

Friday Times

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Local

Health insurance on visitors



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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MPs and the government - represented by the health ministry - are seeking to impose health insurance on visitors to Kuwait. The parliamentary health committee referred to the National Assembly a report on health insurance for foreigners and the imposition of fees for health services. The proposal was unanimously approved by members.

The report referred to the amendment of some provisions of law 1/1999 on health insurance for foreigners to include people who come to the country temporarily to the beneficiaries of health services under the health insurance system. It called for the prevention of granting visas to foreigners coming to Kuwait on temporary visits if they do not obtain health insurance covering their duration of stay in the country.

Supporters have said the proposal is an economic project that will bring new resources to the state and achieve several goals, including involving the private sector and the alleviation of pressure on government hospitals. It is universally known that travel insurance is one of the most important types of insurance, yet most people usually hate it and only buy it if forced by the country to which they plan to travel.

This document is a mandatory requirement in many countries. Embassies of European Union countries require a comprehensive insurance certificate covering health insurance throughout the duration of stay. I think it is the right of any country to claim the value of health-care services, whether the traveler needs it or not. The Kuwaiti health minister said some people have been entering the country for years to benefit from health services. Now there is a link between the manpower authority and the interior ministry, and by the beginning of April, the electronic connection will be complete and active, and will show if a person holds valid residency and health insurance.

Some expatriates wonder about the KD 50 they pay annually in health insurance, especially since they are forced to pay additional fees for treatment and laboratory tests. I think it's a worthwhile question. For years, the state has taken health insurance from expatriates, but where are the results of these funds, and what effects these fees have on raising the level of health services?

I know that some people do not like to talk about mandatory health insurance for both visitors and residents, but most countries today don't offer free medical treatment to residents or visitors, and they must have medical insurance to cover their treatment. I believe medical treatment has turned into a source of income for countries and even given the title of medical tourism. I think the entry of the Dhaman company for health insurance will bring positive change, because it will exempt people from paying the KD 50 fee, which does not benefit expatriates, and replace it with real insurance to benefit the holders.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: The super moon illuminates the sky over Kuwait City. — Photo by Jassem Al-Motar (KUNA)

50% fewer expats in five years? Come on!



IN MY VIEW

by Nejouad Al-Yagout

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I read another disturbing article about expats. This time, MPs are calling on the government to cut the number of expatriates by 50 percent within the next five years. And one of the MPs stated that a reason expats come to Kuwait is for a better life. Well, of course, that's what they are here for. Who else would choose to uproot their lives in their home countries if they had it good? That's why we all emigrate, to find better lives for ourselves and families.

We Kuwaitis know what it is like to live outside our country, but we were quite fortunate that the invasion only lasted seven months. And fortunately, we were treated well by citizens and governments of other nations, because that's what we should do as human beings - let others know that our country is their home away from home.

I cannot bear to read these articles about expats anymore. In fact, while I am writing this, I have tears in my

eyes. Tears for all the families who read the article, wondering whether they are next. Tears for the nativism that seems to have taken effect. Tears on behalf of my ancestors who were ambassadors of coexistence. Tears that in five years there may be fewer expats in my country.

50 percent in five years? Do you know what we could do in five years instead of blaming foreigners for issues that are ours alone? We can focus on sustainable resources, build resorts, enhance tourism, promote women's rights, eradicate discrimination, clean up our sea, reduce the use of plastic and plant more trees. Do you know what we can do in five years? We can improve education, expand the cultural and arts scene and make history as a nation built on love and harmony. So much can be done, but it seems that berating expats is our wag the dog tactic to avoid cleaning up the mess we have made, a mess that can take five years to clean up if we start now.

Diversity: Is it all that?



IN MY VIEW

By Ashlyn Sequeira

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People: you and me. We are completely different from one another in various ways, but at the end of the day, we are the same, hypothetically speaking. Although we are the same, made of the same flesh and bone, we have different body structures, skin and we are born in different societies; and no matter what happens or how much we want to be someone else, we can't, but we can definitely learn from them.

Individuality is a unique trait which unites us together. We are all unique and we meet people who have different opinions and ideas. We adapt to this diversity and learn to accept. This is what makes us a team, endeavoring to reach prosperity. This kind of attitude can be seen in governments, nations, companies and even families. In times of trouble, we join our heads together, try to think of new innovative and mind-blowing ideas that solve problems in an instant.

We all belong to various regions of the world, have individual talents, different jobs and languages and have different skin tones and body structures; but most importantly, we each think differently. This is what makes us unparalleled - identical to the colors in a rainbow. Even though white light is one color, once it refracts and disperses, it forms a band of seven colors, also known as the spectrum. Each color standing alone is common but once they come together they turn

into nature's artistic masterpiece. It shows how contrasting colors, when combined, form a rainbow. And similarly with humans, even though we are all born from the same source we are born with different characteristics and talents; when we embrace our talents and individuality and use it for the best in groups or individually, we become the best at what we do.

At school or at work, we meet many people and talk to them, bond with them and call them our buddies. We all have our moments but stand together as one while including our features and flaws.

I have experienced the beauty of diversity. I had recently changed schools and was the new kid. It was weird for me since I met many people who weren't of my nationality. But it was also an opportunity to step out of my comfort zone. I met people of many nationalities namely: Americans, Italians, Koreans, Egyptians among others. Getting used to this environment was new for me, but as I came to know them, everything changed.

Initially, I stood out like a sore thumb. It was difficult making new friends since I knew no one and vice-versa. The first few days of school were difficult as the curriculum and people were different from what I was used to and I had no one to help me. But then it all changed when one of my classmates extended her friendship to me. It was awkward at first since we had nothing in common to talk about and all we used to do was help each other out in class but gradually we started to talk to each other and realized we had more in common than we thought. We learned from each other and had a level of understanding

of each other. She then introduced me to her friends, and they to their companions; and I ended up meeting amazing people who are now all my friends. This change, even though was difficult in the beginning, was worth it.

I feel like this change was necessary for me as it helped me become a better person and has also taught me ways to communicate with people who are different to me, age wise and culturally. Diversity led me to curiosity, which enabled me to understand and respect various cultures and languages from the different parts of the world since I met people from all over the world.

Diversity is most important in schools and workplaces in Kuwait and other countries as it acts as the basic foundation for education for the future generation and helps the youth learn more about the different societies and prevent them from being

judgmental. Cultural diversity in the workplace enables nations to introduce new innovations, and assist immigrants in exchanging ideas and resources in the labor force. This assists the global economy and human capital. Diversity also plays an active role in society as it prevents us from being ignorant of the different races and this prevents misconceptions about other communities and helps us become more open-minded and welcoming. This also teaches us to be respectful and understanding of the diverse society we live in and could lead to everlasting peace in the future between different nations as the barrier that was initially present would be erased.

As Gandhi would say: "No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive." It is time to include all diverse members of society as one whole.



Local

Global bikers make 350-km-long ride in Kuwait



Captain Mazen gives safety instructions to the cyclists.



Moataz Bahei-Eldin, Head of GBI ventures.



Sara Al-Hubail, Kuwait's representative of GBI.



Sherifa Al-Fagaan, Project Operation Manager of GBI.

Local



KUWAIT: A group photo of the Global Biking Initiative (GBI) team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

The Global Biking Initiative (GBI) organized a cycling event yesterday at Movenpick hotel in the Free Trade Zone. During the three-day event, the cyclists will bike from the North to the South of Kuwait for a total of 350 kilometers. GBI choose Kuwait as the first Gulf country to host its cycling event. On the sideline of the event, Bader Al-Essa, Founder and General Manager of Richter Advertising Agency, said that this event will be organized yearly, noting that 85 cyclists from eight countries are participating in this year's event.

On the first day, the participants started at the Free Trade Zone, crossing a 35-km water bridge to Subiya, then cycling down to Doha heading, back to Kuwait Free Zone. On the second day today, the cyclists' route starts from Movenpick at Free Trade Zone to Kuwait City, then along the coastline all the way to Ahmadi Oil District, and ending

at Safir Hotel in Fintas. On the last day, they will cycle from Safir Fintas across the Oil MSFT to the South of Kuwait's desert, up to the Kuwaiti Saudi border to reach the Aquamarine Kuwait Resort in Nuwaiseeb where the closing ceremony will take place.

GBI established in Germany since 2008, is a fast-growing, worldwide cycling community with the mission to raise funds for charities in more than twenty countries. Multiple cycling events take place during the year, where the main event is the GBI Europe Tour, attended by several hundred participants from all over the world and during which we cross multiple countries over the period of one week. Since 2008, more than 2,000 cyclists participated in GBI events, crossing sixteen countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia.



Local

Govt policies limited foreigners'

US report says many patients can't afford treatment; laments

Anti-expat sentiments blamed for restrictive policies

WASHINGTON: Populist anti-expatriate sentiments in Kuwait led the government to enact policies making healthcare and education more expensive for foreign workers than for citizens, says a report released by the US Department of State on Wednesday. "Human rights organizations reported the immediate effect of this policy was that many foreign workers and their families receiving medical treatment chose to be discharged from hospitals rather than receive treatment they could no longer afford," the report warned.

Meanwhile, unmarried persons in Kuwait continued to face housing discrimination based solely on marital status, says the 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018.' For example, police frequently raided apartment blocks housing bachelors, according to the report. The law prohibits single persons from obtaining accommodation in many urban residential areas. Single noncitizens faced eviction due to a decision by the municipality to enforce this prohibition and remove them from residences allocated for citizens' families, citing the presence of single men as the reason for increased crime, a burden on services, and worsening traffic.

On violence against women, the report indicates that while government does not publish statistics on the matter, a Kuwait University study conducted in 2018 found that 53 percent of Kuwaiti women were victims of domestic violence. "Service providers that assisted women claimed that domestic violence statistics were significantly underreported," the report reads. "Women's rights activists have recounted numerous stories of citizen women trying to get help to leave an abusive situation, but there were no shelters specifically for victims of domestic abuse."

According to the report, a shelter that the government opened for victims of domestic abuse remains empty according to activists familiar with the facility. "Advocates claimed that women who reach out to police rarely get help because officers were not adequately trained to deal with domestic violence cases," the report notes. "Victims were generally sent back to their male guardians, who in some instances may also be their abusers."

On trafficking, the report points out that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor indicated in July that approximately 7,200 court rulings were issued against fake companies involved in visa trafficking since 2014. The total amount of fines collected from those companies exceeded 12 million dinars (\$40 million), an average of 1,700 dinars (approximately \$5,600) per company. In August, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) reported it had won more than 500 cases against visa traffickers. "These companies were founded solely to sell visas to foreign workers; once the workers were registered to the fake companies, they become unemployed, worked as

marginal workers, or were trafficked," the report explains.

"Numerous media reports highlighted the problem of visa trading, where companies and recruitment agencies work together to sell visas to prospective workers," the report further elaborates. "Often the jobs and companies attached to these visas do not exist, and the workers were left to be exploited and find work in the black market to earn a living and pay the cost of the residency visa. Arrests of visa traffickers and illegal labor rings occurred almost weekly. Since workers cannot freely change jobs, they were sometimes willing to leave their initial job due to low wages or unacceptable working conditions and enter into an illegal residency status with the hope of improved working conditions at another job."

Forced labor

Some incidents of forced labor and conditions indicative of forced labor occurred, especially among foreign domestic and agricultural workers, the report says. Such practices were usually a result of employer abuse of the sponsorship system (kafala) for noncitizen workers. Employers frequently illegally withheld salaries from domestic workers and minimum-wage laborers.

Domestic servitude was the most common type of forced labor, principally involving foreign domestic workers employed under the sponsorship system, but reports of forced labor in the construction and sanitation sectors also existed. As of July employers filed 4,500 'absconding' reports against private sector employees. Domestic workers have filed approximately 240 complaints against their employers in accordance with the domestic labor law, according to the report. Numerous domestic workers who escaped from abusive employers reported waiting several months to regain passports, which employers illegally confiscated when they began their employment. The PAM operated a shelter for abused domestic workers. As of October, according to a government source, the shelter had a capacity of 500 victims. It housed as many as 450 residents in April before the residency amnesty that removed travel bans from workers seeking to return home. According to the latest report, 145 workers were resident at the shelter.

There were numerous media reports throughout the year of sponsors abusing domestic workers or significantly injuring them when they tried to escape; some reports alleged that abuse resulted in workers' deaths. Female domestic workers were particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. Police and courts were reluctant to prosecute citizens for abuse in private residences but prosecuted serious cases of abuse when reported. According to a high-level government official, authorities prosecuted several cases of domestic worker abuse. In November a local woman was charged with premeditated murder and trafficking in persons for beating

her domestic worker to death.

The report also highlights the case of Joanna Demafelis, a Filipina domestic worker who in February 2018 was killed and left in an apartment freezer by her Syrian and Lebanese employers. The employers of the Filipina domestic worker, who had fled the country, were arrested in February in Syria and Lebanon following an Interpol manhunt and faced extradition to Kuwait. The Criminal Court sentenced the pair in their absence to death by hanging.

Domestic workers had little recourse when employers violated their rights except to seek admittance to the domestic workers shelter where the government mediated between sponsors and workers either to assist the worker in finding an alternate sponsor or to assist in voluntary repatriation. There were no inspections of private residences, the workplace of the majority of the country's domestic workers. Reports indicated employers forced domestic workers to work overtime without additional compensation.

Some domestic workers did not have the ability to remove themselves from an unhealthy or unsafe situation without endangering their employment. There were reports of domestic workers' committing or attempting to commit suicide due to desperation over abuse, including sexual violence or poor working conditions. In 2016 the government implemented the domestic labor law that provides legal protections for domestic workers. The law established a formal grievance process and identified the Domestic Labor Department at the Ministry of Interior as the sole arbitration entity for domestic worker labor disputes. A worker not satisfied with the department's arbitration decision has the right to file a legal case via the labor court. As of September the department conducted more than 2,400 inspections of domestic worker recruiting agencies, shut 15 fake agencies, and closed 30 for failing to meet the requirements of the law.

The report also touches on the topic of anti-Semitism, saying that anti-Semitic rhetoric often originated from self-proclaimed Islamists or conservative opinion writers. "These columnists often conflated Israeli government actions or views with those of Jews more broadly," it says. "Reflecting the government's non-recognition of Israel, there are longstanding official instructions to teachers to expunge any references to Israel or the Holocaust from English-language textbooks. The law prohibits local companies from conducting business with Israeli citizens. This included transporting Israeli citizens on the country's national airline."

Torture and Inhumane Treatment

The constitution and law prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment,

access to basic services discrimination against 'bachelors'

but there continued to be reports of torture and mistreatment by police and security forces against detained members of minority groups and noncitizens, the report says. "The government stated it investigated complaints against police officers and that disciplinary action was taken when warranted," it states. "Disciplinary actions in the past included fines, detention, and occasionally removal from their positions or termination. The government did not make public the findings of its investigations or punishments it imposed."

Furthermore, the report quoted the Human Rights Committee at the National Assembly, which stated that prisons lacked the minimum standards of cleanliness and sanitation, were overcrowded, and suffered from widespread corruption in management, leading to drug abuse and prisoner safety issues. Moreover, the report indicates that while the law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, there were numerous reports that police made arbitrary arrests of foreigners, regardless of their residency status, as part of sustained action against persons in the country illegally.

Under the law, questions of citizenship or residency status are not subject to judicial review, so noncitizens arrested for unlawful residency, or those whose lawful residency is canceled due to an arrest, have no access to the courts. The clause that allows government authorities to administratively deport a person without judicial review requires a person to be a threat to the national security or harmful to the state's interests. The law is broadly used and subjects noncitizens charged with non-criminal offenses, including some residency and traffic violations, to administrative deportations that cannot be challenged in court; however, noncitizens charged in criminal cases face legal deportations, which can be challenged in court.

Freedom of expression

According to the report, local activists reported they were regularly contacted by state security services and Ministry of Information officials if they published opinions deemed contrary to the government view. Meanwhile, publishers reportedly received pressure throughout the year from the Ministry of Information, resulting in the publishers often restricting which books are available in the country. The Ministry of Information received approximately 3,400 books for review and banned more than 700 due to content violating religious, political, and public morality guidelines. One author appealed to lift the ban on his book; the appeal was pending at year's end. According to the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs reviewed books of a religious nature.

On internet freedom, the report indicates that the

53 percent of Kuwaiti women were victims of domestic violence

cybercrime law criminalizes certain online activity, to include illegal access to information technology systems; unauthorized access to confidential information; black-mail; use of the internet for terrorist activity; money laundering; and utilizing the internet for human trafficking. Newspaper reports indicated that nearly 2,000 cybersecurity cases were filed under this law. The government's E-Licensing program requires bloggers and websites that provide news in the country to register with the Ministry of Information and apply for a license or be fined. The ministry has issued approximately 500 licenses to individuals and organizations this since the implementation of the law in 2016. No fines were issued during the year. The government continued to monitor internet communications, such as blogs and discussion groups, for defamation and generalized security reasons, according to the report.

Stateless persons

According to the latest government figures, there were approximately 88,000 Bidoon in the country, while in Human Rights Watch estimated the Bidoon population at more than 100,000 in 2018. The law does not provide noncitizens, including Bidoon, a clear or defined opportunity to gain nationality. The judicial system's lack of authority to rule on the status of stateless persons further complicated the process for obtaining citizenship, leaving Bidoon with no access to the judiciary to present evidence and plead their case for citizenship.

The naturalization process for Bidoon is not transparent, and decisions appeared arbitrary. The Central Agency for Illegal Residents, tasked with monitoring Bidoon affairs, had more than 88,000 registered Bidoon under review. Although Bidoon are entitled to government benefits including five-year renewable residency, free healthcare and education, and ration cards, community members have alleged it was difficult for them to avail of those services due to bureaucratic red tape.

According to Bidoon advocates and government officials, many Bidoon were unable to provide documentation proving ties to the country sufficient to qualify for citizenship. The government alleged that the vast majority of Bidoon concealed their "true" nationalities and were

not actually stateless. Agency officials have extended incentive benefits to Bidoon who disclose an alternate nationality, including priority employment after citizens, and the ability to obtain a driver's license. As of March approximately 12,700 Bidoon admitted holding other nationalities.

Bidoon leaders alleged that when some members of the Bidoon community attempted to obtain government services from the central agency, officials would routinely deceive them by promising to provide the necessary paperwork if Bidoon agreed to sign a blank piece of paper. Later, Bidoon reported, the agency would write a letter on the signed paper purportedly "confessing" the Bidoon's "true" nationality such as Saudi, Iraqi, Syrian, Iranian, or Jordanian, which rendered them ineligible for recognition or benefits as Bidoon.

According to UNHCR some Bidoon underwent DNA testing to "prove" their Kuwaiti nationality by virtue of blood relation to a Kuwaiti citizen. Bidoon are required to submit DNA samples confirming paternity to become naturalized, a practice critics said leaves them vulnerable to denial of citizenship based on DNA testing.

The government discriminated against Bidoon in some areas. Some Bidoon and international NGOs reported that the government did not uniformly grant some government services and subsidies to Bidoon, including education, employment, medical care, and the issuance of civil documents, such as birth, marriage, and death certificates. Since the government treats them as illegal immigrants, Bidoon do not have property rights.

Bidoon advocates reported that many Bidoon families were unable to obtain birth certificates for their children due to extensive administrative requirements, which restricted the children's ability to obtain government-issued identification cards, access adequate medical care, attend school, and be counted in official statistics.

Many adult Bidoon lacked identification cards due to the many administrative hurdles they face, preventing them from engaging in lawful employment or obtaining travel documents. This restriction resulted in some Bidoon children not receiving an education and working as street vendors to help support their families. Many Bidoon children who attended school enrolled in substandard private institutions as citizens were given priority to attend public school.

The government amended the existing law on military service to allow the sons of soldiers who served in the military for 30 years and the sons of soldiers killed or missing in action to be eligible to join the military. According to the head of the Interior and Defense Parliamentary Committee, more than 25,000 Bidoons are awaiting enlistment.

Local

Women leadership roles lacking: Kuwaiti minister

NEW YORK: Despite the numbers of Kuwaiti women in the workplace being amongst the highest regionally, State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel conceded that women face a lack of leadership opportunities. Speaking to United Nations women's status commission talks, she said Kuwait is taking an "innovative working approach" to achieve the fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality, through "empowering the local workforce." It responds to the needs and aspirations of young people, girls and boys alike, to be partners in the decision-making and policy development process, she said, and to benefit from the experiences of their predecessors in this area. The plans are being spurred by the combined efforts of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Kuwait University Women's Research and Studies Center, the UN Development Program and UN Women, she said. The initiative stems from the vision of His highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and falls in line with Kuwait's 'New Kuwait' development strategy. Several indices have been placed as an objective, which the country aims to reach by 2030, she said.

According to Minister Aqeel, the plan, with an emphasis on the fifth goal, is the first of its kind in the Arab region. "This reflects Kuwait's full commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women in accordance with international obligations," the minister underlined, in regards to the UN targets. She reflected on Kuwait's dedication to women, through "building

a secure and stable social network for women, in the form of laws and regulations that preserve their dignity, enshrined in the Kuwaiti constitution." Through this direction, Kuwaiti women have been able to make numerous accomplishments in the political and economic domains, and violence against women has been limited. Despite gaining the right to vote and run for parliament in 2005, women's chance of winning in the elections remains bound by social convictions, Aqeel commented. This is why the government has taken steps to organize a series of specialized workshops aimed at developing the leadership skills of those wishing to enter the political landscape. It has also approved measures to encourage a three-fold rise in companies, which are focused on empowering women.

Political participation

Meanwhile, Kuwait asserted that women's political participation enhance peace and security at the national, regional and international levels. This came in the speech Aqeel delivered at the Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting on Women, Peace and Security. She highlighted several key issues, the most important of which was the centrality of women's participation in political processes in light of the security challenges facing the Sahel region, the steps required to achieve women's political empowerment and the role of the United Nations and international and regional organizations in promoting women's participation in peace and security in the Sahel region. "Studies

indicate that the role of women is central to all stages of the conflict," she said, adding that success and sustainability of peace processes are increased by the extent of women's involvement. She pointed out to the security challenges facing the Sahel region, with the continued deterioration of economic conditions and the consequences of climate change on the countries of the region, there is an escalating of conflict-related violence.

Aqeel referred to the affected people by these challenges, especially women and children, noting to a comprehensive solutions with developmental dimensions, in which women have an essential role in many sectors, including the military, civil, economic and political sectors. She stressed that it is the responsibility of Member States to ensure the political participation of women at all stages, stressing the importance of international and regional cooperation to prevent all forms of violence against women. In this context, she welcomed the appointment of 11 women out of 32 in the Government of Mali for the first time, and the Government thus achieved the goal of representing women by 30 percent in accordance with the 2015 Act on the Promotion of Gender Equality.

The Kuwaiti minister appreciated the regional initiatives taken by regional countries to involve women in the peace process, such as the launching of the G5 Sahel Women's Platform and the initiatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to empower women. She reiterated her support for the



Mariam Al-Aqeel

United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and urged to complete and coordinate all ongoing efforts to ensure the successful participation of women in the peace process and development plans. "The Security Council has succeeded in setting a solid normative framework on women's issues and peace and security in general in 70 resolutions," she confirmed, adding that "We have a common challenge to implement these resolutions adequately, this is the same challenge facing the agenda of women and peace and security in general."

"As next year 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325, we have a responsibility to redouble and join efforts to make progress in the effective implementation of the agenda of women, peace and security in general and in the Sahel in particular," she said. — KUNA

Five wanted for selling 600 visas to workers

KUWAIT: The residency affairs department recently referred a human trafficking case to public prosecution, said security sources, noting that five fake farm owners had been involved in selling 600 visas to laborers they brought into the country and left them without any jobs. The sources added that two of the five suspects have already been arrested while search and arrest warrants were issued for the remaining three.

Cops held for robbery

Four citizens, including two policemen, and a Saudi man were recently arrested in Salmiya for multiple robberies, said security sources, noting that the gang had robbed several expats using a toy gun to threaten them. Case papers indicate that a Sri Lankan man had called police to report that a gang had stopped and robbed him. A police patrol rushed to the scene and managed to arrest the suspects, who confessed to committing several other robberies using the toy gun they had.

Fatal accident

A Bangladeshi man died in an accident that happened when a ready mix truck ran him over at Mina Abdullah, said security sources, noting that initial investigations showed that the truck's driver does not have a driver's license. The driver was detained pending further investigations.

Smuggling foiled

A Pakistani man was recently arrested in Salmi while trying to smuggle in a kilogram of 'Ice' (methamphetamine) hidden in secret places on his truck, said security sources, noting that the man was arriving from a neighboring GCC state when custom inspectors searched his truck and found the drugs.

Drunk harassers

Jahra detectives recently arrested three drunk citizens, including one sentenced to five years prison, for harassing women jogging in Na'eem area.

Fraud case

A female citizen reported that a hacker who managed to hack her lifelong friend's WhatsApp account contacted her twice pretending to be the real friend, and claimed that she needed money for urgent matters while being in Morocco. The woman told police that she transferred a total of KD 1,182 to her friend, before she realized that the account had been hacked. A fraud case was filed.

— Translated from Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



KUWAIT: A tractor-trailer crashed into a concrete barrier on Sixth Ring Road near Saad Al-Abdullah yesterday. Jahra occupational fire station men responded, freed the trapped driver and handed him to paramedics, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said in a statement. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Municipality gears up for by-elections

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality increased its readiness level for the National Assembly's by-

elections to be held tomorrow. The municipality provided 740 cleaning workers and 57 vehicles to clean schools' parking lots and surrounding streets. The municipality said in that regard that the public cleanliness and road occupancy department issued 15 licenses for candidates' premises. In other news, the Municipal Council is set on Monday to discuss a letter from former Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor General Ahmad Al-Rujaib to change the name of the 'Occupational Abu Fatira' area to 'Aswaq Al-Qurain,' because it is closer to Qurain area, and because it is no longer classified as an 'occupational' area but rather houses various shops.

Kuwait aids Syria with \$300 million



BRUSSELS: Officials pose for a photograph during the third Brussels conference on 'supporting the future of Syria and the region' at the European Council in Brussels yesterday. — AFP

BRUSSELS: A senior Kuwaiti official announced yesterday earmarking \$300 million in aid for Syria. "I am pleased to announce today contribution by the State of Kuwait with 300 million US dollars for a duration of three years in support of Syria at the official and private levels," said Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Sabah Khaled made the announcement in his address to the third Brussels Conference on 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the region.' The official contribution will be according to mechanisms of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), the Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister stated. "We hope that we will be able to attain

the aspired objectives and help our (Syrian) brothers sooth their wounds," he added.

Ninth year

Sheikh Sabah Khaled, who headed the Kuwaiti delegation, delivered the statement at the conference inaugural session, expressing regret that the "Syrian tragedy is entering its ninth year [today] March 15," amid absence of "any political solution to this humanitarian cause." Sheikh Sabah Khaled called for greater efforts to reach a peaceful solution to end the crisis as soon as possible, according to relevant international references, namely United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254. He expressed appreciation for the efforts exerted by the UN envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, as well as by his

predecessor, Staffan de Mistura.

Noting that the current conference is the seventh to be held to make financial pledges for the Syrian people, Sheikh Sabah Khaled noted that Kuwait had hosted three congresses of identical level, took part in two others that had been held later, contributing in all these conventions with a total of \$1.6 billion. Moreover, Kuwait, in its capacity as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, had sought in coordination with Sweden to issue the resolution 2401, which was unanimously adopted. The above-mentioned resolution stipulated cessation of combat action in Syria for 30 days, facilitating dispatch of humanitarian aid, in addition to implementing Resolution 2449, issued in December 2018, on renewing the mechanism of

dispatching the assistance via the borders.

Top concern

Meanwhile, a senior EU official affirmed that the conference is held here for keeping Syria on 'top of the international agenda.' "We are convening today together with the United Nations, the third Brussels conference, gathering 80 international delegations, more than 50 countries, for three main reasons: the first one is to keep Syria and the Syrian people on top of the international agenda," EU High Representative Federica Mogherini told reporters ahead of the meeting. "We gather here so many from all around the world to say, we have to keep focused on a political solution for the conflict in Syria, it's not over yet, people need our support," she stressed. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah plants sprouts at the premises of the Mechanized Liberation Brigade-6 of the Kuwaiti Army. — Defense Ministry photos

Defense minister sets example on beautifying environment

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah planted sprouts at the premises of the Mechanized Liberation Brigade-6 of the Kuwaiti Army

yesterday, setting an example on keenness on the environment. The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad was greeted upon arrival at the compound of Ali Al-

Sabah Military Academy by ranking officers. This initiative is part of Sheikh Nasser's vision, aimed at promoting awareness among the ministry personnel about necessity to beautify the sites of military serv-

ices for sake of safeguarding Kuwait's environment. Sheikh Nasser has personally taken part in planting the small plants, along with non-commissioned officers at the academy courtyards. — KUNA



India disappointed as China blocks bid to ban JeM's leader

Parking lots offer safe haven for homeless Californians



CALIFORNIA: In this file photo, the leader for Brazil elections Lexi Sturdy works in Facebook's 'War Room,' during a media demonstration in Menlo Park, California. Facebook grappled yesterday with a widespread outage, forcing millions of people to taste life without the world's largest social media platform. — AFP

A life without Facebook

Social network outage triggers moans and soul searching

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook grappled yesterday with a widespread outage, forcing millions of people to taste life without the world's largest social media platform. It was probably the last thing Facebook needed as it stumbles from problem to problem, including outrage over its use of customers' private data. The outage began Wednesday afternoon and triggered a flood of gripes on [downdetector.com](#), which tracks trouble accessing online pages, and on rival Twitter.

A Downdetector map late Wednesday showed Facebook service troubles persisting in parts of Australia, Asia, Europe, South America and North America. As of yesterday the problem remained in parts of Europe and Asia, although moaning from America and elsewhere kept coming. "You guys should look in the mirror at yourselves and hear how you sound," a person with the handle Johanna wrote on Downdetector around 0745 GMT. "You make it sound as if it's the end of the world just because you can't be on Facebook. Lmfao. Get a real life instead of a digital one!?!?!?"

Another whose handle is Palmina D'Allesandro mused that time without Mark Zuckerberg's baby might have been good for making the real, human kind. "Up and running here.....for now.....But I predict a baby boom in 9 months, Remember that day FB went down and people were forced to notice each other?", this person

wrote. Some media outlets branded the outage as the biggest in Facebook's history. The outage, of unknown origin, also affected Facebook-owned Instagram, as well as Messenger, although Instagram later said it was back up. In some cases the apps could be accessed but would not load posts or handle missives.

'Not a DDoS attack'

The California firm which has more than two billion users acknowledged the outage after users noted on Twitter they could not access Facebook or had limited functionality. "We're aware that some people are currently having trouble accessing the Facebook family of apps. We're working to resolve the issue as soon as possible," a Facebook statement said on Twitter. A short time later, Facebook indicated the outage was not related to an attack aimed at overwhelming the network. "We're focused on working to resolve the issue as soon as possible, but can confirm that the issue is not related to a DDoS attack," Facebook said. Distributed denial of service cyber strikes involve hackers overwhelming websites with tidal waves of simultane-

ous requests, typically using armies of computers infected with malicious code. The social network said there was no update of the situation as evening arrived in California. Last November, a Facebook outage was attributed to a server problem, and a September disruption was said to be the result of "networking issues."

A grand jury subpoena

While the outage continued, The New York Times reported that US prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into the social network's practice of sharing users' data with companies without letting them know. A grand jury in New York has subpoenaed information from at least two major smartphone makers about such arrangements with Facebook, according to the Times. Regulators, investigators and elected officials in the US and elsewhere in the world have already been digging into the data sharing practices of Facebook. The social network's handling of user data has been a flashpoint for controversy since it admitted last year that Cambridge Analytica, a political consultancy which did work for Donald

Trump's 2016 election campaign, used an app that may have hijacked the private details of 87 million users. "It has already been reported that there are ongoing federal investigations, including by the Department of Justice," a Facebook spokesman said in response to an AFP inquiry. "As we've said before, we are cooperating with investigators and take those probes seriously. We've provided public testimony, answered questions, and pledged that we will continue to do so."

Facebook has shared limited amounts of user data with smartphone makers and other outside partners to enable its services to work well on devices or with applications. Regulators, and now prosecutors, appear intent on determining whether this was done in ways that let users know what was happening and protected privacy. The social network has announced a series of moves to tighten handling of data, including eliminating most of its data-sharing partnerships with outside companies.

Meanwhile, US prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into Facebook's practice of sharing users' data with companies without letting the social network's members know, The New York Times reported on Wednesday. A grand jury in New York has subpoenaed information from at least two major smartphone makers about such arrangements with Facebook, according to the Times.—Agencies



Facebook faces criminal probe of data deals

International

Qatar Cabinet approves proposals to allow foreigners own property

Expanded World Cup to generate \$300-400 million windfall

DOHA: Qatar's Cabinet has approved proposals to allow foreigners to own property and be granted residency at the same time, according to an official statement. Non-Qataris would be allowed to fully own property in 10 unspecified areas of the country, said a statement from the Qatar News Agency. "The Cabinet agrees to allow non-Qatari ownership of residential villas within residential complexes and to allow non-Qatari ownership of shops within commercial complexes," said the QNA. The law also covers commercial property.

The government will identify 16 areas in the country where property contracts could be held over a period of 99 years. The Cabinet also agreed on "granting residence to non-Qatari owners of real estate", the QNA reported. Foreign property ownership has been allowed in Qatar previously but under tight regulation. It was also thought to be restricted to one area to the north of the capital Doha.

It is not yet clear when the new law will come into force. The Cabinet said it would hold a press conference next week to give further details. The move comes as gas-rich Qatar seeks further investment in its economy, especially the faltering property sector, as it remains isolated by neighboring former allies in a long-running Gulf diplomatic dispute. Saudi Arabia, the United Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt are among countries who have cut ties in protest at Qatar's "support" for terrorism and Iran. World Cup 2022 host Qatar denies the charges and says its neighbors want regime change in Doha.

\$300-400 million windfall

An expanded 48-team World Cup in 2022 would deliver a financial windfall of up to \$400 million according to an internal feasibility study commissioned by FIFA, a source with knowledge of the document said. The ruling council of football's global governing body meets in Miami this

week with the issue of the 2022 World Cup format in Qatar expected to dominate discussions. FIFA President Gianni Infantino is a notable supporter of increasing the size of the tournament from 32 teams to 48 teams, accelerating an expansion which was first due to take place at the 2026 tournament.

A feasibility study which will be put before the council at this week's meeting in Miami starting on Thursday, is broadly supportive of the expansion in 2022. A source with knowledge of the study told AFP an expanded tournament would boost incomes by between \$300 million and \$400 million (between 265 and 354 million euros), with the extra revenue driven by increased television and marketing rights and ticket sales. The World Cup is by far FIFA's biggest source of income, with last year's tournament in Russia earning a higher-than-forecast \$6.4 billion.

However a 48-team World Cup could only go ahead if games are shared with neighboring

countries, several of whom have imposed a crippling blockade of Qatar since June 2017. The source said five countries could be considered for possible World Cup games—Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. But Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE would only be candidates if their governments ended the Qatar blockade, according to an excerpt of the feasibility study.

"Due to the geopolitical situation in the region and the recent blockade that Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE have imposed on Qatar, the involvement of such countries in organizing a co-hosted tournament with Qatar would require the lifting of such blockade, in particular the lifting of all restrictions relating to the movement of people and goods between these countries," the feasibility study said. "Ideally, this should be evidenced as a precondition to the appointment of such co-hosts and should cover all aspects to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022."—Agencies

What to expect from Turkish local elections?

ANKARA: Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will be looking to score another victory in local elections on March 31. But the party faces challenges from a more united opposition, a recession and fatigue among voters which experts say could translate into lower turnout. The AKP will likely remain the largest party even if some experts say it could win by a smaller percentage of the vote.

What is at stake?

After parliamentary and presidential elections last year, Erdogan sought to refresh the AKP saying it suffered from "metal fatigue". He exerted his dominance after becoming party chairman again in 2017 by kicking out the mayors of Istanbul and Ankara. The polls this month will be the first municipal elections in which the AKP will field joint candidates with the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). The two parties formed the People's Alliance last year before presidential and parliamentary elections, the first time the AKP ran with another party in a formal alliance. There are 30 metropolitan municipalities in Turkey including Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir while there are 51 provincial municipalities. Depending on their municipality, voters will choose city mayors as well as other local posts such as district mayors, members of district assemblies and neighborhood chiefs.

How might economy affect voting?

The elections come at a tricky time for the AKP, which has won many past ballots based on its perceived economic prowess. But the economy is at the forefront of voters' minds with inflation in double-digits and Turkey tumbling into its first recession since 2009 after a currency crisis battered the lira. After expanding 7.4 percent in 2017, GDP growth was 2.6 percent for 2018. With voters already worried whether they can afford staples such as peppers and aubergines, the economic slowdown will leave households further stretched.

GDP per capita fell to \$9,632 in 2018 from over \$10,000 in 2017



ANKARA: People wave flags as they gather to listen to Turkish President and leader of the Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) party Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a party's campaign rally in Ankara's district of Pursaklar. — AFP

while private household consumption dropped 8.9 percent in the fourth quarter of 2018. But experts including Menderes Cinar, professor of political science and international relations at Baskent University, warned the "bad state of the economy" would not necessarily mean the AKP would suffer huge losses. "The AKP may lose some votes because of its mismanagement of the economy, but the magnitude of that loss may not be big enough to consider the elections a loss for the AKP," Cinar said.

Will turnout be an issue?

Key areas where the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) could do well are Ankara and the southern provinces of Adana, Antalya and Mersin as well as Bursa in the northwest, said Berk Esen of Bilkent University. Voter turnout will be key. "These elections are an important chance for voters to show their feelings" about current local authorities, Burak Bilgehan Ozpek, associate professor of international relations at TOBB University said. "There are frustrations with all parties." Yakup Peker, at the Ankara-based TEPAV think-tank, said the AKP or its People's Alliance could lose voters who "might not come out and vote", partly because of a lack of alternatives. — AFP

Indian police arrest 10 for playing PUBG

AHMEDABAD: Indian police have arrested ten university students for playing PUBG, the hugely popular smartphone game described by one minister as a "demon in every house". The arrests occurred Wednesday in western Gujarat state, where local authorities enforced an outright ban on PUBG last week over concerns about its impact on the "behaviour, conduct and language" of those playing it. The students were released on bail later the same day, police inspector VS Vanzara said yesterday.

Another police official, Rohit Raval, told the Indian Express newspaper the game was "highly addictive and the accused were so engrossed in playing" they did not even see police approaching. Gujarat is the only Indian state to ban the game - which has been downloaded more than 100 million times around the world. But concern has been raised in other parts of the country, where close to half a billion people are online and cheap smartphones and data plans are bringing more first-time users into the digital realm.

Parents and educators say the game incites violence and distracts students from their studies. A minister in coastal Goa state described the PUBG as "a demon in every house". Last month, a mother complained to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about her son's addiction to online games during a public interaction and he replied: "Is this the PUBG one?" Often likened to the blockbuster book and film series "The Hunger Games", PUBG is free to download and pits players stranded on islands against one another in a virtual fight to the death. — AFP

International

India disappointed as China blocks bid to ban JeM chief

Indian groups urge boycott of Chinese goods

NEW DELHI: India said yesterday it was “disappointed” by China again delaying a bid to blacklist the leader of a Pakistan-based militant group that claimed a massive suicide bombing in Kashmir last month. The blast on February 14 killed 40 Indian troops and triggered tit-for-tat air strikes and an aerial dogfight in the most serious bust-up in years between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Although the suicide bomber was native to the part of Kashmir that Indian controls, the attack was claimed by Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), one of several militant groups based in Pakistan. China on Wednesday put on hold a request by Britain, France and the United States to add the leader of JeM, Masood Azhar, on a UN sanctions blacklist which would subject him to a global travel ban, an assets freeze and an arms embargo.

China—an all-weather ally of Pakistan which has blocked three similar moves—said it needed more time to examine the sanctions request targeting Azhar, and asked for a technical hold which could last up to nine months. In a statement, the Indian foreign ministry said it “was disappointed by the outcome”, adding it would continue to pursue all avenues to make sure “terrorist leaders who are involved in heinous

attacks on our citizens are brought to justice”.

China has blocked three previous attempts at the committee on sanctions against Al-Qaeda and IS-linked groups to blacklist the JeM leader. The group itself was added to the UN terror list in 2001. China’s decision was the top news across Indian media yesterday, with the Indian Express headlining its report: “Jaish chief gets Great Wall of China”. India’s main opposition leader Rahul Gandhi used the opportunity to mock Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is seeking re-election in a national ballot starting next month.

“Weak Modi is scared of Xi. Not a word comes out of his mouth when China acts against India,” Gandhi tweeted, referring to Chinese President Xi Jinping. Regional rivals China and India have longstanding territorial disputes but Modi and Xi have tried to patch up ties, banking on their personal chemistry to smoothen differences. China’s move on Azhar also triggered a storm of anti-Chinese sentiment on Twitter with #BoycottChinaProduct attracting hundreds of

tweets. China is India’s biggest trading partner, but the trade imbalance is skewed heavily in favor of Beijing.

Boycott of Chinese goods

Meanwhile, an influential Hindu nationalist group and an Indian traders body called yesterday for a boycott of Chinese goods, to slap Beijing for blocking a move to put a Pakistani militant leader on a UN terrorist list following a suicide attack last month. Regarded by Pakistan as its most reliable friend, China has repeatedly thwarted efforts to implement UN sanctions against Masood Azhar, the founder of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the group that claimed responsibility

for the attack that killed 40 paramilitary police in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), which represents 70 million traders, said it would burn Chinese goods on March 19 to “teach a lesson” to China. “The time has come when China should suffer due to its proximity

with Pakistan,” CAIT said in a statement. “The CAIT has launched a national campaign to boycott Chinese goods among the trading community of the country, calling the traders not to sell or buy Chinese goods.”

The United States, Britain and France asked the Security Council’s Islamic State and Al-Qaeda sanctions committee to subject the Jaish leader to an arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze. But China placed a “technical hold” on the proposal, saying it needed more time to consider, using the same stalling tactic it has used in the past. Mounting impatience with Beijing’s stance was evident on social media yesterday as #BoycottChineseProducts was the second-highest trending hashtag on Twitter in India.

Similar campaigns in the past have proved ineffectual. China is India’s second biggest trading partner. Chinese products – from mobile phones made by companies such as Xiaomi Inc to toys – are ubiquitous in India and trade between the countries grew to nearly \$90 billion in the year ending March 2018. The leader of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, the economic wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a Hindu nationalist group with close ties to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), also called for a boycott of Chinese goods.—Agencies



UK, France, US want JeM leader, on a UN blacklist

Indonesia uncovers huge explosives stash after suicide blast

SIBOLGA: Indonesian police said yesterday they had uncovered a huge stash of explosives linked to a terror suspect whose wife blew up herself and a child following a dramatic standoff at their home. The discovery of some 300 kilograms of assembled explosives and bomb-making materials raised fears that a major attack was being planned, a month before national elections and less than a year after Indonesia was rocked by a wave of deadly suicide bombings. The suicide blast early Wednesday morning came after police had arrested the husband, Abu Hamzah, who was identified as a member of Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD).

The Islamic State-linked jihadist network has been blamed for attacks last May in Indonesia’s second-biggest city, Surabaya, the deadliest in years to rock the world’s biggest Muslim majority nation. Officers surrounded the arrested militant’s home in Sibolga on Sumatra island when the confrontation began. During a nearly 12-hour standoff, the wife lobbed an explosive device at security personnel, wounding a police officer, authorities said.

They later found parts of a woman’s corpse and that of at least one child. Police initially said they thought two of the couple’s children might have been killed. “We’re still trying to formally identify his wife because the body isn’t one piece,” said national police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo. Police said they uncovered a large cache of bombs and explosive materials in the couple’s home and another in the same city. “A total of 300 kilograms of bombs and bomb-making materials were discovered,” Prasetyo said. Yesterday, police destroyed materials in a controlled explosion in a field.

University of Indonesia terrorism expert Stanislaus Riyanta said the large stash hinted that a serious attack was being planned. “This



NORTH SUMATRA: Indonesian police blow up explosives recovered from a suspect in police custody identified as a member of Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an Islamic State-linked jihadist network. — AFP

is frightening,” he said. “The impact of bombs depends on the materials used. But this amount – 300 kilograms—if used all at one time, could certainly be very destructive and deadly, especially in a densely populated area.” The arrest of Hamzah, who police said was a skilled bomb maker, comes days after authorities arrested two other terror suspects in other parts of the country. Police said all three were connected. Last year, two families carried out attacks at churches in Surabaya, killing a dozen people and children of the attackers, including two young girls. Yesterday, a Jakarta court sentenced several militants linked to the Surabaya bombings with prison sentences ranging from about three to 10 years. 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

Afghan airstrikes kill 31 militants

HAZNI: Thirty-one militants, many of them believed to have been Al-Qaeda fighters, have been killed in airstrikes in south-eastern Afghanistan, officials said yesterday. The strikes were carried out in Ghazni province late Wednesday, where the defense ministry said they targeted a “base” belonging to the militants.

“Qari Aref, one of the facilitators (for Al-Qaeda) was transferring these 31 terrorists, including nine suicide bombers, in several cars when targeted by airstrikes and eliminated,” the ministry said. It described the fighters as all belonging to the Middle Eastern jihadist group, although a spokesman for the Ghazni governor said fighters from the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network were also present. The defense ministry did not specify who carried out the airstrikes. Only Afghan and US forces in Afghanistan conduct airstrikes.

The Ghazni governor’s spokesman, Mohammed Aref Noori, said the strikes had been carried out by US forces, but there was no immediate confirmation of his claim. Al-Qaeda is still believed to be active in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, where some of its surviving leadership such as Ayman al-Zawahiri are thought to be hiding. While still regarded as a threat by Afghan and US officials, the group has not been able to conduct major attacks in Afghanistan or repeat the spectacular success of the September 11, 2001 attacks by hijacked airliners on New York and Washington.— AFP

International

US grounds Boeing 737 MAX

US pilots reported problems with Boeing 737 MAX

WASHINGTON: The ban on the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft became worldwide after US President Donald Trump joined Canada and other countries in grounding the aircraft, and the black box flight recorders from the doomed plane were flown to France for analysis yesterday. US authorities said that new evidence showed similarities between Sunday's deadly crash of an Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 MAX 8 and a fatal accident in Indonesia in October. The weekend crash killed all 157 people aboard.

The Federal Aviation Administration said Wednesday that findings from the crash site near Addis Ababa and "newly refined satellite data" warranted "further investigation of the possibility of a shared cause for the two incidents." An FAA emergency order grounded 737 MAX 8 and MAX 9 aircraft until further notice. Trump told reporters at the White House the "safety of the American people and all peoples is our paramount concern."

Mexico late Wednesday suspended MAX 8 and 9 operations, after Canada and Chile also joined the long list of countries to ban the plane from flying in their airspaces. Many airlines have voluntarily taken it out of service. Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia followed suit. FAA acting chief Daniel Elwell said the agency has been "working tirelessly" to find the cause of the accident but faced delays because the black box flight data recorders had been damaged.

The new information shows "the track of that airplane was close enough to the track of the Lion Air flight... to warrant the grounding of the airplanes so we could get more information from the

black boxes and determine if there's a link between the two, and if there is, find a fix to that link," Elwell said on CNBC. Boeing chief Dennis Muilenburg said he supported the US decision "out of an abundance of caution" but continued to have "full confidence" in the safety of the plane.

The company continues its efforts "to understand the cause of the accidents in partnership with the investigators, deploy safety enhancements and help ensure this does not happen again," Muilenburg said in a statement. Ethiopian Airlines said yesterday that the black box flight recorders from the Boeing 737 MAX 8 that crashed have been flown to Paris for analysis. The accounts of the recent crashes were echoed in concerns registered by US pilots on how the MAX 8 behaves.

Pilots concerns

At least four American pilots made reports following the Lion Air crash, all complaining the aircraft suddenly pitched downward shortly after takeoff, according to documents reviewed by AFP on the Aviation Safety Reporting System, a voluntary incident database maintained by NASA. In two anonymous reports on flights just after the Lion Air crash, pilots disconnected the autopilot and corrected the plane's trajectory. One said the flight crew reviewed the incident "at length... but can't think of any reason the aircraft would pitch nose-down so aggressively."

It was unclear if US transportation authorities review the database or investigate the incidents. However, the FAA said this week it had mandated that Boeing update its flight software and training



PHOENIX: A group of Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft sits on the tarmac at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix, Arizona. —AFP

on the aircraft. Questions about the Lion Air crash have honed in on an automated stall prevention system, the MCAS, designed to automatically point the nose of the plane downward if it is in danger of stalling. According to the flight data recorder, the pilots of Lion Air Flight 610 struggled to control the aircraft as the MCAS repeatedly pushed the plane's nose down following takeoff.

The Ethiopian Airlines pilots reported similar

difficulties before their aircraft plunged into the ground as they tried to return to the airport. Boeing was criticized after the Lion Air crash for allegedly failing to adequately inform 737 pilots about the functioning of the stall prevention system. Ethiopian Airlines CEO Tewolde GebreMariam on Sunday said the captain on the flight, Yared Mulugeta Getachew, 29, was an experienced aviator with more than 8,000 flight hours.—AFP

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International

Washington no longer refers to Golan as 'Israel-occupied'

US slams China, Iran rights record, goes easier on North Korea

WASHINGTON: The US no longer refers to the Golan Heights as an "Israeli-occupied" territory in its latest annual human rights report, published Wednesday, though the State Department insists the wording change doesn't mean a policy change. The report now calls the area the "Israeli-controlled Golan Heights."

When asked about the change on such a sensitive Middle East subject, a senior US official told reporters in Washington "there's no change in our outlook or our policy vis-a-vis these territories and the need for a negotiated settlement there." "This, by the way, is not a human rights issue, it's a legal status issue," said Michael Kozak of the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

"What we try to do is to report on the human rights situation in those territories, and so you're just trying to find the way of describing the place that you're reporting on," he said. "And 'occupied territory' has a legal meaning to it; I think what they tried to do is to shift more to just a geographic description." And another semantic change that appeared in last year's report showed up again this year, with a section titled "Israel, Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza," instead of its previous "Israel and the Occupied Territories" heading.

President Donald Trump, who has shown robust support for close US ally Israel, recognized Jerusalem as the country's capital in 2017, defying international consensus much to the chagrin of Palestinian leaders, who view Israeli-annexed east

Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. Israel seized much of the Golan Heights from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War and then effectively annexed it in 1981, a move that was never recognized by the international community.

Israel and Syria remain technically at war after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, though a demilitarized border zone established through an armistice had long been relatively calm until the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Influential Trump ally US Senator Lindsey Graham said Monday during a visit to the Golan Heights with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would push for US recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the strategic region "now and forever."

US slams China and Iran

In another development, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo slammed China's mass detention of Muslims but took a lighter hand on North Korea as the State Department released its annual human rights report Wednesday. Iran also came in for harsh criticism while rival Saudi Arabia, cited for many identical domestic rights abuses as well as the murder of US-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, was given easier treatment.

And in a small semantic change, the report appeared to shift the US view of Israel's hold on the Golan Heights seized from Syria in 1967, calling it "Israeli-controlled" instead of "Israeli-occupied" as before. Introducing the annual report, a fact-based country-by-country review, Pompeo excoriated Beijing for its allegedly de-



GOLAN HEIGHTS: Avigdor Lieberman, Yisrael Beiteinu party leader and Israel's former defense minister, looks through binoculars during a visit to a looking point in Mount Bental in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. — AFP

teriorating rights situation. China is "in a league of its own when it comes to human rights violations," Pompeo said. He said Beijing intensified its campaign of repression against Muslims in the far western province of Xinjiang "to record levels" during 2018. "Today, more than one million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims

are interned in reeducation camps designed to erase their religious and ethnic identities," he said. "The government also is increasing its persecution against Christians, Tibetans, and anyone who espouses different views from those or advocates those of government-or advocates change in government." —Agencies

Black boxes: Crucial to air crash probes

PARIS: A top priority for air crash investigators is to locate and analyse a plane's two black boxes which hold vital clues to what caused it to go down, including cockpit conversations. On Sunday, an Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 MAX 8 crashed, killing all 157 people on board. The airline said Thursday that the black box flight recorders from the crashed plane had been flown to Paris for analysis by the BEA, France's aviation investigation and analysis agency. It is uncertain how much of their content can be retrieved as both the aircraft's black boxes, found Monday, were damaged in the crash.

What are black boxes?

Introduced in the late 1950s, black boxes help explain nearly 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts. All commercial planes are required to have two of them on board—a flight data recorder and a cockpit voice recorder. The data recorder stores up to 25 hours worth of second-by-second information including on speed, altitude, engine performance and flight trajectory. In the case of the October Lion Air accident in Indonesia killing 189 — the first of two Boeing 737 MAX 8 crashes within five months—black box analysis showed that there was a problem with the aircraft's speed when it went down.

The voice recorder picks up conversations by pilots and flight attendants and also other sounds on board, including possible alarms. All black boxes used in civil aviation function the same way according to a common user protocol, regardless of their make, the BEA said. It can take weeks for investigators to retrieve the data inside, and results are typically withheld from the public until the information has been thoroughly examined—which can take years. —AFP

Former British soldier charged with N Ireland 'Bloody Sunday' killings

DERRY: Northern Irish prosecutors yesterday charged a former British soldier with murder over the "Bloody Sunday" killings of 1972 in a politically sensitive case that has stirred passions in both Britain and Ireland. The ex-paratrooper, known only as Soldier F, was charged with murdering two people and the attempted murder of four others when troops opened fire on a demonstration in Derry in which 13 protesters were shot dead. Soldier F was one of 17 British veterans who had faced investigation over Bloody Sunday but he was the only one charged. "This is a remarkable achievement by the families and victims of Bloody Sunday," said Ciaran Shiels, a solicitor for some of the victims' families.

But Shiels added: "We are disappointed that not all of those responsible are to face trial." Relatives looked somber as they emerged from a press conference in which the decision was announced by the Public Prosecution Service of Northern Ireland. "There is sufficient available evidence to prosecute one former soldier, Soldier F, for the murder of James Wray and William McKinney; and for the attempted murders of Joseph Friel, Michael Quinn, Joe Mahon and Patrick O'Donnell," said PPS director Stephen Herron.

'Indebted' to soldiers: Williamson

British Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson said the

defense ministry would support Soldier F and pay his legal costs. "We are indebted to those soldiers who served with courage and distinction to bring peace to Northern Ireland," he said. "The welfare of our former service personnel is of the utmost importance and we will offer full legal and pastoral support," he said. He added that the government was working to reform the system "for dealing with legacy issues". "Our serving and former personnel cannot live in constant fear of prosecution," he said.

Besides 16 former British soldiers not charged, state prosecutors also declined to bring charges against two alleged ex-members of the Irish Republican Army for their role on the day, one of the seminal events in the three-decades-long Northern Irish conflict known as "The Troubles". "In respect of the other 18 suspects, including 16 former soldiers and two alleged Official IRA members, it has been concluded that the available evidence is insufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction," said prosecutor Herron.

Thirteen demonstrators were killed on January 30, 1972 as they participated in a civil rights march in the majority Catholic area of the Bogside in Derry when soldiers from the British Parachute Regiment opened fire. A fourteenth died of his wounds later. In 2010, then British prime minister David Cameron issued a formal state apology for the killings, calling them "unjustified and unjustifiable". A public inquiry found that British troops fired first and had given misleading accounts of what happened. Yesterday, families of those who died marched from a memorial to Derry city centre. John Kelly, whose brother Michael was shot dead at the age of 17, said he was "hoping and praying" for justice. "I'm standing here, where Michael was shot dead, hoping he's looking down on me and saying 'Fair play to you, I'm very proud of you,'" he said. —AFP

International

Pentagon issues new limits on transgender troops, surgery

Pentagon denies US wants 'cost + 50%' from allies for bases

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon yesterday announced a new policy that will bar enlistment of new recruits who have undergone a gender transition or intend to do so, and require most individuals to serve in their birth sex. Under President Donald Trump's new rules, set to go into effect on April 12 after the Supreme Court allowed them to go forward, only transgender troops serving in their birth gender will be able to stay in the military after that date, and they will be barred from taking hormones or getting transition surgery.

The move was a reversal from a policy enacted under Trump's Democratic predecessor Barack Obama, who allowed military recruits to serve in their preferred sex rather than just the one they were assigned at birth. The latest action was swiftly condemned by Democrats and civil rights advocates. "The Trump administration is determined to bring back 'don't ask, don't tell,' a policy that forced service members to choose between serving their country and telling the truth about who they were," said Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center, an independent research institute.

Trump had announced the new ban by tweet in July 2017, pointing to the "tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail." After a flurry of legal battles, the Pentagon's policy is not a complete ban. Transgender troops have until next month's deadline to receive hormonal treatment or surgery, and service members who have already joined the military in their preferred gender

will be able to continue to serve in that gender.

After April 12, however, no one who has transitioned to another gender or been diagnosed with "gender dysphoria" will be able to enlist - and currently enlisted troops will thereafter have to serve in their birth gender and renounce transition treatment. Around 9,000 people who self-identify as transgender individuals currently serve in the armed forces, out of 1.3 million in the active duty troops population, a Pentagon official said on condition of anonymity. Around 1,000 say they have transitioned to another gender or would like to do so. "Persons with a history of gender dysphoria - a serious medical condition - and who have undergone certain medical treatment for gender dysphoria, such as cross-sex hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery, or are unwilling or unable to meet the standards associated with their biological sex, could adversely impact unit readiness and combat effectiveness," a Pentagon statement read. "For this reason, such persons are presumptively disqualified for service without a waiver."

'Cost-plus-50 percent'

In another development, Acting Pentagon chief Patrick Shanahan denied yesterday reports that the United States has a "cost-plus-50 percent" formula for allies to pay for the US military presence on their soil. Earlier this week, Bloomberg reported that President Donald Trump is pushing the formula as a basis for Germany, Japan and other



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump meets with Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar in the Oval Office of the White House yesterday. —AFP

allies to compensate Washington for US troops based in their countries. But Shanahan told the Senate Armed Services Committee that such reports were "erroneous." "We won't do cost-plus-50 percent," he said in a hearing. He said US partners should pay their "fair share" when they can, but there was no such business-like formula. "We're not going to run a business and we're not

going to run a charity," Shanahan said.

"Payment comes in lots of different forms. At the end of the day, people need to carry their fair share," he said. "Not everyone can contribute. It is not about cost-plus-50 percent." Shanahan did not say whether Trump, who built a multibillion-dollar fortune in the real estate business, himself has advocated the formula. —Agencies

Love, corruption and car: What you need to know about Slovakia

BRATISLAVA: Slovakia, which kicks off a two-round presidential election tomorrow, spent decades behind the Iron Curtain before joining the European Union, the euro-zone and NATO. Last year's murder of a journalist probing high-level corruption led to the largest anti-government protests since communist times. Here are five things to know about the central European country of 5.4 million people.

Car-driven economy

With the world's highest per capita auto production, Slovakia is home to Volkswagen, Kia Motors, PSA Peugeot Citroen, and Jaguar Land Rover car plants. Last year, more than a million cars rolled off its assembly lines, while exports totaled 3.7 billion euros (\$4.3 billion). Overall, the car-making sector has a 44 percent share of Slovakia's total industrial production. The economy is expected to grow 4.5 percent this year, from 4.2 percent in 2018. The parliament also approved a balanced state budget for 2019 — a first in the country's modern history.

Tourist paradise

Though geographically one of the smaller EU members, Slovakia boasts nine national parks, more than 6,000 caves and 180 castles, among other treasures. It also has nearly 60 well-preserved wooden churches - built without a single nail - many of them UNESCO world heritage sites. The oldest is the 15th-century Church of St Francis of Assisi in the eastern village of Hervartov. Slovakia's mountains are a favorite ski location in the region.

Murdered journalist

Investigative reporter Jan Kuciak and his fiancée were gunned

down in February 2018 as he was about to publish a story on alleged ties between Slovak politicians and the Italian mafia. His murder and explosive report, published posthumously, plunged the country into crisis, raising concerns about media freedom and corruption and sparking protests that forced the government to resign. To date, four people have been charged in the double murder. Last year, Slovakia earned its worst corruption score since 2013. It placed 57th - down three spots from 2017 - on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranks 180 nations for public-sector corruption.

'Epicentre of Love'

According to the World Record Academy, Slovakia boasts the longest love poem. The 2,900-line "Marina", written in 1844, recounts the doomed love between poet Andrej Sladkovic and his muse Maria Pischlova. They were star-crossed lovers but unlike Romeo and Juliet their tragic romance is a true story. Marina's parents shunned the poor poet and forced her to marry a wealthy gingerbread maker. The house where Marina lived in the medieval silver mining town of Banska Stiavnica is today called the "Epicentre of Love". The exhibition includes a "love-o-meter" that measures the strength of a couple's affection.

Peaceful split

The Slovak Republic was part of Czechoslovakia, which declared independence from the dying Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 and was home to Czechs and Slovaks. It remained a stable democracy until dismemberment in 1938. Under Nazi occupation Slovakia became a puppet state under the regime of Father Jozef Tiso, who agreed to send tens of thousands of Jews to World War II death camps.

Czechoslovakia was liberated and a republic restored in 1945. Three years later, following a Communist coup, the country fell under Soviet domination. The Velvet Revolution toppled totalitarian rule in 1989, and in 1993 Czechoslovakia split peacefully into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Michal Kovac became Slovakia's first head of state. Presidential elections have since been held in 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. —AFP

8 killed in Brazil school shooting; 2 suspects dead

SAO PAULO: Two former pupils shot dead eight people, most of them students and staff, at a high school near Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Wednesday before turning their weapons on themselves, authorities said. The two assailants burst into the school grounds in the early morning, armed with a .38 caliber revolver and a "medieval weapon that looked like a bow and arrows," military police Colonel Marcelo Sales said.

After shooting at students in the yard, the killers headed to the language center where several pupils were hiding and "committed suicide in a corridor," he said. Brazil is one of the most violent countries in the world, and the victims in this case were five students aged 15 to 17, two school officials aged 38 and 59, and a 51-year-old carwash owner who was shot by the attackers before they arrived at the school, said Sao Paulo's Public Security Secretary Joao Pires de Campos.

Eleven other people were wounded in the shooting at the Raul Brasil public school in Suzano, on the outskirts of Sao Paulo in southeast Brazil. "It's the saddest thing I've ever seen," said Sao Paulo State Governor Joao Doria. Tearful residents later held a street mass near the school, where flowers and candles commemorated the dead. President Jair Bolsonaro expressed his sympathies on Twitter to "the families of this inhumane attack," describing it as "a monstrosity and enormous cowardice." The two assailants, who wore hoods, were identified as former pupils aged 17 and 25. —AFP

International

Parking lots offer safe haven for the homeless Californians

Nearly 554,000 people in US are homeless

LOS ANGELES: It's a chilly winter evening in Los Angeles as Cameron Jones maneuvers his white sports car into an open-air parking lot and picks a secluded spot where he can recline his seat and call it a night. "I lost my apartment about 10 days ago because I couldn't afford the \$2,200 rent and was told this is a safe place to be until I get back on my feet," said Jones. "I can sleep soundly here without having to keep waking up at night and looking over my shoulder," added the 26-year-old Marine Corps veteran, who served in Afghanistan and now works for a company that sells solar panels.

Jones joined a health club in order to shower every morning before going to work. His suit hangs in the back seat, ready for use. Within an hour or so, about a dozen other vehicles—some with children inside—fill the lot that is part of a growing number of so-called "safe parking" areas in California and other US states. Half a dozen such lots monitored by security guards have sprung up in the Los Angeles area in the last year, offering a temporary safe haven to some of the more than 15,500 people in the region who live in their vehicles.

One "safe parking" is located at the back of a church, another at a synagogue and a third at the sprawling campus operated by the US De-

partment of Veterans Affairs. Portable toilets and hand-washing stations are available to the vehicle dwellers who must fill out an application before being granted access to the lots.

'I feel safe here'

Nearly 554,000 people in the United States were homeless in 2017, according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). About 25 percent of them—or 134,000—lived in California, the highest number of any state. California also has the highest rate of so-called "unsheltered" homeless—meaning people who are living in vehicles, abandoned buildings, parks or on the street, according to HUD.

In Los Angeles county alone, there are some 53,000 homeless people, a huge increase from 2010, when the number stood at about 38,700, according to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Carlos Gonzalez Jr is a 60-year-old US Army veteran who fell on hard times after suffering an elbow injury and has been liv-

ing in a mobile home for the past couple years. For him, the safe parking program means he does not have to constantly move his car or face harassment.

"There are bad people out there and I feel safe here," he told AFP as he parked his RV at the Veterans Affairs lot near LA's upscale Westwood neighborhood and prepared to go to sleep. "Here I can sleep without being concerned about someone breaking into my car,"

Gonzalez added, speaking over the constant din of cars racing along a nearby highway. Similar programs have been implemented elsewhere in California—including in the San Francisco Bay area—where skyrocketing housing prices have increasingly pushed

low-income residents onto the streets.

"We have a school teacher who uses one of our lots and she said the rent got higher than she could afford and she wound up in her car," said Ira Cohen, who co-founded the Safe Parking LA program with his wife Pat. "The economics are such that some people can no longer afford to

live indoors... and some are lucky to have a vehicle to provide a home for themselves."

"This didn't happen overnight"

Experts say the lack of affordable housing and soaring home costs are the key reasons for the dramatic spike in homelessness. They blame federal, state and local authorities for failing to develop a sound strategy to address a crisis that was years in the making. "This didn't happen overnight," said Gary Painter, who heads the Homelessness Policy Research Institute at the University of Southern California. "Rents in Los Angeles have been going up faster than people's incomes for quite a few decades... and I think it's reasonable to say that we reached our breaking point in the last three years in terms of that leading to people living on the streets."

Painter said although there has been a massive influx of funding for new housing, shelters and outreach programs in recent years, the state was unlikely to turn the corner any time soon, given the scale of the problem. In the meantime, programs like Safe Parking LA are gaining in popularity as authorities seek interim solutions. "If you spoke to me a couple years ago and told me that I would be in this situation, I probably would have laughed at you," said Jones. "I thought I was living the American Dream."—AFP



53,000 people
homeless in LA

Search ends in Lagos building collapse as anger flares

LAGOS: Emergency services yesterday said they had called off the search for survivors of a building collapse that killed nine in Nigeria's biggest city, Lagos, as anger mounted over dilapidated property and unscrupulous owners. The building, which housed a primary school and nursery, came down without warning in the teeming Lagos Island area at mid-morning on Wednesday.

Firefighters and other emergency services worked through the night to find anyone still trapped. One body was recovered in the early hours, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said. "We have gotten to ground zero," added Kehinde Adebayo, spokesman for the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency. "The debris has been cleared. All those trapped have been evacuated and the rescue operation has ended," he told AFP. Final casualty figures were still being compiled and would be announced later, he said. NEMA has said that 37 people were rescued alive.

Lagos State governor Akinwunmi Ambode said the building had been earmarked for demolition and a nursery and primary school were being run illegally on one of its floors. School bags, toys and clothes were among the piles of rubble as a bulldozer tried to clear a path through wreckage. Shopworker Adeniyi Afolabi, who lives nearby, gave the name of the school as the Ohen Nursery and Primary, and said there were 144 pupils in attendance on Wednesday. Another local, Zion Munachi, also confirmed the name and the number of pupils. But both said not all children were at the school because of sports activities.

Chaotic scenes of heavy lifting equipment and ambulances try-



LAGOS: Emergency and rescue personnel are seen at the site of a building which collapsed in Lagos.—AFP

ing to pick their way through huge crowds and narrow streets gave way to anger yesterday, as residents demanded answers. Lagos Island is the historic heart of the metropolis, which is home to an estimated 20 million people, and also home to its central business district. Building collapses are tragically common in the city and elsewhere in Nigeria, where building regulations are routinely flouted.

In September 2014, 116 people died — 84 of them South Africans—when a six-storey guesthouse collapsed at the Lagos church complex of celebrity televangelist TB Joshua. An inquiry found extra floors had been added without planning permission. Engineers responsible for the construction are currently on trial for manslaughter. In 2016, at least 60 people were killed when the roof collapsed at a church in the southern city of Uyo.—AFP

Kids 'not spared' by homelessness crisis

LOS ANGELES: Jose Razo, the principal of Telfair Elementary School in Los Angeles county, wants his students to spend their time worrying about homework, their grades or playdates. But the harsh reality for more than a quarter of the 720 children at the school is far different—they are classified as homeless. "Food, somewhere to sleep, something to put on their back: those are the challenges our students are facing," says Razo. "Someone seven or eight years old should not have to worry about that."

According to the Los Angeles Unified School District, nearly 18,000 students in the district are classified as homeless and Telfair is at the epicenter of the crisis. Built in 1945, the school is located in Pacoima, about a 30-minute drive north of downtown LA, and nearly all of its pupils — 98 percent—are Latino. About half of the homeless students come from low-income families struggling to survive. They are forced to live with relatives, in shared homes, in garages—sometimes with no running water—or in mobile homes.

Nearly every student is poor enough to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. "When you have a single mom working to pay for two students and herself, and she's just making the minimum wage (\$12 an hour in LA), that's barely enough for just the food," says Razo, who himself experienced homelessness growing up.

"So families will double up, triple up, quadruple up in a house, and each family might rent a room for two or three children," he added. Razo said "home" for some of the pupils at Telfair is a living room where they are unlikely to get a good night's sleep amid the comings and goings of the house's other occupants. "So they come here the next morning tired and anxious," he said. A small number of the students, Razo said, live in motels. The worst off live in RVs, shelters or even a car.—AFP

International

Heat, floods and quakes: Tokyo 2020 preparing for any disaster

Japan making contingency plans for possible catastrophes

TOKYO: Cyberattacks, terrorism, earthquakes and heatwaves: Tokyo 2020 organizers are hoping for the best but bracing for the worst and making contingency plans for several possible catastrophes during the Games. Clean, virtually crime-free Tokyo has been spared the terror attacks that have hit many Western cities in recent years, and is considered a relatively safe bet for the Games - it is often ranked as low-risk by insurance and risk-management firms.

But that security goes out of the window when it comes to hosting the Greatest Show on Earth, says Shiro Kawamoto, counter-terrorism expert and professor of risk management at Nihon University. "Tokyo's safeness in normal times cannot be taken for granted during the Olympics when the world's attention is on it," Kawamoto said. So Tokyo is pulling out all the technological stops to bolster safety - for example, in an Olympic first, introducing a facial recognition system for volunteers.

Organizers are also bracing for a cyberattack similar to that which blighted the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics opening ceremony, where internet and wifi access were brought down. "We are preparing on the assumption there will be a cyberattack," said Kenji Endo, a senior government official in charge of

Tokyo 2020. The government has set up an elite unit of police and defense ministry experts to counter a possible cyber threat.

For terrorist attacks, Tokyo has not experienced a large-scale atrocity since the Aum Shinrikyo doomsday cult released Sarin gas on the subway in 1995, killing 13 people and injuring dozens more. But an attack on New Year's Eve - where a man deliberately rammied a car up one of Tokyo's best-known streets and injured nine people - jolted Tokyo out of its complacency.

Counter-terrorism drills are being conducted regularly and officials are urging the public to be vigilant. With petty crime much lower than in other major capitals, people generally pay little attention to abandoned baggage, for example. "To avoid a suspicious object in a train suddenly exploding, someone has to spot it and call police or station staff," Kawamoto said.

Organizers braces for a cyberattack



'Most dangerous period'

The ever-present threat of natural disasters is also keeping Olympics officials up at night, with Tokyo being one of the world's most seismically active capitals and Japan battered last year by typhoons and heatwaves. "As for natural disasters, we think the biggest challenge is to



TOKYO: People protect their heads during a disaster drill at Sensoji Temple in Tokyo. Cyberattacks, terrorism, earthquakes and heatwaves: Tokyo 2020 organizers are hoping for the best but bracing for the worst and making contingency plans for several possible catastrophes during the Games. — AFP

prepare for a big quake that is impossible to predict," said Akio Sato, senior official at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

Rigid building codes mean even strong tremors often do little damage but the government estimates up to 23,000 could die if a magnitude seven quake hit Tokyo directly. Panic and

a lack of preparation could cause more unnecessary damage, experts warn. Mindful that hundreds of thousands will be coming from overseas, the Japan Tourism Agency has upgraded its "safety tips" app with information on major disasters, evacuation shelters and medical organizations.—AFP

Suffer the children: How air pollution hurts the youngest

TOKYO: Air pollution can have devastating health effects for people of all ages, but children are more vulnerable and face specific risks that can last a lifetime, experts say.

Why are kids more vulnerable?

Children breathe faster than adults and are smaller "so they end up getting a higher dose of air pollution into their lungs relative to their body mass than adults," said Rima Habre, assistant professor of clinical preventative health at the University of Southern California (USC). Children are also closer to the ground, where some types of pollutants tend to concentrate, and can be exposed to dirty air for longer stretches if they play outside. But air pollution isn't only found outdoors. Some of the most serious air pollution is in homes where heating and cooking fires burn fuel incompletely, producing hazardous fumes.

These are disproportionately inhaled by young children and their mothers, who spend more time inside and often close to the home's stove. Children's organs are also still growing and pollution can slow the development of the lungs, brain and other organs in ways that can have life-long effects. "Children have a long lifetime ahead of them during which even diseases with a long latency pe-

riod have time to manifest," said Carrie Breton, associate professor of preventive medicine at USC.

What are the effects on children?

The consequences of air pollution can be immediate but can also manifest over the longer term. The most obvious immediate effects are respiratory. Children exposed to air pollution are more susceptible to infections including pneumonia and bronchitis, as well as asthma. Research into how exactly air pollution causes these problems is still ongoing, but the World Health Organization says dirty air contributed to respiratory tract infections that resulted in 543,000 deaths in children under five in 2016. And there are other less obvious effects including on "biological pathways," Breton said. "There is some evidence to suggest air pollution may shift metabolic or stress response pathways that could then put children at greater risk for diabetes later in life or cardiovascular diseases," she added. The WHO also says there is "substantial evidence" that traffic-related air pollution "is associated with increased risk of childhood leukaemia." Other research has linked air pollution to childhood obesity, persistent ear infections and neurodevelopment issues that can lead to lower cognitive test outcomes and may influence behavioral disorders.

What about in the womb?

Children are exposed to the health dangers of air pollution even while they are still in the womb. "Gases and ultrafine particulates can penetrate deep into the lungs of the mothers and enter their bloodstream. These particles have been found in placenta," said professor Neil Thomas of the University of Birmingham's Institute of Applied Health Research. —AFP

Over 100 Malaysian schools shut after toxic waste dump

KUALA LUMPUR: Over 100 schools in Malaysia have been closed after the dumping of toxic waste into a river caused hundreds of people to fall ill, including many children, authorities said. A lorry is believed to have dumped the waste in southern Johor state last week, sending hazardous fumes across a wide area and causing those affected to display symptoms of poisoning such as nausea and vomiting.

Over 500 people, many of them school pupils, have received medical treatment after inhaling the fumes, with over 160 admitted to hospital, according to official news agency Bernama. It was unclear what type of poisonous gas had been emitted near the industrial town of Pasir Gudang. Education Minister Maszlee Malik initially ordered the closure of 43 schools in the area Wednesday, but later announced that figure had more than doubled.

"The ministry of education has decided to close all 111 schools in the Pasir Gudang area immediately," he said in a statement. "The education ministry is requesting that all parties take precautions." Three men were arrested earlier this week over the toxic waste dumping. One is expected to be charged in court soon and could face up to five years in jail if found guilty of breaking environmental protection laws.—AFP

International

Hundreds of shops looted in Venezuela blackout: Traders

Diplomats walk out of UN conference in Venezuela protest

CARACAS: More than 500 shops were looted in Venezuela's western city of Maracaibo during a vast nationwide blackout that struck last week and lasted for days, a retailers' association said Wednesday. The Consecomercio association called on beleaguered security forces to reimpose order in Maracaibo and its surrounds.

In a statement, it said it lamented the "impunity with which mobs, taking advantage of the electricity crisis... destroyed installations" in Maracaibo's main shopping center and in "500 other establishments." The blackout, which cut power to 21 of Venezuela's 23 states last Thursday, was still going in western parts of the country.

Electricity had mostly been restored to the capital Caracas and other regions, but drinking water supplies remained disrupted, requiring water to be trucked in. The reason for the unprecedented power cut has not been determined. President Nicolas Maduro blamed it on "sabotage" by the United States and the opposition. Opposition leader and self-proclaimed interim president Juan Guaido—who is backed by the US and 50 other countries—told supporters corruption and mismanagement by Maduro's "dictatorship" was the root cause.



Tension mounts as crisis rages

Maracaibo suffered the worst of the looting, but other places, including Caracas, registered some pillaging of shops too. The head of Consecomercio, Felipe Capozzolo, urged authorities to act, stressing on Twitter that looting could undermine retailers' stockage and distribution of food and basic goods that have become increasingly scarce under Venezuela's economic crisis. The blackout made matters worse by cutting power to refrigerators and freezers, ruining produce inside. According to economic analysis firm Ecoanalitica, the blackout cost Venezuela \$875 million.

Diplomats walk out

In another development, diplomats yesterday walked out of a UN convention on drugs addressed by Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, saying his government was illegitimate and did not represent the country. Dozens of officials from Latin America, as well as the US, Canada and some European countries, including France, left the room in protest as Arreaza took the podium for the meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna.

"The members of the Venezuela delegation here today represent the illegitimate government of



CARACAS: A man fills containers with water flowing down from the Wuaraira Repano mountain, also called 'El Avila', in Caracas. The blackout has left millions without running water. —AFP

(Venezuela's President) Nicolas Maduro, and thus cannot be considered as speaking on behalf of the Venezuelan people," a spokesperson of the US Mission to International Organizations said in a statement after the walk-out.

Multiple diplomats including from Latin America and Europe had staged a walk-out late last month during an Arreaza address to the United Nations

Human Rights Council in Geneva, when he called for direct talks between Maduro and US President Donald Trump about the country's crisis. Arreaza said in his speech in Vienna yesterday that the drug epidemic could only be combated multilaterally, adding that US "unilateral economic steps" have cost the country billions, diverting funds from the fight against drugs. —Agencies

US lawmakers tuck into juicy debate over meat substitutes

NEW YORK: Towering over a wooden podium in the Arkansas General Assembly this month, Republican representative David Hillman, a self-declared calf-roper, spoke of steak to pitch his latest bill. "I want my rib-eye steak to have been walking around on four feet at one time or another," he said. His proposal, making it illegal for meat-substitute products to be labeled as meat, was swiftly adopted.

Across the United States, tens of similar bills have been introduced - some unsuccessfully - as well as half a dozen with opposing aims, as an out-of-sight battle heats up between friends and foes of plant-based meat. One key issue at stake is whether the rise of alternative meat in the world's largest beef and veal-producing nation could substantially reduce its planet-warming emissions.

Rearing animals is a major driver of climate change - accounting for nearly 15 percent of greenhouse gas emissions - while producing meat uses land and water less efficiently than growing crops, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization says. Increasingly, many environmentalists are placing their hopes in greener alternatives for carnivores, including lab-grown meat. Led by plant-based foods, which mimic the taste, texture and look of meat, the US alt-meat market is forecast to nearly double to \$2.5 billion by 2023, according to market research firm Euromonitor International. Lab-grown meat is not yet being sold. The trend has put the country's half-a-million meat-industry workers on edge, and prompted more than 20 meat-producing states, from Wyoming to Indiana and Nebraska, to look at adopting legislation similar to Hillman's, according to The Good Food Institute, a nonprofit that promotes meat alternatives. —Reuters

Venezuela's US invasion: the dollar takes hold

CARACAS: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro may be fiercely opposed to the "imperialist" United States. But in one regard, a US invasion is already happening: the dollarization of his South American country. Dollar bills are mixed in with wads of the near-worthless bolivar in markets. Long lines form for an opportunity to buy dollars. Shops offering scant and desperately sought basic items are increasingly demanding dollars as payment. The adoption of the US currency had been creeping in for months, as Venezuela's jaw-dropping inflation — projected to be 10 million percent this year, according to the IMF — meant the use of the bolivar was largely restricted to purchases by debit cards or bank transfers. But with an unprecedented power blackout since last week, electronic transactions were knocked out, and Venezuelans turned to the only option left: the greenback. "There was no power, and when it did come back, we had connection problems with the card terminals and the banks. People turned up with dollars, and from there you do a deal," the owner of a Caracas bakery, Martin Xabier said. "Everybody is doing that around here," he explained, indicating his working-class district of Catia in the capital's west and a line of a dozen people outside his shop.

Cash is king

In the more upmarket eastern district of Altamira, another line stood in front of a small grocery store that did business behind a locked security grate. "We only take cash, people! Bolivares or dollars!" the manager declared. "An old woman started crying. 'I don't have anyone to send me dollars. What can I do?'" she said, saying she was there to buy milk for her grandson and the bolivares she had were insufficient.

In a market in the nearby neighborhood of Chacao, the dollar ruled supreme. "Many people are paying with dollars... We need to take cash only and people don't have bolivares. Or if they have them they have to bring the banknotes in a wheelbarrow," said Maria del Carmen Pereira, owner of a half-empty deli-

catessen. But Franklin Garcia, who runs a small grocery store in the central La Candelaria neighborhood, said: "We aren't seeing a lot of people, but they are coming with small banknotes, of \$10 or \$20." He said that, in any case, he had lost a lot of produce because the blackout ruined food kept in his freezer.

'Irreversible' trend

As of Wednesday, \$1 was worth around 3,000 bolivares, of which the biggest denomination was a 500-bolivar bill equivalent to around 17 US cents. The average Venezuelan salary has sunk to the equivalent of \$6 per month. But much food and basic goods are imported, with a chicken for instance costing \$3 or \$4 in a Caracas supermarket. The problem for millions of Venezuelans is they have no access to dollars, which is creating "extreme inequality," according to Asdrubal Oliveros, head of the economic analysis firm Econanalitica. Henke Garcia, head of another firm, Econometrica, said: "Dollarization has to do with inflation, that is the fundamental cause. This traumatic episode (the blackout) might have accelerated its uptake with people more apt to receive payments in dollars. The trend is now irreversible."

Lines for ice

Electricity supply was nearly back to normal in Caracas by Wednesday, which meant mostly stable but with some interruption. But in western parts of Venezuela, power was still out. "Here, everything is sold in dollars: cheese, bananas, bread, cellphone recharges, ice," said Roxana Pena, a 26-year-old resident in the western oil hub of Maracaibo. Her city, scene of much looting during the blackout, has witnessed lines of people that stretch for kilometers (miles) to spend \$5 to buy blocks of ice needed to preserve fresh food. "A lot of people don't have anything to pay with," sighed an elderly local, Margara Bermudez. The United Nations estimates there are 3.4 million Venezuelans who have emigrated since the crisis in their country began. Many of them send remittances to relatives who remain, but substantial numbers of Venezuelans have no such financial lifeline. Maduro "can't guarantee water or power or medicines," his opposition rival and self-proclaimed interim president, Juan Guaido, told supporters on Tuesday. The bolivar "is no longer respectable money, able to buy food," he said. Maduro accuses Guaido of involvement in the blackout, imputing it to "cybernetic" and "electromagnetic" attacks by the US, which is one of some 50 countries recognizing the opposition leader. Experts however believe the energy collapse is the result of mismanagement, corruption and lack of investment under Maduro's government. —AFP

Lifestyle

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Revelers pose as they attend the first winter edition of the Tomorrowland electronic music festival, in l'Alpe d'Huez, eastern France. — AFP

Lou Reed's guitars take New Yorkers to church

See Page 21

Director Kusturica named advisor to Bosnia's Serb president

Acclaimed Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica has been appointed an advisor to Bosnia's nationalist Serb President Milorad Dodik, according to the presidency. The two men are known to be close friends, with 64-year-old Kusturica, a two-time Palme d'Or winner, describing Dodik as "nothing but the best" in an interview last year with local media. The announcement, posted on the presidency's website, did not specify what Kusturica's portfolio would be. Dodik, who has been sanctioned by the US, was elected to Bosnia's three-man presidency last October, seeding fears about the future of the fragile and divided country.

Though he began his political career as an ally of the

West, Dodik later rebranded as a firebrand nationalist. In recent years he inflamed Western powers by referring to post-war Bosnia as a "failed country" and threatening to hold a referendum on the secession of the Serb-dominated region he has run for a decade. Kusturica, who was born in Sarajevo but has not returned since the 1992-95 war, is also known for provocative views. One of his Palme d'Or films, "Underground" (1995), was accused by critics of being too pro-Serb. Nearly a quarter century after the conflict that killed 100,000 people, Bosnia remains divided along communal lines, with power shared between Serb, Muslim and Croat constituencies. —AFP



Aamir Khan to star in Bollywood 'Forrest Gump' remake

Bollywood megastar Aamir Khan announced yesterday that he is to star in an official Hindi-language remake of hit American movie "Forrest Gump". Khan will play the role of Laal Singh Chaddha, based on Tom Hanks's character in the 1994 multiple-award-winning US classic. "I have always loved 'Forrest Gump' as a script. It is a life-affirming story. It is a feel-good film. It is a film for the whole family," Khan told reporters in Mumbai on his 54th birthday. "Forrest Gump" won six Oscars, including best picture, best director and best actor for Hanks.

The film was directed by Robert Zemeckis and was based on Winston Groom's 1986 novel of the same name. It centers on the life of a dim-witted but kind man whose life mirrors key events in America in the 20th century. Khan, who last appeared in box office flop "Thugs of Hindostan", said he would lose 20 kilograms (45 pounds) for the role. "I have to be lean and slim," he explained, adding that shooting would start in October. Hollywood blockbusters have long inspired the Mumbai-based Hindi film industry.

Action-thriller "Kaante" (2002) was influenced by Quentin Tarantino's "Reservoir Dogs" while "Sarkar" (2005) was likened to "The Godfather" and "Chachi 420" was similar to "Mrs Doubtfire", although they weren't official remakes. Khan's adaptation of "Forrest Gump" is expected to hit screens next year. Khan said the rights to the movie were bought from Paramount. An official remake of 2014 Hollywood film "The Fault in Our Stars" is also in the works. —AFP



Joss Stone plays 'unofficial gig' in North Korea



This handout from Koryo Tours shows British singer-songwriter Joss Stone (right) performing in a bar in Pyongyang. — AFP photos

British singer-songwriter Joss Stone performed an informal gig in the capital of nuclear-armed North Korea as part of her ambitious project to perform in every country on earth. Stone, who has performed in more than 175 countries since embarking on the Total World Tour five years ago, was pictured singing in a bar in Pyongyang in front of a small group of tourists and guides on Wednesday night. The 31-year-old artist, who has recently sung in Syria, Pakistan and Iraq, announced the trip on Instagram Tuesday before boarding a plane to the North.

"It's a fine day to go to North Korea," she said in a video message taken at the Beijing Capital International Airport. "We'll be getting on a plane very soon to go to Pyongyang...? A place in North Korea, anyway. It's gonna be fun," she added. Stone said she was practicing



British singer-songwriter Joss Stone (third right) posing for a photo in Pyongyang.

a traditional Korean folk song 'Arirang'—listed as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in both the North and South—for her audience in Pyongyang. The visit was arranged by Simon Cockerell, who runs Koryo Tours, which specialises in trips to the isolated country.

Cockerell described the performance as an "unofficial gig" and posted photos of Stone singing for around 40 tourists and guides at a bar he identified as the Yanggakdo cinema complex. "Let's do it again with a full band and thousands of local fans not too far in the future!!" he wrote on his Instagram with a picture of Stone departing from the North Korean capital. It is rare for North Korea to allow foreign musicians to perform for ordinary citizens, though last year a handful of South Korean pop artists were invited to Pyongyang amid a rapid rapprochement on the Korean peninsula. — AFP

Brain orgasms? The ASMR relaxation trend seducing the internet

Tapping fingernails triggering goosebumps, whispers sending shivers down the spine: the brain-tingling world of ASMR has the internet clamoring for sounds that feel good. The auditory-sensory phenomenon sees people experience waves of calm and pleasurable quivers of the mind often referred to as "brain orgasms"—and it's emerging from the depths of the web into the pop culture mainstream as a means to relax. ASMR, short for autonomous sensory meridian response, has become a full-fledged internet sensation, with YouTube creators notching millions of views for clips featuring stimuli—soft whispers into a microphone, long nails tapping, noodle slurping—to set off a prickle at the back of the neck.

"It's that moment where all the hair on your body stands up," said Bianca Hammonds, who works on the ASMR channel for the US music outlet Fuse. "You kind of feel your body vibrate," she told AFP. "It's like this zen moment." A beer commercial aired during the Super Bowl recently showcased ASMR, with actress Zoe Kravitz whispering, drumming her fingers against a bottle and pouring the liquid to release a gentle fizz. But it's largely hip hop's tastemakers who have ushered it onto the scene, with rap stars making their own ASMR videos or even integrating its techniques into their songs. — AFP



A journalist talks into a microphone in Washington. — AFP



Late US musician Lou Reed's former guitar technician Stewart Hurwood performs in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine during the concert "Lou Reed Drone" in New York City. — AFP photos

Lou Reed's guitars take New Yorkers to church

As his acclaimed "New York" album turns 30, the guitars of late rock pioneer Lou Reed are still reverberating in his beloved hometown, giving deafening soundbaths to those seeking refuge. This week, Reed's widow Laurie Anderson brought the icon's "drones"—openly tuned guitars propped against amplifiers to produce ear-splitting, unpredictable sounds—to New York's Cathedral of St John the Divine for a free, public performance.

The show was part of the cathedral's contemporary exhibition "The Value of Sanctuary," which features works from some 30 artists exploring the notion of refuge and social identity in times of upheaval. Calling Reed one of the first "noise artists" who "got a little bored with notes," Anderson said after his death she and others in Reed's inner circle began doing drone performances in churches, theaters and at music festivals everywhere from New York to Tanzania to showcase his love for "extreme volume"—and its meditative qualities.

Reed—known for his poetic lyricism and deadpan delivery—began creating such drones during his days as the frontman of the massively influential band The Velvet Underground, rock experimentalists who worked with pop artist Andy Warhol. "It's so symphonic and so beautiful," Anderson said. "It's a kind of music that's very complex." The drones rang out in the enormous cathedral—large enough to lay the entire Statue of Liberty lengthwise within its walls—for some five hours.

They were accompanied at the start with organ music before Anderson and other collaborators began chiming in with instruments including drums and violas, as onlookers filled the cavernous space for a sonic massage. "It gets into your body somehow," Anderson told AFP just prior to the performance. "It's so loud, it's relaxing." "It fills you, and you become defenseless," said the 71-year-old multimedia artist and electronic music trailblazer. "And that's a nice feeling in this world." "We're very defensive these days." — AFP



Guitars and amps are seen in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine before the concert "Lou Reed Drone".

Two more K-pop stars embroiled in sex video scandal

Two more K-pop stars quit yesterday, their agencies said, as a scandal over illicit sex videos and other offences rippled further across South Korea's music industry. Yong Junhyung, 29, left boy band Highlight—formerly known as Beast—after he admitted watching videos of singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young having sex with women taken without their consent, his agency said. Hours later, managers for Choi Jonghoon, 29, a member of boy band FT Island, announced his retirement saying that he would be questioned by police later this week over "suspicions" he was involved in the scandal.

Choi is believed to have been a member of an online chatroom where Jung shared the footage—as is mega K-pop star Seungri. Both Seungri and Jung announced their retirements from showbusiness earlier this week. Jung, 30, was questioned by police yesterday over the videos, while Seungri—a member of boy band BIGBANG with a range of business interests—was also interviewed for allegedly providing prostitutes to his potential investors.

Both men apologized to "all Korean citizens" when they reported to police and promised to cooperate with the inquiries. Yong received the footage directly from Jung, watched it and had an "inappropriate conversation" with him, his agency Around Us Entertainment said in a statement. South Korea has been battling a growing epidemic of so-called "molka", or spycam videos—mostly of women, secretly filmed by men.

As well as secretly filming women in schools, toilets and offices, "revenge porn"—videos taken of



Seungri (center), a member of the K-pop boy group BIGBANG, speaks to the media as he arrives for questioning over criminal allegations at the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency in Seoul. — AFP

sexual relations without the other partner's consent—is believed to be equally widespread. According to Han Sol, an activist at Flaming Feminist Action, such videos have long been watched and shared by South Korean men as a form of entertainment and a way to strengthen their "brotherly ties". Yong, who has also worked as a record producer and actor, had previously denied allegations that he had been involved in the ongoing K-pop sex scandal, which has threatened to overturn the industry's "wholesome" image. For South Korean women's activists, the scandal, including the latest revelation, is unsurprising. — AFP

US actress Lori Loughlin arrested in college bribery scandal

US actress Lori Loughlin surrendered to authorities on Wednesday and was to appear in a Los Angeles court to face charges in a massive college admissions scam involving other celebrities and top industry CEOs. The "Full House" star and her husband, designer Mossimo Giannulli, who has also been charged in the case, allegedly paid \$500,000 in bribes to ensure their two daughters were recruited to the University of Southern California rowing team even though the pair did not participate in the crew. FBI spokeswoman Laura Emiller told AFP that Loughlin, 54, surrendered to FBI agents early Wednesday after returning from Vancouver, where she was filming, and she was set to be arraigned later in the afternoon on fraud-related charges.

Giannulli appeared in court on Tuesday and was released on \$1 million bail. The couple were among 50 people indicted on Tuesday in a scam to help children of the American elite gain entry into top US colleges. "Desperate Housewives" star Felicity Huffman, who has also been implicated in the scandal, was arrested by FBI agents at her home on Tuesday and later released on bail. The 56-year-old actress and her husband William H Macy, the star of Showtime's hit series "Shameless," allegedly paid \$15,000 for their eldest daughter to perform well on a college entrance exam. Macy was mentioned in the case but has not been charged.



In this file photo taken actress Lori Loughlin attends the Women's Cancer Research Fund's 'Unforgettable Evening' in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

The ringleader behind the scam, William "Rick" Singer, has pleaded guilty and is cooperating with authorities. Some of the universities targeted in the elaborate cheating scam include Yale, Stanford, UCLA and Georgetown. None of the schools or the students has been charged in the case. According to prosecutors, the accused parents paid a firm run by Singer as much as \$6 million to cheat on college entrance exams for their children or to bribe coaches to help non-athletic students get scholarships. — AFP

Lifestyle | Fashion

Kylie and Kendall Jenner to collaborate on beauty product



Kylie and Kendall Jenner

Kylie Jenner has hinted that she could soon be collaborating with her sister Kendall. The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star has teased the prospect of working on a beauty collaboration with her sibling but they couldn't before because Kendall was in a longtime contract with make-up brand Estée Lauder. When someone asked Kylie if she could collaborate with her sister during an Instagram live question and answer session, she simply held her finger up to her mouth and said, "Shh", prompting speculation one is in the works. She added: "You know Kendall was in a contract for a really long time so I couldn't do a collaboration with her. That's the only reason why I didn't collaborate with her. But, you know, we worked it out."

Kylie's cosmetics brand has gone from strength to strength and

is loved by her fans, friends and family alike. Her half-sister Khloe previously confessed she keeps five Kylie Cosmetics lip-glosses in her make-up bag at any one time, adding: "I have five [Kylie Cosmetics] colors in my make-up bag. The 'Koko K' shade is named after me - that was a surprise. It's a pinky nude, which is what I wear every day." Kim Kardashian West's make-up artist Mario Deivanovic is also a fan of the brand and he "hoards" as many as he can. He said: "I'm the biggest hoarder of Kylie Cosmetics. I literally have boxes and boxes at my house that I'm collecting. They're just so iconic I want to keep them forever. Her black gel eyeliner is so good and is in my kit a lot." — Bang Showbiz

Fashion Pakistan Week (PFW)



Models present creations by Pakistani fashion brand Ideas on the second day of the Fashion Pakistan Week (PFW) in Karachi. — AFP photos



Models present creations by Pakistani designer Yasmin Zaman on the second day of the Fashion Pakistan Week (PFW).

Models present creations by Pakistani fashion brand Generation on the second day of the Fashion Pakistan Week (PFW) in Karachi.

Emily Blunt loves being styled for red carpet events

Emily Blunt loves the “fantasia” of being styled for a red carpet event. The ‘A Quiet Place’ star says her stylist Jessica Paster has taught her how to be “bold” with her outfit choices but still always ensure she feels “comfortable”. Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter for their 25 Most Powerful Stylists in Hollywood issue, she shared: “I do really love red carpets because they’re full of fantasia and it’s so not what I wear every day, and so I think she’s taught me a great deal about boldness and it can bring out an element of yourself you didn’t quite know was there, and I think then the dress never wears you. You’re always comfortable.” Emily previously revealed that style is “an extension of who you are”.

The 36-year-old actress shared: “What have I learned about style? I’ve learned that I had none before I embarked into this industry, I used to really enjoy wearing men’s waist-

coats, quite lurid colours, with white jeans, but like mum jeans, before they were cool. I wonder if I wore that now if I’d be a trail blazer? So I’ve learned that ... I think style is an extension of who you are.” And Emily shared her beauty tips, saying she is learning to “embrace the pale”. She said: “I’ve learnt that confidence is actually very quiet and it’s not in your face and it’s not chest beating. It’s very still and very quiet. I’ve learnt about beauty that I personally, should not lie in the sun - I am naturally very pale and I should just embrace it. So I’ve learnt to wear sunscreen and embrace the pale.”— Bang Showbiz



Emily Blunt



View of the shops & restaurants at Hudson Yards in New York City. — AFP photos



The Hudson Yards development, including 'The Vessel,' stands on the West Side of Midtown Manhattan.

New York's controversial Hudson Yards complex set to open

With an arts center, posh stores, uber expensive apartments and lots of controversy, the largest privately funded real estate development in US history opens Friday in Manhattan. It's in a place called Hudson Yards, and it took seven years and a cool \$16 billion to build. The project was erected on a giant slab of concrete covering a rail depot and makes New York a new center of urban planning innovation in a city with a red hot real estate market. In this new neighborhood, some apartments will fetch as much as \$30 million. The area between 10th and 12th avenues and 30th and 40th streets was long a no-man's land. Now it is ready to welcome New Yorkers and tourists in a new tribute to the US financial capital's legendary skyscrapers.

The six towers in this development, conceived by prestigious architects in the 2000s when Michael Bloomberg was mayor, did not set a record for height. But they are brimming with technological innovation. The complex has its own waste treatment, a blackout-proof electrical generating system and automatic underground doors to protect sensitive equipment from rising waters as a result of climate change.

A new New York icon?

The project's goal is not just to use idle space in a city that is fabulously dense and crowded. Rather, the idea is for the neighborhood to be fully integrated into the Big Apple, said Douglas Woodward, a professor of architecture at Columbia University

who took part in the design master plan. Aside from the residential towers and offices—which already host corporate offices of companies like L'Oreal USA and software company SAP—the complex has about 100 high-end stores like Dior and Fendi, and 25 restaurants from big-name chefs like Jose Andres and Thomas Keller. It also has an artistic center named The Shed that will open in April, and an outdoors area with trees to create a campus atmosphere, Woodward said.

Unlike London's Canary Wharf neighborhood, which is far from the city center, or La Defense, located west of Paris, Hudson Yards is just a few minutes from Times Square thanks to a subway station that opened in 2015. The neighborhood can also be reached by foot via the High Line, a raised walkway built on a former rail line that in just a few years has become a major city attraction.

Stephen Ross, the real estate developer behind the project, wants Hudson Yards—said to be the city's most ambitious since Rockefeller Center was built in the 1930s—to become “the biggest tourism attraction and icon in New York.”

Despite the inherent risk of such a massive investment, and the fact that many of the apartments are still available for rent—with a single room apartment going for \$5,000 a month—the 78-year-old real estate magnate is brimming with confidence and said he will soon move to a Hudson Yards penthouse. “What we are doing here is so unique” that residents “will want to be here,” Ross said during a recent visit to the work site.



Workers walk on 'The Vessel' in the Hudson Yards development on the West Side of Midtown Manhattan.

“People want to live in a place where everything is, that's what people live in a city for. “It's a live-work-play environment, and you are in the city! This does not exist anymore,” he said.

Chorus of critics

Not everyone is as enthusiastic. “I can't help feeling like an alien here, as though I've crossed from real New York with all its jangling mess into a movie studio's backlot version,” New York magazine architecture critic Justin Davidson wrote in February. “Everything is too clean, too flat, too art-directed.” Davidson slammed Hudson Yards as “para-Manhattan,” a site that has “no history, no holdover greasy spoons, no pockets of blight or resident eccentrics.” At a time of growing outrage over tax breaks given to big companies such as Amazon, some are angered by the subsidies and tax breaks granted to the project, estimated at around \$6 billion. — AFP

Fast cars, polo and parties: Thai 'High Society' flourishes in unequal kingdom



It's polo season in Thailand and teams of jodhpur-clad Argentines and monied Asians gallop onto the flawless field, as spectators spill from a pavilion—glasses of drinks in hand—for the final chukka. The “Sport of Kings” is undergoing an unlikely renewal in Thailand, one of the world's most unequal countries, which goes to the polls on March 24 with the widening wealth gap in sharp focus. Thailand boasts 50 billionaires, according to the latest rich list published by China-based researchers at the Hurun Report, the ninth-most in the world and more than France, Japan and Singapore.

Some of that cash paid for the play at a recent charity event at the Thai Polo & Equestrian Club, an unexpected oasis of immaculate lawns, wood-paneled changing rooms and stables a stone's throw from the raucous “Sin City” of Pattaya. “Is polo elitist? Yes, you cannot deny it is a very elite sport,” says

Nunthinee Tanner, the club's convivial co-founder and doyenne of the Thai equestrian scene. “A small group play across the world because it's very expensive and takes a lot of practice.”

As she speaks, Thai “HiSo” (High Society) women in striking millinery and high heels pick their way over the soft turf. Laughter peals from the Veuve Clicquot tent where men in seer-suckers and pink trousers have encamped for the day. “It's a sport of CEOs and royalty,” Nunthinee explains. On cue, billionaire Harald Link—a German-born naturalised Thai businessman and philanthropist who co-owns the club—leads the home team onto the field, mallet in hand. Other team patrons include Brian Xu, the Shanghai-based head of the world's biggest pencil-making firms, while Sultan Abdullah was a last-minute no-show after his sudden elevation to the Malaysian throne. — AFP

Lifestyle | Travel

Explore *Gocek*

By Ingjie Al-Nakhlawi

After the cold passes, most travelers are ready for spring to begin, making plans for their upcoming destination to soak up some sun. I chose for our reader a small town in Turkey called “Gocek” located on the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded by the Taurus Mountains, where it is sunny almost 300 days a year. With only 4500 inhabitants located in the Fethiye district of Mugla Province, this small town is one of serenity and luxury. Its reputation has already begun to spread all over Europe.

Kuwaiti citizens do not require a Turkish visa to enter the country, which can help make it a last minute decision if no other travel plans were made earlier. Citizens of most countries can obtain tourist visas without difficulty prior to departure or upon arrival. Be sure to check your exceptions before embarking on your adventure.

There are several ways to reach Gocek whether by land, sea or air. When flying directly from Kuwait to either international airport in Turkey, make sure to book an internal flight to Dalaman Airport, which is the closest to Gocek. Another 20 minutes by car is your destination! Be prepared for a breath of fresh air, literally, as soon as you arrive.

Waking up at your destination, expect a view of the Mediterranean Sea from any boutique hotel room. Almost all hotels in this area range between two and eight bedrooms only. An interesting fact is that the town lies within an area controlled by the Turkish Environmental Protection Agency, which allows no building to exceed 2.5 stories. This means Gocek has blissfully avoided the high-rise overdevelopment that is quickly taking over other small towns. If you are searching for natural scenery without construction blocking your picturesque view this is the

ideal place for travelers looking to enjoy a relaxing vacation.

On your first morning upon arrival, start your day off right with a delicious Turkish breakfast on the beach front with a view of clear skies, turquoise transparent water, docked yachts and friendly faces. The town has six significant marinas that serve the yachting tourism. Gocek is famous in Turkey for being a resort of the elite who expect only high quality service and enjoy luxury regardless of cost.

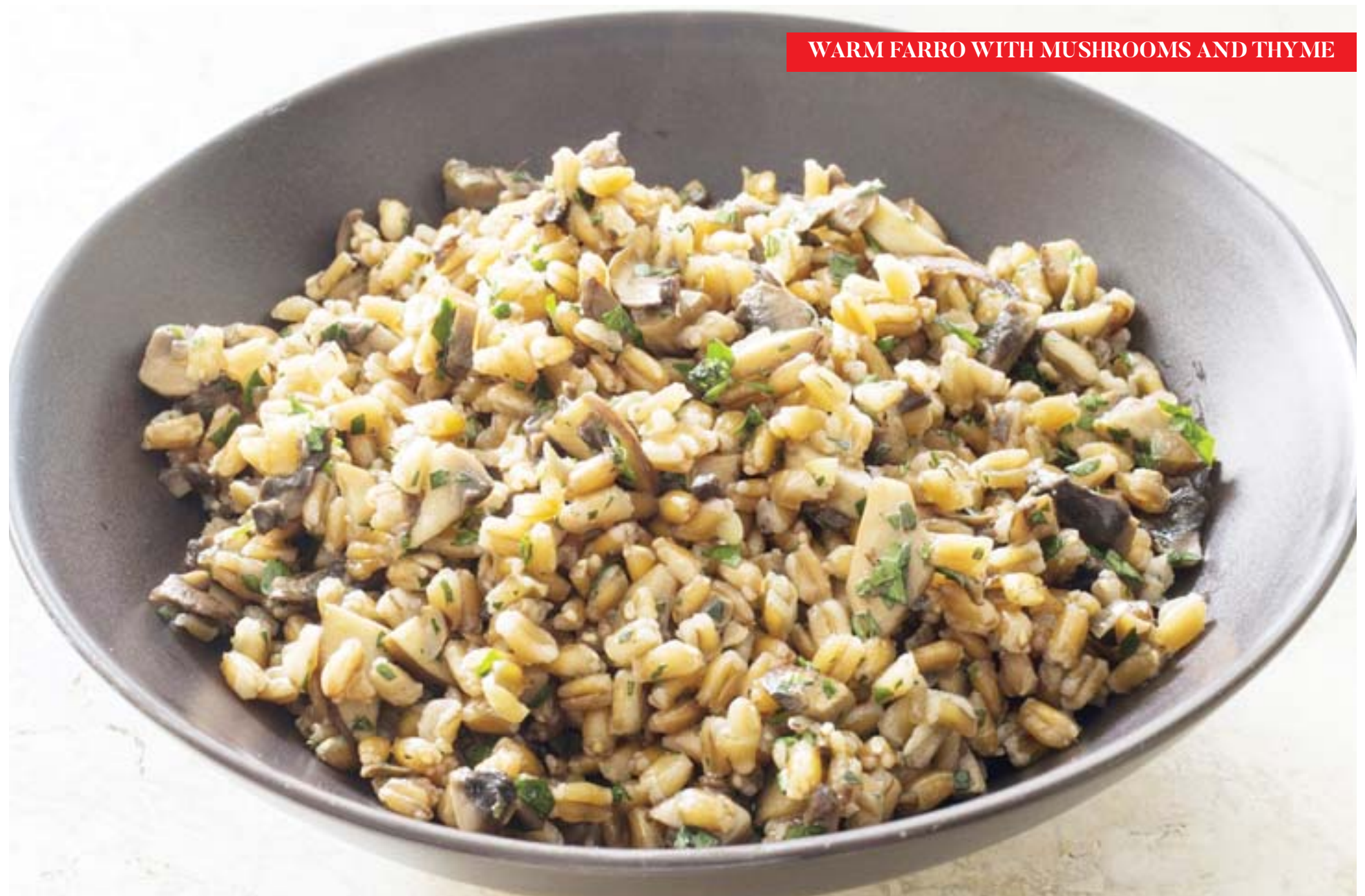
Surrounding Gocek, are 12 islands and coves located on the Mediterranean Sea and covered by green pine forests. These islands can be reached by private chartered fishing boats or yachts. To enjoy the crystal clear water and beautiful beaches, organized trips by operators are available at the Gocek marina for the full experience.



Recommended by many locals is D-Resort, which can be accessed by paying a daily fee if you are not a guest at the resort. Spend the day soaking up the sun in the gorgeous weather, snacking on local food, or take part in the many water sports available. Another option is driving to Oludeniz beach, arguable Turkey’s finest beach, which is only 40 minutes away from Gocek.

When it comes to food, there is a wide variety of restaurants where you can indulge in either conventional Turkish dishes, or International cuisine. These restaurants are situated by a long walk way similar to la Croisette in Cannes, France or Ocean drive, in Miami. Late dinners are always available for the night owls. Individual small shops line the charming streets displaying local and international designers and exquisite hand-made crafts, which are always available for purchase at reasonable prices. Pack your bags to relax and unwind at this supreme destination!





WARM FARRO WITH MUSHROOMS AND THYME

Pair earthy, hearty mushrooms with equally hearty farro

We wanted to pair earthy, hearty mushrooms with equally hearty farro. To start, we used the pasta method (an abundance of water) to boil our farro, which ensured the grains cooked evenly and required only half an hour. We then moved on to the mushrooms, sauteing them with shallot and thyme until the moisture evaporated and the mushrooms achieved some browning.

Scraping up the browned bits in the pan with sherry rounded things out with sweetness and acidity before we added the farro. We prefer the flavor and texture of whole farro; pearled farro can be used, but the texture may be softer. Do not use quick-cooking

or pre-steamed farro (read the ingredient list on the package to determine this) in this recipe. The cooking time for farro can vary greatly among different brands, so we recommend beginning to check for doneness after 10 minutes.

WARM FARRO WITH MUSHROOMS AND THYME

Ingredients

Servings: 6

Start to finish: 1 hour
 1 1/2 cups whole farro
 Salt and pepper
 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 12 ounces cremini mushrooms, trimmed and

chopped coarse

1 shallot, minced
 1 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried
 3 tablespoons dry sherry
 3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
 1 1/2 teaspoons sherry vinegar, plus extra for seasoning

Preparation

Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add farro and 1 teaspoon salt and cook until grains are tender with slight chew, 15 to 30 minutes. Drain farro, return to now-empty pot, and cover to keep warm. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in 12 inch skillet over medium heat until

shimmering. Add mushrooms, shallot, thyme, and 1/4 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until moisture has evaporated and vegetables start to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in sherry, scraping up any browned bits, and cook until skillet is almost dry. Add farro and remaining 1 tablespoon oil and cook until heated through, about 2 minutes. Off heat, stir in parsley and vinegar. Season with pepper and extra vinegar to taste and serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

311 calories; 79 calories from fat; 9 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 247 mg sodium; 45 g carbohydrate; 8 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 9 g protein.

The key to making your raw kale tender is a little massage

We love the earthy flavor of uncooked kale, but the texture of raw kale can be a little tough. Many recipes call for tossing it with dressing and letting it tenderize in the fridge overnight. This method didn't deliver the tender leaves we were after, and the long sitting time wasn't very convenient.

Luckily, we found another technique that worked better and faster: massaging. Squeezing and massaging the kale broke down the cell walls in much the same way that heat would, darkening the leaves and turning them silky. Caramelized roasted sweet potatoes, shredded radicchio, crunchy pecans, a sprinkling of Parmesan cheese, and a sweet pomegranate vinaigrette turned our salad into a hearty meal. If you can't find pomegranate molasses, you can make your own. Tuscan kale (also known as dinosaur or

Lacinato kale) is more tender than curly-leaf and red kale; if using curly-leaf or red kale, increase the massaging time to 5 minutes. Do not use baby kale.

KALE SALAD WITH SWEET POTATOES AND POMEGRANATE VINAIGRETTE

Ingredients

Servings: 6-8

Start to finish: 1 hour

Salad:

1 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1/2-inch pieces

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper

12 ounces Tuscan kale, stemmed and sliced crosswise into 1/2-inch-wide strips (7 cups)

1/2 head radicchio (5 ounces), cored and

sliced thin

1/3 cup pecans, toasted and chopped

Shaved Parmesan cheese

Vinaigrette:

2 tablespoons water

1 1/2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses

1 small shallot, minced

1 tablespoon honey

1 tablespoon cider vinegar

Salt and pepper

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Preparation

For the salad: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 F. Toss sweet potatoes with oil and season with salt and pepper. Arrange potatoes in single layer in rimmed baking sheet and roast until browned, 25 to 30 minutes, flipping potatoes halfway through roasting. Transfer to plate

and let cool for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, vigorously squeeze and massage kale with hands until leaves are uniformly darkened and slightly wilted, about 1 minute.

For the vinaigrette: Whisk water, pomegranate molasses, shallot, honey, vinegar, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper together in large bowl. Whisking constantly, slowly drizzle in oil. Add potatoes, kale, and radicchio to vinaigrette and gently toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to serving platter and sprinkle with pecans and shaved Parmesan to taste. Serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

288 calories; 171 calories from fat; 19 g fat (3 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 292 mg sodium; 28 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 10 g sugar; 4 g protein.



KALE SALAD WITH SWEET POTATOES AND POMEGRANATE VINAIGRETTE



Colorful boats and colorful temples at Uppuveli

Sun, sand and Sigiriya: Tips for family travel in Sri Lanka

After a tumultuous two decades of political instability and civil war, calm has returned to Sri Lanka, and visitors are flooding back. This Indian Ocean island has a deserved reputation as a top spot for adventurous backpackers, but going for a family holiday - was that a step too far? As a travel writer, I needed to find out. Luckily, my wife loves adventure, and the kids were happy to come along for the ride, so we set out in search of the perfect Indian Ocean family holiday.



Happy kids is the test of a good holiday

Why Sri Lanka?

With so many tropical islands to choose from, what made us pick Sri Lanka? For the variety more than anything. On our journey around the island we marveled at ancient palaces, snorkeled on coral reefs, watched great herds of elephants and strolled barefoot on tropical beaches. Few places offer so much in such a manageable area.

Then there was a sense of passing things on to the next generation. In the years BC (before children), my wife and I travelled widely in India and Africa, and we hoped to share a similar experience with the kids - aged 12 and 15 - but without the tears or fears. What we wanted was easy travel, good-value accommodation and no hassle, and Sri Lanka ticked all the boxes.

First steps in Negombo

The children were a little unsure what to expect, but it was in Negombo, just north of the capital Colombo, that they had their first rickshaw ride, their first taste of a genuine, at-source South

Asian curry and their first sight of the Indian Ocean. It was wonderful to experience travel in the developing world through the eyes of our (very first-world) children. Days were filled with questions: 'Dad, why does the rickshaw have no seatbelts?' and 'Dad, why are there cows in the road?'

Negombo served up an education in Sri Lankan history as well. European powers have influenced Sri Lanka for 500 years, and in colonial times, the British filled the island with railways, the Portuguese built the churches and the Dutch, of course, built the Hamilton canal - which is still in use connecting Puttalam to Colombo. In seemed only appropriate to take a boat ride along this historic waterway depositing us at the unmistakably European St Mary's Church, one of the many that give this city its 'Little Rome' moniker.

Heading up-country

Journeying inland and farther back in time, our next stop was the complex of Buddhist cave temples at Dambulla, where natural caverns were filled with statues of the Buddha over many centuries,



Dambulla's monumental reclining Buddha

as local kings attempted to out-perform their predecessors with increasingly large and elaborate figures of the great teacher. Most impressive of all was Dambulla's gigantic reclining Buddha, where just the statue's toes were larger than a 12-year-old boy's head. We know because he checked. It was very rewarding to see our own enthusiasm for history and culture being picked up by our children.

Cultural triangle

The countryside around Dambulla is dotted with an abundance of temples and historic sites, hence its nickname of the Cultural Triangle. But the key to success for family travel, as every parent knows, is to not be too ambitious. Experience had taught us to focus on just a few places, rather than risk exhausting young minds and bodies by trying to see everything (something that only really works in Disneyland).

Rather than line up a string of temple tours, we opted for one more stab at history in Sigiriya, a vast ruined palace on a towering rock, soaring above the surrounding plains. It's a Sri Lankan icon,



The rocky outcrop of Sigiriya soars above the plain

Lifestyle | Travel

**Prime viewpoint for watching jumbos at Kaudulla National Park**

made all the more captivating by the landscaped water gardens at the foot of the rock and the delicate frescoes painted on the cliffs.

The palace was built around 1500 years ago but eventually abandoned, to be rediscovered and researched by archaeologists in the 19th century. Science fiction readers of a certain age will know it from Arthur C Clarke's *Fountains of Paradise*; for our kids, tales of lost palaces inevitably inspired thoughts of Indiana Jones, and this became a theme for our explorations.

Pachyderms on parade

After several stops with an educational bent, it was time for a break from culture and history, and Sri Lanka served up its next family-friendly delight in the form of wildlife. In an open-topped safari jeep we trundled into Kaudulla National Park, where vast herds of elephant emerged from the forest to drink at a shallow lake.

The kids were entranced by their first sight of elephants in the wild, but having experienced safaris in Africa, Kaudulla wasn't really a wilderness experience. Along with neighboring Minneriya National Park, this is a hugely popular spot for tourists, with humans sometimes outnumbering the animals. Despite the proximity, on our visit the elephants seemed undisturbed by the vehicles, but some travelers have found the overcrowding off-putting.

Beach hut living

We'd promised the kids beaches, so we continued our journey northwards towards Trincomalee and Uppuveli, once a sleepy fishing village but now a fledgling coastal resort, where we stayed in palm-thatched cabins just a minute's walk from the beach. A staple of the backpacker experience, beach hut living was perfectly suited to family life. Swimming, paddling and lounging on the sand were the primary activities of the day, interspersed with periodic trips into town to see astoundingly decorated Tamil Hindu temples or haggle for souvenirs in the market.

Plentiful wildlife offshore provided more family bonding experiences: an early-morning boat-ride to watch dolphins frolicking in the waves and a snorkeling-trip to nearby coral reefs where the kids enjoyed swimming among shoals of the brightly-colored tropical fish. Yes, including some that looked like Nemo.

After a day of activity, evenings were a calmer affair,

usually spent in one of the laid-back restaurants overlooking the ocean, where we would drink from fresh coconuts and feast on fresh seafood. Menus were well set up for families, allowing grown-ups to sample spicy local dishes while the kids relaxed with a pizza. As veteran travelers, we always try to encourage the kids to sample new food when travelling, but sometimes they just want something familiar. Fair enough - it's their holiday too.

Tea and trains in the hills

The final leg of our journey back to Colombo sliced through the Hill Country at Sri Lanka's heart, where we stayed in a cottage on one of the many historic plantations that produce the island's world-famous Ceylon tea. There was just time for a pocket-friendly ride on the equally famous historic railway that meanders through the mountains, but this was just for nerdy dad; my wife went bird-watching, and the kids stayed in the cottage, making full use of the wi-fi. And so the journey ended more or less as it had begun, with a final look around Colombo before jetting home. Our conclusion? Sri Lanka provided everything needed for a low-stress, good-value and hassle-free family holiday, plus enough adventure to keep the adults on side. The only challenge, in our experience, was keeping to our promise to not cram too much in.

Practicalities

To ease into the trip, we booked ahead at a guesthouse in Negombo with easy access to Colombo airport. The remainder of our accommodation ranged from comfortable midrange hotels to simple beach huts, but at each stop we arranged a car and driver to take us to our next destination, ensuring comfort, flexibility and reduced travel times - thereby avoiding cross and frustrated kids. For getting around towns and cities, three-wheeler auto-rickshaws, known as tuk-tuks by tourists (but not locals), added local color and fun.

Lunches were mostly bread and bananas bought at road-side stalls, but for evening meals we ate at our hotel or a local restaurant: 'devilled calamari' was a particular cross-cultural favorite. For drinking water, we avoided disposable plastic as much as possible and filled our own bottles with tap water purified by Steripen. We were fastidious about hand-washing, which seemed to pay off, as we all enjoyed a trip entirely free of tummy upsets.

**Barefoot in the sand at Uppuveli****Sri Lanka's mountain railways slice through emerald hills**

Comic

Word Search

90's Songs 2 - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| ALWAYS | LITHIUM | ROOSTER |
| BLACK VELVET | LOSER | RUSH RUSH |
| COME UNDONE | MOVE THIS | SENSITIVITY |
| DO ANYTHING | MY ALL | SHOOP |
| GLYCERINE | ONLY YOU | SOMEDAY |
| HEY LOVER | PUSH | THE ONE |
| IESHA | ROAM | VOGUE |
| JUMP | ROMANTIC | |

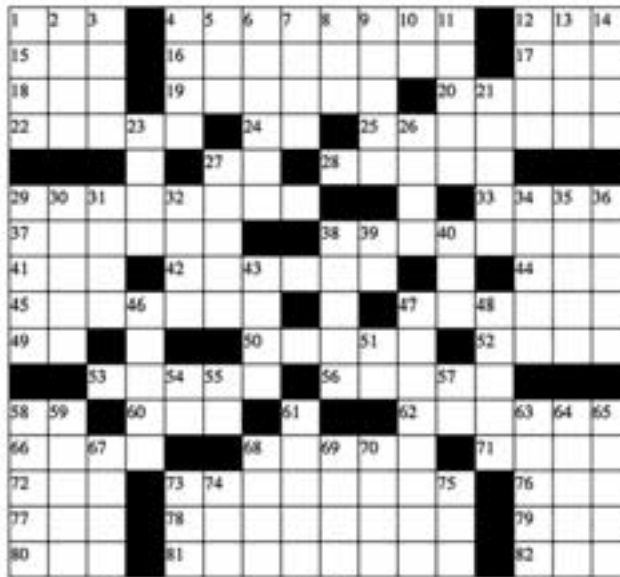
Yesterday's Solution

90's Songs 1 - Solution

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

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| ALL STAR | JOYRIDE | SUMMERTIME |
| CARNIVAL | MACARENA | TENNESSEE |
| FREAK ME | MMMBOP | 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 | |

Crossword 2158



ACROSS

1. A former monetary unit in Great Britain.
4. Doing arduous or unpleasant work.
12. An easy return of a tennis ball in a high arc.
15. The month following March and preceding May.
16. An Old World reptile family of Sauria.
17. One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
18. The cry made by sheep.
19. A nation in northern North America.
20. A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
22. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
24. A bluish-white lustrous metallic element.
25. Troubled persistently especially with petty annoyances.
28. A concavity in a surface (especially an anatomical depression).
29. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
33. The villain in William Shakespeare's tragedy who tricked Othello into murdering his wife.
37. A chain of connected ideas or passages or objects so arranged that each member is closely related to the preceding and following members (especially a series of patristic comments elucidating Christian dogma).
41. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
42. A large Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria.
44. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.

DOWN

1. A small cake leavened with yeast.
2. A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
3. (informal) Exceptionally good.
4. A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
5. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
6. A Japanese cheer of enthusiasm or triumph.
7. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
8. (usually followed by 'of') Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
9. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
10. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
11. Wheelwork consisting of a connected set of rotating gears by which force is transmitted or motion or torque is changed.
12. Being three more than fifty.
13. Look at with amorous intentions.
14. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
21. That part of the central nervous system that includes all the higher nervous centers.
23. A unit of area (4840 square yards) used in English-speaking countries.
26. United States tennis player who was the first Black to win United States and English singles championships (1943-1993).
27. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus *Draba* having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scape or leafy stems.
30. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
31. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
45. Gull family.
49. An honorary degree in science.
50. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
52. A capacity unit used for measuring fresh herring.
53. Goods (or wreckage) on the sea bed that is attached to a buoy so that it can be recovered.
56. The mother-in-law of Ruth whose story is told in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament.
58. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
60. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
62. Large highly venomous snake of north-eastern Australia.
66. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
71. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
72. Step on it.
76. To make a mistake or be incorrect.
77. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
78. Moths whose larvae are cutworms.
79. A resource.
80. The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
81. Eruption on a mucous membrane (as the inside of the mouth) occurring as a symptom of a disease.
82. (used as a combining form) Recent or new.

DOWN

32. A town in north central Oklahoma.
34. A machine or person that adds.
35. Pasture grass of plains of South America and western North America.
36. Consisting of or made of wood of the oak tree.
38. A member of an American Indian people of Yucatan and Belize and Guatemala who once had a culture characterized by outstanding architecture and pottery and astronomy.
39. An associate degree in nursing.
40. Used of a single unit or thing.
43. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
46. Any of a group of heavenly spirits under the god Anu.
47. A substance derived from amygdalin.
48. Being three more than ninety.
51. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
54. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
55. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
57. Informal terms for a mother.
59. Long-tailed arboreal mustelid of Central and South America.
61. Not acknowledging the God of Christianity and Judaism and Islam.
63. A formal expression of praise.
64. The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
65. Australian clover fern.
67. A signal transmitted along a narrow path.
68. A member of the Dravidian people living in the Nilgiri hills in southern India.
69. Consideration in dealing with others and avoiding giving offence.
70. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
73. (informal) Of the highest quality.
74. Cooking utensil consisting of a wide metal vessel.
75. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



01:30 Vengeance: A Love Story
03:20 The Wolverine
05:35 The Space Between Us
07:45 Cold Zone
09:20 Timeline
11:20 The Wolverine
13:40 Beyond The Edge
15:40 The Hunt For Red October
18:05 Surrogates
19:45 Bad Boys
22:00 Romeo Is Bleeding
23:55 Crank



00:50 Into Alaska
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 Monsters Inside Me
03:35 Amba The Russian Tiger
04:25 Into Alaska
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Wildest Arctic
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Vet On The Loose
08:00 Vet On The Loose
08:25 Whale Wars
09:15 Animal Cops Houston
10:10 Into Alaska
11:05 North Woods Law
12:00 Wildest Arctic
12:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
13:50 Amba The Russian Tiger
14:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
15:40 Extinct Or Alive
16:35 Monsters Inside Me
17:30 Whale Wars
18:25 Animal Cops Houston
19:20 League Of Monkeys
20:15 Amba The Russian Tiger
21:10 Amanda To The Rescue
22:05 Wildest Arctic
23:00 Monsters Inside Me
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees



00:20 EastEnders
00:50 The Split
01:45 Holby City
02:45 Inside No. 9
03:15 Inside No. 9
03:45 The Collection
04:40 Father Brown
05:25 Doctors
06:00 Doctors
06:35 EastEnders
07:05 Carters Get Rich
07:30 Friday Night Dinner
07:55 The Moonstone
08:40 Death In Paradise
09:35 Father Brown
10:25 Doctors
10:55 Doctors
11:25 EastEnders
11:55 Holby City
12:50 Casualty
13:40 Death In Paradise
14:35 EastEnders
15:05 Holby City
16:00 Doctors
18:35 Maigret
20:10 The Split
21:05 Line Of Duty
22:05 Luther
23:05 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
23:50 Doctors



00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Surviving R Kelly
02:30 The Killing Season
03:25 The Killing Season
04:15 Crimes That Shook Britain
05:10 The First 48
05:55 Live PD: Police Patrol
06:15 Cold Case Files
07:00 Homicide Hunter
08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
08:20 The First 48
09:05 Crimes That Shook Australia
09:50 Homicide Hunter

10:35 What The Killer Did Next
11:30 Nightmare In Suburbia
12:25 The First 48
13:20 I Killed My BFF
14:15 Live PD: Police Patrol
14:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
15:10 It Takes A Killer
15:40 It Takes A Killer
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 The First 48
19:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
19:30 Live PD: Police Patrol
20:00 Cold Case Files
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Police Patrol
22:30 Police Patrol
23:00 Surviving R Kelly



00:25 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
00:55 Broad City
01:18 Broad City
01:40 Review
02:05 Takeshis Castle Thailand
02:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:00 Broad City
03:23 Broad City
03:45 Are We There Yet
04:10 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
04:40 Impractical Jokers
05:00 Are We There Yet
07:05 Lip Sync Battle
07:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
08:15 Takeshis Castle Thailand
08:40 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
09:10 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
09:40 Menna W FINA
10:15 Friends
12:25 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
14:30 Disaster Date
15:45 Friends
18:00 Impractical Jokers
19:30 Ridiculousness Arabia
20:00 Takeshis Castle Thailand
20:25 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
20:55 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
21:25 Menna W FINA
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 The Alternative Comedy Experience
23:30 This Is Not Happening
23:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:30 Xploration Outer Space
01:20 Animal Airport
02:10 Baby Animals
03:00 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Xploration Outer Space
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
10:20 Animal Airport
11:10 Baby Animals
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Xploration Outer Space
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 Animal Airport
17:50 Baby Animals
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:05 Breaking Magic
19:30 Deception With Keith Barry
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:00 How It's Made
22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:15 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 Deception With Keith Barry



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



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



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 The Lion Guard
01:00 Sofia The First
01:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:00 PJ Masks
02:50 The Hive
03:00 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 The Hive
04:40 Zou
05:25 The Hive
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
06:35 The Hive
06:45 PJ Masks
07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
08:00 Disney Muppet Babies
08:20 Paprika
08:40 PJ Masks
09:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:15 Puppy Dog Pals
09:30 Vampirina
09:45 Fancy Nancy
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Elena Of Avalor
11:00 Puppy Dog Pals
12:00 Disney Muppet Babies
12:20 Paprika
12:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:40 PJ Masks
14:40 Paprika
15:00 Claude
15:40 Vampirina
16:30 Paprika
17:00 Disney Muppet Babies
17:30 PJ Masks
18:00 Puppy Dog Pals
18:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:00 Fancy Nancy
19:30 Vampirina
20:00 PJ Masks
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Sofia The First
21:25 Playtime With Puppy Dog Pals
21:30 Elena Of Avalor
22:00 Puppy Dog Pals
22:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
23:00 Fancy Nancy
23:30 Vampirina



00:15 Marooned With Ed Stafford
01:05 Impossible Engineering
01:50 Mythbusters Jr.
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Diesel Brothers
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Auction Kings
06:00 Storage Wars Canada
06:20 Auction Kings
06:45 Marooned With Ed Stafford
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Diesel Brothers
13:05 Storage Wars Canada
13:30 Auction Kings
13:55 Alaskan Bush People
14:40 Railroad Australia
15:30 Man v Expert
16:15 Wheeler Dealers
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Diesel Brothers
21:00 American Chopper
21:50 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings
22:40 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings
23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja

00:35 Booster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Booster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Marvel's Avengers: Secret Wars
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Gravity Falls
09:00 Supa Strikas
09:29 Milo Murphy's Law
10:29 Lab Rats
11:00 Phineas And Ferb
12:00 Supa Strikas
12:29 Gravity Falls
13:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:29 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:31 Furiki Wheels
16:00 Big City Greens
16:29 Space Chickens In Space
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:29 Supa Strikas
18:00 Phineas And Ferb
18:29 Lab Rats
19:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:00 Big City Greens
20:29 Gravity Falls
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
22:29 Furiki Wheels
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
21:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
23:00 Botched



00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 This Time Next Year
04:20 Gino's Italian Coastal Escape
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
07:10 The Chase
08:05 This Time Next Year
09:00 Gino's Italian Coastal Escape
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
10:55 Who's Doing The Dishes?
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Dancing On Ice
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:30 America's Book Of Secrets
01:15 Ancient Aliens

02:00 Ancient Discoveries
02:45 10 Things You Don't Know About...
03:30 UFO Hunters
04:15 Ancient Aliens
05:00 The Universe
05:45 Weapons At War
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22:15 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
23:45 Weapons At War



00:20 Mountain Men
01:05 Pawn Stars
01:50 American Pickers
02:35 Storage Wars
03:25 Brothers In Arms
04:15 River Hunters
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Detroit Steel
06:45 Mountain Men
07:30 Pawn Stars
08:15 American Pickers
09:00 Storage Wars
09:45 River Hunters
10:30 Forged In Fire
11:15 American Pickers
15:00 Counting Cars
17:15 Cars That Made America
18:45 Counting Cars
19:30 WW2 Treasure Hunters
21:00 Forged In Fire: Knife Or Death
22:40 Milwaukee Blacksmith
23:30 Cars That Made America



00:45 Croatia's Finest
01:10 My Dubai
01:40 Miguel's Feasts
02:05 Chasing The Sun
02:35 Bangkok Airport
03:30 Fish Tank Kings
04:25 Route Awakening
05:20 A House Of Its Time
06:15 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
06:40 Poh & Co.
07:10 Miguel's Feasts
07:35 Chasing The Sun
08:05 Bangkok Airport
09:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:55 Route Awakening
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11:45 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
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19:05 Bangkok Airport
20:00 Fish Tank Kings
21:00 Route Awakening
21:30 Route Awakening
22:00 A House Of Its Time
22:25 A House Of Its Time
22:55 Poh & Co.
23:20 Poh & Co.
23:50 Route Awakening

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you're learning what you value most today. You know that this day contributes to your future as the past always does. Analytical thoughtful processes take over your mind. Everything has a reason. There are no coincidences. Now to put them into work for you and your best life. You need to belong not only at work but at home. You find yourself questioning the sincerity of your lover's intentions. You may feel left out or looked over at home and don't appreciate the feeling. Ruminating on what to do is almost an obsession at the moment. You want to be loved and to love with a totally secure feeling that it'll be alright. You'll figure it out, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you need someone who loves and understands you. This is your greatest quest now because it means more to you than anything else. You feel that your mate and you should be two against the world. Romanticizing your relationship is your idea of the most ideal situation lovers could have. Though you generally live in the real world, you have dreams of that kind of sheltering type of love, Taurus. You need the nurturing but not in a motherly type manner. The security of having someone you trust implicitly is your need. Because of the perfection you seek you may make a mistake in your choices now. Be thoughtful.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, at work and at home this is a time you enjoy being with others. You're thanking the powers that be for the good you have in your life and you wish for the same in others lives as well. Friendships mean more to you now. You examine them closely to see why you feel as you do and why a particular person may want to befriend you. This isn't unusual for you, Gemini, because you're always in self-analysis mode. Emotional security is uppermost in your mind. Your job gives you a forum to show off and the boss notices. You're told what you mean to the work place. Enjoy the compliments. Maybe it's time for a raise.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you crave your personality traits more now than you generally do. That's because of the alignment of the stars at this moment, in case you're wondering. Don't think you're being obsessive. You're not. It's a need. Security is very important to you anyway but today it's a priority. Furthermore, you'll have opportunities to help yourself and the people to involve for increasing your probability for acquiring those needs but it won't happen quickly. What you really need to keep in mind, Cancer, is don't go on a shopping spree yet. Work instead. Anything you buy today will most likely need to be returned tomorrow. Take into account the objects you can't do without but don't go browsing.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, work could be in last place on your mind right now though you should concentrate more on keeping up the pace you've already set. Good will at work has gotten you where you are now. You may be thinking of home more than you are work and that's not a good combination when you're trying to make a more secure environment. Your friends may comment that you're less self-centered than you generally are, Leo. That egotistical side of you made you shine at work. Now all you can think about is home and family. Try to create a good balance in work and home life.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you have an instinctive desire to make the most of your life meaning you want to make sure you live a long, good life. Exercise and devotion to your style in eating may be part of your solution. Remember that you can get exercise without going to the gym. Dancing and other fun things like playing ball or bowling will help with that. Making your mind sharper also helps. You want to feel better about yourself, Virgo. That is your issue now and you're up to the challenge. You're also thinking of how best to make a life with the person you love. That's a good place to be.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, today you may think of changing your job description. You have a need to help others and in doing so helping yourself too. Nursing or becoming a psychologist are right up your alley now because of your needs. Those are noble professions but give yourself a couple of days before you start the college courses. This is a time that your decisions could be reversed shortly after making them. Take the time to let emotions settle down so that you understand exactly what you need, Libra. Meanwhile look to your mate for the love you seek.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, now could be the time to push yourself out there to ask for that new job. Going out on a date could be a great time for you too. Anything you've wanted to try but have been reticent to do is now at the forefront. You've got the charm and intellectual thought processes to keep anyone interested. You want roots, someone to go through life with, to make that life long commitment. You have to take the first step in any situation in order that others know your now making the attempt, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, you're getting it together in all aspects of your life. Your thoughts are slowing down now from the rushing torrent they were, so that you can inspect all elements of work opportunities and more. You realize that you want the ability to make more money, put down roots and have all you desire in life without giving up certain prospects. You have the ability, Sagittarius, to word your explanation to those you're trying to impress in such a manner that they understand and appreciate your sentiments more now. Today is your day. Enjoy and get your point across. Your clear-headed thoughts will help you succeed.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, someone at work goes against what you're trying to impart. Keep a lid on your temper if at all possible. March forward as if that person doesn't exist. He or she may be having a bad day. You don't need to let them infect you. This day is one that may find you struggling with your communication skills a little more than usual. That coworker doesn't help the matter either, Capricorn. You need to be encouraged today. It will probably come in the form of your lover. Take the love and sensitivity offered and enjoy.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, just as you start to feel very good about yourself, along comes something you may feel is putting your whole world together. A lover may get your entire attention. You think you've found the love of your life. At least it makes you feel that way when you're around this person. Your lover is on your mind constantly. The only other person who commands this much attention is a child or a pet that seems to be your child. Enjoy the time you're taking with this person. Work is going exceptionally well at the moment so you can spend thought on your new love life, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, this is a great time to be with others. Working groups are helpful now in that they help you spread ideas so that you can shine in the workplace. You show off in the management area. Higher ups notice. Work isn't really all you want to do today. You'd rather be out with friends or family enjoying a game or shopping for a new toy. You need something that makes you exercise your brain but you might like a trip to the zoo or a museum as well. Anything that brings new and different into your life is right up your alley, Pisces. Go for it whatever catches your eye.

Country Codes

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

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

BY NIGHT: Unstable and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind changing to wind, with speed of 18 - 45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

BY DAY: Unstable with moderate to fresh south easterly wind, with speed of 25 - 65 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING			Thunder rain + dust	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 14/03/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	18 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	26 °C	15 °C		
ABDALY	28 °C	13 °C		
BUBYAN	---- °C	---- °C		
JAHRA	28 °C	16 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	25 °C	16 °C		
SALMIYAH	25 °C	18 °C		
AHMADI	24 °C	17 °C		
NUWAISIB	25 °C	15 °C		
WAFRA	27 °C	15 °C		
SALMY	26 °C	16 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	03/15	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	26 °C	13 °C	NW-VRB	10 - 35 km/h
Saturday	03/16	Warm with a chance for fog forming at night	26 °C	12 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Sunday	03/17	Warm with a chance for blowing dust and some scattered clouds will appear	27 °C	12 °C	VRB-NW	10 - 45 km/h
Monday	03/18	Warm	26 °C	12 °C	NW	15 - 38 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:41
Sunrise	06:00
Zuhr	11:57
Asr	15:22
Sunset	17:55
Isba	19:12

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	27 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	76 %
MIN. RH	18 %
MAX. Wind	S 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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EMERGENCY

112

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

Clinics

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

Business

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TEHRAN: In this file photo gas flares from an oil production platform at the Soroush oil fields in the Persian Gulf, south of the capital Tehran. — Reuters

US aims to cut Iran oil exports

Washington seeks to choke off Tehran's main source of revenue

WASHINGTON: The United States aims to cut Iran's crude exports by about 20 percent to below 1 million barrels per day (bpd) from May by requiring importing countries to reduce purchases to avoid US sanctions, two sources familiar with the matter said. US President Donald Trump eventually aims to halt Iranian oil exports and thereby choke off Tehran's main source of revenue.

Washington is pressuring Iran to curtail its nuclear program and stop backing militant proxies across the Middle East. The United States will likely renew waivers to sanctions for most countries buying Iranian crude, including the biggest buyers China and India, in exchange for pledges to cut combined imports to below 1 million bpd. That would be around 250,000 bpd below Iran's current exports of 1.25 million bpd.

"The goal right now is to reduce Iranian oil exports to under 1 million barrels per day," one of the sources said, adding the Trump administration was concerned that pressing for a complete shutdown of Iran's oil in the short-term would trigger a global oil price spike. Washington may also deny waivers to some countries that have not bought Iranian crude recently, the sources said. The US reimposed sanctions in November after pulling out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers. Those sanctions have already halved Iranian oil exports.

To give time to importers to find alternatives and prevent a jump in oil prices, the US granted Iran's main oil buyers waivers to sanctions on the condition they buy less in the future. The waivers are due

for renewal every six months. "Zeroing out could prove difficult" one of the sources said, adding a price of around \$65 a barrel for international benchmark Brent crude was "the high end of Trump's crude price comfort zone." Brent crude settled at \$67.55 a barrel on Wednesday.

Both sources said they were briefed by the Trump administration on the matter but were not authorized to speak publicly about it and asked for anonymity. While the latest talks on waivers aimed for a reduction in exports, the sources said the administration remained committed to a complete halt in the future. Brian Hook, the State Department's special representative on Iran, also said in remarks at an industry conference in Houston on Wednesday that Washington is pursuing its plan to bring Iranian crude exports to zero.

Trump "has made it very clear that we need to have a campaign of maximum economic pressure" on Iran, Hook said, "but he also doesn't want to shock oil markets." A State Department energy bureau spokesperson declined to comment on new volume targets for importers, but said US officials were constantly assessing global oil markets to determine the way forward with Iran sanctions waivers. "On the numbers part, we'll get an updated assessment as we get closer to the end of the 180 day period," of the first round of waivers that ends in May, the spokesperson said.

Fewer waivers, less oil

Washington in November provided waivers to eight economies

that had reduced their purchases of Iranian oil, allowing them to continue buying it without incurring sanctions for six more months. They were China and India, along with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece. All eight are in bilateral talks about the waivers, sources said. The administration is considering denying extension requests made by Italy, Greece and Taiwan - in part because they have not made full use of their waivers so far, one of the sources said. Greece and Italy were not buying any Iranian oil, Iran's oil minister Bijan Zanganeh was quoted as saying in February.

It is unclear whether the administration will be able to convince China, India and Turkey - all of whom depend heavily on Iranian oil and have criticized the US sanctions on Iran - to reduce imports. "India, China and Turkey - the three tough cases - will continue to negotiate with the administration and are likely to keep their waivers," one of the sources said. Washington is pressuring allies Japan and South Korea to reduce purchases of Iranian crude, the source said.

The administration would likely struggle to cut Iran's exports much below 1 million bpd due mainly to strong demand from China, India and Turkey, said Amos Hochstein, who was in charge of Iran sanctions as the top US energy diplomat under former President Barack Obama. "Looking at the market right now it seems reasonable that Iranian exports will remain at the 800,000 to 1.1 million bpd average," said Hochstein, who talks with energy ministers from big oil consumers. He said he expects China and India purchases alone to account for around 800,000 to 900,000 bpd. — Reuters

Business

European, UK shares rally after UK votes down no-deal Brexit

Asian shares falter after Chinese data

LONDON: European shares rallied to five-month highs yesterday after Britain's parliament removed a key source of uncertainty by rejecting a no-deal Brexit though somber economic data and trade fears kept a lid on gains. A pan-European equity index jumped 0.7 percent to the highest since October after Britain's parliament vote on Wednesday. The vote paves the way for a delay to Brexit beyond the current March 29 deadline which could lead to an EU divorce deal being agreed or even another referendum.

British stocks also rose 0.5 percent. Goldman Sachs analysts told clients the probability of a no-deal Brexit had fallen to 5 percent from 10 percent after Wednesday vote. Despite the vote having no legal force, it carries considerable political force. However, data from China, signaling further weakness in the world's second-biggest economy, extended the steady stream of economic indicators that are painting a lackluster picture of the global economy—the figures showed industrial output at 17-year lows and sluggish retail sales.

That pushed MSCI's index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan 0.7 percent lower, though world shares trod water, staying well off 4-1/2 month highs hit recently. Wall Street was set for a marginally firmer open, futures showed. Reports that China was seeking to delay trade talks also weighed on sentiment. "Global markets have had a good start to this year but people are now starting to focus on the real issues like will there be a (US-China) trade deal, Brexit and the ex-



British stocks rise 0.5%

pectation that the Fed will raise rates possibly once more this year before maybe cutting rates," said Peter Lowman, chief investment officer at Investment Quorum.

He was speaking of the US Federal Reserve which signaled recently that it was pressing pause on rate rises. Some players however reckon it could still raise interest rates one more time before calling time on its tightening campaign. Lowman noted that despite China's slowing growth, markets have had an impressive rally this year, with the MSCI index climbing about 10 percent, spurred by the Fed's change of heart. But many remain skeptical about how much further the share rally can run.

The state of trade talks also weighed on investors after President Donald Trump said he was in no rush to complete an agreement. Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping had been expected to hold a summit at the presi-

dent's Mar-a-Lago property in Florida later this month, but no date has been set for a meeting. "Before we conclude that this market still has decent legs, we'd like to see equity prices supported by stronger macro data, lifted by better earnings trends, and confirmed by stable-to-rising yields," David Lafferty, chief market strategist at Natixis, told clients.

Brexit

On currency markets, most action was in sterling which rallied after Wednesday's vote by more than 1 percent to \$1.3380, the high-

est since June 2018. However, it has retreated from those levels to stand half a percent lower as lawmakers prepared to vote again later in the day to delay Brexit until at least the end of June. But analysts risks have not been eliminated with parliament still needing to find a way forward and all 27 EU nations needing to agree an extension on Brexit. "There is gradual optimism being priced in and barring something highly unlikely, the possibility of an actual no-deal is not zero but less than 5 percent," said Tim Graf, head of macro strategy at State Street Global Advisors.

challenges facing Ooredoo Kuwait in its security strategy and reduction of business risks in parallel with Ooredoo's digital transformation strategy and the utilization of AI, automation, and orchestration and now to effectively combat cyber threats, in addition to showcasing its success and best practices. Discussions will also include providing essential guidance for the security leaders on the front line and driving their organization's security strategy and working to reduce business risks. Commenting on the company's participation, Chief Business Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait Abdulaziz Al-Babtain said: "We're proud to participate in this event, which provides a good opportunity to interact with industry leaders in this field, and provides a constructive platform for exchanging expertise. Security strategy and reducing business risks is without a doubt one of the main and most important goals, which plays a vital role in the security of organizations. We believe that the Kuwaiti market deserves to have the latest and most advanced and innovative modalities to keep up with international trends of security."



NEW YORK: The US flag flies outside the New York Stock Exchange in New York. —AFP

est since June 2018. However, it has retreated from those levels to stand half a percent lower as lawmakers prepared to vote again later in the day to delay Brexit until at least the end of June. But analysts risks have not been eliminated with parliament still needing to find a way forward and all 27 EU nations needing to agree an extension on Brexit. "There is gradual optimism being priced in and barring something highly unlikely, the possibility of an actual no-deal is not zero but less than 5 percent," said Tim Graf, head of macro strategy at State Street Global Advisors.

UK watchdog puts Brexit war chest at £26.6bn

LONDON: Britain will have a £26.6-billion war chest to battle the potential damage of its exit from the European Union, a government oversight body said. With the Brexit deadline approaching on March 29 and no deal reached over the UK's departure, the government is stepping up economic contingency plans. Its efforts will be helped by extra money if it keeps to a budget deficit below two percent of gross domestic product in 2020-2021, the Office of Budget Responsibility, which the government tasks with reviewing its budgets, said late Wednesday.

Its report assessed finance minister Philip Hammond's latest economic report to parliament, which he delivered earlier Wednesday. "The

But he added: "There is always the chance the EU won't grant an extension if they are just going to be trying to push this deal through... that's where the caution comes in." Elsewhere, the Australian dollar was down 0.35 percent, hit by the lackluster economic data from China, Australia's major trading partner. The yuan too fell 0.3 percent. Oil prices extended overnight gains Brent adding 0.8 percent to \$68.05, boosted by OPEC-led supply cuts, US sanctions against Venezuela and Iran and an unexpected dip in US crude oil stocks and production.—Reuters

forecast changes and policy decisions leave (Hammond) with £26.6 billion of headroom against his fiscal mandate," the OBR said. "This is up from £15.4 billion in October, as the fiscal costs of the temporary near-term cyclical weakness of the economy have been swamped by the fiscal gains from higher income tax and lower debt interest spending."

The figure represents the difference between the OBR's new budget deficit forecast and the government's own fiscal targets. The money should help Britain offset an economic slowdown caused by uncertainty over how Brexit will be resolved. British Prime Minister Theresa May stressed on Tuesday that parliament's approval of the withdrawal agreement she has reached with Brussels will deliver a fiscal "Brexit dividend."

But lawmakers still rejected her deal, sending it to a second defeat since January. May on Wednesday agreed to ask the 27 EU leaders for a postponement of the Brexit deadline. But she also warned that unless parliament drops its opposition, any Brexit extension could be long.—AFP

Ooredoo becomes platinum sponsor of IDC Security Roadshow

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait today announces its participation as platinum partner in the upcoming IDC Security Roadshow 2019, which will take place at the JW Marriot Hotel Kuwait City on March 18, 2019. Hosted by global technology research and consulting firm International Data Corporation (IDC), the event will showcase insights from a number of industry-leading entities. Ooredoo's participation reiterates its commitment to enriching the Kuwaiti community with digital transformation. Chief Business Officer Abdulaziz Al-Babtain and Senior Director Corporate Security Amadou Ndiaye will be representing Ooredoo Kuwait at the event.

Various topics will be discussed such as the

Business

US weekly jobless claims rise; import prices increase

Weekly jobless claims rise 6,000 to 229,000

WASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits increased more than expected last week, suggesting the labor market was slowing, but probably not to the extent implied by a near-stall in job growth in February. While other data yesterday showed import prices rising by the most in nine months in February, the trend in imported inflation remained weak. Import prices dropped on a year-on-year basis for a third straight month in February. The stream of data remains broadly supportive of the Federal Reserve's pledge to be "patient" before raising interest rates further this year.

"Right now the labor market looks distinctly cooler than it did last year," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York. "If Fed Chair (Jerome) Powell is waiting for inflation to pick up before resuming that gradual pace of rate hikes, today's (import prices) report isn't going to impress him much." Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 6,000 to a seasonally adjusted 229,000 for the week ended March 9, the Labor Department said yesterday. Data for the prior week was unrevised. The Labor Department said no states were estimated.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims rising to 225,000 in the latest week. Claims have been hovering in the middle of their 200,000-253,000 range this year. The four-week moving average of initial claims, consid-

ered a better measure of labor market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, slipped 2,500 to 223,750 last week. The labor market is slowing as workers become more scarce. Hiring is also being constrained by a weakening economy as stimulus from a \$1.5 trillion tax cut diminishes.

Washington's trade war with Beijing, slowing demand overseas and uncertainty over Britain's exit from the European Union are also hurting economic activity. The government reported last week that nonfarm payrolls increased by only 20,000 jobs in February, the weakest since September 2017, in part as payback after hefty gains in the prior two months. But the unemployment rate dropped two-tenths of a percentage point to 3.8 percent and annual wage growth was the strongest since 2009. US financial markets were little moved by the data yesterday.



Labor market slows; workers become scarce

Imported food prices tumble

In another report yesterday, the Labor Department said import prices rose 0.6 percent last month, boosted by increases in the costs of fuels and consumer goods. That was the biggest gain since May and followed an upwardly revised 0.1 percent rise in January. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast import prices rising 0.3 percent in February after a previously reported 0.5 percent drop in January. In the 12 months through February, import prices fell 1.3 percent. That followed a



BOSTON: In this file photo job seekers speak with potential employers at a City of Boston Neighborhood Career Fair on May Day in Boston, Massachusetts. —AFP

1.6 percent decline in January.

The report came on the heels of data showing tame producer and consumer inflation readings in February. The jump in the monthly import prices probably does not change economists' expectations that inflation will remain moderate through the first half of 2019, and allow the Fed to stay pat on interest rates. The US central bank raised rates four times last year. Last month, prices for imported fuels and lubricants rose 4.9 percent after increasing 4.1 percent in January. Prices for imported petroleum increased 4.7 percent after rebounding 7.1 percent in January.

But food prices fell 0.8 percent in February

after decreasing 0.4 percent in the prior month. Excluding fuels and food, import prices rebounded 0.2 percent last month after falling 0.3 percent in January. The so-called core import prices fell 0.3 percent in the 12 months through February. Increases in core import prices have been curbed by last year's strength in the dollar.

Prices for imported consumer goods excluding automobiles rose 0.3 percent in February, reversing January's drop. The cost of goods imported from China were unchanged in February after dropping 0.3 percent in the prior month. Prices of Chinese imports dropped 0.7 percent in the 12-months through February, the biggest decline since October 2017.—Reuters

India's Reliance caps Venezuelan oil purchases

MUMBAI: India's biggest private oil refiner Reliance Industries has capped crude imports from sanction-hit Venezuela, the company said yesterday, following pressure from the United States. The energy-to-telecoms conglomerate has also stopped exporting diluents to the crisis-hit South American country, it said. The announcements come after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo asked India to halt all crude imports from Nicolas Maduro's regime, which the United States does not recognize.

"Our US subsidiary has completely stopped all business with Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PdVSA, and its global parent has not increased crude purchases," Reliance said in an emailed statement. "Reliance has halted all supply of diluents to PdVSA and will not resume such sales until sanctions are lifted," added the company, which is owned by India's richest man Mukesh Ambani. Venezuela—a once-rich oil-producing nation—is in the grip of an economic and political crisis and analysts said end-

ing diluent exports would hamper Venezuela's output.

"Venezuelan oil is thick and needs these raw materials for processing crude," PetroWatch editor Madhu Nainan told AFP. Venezuela is reeling from an unprecedented, week-long nationwide blackout and inflation is projected to reach 10 million percent this year, according to the IMF. The country's infrastructure has degraded over years because of a lack of investment, a significant brain drain, and the government's practice of putting the military in charge of key civilian facilities and companies.

The situation has worsened with successive rounds of US sanctions against Maduro's government, including steps that have severely curbed its oil exports. India became the top importer of crude from Venezuela in February after US President Donald Trump issued a de facto ban on imports. The US and European Union recognises opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president.

On Tuesday, Pompeo asked India to stop buying crude from Venezuela, so as not to provide an "economic lifeline" to Maduro's regime. The following day, New Delhi warned oil companies that they faced "undisclosed consequences" if they continued to buy Venezuelan oil. "We will continue a constructive dialogue with the US government to ensure Reliance remains in compliance," the conglomerate, which operates the world's biggest refining complex, added in its statement. —AFP

Giant UAE port operator posts rise in 2018 profit

DUBAI: Dubai port and logistics giant DP World said yesterday its net profit for 2018 rose over five percent on increased trade and higher returns from new acquisitions. The global provider, which runs port operations in over 40 countries, said in a statement that it posted a net profit of \$1.27 billion in 2018, compared to \$1.21 billion the previous year. "This robust performance has been delivered in an uncertain trade environment, once again highlighting the resilience of our portfolio," said DP World chairman and CEO Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem.

He said DP World had made new acquisitions worth \$2.5 billion last year, strengthening its presence around the world. They included Berbera port in Somaliland, Continental Warehousing Corp. in India, Cosmos Agencia Maritima in Peru, and the Unifeeder Group in Denmark, as well as the pan-European logistics business P&O Ferries. The state-owned company said its revenue for the year rose 20 percent to \$5.65 billion, with important contributions from new acquisitions. —AFP

Business

European parliament deals setback to EU-US trade talks

MEPs meeting fails to pass approval of EU mandate

STRASBOURG: The European Parliament yesterday failed to back the launch of trade talks between the EU and the United States, dealing an unexpected blow to efforts to avert a trade war. Pursuing a limited trade deal was the central part of a truce agreed in July when European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and US President Donald Trump pledged no new tariffs following those on steel and aluminum.

That announcement allowed the two sides to reduce tensions at a time when Trump threatened to impose steep duties on European automobiles—a threat he has renewed in recent weeks. MEPs meeting in the eastern French city of Strasbourg yesterday failed to pass an approval of an EU mandate, after a rebellion by lawmakers changed the wording of the text. In the final tally, 223 voted against the recommendation to start the talks and 198 in favor, with 37 abstentions.

The European Parliament only has an advisory role with regard to the EU's negotiating mandate, but it will have the final say once an agreement has been concluded. "We have taken note of the vote, on the draft

EU-US negotiating directives. We await the outcome of the discussions in Council," a spokesman for the European Commission, the EU executive, said. "The Commission will of course involve the European Parliament throughout in this process," he added.

The European Council represents member states. The setback in parliament comes as debate over the contours of the deal already underlined deep transatlantic divisions, with the US insisting that farming be included—an idea rejected by the EU. But powerful Germany deeply wants the deal in order to placate Trump and avoid the auto tariffs that would punish the country's cherished exports, a prospect Chancellor Angela Merkel has labeled "frightening".

France however is dragging its feet, fearing that entering trade negotiations with Trump could fire up domestic opposition just months ahead of European elections, set for May 22 to 26. Paris is especially wary after the failure of talks on TTIP, a far more ambitious transatlantic trade plan, which stalled amid fears a deal with Washington would undermine EU food and health standards. —AFP



Paris wary after failure of talks on TTIP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, US President Donald Trump and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, left, give a statement in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, DC. —AFP

Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways posts losses for third year

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways posted a loss in 2018 for the third year running, it said yesterday, blaming investment losses and challenging market conditions. The airline, which has been undergoing restructuring since late 2017, said it had narrowed its losses in 2018 to \$1.28 billion, from \$1.52 billion the previous year. Along with its 2016 losses, that adds up to total losses of \$4.67 billion over three years, prompting the company to scrap dozens of orders on aircraft.

Established in 2003 by the oil-rich Gulf emirate's government, the airliner has faced stiff competition from regional rivals, Dubai aviation giant Emirates and Doha-based Qatar Airways. Etihad invested heavily in carriers around the world including Alitalia, airberlin, Air Seychelles, Virgin Australia and India's Jet Airways, some of which have faced financial difficulties, causing Etihad heavy losses. In late 2017, the company appointed Tony Douglas, a former British defense official, as its chief executive officer and launched a five-year restructuring process. Douglas said yesterday the airline was "streamlining our cost base, improving our cash-flow and strengthening our balance sheet." The company said its financials had improved since the restructuring process began, despite "challenging market conditions and effects of an increase in fuel prices." —AFP

Fearing new oil glut, OPEC builds case for keeping supply cuts

LONDON: OPEC yesterday cut the forecast of global demand for its oil this year as rivals boost production, building a case for extending supply curbs beyond June to stop any new glut. Continued supply reductions would further support oil prices, which are up about 25 percent this year at \$68 a barrel, and incur the wrath of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has demanded OPEC ease its efforts to bolster the market.

In a monthly report, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said 2019 demand for its crude would average 30.46 million barrels per day, 130,000 bpd less than forecast last month and below what it is currently producing. OPEC, Russia and other non-member producers, an alliance known as OPEC+, are reducing output by 1.2 million bpd from Jan. 1 for six months. The report said rising production outside the group pressed the need for continued restraint by OPEC+.

"While oil demand is expected to grow at a moderate pace in 2019, it is still well below the strong growth expected in the non-OPEC supply forecast for this year," OPEC said in the report. "This highlights the continued shared responsibility of all participating producing countries to avoid a relapse of the imbalance and continue to support oil market stability in 2019." OPEC sources have said an extension of the pact is the likely scenario.

The group will discuss this at a meeting in April, although top exporter Saudi Arabia has said a decision may not be made until another gathering in June. The 2019 pact was a U-turn after the producers had agreed to boost supplies in mid-2018. OPEC+ changed course after prices slid from \$86 in October, making them wary of a new glut. Despite the new curbs, market indicators followed by OPEC will prolong concerns about excess supply. OPEC's report said oil inventories in developed economies were above the five-year average in January.

Venezuela output hit

OPEC's share of the cut is 800,000 bpd, and the report showed producers were over-delivering. Overall OPEC output fell by 221,000 bpd month-on-month to 30.55 million bpd. This was led by a drop in supply from Venezuela - exempt from the OPEC cut but under US sanctions - and a further voluntary reduction by Saudi Arabia. The 11 OPEC members required to cut output achieved 105 percent compliance in February with pledged curbs, according to a Reuters calculation, up from January.

Production in Iran and Libya, also exempt, was little changed. Even so, with the demand for OPEC crude forecast at 30.46 million bpd, the report indicates that the market would still face a small 2019 surplus if OPEC kept pumping at February's rate, as rivals such as the United States boost output. OPEC forecasts non-member producers to boost output in 2019 by 2.24 million bpd, 60,000 bpd more than expected previously. It kept its forecast for growth in global oil demand this year unchanged at 1.24 million bpd.—Reuters

Business

Microsoft targets video game developers, in challenge to Amazon cloud dominance

Microsoft to roll out 'Microsoft Game Stack'

CALIFORNIA: Microsoft Corp yesterday said it is combining elements of its video gaming and Azure cloud computing businesses to court game developers, an action designed to use the strength of its Xbox gaming franchise to gain ground on cloud services leader Amazon.com.

Microsoft said it will start rolling out "Microsoft Game Stack," a group of services that lets game developers do things like host multiplayer games and match players of similar skill levels. The services are designed to work for titles played on any device - including those with operating systems from Microsoft's onetime rivals like Apple and Google.

Microsoft competes against Amazon Web Services division to sell those cloud services. But it has been in the console gaming business with its Xbox device since 2001 and had 64 million users for its Xbox Live online gaming service. Microsoft also owns titles such as the "Halo," the sci-fi action franchise for the Xbox and Windows, as well as "Minecraft," a game that is popular on mobile devices with operating systems from Apple Inc and Google Inc.

On "any device you're going to pick up

today, consumer gaming is almost surely one of the top engagement and monetization businesses on that device," Phil Spencer, Microsoft's executive vice president for gaming, told Reuters. "As we were looking at our place in the gaming business and our place and things like Azure and the other services that Microsoft offers, we were seeing more and more synergy."

Microsoft faces competition in the game space from Amazon, which acquired gaming video service Twitch to let gamers watch

each other battle online and GameSparks to provide back-end services to game makers. Piers Harding-Rolls, head of games research at IHSMarkit, said Amazon has a lead right now over Microsoft in cloud services for game makers. But Microsoft's moves

yesterday, many based on its acquisition last year of a company called PlayFab, could help it gain ground.

"Microsoft intends to be as agnostic as possible - even supporting other cloud service providers and all platforms - but you have to think that these tools will end with more companies using Azure as a result," Harding-Rolls said. An example of

where Microsoft hopes its own gaming ex-

perience will pay off is in matching players of equal skill online, said Mark Russinovich, chief technical officer of Azure. The

chinese learning, which Microsoft has refined through its Xbox Live service over the years, he said. —Reuters



WASHINGTON: Phil Spencer, Microsoft Corp's Executive Vice President of Gaming, speaks at one of the company's Xbox events in this undated photo released from Microsoft Corporation in Redmond, Washington. —Reuters

Microsoft Game Stack

Investors could pump \$1bn into Uber self-driving cars

SAN FRANCISCO: A group of investors including SoftBank Group is in talks to invest \$1 billion or more into Uber's self-driving car unit, The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday. Word of a potential infusion of cash valuing the Uber autonomous vehicle division at from \$5 billion to \$10 billion comes as the ride-hailing startup steers toward a hotly-anticipated stock market debut. Under terms being discussed, SoftBank's Vision Fund and other investors, including a car maker, would take a minority stake in Uber's self-driving vehicle unit, according to the Journal.

Led by Japan's Masayoshi Son, the Vision Fund is heavily invested by Saudi Arabia. The Journal described the "late-stage" talks as fluid, with the possibility a deal might not be reached. Uber has been in a race with Google-owned Waymo and a host of other companies, including major automakers, to develop self-driving vehicles. Waymo said this month that it would sell a key innovation to companies that don't compete with its autonomous cars.

The California-based unit of Google parent Alphabet will offer its lidar sensors, which measure distance with pulses of laser light, to companies in robotics, security, agricultural technology and other sectors. The move could offer a new revenue stream for Waymo as it invests in bringing "robo taxis" to market, broadening the availability of the 3D lidar sensors it has



SAN FRANCISCO: In this file photo an Uber self-driving car drives down San Francisco's 5th Street. —AFP

been developing since 2011. Uber is aiming beyond car rides to becoming the "Amazon of transportation" in a future where people share, instead of own, vehicles.

If all goes to plan, commuters could ride an e-scooter to a transit station, take a train, then grab an e-bike, share a ride or take an e-scooter at the arriving station to complete a journey—all using an Uber app on a smartphone. Uber's platform moves cargo as well as people, with a "Freight" service that connects truckers with shippers in a way similar to how drivers connect with people seeking rides. Uber is also seeing growing success with an "Eats" service that lets drivers make money delivering meals ordered from restaurants. —AFP

Entrepreneurs brave Baltic ice in bid for cash

OULU, Finland: How far would you go to win 10,000 euros (\$11,300)? On a blisteringly cold night in northern Finland, hopeful entrepreneurs plunge into a hole in the Baltic sea ice in a bid to win over a panel of investors. The annual 'Polar Bear Pitching' competition in the remote town of Oulu, just over an hour's drive from the Arctic Circle, is a chance for 12 start-up businesses to try and snare funding for their ventures from a group of potential backers. The catch—competitors may only speak for as long as they can stand chest deep in glacial water. Long, rambling presentations are well and truly off the agenda. "It feels terrible. It feels like you get punched in the face by ten really strong guys," said Lasse Brurok, who took home this year's prize money along with his business partner Arne-Morten Willumsen. The pair's energy and humor impressed the judges—who sat huddled on reindeer skins on dry land—as well as the business potential of their website which allows users to buy and sell new and used books in their native Norway. "We came here with the mindset that we're gonna win, and it worked out. Even though we had that mindset, it's still a shock. It's really fun," Willumsen told AFP. This year's contenders came from countries including the US, Kenya, Estonia and Finland.

While most managed between one and two minutes in the ice hole, the longest presentation ran to almost five skin-numbing minutes—a record in the competition's seven year history. A hot tub was on hand to bring the speakers back up to room temperature. Among the other innovations vying for the 2019 prize were a design for a super-lightweight electric cable, a lower-cost system of sensors to track tennis games, and a tool for analysing video CVs of job applicants. —AFP

Sports

Wales unchanged for Ireland as Williams declared fit

Victory over Ireland would ensure record 6 Nations clean sweep of Gatland's reign

CARDIFF: Warren Gatland yesterday named an unchanged Wales team for his final Six Nations game in charge, full-back Liam Williams having overcome a right shoulder 'stinger' injury.

It will be Gatland's 50th Six Nations match with Wales, with the Kiwi coach slated to step down from his post following this year's Rugby World Cup in Japan. Wales head into Saturday's match at Cardiff's Principality Stadium as the only unbeaten team in the Six Nations tournament with four victories from four played, part of a 13-match unbeaten streak.

Victory over Ireland would ensure a record third Six Nations clean sweep of Gatland's reign following Grand Slams in 2008 and 2012, and a first Six Nations title since 2013. The Irish, however, can still win the title should they beat the Welsh and Scotland be victorious over England in Saturday's final game.

"We've named an unchanged squad and rewarded the players for the last couple of outings and the last couple of victories," said Gatland, who took over as Wales coach at the end of 2007. "These players are on a very good run, they are a hugely impressive group and they deserve to be going into the final weekend with everything to play for."

"It is a great reward for them for the hard work they have put in and we are all looking forward to what is going to be a huge game."

Leaving the Wales set-up along with Gatland after the World Cup will be respected assistant coaches Shaun Edwards, Rob Howley

and Robin McBryde, among others. And the New Zealander admitted that tomorrow would likely prove emotional. "For a number of us as coaches this is our last Six Nations game and the fact that it is in Cardiff is extra special," he said. "There is bound to be a bit of emotion on Saturday and that is something to embrace."

Captain Alun Wyn Jones will equal Welshman Gethin Jenkins' total Test appearance record as he moves to 134 caps (125 Wales, nine British and Irish Lions) and to joint fifth in the overall world Test appearance list.

Jones again packs down with Adam Beard in the second row, with Rob Evans, Ken Owens and Tomas Francis continuing together in the front row, as Josh Navidi, Justin Tipuric and Ross Moriarty combine in the back row.

Gareth Davies and Gareth Anscombe are named at half-back with Hadleigh Parkes and Jonathan Davies in the centre. Josh Adams, George North and Liam Williams once again comprise the back three for Wales.

Williams had been an injury doubt after going off injured in last weekend's 18-11 victory over Scotland. But the Saracens full-back has shaken off that knock, sustained in a tackle, to be declared fit. Elliot Dee, Nicky Smith and Dillon Lewis provide the front-row cover on the bench with Jake Ball and Aaron Wainwright completing the forward contingent. Aled Davies, Dan Biggar and Owen Watkin provide backline cover.

Wales team to play Ireland in the final round of Six Nations matches at Cardiff's



EDINBURGH: File photo shows Scotland's number 8 Josh Strauss (2L) is tackled during the Six Nations international rugby union match between Scotland and Wales at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh on March 9, 2019. —AFP

Principality Stadium on Saturday (kick-off 1345 GMT):

Liam Williams; George North, Jonathan Davies, Hadleigh Parkes, Josh Adams; Gareth Anscombe, Gareth Davies; Ross Moriarty, Justin Tipuric, Josh Navidi; Alun Wyn Jones

(capt), Adam Beard; Tomas Francis, Ken Owens, Rob Evans.

Replacements: Elliot Dee, Nicky Smith, Dillon Lewis, Jake Ball, Aaron Wainwright, Aled Davies, Dan Biggar, Owen Watkin Coach: Warren Gatland (NZL). —AFP

Skateboard whizz-kid Brown chooses Britain in Olympic blow to Japan

TOKYO: Ten-year-old skateboarding sensation Sky Brown, who had been a medal hope for Japan at next year's Tokyo Olympics, yesterday opted to qualify under the British flag. The pint-sized YouTube smash, born to a Japanese mother and a British father, told AFP she had taken the decision because Britain offered a more relaxed approach, given her tender years.

"I chose to compete for Britain because they told me 'Have fun, there's no pressure!'—and I feel like that's the best way for me to skate my best," said Japan-based Brown, the world's youngest professional skateboarder.

"I want to work hard and try my best, but I mostly skateboard for fun—it's my happy place." Japanese skate officials struggled to match Britain's technical know-how and structure, leaving Brown to make a difficult choice—and one which could potentially cost the Olympic host nation a medal.

"It would be really cool to qualify (for Britain's Olympic team)," said Brown, who is also a professional surfer and has just become Nike's youngest athlete. "It's really cool that the Olympics will be in Japan because it's my home, it's where I was born," added Brown, who lives in Miyazaki, southern Japan. —AFP

England drop Cokanasiga as Jones rings changes for Scotland

BAGSHOT: Joe Cokanasiga has been dropped by England coach Eddie Jones for tomorrow Six Nations finale against Scotland at Twickenham. The powerhouse wing produced a man-of-the-match display in England's 57-14 thrashing of Italy as he rampaged around Twickenham last weekend, with former England coach Clive Woodward comparing the Fiji-born flyer to New Zealand great Jonah Lomu.

But Cokanasiga was not even named on the bench for the Calcutta Cup clash against Scotland with fellow wing Jack Nowell, the man he came in for last weekend, returning after a shoulder 'stinger' injury in one of four changes made by Jones to his starting XV.

Jones said leaving the four-times capped Cokanasiga out completely was all part of his plan for the 21-year-old's future development ahead of this year's World Cup in Japan. "Joe's a good, young player and we're looking after him," Jones told reporters at England's training base in Bagshot, southwest of London, on Thursday.

"He'll feature very strongly in our plans for the future, but we just feel this week that Jack Nowell is our best player in that position. "He (Cokanasiga) is a young player and we don't need to rush him. We'll bring him through carefully and he's got a long career ahead of him."

The Australian added: "We've got a good plan in place for him. He'll be

ready by the World Cup." Elsewhere Henry Slade returns in the centres to partner Manu Tuilagi. Ben Te'o drops to the bench, with Jones opting for a more traditional midfield balance of guile and strength following last week's power-packed duo.

There are also two changes in the pack, with Mark Wilson back at blind-side flanker instead of Brad Shields and prop Ben Moon returning in place of Ellis Genge. Ben Youngs will make his 85th appearance to surpass the England record for a scrum-half held by Danny Care.

If Wales beat Ireland in Cardiff earlier on Saturday they will be crowned champions and complete a Grand Slam. But if the Welsh lose, England will take the title instead if they beat the Scots. "It's the last week of the tournament so it's exciting. It will be a fascinating finish too, with the three teams that can win it and we are playing against one of our most traditional foes in Scotland," said Jones.

"Scotland are a difficult side—they are always at you, they play with a lot of enthusiasm and effort and have got a lot of attacking strings to their bow," he added. Scotland beat England 25-13 at Murrayfield to win the Calcutta Cup last season but they have only beaten Italy so far in this Six Nations and the Scots have not won at Twickenham since 1983.

Whatever happens, England will have had a far better Championship after losing their last three Six Nations matches to finish fifth last season. That was part of a run of five straight Test defeats that included subsequent losses in the opening two internationals of their tour of South Africa.

"The massive improvement for us is in our mindset," said Jones, "whose side would have been going for a Grand Slam themselves but for a second-half collapse during a 21-13 loss to Wales in Cardiff. "That's what's pleased me the most, the clarity with which we can play the game and the way we are becoming adaptable.

"We still have a long way to go don't get me wrong but it's going to be massively important for tomorrow. "But if we impose our game on Scotland, it'll be pretty tough for them." —AFP

Sebastian Vettel fired up to return Ferrari to the top

Italian team have a new look heading into the season

MELBOURNE: Four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel yesterday vowed to shrug off a “disaster” 2018 and topple arch-rival Lewis Hamilton, with his refreshed team passionate about returning Ferrari to the top.

The German won the opening race of the season in Melbourne last year and backed it up with victory at the next in Bahrain. But Hamilton roared back to sweep 11 of the remaining 19 Grand Prix and the 31-year-old is desperate to turn the tables.

“There is a lot of passion inside this team willing to get out and to express ourselves through winning I think is the best we can do,” he said. “So that’s the target. So far the atmosphere is good, the spirit is right within the team and we will try to carry that into the season.”

Vettel is a winner and having to settle for second in the drivers and constructors championship last year was tough to take. He said it was normal for Ferrari fans to consider finishing runner-up a “disaster”.

“You know the winner takes it all. Lewis has been in that position the last couple of years and we will try to turn it around,” he said. “In the end we are racing for Ferrari and we will try to get

Ferrari back to where we’ve been trying to get it back to for the past few years.” Ferrari haven’t won the constructors’ title since 2008 and their last drivers’ crown came in 2007 through Kimi Raikkonen.

The Italian team have a new look heading into the season, with tech chief Mattia Binotto replacing Maurizio Arrivabene as team principal and young gun Charles Leclerc in for the experienced Raikkonen. Asked if Ferrari were in a better situation now than 12 months ago, the 31-year-old replied: “Yeah quite frankly because last year’s winter testing didn’t go well for us.

“We had some issues with the car to fix. We got a bit lucky during the race weekend (in Melbourne) with the safety car to grab the win. “In this regard we are more prepared. Our car seems to work fine, there are no problems at this stage.”

But he added: “It’s a tough weekend ahead of us.” Despite his huge experience, Vettel admitted to being “a bit nervous” ahead of the 2019 campaign. “You don’t know exactly where you are, you don’t know what’s going to happen,” he said. “At this point we are all hunters and we are all the hunted. We have zero points.” —AFP



MELBOURNE: Williams’ Polish driver Robert Kubica (R) and Ferrari’s German driver Sebastian Vettel attend a press conference in Melbourne yesterday, ahead of the Formula One Australian Grand Prix. —AFP

F1 mourns sudden death of race director Whiting

MELBOURNE: The death of Formula One race director Charlie Whiting, a popular and key figure in the sport, cast a pall over the paddock yesterday, three days before the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

The governing International Automobile Federation (FIA) said in a statement that the Briton, who started his career working for the Hesketh team in 1977, had died in Melbourne of a pulmonary embolism. He was 66.

Australian Michael Masi, a previous deputy race director of the local V8 Supercars series who has served as a steward at Formula One and Formula E, will replace Whiting for the Melbourne weekend. “It is with immense sadness that I learned of Charlie’s sudden passing,” said Jean Todt, president of the International Automobile Federation.

“He has been a great race director, a central and inimitable figure in Formula One who embodied the ethics and spirit of this fantastic sport. Formula One has lost a faithful friend and a charismatic ambassador in Charlie.” Whiting, who had been race director since 1997, started out with defunct British outfit Hesketh before crossing to Brabham to work with the sport’s former commercial supremo Bernie Ecclestone in the 1980s.

A poacher turned gamekeeper, with a ready grin and self-deprecating sense of humour, he joined the FIA as a technical delegate in 1988. Inside the paddock, he was known simply as Charlie—the go-to man for teams, drivers and media.

At the FIA, Whiting was a driving force in pushing improved safety and played a key role in the introduction of the halo, the ring-like barrier fitted over the drivers’ heads to protect them from heavy impacts and missiles. The news was met with shock in the Formula One paddock.



Charlie Whiting

“What he did for this sport, I mean, his commitment...he really was a pillar,” five times world champion Lewis Hamilton told reporters.

“I spoke to him yesterday and walked the track for the first couple of corners together with him,” added Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel. “Difficult to grasp when somebody is just not there anymore. “He’s sort of been our man, the driver’s man. Obviously there are regulations and all that and then there is us and he was the middleman. He was someone you could ask anything of, anytime.”

Former champions McLaren said Whiting would be remembered “as one of the giants of our sport, as well as a great colleague.” Ross Brawn, F1 managing director, said he was “devastated” to lose a friend and colleague.

“I have known Charlie for all of my racing life. We worked as mechanics together, became friends and spent so much time together at race tracks across the world,” the former championship-winning boss of Brawn GP said in a statement. “I was filled with immense sadness when I heard the tragic news.” —Reuters

Hamilton says Mercedes have work cut in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: Mercedes have plenty of work ahead to challenge Ferrari, world champion Lewis Hamilton said yesterday but voiced confidence his team was making good progress. The 34-year-old, who was dominant in 2018, said after pre-season testing in Barcelona the Italian team could be up to half a second quicker at the opening race of the year in Melbourne on Sunday.

While cars have different engine settings and fuel loads in testing, the Briton insisted he wasn’t joking despite winning five drivers’ and constructors’ titles in a row. “Usually the first few races is when you really start to get an idea of where everyone stands,” the five-time champion said in his pre-race press conference.

“But we certainly have work to do. We weren’t talking BS you know (in Barcelona). We have work to do.” Hamilton won 11 of the 21 races in 2018 to beat Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel and secure his fifth championship with two rounds to spare.

Now fully refreshed after an off-season break spent skydiving and surfing, among other things, he is partnered for a third successive season by Valtteri Bottas. Mercedes is one of only two teams to stick with the same driver line-up and Hamilton said, for him, it was important to have continuity. “On the driving front, continuity is what works. We have a great pairing and the contribution from Valtteri and I has worked well for years,” he said. “We have so many incredible people in the team and the energy is really, really inspiring to see. The communication is better than ever.

“It’s so impressive to see so many people passionate about their jobs and about racing and wanting to do a better job and wanting to improve,” he added. “It’s really cool to see and really encouraging. This is a team that will give absolutely everything to make sure we continue to progress.” —AFP

Sports

Federer, Nadal, steam into Indian Wells quarter-finals

19-year-old Miomir Kecmanovic keeps Serbian flag flying

INDIAN WELLS: Former champions Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal edged closer to a blockbuster semi-final showdown at the ATP Indian Wells Masters on Wednesday with brisk fourth-round wins. World number two Nadal overpowered Serbian qualifier Filip Krajinovic 6-3, 6-4 to book his quarter-final berth in one hour and 26 minutes.

Federer, seeking a record sixth title in the California desert, needed just 64 minutes to get past Britain's Kyle Edmund 6-1, 6-4. Nadal said his performance on a windy stadium court wasn't as good as his 6-3, 6-1 third-round win over Argentine Diego Schwartzman.

But he was more than a match for 113th-ranked Krajinovic, breaking him early in each set and saving the only break point he faced. Nadal, who lifted the Indian Wells trophy in 2007, 2008 and 2013, is in the last eight for the first time in three years after missing last year's edition, skipping both Indian Wells and the Miami Masters with a hip injury.

He next will take on 13th-ranked Russian Karen Khachanov, who beat world number nine John Isner 6-4, 7-6 (7/1). Khachanov produced just one ace to the big-serving American's 12 but stretched his record over Isner to 4-0.

Fourth-seeded Federer, fresh off his 100th career title, looked poised to finish off Edmund in less than an hour. But the Swiss great had to fight off three break points as he served for the match, just a small speed bump in a match that he took charge of early.

"He didn't have the best start, so that cost him

the first set," Federer said. "Second set, it was definitely better. I think he probably struggled throughout a little bit. He never really got going.

"Conditions are tough with the glare, and the jump of the ball it's sometimes hard to find the rhythm and timing." Federer will fight for a semi-final berth against 22-year-old Pole Hubert Hurkacz.

Hurkacz, ranked 67th in the world, sent 25th-ranked Canadian Denis Shapovalov packing 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-3. Although he'll be an overwhelming favorite against Hurkacz, Federer said he wouldn't take a semi-final meeting with Nadal for granted. "I hope I can get there," Federer said, "but I'm not going to underestimate Hubert."

A day after world number one Novak Djokovic tumbled out of the third round, 19-year-old Miomir Kecmanovic kept the Serbian flag flying. Kecmanovic became the first lucky loser to reach the last eight at Indian Wells since the ATP's Masters 1000 series launched in 1990.

Kecmanovic, ranked 130th in the world, had taken the first set against Yoshihito Nishioka 6-4 when the 74th-ranked Japanese retired because of injury. Kecmanovic, who gained entry to the second round when fifth-seeded Kevin Anderson withdrew with an elbow injury, is in his first ATP quarter-final.

Kecmanovic is the last teen left in the men's draw, after the departure of 19-year-old Shapovalov. At the other end of the age spectrum, 40-year-old Croatian Ivo Karlovic's run came to an end with a 6-4, 6-3 loss to 25-year-old seventh seed Dominic Thiem.



INDIAN WELLS: Roger Federer of Switzerland plays a backhand against Kyle Edmund of Great Britain during their men's singles fourth round match on day ten of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Wednesday in Indian Wells, California. —AFP

Thiem needed less than an hour to subdue the 89th-ranked Karlovic, surrendering just seven points on his own serve and punishing Karlovic's second serve. Thiem said putting 87 percent of his first serves in play was key in his first meeting with Karlovic.

"I felt pretty confident on my own service games. That's what I transferred also to the return

games," he said. "I made two breaks in the right moment I would say."

Thiem booked a meeting with 18th-seeded Gael Monfils of France, who defeated Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-0, 6-2 in 57 minutes a day after the German stunned world number one Novak Djokovic in the third round. —AFP

Shiffrin wins first WCup Super-G globe

PARIS: Mikaela Shiffrin won the World Cup Super-G crystal globe for the first time yesterday, adding it to the overall title and the slalom globe she has already won this ski season. The American, who turned 24 on Wednesday, clinched the title in Soldeu, Andorra, to underline her dominance. Shiffrin was tied for fourth with Austria's Nicole Schmidhofer, 0.44sec behind winner Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany. She is almost certain to add the giant slalom globe in Andorra on Sunday when she only needs to finish in the first 15 places. With only 100 points available for a win, Petra Vlhova of Slovakia needs to overturn a 97-point deficit. If she achieves that feat, she would become the first skier—male or female—to collect World Cup titles in overall, slalom, giant slalom and super-G discipline in a single season.

Overall World Cup standings

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 2,004 pts, 2. Petra Vlhova (SVK) 1,235, 3. Wendy Holdener (SUI) 959, 4. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 771, 5. Viktoria Rebensburg (GER) 769, 6. Federica Brignone (ITA) 764, 7. Ragnhild Mowinckel (NOR) 675, 8. Frida Hansdotter (SWE) 609, 9. Stephanie Venier (AUT) 528, 10. Ilka Stuhec (SLO) 507

Final World Cup Super-G standings

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 350 pts, 2. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 303, 3. Tina Weirather (LIE) 268, 4. Viktoria Rebensburg (GER) 257, 5. Ragnhild Mowinckel (NOR) 247. —AFP

Andreescu overwhelms Muguruza to reach Indian Wells semis

INDIAN WELLS: Bianca Andreescu's breakout season continued Wednesday as the Canadian teenager swept past two-time Grand Slam champion Garbine Muguruza and into the Indian Wells WTA semi-finals.

Andreescu, 18 and ranked 60th in the world, won the first nine games on the way to a 6-0, 6-1 victory that took just 52 minutes. She reached her third semi-final of the season after a run to the final in Auckland and the last four in Acapulco.

"I just went out there, went for it," Andreescu said. "I didn't focus on who was on the other side. "It really helped me. I used my serve to my advantage. She didn't serve so well today, so I took advantage that as well."

Andreescu, who began 2019 ranked 152nd in the world, is now headed for the top 40. The win over Muguruza, now ranked 20th, followed a victory over 18th-ranked Wang Qiang of China in the fourth round and took her win-loss record to a remarkable 26-3 in 2019, including qualifying matches.

"I had a good day," Andreescu said. "She didn't have such a good day. I felt she was holding back a lot so I just kept putting pressure. She just kept missing." Muguruza said the overall quality of Andreescu's game

was just too much.

"I struggled to find a way to turn things around, because she was keeping her high level all the time," Muguruza said. Andreescu will get a shot at another top-10 player in the semi-finals, after sixth-ranked Elina Svitolina clawed out a 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory over another red-hot teen—Marketa Vondrousova of Czech Republic.

Vondrousova, who reached her second WTA final in Budapest in February to arrive in California ranked 61st in the world, was coming off an upset of world number two Simona Halep in the third round, which followed wins over 2018 finalist Daria Kasatkina and former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Svitolina, coming off a 7-6 (10/8), 5-7, 6-4 win over Aussie Ashleigh Barty that—at three hours 12 minutes—was the longest on the WTA Tour this year, struggled to get to grips with the unfamiliar left-hander's game.

But her experience and determination made the difference in the end. "Not every day you play your best game, you just have to stay strong and stay calm and fight for every ball," Svitolina said. The remaining quarter-finals will be played, with Belinda Bencic taking on Karolina Pliskova and Venus Williams facing Angelique Kerber in a battle of former world number ones. Bencic, 22, stunned world number one Naomi Osaka 6-3, 6-1 in the fourth round, bringing the Japanese star's first WTA title defense to an abrupt end.

The Swiss player is on the rise after a spate of injuries slowed her career and is ranked 23rd in the world after claiming her first title in four years at Dubai last month. —AFP

Sports

Friday, March 15, 2019

Warriors hold on, snap Houston Rockets' nine-game win streak

HOUSTON: DeMarcus Cousins served as a facilitator before thriving as a battering ram, leading the Golden State Warriors to a 106-104 victory over the host Houston Rockets on Wednesday. Cousins posted season-highs in points (27) and assists (seven) to help the Warriors avert a four-game, season-series sweep by the Rockets. The Warriors, 4-6 over their previous 10 games, snapped the Rockets' season-best, nine-game winning streak by striking an effective inside-out balance. Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson combined for 54 points on 20-of-43 shooting, with Thompson tallying 30 and five 3-pointers. James Harden paired 29 points with 10 assists but continued his recent struggles from deep, missing 10 of 12 3-point attempts. Clint Capela posted 13 points and 13 rebounds but struggled to defend Cousins on the block. Eric Gordon added 17 points for the Rockets.

THUNDER 108, NETS 96

Paul George and Russell Westbrook com-

binated for 56 points as Oklahoma City beat visiting Brooklyn after trailing by as much as 17 early in the second quarter and 10 early in the second half. It was the second time this season the Thunder came from a double-digit deficit in the second half to beat the Nets and the 14th game this season that Oklahoma City won after trailing by at least 10. Westbrook finished with 31 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his first triple-double since Feb. 28. Spencer Dinwiddie led the Nets with 25 points.

WIZARDS 100, MAGIC 90

Bradley Beal scored 23 points, Thomas Bryant added 21 points and 10 rebounds, and Washington defeated visiting Orlando. Jabari Parker added 19 points and nine rebounds for Washington, which is 2-0 on a crucial five-game homestand. Wizards reserves, led by Bryant, Parker and Chasson Randle (13 points), scored 59 points. Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 20 points and 14 rebounds. D.J. Augustin scored 16 points, and



HOUSTON: Gerald Green #14 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the Golden State Warriors on Wednesday at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

NBA results/standings

Oklahoma City 108 Brooklyn 96; Washington 100 Orlando 90; Miami 108 Detroit 74; Atlanta 132 Memphis 111; Golden State 106 Houston 104; Utah 114 Phoenix 97.

	Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
x-Milwaukee	51	17	0.750	-	Golden State	46	21	0.687	-
x-Toronto	48	20	0.706	3	Denver	44	22	0.667	1.5
Philadelphia	43	25	0.632	8	Houston	42	26	0.618	4.5
Indiana	43	25	0.632	8	Oklahoma City	42	26	0.618	4.5
Boston	41	27	0.603	10	Portland	41	26	0.612	5
Brooklyn	36	34	0.514	16	San Antonio	39	29	0.574	7.5
Detroit	34	33	0.507	16.5	Utah	38	29	0.567	8
Miami	32	35	0.478	18.5	LA Clippers	39	30	0.565	8
Orlando	31	38	0.449	20.5	Sacramento	33	33	0.500	12.5
Charlotte	30	37	0.448	20.5	Minnesota	32	36	0.471	14.5
Washington	29	39	0.426	22	LA Lakers	31	36	0.463	15
Atlanta	24	45	0.348	27.5	New Orleans	30	40	0.429	17.5
Chicago	19	50	0.275	32.5	Memphis	28	41	0.406	19
Cleveland	17	51	0.250	34	Dallas	27	40	0.403	19
New York	13	55	0.191	38	Phoenix	16	53	0.232	31

x - clinched playoff spot

No World Cup panic for Kohli despite Aussie drubbing

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli said his team is not panicking about the World Cup despite India suffering their first one-day series loss at home since 2015 at the hands of a resurgent Australia.

Their collapse from 2-0 up to a 3-2 defeat earned his side some harsh criticism in the media on Thursday, with a Times of India headline declaring "The Bubble Bursts", while the Indian Express said "India lose grip, match, series". But Kohli, the Indian captain, said after Australia sealed the series on Wednesday: "None of the guys in the changing room are panicking, the support staff is not feeling down after this defeat.

"The XI is clear in our head. We just have to take better decisions in pressure situations to go far in the World Cup," he added.

But the skipper urged his players to manage their workload during the nearly two-month long Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 tournament starting March 23, in their bid to stay fit for the 50-over World Cup in England and Wales beginning on May 30.

The series against Australia, who triumphed against the odds despite the absence of batsmen David Warner and Steve Smith, was the last time the Indian side will play together before then, with the players now due to join their IPL sides.

Kohli said there should be no pressure in the annual T20 extravaganza-when top players earn millions of dollars. "Exactly what we spoke in the change room was, 'just go and enjoy these two months in the IPL. Don't think of performance or pressure,'" said Kohli. "All the workload will be monitored," he added. "Everyone knows that no one wants to miss the World Cup and cost the team good balance." — AFP

Blackhawks build big lead, hold off Leafs

TORONTO: Brendan Perlini had a goal and two assists, Brandon Saad added a goal and an assist, and the visiting Chicago Blackhawks held on to defeat the Toronto Maple Leafs 5-4 Wednesday night. The Maple Leafs trailed 5-0 before scoring four consecutive goals, including three in the third period, when they took 30 shots. Duncan Keith, Dominik Kahun and Alex DeBrincat also scored for the Blackhawks, who have won four in a row. Dylan Strome contributed two assists. Corey Crawford saved 17 of the 18 shots he faced in the Chicago goal but left because of illness after the second period. Andreas Johansson, Auston Matthews and Morgan Rielly each had a goal and an assist for the Maple Leafs, who have lost two in a row. John Tavares also scored for Toronto, and William Nylander and Mitch Marner each added two assists.

had 18 points and 20 rebounds for the Jazz, who outscored Phoenix 36-22 during the fourth quarter. Derrick Favors added 18 points, seven rebounds and seven assists. Devin Booker scored 27 points for the Suns, who lost for just the third time in eight games. Kelly Oubre Jr. added 18 points.

HAWKS 132, GRIZZLIES 111

Atlanta continued its hot play on offense, with John Collins, Trae Young and Alex Len combining for 69 points in a win over visiting Memphis. The Hawks entered the game as the NBA's top offensive team since the All-Star Game, averaging 122.5 points. Collins finished with 27 points on 11-for-17 shooting and grabbed 12 rebounds for his 28th double-double of the season. Young scored 22 points and had eight rebounds. Len came off the bench to add 20 points and eight rebounds. CJ Miles sank eight 3-pointers and scored 33 points for the Grizzlies. Mike Conley added 20 points and seven assists. — Reuters

DEVILS 6, OILERS 3

Kenny Agostino, Damon Severson and Kevin Rooney each collected a goal and an assist, and six New Jersey players scored in snapping a seven-game losing streak to hand Edmonton a crushing loss. Devils goalie Cory Schneider stopped 36 shots in the win. Going into the game, the injury-riddled Devils had 18 skaters who had combined for 99 goals this season. Connor McDavid collected a pair of assists to give him three consecutive 100-point seasons, but the Oilers lost for the second time in three games. They sit six points out of a playoff spot with 12 games remaining.

CANUCKS 4, RANGERS 1

Tyler Motte scored two goals 11 seconds apart in the second period and host Vancouver beat New York as the Canucks posted only their fifth NHL win in the past 18 games (5-10-3), while the Rangers took their eighth loss in nine outings. Brock Boeser and Jake Virtanen, with an empty-netter in the final minute, also tallied for the Canucks. Pavel Buchnevich scored for the Rangers. Vancouver goaltender Jacob Markstrom stopped 21 of 22 shots. New York goalie Henrik Lundqvist recorded 24 saves on 27 shots in the loss. Lundqvist was denied a chance to become only the sixth goalie to record 450 all-time NHL wins. — Reuters

Sports

Messi mission on course after masterclass against Lyon

Big players like Leo and Cristiano, they give you so much: Pique

BARCELONA: Lionel Messi pledged at the start of the season to bring “that beautiful cup” back to the Camp Nou and on the evidence of Wednesday night, few would bet against him. Barcelona’s 5-1 thrashing of Lyon in their Champions League last 16 second leg, a score that overlooked a nervy spell in the second half when the visitors were a goal from going through, in the end, was all about him. Messi scored twice, including once from the penalty spot, although it was no ordinary spot-kick, instead a delightful chip that hung in the air and plopped perfectly down the middle. There was a pair of assists too, for Gerard Pique and Ousmane Dembele, during a three-goal flurry in the final 12 minutes, with Messi leaving Lyon defenders sprawled to add a second of his own.

“Almost everything went through Messi,” said Lyon coach Bruno Genesio, whose team had held Barcelona to a 0-0 draw in the first leg. “When he is at that kind of level he is almost unstoppable. We did what we could.”

They restricted him to two goals, one short of Cristiano Ronaldo’s hat-trick that had sent Juventus through and Atletico Madrid crashing out in Turin on Tuesday. Messi paid tribute. “Cristiano had a magical night,” he said.

The talk has been of a changing of the guard, after Real Madrid’s European hegemony was ended by Ajax, and a new era, with Spain having only one side in the Champions League quarter-

finals for the first time since 2010.

But Messi and Ronaldo remain constant, the former now on 108 goals in the competition, behind the latter’s imperious 124. Each still has the power to settle a tie on their own and those most ardent in the debate about who is greater might be hoping for a Barca-Juve showdown when the draw for the quarter-finals is made on Friday. “Big players like Leo and Cristiano, they give you so much,” said Pique. “Not just in results. Having Leo on your team makes you feel like you can face anything.” Certainly, Barca will be amongst the two or three opponents that clubs will be keenest to avoid, with only Manchester City and perhaps Juve, because of Ronaldo, carrying the same sense of power and momentum. Ernesto Valverde’s team are not without weaknesses. Their defence, as proven against Lyon, is always susceptible while teams like Real Betis, Sevilla and Levante have laid a template for success in recent months, using speed on the counter-attack.

But with a seven-point lead in La Liga, Valverde can afford to keep his players fresh while last year’s collapse against Roma in the Champions League quarter-finals should mean complacency is out of the question.

For Barcelona, domestic dominance has become the norm, meaning the Champions League is what will define their season, however unfair that assessment might be. “From all over Spain,

SIPG for Spain’s Espanyol.

“Nothing has (improved) in 20 years because there is no building (effective structure). It’s almost a desert of youth football education.” Despite a population of 1.4 billion China have qualified for the World Cup only once, in 2002, when they exited without a point or even a goal.

President Xi’s government is pouring money into youth football, but Xie said it was often going to waste. He alleged that some schools were even making up results without playing matches. One well-qualified coach, who did not want to be identified because he was not authorised to talk to media, said there was a “free-for-all” and bemoaned how unscrupulous coaches were giving the rest a bad name.

Mario Castro, who holds a UEFA B licence from the Portuguese football federation, paints a similarly bleak picture. “We have three huge problems in China: the fake coach, the unqualified coach and the coach without knowledge,” said Castro, who has worked in China since 2016 and is technical director at a Shenzhen-based tie-up with top-tier French club Toulouse.

“In the small cities the academy or company needs a foreign face, even if the coach doesn’t have a degree or UEFA certification. “In the big cities there is a huge market in part-time coaching and most of the coaches don’t have a certificate to be a coach or work with children because it is very difficult to find a real coach to work only a few hours per week.”

The Chinese Football Association (CFA) declined to comment on the situation when approached by AFP. But the organisation last month issued a set of rules in an effort to regulate the chaotic coaching market—a tacit admission that a problem exists. — AFP



BARCELONA: Barcelona’s Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez (L) is fouled by Lyon’s Belgian defender Jason Denayer during the UEFA Champions League round of 16, second leg football match between FC Barcelona and Olympique Lyonnais at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Wednesday. — AFP

this team is given little credit for what we do,” said Jordi Alba on Wednesday. “The team has been consistent in all the competitions but the Champions League is decided by fine margins. We will try to do better.”

Messi perhaps feels that urge more than most and the 31-year-old, who has won the

competition four times but only once since 2011, is playing like a man on a mission. “We are all extremely focused for this competition and Leo too,” Valverde said. “He played an incredible match, extraordinary. He made assists, scored goals, won the ball back. “We are used to him, but somehow he always surprises us.” — AFP

‘Fake’ coaches, fixers undermine China’s football ambitions

SHANGHAI: Rapacious middlemen and coaches with forged or few qualifications are trying their luck in China’s fast-growing grassroots football, imperilling its ambitions to become a major force in the sport, insiders warn. At the behest of football-fan President Xi Jinping, for whom it is a soft-power tool, the world’s second-biggest economy is throwing resources at the game domestically.

Central to that is getting more youngsters to play at schools, clubs and academies. The education ministry plans to have 50,000 “schools characterised by soccer” by 2025. But five people involved in youth football in the country told AFP they had encountered coaches with counterfeit certificates. Just being from overseas was sometimes enough to get work, many involved in the scene said, as so-called coaches-Chinese and foreign-rush for a share of the money swilling around football in China.

Former international forward Xie Hui, now an assistant coach at Chinese Super League (CSL) champions Shanghai SIPG, said there was “a huge problem” with youth coaching. “Even if you give them Wu Lei, they will erase (his talent), that’s the reality,” the 44-year-old told AFP, referring to the Chinese forward who recently left

Southgate rules out England exit before Euro 2020

LONDON: Gareth Southgate has no plans to leave the England job before Euro 2020 but admits his future is uncertain after that. Southgate led England to their first World Cup semi-final appearance since 1990 during a memorable run in Russia last year.

That was a huge boost to his reputation and England’s progress to the inaugural Nations League Finals later this year is another feather in his cap. The 48-year-old was linked with Manchester United before Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s remarkable impact as interim boss effectively took him out of contention for the Old Trafford post.

But Southgate, whose contract runs until 2022, said he would not have walked out on the chance to manage England in a major tournament on home soil, with several matches in Euro 2020 being staged at Wembley.

“Well, first and foremost, I love the job I’m in,” Southgate said when asked about the link to United. “I’m proud to be England manager. We’ve got a second semi-final coming this summer and a Euros at home—well, I say at home, the group stage is at home—so there is no way I’d be walking away from this.”

Southgate was less definitive when the

question of his long-term future came up, hinting he would like another crack at a big club job after his disappointing spell as Middlesbrough boss. “After those Euros, people might want me or might not want me, here or somewhere else,” he said.

“You can’t look too far ahead in football. You’re quite right, I’m contracted to 2022 — or whenever that World Cup will finish. I don’t look any further than that. “I’m sure at some point in my life, I’ll want to go back to club football because people will say, ‘oh well he did OK as an international manager, but he didn’t work as a club manager’.

“How could you when you step out the dressing room? What do you know, really, two years into your coaching career? “I think at this point, at some stage in the distant future, I would want to do that, but I actually don’t know, because there might be something else more important in my life and I might be doing something completely different. I think it’s too hard.” Southgate has not worked as a club boss since being sacked by Middlesbrough soon after their 2009 relegation from the Premier League.

Aware of the unpredictability of management, the former England, Crystal Palace, Aston Villa and Middlesbrough defender does not have a clear plan for his next move yet. “I’ve never quite understood in this game, people who have a coaching plan or a plan of where they want to go because I didn’t expect to be manager of Middlesbrough two days before I got offered it,” he added. “I didn’t expect to be England senior manager six hours before I was offered it.” — AFP

Sports

Klopp says Liverpool 'back at the top' after Bayern triumph

'It's a big step to get this club back on European stage'

MUNICH: Jurgen Klopp said his Liverpool side proved they are "back on the European stage" after an impressive 3-1 win at Bayern Munich on Wednesday put them into the Champions League quarter-finals.

Sadio Mane scored twice at the Allianz Arena to put last season's finalists Liverpool through with a 3-1 aggregate last-16 win. "It's a big step to get this club back on the European stage and I am really happy," said Liverpool's German manager. "If Barcelona, if Real Madrid come here, they know this is a hard place to win."

"It's a big step for us, let's see what we can do with it, but we have a set a bar for this wonderful club that we really are back on the landscape of top international football. "We think that is where this club should be, but let's carry on, we have a lot to learn, a lot to improve, but we're back."

Having missed the goalless first leg at Anfield three weeks ago through suspension, Virgil van Dijk's long pass led to Mane's excellent first-half goal. "His first goal was ridiculous, the calmness with how he's finished it off," Liverpool midfielder James Milner told BT Sport.

"He's on fire at the minute and let's hope it continues for the rest of the season." Dutch centre-back Van Dijk then headed Liverpool into a 2-1 lead from a Milner corner on 69 minutes after Joel Matip's own goal had handed Bayern a first-half equaliser. Mane made sure of Liverpool's place in the quarter-final draw by nodding in six minutes from time.

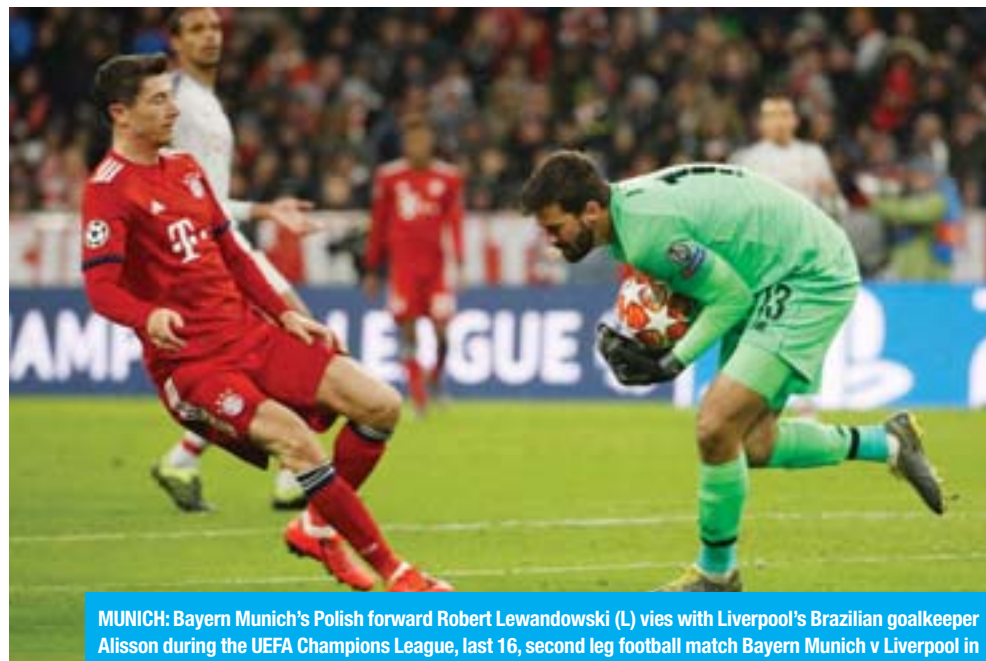
Liverpool's victory means they join Tottenham Hotspur, Manchester City and Manchester United in the quarter-finals, completing a clean sweep of English sides reaching the last eight for the first time since 2008/09.

"It is good for English football—that's what you want," added Milner. "We have good feelings from last year, so hopefully we can carry that on and go as far as we can." It is a bleaker picture in Germany as Bayern's exit leaves no Bundesliga club in the quarters for the first time since 2005/06, as Borussia Dortmund and Schalke also bowed out in the last 16 — to Tottenham and Man City respectively.

"Both teams were very cautious for a long period, but the second goal took the belief out of us," said Bayern defender Mats Hummels. "Jurgen Klopp is good at neutralising the opponents' strengths and he did that once again."

"We didn't play well enough to create enough clear chances at this level." This is the first time since 2011 that Bayern have failed to make the quarter-finals. "We have the right to be bitterly disappointed, it's tough not being part of the Champions League anymore," said Bayern head coach Niko Kovac.

"We have to be positive, we have a good run in the Bundesliga and we have to focus on that." Milner was preferred to Fabinho in Liverpool's midfield, but Klopp was forced into an early change when captain Jordan Henderson hobbled off on 12 minutes. Brazilian Fabinho made an early



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski (L) vies with Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson during the UEFA Champions League, last 16, second leg football match Bayern Munich v Liverpool in Munich, southern Germany, on Wednesday. — AFP

entrance and Milner took the skipper's armband. "It doesn't look so serious for Jordan's ankle, but it's always a bad sign when you have to make a change, especially in midfield," said Klopp.

Klopp had urged his side to "be brave on the

ball" and it was that, combined with an amazing piece of skill by Mane, which gave them the lead. Van Dijk's pin-point pass over 40 metres found Mane in the Bayern box with goalkeeper Manuel Neuer off his line.—AFP

WCup expansion to dominate FIFA agenda in Miami

MIAMI: The possible expansion of the 2022 World Cup is poised to dominate discussions when FIFA's ruling council meets in Miami today. FIFA president Gianni Infantino wants to increase the number of teams due to take part in the footballing showpiece from 32 to 48, bringing forward by four years an expansion which has already been set for the 2026 finals.

Details of an internal feasibility study by FIFA which emerged this week gave broad support to expanding the 2022 finals in Qatar. But while the study found that the increase would deliver a financial windfall for FIFA of between \$300-\$400 million, several logistical and political obstacles to expansion remain.

The Qatar World Cup, the first to take place in the Middle East, is due to be held over 28 days in November and December 2022 instead of the usual 32. Officials have said previously that it is not possible for Qatar to change the number of days of the tournament, meaning games would have to be held in neighbouring states. If the template of the 2026 World Cup to be staged by the United States, Mexico and Canada is used, approximately 20 of the tournament's 80 games would need to be held outside Qatar. But that scenario is complicated by Qatar being at the centre of the worst diplomatic crisis to hit the Gulf in years.

A rancorous diplomatic dispute with former allies, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain has led to the tiny Gulf state being diplomatically and politically isolated. A source with knowledge of the feasibility study told AFP this week

that five countries were seen as options to stage games outside Qatar in 2022 — Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. But Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE would only be candidates if their governments ended the Qatar blockade, the study said.

"Due to the geopolitical situation in the region and the recent blockade that Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE have imposed on Qatar, the involvement of such countries in organising a co-hosted tournament with Qatar would require the lifting of such blockade, in particular the lifting of all restrictions relating to the movement of people and goods between these countries," the feasibility study said.

"Ideally, this should be evidenced as a precondition to the appointment of such co-hosts and should cover all aspects to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022." While the bitter regional acrimony would appear to be a significant obstacle to expansion, Infantino has spoken bullishly of a thawing in relations, citing the recent US-North Korea summit in Vietnam.

"The geopolitical situation is complex but I see that Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un met today, so that means that anything is possible," Infantino said in Rome last month. "I think it's worthwhile having a look at the idea and trying (to implement it). Obviously it won't be easy, but we've already made the decision to have 48 teams for 2026, so why not before?" he added.

Meanwhile, FIFA Council members will also vote on the creation of an expanded 24-team Club World Cup, with a "pilot" edition of the new tournament to be held in 2021. A 17-page report distributed to the 37 members of FIFA's ruling body calls for the new tournament to take place between June 17 and July 4 2021, replacing the Confederations Cup international tournament.

The new tournament is the result of a working group created by FIFA following opposition to an earlier proposed revamp presented at a meeting last year in Bogota. The document said five of the six regional confederations were in favour of the proposal being tabled at Friday's meeting.—AFP

Man Utd may face Champions League fixture reversal

PARIS: The home leg of Manchester United's Champions League quarter-final tie could be reversed in the event of a clash with that involving Manchester City, depending on the outcome of today draw, UEFA said yesterday.

The two Manchester clubs are through to the last eight alongside two other Premier League sides, Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool. Unlike in previous rounds, there is no longer any country protection in the draw, meaning teams from the same domestic league can now face one another. That throws open the possibility of a Manchester derby in the quarter-finals. However, if they do not face each other, United will have to reverse their fixture if they are drawn at home in the same week as City. "Following a decision made by the relevant local authorities, Manchester City and Manchester United cannot play at home on the same night, nor on consecutive nights," said UEFA.

"Should both clubs be drawn within the same sequence (home or away), the team having finished lower in the domestic league the previous season—in this case Manchester United—will be reversed in accordance with the UEFA Club Competitions Committee principles." The semi-final draw will also take place today, and UEFA added: "The calendar for the semi-finals will be communicated to all parties on April 18, 2019, following the return legs of the quarter-finals."—AFP



HOUSTON: DeMarcus Cousins #0 of the Golden State Warriors shoots reverse layup against the Houston Rockets on Wednesday at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Warriors hold on, snap Houston Rockets' nine-game win streak

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