showing everyone how to drive in difficult conditions. He is really strong at the moment. When I look at him right now, I see myself over 20 years ago when I was focusing on winning the title."

Ott Tanak, Driver of the No. 8 Toyota Yaris WRC, said: "We have had a very good weekend. Friday was a key moment, when we had to get through to minimize the time loss in challenging conditions. But after this, we just drove with a good rhythm and as little risk as possible. The fourth and last day was about saving the tires for the Power Stage and to give it a big push. We had a very good run and everything was working really well, so I was really comfortable in the car. We have a very strong team and it's great for us to have this kind of result at the beginning of the season."

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nurburgring 24 Hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established GAZOO Racing (GR), to consolidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that "the roads build the people, and the people build the cars", GR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making "ever-better" cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, GR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

GAZOO Racing will be seeking to strengthen its lead in WRC in the third round of the season, Rally Mexico. The event takes place from March 7-10 and is set to provide a major contrast from Sweden, with rough gravel roads and temperatures in the region of 30°C. High altitude is also a major factor, with a route that peaks at 2,737 meters above sea level, starving engines of air and cutting power by as much as 20 percent.

Wales thriving on defence forged in Wigan

CARDIFF: A teak-tough defence forged by rugby league legend Shaun Edwards has helped push Wales to the brink of a Six Nations Grand Slam, the Wiganer applying a system that has become ingrained among the players after 11 years in the post. The 52-year-old Edwards, who played 36 times for Great Britain at scrum-half or stand-off, is the most decorated player in rugby league history, with 36 winner's medals. After hanging up his boots, Edwards switched codes, joining Wasps as assistant coach in 2001, when Warren Gatland was head coach, a position he himself took over in 2005 when the New Zealander returned home.

Edwards, the sole schoolboy player to have captained England in both rugby league and rugby union, stayed with Wasps until 2011 and during his time there, the club won two European Cups (2004, 2007) and three Premiership titles (2003, 2004, 2005). In 2008 he became Wales' defence coach, again under the newly-named head coach Gatland and together, the pair have been crucial in helping Wales to win three Six Nations championships (2008, 2012, 2013), the first two of which were Grand Slams. In winning the 2008 Grand Slam, Wales' tenacious defence only conceded two tries, spearheaded by chop-tackling flanker Dan Lydiate. "Offence sells tickets, defence wins championships," was Edwards' blunt assessment at the time.

"To concede only two tries, one from an interception, one from a kick, so not one running try in five games, is massive credit for the players."

Speaking ahead of Saturday's match against Ireland, BBC pundit Jerry Guscott added: "The most distinctive part of Wales' DNA is their defence. They have only scored nine tries so far in this tournament - the same number as Italy - but have conceded just six, the fewest of any side."

"Their fitness, durability and organisation is more of a hallmark than incredible try-scoring." Former England centre Guscott added: "Edwards has been in charge of their defence for more than 11 years and that continuity means the defensive system is ingrained."

"Their ethos is to meet line speed with line speed. They come up flat and fast, especially close to the breakdown." Wales' talismanic captain Alun Wyn Jones hailed his team's performance in the hard-fought 18-11 victory over Scotland that set up a chance of a Grand Slam in Cardiff on the weekend.

The Welsh produced a mind-boggling 140 tackles in the second-half of a gripping match at Murrayfield to eventually stifle a game Scottish side. "(That was) testament to Shaun Edwards, he earned his wage this week the way we defended," Jones said.

Edwards, who was also the British and Irish Lions defence coach in 2009 on the tour of South Africa, has acknowledged his pivotal role in building up what is arguably the leading defence in the world game. —AFP

Sports

LeBron, Lakers snap skid, Sixers win and Nuggets rout T-Wolves

Blazers end Clippers' win streak with late surge

CHICAGO: LeBron James had 36 points and 10 rebounds, and the visiting Los Angeles Lakers overcame their lowest-scoring first quarter of the season to end a five-game losing streak with a 123-107 win against the Chicago Bulls on Tuesday. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 24 points off the bench. Kyle Kuzma scored 21. Rajon Rondo had 14 points and 10 assists, and JaVale McGee finished with 10 points and 11 rebounds for the Lakers. Robin Lopez scored 20 points. Otto Porter Jr. had 19 points and nine rebounds, and Kris Dunn finished with 18 points, seven rebounds and nine assists for Chicago. Ryan Arcidiacono started in place of leading scorer Zach LaVine (knee) and had 14 points and six assists. The Lakers scored 16 points in the first quarter, and the Bulls closed with an 11-1 run to take an 18-point lead into the second quarter. Los Angeles went ahead for the first time since making the first basket of the game when Kuzma put in a layup for a 66-64 lead with 8:48 left in the third quarter.

SPURS 112, MAVERICKS 105

DeMar DeRozan scored 16 of his team-high 33 points in the first quarter and LaMarcus Aldridge had 10 of his 28 in the third to lead visiting San Antonio past Dallas. Derrick White added 23 points and seven assists, and Davis Bertans dropped three 3-pointers, including two big ones in the fourth quarter. San Antonio ran its win streak to a season-best six games. Dallas lost for a sixth consecutive game as rookie Luka Doncic, playing with a sore right knee, was limited to 12 points on 5-of-18 shooting. He was 1 of 7 from deep, a frustrating 1 of 9 from the free-throw line and committed nine of the Mavericks' 14 turnovers. Jalen Brunson scored a career-high 34 points for Dallas.

BUCKS 130, PELICANS 113

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 24 points to lead six Milwaukee scorers in double figures in a win at New Orleans. Khris Middleton added 23 points, Malcolm Brogdon scored 18, Eric Bledsoe and former Pelicans forward Nikola Mirotic had 14 each and Brook Lopez 13. Elfrid Payton had his second consecutive triple-double for the Pelicans, who lost their fourth straight, finishing with 14 points, a career-high 15 rebounds and 11 assists. He is the first New Orleans player to have a triple-double in consecutive games since Chris Paul did it in 2008.

76ERS 106, CAVALIERS 99

Ben Simmons had 26 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists to lead host Philadelphia past Cleveland. Joel Embiid added 17 points and 19 rebounds for his 50th double-double of the season. Embiid also blocked four shots. JJ Redick scored 17 points for the Sixers, who were without Jimmy Butler as he was held out for a planned rest day. Collin Sexton paced the Cavaliers with 26 points while Cedi Osman added 18 and Jordan Clarkson had 13.

PACERS 103, KNICKS 98

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 24 points as Indiana continued its home dominance of New York. The Pacers rebounded from a pair of nationally televised double-digit defeats at Milwaukee and Philadelphia by beating the Knicks for the 13th time in their last 14 meetings in Indianapolis and completing their third season sweep of New York in the past five seasons. The Knicks' latest losing streak is at seven games. New York, which got 21 points from Emmanuel Mudiay, scored fewer than 100 points for the fourth straight game.

NUGGETS 133, TIMBERWOLVES 107

Jamal Murray scored 30 points, Paul Millsap had 23, and host Denver cruised past Minnesota. Nikola Jokic had 18 points, eight rebounds and seven assists, and Monte Morris scored 16 off the bench for the Nuggets, who recorded a season-high 40 assists. Karl-Anthony Towns returned after missing one game with a knee injury, and he provided 34 points and 10 rebounds. Tyus Jones scored 16 for the short-handed Timberwolves, who were without Derrick Rose (right elbow soreness), Jeff Teague (right foot inflammation) and Andrew Wiggins (thigh).

TRAIL BLAZERS 125, CLIPPERS 104

CJ McCollum scored 23 of his 35 points in the fourth quarter to lead Portland past host Los Angeles. Damian Lillard registered 20 points and 12 assists as Portland won for the eighth time in the past 11 games. Jusuf Nurkic added 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Trail Blazers. Montrezl Harrell amassed 22 points and 11 rebounds, and Lou Williams added 18 points for Los Angeles, which had a five-game winning streak halted. — Reuters



CHICAGO: Andre Ingram #20 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball against the Chicago Bulls on Tuesday at the United Center in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

NBA results/standings

Indiana 103 New York 98; Philadelphia 106 Cleveland 99; Los Angeles Lakers 123 Chicago 107; Milwaukee 130 New Orleans 113; San Antonio 112 Dallas 105; Portland 125 Los Angeles Clippers 104; Denver 133 Minnesota 107.

	Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
x-Milwaukee	51	17	0.750	-	Golden State	45	21	0.682	-
x-Toronto	48	20	0.706	3	Denver	44	22	0.667	1
Philadelphia	43	25	0.632	8	Houston	42	25	0.627	3.5
Indiana	43	25	0.632	8	Oklahoma City	41	26	0.612	4.5
Boston	41	27	0.603	10	Portland	41	26	0.612	4.5
Brooklyn	36	33	0.522	15.5	San Antonio	39	29	0.574	7
Detroit	34	32	0.515	16	LA Clippers	39	30	0.565	7.5
Miami	31	35	0.470	19	Utah	37	29	0.561	8
Orlando	31	37	0.456	20	Sacramento	33	33	0.500	12
Charlotte	30	37	0.448	20.5	Minnesota	32	36	0.471	14
Washington	28	39	0.418	22.5	LA Lakers	31	36	0.463	14.5
Atlanta	23	45	0.338	28	New Orleans	30	40	0.429	17
Chicago	19	50	0.275	32.5	Memphis	28	40	0.412	18
Cleveland	17	51	0.250	34	Dallas	27	40	0.403	18.5
New York	13	55	0.191	38	Phoenix	16	52	0.235	30

x - clinched playoff spot

'Our inspiration is Afghanistan' as East Timorese hope to copy cricket rise

DILI: Navigating pigs and goats as they practise on a dusty paddock, a group of young East Timorese are hoping to copy the fairy-tale rise of Afghanistan by making it as Asia's latest emerging cricket nation.

In the impoverished, once war-ravaged country, which only gained independence from Indonesia in 2002, the manicured pitches of Lord's are a world away for aspiring cricketer Juvellino Mique "Micky" Rama Pinto, 16.

His 14-year-old batting partner, Joana Gonsalves Borges, has seen cricket on TV and is excited by "watching big sixes and wickets being taken". Like Micky, she wants to play for East Timor. The vision to turn soccer-obsessed East Timor on to cricket originated with Mark Young, who played at league level in Lancashire and Gloucestershire before emigrating to New Zealand in 1997.

Young and a Pakistani colleague, Muhammad Tayyeb Javed, argue that East Timor can use cricket as part of its revival just like Afghanistan, whose players learned the game in refugee camps but have risen to the elite Test level.

East Timor, one of the world's youngest nations, is still suffering the effects of a violent, decades-long independence struggle which destroyed infrastructure. With high levels of poverty, one of the world's worst rates of malnourishment and 60 percent of its 1.3 million population under the age of 24, there is an urgent need for new opportunities for young Timorese-including, now, cricket.

Management consultant Young and his partner, Lara, came to East Timor hoping to help the country after first working in India, where he said "the poverty there left a big impression on us".

Through the Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) aid agency, Young was placed in East Timor as an advisor to a government organisation tasked with diversifying the economy. Walking to work one morning in Dili, Young noticed a group of youngsters playing cricket with homemade bats and stumps.

They had been taught the basics by Tayyeb, who lived in Dili with his Timorese wife Mariana Dias Ximenes—a marathon runner who represented the young country at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"I contacted him and we are now working together to develop cricket in Timor," Young told AFP. "We now have over 100 young Timorese playing the game. 40 percent female." "We have exciting plans to take a representative team to Bali in April 2019 and one day be the newest ICC nation in Asia," he said.

"Our inspiration is Afghanistan, another post-conflict society who only started playing seriously 20 years ago and are now highly ranked in world cricket, number eight in Twenty20." Every Sunday a group of excited, grinning teenagers pack the back of a small truck in the city of Ermera for the one-hour journey to practise at a makeshift cricket field in Dili, the national capital.

In addition to the scores already playing, Young esti-



DILI: This undated handout picture released on March 11, 2019 by the Timor Leste Cricket Association shows local youth receiving new cricket equipment in Dili, the capital of East Timor. Navigating goats and chickens as they practise on a dusty pitch, a group of young East Timorese are hoping to copy the fairy-tale rise of Afghanistan by making it as Asia's latest emerging cricket nation. — AFP

mates there would be at least 100 more youths involved if he had sufficient equipment. "Cricket is giving the young Timorese a sense of purpose in a society where there is much poverty and many people struggle with day-to-day living," Young said.

The group played its first tournament in December with four teams, and coverage by national media. "They were interviewed afterwards and felt really special. A lot of tears of joy and that was a really cool moment," Young recounted.

A national body-Federacao de Criqueste East Timor-has been established with a strategic plan that talks of "young Timorese people using cricket to grow and fulfil their potential". Post-war Afghanistan is mentioned as an example.

The next step is to raise enough money to send a team to the upcoming Bali Sixes tournament and to start a home league of four teams who will play each other on a regular basis. William Glenwright, the

International Cricket Council's general manager of development, is closely watching the "great strides" taken in East Timor.

"Cricket can be a vehicle for change and have a positive impact on people's lives," Glenwright said. "This is also particularly true in East Timor and we are excited to see the developments in the coming months."

Young is using his contacts in New Zealand and a public fund-raising campaign to secure equipment and a portable pitch, which he believes will make a massive difference to the young players' skills.

Micky, who lists Virat Kohli and Brett Lee among his heroes, is already dreaming about playing for East Timor. "I want to have the opportunity to play for my country, which would make my country very proud," he said. Joana says she doesn't know much about world cricket yet but adds: "I like to try to practise most days. I've never been outside East Timor but I want to play cricket for East Timor one day." — AFP

WADA files appeal against China's Sun Yang doping decision

LAUSANNE: The World Anti-doping Agency said yesterday it had filed an appeal against a decision to clear Chinese swimming star Sun Yang of missing an out of competition doping test. WADA, meeting in Lausanne, told AFP that it had filed the appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport following a decision by swimming's world governing body FINA not to pursue a case against the multiple world champion.

Sun, who has won Olympic gold in the 200m, 400m and 1,500m freestyle, missed an out-of-competition test on September 4 at his home in China's Zhejiang province. "WADA has filed a CAS appeal in the case of Sun Yang," a spokesman for the anti-doping authority said. The swimmer—who was banned for three months in 2014 for taking a stimulant—was cleared of wrongdoing by FINA in January, according to his lawyers. Sun failed to comply with the test requirements but a FINA doping panel cleared him of wrongdoing because testers for IDTM—the body which conducts tests—had breached several rules.

Those included failing to produce authorisation letters and a nursing licence, his lawyers said in a statement. Sun's lawyers also threatened legal action against a British newspaper, the Sunday Times, which claimed Sun clashed with the anti-doping testers and he and a bodyguard smashed a sealed vial of blood with a hammer.

Sun is one of China's greatest-ever athletes and is hugely popular at home. But his career has been dogged by controversy over doping suspicions and he was publicly branded a drug cheat by his Australian rival Mack Horton at the Rio Olympics in 2016. —AFP

Price becomes winningest goaltender in Canadiens history

MONTREAL: Carey Price set the Montreal franchise record for most wins by a goalie. Max Domi scored two goals, and the host Canadiens defeated the reeling Detroit Red Wings for the ninth consecutive time, 3-1 on Tuesday. With his 315th regular-season victory, Price supplanted Jacques Plante for the team mark. He made 20 saves as the Canadiens completed a sweep of the four-game season series by a 21-7 aggregate score. Brett Kulak collected the other goal for Montreal while Tomas Tatar recorded two assists. Andreas Athanasiou scored the only goal for the Red Wings, who have lost 11 of their last 12 games (1-8-3). Jonathan Bernier made 33 saves.

FLAMES 9, DEVILS 4

Johnny Gaudreau collected a career-best six points—including a hat trick—and host Calgary exploded for six goals in the third period en route to a comeback victory over New Jersey. Derek Ryan had two goals and an assist, and Sean Monahan and Elias Lindholm both collected a goal and three assists for the Flames. Sam Bennett and Matthew Tkachuk also scored for Calgary. Blake Coleman produced a goal and an assist for the Devils, who also got goals from Kyle Palmieri, Kenny Agostino and Travis Zajac.

STARS 2, SABRES 0

Ben Bishop recorded his third consecutive shutout. Roope Hintz notched his first multiple-goal game, and visiting Dallas beat Buffalo. Bishop made 35 saves to notch his sixth shutout of the season and the 30th of his career, running his career record to 12-0-1 against the Sabres. He has a shutout streak of 204:20, the second-longest stretch in club history. Ed Belfour went 219:26 without allowing a goal in the 2000-01 season. The three straight shutouts ties Bishop with Belfour and Cesare Maniago for the franchise record. Maniago did it in December 1967 with the then-Minnesota North Stars, and Belfour's hot stretch was in November 2000.

PENGUINS 5, CAPITALS 3

Evgeni Malkin had two assists to become the 88th NHL player to reach 1,000 career points, and Pittsburgh halted visiting Washington's seven-game winning streak. Sidney Crosby scored twice, and Jake Guentzel, Phil Kessel and Jared McCann tallied once apiece for Pittsburgh, which has won five of six. Matt Murray stopped 38 shots. Jakub Vrana scored twice and John Carlson once for the Capitals, and Braden Holtby made 25 saves. Washington's Alex Ovechkin had an assist to reach 1,200 career points.

SHARKS 5, JETS 4

Joe Pavelski scored the go-ahead goal with five seconds remaining in the third period as San Jose won at Winnipeg for its sixth straight victory. Gustav Nyquist scored twice to record his 13th career multi-goal performance, and Marcus Sorensen added a goal and an assist for the Sharks, who improved to 15-3-1 in their past 19 games. Joe Thornton had two assists to move past Hall of Famer Stan Mikita (1,467 assists) for sole possession of 14th place in NHL history. The 39-year-old Thornton skated in his 1,554 regular-season game to tie Jarome Iginla for 13th place on the league's all-time list. —Reuters

Sports

Kohlschreiber stuns Djokovic as Federer, Rafa advance

Osaka finds positives despite Indian Wells upset

INDIAN WELLS: Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber stunned Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic 6-4, 6-4 on Tuesday, claiming his first career win over a world No. 1 player to reach the fourth round of the ATP Indian Wells Masters.

Serbian superstar Djokovic was playing his first tournament since lifting a record seventh title in Melbourne, taking his tally of Grand Slam victories to 15. He had won eight of nine prior meetings with Kohlschreiber, but could find no answer to the 39th-ranked veteran, who had come up empty in 11 prior attempts to beat a top-ranked rival.

"It's a very special moment," Kohlschreiber said. "Of course, playing the top guys is always a big pleasure, but most of the time they beat you." In match that resumed after rain stopped play just one game in on Monday night, Kohlschreiber said the warmer daytime conditions suited him better, and Djokovic agreed.

"I liked my chances more at night against Kohlschreiber," Djokovic said. "Completely different conditions today: Ball bounces much higher. Obviously he uses his spin very well. I wasn't playing well. One of those days," added Djokovic, whose defeat came on a day the women's draw lost its top two seeds-world number one Naomi Osaka and number two Simona Halep. "I congratulate him for playing tactically really well and getting me out of my comfort zone," Djokovic said. "He deserved to win."

World number two Nadal stayed on track to improve that number as he swept past Argentine Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 6-1 to reach the last 16. Nadal took his record against the world No. 26 to 7-0 in emphatic style, never facing a break point in a match lasting an hour and 16 minutes.

"I think I played a very solid match. I did a lot of things well," Nadal said. Nadal, a three-time winner of the Indian Wells title, next faces Serbian qualifier Filip

Krajinovic, who ousted 14th-seeded Russian Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 6-2.

Fourth-seeded Roger Federer eased through with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over friend and fellow Swiss Stan Wawrinka. Federer took his record to 22-3 over Wawrinka, a former world number three who is climbing back up the rankings in the wake of double knee surgery.

"I felt good from the beginning," said Federer, who is coming off his 100th career title at Dubai last month. "For me, the plan worked. I was able to mix up my game, cover my serve, be dangerous on the return—maybe take some rhythm away from Stan. Federer next faces Britain's Kyle Edmund, who beat Macedonian qualifier Radu Albot 6-3, 6-3.

Poland's 67th-ranked Hubert Hrkacz upset sixth-seeded Kei Nishikori of Japan 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 to reach the last 16 of a Masters 1000 event for the first time. He will play 19-year-old Canadian Denis Shapovalov, the 24th seed who beat 10th-seeded Croatian Marin Cilic 6-4, 6-2.

Earlier, world number one Naomi Osaka was trying to find the positives after her Indian Wells WTA title defense went up in smoke on Tuesday. The US and Australian Open champion found at least one.

"I didn't lose in the first round. That's a plus," Osaka said after falling in the fourth round 6-3, 6-1 in just 66 minutes to red-hot Belinda Bencic of Switzerland. Osaka conceded she didn't play well, but she didn't find the lopsided scoreline depressing because "I tried my best and I don't really have any regrets."

Osaka had won nine straight games at Indian Wells, but Martina Navratilova in 1990-91 remains the only women's repeat winner in the event. Osaka said the first title defense of her career had brought different challenges, and she thought she handled them well.

"I think I did well," she said. "It's just really exciting



INDIAN WELLS: Novak Djokovic of Serbia hits a forehand against Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany during their men's singles match on day nine of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Tuesday in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

to come out here every day and for everyone to be so kind. There were so many fans, I think that that's part of the experience. Yeah, I think I did well for my first time." She said she could see a change in herself since she arrived unheralded at Indian Wells last year and

walked away with a victory that sparked a stellar 2018 campaign that included a win over Serena Williams in the US Open final. "One of the biggest things is I wanted to be more mature," she said when asked how she had changed. — AFP

Rice receives England call-up for Euro qualifiers

LONDON: Declan Rice's decision to switch international allegiance to England was rewarded with his first call-up to Gareth Southgate's squad yesterday for Euro 2020 qualifiers against the Czech Republic and Montenegro later this month.

West Ham midfielder Rice made three international appearances for the Republic of Ireland, but all of them in friendly matches meaning he was still eligible for England. The highly rated 20-year-old was born in London but qualified for Ireland via paternal grandparents. However, after much deliberation, he announced last month that he would play England. His switch was ratified by FIFA last week. "I think they are really big decisions when you are asking a player to transfer association. You've got to be very clear that you feel they have a future with you," said England manager Southgate.

"That said, there were never any guarantees made to him because I think that is very important as well. You've got to be playing well to get in the squad, but his form has been excellent." Apart from calling up Rice, Southgate largely stayed loyal to the core of players who helped England reach the World Cup semi-finals last summer and have qualified for the inaugural Nations League semi-finals in June.

Eric Dier, Fabian Delph and Ruben Loftus-Cheek are included despite limited playing time at Tottenham, Manchester City and Chelsea respectively. Meanwhile, Leicester's James Maddison and in-form Southampton midfielder James Ward-Prowse missed out.

"You could look at Fabian Delph and say he has not been playing for Manchester City, but he was our best player against Croatia (in November) so balancing all that has been difficult this time," added Southgate.

"We have qualified for a semi-final in the summer. It would be strange to make huge changes to that squad, but we have added another young player in Declan." Despite



CARDIFF: West Ham United's Irish defender Declan Rice (C) shoots past Cardiff City's English defender Lee Peltier (R) but fails to score during the English Premier League football match between Cardiff City and West Ham United at Cardiff City Stadium in Cardiff, south Wales on March 9, 2019. — AFP

Rice's change of heart, Southgate also insisted he will not simply cap players to prevent them switching international allegiance.

Southampton and England under-21 goalkeeper Angus Gunn has been courted by Scotland, while promising Crystal Palace right-back Aaron Wan-Bissaka is of Congolese descent. "I'm not prepared to pick players just to stop the possibility of other countries picking them," he added. "Aaron Wan-Bissaka is playing very well, and really pushing to be in our squad. I could pick players give them a cap and stop them from playing somewhere else but I don't think that is right."

England squad to face the Czech Republic on March 22 and Montenegro on March 25 in Euro 2020 qualifiers:

Goalkeepers

Jack Butland (Stoke City), Jordan Pickford (Everton), Tom Heaton (Burnley)

Defenders

Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool), Ben Chilwell, Harry Maguire (both Leicester City), Michael Keane (Everton), Luke Shaw (Manchester United), John Stones, Kyle Walker (both Manchester City), Danny Rose, Kieran Trippier (both Tottenham Hotspur), James Tarkowski (Burnley)

Midfielders

Dele Alli, Eric Dier, (both Tottenham Hotspur), Jordan Henderson (Liverpool), Ruben Loftus-Cheek, Ross Barkley (both Chelsea), Declan Rice (West Ham), Fabian Delph (Manchester City)

Forwards

Marcus Rashford (Manchester United), Jadon Sancho (Borussia Dortmund/GER), Harry Kane (Tottenham Hotspur), Callum Wilson (Bournemouth), Raheem Sterling (Manchester City). — AFP

Twice a Champions League winner as Barcelona boss, Guardiola claimed this week that City are "teenagers" in the competition compared to the more established European powers. They have never won the Champions League, with their best performance a semi-final appearance in 2016 under Guardiola's predecessor Manuel Pellegrini. But City are one of the favourites to claim the trophy after Real Madrid and Paris Saint Germain crashed out and, on this evidence, Guardiola's players are up for the challenge of showing they are more mature than he believes. "When I say we are a teenager team it doesn't mean we are not going to fight," Guardiola said. "The 'teenagers' have passion and desire, they are not scared. We are going to try. I won it twice but I lost seven times. People say you have to win (the trophy), but in one game you can lose against these incredible top sides. We will see how far we will get."

Amid reports he is in danger of being sacked, Schalke boss Domenico Tedesco admitted it was the worst result of his reign. "I'm extremely disappointed. We fell apart. It was the worst we've had here since I was coach," he said.

"Of course it hurts. It's difficult when you lose 7-0 to stand here. The next couple of weeks are going to be difficult." Guardiola's men monopolised possession and their territorial dominance finally paid off 10 minutes before the break. Ilkay Gundogan clipped a pass into the Schalke penalty area and Jeffrey Bruma bundled over Bernardo, with the spot-kick awarded after being checked by VAR.

Aguero stepped up to nonchalantly chip the penalty down the middle as Ralf Fahrman dived the wrong way. That opened the floodgates as Aguero quickly put the result beyond doubt three minutes later.

Sterling was the provider as he raced onto Gundogan's pass and pulled the ball back to Aguero, who squeezed his shot past Fahrman from a tight angle for his 27th goal of the season. An interminable VAR delay of several minutes



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero (L) heads towards goal under pressure from Schalke's German defender Bastian Oczipka (R) during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match between Manchester City and Schalke 04 at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. — AFP

while Sterling was confirmed as onside drew more boos from City fans. But they were celebrating again in the 42nd minute. This time it was Sane who ripped open the shambolic Schalke defence, the German winger sent clear on goal by Olexandr Zinchenko before driving a clinical strike into the far corner.

City were streets ahead of Schalke in every phase of the game and Sterling maintained his sublime form with a cool finish from Sane's majestic pass in the 56th minute. Bernardo made it five in the 71st minute, netting with a first-time shot from Sane's pass.—AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE		
Red Bull Salzburg v SSC Napoli	beIN SPORTS HD 4	20:55
FK Krasnodar v Valencia C.F	beIN SPORTS HD 2	20:55
Dynamo Kyiv v Chelsea FC	beIN SPORTS HD 1	20:55
Internazionale Milano v Eintracht Frankfurt	beIN SPORTS HD 4	23:00
SL Benfica v GNK Dinamo Zagreb	beIN SPORTS HD 5	23:00
Villarreal CF v Zenit St. Petersburg	beIN SPORTS HD 3	23:00
SK Slavia Prague v Sevilla FC	beIN SPORTS HD 2	23:00
Arsenal FC v Stade Rennais	beIN SPORTS HD 1	23:00

PSG win in first outing since CL nightmare

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain shook off their Champions League hangover and resumed their canter towards another French title on Tuesday as they cruised to a 4-0 win in Dijon. Marquinhos, Kylian Mbappe, Angel Di Maria and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting scored PSG's goals in their first outing since their disastrous exit from the Champions League in the last 16 at the hands of Manchester United last week.

The result left Thomas Tuchel's team 17 points clear of Lille in second place, and they still have a game in hand. With a French Cup semi-final to come next month, a domestic double remains a possibility, but any celebrations here were low key for a club whose priority has long been Europe.

"It was a first step to show that we could react like champions. It was a good reaction," said Tuchel. "We still have objectives and we want to win the league and the Cup." The PSG squad had been given three days off in the wake of their 3-1 home reverse against United, which eliminated them from the Champions League on away goals, the third season running in which they have gone out in the last 16. Their return to training on Sunday had been marked by tensions between players and unhappy supporters hurling abuse, and it remains to be seen what kind of welcome they receive when they play host to Marseille this weekend.

"I want our supporters to show that we are all together. That is the only thing to do," said Tuchel. "One VAR decision must not change that. The supporters are disappointed, like us, but now is the time to show we are together."

Referring to the Champions League exit, and the nature of it, the German added: "We must accept that result was an accident. Stay calm and maintain our confidence in this team." A Dijon side battling to avoid relegation were the ideal opponents for PSG here, with the visitors going ahead inside seven minutes when Marquinhos headed home from a Di Maria corner.

The PSG line-up featured just four changes from last Wednesday's Champions League game, with Gianluigi Buffon and Thilo Kehrer dropping out along with the banned Dani Alves and injured Julian Draxler.

Mbappe got the second shortly before half-time, bundling in a Layvin Kurzawa centre from close range for his 25th league goal of the campaign. The World Cup-winning striker later hit the woodwork, but that was after Di Maria had curled in a free-kick five minutes into the second half.—AFP

Rampant Man City crush Schalke with magnificent seven

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola says Manchester City don't fear any team in the Champions League after they powered into the quarter-finals with a 7-0 rout of hapless Schalke on Tuesday. City had snatched two late goals to win the first leg 3-2 and they made the most of that fight-back with a ruthless demolition job at the Etihad Stadium to clinch a 10-2 last-16 aggregate victory. Sergio Aguero's penalty opened the scoring in the 35th minute and the Argentine forward netted again soon afterwards before Leroy Sane, who also contributed three assists, struck against his former club. Raheem Sterling, Bernardo Silva, Phil Foden and Gabriel Jesus all scored after the interval to complete City's biggest home win in the Champions League.

Guardiola's side, who lifted the League Cup in February, remain on course for an unprecedented quadruple, sitting one point ahead of Liverpool at the top of the Premier League before this weekend's FA Cup quarter-final at Swansea. "After the first goal we played at a good level. We were serious and we did the job," Guardiola said.

"In the last 15 minutes of the first half and in the second half we were incredible. We were playing quick, dynamic in the transitions and we scored goals." This emphatic victory was the joint-biggest ever Champions League knockout stage win but won't linger long in the memory given Schalke's total lack of resistance.

25 Brazilian Jiu-jitsu gaining traction amongst female martial artists



26 'Our inspiration is Afghanistan' as East Timorese hope to copy cricket rise



27 Kohlschreiber stuns Djokovic as Federer, Rafa advance



Khawaja, bowlers humble India

Australia ease to a 35-run series clinching win in fifth ODI



CHAMPIONS

PAYTM INDIA - AUSTRALIA ODI SERIES 2019

NEW DELHI: Australian cricketers poses with the winning trophy after winning the fifth one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Australia at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

NEW DELHI: A fluent century by Usman Khawaja and incisive bowling helped Australia ease to a 35-run series clinching win in the fifth one-day international yesterday. Adam Zampa took three wickets to help dismiss India for 237 on the last ball of their innings after Khawaja's 100 guided the tourists to 272 for nine at Delhi's Feroz Shah Kotla ground.

Pat Cummins, Jhye Richardson and Marcus Stoinis claimed two wickets each to set up Australia's first win in a five-match ODI series after being 0-2 down. But the left-handed Khawaja stood out for the tourists with his 100 off 106 deliveries that guided Australia to what turned out to be a match-winning score.

His scores of 50, 38, 104 and 91 in the previous matches made him stand tall in the batting chart between the two teams. The left-right batting pair of Khawaja and Handscomb stayed firm during a 99-run stand to lay the foundation of their team's total after skipper Aaron Finch was out on 27.

Khawaja got the second hundred of his ODI career with a single off Kuldeep Yadav as he waved the bat to an applauding Australian dressing room. He lost his wicket in the next over to paceman Bhuvneshwar Kumar with a drive to cover that was safely caught by skipper Virat Kohli.

Ravindra Jadeja returned to get the dangerous Glenn

Maxwell for one and Handscomb was caught behind off Shami as Australia slipped to 182-4.

The Aussies kept losing wickets but Richardson played a useful cameo of 29 off 21 deliveries before being run out on the final ball of the 50th over. India were reduced to 132 for six in their reply but Kedarr Jadhav, who made 44, and Kumar threatened to pull off the chase during their 91-run stand for the seventh wicket.

Cummins got Kumar caught and bowled for 46 and Richardson sent back Jadhav to silence the home crowd. Earlier Cummins drew first blood after getting Shikhar Dhawan caught behind for 12 on a pacy away-

going delivery.

But it was Stoinis who got Kohli's prized scalp after the star batsman edged a cross-seam delivery to wicketkeeper Alex Carey. He was on 20. Spinner Nathan Lyon and Zampa then combined to get a wicket each and the hosts slipped to 120 for four midway into the innings.

Rohit Sharma, who survived a dropped chance on 53, could not capitalise on the spill by Glenn Maxwell off Zampa as he got out to the same bowler three runs later. It was India's final ODI before the World Cup in England and Wales starting May 30. Australia head to the UAE to play Pakistan later this month. —AFP

Ronaldo lifts Juventus into CL q-finals

TURIN: Cristiano Ronaldo scored a spectacular hat-trick to fire Juventus into the Champions League quarter-finals with a 3-0 win over Atletico Madrid on Tuesday that saw his side claim a thrilling tie 3-2 on aggregate. The Portuguese superstar scored two headers either side of half-time and a late penalty to clinch a place in Friday's last-eight draw with a dominant display by the Italian champions in Turin.

"It was always going to be a special night and it was, not only for the goals, but for the team," said Ronaldo. "This is the mentality of champions. This is why Juve brought me in, to help on magical nights like this."

Diego Simeone's Atletico were a shadow of the team who had run riot in the first leg in Madrid, and crashed out of the tournament they had been hoping to win in their own Wanda Metropolitan Stadium on June 1. "The lads have shown great maturity," said Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri. "They interpreted the game at their best, I have to congratulate them. This is what we wanted in the first leg. Tonight we were lucid, there was the risk of having a hysterical match, as if everything had to be done in 10 minutes." It is the eighth time that Ronaldo has scored a hat-trick in the competition and mirrors his improbable treble which lifted former club Real Madrid past Wolfsburg in April 2016 with the Spaniards 2-0 down after the first leg.

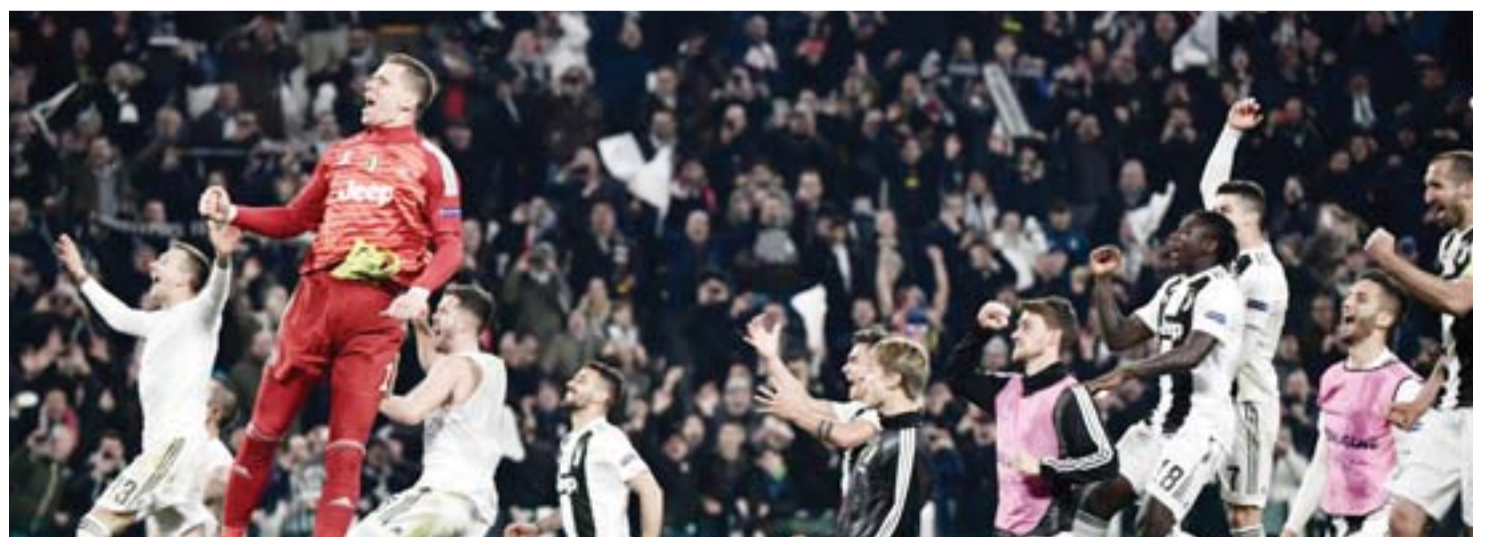
The Champions League's record scorer took

his tally in the tournament to 124, with four goals this season. Juventus signed 34-year-old Ronaldo last summer from Real Madrid for 100 million euros (\$117 million) in order to make the difference on the continent for the Italian champions, who have not won the Champions League since 1996 and have finished runners-up twice in the past four seasons.

And five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo pulled out a spectacular performance as he spearheaded the attack along with Federico Bernardeschi and Mario Mandzukic. Allegri's side came out firing, dominating the first half with nine shots on goal compared to three for the Spaniards. Atletico had an early scare when Juventus skipper Giorgio Chiellini had finished off. Defensive specialists Atletico held off the Juventus pressure until the 27th minute, when Ronaldo met a pin-point Bernardeschi cross to head home the opener.

Bernardeschi sent a curling free-kick just wide minutes later with Ronaldo missing a chance for a second when he headed wide. A Chiellini header from a Miralem Pjanic corner was cleared by Oblak, before Alvaro Morata missed a chance for an away goal before the break when he shook off

Leonardo Bonucci only to head over. But back after the break Ronaldo levelled the tie with his second goal with a move he began from his own half with a pass to Leonardo Spinazzola down the left. The ball was worked to Joao Cancelo, who crossed into the penalty area for Ronaldo, whose powerful header was pushed out by Oblak but not before it had crossed over the line.



TURIN: (From L) Juventus' Italian forward Federico Bernardeschi, Juventus' Polish goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, Juventus' Bosnian midfielder Miralem Pjanic, Juventus' Italian defender Leonardo Spinazzola, Juventus' Argentine forward Paulo Dybala, Juventus' Italian midfielder Hans Nicolussi Cavaglia, Juventus' Italian defender Daniele Rugani, Juventus' Italian forward Moise Kean, Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo, Juventus' Uruguayan midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur and Juventus' Italian defender Giorgio Chiellini acknowledge fans as they celebrate at the end of the UEFA Champions League. —AFP

Teenager Moise Kean missed a chance to put Juve ahead just after coming off the bench, sending wide with only the goalkeeper to beat. But the decisive goal came with four minutes left when Bernardeschi burst into the penalty area from the left and was brought down by Angel Correa.

Ronaldo made no mistake from the spot to score his 25th goal against Atletico, and fourth

hat-trick, to spark pandemonium among the home crowd. "Juventus played in a similar way to what we did in the first leg. We struggled and they deservedly go through to the quarter-finals," said Simeone. "I don't think it was our worst performance, nor did I see a lack of character. They simply played better and we have to congratulate them." —AFP