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# Killer charged with murder after New Zealand mosque shootings

Kuwait condemns terrorist attack • Amir sends condolences • Ardern vows gun reforms

## White nationalist movement spreads, pushing attacks

**WASHINGTON:** The massacre of Muslims at New Zealand mosques on Friday demonstrated the global reach of a white nationalist movement that preaches an imagined "European" ideal, rejects immigration and shares often vicious threats over the Internet. It's leaderless, fragmented, and relies for attention on lone-wolf type attackers like the 28-year-old Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who killed 49 people Friday in Christchurch, explaining in a manifesto that he wants to "crush immigration" and revenge terror attacks on Europe.

But experts say it is a cohesive movement bound together online that stretches across Europe into Russia, has a deep following in the US and Canada, and as Friday's attack showed, is present in Australia and New Zealand.

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**CHRISTCHURCH:** Brenton Tarrant, the man charged in relation to the Christchurch mosque massacres, makes a white supremacist sign during his appearance in the Christchurch District Court yesterday. — AFP ( See Page 8)

**CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand:** The rightwing extremist charged over the horrifying attacks on New Zealand mosques flashed a white power gesture as he appeared in court yesterday, while a shell-shocked community began digging graves for the 49 people he killed. Australia-born 28-year-old Brenton Tarrant stood largely impassive in the dock wearing handcuffs and a white prison smock, as the judge read the first of what are expected to be a host of murder charges he is likely to face.

Flanked by armed police, the former personal fitness trainer gestured an upside-down "okay" - a symbol used by white power groups worldwide. He did not request bail and was remanded in custody until an April 5 court appearance. Outside the courtroom, Christchurch residents struggled to deal with the aftermath of what is thought to be the worst act of terror against Muslims in the West. Nearby, excavators were called in to remove the vast amount of earth needed to bury the dead, although police have not yet released the

bodies to anxious families.

In a nearby hospital, doctors worked round the clock to treat 39 people for gunshot wounds and other injuries sustained in the attacks. The wounded included a two-year-old boy and a four-year-old girl, who was in critical condition. The attack on the Al Noor and Linwood mosques has prompted an outpouring of grief and deep shock in this usually peaceful country, which prides itself on welcoming refugees fleeing violence or persecution.

On Friday, Kuwait strongly condemned and denounced the terrorist attack on the two mosques. Kuwait affirms its full stand and solidarity with New Zealand, and supports all measures it carries out to preserve its security and safety of its people and residents, an official foreign ministry source said in a statement. Kuwait reiterates its principled and firm stand against all forms and manifestations of terrorism and violence, it added. It also urged the international community to exert further efforts to

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## Mulla, Kandari win by-elections; Amir hails polls

**KUWAIT:** According to unofficial results of the National Assembly by-elections late yesterday, Abdullah Al-Kandari was comfortably elected from the third constituency, while Badr Al-Mulla won narrowly in the second constituency.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated Kuwaiti nationals, men and women alike, on the success of the by-elections. He praised the cooperation and coordination undertaken by numerous public bodies behind, which helped facilitate the voting process. The supreme judicial committee tasked with overseeing the matter, ministry of interior, ministry of information, ministry of health, ministry of education and fire department were singled out for praise.

Eighteen candidates vied to fill one vacant seat in the second constituency, which has 62,547 eligible voters, while 29 hopefuls vied for the 96,528 votes in the third constituency, also for one seat. The by-elections were held after MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash were stripped of their parliamentary seats on Dec 19, 2018 after the constitutional court ruled against the constitutionality of article 16 of the internal charter of the National Assembly. — Agencies



**KUWAIT:** (Left) Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah visits a polling station yesterday. (Right) Abdullah Al-Kandari celebrates with his supporters at his election headquarters in Adaliya yesterday after unofficial results showed he had won in the by-elections in the third constituency. — Photos by KUNA and Fouad Al-Shaikh (See Page 2)



## MoI has no plans for amnesty; PACI urges expats to double check info

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Well-informed security sources said the interior ministry's field security forces are preparing to launch intensive security campaigns in various areas to track down, arrest and deport residency visa violators. The sources also denied any plans to grant residency violators any grace periods this year, pointing out that the last amnesty was not fruitful as only 57,000 expats benefited from it, which was way below the expected numbers.

The sources said that the total number of residency violators is 70,000, but those registered in security databases number more than 100,000. "Checking the registered names, it was found that many of them have been registered for over 25 years, and many of them had probably left the country," the sources explained.

Meanwhile, Public Authority for Civil Information Director Musaed Al-Assoussi stressed the need to double check the information expats submit to residency affairs departments in their renewal forms. He urged them to examine the receipts they get from clerks and ask for immediate correction of any mistakes before they leave the counter.

Assoussi added that an expat has three chances to check personal data prior to receiving the new civil ID. "The first step starts by typing the renewal form

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## Stores looted, bank torched in Paris violence

**PARIS:** Demonstrators looted and torched shops and businesses on the famed Champs-Elysees avenue in Paris yesterday, on the 18th straight weekend of "yellow vest" protests, characterized by an uptick in violence after weeks of dwindling turnout. A Boss menswear store and the upscale Fouquet's restaurant - a brasserie popular with politicians and film stars - were among the premises to have their windows smashed by groups of hooded demonstrators in scenes reminiscent of the worst "yellow vest" riots in Paris in December.

The demonstrators also set fire to a Longchamp handbag store and to a bank situated on the ground floor of an apartment building, which was engulfed by flames. The fire service evacuated the residents, including a nine-month-old baby, and extinguished the blaze. Yesterday's turnout is a test for the "yellow vest" movement, which began in November over fuel tax hikes and quickly ballooned into a rebellion against President Emmanuel Macron's policies but has struggled lately to mobilize large numbers of protesters.

The police estimated the number of protesters in Paris at 10,000, out of around 14,000 nationwide - a fraction of the 282,000 that took part in the inaugural demonstrations on Nov 17. By the mid-afternoon 129 people had been arrested. Eleven people, including two fire fighters, suffered minor injuries in the bank blaze, the fire service told AFP. Interior Minister Christophe Castaner in a tweet accused the arsonists of being "neither demonstrators, nor troublemakers" but "murderers".

The rally coincides with the end of the public debates called by Macron to try take the heat out of the protests and give voters a forum to propose policy changes. Around half a million people turned out at



**PARIS:** A 'yellow vest' protester gestures behind flames rising from a barricade yesterday. — AFP

townhall-style meetings held around the country over the past two months. But many "yellow vests" dismissed the consultation exercise as a smoke-screen. Yesterday, the police used tear gas, stun grenades and water cannon to repel protesters who gathered at the foot of the Arc de Triomphe war memorial, which was sacked by protesters on Dec 1 in scenes that drew international condemnation.

Several newsstands also went up in smoke as groups of mostly black-clad demonstrators pelted the security forces with stones and erected barricades. "There are a number of people who have come just to smash things," Castaner said, estimating that some 1,500 "ultra-violent" activists had infiltrated the crowd. "We have been too nice, that's why it's violent today. I'm not in favor (of violence) but we are ruled by corrupt people who dare to lecture us," Jean-Francois Bernard, a landscape gardener who was among the protesters, told AFP.

On social media, "yellow vest" leaders had hinted at the arrival of sympathizers from Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and even Poland. "Macron, we're coming to get you at home," some of the protesters chanted, referring to the presidential palace situated near the Champs-Elysees.

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## Maid confesses to botched robbery that killed Kuwaiti

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Egyptian security forces managed to solve the mystery of the murder of an elderly Kuwaiti in his apartment in the Cairo suburb of Giza, noting that the man's maid, who had reported the murder, was actually behind it. Notably, the 80-year-old citizen's maid, who is in her thirties, had reported that unidentified robbers had broken into the apartment, tied her up and stole her phone and the deceased's money.

However, all suspicions pointed to the maid, said a report on the Masrawy website, noting that the maid broke down during interrogations and admitted that she had arranged the robbery with her brother and sister, taking advantage of her boss' poor health and age. The maid added that her brother hired three friends to do the job.

"The three assailants knocked on the door. I opened it for them and they tied me and my boss up and stuck duct tape on his mouth," she explained, noting that when the man tried to remove the gag, they shut his mouth by hand till he suffocated to death. They then took his money, mobile and her mobile before leaving. After they were arrested, the three assailants denied prior intention to kill the octogenarian and described what happened as 'fate'.

The Charge d'Affaires at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo Adel Al-Saraya said the embassy was closely following up the investigations, noting that all involved suspects had been arrested except for one who is still at large and being tracked down. He hailed the Egyptian authorities' efficiency in dealing with the matter as well as its cooperation with the embassy and keeping it posted with the latest investigations. Saraya expressed condolences to the deceased's family and assured them that both the embassy and its lawyer are following up the case to make sure that the culprits are brought to justice.





KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem casts his vote in yesterday's by-elections. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



A senior citizen casts her vote.

# Low turnout at polling stations in early hours of by-elections

## Speaker lauds 'democratic festival'; minister finds no 'significant issues'

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A limited number of people turned out at polling stations to vote in the early hours after voting started for by-elections in the second and third constituencies. Only senior citizens voted until noontime, said informed sources, noting that the process started at 8 am. The sources added that observers from the Arab Network for Democratic Elections (ANDE) were present at Al-Maamoun school in Kaifan, while Ministry of Interior (MoI) officials toured the polling stations to check security measures.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem praised the by-election and described it as a 'democratic festival.' In a statement to reporters after casting his vote in the Second Constituency, Ghanem called on everyone to "cast their votes for those who see the best candidates to represent them in parliament." He stressed that the parliamentary task is not easy as it requires a lot of effort to achieve the aspirations of the citizens.

Meanwhile, Minister of Justice Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi said that he found no significant issues during his tour of the ballot stations. He lauded judges and State officials for supervising the polling process that kicked off early today and continued hours later, with voters showing up at the centers to cast their votes.

Speaking to reporters, former finance minister Mustafa Al-Shamali, who voted in Abdullah Al-Salem School, expressed good wishes to all candidates. Chancellor Jamal Al-Meer, who was at Abdullah bin Masoud School, said that only 45 voters had cast their votes by 9:30 am.

Security commander at the main committee in the second constituency Lt Col Jarrah Al-Habashi stressed that the polling process was going smoothly and that MoI had pre-

pared for it days earlier. Head of the main committee in Kaifan's men polling station Najeeb Al-Mulla said only 28 out of 745 voters had cast their votes in the morning period.

Chancellor Owayyed Al-Thowamer said only 18 voters showed up at the women's polling station at Boubyan Intermediate School. Chancellor Khaled Al-Mandeel said only 22 out of 916 voters had cast their votes in the morning period at Fatima bint Al-Waleed School, while at Qurtuba Secondary School for girls, only 21 out of the 852 voters showed up.

Notably, several candidates' representatives filed complaints over allowing the entry of children into polling stations to distribute promotional flyers of certain candidates, to which security forces immediately responded and ordered all the children out.

In the meantime, Ministry of Health (MoH) assistant undersecretary for medical services affairs Dr Fawwaz Al-Refae said there was constant coordination with the medical emergencies department's operation room to handle any urgent medical cases during the elections. Speaking to reporters, Refae said that all hospitals and clinics are on full alert to deal with any urgent cases, in addition to the presence of 16 temporary clinics, 10 ambulances and 62 paramedics at all voting centers.

By-election were held yesterday to fill seats in the second and third constituencies. The two seats have been vacant since a court order was issued against MPs Dr Waleed Al-Tabtabaie and Dr Jamaan Al-Herbesh, stripping them both of their membership in the National Assembly. Up to 47 nominees, including five women, vied to occupy the two seats. There were 18 candidates, including one female citizen, in the second constituency. In the third, 29 candidates, including four females, competed. Authorities have transformed buildings of 38 schools into ballot stations, while MoH stationed medical teams at the voting centers.



Voters enter a polling station.



Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi tours a polling station.



Only senior citizens voted till noon



A woman checks candidates' lists outside a polling station.



Police officers inspect a voter's passport outside a polling station.



Two women enter a polling station to cast their votes.



A man fills his ballot application.



A woman casts her vote at a polling station.



A senior citizen casts his vote at a polling station.



A woman fills her ballot application.



A ballot box seen at a third constituency polling station in Jabriya.



A man casts his vote.



A woman casts her vote.



Police officers outside a polling station.



## Local

# UN Security Council adopts Kuwait's condemnation of New Zealand attack

## Speaker Ghanem condemns shootings; no Kuwaitis among casualties

**NEW YORK:** The United Nations Security Council adopted a statement proposed by Kuwait, which strongly condemned the New Zealand mosque terrorist attack, in which dozens were killed and wounded, as "heinous and cowardly." Equipped with a semi-automatic weapon, a shooter opened fire on prayergoers during Friday prayers at two mosques in the city of Christchurch, killing at least 49 people and wounding many others. Member nations "expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of New Zealand and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured," read the document, jointly put forward by Indonesia. Terrorism "constitutes one

of the most serious threats to international peace and security," added the statement, describing these acts as "criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed." The Security Council highlighted the need to "hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice." It also called on the international community to cooperate with New Zealand authorities on the matter.

Separately, Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem on Friday denounced the terrorist mass shootings that targeted two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. In a press release, he said

that this criminal act proves that terrorism has no religion and that the whole world is called upon to cooperate to eradicate the culture of hatred, fanaticism and extremism. Speaker Ghanem expressed deep condolences to the families of the victims and wished the speedy recovery of those injured.

Kuwait's Ambassador to New Zealand Ahmad Al-Wuhaib had meanwhile confirmed that there were no Kuwaitis among victims. The ambassador has said via phone that there are no Kuwaiti citizens among the casualties, adding that all Kuwaiti students and diplomats in the country were safe. He urged Kuwaitis in New Zealand to take precaution and contact the mission in case they needed any help. —KUNA



**ANKARA:** People perform a funeral prayer in absentia for those who lost their lives during twin terror attacks in New Zealand mosques, yesterday in Ankara, Turkey. —AFP

In my view

### Oh brothers and sisters!



By Nejouad Al-Yagout

local@kuwaittimes.net

Dear brothers and sisters,

There is a lot of pain on this planet. Radicals on all ends of the spectrum are attacking one another. And those of us caught in the crossfire watch flabbergasted and helplessly. But we are not helpless. We may feel fragile at the moment, but we are not helpless. Oh, it's a cruel collective when people are no longer safe in sacred houses of worship. It's downright cruel, appalling, heartbreaking and tragic. When holy sites are no longer havens or places of refuge, what of the world?

Instead of coming together as human beings and finding ways to protect ourselves from natural disasters and disease, we attack and kill each other, create wars, divide ourselves into belief systems, draw borders and tell each other lies about who among us is superior.

Oh, brothers and sisters! We must stop taking sides. We must stop feeling threatened by the other. This is the game of our collective ego, prodding us to hate, to attack, to condemn, to ostracize, to take revenge and to go to war so the best can win. But there is no best religion, best skin color, best race or best gender. But we are falling for it, believing this lie of us

“ We must stop feeling threatened by the other ”

vs them. And lives are at risk. And we are perpetuating that danger when we use labels, pointing fingers to show where the hate is coming from and seeing the violence coming from "them", trying to prove that the threat is coming from "others".

There are no others, oh sisters and brothers. We have been taught to fear immigrants, refugees, those who call God by another name and those who don't adhere to any belief system. We have been taught to believe that women are inferior, gays are unnatural, and that social and financial divides are the way of the world. And these doctrines may seem normal since we grew up with them, but they are manifesting as hatred, poisoning our collective unconsciousness, tainting the heart of our existence and shredding our unified thread into pieces so that all we see are sects and enemies.

So we have no right to act surprised when violence occurs - when we refuse to remember that there is only one race: The human race. We have no right to act surprised when we believe that darkness is elsewhere and not lurking within us, in our nations, our communities, our societies and our thought matrices. It's always the other's fault, right? We have created this mess by believing we are entitled, by believing there are enemies outside of us and by believing that LOVE is wrong.

Oh, brothers and sisters. LOVE is never wrong. Neither is it right. Because LOVE merely is. And when we bask in it, we will no longer see a you or a me. No rightwing, leftwing, conservative, liberal, local, expat, man, woman, gay or straight. Only a human being. A divine spark that is made of love, that longs to love, to be loved. Let us not forget. Let us not take sides. Let us not retaliate. Let us only hold hands as we navigate unknown terrain. Let us hold each other so strongly that borders dissolve, and we travel freely like clouds, roaming from one place to another, welcome wherever we go, showering blessings on Earth.

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The 'super moon' rises over Kuwait City. —Photo by Hatem Al-Sheikh (KUNA)

# 'TooMooH' Talent Development Program launches in Kuwait

## Aims to integrate GCC nationals into the booming hospitality sector

KUWAIT: 'TooMooH' which translates as 'Ambition' is a comprehensive, four tier, national development program focusing on the career advancement of fresh graduates, executives and leaders was launched recently in Kuwait by Millennium Hotels and Resorts, MEA.

The program aims to integrate GCC nationals into the booming hospitality sector and boost their presence in the job market. The internship development program was recently launched in Saudi Arabia, Oman and UAE.

A press conference was held at Millennium Hotel and Convention Center to officially kick off the program in the country. Officials from Millennium Hotel and Convention Center, Copthorne Kuwait City, Al-Jahra Copthorne Hotel and Resort, Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA, government officials and the media attended the presentation.

As quoted by Ali Hamad Lakhraim Alzaabi, President of Millennium Hotel and Resorts MEA, "By launching TooMooH Development Program in Kuwait we have

taken a progressive step to ensure the development journey of all the participants towards their career aspirations, area strengths and development are without limitations. This also demonstrates that we are committed to moving towards job creation and retaining national colleagues."

Ahmed Serafi, General Manager, Millennium Hotel and Convention Center, said, "With the TooMooH program, we want to encourage Kuwaiti nationals to join the hospitality industry and contribute to the development of the tourism sector. Kuwait's hospitality industry is geared towards massive growth within the next five years so we must attract Kuwaiti nationals into pursuing and developing a career within this sector."

According to Alpen Capital's latest report on GCC Hospitality Industry 2018, Kuwait's hospitality market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6.1 percent (2017-2022) to \$0.4 billion by 2022. International tourist visits are expected to grow at a 5-year CAGR of 4.4 percent to

0.5 million whereas the hotel supply is expected to grow at a 5-year CAGR of 4.4 percent to approximately 10,112 hotel rooms. Kuwait aims to attract 440,000 visitors by 2024 along with earmarking \$1 billion to promote the country during that period. The Government is actively diversifying from the oil-based economy and making substantial investments in the hospitality and tourism sector to boost its economy. A number of projects are expected to share the multi-billion dollar development budget such as the expansion of Kuwait International Airport which is expected to reach a handling capacity of 25 million passengers annually by 2025 along with Madinat Al-Hareer (Silk City) and Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Islamic Center.

As part of the initiative, the hotels in Kuwait will partner with the Labour Office and the Ministry of Commerce to spread the message about the program. All trainees will receive comprehensive hands-on training in different aspects of the hospitality business so

that they can join the industry, build a career and take up leadership roles. Commenting on the 'TooMooH' program, Hamed Elbata, Hotel Manager, Al-Jahra Copthorne Hotel and Resort, "We encourage Kuwaiti Nationals to join this program that will enhance their skills and knowledge of the industry, so they can contribute to the economy of their country."

"The TooMooH initiative reflects the vision of Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA to have an active role in the inclusion and development of GCC nationals in the region's flourishing hospitality industry. With proper training, grooming and mentoring of local talents, we could change the landscape and help create more jobs for Kuwaiti nationals and help them become leaders of the tourism industry," said Alaa Salim, General Manager, Copthorne Kuwait City. At Millennium Hotels and Resorts, MEA, we welcome all our national colleagues to be a part of this program and work towards their professional career progression.

## Kuwaiti writer wins UAE child literature award

ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti writer Hussein Al-Mutawa won the Sheikh Zayed Book Award for Child Literature, which is based on his story 'I dream of being a concrete mixer'. In a statement, the award's organizers said that the story of Mutawa addresses the issue of demolition and construction cleverly through the biography of 'Haddam', which hopes to become a cement mixer where the story and the transformations and paradoxes and drawings in a structured narrative. The 13th edition of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award has announced the winners for 2018/2019, with five international authors and an Arab research center honored for their exceptional literary and intellectual publications. Moroccan writer and novelist Bensalem Himmich's autobiography 'The Self - Between Existence and Creation' 'Le Centre Culturel Du Livre, 2018' won the 'Literature' category award. Algerian scholar Dr Abderrezak Belagrouz won the 'Young Author' category for his book 'The Essence of Values and the Freedom of Social Concepts', 'The Arabian Establishment for Thought and Innovation, 2017'. In the 'Literary and Art Criticism' category, scholar Dr Charbel Dagher from Lebanon won the award for his book 'Contemporary Arabic Poetry - the prose' 'Al-Maaref Forum, 2018'. "The Award has remained at the forefront of the Arabic intellectual, cultural and literary landscape for 13 years now, garnering recognition for its credibility and transparency," the statement quoted Secretary General of the Award Dr Ali bin Tamim as saying. Mutawa, 30, who began his literary career as a poet in 2009, has participated in many poetry festivals and won several awards. —KUNA



The cover of Kuwaiti writer Hussein Al-Mutawa's award-winning book 'I dream of being a concrete mixer'.



KUWAIT: Officials cut the ribbon during the ceremony to announce launching the 'TooMooH' program.



Officials cut a cake during the ceremony.



A group photo of Millennium Hotel and Convention Center staff.



Local

# Panel to discuss north zone in key meeting

## Defense minister to answer questions in press conference: Khorsheed

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Head of the parliamentary economic and financial affairs committee Salah Khorsheed said that the committee's meeting today is fundamental to discuss the state's development plan, the government's agenda and the project of building the northern economic zone. Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and representatives of other relevant bodies are set to attend the meeting, the lawmaker said. Khorsheed added that the new project in the northern region is different from the previous Silk City project because basic changes had been made to create more non-oil revenues and attract huge local and foreign investments. "A press conference will follow the meeting, where Sheikh Nasser will respond to media inquiries about the project," Khorsheed concluded.



KUWAIT: An artist's rendition of the planned Silk City project.

**Automated connection**  
The project of automated connection between Kuwait, Egypt and India is getting closer to achievement, well-informed sources at the Public Authority for Manpower said. The project targets regulating the recruitment of expatriate labor, focusing on technical workers and avoiding marginal labor, the sources added. "Automated connection will help have more control on labor from those countries, and at the same time help protect workers' rights," they noted. The sources expected the project will be launched with Egypt soon, and then with India at a later date.

**Promoting moderation**  
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fareed Emadi issued a resolution regulating Friday sermons, lectures and seminars held in the mosques frequented by non-Arab Muslims, by forming a special committee to interview preachers and evaluate their scientific standards, and report back to the ministry. The resolution stressed that all communities' preachers and their assistants will have to respect the mosques'

charter that promotes moderation. It also stipulates suspending any community preacher in case of violation. In addition, the resolution conditioned that preachers for

be nominated by their own community before undergoing special training courses.

### Australians' tax

Kuwait is likely going to pay income tax imposed on a number of Australian employees working at Kuwait's cultural office in Australia, sources said. The sources added that the Ministry of Higher Education had contacted the finance ministry in this regard, requesting paying the tax from the state's budget to prevent losing experienced staff members and treat them equally as other peers in the embassy. "The matter is still being discussed," the sources remarked. In other news, Kuwait University's deans committee held a meeting to discuss the admission policy and capacity for the coming academic year (2019-2020). Kuwait University Rector Prof Hussein Al-Ansari chaired the meeting.



## 'Basic changes' to Silk City project

non-Arab Muslim communities must be able to recite Fatiha clearly and correctly, hold a university degree and at least memorize juz Amma, be able to communicate in Arabic and

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'He leaped on someone to save them': Stories emerge of Kiwi mosque victims

## New Zealand struggles to answer 'why' in wake of massacre



BAGHOUZ: A fighter of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) loads an ammunition belt at a position in the village of Baghouz, near Syria's border with Iraq, in the eastern Deir Ezzor province on March 15, 2019 during the SDF's preparations to advance in the battle against the last pocket of Islamic State group (IS) jihadists. —AFP

# Battle rages with IS in holdout village

## Makeshift encampment of tents and tunnels is all that remains

BAGHOUZ: US-backed forces battled Islamic State group fighters yesterday as the holdout jihadists clung onto the last dregs of their crumbling "caliphate" in eastern Syria. For weeks, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have battled to crush IS fighters holed up in a small riverside hamlet in the village of Baghouz.

The makeshift encampment of tents and tunnels is all that remains of a once-sprawling "caliphate" declared in 2014 over large swaths of Syria and neighboring Iraq. The SDF and coalition warplanes have rained fire on the enclave since last Sunday, blitzing more than 4,000 IS fighters and family members into surrender. US-backed forces have reduced daytime airstrikes and shelling to allow for more exits from the last jihadist bastion.

But AFP journalists at an SDF post inside Baghouz heard sporadic rounds of mortar fire Saturday and an SDF spokesman said clashes were ongoing. "Clashes broke out again last night and have continued since,"

SDF spokesman Adnan Afrin said. "There have so far been no surrenders (today) and there's no sign they are giving up," the spokesman said. An SDF statement said the latest fighting broke out after the Kurd-led force attacked IS positions inside Baghouz. Around 32 jihadists, including at least four senior IS figures, were killed in battle, it said.

### Suicide attacks

On Friday, IS launched three suicide attacks outside Baghouz, killing six people among those fleeing the village near the Iraqi border. They were the latest casualties in Syria's devastating civil war as it entered its ninth year with 370,000 dead. The US-led coalition said the bombers were dressed in women's clothing and had mixed with others surrendering.

"Daesh has proven to demonstrate a reckless disregard for human life and continues to be a global threat," it said late Friday, using an Arabic acronym for IS. "We stand by our SDF partners as they fight to liberate that last Daesh-held territory," it said on Twitter.

Die-hard IS fighters have unleashed a wave of suicide bombings over the past week to impede the SDF advance. It remains unclear how many fighters and civilians remain inside Baghouz.

More than 61,000 people have streamed out of IS-held territory since December, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says, a tenth of them suspected jihadists. The exodus has sparked a humanitarian crisis in Kurdish-run camps for the displaced further north where civilians have been transported. These include the wives and children of alleged foreign jihadists, hundreds of whom are being held by the Kurdish forces.

### Distress, fatigue, malnutrition

Around 3,000 people arrived at Al-Hol camp from Baghouz over the past two days, pushing the camp's population to over 69,000, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) said yesterday. According to the

United Nations children's fund, UNICEF, the camp was designed with a 20,000-person capacity. The UN said most of the new arrivals "show clear signs of distress, fatigue, malnutrition and require some form of medical care or attention".

According to the IRC and UN, around 122 people have died en route to the camp or shortly after arriving since December, mostly small children, two of them on Thursday. "There is an urgent requirement for funding to continue health and nutrition interventions in the camp," the UN said. At the height of its brutal rule, IS controlled a stretch of land in Syria and Iraq the size of the United Kingdom.

The total capture of the Baghouz camp by the SDF would mark the end of the cross-border "caliphate" it proclaimed more than four years ago. But beyond Baghouz, IS retains a presence in eastern Syria's vast Badia desert and sleeper cells in the northeast. The jihadists have continued to claim deadly attacks in SDF-held territory in recent months. — AFP

## At least 24 dead as Cyclone Idai hits east Zimbabwe

HARARE: At least 24 people have been killed and dozens are missing as tropical cyclone Idai hit eastern parts of Zimbabwe after lashing neighboring Mozambique, the government said yesterday. Most of the deaths were in Chimanimani East, Zimbabwe's information ministry announced on Twitter, saying at least 40 other people had been injured. Two of the victims were students who died when a boulder hit their school, causing the wall of the dining room to collapse on top of them, the state-run Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation said.

The boarding school has been shut while the students waiting to be airlifted to safety by the army, which is leading rescue operations. Others who fled their homes were "marooned" on top of a mountain waiting to be rescued, but strong winds were hampering helicopter flights, the ministry said. The storm damaged many houses and washed away bridges in the eastern Manicaland province which borders Mozambique, with a lawmaker telling AFP thousands of people have been

affected by power cuts and flooding.

"The information we have so far is that over 100 people are missing," said Joshua Sacco, an MP in Chimanimani district. "At least 25 houses were swept away following a mudslide at Ngangu township in Chimanimani urban. There were people inside," he told AFP, saying they were listed as missing. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change demanded immediate help for the storm-hit east, warning that a "serious humanitarian crisis" was unfolding there. "We need state intervention on a massive scale to avoid biblical disaster," wrote MDC spokesman Jacob Mafume on Twitter.

### 'Dire situation'

Tropical cyclone Idai battered central Mozambique on Friday killing at least 21 people and cutting off more than half a million people in the port city of Beira. Even before the cyclone made landfall on Friday, heavy rains earlier in the week had already claimed 66 lives and displaced 17,000 people in Mozambique, local officials said. They had also affected neighboring Malawi, where 56 people died and nearly a million others were affected, the government said.

As the cyclone hit, Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi appealed for emergency assistance for the victims before leaving for eSwatini. "We have compatriots suffering without hope and we have to restore hope," he said on Friday as he set off on a three-day state visit to the kingdom that was previously known as Swaziland.

As the cyclone approached, the Red Cross sent out more than 200 volunteers to areas most likely to be affected. "The situation is dire but we don't know the exact particulars," said Jamie LeSueur, the Red Cross's roving emergency operations manager for Africa, who was making the 1,200-kilometer trip from Maputo to Beira by road after flights were cancelled and the airport closed. Describing it as a "difficult emergency" to tackle, he told AFP said it would require "the full force of the humanitarian community behind the government of Mozambique to respond to rapidly."

### Electricity rationed in S Africa

Beira's international airport was closed after the cyclone made landfall, damaging the air traffic control tower, the navigation systems and the runways. "Some runway lights were damaged, the navigation system is damaged, the control tower antennas and the control tower itself are all damaged," an official at the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) told AFP on Friday. "The runway is full of obstacles and parked aircraft are damaged."

The storm also affected power supplies to neighboring South Africa which imports electricity from Mozambique to supplement its own production. South Africa's power utility company Eskom yesterday introduced severe electricity rationing "due to the loss of additional capacity, which includes a reduction in imports from Mozambique," it said in a statement. —AFP

## Yemen rebels warn they could target Riyadh, Abu Dhabi

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi rebels warned yesterday they could launch attacks against the capitals of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who lead a military coalition against them. The threat came as the United Nations was trying to salvage a truce deal in Yemen, seen as crucial to diplomatic efforts to end the country's four-year war.

"We have aerial photographs and coordinates of dozens of headquarters, facilities and military bases of the enemy," rebel military spokesman Yahya Saree said in comments carried by the rebels' Al-Masirah channel. "The legitimate targets of our forces extend to the capital of Saudi Arabia and to the emirate of Abu Dhabi," capital of the UAE, he said. "We have manufactured advanced generations of attack aircraft, and new systems will soon be functional."

The Iran-linked Houthi rebels have targeted Saudi border towns and Riyadh with ballistic missiles and also claimed drone attacks on the airports of Abu Dhabi and Dubai during the course of the

conflict. Saudi Arabia has said the missiles were all intercepted by its air force, with one civilian reported killed by falling shrapnel, while the UAE has denied the alleged drone attacks. Saudi Arabia and its military allies joined the Yemeni government's war against the Iran-linked Houthis in March 2015, triggering what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Some 10 million Yemenis face mass starvation, according to the UN. Both sides to the conflict stand accused of acts that could amount to war crimes. The World Health Organization estimates nearly 10,000 people have been killed in Yemen since March 2015, when Saudi Arabia and its allies joined the government's war against the Houthis. Other rights groups estimate the toll could be much higher.

On Wednesday the UN Security Council met to discuss the stalled truce deal that had been agreed in Sweden in December between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and the Houthis. The deal — which called for a ceasefire, rebel pullback and mutual redeployment from Hodeida, Yemen's lifeline Red Sea port controlled by the Houthis — offered the best hope in years of moving toward an end to the conflict. While the fighting in Hodeida has eased, redeployment efforts have stalled in recent weeks. UN envoy Martin Griffiths told the Security Council on Wednesday he was still working to make the redeployment a "reality". — AFP



International

# White House 2020 race: Beto seeks to woo voters in Iowa

## Promises to deliver a positive and unifying message

**MOUNT PLEASANT:** Winter is clinging to the plains of Iowa but the crowd packed inside the Mount Pleasant coffee house is snug and warm as they await the latest candidate in the 2020 presidential race. Dozens of people have turned up at Central Park Coffee, curious to hear what former Texas congressman Beto O'Rourke, a rising star in the Democratic Party, has to say.

The 46-year-old surprised the television cameras and the crowd by slipping quietly in through a back door before rolling up the sleeves of his trademark blue shirt to address the gathering. The skateboarding former punk rocker rocketed to fame by running a close race in November against Republican Senator Ted Cruz in Texas, a reliably conservative state, and announced his candidacy for the presidency in a video on Sunday. O'Rourke, whose given name is Robert but goes by "Beto," promised to deliver a positive and unifying message as he joined the crowded field of Democrats seeking to oust Trump in next year's vote.

Using sweeping hand gestures, despite the mockery of President Donald Trump the previous day, O'Rourke spoke for about 10 minutes, expressing his condolences for the victims of the massacre at two New Zealand mosques. He then touched on some of the other major themes of his campaign — universal health care, criminal justice reform and climate change. The biggest annual event in this town of some 8,500 people in southwest Iowa surrounded by corn and soy bean fields is the Midwest Old Threshers Reunion, an agricultural fair.

Henry County, where Mount Pleasant is located, voted for Trump in 2016 but the trade wars launched by the president — and the tariffs which have cut into their exports — have lost him some support. And not just among farmers. Robert Morrison lost his job as a machinist when Siemens closed its plant in Burlington to move operations to the Czech Republic and India. "It is very unfair what happened," Morrison said. "If you knew what hap-

pened, it was a dirty deal." He said he hoped O'Rourke "would do his best to try and keep our jobs in the United States, to keep us working." Morrison said he found O'Rourke to be "very charismatic, very positive." "He gets his message across very well," he said. "I think he would make a good president."

### 'Fresh voice'

Ted Bowling, a 62-year-old retired teacher who is originally from Texas, said he found O'Rourke to be a "breath of fresh air." "It has stagnated for the last two and a half years and I think Beto has a fresh voice," said Bowling, who was wearing a "Beto 2020" hat and backed Democrat Hillary Clinton the last time around. Like Morrison, Bowling also said he found O'Rourke to be "very charismatic." At 17, Garrick Dodson is not old enough to vote but he will be by February of next year when Iowa becomes the first state to hold a presidential caucus. — AFP



WASHINGTON, Iowa: Democratic presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke listens to questions from voters during his second day of campaigning for the 2020 nomination at Art Domestique. — AFP

## Mental stress, desperation: Venezuela's hidden issues

**CARACAS:** Escarli is afraid of the dark. German appears absent. Yuri tips into rage at the smallest upset. Mental malaise in Venezuela is growing, a hidden anguish adding to the litany of ills ravaging the country. A nationwide blackout, unprecedented in scale and length, only worsened the psychological descent for Venezuelans as they watched cash machines and water pipes shut down for lack of electricity, and their homes plunged into darkness.

The outage lasted five days, to Tuesday this week. But the trauma goes on, giving

some residents a haunted look — people tottering on the edge after four years of political and socioeconomic crisis. "There is desperation," summed up Jorge de Avila, a 38-year-old store employee who lined up at dawn to buy canisters of cooking gas in a dangerous poor district in the southeast of Caracas.

The neighborhood of makeshift houses spent seven days with no power, and two weeks without water. The little food stored in fridges spoiled, and the local clinic ceased operations. "These have been hard days. We have no access to services, to food. Many families with children are sinking into despair. Many shops are shut. A lot of food has spoiled," De Avila told AFP.

### 'Chronic' anxiety

Stefania Aguzzi, a psychologist heading a free mental health association that consults by telephone, said many Venezuelans are "suffering with enormous sadness" that

could "become depression very quickly, with anxiety levels that would turn chronic." The blackout was a dramatic blow on top of a deteriorating situation for the country of 30 million inhabitants who are reduced to daily protests and struggling to survive against a tsunami of hyperinflation and lack of cash, food and medicine.

For days it paralyzed the country, knocking out bank card terminals in shops used to electronically pay for what goods were available, forcing citizens to increasingly turn to the only currency available: dollars. Water pumps stopped working. Some hospitals without standalone generators collapsed. "We're in a bad way, and on guard because there's looting going on, some establishments are being robbed. There is tension. Police are firing shots, running after those people.

You lock your doors but don't know if they're going to turn on you," said Gabriela Martinez, a 37-year-old administrator. For

Mayaro Ortega, a psychologist and researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, "this state of chronic emergency is a risk factor for developing post-traumatic stress." When someone is incapable of securing basic necessities and personal safety, they can fall victim to panic attacks even while outwardly appearing calm, she explained. "Children are the most vulnerable."

### 'I feel afraid'


Escarli, a nine-year-old girl with shining dark eyes, fears the darkness the blackout brought. "When I go to pee I feel afraid because I feel that somebody is going to come and scare me," said the girl, who has spent a week without going to school because of the power outage. Ortega said Venezuela was impacted by "collective stress."

"It's contagious, and is spread initially because we're social beings. Evolutionarily

speaking, we are built to feel empathy for others and what happened in the past still affects us," she said. Rage is another symptom. Yuri Martera says she is gripped with fury and "can't tolerate anyone." She lost control of herself when one of her neighbors expressed unconditional support for the government of President Nicolas Maduro. "Out!" she screamed, which summoned a crowd that likewise directed their fury at the neighbor.


### Suicides

At the other end of the same district, German Parra, a 61-year-old carpenter, rooted through fly-covered garbage with a faraway look on his face, mentally removed from what was going on around him. "Sometimes I find a morsel of something to eat," he said, his face lined beyond his years and missing teeth. Psychologists said the depression provoked by post-traumatic stress can lead to suicidal thoughts. — AFP






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## International

# 'He leaped on someone to save them': Stories emerge of Kiwi mosque victims

## 'I've lost my little boy, he's just turned 14'

**CHRISTCHURCH:** A right-wing extremist has been charged over Friday's horrifying gun attacks on two New Zealand mosques, which left 49 people dead and dozens more injured. The worshippers and their families caught up in the attacks in the normally peaceful city of Christchurch came from around the world. Here are some of their stories:

### The Afghan who ran into gunfire

An Afghan man, thought to be in his 60s or 70s, died after he reportedly ran into the line of fire to save fellow worshippers at the Al Noor mosque in central Christchurch. Daoud Nabi had lived in New Zealand for more than 40 years after fleeing Afghanistan as a refugee in the late 1970s, and believed his adopted home to be a "slice of paradise", his son Omar told AFP.

Omar learnt his father had died after trying to shield someone else from a bullet. "I got told by my best friend's father... that he leaped on somebody else to save their life," he told Stuff.co.nz. "He jumped in the firing line to save somebody else's life and he has passed away." Another of Daoud's sons, Yama, was on the way to the mosque — to make up with his father after a small falling out — when he bumped into a friend outside who told him "your father saved my life. Your father saved my life", according to Australian newspaper The Age.

It wasn't until Yama re-watched the gunman's video of the rampage — which he streamed on

Facebook Live — and saw his father lying dead on his back that he realized his father did not escape. "I never thought it would happen in New Zealand. It's a peaceful country," Yama Nabi said, tears welling up in his eyes. There were reports on social media that Daoud Nabi had opened the door to the terrorist, greeting him with the words "hello brother".

### The 14-year-old 'brave little soldier'

Sayyad Milne, 14, died at the Al Noor mosque which he attended with his mother and friends every Friday, the New Zealand Herald reported. His father John Milne said his death hadn't been officially confirmed but he'd been told the teenager had been seen lying on the floor of the mosque, bleeding. "I've lost my little boy, he's just turned 14," he told the paper, adding that his son had been a keen footballer. "A brave little soldier. It's so hard... to see him just gunned down by someone who didn't care about anyone or anything."

### The three-year-old still missing

The last time Mucad Ibrahim, aged three, was seen alive was at the Al Noor mosque with his brother and father. His brother Abdi managed to flee the carnage while his father pretended he was dead after he was shot and managed to escape, The Age said. Mucad has not been seen since the shooting. Abdi said his family — who had been to Christchurch Hospital and looked through the list



CHRISTCHURCH: A Muslim resident shows picture of one of mosque attack victim's on his mobile phone outside the court building. —AFP

of people there — thought his brother had most likely died at the mosque.

### The father and daughter in hospital

Jordanian barber Wasseim Alsati and his daughter Alin, four, are both in hospital with serious injuries after being shot at the Al Noor mosque. In a video filmed from his

hospital bed Alsati asked people to "please pray for me and my daughter", who has been flown to Auckland for treatment. A friend of Wasseim's, Carolyn Phillips, who was at the hospital with him, said he had undergone surgery for a perforated bowel, an injury to his pelvis and to get shrapnel and bone out of his hip socket. Alsati reportedly moved to New Zealand from Jordan in 2014. —AFP

## Rural cops brought down Christchurch accused: PM

**CHRISTCHURCH:** A pair of rural New Zealand police officers dramatically arrested the suspected Christchurch gunman 36 minutes after authorities were alerted, it emerged yesterday, as the prime minister hailed their bravery. Jacinda Ardern said the alleged attacker, 28-year-old Australian Brenton Tarrant, would surely have killed even more people than the 49 worshippers he massacred in two mosques were it not for the policemen.

"The offender was mobile, there were two other firearms in the vehicle that the offender was in, and it absolutely was his intention to continue with his attack," Ardern told reporters in Christchurch. Grainy video apparently shot from a passing car shows the gunman's light-colored vehicle at the side of a busy road, rammed against the kerb by a police car and with one of its front wheels suspended in the air.

Two police officers — one of whom appears to be armed only with a handgun — can be seen pointing their weapons at the open passenger-side door. "They were rural community cops I understand from Lincoln (a nearby town) who were present here. Anyone who has seen the footage... they put New Zealand first," Ardern said. "The individual charged was in custody 36 minutes from receiving the first call," she said. —AFP

## Attack puts focus on semi-automatic weapons in New Zealand

**WASHINGTON:** The horrific death toll in the New Zealand mosque massacre has put the spotlight on the lethality of the semi-automatic weapons used by the Christchurch gunman and in numerous attacks in the United States.

At least 49 people were killed and dozens wounded when the gunman, identified as a 28-year-old Australian right-wing extremist, opened fire on worshippers in two mosques. A video live-streamed by the assailant on Facebook showed him rapidly firing what appeared to be hundreds of bullets at his defenseless victims using various weapons. The New Zealand police have not yet identified the exact makes and models of the various guns used by the assailant. At least one was a shotgun but others appeared to be similar to the semi-automatic rifles used in a number of US mass shootings and equipped with large-capacity magazines. Such weapons were used in the mass shooting at a movie theater in Colorado which left 12 people dead in 2012 and the massacre at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, that same year which left 26 people dead including 20 children.

The jihadist who attacked the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in 2016, killing 49 club-goers, used a semi-automatic weapon. The deadliest mass shooting in recent US history was carried out in Las Vegas in 2017 by a man armed with 10 AR-15 semi-automatic rifles, some with 100-round magazines, and other guns. Fifty-eight people died in that attack. The troubled teenager behind the mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida, in 2017 which left 17 people dead and led to a grass roots gun control movement was also armed with an AR-15. —AFP

## New Zealand struggles to answer 'why' in wake of massacre

**CHRISTCHURCH:** Why was the country, thought of as among the most peaceful in the world, singled out for a horrifying terrorist attack? This South Pacific nation, hailed by Muslim immigrants as a "heaven on earth", ranks second only to Iceland on the Global Peace Index. But in just 36 minutes on Friday afternoon, 49 Muslims were shot dead at two Christchurch mosques, leaving more dead than there were murders in all of last year.

In a country where police routinely patrol unarmed, parents strained to explain to their kids what happened, even as they struggled to understand it themselves. A sole gunman "made the point that there is nowhere that's far enough away", said Chris, who took his children aged 12, nine and four, to the scene of the Linwood mosque where seven were gunned down.

"It's a fine line between telling the children this is the reality of it," he said, "and not exposing them to the true nature of humanity that can lead to this sort of thing." Nearby, a heavily armed policewoman tried to explain to two young girls she was holding a rifle to keep them safe, to which one of the girls responded by saying the gunman had used a rifle to kill people.

### Paradise lost?

New Zealand is not a Utopia, there are occasional reports of racism and anti-immigrant attitudes, but they attract headlines because they are not the norm. "I live in New Zealand because the first time I came here in 2011, I found a place that was heaven on earth and I decided to bring my family to live here in peace, away from all the troubles," a Palestinian man said.

## 'I'll walk with you': Massacre prompts flood of support

**CHRISTCHURCH:** Kiwis have responded to the Christchurch mosque massacres with an outpouring of interfaith solidarity — crowdfunding millions of dollars, donating halal food and even offering to accompany local Muslims now scared to walk the streets. The murder of 49 people at two mosques in this usually placid city on Friday has sent shockwaves rippling across New Zealand, a country that on average sees no more than 50 murders a year.

But revulsion at the bloodshed and the self-declared perpetrator's racist motives has been matched by displays of support and warmth towards the country's devastated Muslim communities. In a suburb of Christchurch close to where the shootings took place, Yoti Ioannou and his wife put a shoutout on Facebook calling for locals to donate halal food. Their idea was to provide meals for the dozens of desperate relatives waiting at the city's hospitals for news of their loved ones as surgeons battled to save lives.

The halal food drive was inundated, they said, with lines of people queuing up to give meals throughout yesterday. "We're just really humbled and happy to help," Ioannou said. "We'll be working on a way

to keep things consistent with support for the families." He said so much food was donated that they eventually had to put a fresh call out saying no more was needed. "The people of Christchurch, we're used to rallying," Ioannou said, referencing the 2011 earthquake that killed more than 180 people. "It's just second nature to us now and I'm pleased they came out in force today."

### 'Stay strong'

Across the country New Zealanders also dug deep — the two most prominent crowdfunding campaigns had already raised between them more than NZ\$3.2 million (US\$ 2.2 million) within 24 hours of the shootings yesterday afternoon. Many of those donating left messages of support incorporating popular Maori terms. "Kia kaha to all New Zealanders, love to all families affected," read one donation, using a Maori phrase for "stay strong".

Others put out offers for help and support for local Muslims who might be feeling afraid of leaving their houses. In one Facebook post that went especially viral, Wellington native Lianess Howard wrote: "If any Muslim women in Wellington feel unsafe right now — I will walk with you, wait at the bus stop with you, I'll sit on the bus with you, or walk with you while you do the groceries." A screen grab of the post placed on Twitter was shared more than 16,000 times.

Others came to the police cordons to show support. Wendy and Andy Johnson said that had clipped a silver fern, a



HYDERABAD: An Indian Muslim woman holds placard and candle during a silent protest to pay tribute to the victims of the March 15 Christchurch mosque attacks. —AFP

national symbol, from their garden to place with the growing bunches of flowers left at the massacre site cordons. "We cut the silver fern out of our garden just to let all our Muslim community know that our hearts are breaking for them today and

we stand with them in solidarity," Wendy Johnson told the StuffNZ website. "They have a god damn right to pray how they want to in our city without judgment or murder. It's just appalling this has happened in our city." —AFP



International

# Campuses not camps: China defends Xinjiang policies at UN

‘Interference under the guise of human rights’

GENEVA: China on Friday flatly rejected criticism of mass detainment of Muslim minorities in its restive Xinjiang region, insisting it has set up “campuses”, not camps, in a bid to counter radicalization. China’s vice foreign minister Le Yucheng, the head of a delegation speaking before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, slammed “ill-intentioned accusations against vocational training centers in Xinjiang.”

He was responding to a long line of comments and recommendations regarding the situation in Xinjiang made during a so-called Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of China’s rights record before the council last November. A number of countries at the time cited estimates that some one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim Turkic minorities are being held in detention centers in Xinjiang, and asked China to halt the practice. But Le insisted Friday that such claims showed “a total disregard for the facts”, and were aimed at “interference under the disguise of human rights.” “The training centers... are actually boarding schools or campuses, and not camps as claimed by the ill-intentioned few,” stressing the official line that they are meant to help educate and rehabilitate people susceptible of falling “prey to terrorist extremism”. He said the “trainees” at the centers were free to go home regularly and to have contact with their families, and that those who graduated easily found jobs, allowing them to break “free of both extremist ideology and poverty.” “We are delighted to see on the faces of the trainees smiles of contentment and appreciation of the government.” Le said there had been “thousands” of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang since the 1990s, but that thanks to the use of the “vocational training centers”, not a single attack had taken place in the past 27 months.

Stifling criticism?

“As the counter-terrorism situation improves, the training program will be gradually downsized, leading to its completion,” he said. Nearly 100 countries requested the right to respond to China’s remarks, but due to strict time constraints, only around a dozen were permitted to take the floor. In advance, the rights council drew the name of the first country, Mali, from a hat, and from there countries were called upon in alphabetical order, through to the Philippines.

This meant that most critical voices from Europe and North America were not called upon, with only Norway speaking up against China’s Xinjiang policies. Most other speakers took the opportunity to praise China for accepting and respect for human rights. Non-governmental organizations were also given a chance to speak, but there too, groups praising China grabbed six of the 10 available speaking slots. Activists said this showed that China had gone to great lengths to stifle criticism at the event.

John Fisher of Human Rights Watch commented on the lack of criticism during the event, suggesting that Beijing had coerced states into singing its praises. “Let me start by acknowledging China’s active participation in the UPR process — not just through its national report, but also through its tireless efforts to encourage such a large number of states to uncritically endorse its approach,” he said. Sarah Brooks of the International Service for Human Rights agreed, telling AFP that the numerous pro-China NGO’s speaking at the event was “yet again an example of the investment they will make to buy silence and cover of abuse.” —AFP



BEIJING: A Uighur delegate leaves the room at the end of the Xinjiang delegation meeting at the ongoing National People’s Congress at the Great Hall of the People. —AFP

## After reporter’s murder, govt critic tipped to win Slovak poll

BRATISLAVA: Slovaks voted yesterday in round one of a ballot that could usher in their first female president, a vocal government critic who emerged as the clear favorite after an investigative journalist’s murder dealt a blow to the political establishment. Frontrunner Zuzana Caputova, 45, was among tens of thousands of protesters who took to the streets of the eurozone country of 5.4 million last year over the killing, which sent shockwaves through the country and raised fears about media freedom and political corruption. Opinion polls give the environmental lawyer a double-digit lead over European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic, a 52-year-old career diplomat backed by the ruling Smer-SD party, in the contest for the presidency, a largely ceremonial post.

“Caputova attracts those who abhor corruption and are dissatisfied with what they see as an increasingly... self-dealing government,” said Kevin Deegan-Krause, an expert on central Europe at Wayne State University. “Sefcovic appeals to those with a certain satisfaction with the progress of a country which, by many indicators, has not done at all badly over the last decade,” he told AFP. Neither candidate is on track for an outright victory and a run-off vote for the presidency is expected on March 30.

Murder probe update

Caputova, a deputy head of the non-parliamentary Progressive Slovakia party, told AFP that “people are calling for change” as she campaigned earlier

in March. Journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée were gunned down in February 2018, just as he was to publish a story on alleged ties between Slovak politicians and the Italian mafia plus associated irregularities in EU farm subsidy payments.

The double murder and Kuciak’s last explosive report, published posthumously, plunged the country into crisis. Then prime minister Robert Fico was forced to resign but remains the leader of the populist-left Smer-SD and is a close ally of current premier Peter Pellegrini. Four people were charged last year with the killings. On Thursday, prosecutors announced they had also charged multi millionaire businessman Marian Kocner — believed to have ties to Smer-SD — with ordering the journalist’s murder. Kuciak had been investigating his business activities. “With this announcement, the authorities may have wanted to show just how effectively the state functions, so it could help Sefcovic gain some points,” Bratislava-based analyst Grigorij Meseznikov told AFP. “On the other hand, this could also be a vindication for Caputova, as she is the symbol of change.”

Slovakia ‘polarized’

Caputova won a vote from outgoing President Andrej Kiska, who told reporters that “it is extremely important to continue this fight for a decent and fair Slovakia”. She has appealed to voters tired of the country’s main political players and vowed to restore public trust in the state, running on a slogan of: “Stand up to evil”. On the streets of Bratislava, several voters said they were impressed by her fresh approach.

Project manager Nora Bajnokova said she backed Caputova because “she is a woman, a mother, a lawyer and not involved in active politics”. “You just don’t get the sense that she’s lying,” the 33-year-old from the southern town of Komarno said. Economist Katarina, 42, said Caputova “will ensure equality and fairness”. But 41-year-old security guard Oto said only Sefcovic was “serious” enough to be president material.



BRATISLAVA: Candidate in the upcoming Presidential elections in Slovakia, Zuzana Caputova arrives to take part in a public debate organized by Slovak daily Dennik N with candidate Maros Sefcovic (not in picture) in Bratislava. —AFP

## Russia slams ‘hypocrisy’ of new Western sanctions

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday slammed the “hypocrisy” of new Western sanctions against its officials over their role in a naval confrontation with Ukraine last year, and vowed to respond to the “unfriendly” move. The United States, Canada and the European Union Friday slapped new sanctions on more than a dozen Russian officials and businesses in response to Moscow’s “continued aggression in Ukraine.”

“The pretext for including our countrymen in the illegitimate sanctions list of the EU astounds with hypocrisy and cynicism,” the Russian foreign ministry said. In a previous statement late on Friday, it said Russia “will not leave the unfriendly act of the EU without a response” and accused Brussels of siding with Kiev on the eve of its presidential election due on March 31. “It cannot be ignored that the decision came not long before the presidential election in Ukraine,” it said. It also accused Washington and Ottawa of “Russophobia” and said the sanctions will “not lead to the results the US and Canada want”. A US Treasury statement Friday said six Russian officials, six defence firms and two energy and construction firms had been targeted, either over the seizure of Ukrainian vessels in the Kerch Strait last November, or for their activities in Russian-annexed Crimea or separatist eastern Ukraine.

The US sanctions freeze all property and interests in property belonging to the designated individuals and entities, and prohibit US persons from transacting with them. Four of the individuals are border guard or coast guard officials, singled out for their role in a November 25, 2018 naval confrontation, in which Russian ships fired on and seized three Ukrainian vessels in the narrow Kerch Strait the two countries share. —AFP

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## WASHINGTON WATCH

## Challenging candidates to discuss the Middle East in Iowa 2020

By Dr James J Zogby

I'm writing from Iowa where I've been speaking to audiences of activists and helping to organize "Concerned Iowans for Middle East Peace (CIMEP)" - a coalition committed to Palestinian human rights and a just Middle East peace. If you care about politics and policy, Iowa's the place to be. It's not just that Iowa is the first state to vote in the presidential election cycle. It's because of the way politics are done in this state and the seriousness with which Iowans engage in this process.

When they vote, Iowans don't pull a lever or fill out a paper ballot, they caucus. On election day, across the state, hundreds of thousands of voters gather in school auditoriums, other public buildings, and even living rooms. At the appointed time, they break into groups indicating their preferred presidential candidate. If some candidates only have a few individuals who caucus for them - not enough to register - they may decide to join another candidate's caucus group.

Similarly, members of larger caucuses may try to recruit supporters from the smaller ones, in order to boost the share their candidate receives in the overall vote. When this process is over, the numbers are tallied and those candidates who have the largest number of supporters win the right to send a few delegates to the next round of voting. This same process continues up the ladder from these local caucuses, to the county caucus, to the congressional district, and finally to a state convention - where delegates to the national convention are finally selected.

An additional factor that makes the Iowa experience so interesting is that after the votes for president are tallied, the delegates then debate and vote on issues they want to send to the state convention to be inserted in the state party's political platform. It's a complicated and involved process, to be sure, but it's also exciting and an example of real democracy at work. Iowans don't vote passively; they debate with their neighbors and try to win over other voters to caucus for their chosen candidate. They're aren't just voters, they're activists and advocates.

Last year, I served on a reform commission created by the national Democratic Party. There were some who wanted to end the Iowa caucuses. They argued that it required too great a time commitment (and therefore excluded people whose work or disability make it difficult for them to participate) or that Iowa's population wasn't diverse enough and didn't reflect the rest of the United States.

Those of us who support Iowa and respect its unique process pushed back. We noted that though small in number, Iowa's diverse communities take their responsibilities seriously and engage fully in the caucuses and the debates leading up to them. In the end, Iowa kept its caucuses, but some improvements were made to allow for broader participation by more voters.

There's another reason why I love the personal, hands-on nature of Iowa's politics. It isn't enough for Iowans to see their candidates in a TV ad or at a big rally. They want to meet them, look them in the eye, take their measure of them, and then ask them tough questions. This is what Iowans do.

Because, after Iowa, the rest of the election season is a blur, the rest of the country doesn't have the same opportunity to meet and question the candidates. It's impossible to do that kind of "up close and personal" politics in all 50 states, so Iowans get to raise the issues and ask the questions that the rest of America needs to have answered. And on most topics, Iowans have done their homework and can be quite sophisticated in how they approach the candidates.

Just yesterday, for example, one member of CIMEP was at a small gathering with Beto O'Rourke - the newest Democrat to enter the presidential contest. He was able to frame a detailed and thoughtful question, asking what O'Rourke would do as president about the racist policies of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and what would he do to protect the human rights of Palestinians under occupation. O'Rourke gave a fairly good response condemning Netanyahu and committing to Palestinian rights. If our work goes as planned, this isn't the last time O'Rourke, and other candidates, will get these questions - since our plan is to continue to drill down and insure that the rights of the Palestinians and other Middle East peace issues are center stage in this election.

It is important that an effort like CIMEP be organized, because if it didn't exist, the questions its members will ask might not enter the discussion. Candidates might not be called to account for their position on the Arab-Israeli conflict during the entire presidential contest. Challenging the candidates is so important because in election after election we have chosen a president who has never had to state what they would do to address Israel/Palestine or, for that matter, most other Middle East-related issues.

This is the state of affairs we are determined to bring to an end. We do so because in the past four decades, since the end of the Vietnam War, the US has spent more money, shipped more weapons, sent more troops, fought more wars, lost more lives and has more at stake in the Middle East than any other area of the world - and yet we repeatedly elect presidents without knowing how they will address that region. It is, therefore, imperative that those who seek to lead the United States in the next four years be asked to engage in an open conversation with the American people about how they intend to conduct Middle East policy.

My thanks, therefore, goes to Iowa's peace activists who hosted me and who are organizing to engage in a respectful and desperately needed conversation about the Middle East in this presidential race.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute



Democratic presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke stands on a counter top as he talks with voters during his second day of campaigning for the 2020 nomination at Central Park Coffee Company on Friday in Mount Pleasant, Iowa. —AFP

## Dems build campaign war chests, \$1 at a time

The 2020 presidential election is still 20 months away, but one campaign battle is already raging: The fight for America's small-dollar contributions. With all 12 major Democratic White House candidates shunning donations from corporations and political action committees, or PACs, they have turned their collective eye toward individual voters, who are showing increasing willingness to open their pocketbooks and play a larger role in the political process.

All signs point to an avalanche of personal contributions in the 2020 election cycle as individuals invest more of their own cash in candidates, as polls show voters are overwhelmingly fed up with dark money and corporate influence in politics. Candidates are required to report their first-quarter donations to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) within the coming weeks, and the results are likely to show that while big money will still be at play in the election process, it just might be coming more from everyday voters.

## 'Eager to give'

"There was a lot of energy on the Democratic side (in the 2018 midterm elections) and I see no reason why Democratic giving would slow down in a cycle when President Trump is actually on the ballot," Patrick Burgwinkle, communications director for campaign finance reform group End Citizens United,

told AFP. Individual Democratic donors are "eager to give," he added, "provided that these candidates are walking the walk on reforming our broken campaign finance system."

Many of them seek to claim the moral high ground and prove they will be accountable to the American people and not to corporate donors or special interests. "The money in politics is corrupting. It controls everything," Senator Kirsten Gillibrand told voters in Des Moines, Iowa, last month after announcing her presidential bid. "You have to get money out of politics. And that's why, as a very small first step, I'm not taking corporate PAC money."

Instead she and others, armed with massive voter databases culled from social media and other contacts thanks to improving technology, are sending out millions of fundraising emails seeking contributions to fund their exhausting ground operations - "even just a dollar," pleaded one such message from Democrat Cory Booker.

Bernie Sanders, the liberal senator who made campaign finance reform a central pillar of his rebellious 2016 presidential campaign, entered the 2020 race in February with a bang, raising \$5.9 million in the first 24 hours from more than 220,000 individuals across all 50 states. The average donation was \$27. "Powerful special interests may have the money," he tweeted, "but we have the people". Donald Trump of course is not sitting

idle. The president filed his candidacy for 2020 the day after his inauguration, and his campaign has been fundraising ever since, reportedly raising some \$106 million by last October.

## Unlimited political spending

Many Democrats have raised the reform alarm since 2010, when the controversial Supreme Court decision in Citizens United vs FEC lifted restrictions on campaign spending by corporations and unions. It also paved the way for unlimited political spending by independent groups known as super PACs, political entities that can accept unlimited contributions - sometimes millions of dollars by a single entity or individual - and then spend that money advocating for a candidate. Burgwinkle, of End Citizens United, said some Democrats have benefited from super PACs, but that the lion's share of post-Citizens United PAC money went towards helping elect Republicans. But today, Trump's challengers are receiving major financial boosts from energized grassroots supporters. "The race for money in the Democratic Party is really going to be a race for small dollars," said Colby College's Anthony Corrado, a government professor and leading expert on political finance. "What Bernie Sanders proved in 2016 was that you can finance a campaign largely depending on small-dollar contributions - if you can generate the excitement amongst the grass roots faithful." —AFP

## N Zealand massacre provides test for live video platforms

A horrific video of the New Zealand mosque massacre was blocked by Facebook during its livestream but circulated on other social media, highlighting the challenges faced by Internet platforms in curbing the spread of violent content. Facebook said it "quickly" removed a live video from the suspected gunman in twin mosque shootings in Christchurch that killed at least 49 people. But the livestream lasting 17 minutes was shared repeatedly on YouTube and Twitter, and Internet platforms were scrambling to remove videos being reposted of the gruesome scene.

The major Internet platforms have pledged to crack down on sharing of violent images and other inappropriate content through automated systems and human monitoring, but critics say it isn't working. "There's no excuse for the content from that livestream to be still circulating on social media now," said Lucinda Creighton, a former government minister in Ireland and an advisor to the Counter Extremism Project, which campaigns to remove violent internet content. The online platforms "say they have their own technologies but we don't know what that is. There is no transparency, and it's obviously not working," she told AFP. The organization has developed technology that would flag certain kinds of violent content and offered it to Internet firms, but has been rebuffed.

Internet platforms have cooperated to develop technology that filters child pornography, but have stopped short of joining forces on violent content. Facebook has said it uses a combination of technology tools along with its own monitors and community reports to take down inappropriate content. While Facebook has hired about 20,000 moderators, several media reports have highlighted the stress it puts on people to watch violent content, and problems dealing with live videos. Mia Garlick of Facebook's New Zealand policy team said the social network was working to prevent repostings of the violent video. "We are adding each video we find to an internal data base which enables us to detect and automatically remove copies of the videos when uploaded again," she said in a statement. "We urge people to report all instances to us so our systems can block the video from being shared again."

## YouTube, Twitter scramble

New Zealand police, in a Twitter message early Friday, urged people not to share the "extremely distressing" footage from the Christchurch killings, which were seen on platforms such as 4chan and Reddit and some media websites. "We would strongly urge that the link not be shared. We are working to have any footage removed," the country's police department tweeted. Both Twitter and YouTube said



This image grab from a self-shot video that was streamed on Facebook Live on Friday by Brenton Tarrant, who was involved in two mosque shootings in Christchurch, shows the man in his car before he entered the Masjid al Noor mosque.

they were working to remove the videos and related content. A Twitter spokesperson said issues such as the Christchurch video were handled rigorously by a dedicated team, adding that the platform cooperates with law enforcement. "Our hearts are broken over today's terrible tragedy in New Zealand. Please know we are working vigilantly to remove any violent footage," YouTube said in a tweet. Facebook said it had removed the video following a police alert and blocked the alleged shooter's Facebook and Instagram accounts. "We're also removing any praise or support for the crime and the shooter or shooters as soon as we're aware," Facebook said.

But Jennifer Grygiel, a Syracuse University communications professor who follows social media, said the companies were doing far too little to prevent the spread of violent content. "Facebook is an unmoderated platform where you can stream anything you want," she said, arguing that no meaningful measures have been taken since a 2017 Facebook livestream of a murder in Cleveland, Ohio. Social networks have been caught flat-footed in many cases by videos showing violent acts including suicides and assassinations. The platforms have also been used for videos showing police brutality. Grygiel said it has become commonplace for perpetrators to use social media to gain attention to acts of violence, and that these are often shared on YouTube and other platforms.

She said platforms like YouTube have the ability to find and remove violent videos with keyword searches, but that more people are needed to monitor the platforms. "They have the tools with social listening to go in with keyword terms and have moderators view and remove all videos linked to this type of incident," she said. Grygiel noted that artificial intelligence falls short, saying, "there's no algorithm that can be designed for this, because you can't predict the future". —AFP

## In San Francisco, tech boom has left people priced out of housing

In San Francisco, far from the picturesque, winding streets in the hills, a glistening skyscraper represents how the country's tech titans have transformed the city - and made it one of the world's most expensive places to live. The figures are mind-boggling: Average monthly rent for a two-room apartment in the city by the bay now runs to \$3,700, the highest in the United States. And a household of four with annual earnings of less than \$117,400 is officially considered "low income."

Want to go visit the Facebook headquarters in the close suburbs? It'll take you two hours to go 45 km, day and night. The Salesforce Tower - named for a cloud-based software company - now dominates the skyline. Each day, huge buses transport tech workers to the suburban offices of Facebook, Google and Apple. All this wealth has sent real estate prices soaring across the Bay Area - from Silicon Valley in the south to Oakland in the east - and widened the rich-poor divide in a striking way.

Thousands of shabbily dressed homeless people wander along Market Street, one of the city's main shopping thoroughfares, not far from the headquarters of Uber and Twitter - as Teslas and Maseratis zip by. With rent so high, some have taken to living in their cars, like Elizabeth V, a 59-year-old who works up to 16 hours a day as a security guard at one of the tech company buildings. She earns just \$2,800 a month - not nearly enough to pay for housing for herself and her disabled brother.

"I guess we're kind of invisible because people don't think of us when they think of Silicon Valley. They think of the small minority of engineers that earn a ton of money," says Elizabeth, who wakes up every morning in her car - filled with clothes and boxes of food - in a parking lot in San Jose, in the heart of the tech corridor. Cary McClelland, whose 2018 book "Silicon City" examines how the area has changed, says: "We see now a kind of homelessness that did not occur before - people who work, that is new."

## Skyrocketing evictions

Whether talking to politicians, housing experts or residents, everyone agrees that even though San Francisco - built on a



A woman walks by a housing-related mural in San Francisco on Feb 6, 2019. —AFP

peninsula - has always had housing problems, the situation has become far worse since the tech boom of 2012. According to the Paragon real estate group, the average price of a house in San Francisco shot up from \$670,000 in early 2012 to \$1.6 million at the start of 2018. With the influx of tens of thousands of "techie" - software designers, programmers and engineers - whose salaries easily start at \$100,000 a year and go up from there, the cost of living rose quickly.

That triggered "skyrocketing evictions in the city (...)" a huge number of businesses had to close," along with cultural institutions and non-profits, said McClelland. "After the great recession (2008-2011), with so little place for investment capital to go elsewhere in the economy, so much of it came here and overheated the city," he said. Servane Valentin, a French realtor, recalled that as of 2012 and 2013, "we saw young 'geeks' in their 20s and 30s arriving with much higher salaries and had no idea about money." "They were ready to pay \$2,000 for a studio," a price far above the market value, says Valentin.

## Reaction

Soaring real estate prices have certainly boosted the ranks of the homelessness - there are officially some 7,500 people living on the streets of San Francisco, a city of just 900,000 inhabitants. But they have also driven out the middle classes, who now live in the far suburbs, with commute of two or three hours each way. That aggravates road congestion. As a result, "we almost always have openings for certain lower-paying jobs, such as medical assistants" who cannot afford to live in the city, said Peggy Sugar, 55, who works in the health sector and has lived here for more than 30 years. The same goes for teachers, firefighters, social workers, waiters and delivery workers, among others. —AFP



# Business

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**12** China says ready to use more policy tools to help economy

**13** AUB launches Microsoft teams to boost digital transformation

**14** Flydubai inaugurates service to Uzbekistan with Tashkent flight



KUWAIT: Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, along with the management said, addresses a press conference yesterday.

## ABK delivers operating profit of KD 103.7m

Bank reports a net profit of KD 42.1 million for 2018, an increase of 18.1% y-o-y

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), yesterday announced its financial results for the fiscal year ended 31st December, 2018. The Bank delivered a strong set of results with a net profit of KD 42.1 million, up 18.1 percent year-on-year. Operating income was KD 168.8 million, up 7.5 percent over last year, while operating profit was up 6 percent to KD 103.7 million. Total assets reached KD 4.5 Billion, up 4.3 percent from 2017, and total shareholders' equity increased by KD 12.8 million, reaching KD 585 million. Earnings per share increased to 26 fils, up by 4 fils. The ABK Board of Directors have proposed a distribution of 14 fils per share cash dividend compared to 12 fils in 2017, subject to the approval of ABK's General Assembly Meeting.

ABK's customer deposits witnessed an increase of 6 percent over the same period last year to reach KD 3.1 billion. Asset quality remained very solid with the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio at 1.78 percent and NPL coverage well over 300 percent. The Bank's capital adequacy ratio and Tier 1 capital ratio was 19.15 percent and 17.94 percent, respectively. The Bank continues to maintain strong credit ratings on both Fitch and Moody's, receiving A+ and A2 ratings respectively.

Commenting on the results, Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK said: "Over the past year, the Bank has continued its steady growth trajectory despite a challenging global macro-economic environment. Our prudent business model has enabled us to deliver a robust

and profitable operating performance across all our core businesses. For the first time in the history of ABK, we have surpassed the KD 100 million operating profit.

"I firmly believe that our 'Simpler Banking' strategy will fuel the future development of ABK, and create greater long-term value to our customers and shareholders. "ABK was the first Kuwaiti Bank to open its doors in the UAE 40 years ago, to serve the interests of Kuwaiti businesses abroad. Driven by this commitment, we have further extended our reach in the UAE by opening a new DIFC branch that will serve as the Group's Corporate Finance hub and support our corporate and multinational clients in expanding their regional footprint."

Shortly after opening the DIFC branch, ABK signed an agreement with Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) for a revolving credit facility worth \$800 million. The four-year facility was substantially oversubscribed. Michel Accad, Group CEO of ABK said: "The sustained growth of ABK is built on our commitment to our core value pillars - Transparency, Integrity, Simplicity and Excellence. At an operational level, we have been able to efficiently respond to the growing need for digital transformation in the financial sector. We have expanded the scope of our capabilities across retail and corporate banking, and across our geographies, especially in Egypt, putting us firmly amongst the leading banks in the region. I am certain that the inherent strengths of ABK combined with our dedication towards enhancing

our customers experience will make the Bank even stronger in the years ahead."

In line with its digital transformation journey, a number of digital products were launched during the year, some of which were first to market, such as "Global View" or the possibility to generate decades-old account statements online or through our mobile App. Harnessing the latest digital technology including Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, the user-friendly platform helps increase ABK's employee engagement and delivers improved agility to the workforce to achieve organisational goals.

ABK contributed to a number of social causes throughout the year with the main focus aligned to the Bank's CSR strategy of Healthy Living.

Speaking about the Bank's Social Responsibility, Accad said: "At ABK, we believe that the best way to support the interests of our stakeholders is by running a strong, profitable and growing business, which creates jobs and actively engages with the community. In our view, that is the basis for being a force for good. We are not only interested in contributing to growth today, but we also want to help individuals, businesses and economies progress in ways that will contribute to sustainable growth tomorrow."

ABK received significant global exposure from various industry forums in 2018 and was recognized by Global Finance Magazine as one of the top ten 'Safest Banks' in the region for the second year in a row.

### ABK lists achievements, unveils future plans

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced some of its domestic and international achievements and unveiled some of its future plans during a press conference that followed the general assembly meeting yesterday.

Michel Accad, Group Chief Executive Officer, ABK spoke about the bank's performance in Egypt. "In terms of international operations, ABK is performing very well in Egypt. And we continue to focus on our overseas expansion. We are very optimistic about our future in the UAE with the issues that we faced in the past are behind us today," he noted.

"We register a much faster growth in Egypt than the sector growth in the country. The initial base was smaller but we are able to expand it faster. The

banking industry is not completely developed in Egypt as in the GCC. There is a lot of unbanked population, so there are much bigger opportunities to grow. At the same time, we don't need to do acquisitions to grow," added Accad.

Regarding the launching of new branches in Egypt, he said: "Egypt is a very big country and we consider opening new branches there in order to reach the large unbanked population. Today, much of the growth has to come from digital banking rather than the physical branches as it is today's model. Our retail banking is also doing well in Egypt, even better than the corporate banking. We have modern branches in the country as we are expanding our operations at the appropriate time," he explained.

"Today the world is moving towards the digital banking rather than physical banking. ABK has a dedicated team to evolve our digital strategy and its proper implementation. We are expecting the results soon," he further said.

"In terms of the percentage growth, it is more or less similar as its was in three or four years ago. Our approach of simplicity brought in new clients for us. Remember, we started operations in Egypt only three years ago and the growth is faster than

Kuwait or the Emirates. It's about 10 percent and we expect the growth to double in the next three years," stated Accad.

Abdullah Al-Sumait, Deputy Chief General Manager, ABK spoke about the bank's mega projects. "All banks will participate in these mega projects. ABK has entered into many mega projects such as Al-Subiya City and Jaber City. We have almost finalized our participation in other projects as well. We are one of the few banks in the country with cutting edge management expertise for these projects as we are not just a participant," he pointed out.

ABK is also leading some huge transactions that will be announced in 2019. "We are leading one of the largest transactions in aviation sector, a project worth \$800 million in Dubai. Other projects will be announced later," he added.

ABK recently issued a new bond to increase its capital. "The bank's large capital adequacy of 19.2 percent allows it a faster growth and enables it to open more opportunities in Egypt. Issuance of bonds is as per requirement and we don't have to issue new bonds over the next few years," said Al-Sumait. "The Bursa Kuwait is very stable now and we are happy that it is recognized internationally today," Accad added.

### Trump's trade war cost US economy \$7.8bn in 2018: Study

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's trade battles cost the US economy \$7.8 billion in lost gross domestic product in 2018, a study by a team of economists at leading American universities published this week showed. Authors of the paper said they analyzed the short-run impact of Trump's actions and found that imports from targeted countries declined 31.5 percent while targeted US exports fell by 11 percent. They also found that annual consumer and producer losses from higher costs of imports totaled \$68.8 billion.

"After accounting for higher tariff revenue and gains to domestic producers from higher prices, the aggregate welfare loss was \$7.8 billion," or 0.04 percent of GDP, the researchers said. The study was authored by a team of economists at the University of California Berkeley, Columbia University, Yale University and University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and published by the National Bureau of Economic research. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25638>

Having dubbed himself the "tariff man," Trump pledged on both the campaign trail and as president to reduce the trade deficit by shutting out unfairly traded imports and renegotiating free trade agreements.

Trump has pursued a protectionist trade agenda to shield US manufacturing. Washington and Beijing have been locked in a tit-for-tat tariff battle for months as imposing unilateral tariffs to combat, and Trump has imposed tariffs that have roiled the European Union and other major trading partners.

The authors said while US tariffs favored sectors located in "politically competitive" counties, the retaliatory tariffs imposed on US goods have offset the benefits to these areas.

"We find that tradeable-sector workers in heavily Republican counties were the most negatively affected by the trade war," the researchers said. — Reuters



Business

# China says ready to use more policy tools to help economy

## Li warns against using flood-like stimulus to boost economy

**BEIJING:** The Chinese government has additional monetary policy measures that it can take to support economic growth this year, and will even cut "its own flesh" to help finance large-scale tax cuts, Premier Li Keqiang said on Friday. China has promised billions of dollars in tax cuts and infrastructure spending to help businesses and protect jobs, as economic momentum is expected to cool further due to softer domestic demand and the trade war with the United States.

Li's comments suggest Beijing is ready to roll out more stimulus measures to ensure the economy grows within a targeted range of 6.0 to 6.5 percent. Gross domestic product grew 6.6 percent in 2018 - the least in 28 years. Shares on Chinese stock exchanges climbed after the government reaffirmed its commitment to boosting growth. The yuan recovered from a three-week low against the dollar after Li's comments.

"Of course, we are faced with many uncertain factors this year. We have to prepare more and we have reserved policy room (to address uncertainties)," Li told a news conference after the annual parliament meeting ended. "Moreover, we can deploy quantity-based or price-based policy tools such as reserve requirements and interest rates. This is not monetary easing but to more effectively support the real economy."

The support measures rolled out so far are taking time to kick in and most analysts believe activity may not convincingly stabilize until the middle of the year.

The central bank has cut banks' reserve requirement ratios (RRR) five times over the past year, with a two-stage RRR cut in January releasing a total of 1.5 trillion yuan (\$223.23 billion) into the financial system. Further cuts in RRR had been widely expected this year, after fresh data pointed to persistently soft demand in the Asian economic giant, raising fears of a sharper slowdown. Sources told Reuters in February that the central bank is not yet ready to cut benchmark interest rates to spur the slowing economy, but is likely to cut market-based rates.

The premier said the government would take multiple measures to lower funding costs for small and micro firms by 1 percentage point this year. An across-the-board cut in borrowing costs could also risk another flare-up in debt and speculative activity like that in the

wake of the 2008-9 global financial crisis.

### Cutting taxes, slitting wrists

To help finance the tax cuts, the government would need to tighten its belt, Li said.

China will bolster its national coffers by collecting more of the profits earned by some financial institutions and centrally-owned firms, while general expenditure will be cut, Li said. That will collectively cover 1 trillion yuan of the government's planned tax cuts, he said.

"Large-scale tax cuts and fee reductions would affect the government, cutting its own flesh," Li said. "This kind of reform is equivalent to turning one's blade inward and slitting one's wrist."

Promised cuts in value-added tax (VAT) for manufacturing and other sectors will take effect from April 1, while social security fees will be reduced from May 1, Li said. The premier announced on March 5 that the VAT for the manufacturing sector would be cut to 13 percent from 16 percent. VAT for the transport and construction sectors will be reduced to 9 percent from 10 percent.

Li's comments "reconfirm a consistent pro-growth stance, with clarity on fiscal easing and an earlier-than-expected effective date for tax cuts," Morgan Stanley said in a note, adding that it expects improved growth from the second quarter. Beijing's tax cut efforts have focused on the manufacturing sector and small businesses that are vital for economic growth and employment. Li said the government hopes to create 13 million jobs this year, the same as last year.

"Not allowing the economy to slip out of a reasonable range, that is to say we will not allow waves of layoffs," said Li, adding the government will provide support to firms creating the most jobs. Data on Thursday showed that China's survey-based jobless rate rose to 5.3 percent in February, from 4.9 percent in December, partly due to job shedding by export-oriented companies.

### Trade war

China is still negotiating with the United States to resolve their trade frictions, Li said, adding both sides have far more shared interests than conflicts, and it would be "unrealistic" to decouple the world's two



**NANTONG:** A worker welds a liquefied natural gas (LNG) tank at a factory in Nantong in China's eastern Jiangsu province. —AFP

largest economies. "We hope that the consultations will be fruitful and will achieve mutual benefit and win-win. I believe that this is also the expectation of the world," Li said. A summit to seal a trade deal between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping will not happen at the end of March as previously discussed, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Thursday. Washington and Beijing have been locked in a tit-for-tat tariff battle as U.S. presses China for an end to practices and policies it argues have given Chinese firms unfair advantages, including subsidizing of industry, limits on access for foreign companies and alleged theft of intellectual property.

On Friday, China's parliament approved a new foreign investment law that promises to create a transparent environment for foreign firms, though there is skepticism about its enforceability.

The law, designed to ease concerns among foreign companies about the difficulties they face in China, will ban forced technology transfer and illegal government "interference" in foreign business practices.

Li stressed that China did not, and would never, ask Chinese companies to spy on other countries.

His comments came after increased international scrutiny of Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd., which has been caught in the cross-fire as trade tensions ratcheted up. —Reuters

## S&P upgrades Portugal's debt rating, citing

**WASHINGTON:** Global ratings agency S&P on Friday upgraded Portugal's sovereign debt, citing the country's declining level of indebtedness and expectations for "balanced" growth. The decision followed September's upgrade to Portugal's outlook as the once troubled European economy continues its recovery. In 2014, Portugal exited an international bailout program that began at the height of the European Union debt crisis. S&P raised its rating to the lower-medium-grade "BBB," with a stable outlook, up from "BBB-."

The agency said Portugal should continue to run budget surpluses, steadily reducing the ratio of debt to GDP, while posting growth of between 1.5 percent and 1.7 percent through 2021. Last year's primary budget surplus of almost three percent of Gross Domestic Product was "one of the highest in the euro area" or among OECD members, the agency said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Lisbon's plans to operate at an overall surplus by next year, including spending on interest costs, are "credible," despite the cyclical economic slowdown in Europe, according to S&P.

Portuguese authorities have also made efforts to protect the economy from a no-deal Brexit.

"UK residents make up about one-sixth of tourist arrivals in Portugal, meaning a no-deal Brexit would at least initially incur a cost," the statement said. "The government has introduced measures to facilitate the arrival of UK nationals in Portugal in the event of a no-deal Brexit." —AFP

## US manufacturing sector slowing as economy loses steam

**WASHINGTON:** US manufacturing output fell for a second straight month in February and factory activity in New York state hit nearly a two-year low this month, offering further evidence of a sharp slowdown in economic growth early in the first quarter.

The reports on Friday extended the streak of weak data and underscored the Federal Reserve's "patient" stance towards further interest rate increases this year. Fed officials are scheduled to meet next Tuesday and Wednesday to assess the economy and deliberate on the future course of monetary policy. The US central bank raised rates four times last year. "The economy is spinning its wheels and not gaining any traction yet in this soft patch produced by trade wars and stock market turbulence and the government shutdown," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MIFG in New York. "Thank God Fed officials were smart enough to take their foot off the rate hikes accelerator."

The Fed said manufacturing production dropped 0.4 percent last month, held down by declines in the output of motor vehicles, machinery and furniture. Data for January was revised up to show output at factories falling 0.5 percent instead of slumping 0.9 percent as previously reported.

It was the first back-to-back decline since mid-2017. Economists polled by Reuters had

forecast manufacturing output rising 0.3 percent in February. Production at factories increased 1.0 percent in February from a year ago. Manufacturing accounts for about 12 percent of the economy.

Motor vehicles and parts output slipped 0.1 percent last month after tumbling 7.6 percent in January. Excluding motor vehicles and parts, manufacturing output fell 0.4 percent last month, the largest decrease in nearly a year. February's drop in manufacturing production added to soft reports ranging from retail sales to housing in suggesting the economy lost significant momentum early in the first quarter.

The Atlanta Fed is forecasting gross domestic product will rise at a 0.4 percent annualized rate in the first quarter. GDP grew at a 2.6 percent pace in the fourth quarter.

The economy is losing steam as the stimulus from last year's \$1.5 trillion tax cut package fades. Activity is also being cramped by a trade war between the United States and China as well as by last year's surge in the dollar and softening global economic growth, which are hurting exports.

These factors, together with a 35-day partial shutdown of the US government that ended on Jan. 25, have spilled over to the manufacturing sector. In a separate report on Friday, the New York Fed said its general business conditions index fell 5.1 points to a reading of 3.7 in February, the lowest since May 2017. It was the third consecutive monthly reading below 10, which the New York Fed said suggested "that growth has remained quite a bit slower so far this year than it was for most of 2018."

A reading above zero indicates expansion in the region's manufacturing sector. The survey's new orders index fell 4.5 points to 3.0 in



**WILLISTON:** In this file, pump jacks and a gas flare are seen near Williston, North Dakota. US manufacturing dropped sharply for the second consecutive month in February with across-the-board declines in nearly every category of product, the Federal Reserve reported on Friday. —AFP

March. The weakness reported by the New York Fed also suggests that national factory activity remained sluggish this month after slowing sharply in February.

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) reported this month that its measure of national manufacturing activity dropped to more than a two-year low in February, with a steep decline in the new orders component. The dollar was weaker against a basket of currencies on Friday, while US Treasury prices rose. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher.

### Job openings rise

But there was some good economic news. In a third report on Friday, the University of

Michigan said its consumer sentiment index rose to a reading of 97.8 in early March from 93.8 in February. Strong consumer sentiment bodes well for consumer spending in the months ahead after spending appeared to have retrenched early in the first quarter. A fourth report from the Labor Department showed job openings, a measure of labor demand, rose by 102,000 to a seasonally adjusted 7.58 million in January. That was not far from the record high 7.63 million in November. The high level of vacancies suggests a shortage of workers that could further boost wage growth. Annual wage growth in February was the best since 2009. But the scarcity of workers could be another constraint for manufacturing and economy. —Reuters

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
<b>EUROPEAN &amp; AMERICAN COUNTRIES</b>	
US Dollar Transfer	304.600
Euro	345.420
Sterling Pound	403.290
Canadian dollar	228.760
Turkish lira	57.040
Swiss Franc	303.840
US Dollar Buying	303.400
<b>ASIAN COUNTRIES</b>	
Japanese Yen	2.740
Indian Rupees	4.367
Pakistani Rupees	2.223
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.701
Nepali Rupees	2.728
Singapore Dollar	225.380
Hongkong Dollar	38.804
Bangladesh Taka	3.608
Philippine Peso	5.779
Thai Baht	9.649
Malaysian ringgit	77.903
<b>GCC COUNTRIES</b>	
Saudi Riyal	81.281
Qatari Riyal	83.716
Omani Riyal	791.683
Bahraini Dinar	809.350
UAE Dirham	82.986
<b>ARAB COUNTRIES</b>	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.700
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.438

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	102.910
Jordanian Dinar	430.230
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.030
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.370
<b>Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd</b>	
<b>Rate for Transfer</b>	<b>Selling Rate</b>
US Dollar	304.040
Canadian Dollar	229.140
Sterling Pound	405.040
Euro	346.645
Swiss Frank	307.445
Bahrain Dinar	808.555
UAE Dirhams	83.180
Qatari Riyals	84.420
Saudi Riyals	81.975
Jordanian Dinar	430.115
Egyptian Pound	17.461
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.700
Indian Rupees	4.395
Pakistani Rupees	2.184
Bangladesh Taka	3.613
Philippines Peso	5.775
Cyprus pound	18.090
Japanese Yen	3.720
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.752
Malaysian Ringgit	75.240
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.688
Thai Bhat	10.575

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
<b>Europe</b>		
British Pound	0.398332	0.412232
Czech Korune	0.005437	0.014737
Danish Krone	0.042170	0.047070
Euro	0.338003	0.351703
Georgian Lari	0.132043	0.132043
Hungarian 0.001147	0.001337	0.001337
Norwegian Krone	0.031627	0.036827
Romanian Leu	0.065231	0.082081
Russian ruble	0.004676	0.004676
Slovakia	0.009099	0.019099
Swedish Krona	0.028921	0.033921
Swiss Franc	0.297852	0.303855
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.208083	0.220083
New Zealand Dollar	0.202642	0.212142
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.223174	0.232174
US Dollars	0.300300	0.305600
US Dollars Mint	0.300800	0.305600
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003053	0.003854

Chinese Yuan	0.043828	0.047328
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036036	0.039786
Indian Rupee	0.003705	0.004477
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002647	0.002827
Korean Won	0.000258	0.000273
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070300	0.076300
Nepalese Rupee	0.002610	0.002960
Pakistan Rupee	0.001537	0.002307
Philippine Peso	0.005768	0.006068
Singapore Dollar	0.219647	0.229647
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001363	0.001943
Taiwan	0.010160	0.010340
Thai Baht	0.009280	0.009830
Vietnamese Dong	0.000103	0.000103
<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.792857	0.809357
Egyptian Pound	0.017573	0.020173
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.424432	0.434332
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022124	0.046124
Omani Riyal	0.784331	0.790011
Qatari Riyal	0.079321	0.084261
audi Riyal	0.080087	0.081367
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.096318	0.104318
Turkish Lira	0.049450	0.060950
UAE Dirhams	0.081452	0.083152
Yemeni Riyal	0.000689	0.001069



## Business

# AUB launches Microsoft teams to boost digital transformation

## Application to facilitate closer collaboration, hold virtual meetings

**KUWAIT:** As part of its digital transformation drive, Ahli United Bank has rolled out the Microsoft Teams application designed to enable effective communication, facilitate closer collaboration and hold virtual meetings. This solution was delivered based on the need to facilitate the rapid and more efficient sharing of information and insights in a collaborative and dynamic way.

Ahli United Bank has adopted Microsoft Teams as it promotes work effort integration, enhances work visibility more than ever before and allows the secure sharing of insights and intelligence across a collaborative platform.

AUB employees expressed satisfaction with the new application which exposes them to a richly diversified experience in conversation and allows maintaining and retrieving of con-

versation threads related to specific topics and themes.

Perhaps one of the most prominent features of Microsoft Teams is that it allows certain conversations to be "public" and others "private" and limited to the desired number of participants. Furthermore, users can use photos, animations, texts, links and various forms of files in their conversations.

Speaking on this occasion, Tareq Muhmood, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Ahli United Bank, said: "we are thrilled to partner with Microsoft on using this tool. In addition to the conversation tools, including expressions, symbols and stickers to facilitate communication, in addition to sending, receiving and editing documents without interrupting the conversations.

We are also able to integrate with Skype for video and voice discussions."

Muhmood emphasized that feedback on this service from the Bank's employees has been very positive, given the enhanced work experience and allowed the staff to be more productive and fulfilled. Commenting on the application and the new step taken by Ahli United Bank, Charles Nahas, General Manager of Microsoft - Kuwait, said: "Ahli United Bank has been an excellent partner in using Microsoft technology to improve productivity and enhance overall staff experience."

Over the coming weeks and months, Ahli United Bank have plans to further enhance its customer and staff experience and will continue to update its customers as these launch.



**KUWAIT:** Charles Nahas, Tareq Muhmood and Ali Al-Oud at the Ahli United Bank on the occasion of the launch of Microsoft teams



**MIAMI, FL:** Two grounded American Airlines Boeing 737 Max 8 are seen parked at Miami International Airport in Miami, Florida. — AFP

## Boeing upgrades software on crisis-hit 737 MAX

**WASHINGTON:** Boeing is upgrading the stall prevention software on its 737 MAX, industry sources said Friday, as French investigators scoured black box data from the latest of two deadly crashes involving the aircraft in recent months. The MAX has been grounded worldwide following Sunday's Ethiopia Airlines disaster that killed all 157 on board, and the fallout has left the company, regulators and airlines scrambling to respond.

Boeing will fine-tune its MCAS system implicated in the crash of a Lion Air 737 MAX 8 in Indonesia in October within 10 days, said two sources, who cautioned that the cause of the latest crash has yet to be determined.

Boeing has halted deliveries of its top-selling model ahead of the software patch, which was already underway prior to the latest incident near Addis Ababa.

Asked for details about the timeline for the fix, a Boeing spokesman Friday would only say it would be installed in "coming weeks." The black boxes from the Ethiopian craft, which was only a few months old and crashed minutes after takeoff, are being analyzed by the French authorities to determine the cause of the accident.

An Ethiopian delegation delivered the cockpit voice and flight data recorders, which were damaged in the disaster, to France's BEA air safety agency to begin the investigation on Friday. The Lion Air crash also came just minutes after takeoff, killing 189 people, and US authorities say there is evidence of similarities between the accidents. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said findings from the crash site and "newly refined satellite data" warranted "further investigation of the possibility of a shared cause for the two incidents."

Several American pilots also reported issues with the MCAS and the FAA said it had ordered Boeing to issue a fix by April. The aerospace giant held a conference call on Thursday with at least three carriers using the 737 MAX and gave them the patch, one source said, and the other airlines will get it early next week.

Meanwhile, American pilots have raised questions about the training provided to the flight crews.

One who flew a MAX 8 on Monday told AFP that US-trained pilots—many of whom come from the military—would have been able to react quickly to the MCAS flaw, if that occurred in the accident last weekend. And Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger—noted for his safe landing of a damaged plane on the Hudson River in New York without loss

of life — questioned the lack of experience of the Ethiopian first officer on the doomed flight, who reportedly had only 200 hours of flight time.

"A cockpit crew must be a team of experts, not a captain and an apprentice," he said on social media.

But he also worried about the lag in getting a software fix installed. "It has been obvious since the Lion Air crash that a redesign of the 737 MAX 8 has been urgently needed ... and the announced proposed fixes do not go far enough."

### Boeing shares hit

Thousands of miles away, distraught families were demanding answers as they visited the deep black crater where the plane smashed into a field outside the capital, disintegrating on impact. Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest carrier, sent the black boxes to France because it does not have the equipment to analyze the data. The information that they contain helps explain 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts.

An FAA emergency order has grounded 737 MAX 8 and MAX 9 aircraft until further notice, effectively taking the aircraft out of the skies globally. The move came after a growing number of airlines and countries decided not to fly the planes or ban them from their airspace until it is determined there are no safety issues.

US President Donald Trump told reporters the "safety of the American people and all peoples is our paramount concern". Trump and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed exchanged condolences Friday, Abiy said on Twitter, with the US president praising Ethiopian Airlines as a "strong institution" and offering technical support.

The 737 MAX series is Boeing's fastest-selling model and it is still relatively new with fewer than 500 in service. There are 74 registered in the United States and 387 in use worldwide with 59 carriers, according to the FAA.

Boeing's shares have fallen 10 percent since Sunday's crash-wiping out about \$25 billion in value—after regaining some ground Friday after report that a fix was coming soon.

### 'Panicky voice'

According to the flight data recorder, the pilots of Lion Air Flight 610 struggled to control the aircraft as the MCAS repeatedly pushed the nose down after takeoff. At least four American pilots later complained of the same problem with the aircraft, 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 disaster, US pilots disconnected the autopilot and corrected the plane's trajectory in response. The Ethiopian Airlines pilots reported similar difficulties before their aircraft plunged to the ground. According to The New York Times, air traffic controllers observed the Ethiopian Airlines plane "oscillating up and down by hundreds of feet" prior to the crash.—AFP

three separate lots—were also won by Flughafen Zurich of Switzerland and a Brazilian consortium, Aeroeste. Nine groups competed.

The administrators must invest 3.5 billion reais during the term of the concession. Brazil is to complete the sale of concessions to 42 airports between 2020 and 2022, including Santos Dumont in Rio de Janeiro and Congonhas in Sao Paulo. The airports auctioned Friday represent 9.5 percent of the domestic market. Six airports in northeastern Brazil were bought by Aena, two in the center-west went to Zurich, and four in the southeast to Aeroeste. Aena's successful tender included the auction's most lucrative prize, tourist-magnet Recife airport, a destination seen as having the biggest potential because of its relative proximity to Europe.

Infrastructure minister Tarciso Freitas said the auction was "a great demonstration of confidence in the country." Bolsonaro's conservative predecessor Michel Temer initiated a program of privatizations and concessions.

But Bolsonaro, who came to power in January, has made privatizing state-owned companies and overhauling the costly

## Central banks stuck in holding pattern

**LONDON:** A host of central banks meet next week, but with a global economic slowdown underway alongside political and trade strife, they are unlikely to tinker much, if at all, with policy.

An escalation in the US-China trade war would trigger a sharper downturn, economists say, putting major central banks on a more cautious path just as they want to wind down crisis measures.

On Wednesday, the United States Federal Reserve will release its updated forecasts for the US economy, and its latest dot plots will probably point either to no more interest rate rises this year or to one more at most. The Fed is currently in a holding pattern and its chief, Jerome Powell, signalled at the conclusion of the last meeting in January it may be at the end of its policy tightening cycle and would be "patient" before making any further moves.

"We believe the word 'patient' is likely to appear in the March policy statement again, as it did in January," HSBC economists told clients.

"This would imply, in our view, that the target funds rate will be kept unchanged for at least the two subsequent policy meetings. We look for one 25 basis point rate increase in the federal funds rate this year, in September." A Reuters poll pointed to one rate increase, in the third quarter, before it calls a halt.

On March 21, the Bank of England is almost certain to sit on its hands. British lawmakers voted overwhelmingly on Thursday in favor of delaying Britain's exit from the European Union, which had been due at the end of the month. Prime Minister Theresa May will now try for a third time to get parliament's approval for her proposed deal on leaving the EU. Lawmakers must decide whether to back a deal they feel does not offer a clean break from the EU, or reject it and accept Brexit could be watered down or even thwarted by a long delay.

"This looks set to keep the Bank Rate firmly on hold at 0.75 percent. The committee is very unlikely to raise rates again until it has a clearer line of sight on Brexit," said Victoria Clarke at Investec.

Britain's economy came close to stagnating again in February amid Brexit nerves and sluggish global growth, a picture repeated in the euro zone where a series of weak economic reports have confirmed a slowdown. The European Central Bank may have missed its opportunity to raise interest rates before the next downturn, according to a Reuters poll that showed a majority of central bank policy watchers aren't confident they will.

Earlier this month, the ECB pushed back until at least 2020 the timing of its first post-crisis rate increase. It also offered banks a new round of cheap loans to help revive the euro zone economy.

It was a similar scene in Asia, where growth is also slowing. Central banks in Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand all have monetary policy meetings in the week.

"The market is interested in what Indonesia and the Philippines central banks will do and look for any signs of easing after their aggressive policy hikes in 2018," said Prakash Sakpal at ING. All 13 economists polled by Reuters said the Philippines central bank would leave policy alone and probably wait until inflation is within its target before it looks to ease. Indonesia's central bank will also remain on hold and wait for further moves from the Fed, a Reuters poll suggested.

"We think Bank Indonesia will remain on hold until late Q3 when we expect it to hike another 25 basis points to maintain balance with Fed hikes," noted Credit Suisse economists.

Bucking the trend, Norway's central bank is expected to raise its key rate on March 21 and continue to tighten later this year amid solid growth and rising inflation, a Reuters poll found on Friday.

Norway's fourth-quarter growth exceeded expectations, as did February inflation. The crown's weakness and a rising price for crude oil, the country's main export, also point to tighter policy.—Reuters

pension system key planks of his policy to reduce soaring public debt and regain investor confidence. The auction, organized by the National Agency for Civil Aviation and the Sao Paulo stock exchange, was also seen as a test of the market's support for Bolsonaro's economy minister Paulo Guedes, a US-trained free-marketeer.—AFP



**Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, pictured in Brasilia on March 12, 2019.**

## Boeing groundings puts US-China trade-linked jet order in limbo

**SEATTLE/PARIS/SHANGHAI:** China's move to ground Boeing Co's 737 MAX jetliners following the deadly Ethiopian Airlines crash has cast a shadow over the American planemaker's immediate hopes for a major jet order linked to a US-China trade deal, industry sources said.

Evidence of a major potential order for more than 100 jets worth well over \$10 billion at list prices had risen in recent weeks as Washington and Beijing reported some progress in trade talks to resolve a months-long trade war. Those expectations were fanned by signs of pent-up demand stemming not only from a drop in China's public purchases as the two sides descended into a tariff war, but also because China placed no private orders for Boeing aircraft in 2018, according to trade and industry sources familiar with the matter.

Now, those sources say it is uncertain how quickly China will be willing to give the 737 MAX the expected new endorsement after ordering its own airlines to stop flying the jet - though much could change as Ethiopian investigators assemble clues to the second deadly crash of the brand-new model in five months. On Wednesday, the United States joined a wave of nations grounding the 737 MAX in the wake of Sunday's crash in Ethiopia, which killed all 157 people onboard. The planes will be grounded for weeks, US lawmakers said on Thursday.

Analysts said the crash has added uncertainty for America's largest exporter over sales to China.

"It is definitely on their list of concerns because China is Boeing's biggest single export market," Teal Group aerospace analyst Richard Aboulafia said. Even before the 737 MAX crisis, trade tensions had been widely seen as a growing source of risk for Boeing, which relies on China for one of four of the planes it delivers. China is poised to overtake the United States as the world's largest aviation market in the next decade and is gobbling up planes made by both Boeing and Airbus while it invests in homegrown aircraft businesses. Boeing sees Chinese demand for 7,700 jets over 20 years worth \$1.2 trillion. While the trade frictions have visibly hurt businesses such as US soybean farmers and Chinese manufacturers, their impact on Boeing has been less clear. China routinely places large, headline-grabbing jet orders to mark significant diplomatic moments, such as a deal for 300 Boeing jets signed during a visit by Trump to Beijing in 2017. But analysts say that behind those headlines, such deals contain a mixture of new demand, repeats of older orders and credits against future deals, meaning the impact remains foggy.

The same could apply to any new bout of jet orders announced with a trade peace deal, a former industry negotiator said. State buyer China Aviation Supplies declined comment.

US President Donald Trump has said he is confident the United States could forge a trade deal with China, but ruled out making any deal that was not in US interests. It is possible China could also decide to use a large order of Airbus jets to relieve pent-up demand. Orders of European jets have slowed too, partly because Chinese buyers have been wary of wading into the trade row and because the economy is slowing. An aide to French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday there were encouraging signs Airbus was closing in on a long-negotiated deal with China for dozens of narrow-body jets.

### Speaking softly

Tit-for-tat tariffs between the US and China, the world's two largest economic powers, have slowed the global economy and forced Boeing to walk a geopolitical tightrope for months.

On the one hand, Boeing has been increasing its industrial footprint in China as it aims to win business and increase its sales lead over Airbus in Asia. On the other hand, Boeing executives have taken pains to sound measured when publicly discussing trade, in part to avoid clashing with Trump who has repeatedly said the US must take steps to protect American jobs and technology. One person with knowledge of the matter said before the groundings that Boeing could win a "massive" order led by 737s. Company data shows Boeing did not win any publicly announced aircraft deals in mainland China last year as the US-Sino trade fight festered into a full-blown trade war.—Reuters

## Brazil airport auction tests investor confidence in Bolsonaro

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Spain's Aena snapped up six airports in Brazil on Friday, in an auction seen as the first major test of foreign investor confidence in President Jair Bolsonaro's market-friendly agenda.

The initial sale of concessions to 12 airports generated 2.3 billion reais (\$620 million) — more than 10 times the minimum fee required—which Bolsonaro said signaled "confidence" in Latin America's biggest economy was returning. "It's Brazil growing again!" the far-right leader tweeted, hailing a "great victory." Rights to operate the airports for 30 years—sold in



## Business

# Flydubai inaugurates service to Uzbekistan with Tashkent flight

## First UAE-based carrier to offer direct flights to Uzbekistan



**KUWAIT:** Flydubai inaugurated its new service from Dubai to Tashkent becoming the first carrier based in the UAE to offer direct flights to Uzbekistan. The inaugural flight departed on 11 March from Terminal 3, Dubai International (DXB) and was welcomed on arrival at Tashkent International Airport (TAS).

On board the inaugural flight was a senior delegation from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) led by Eng. Sultan bin Saeed Al-Mansoori, Minister of Economy in the UAE. Trade delegation included the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, other business entities and members of the UAE media. On arrival at Tashkent, the delegation was received by the Deputy Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan Shuhrat Vafaev and Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the UAE to Uzbekistan Mohammed Al-Mehairbi.

Eng. Sultan bin Saeed Al-Mansoori, UAE Minister of Economy, emphasized on the importance of this step, further pointing out that the country maintains a leading position in the global air transport map and serves as an important center for enhancing global connectivity through its sophisticated international airports and air carriers with world-class reputation and a wide network of destinations. He also stated that the civil aviation sector continues to serve as a major pillar in the vision adopted by the UAE, under the guidance of its leadership, to strengthen economic relations and establish partnerships with various developing countries. This sector is also seen as one of the main channels for increasing trade rates and



investments and enhancing tourism and cultural exchange.

The inauguration of flydubai's direct route between Dubai and Tashkent represents an important step in the move to reinforce economic and trade ties between the two countries-expanding the UAE's economic partnerships with the Central Asian region and empowering the business community in both countries to intensify communication and visits, which helps create opportunities like establishing projects and commercial exchanges that are mutually beneficial to both UAE and Uzbekistan. Lastly, he commended flydubai's pioneering role in supporting the UAE's air link with world-class and new destinations, which in turn, will support the growth of the national economy.

Commenting on the occasion, Ghaith Al-Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer of flydubai,

said: "Uzbekistan is an important trade partner for the UAE and the start of flights to Tashkent represents a significant milestone in helping to strengthen commercial ties between us. We are pleased to be the first UAE carrier to launch direct flights between Dubai and Tashkent, opening up another underserved market in Central Asia and supporting Dubai's vision of creating flows of travel and trade."

flydubai has been flying to Central Asia since 2010 and the region has become an important trade partner with increasing demand for travel and tourism. Total overnight visitors from Uzbekistan to Dubai in 2018 increased by 6.3 percent compared to 2017. In addition, Uzbekistan has already established itself as the fourth largest source market for visitors to Dubai from the region.

After recording a total trade volume of \$110.3 million in 2017, the UAE and



Uzbekistan signed an agreement in 2018 to set up a \$1 billion investment fund to aid the promotion of economic cooperation and increase flows of trade and tourism.

Located on the ancient Silk Road, Uzbekistan is known for its rich history and beautiful mosques, madrasas and mausoleums. Its capital Tashkent is one of the largest cities in Central Asia presenting visitors with a diverse architecture of classical monuments and 12th century mosques. Only a few hours from Tashkent, travellers can visit Samarkand, another main city on the Silk Road, which is known for its landmark Islamic sights.

Emirates will codeshare on this route and for bookings under the codeshare Emirates passengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Business and Economy class. The partner-

ship between flydubai and Emirates announced in 2017 has expanded to meet increasing demand as passengers realize the benefits, such as access to an expanded global network, the convenience of travelling on a single ticket with seamless point to point baggage handling, the alignment of the frequent flyer program and a smooth transfer during transit in Dubai.

The route to Tashkent will operate five times a week from Terminal 3 at Dubai International and will become a daily service from 31 May 2019. With the start of flights to Tashkent, flydubai will offer 33 weekly flights to seven points in Central Asia, including flights to Ashgabat in Turkmenistan, Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, Dushanbe in Tajikistan and Almaty, Astana and Shymkent in Kazakhstan. flydubai's growing network expands to more than 90 destinations in 47 countries.

## Stock markets climb on trade talks optimism

**NEW YORK:** Stock markets rose across the globe on Friday, lifted by the latest encouraging reports from the US-China trade talks while the pound ended a volatile Brexit-fueled week on a strong note. China's official Xinhua news agency reported "substantial progress" had occurred in a call that Beijing's trade envoy Liu He held with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. That added to a positive tone struck Thursday by US President Donald Trump.

"Comments coming from the Chinese side were positive. That helped despite the fact the US president suggested he could walk away from a deal this week," Quincy Krosby of Prudential Financial told AFP. On Wall Street, the major indices closed with gains for the week, as the S&P 500 and Nasdaq hit their highest levels since early October. Analysts however pointed out some enthusiasm could have been due to the quarterly expiry of stock options and index futures. The main European markets likewise all closed higher and Tokyo's main stocks index gained-even though the Bank of Japan issued a more downbeat assessment of the world's third-biggest economy, as a broader global slowdown weighs on exports and production.

### 'Talk is cheap'

"Brexit volatility appears to have calmed," said Joshua Mahony, senior market analyst at IG trading group. "Meanwhile, US-China trade talk hopes have improved." On Friday, China approved a foreign investment law that will abolish the forced transfer of technology from foreign firms to local joint-venture partners, addressing a central demand by the White House.

On currency markets, the pound climbed against the dollar and euro after a week that saw wild fluctuations for the British unit, sparked by Brexit twists and turns. British Prime Minister Theresa May's EU withdrawal agreement was this week rejected by parliament for a second time. —AFP

## Michael Jabbour appointed new GM of The Holiday Inn Kuwait, Salmiya

**KUWAIT:** Holiday Inn Kuwait Salmiya Hotel is pleased to announce that Michael Jabbour has been appointed as the new General Manager of the property that is strategically located in the heart of Salmiya. With hospitality management experience spanning for 24 years, Jabbour brings a broad working experience in leading hotels across the Middle East and GCC.

A Lebanese national, holding the Australian citizen-

ship, Michael's career within the hospitality industry commenced in 1996, graduating from Notre Dame University where he received his bachelor degree in Hotel Management & Tourism.

Prior to starting at the Holiday Inn, He began his journey with IHG in year 2000 as part of the opening team of InterContinental Phoenicia Beirut moving to InterContinental Aqaba, Jordan. This was followed by a senior role with Crowne Plaza Dubai in 2011 where he held the position of Rooms Division Manager until year 2015, and then moved to InterContinental Muscat to serve as the Hotel Manager for four remarkable years. Jabbour brings a wealth of extensive knowledge in the Hospitality field and he will be directing all operations for the hotel, elevating the existing exemplary guest experiences throughout the hotel and channeling efforts of the entire team to deliver unforgettable experience to all hotel guests.

Jabbour expressed his delight to start a new jour-



Michael Jabbour

ney with the InterContinental Hotels Group, especially at this well-reputed property in Kuwait.

## The slippery slope for Venezuela's oil output gets steeper

**CARACAS:** A weeklong blackout and ever-tightening US sanctions have nudged Venezuela's already declining oil production into an even steeper dive, experts say. Even before the massive, unprecedented power cut swept across the South American nation on March 7, Venezuela's outlook for its one vital export resource was grim, with the state-owned oil company PDVSA in default and under sanctions pressure.

From April 28, US companies and citizens will be barred from dealing in Venezuelan crude, effectively cutting PDVSA off from its biggest customer. Oil expert Luis Oliveros said "not a barrel was shipped during the blackout," paralyzing the oil sector and marking "the start of a bigger cycle of deterioration."

### Long decline

Venezuela's crude output has slipped for years, and in February was calculated by secondary OPEC sources to amount to a million barrels a day — 142,000 less than a month earlier and a fraction of the 3.2 million barrels pumped a decade ago. Observers say the blackout's damage to the sector could trigger even more sharp cuts

to production. It could go as low as 500,000 barrels a day, according to Asdrubal Oliveros, an economist and director of the economic analysis firm Econometrica, citing a report by British financial services outfit Barclays. Such a figure-staggeringly low for a country with the largest proven oil reserves in the world-would put Venezuela on par with minor OPEC member Ecuador, or non-member Romania. PDVSA has not revealed the impact of the electricity cut on its operations. It said only that it managed to meet domestic demand for gasoline after long lines of cars formed at service stations.

On Thursday, however, more bad news hit the company when three storage tanks at a heavy-oil processing plant in the east caught fire. The government claimed it was a "terrorist attack" organized by arch-foe the United States. President Nicolas Maduro also blamed the blackout on US "cybernetic and electromagnetic attacks." Experts, though, discount that possibility and say chronic neglect of Venezuela's infrastructure means more dysfunction of the power grid and oil production will occur again.

### US pressure

Bringing oil installations back online after the blackout will not be easy, Luis Oliveros said, explaining that knock-on effects would be felt for some time. "The damage to the (oil) wells, in some cases, are irreversible. And in others major investment will be needed to make them operational. The impact is going to be very hard," he said. According to oil sector monitoring firm Baker Hughes, Venezuela has 26 oil platform left functioning, down from 47 a year ago. In 2014, the number was 74. US President Donald Trump has inten-



**MARACAIBO, Venezuela:** A fisherman works in the Maracaibo lake in Maracaibo, Venezuela on Friday. Production cutbacks by OPEC nations are building a supply cushion that could be called upon to mitigate a possible supply shock from an abrupt drop in crisis-hit Venezuela's output, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Friday. —AFP

sified measures against Maduro's regime and PDVSA as he tries to swing support behind Juan Guaido, the head of Venezuela's opposition-ruled congress who is recognized as interim president by some 50 countries.

The aim is to shore up Guaido and seek to shear away military chiefs and others who are propping up Maduro. After blocking PDVSA from getting new credit by issuing bonds, Trump has frozen PDVSA assets and accounts and started targeted companies dealing with it, including a Russian bank, Evrofinance Mosnarbank. —AFP



Health

# Malaysia plants hope for palm oil's future in dwarf trees

## European Parliament to ban use of palm oil in biofuels



**KUALA LUMPUR:** This picture shows a research officer inspecting specimens of the newly created dwarf palm oil tree at the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) laboratory in Bangi, on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. — AFP photos

**BUKIT LAWIANG, Malaysia:** Test tubes holding plants line shelves in a Malaysian laboratory, the heart of a breeding program for dwarf palm oil trees which scientists hope will cut costs and limit the environmental damage caused by the controversial industry. Palm oil has become a key ingredient in everyday goods from biofuels to chocolate, leading to a production boom in the world's top two growers, Indonesia and Malaysia.

But green groups blame rapid expansion of plantations for laying waste to jungle that is home to orangutans and other animals, as well as tribes people's lands, and sustained environmental campaigns have damaged its image in the West. The adverse publicity, combined with rising stockpiles and sluggish demand from key importers, has led to precipitous falls in prices. Now the Malaysian Palm Oil Board hopes an initiative to breed smaller trees could go some way to improving industry woes.

"With this smaller variety, we can improve yields, maximize land use and improve palm oil sustainability," plant scientist Meilina Ong-Abdullah told AFP in the lab in the town of Bangi, as other women in white gowns and facemasks sliced at plants and transferred them into test tubes. But the plan faces huge challenges, not least the relatively high price of the newly created trees, which may make them too expensive for many of the country's hard-pressed farmers.

### Smaller space, more trees

The dwarf trees, which are about 30 percent smaller than regular ones and have shorter fronds, are the fruit of a decades-long research program by the palm oil board, which is a government agency. Their small size makes it easier and quicker for the bunches of red berries from which the oil is extracted to be collected, and means fewer workers are needed for harvesting. A greater number of the trees can be packed into a smaller space, and they produce about 37.5 metric tons of palm oil fruit per hectare—twice the current per hectare average.

This should mean that less rainforest needs to be logged to cultivate the world's best-selling vegetable oil, and could make more productive use of land that is being replanted after previous clearances. The plan may help address the problem of



**KUALA LUMPUR:** This picture shows a worker trimming leaves on a newly created dwarf palm oil tree.

land scarcity for cultivation caused by voracious growth of plantations. In Malaysia alone, palm oil plantations already cover some 5.8 million hectares —roughly the size of Croatia.

### 'Killer' price

As part of the palm oil board's breeding program, the dwarf trees have been planted in several areas, including on an estate in Bukit Lawang in southern Johor state. The dwarf trees there are about five meters tall, compared to an average of about 7.5 meters for conventional trees in the area. The dwarf trees went on sale in 2017 but take-up has been slow. At about 30 ringgit (seven dollars) each, the seedlings are around twice the price of conventional varieties.

Mohamad Isa Mansor, who has a five-hectare palm oil plantation, said he wanted to buy them but the cost was a "killer". "Smallholders are poor and sustaining our daily life is a challenge due to depressed prices of crude palm oil," he told AFP. He added: "To replant a hectare with the new variety will cost about 6,000 ringgit. Where are we

going to find this huge sum of money?" Nor does the government appear ready to step in and help. Minister Teresa Kok, whose portfolio includes the palm oil sector, said that the cash-strapped government "doesn't have funds to assist smallholders to do replanting at the moment".

Using smaller trees is unlikely to be enough to take the sting out of environmental campaigns and growing opposition to palm oil, particularly in Europe. The latest challenge facing Indonesia and Malaysia is a move by the European Parliament to ban the use of palm oil in biofuels, which industry groups claim would devastate the livelihoods

of millions of small farmers.

Environmentalists were positive about the dwarf tree program, but said it needed to be accompanied by efforts to reforest areas already stripped bare for plantations. "My biggest concern about the palm oil sector is the destruction of biodiversity—there should be no more clearance of forests," Mohideen Abdul Kader, from Friends of The Earth, told AFP. "And if possible cleared jungles should be rejuvenated." —AFP



**KUALA LUMPUR:** This picture shows a research officer handling a test tube with a seedling specimen of the newly created dwarf palm oil tree.

## Nations agree 'significant' plastic cuts

**NAIROBI:** Nations on Friday committed to "significantly reduce" single-use plastics over the next decade, in a series of voluntary pledges that green groups warned fell short of tackling Earth's pollution crisis. After marathon talks in Nairobi, countries appeared to have reached a deal over throwaway plastic items such as bags, cups and cutlery to reduce the more than eight million tons of plastics entering oceans each year.

The final ministerial statement—issued on a day of youth protests against climate change—made only two references to man-made global warming and none to the fossil fuels that drive it. It said countries would "address the damage to our ecosystems caused by the unsustainable use and disposal of plastic products, including by significantly reducing single-use plastic products by 2030." Sources close to the talks told AFP that several rich nations, led by the United States, were influential in watering down the pledge.

An initial ministerial statement at the beginning of the UN environment assembly this week had proposed a commitment to "phase out single-use plastics... by 2025"—a far stronger promise than the compromise nations appear to have reached. "It's hard to find one solution for all member states," said Sjim Kiisler, UN assembly president, told journalists before the final decision. "The environment is at a turning point. We don't need verbose documents, we need concrete commitments."

The world currently produces more than 300 million tons of plastics annually, and there are at least five trillion plastic pieces floating in our oceans, scientists have estimated. When asked specifically whether the US had played a spoiler role during the week's negotiations, Kiisler told journalists: "I will not answer that question."

### Geo-engineering dispute

The UN this week released its periodic assessment of the health of our planet. As much as a quarter of all pre-

mature death and disease is caused by manmade pollution, environmental damage and a lack of access to clean sanitation, said the Global Environmental Outlook report. Joyce Msuya, the UN's interim environment head, said states had reached consensus on "issues vital to human and planetary health".

But unlike the UN's parallel process on climate change, the environmental assembly has no legal means of enforcing what countries promise. The summit started on a somber note after several UN staffers perished in the Ethiopian Airlines plane crash on Sunday. Delegates on Friday held a minute's silence at the start of the final plenary, and UN staff lit a string of candles along the assembly hall.

Another major bone of contention during negotiations was geo-engineering, the use of untested, large-scale infrastructure projects to mitigate the climate impact of manmade emissions. A Swiss proposal for greater oversight on these potentially powerful but risky projects was met with "fierce opposition" from the US and Saudi Arabia, one source close to the talks told AFP.

Green groups fear geo-engineering such as carbon-capture and so-called "solar radiation management"—essentially pumping reflective material into the atmosphere to bounce back more of the Sun's rays—would allow richer nations to burn fossil fuels well into the future while seeming to commit to tackle climate change.

Even if these schemes eased global warming, they would not address the carbon dioxide emissions that are acidifying the oceans, say experts. "They want to avoid further regulation, governance, and oversight over these technologies and it's definitely in the interest of the fossil-fuel industry," said Linda Schneider, senior program officer of International Climate Policy at Germany's Heinrich Boell Institute. Charities gave a lukewarm reception to the commitments due Friday.

"World leaders have agreed some important steps to safeguard the environment," Harjeet Singh of ActionAid told AFP. "But we cannot continue to ignore the bigger picture—rising global inequality is driving unsustainable levels of consumption and destroying the world's natural resources." Mohamed Adow of Christian Aid said "more was expected from this meeting to tackle the one existential environmental crisis of our times: climate change." —AFP



**MONTREAL:** Thousands of protesters flood the streets of Montreal during the march for climate. —AFP

## Hundreds of thousands join world youth climate demo

**MONTREAL:** Hundreds of thousands of young people skipped school across the globe on Friday to march through the streets for an international day of student protests aimed at pushing world leaders into action on climate change. Classrooms in capitals from Bangkok to Berlin and Lagos to London emptied as organizers of the student strike called demonstrations in more than 100 countries.

Students flooded into the streets across Europe, North and South America, and Asia carrying placards reading: "There is no planet B"; "You're destroying our future" and "If you don't act like adults, we will." Despite three decades of warnings, carbon dioxide emissions hit record levels in 2017 and again last year. Loading the atmosphere with greenhouse gases at current rates will eventually lead to an uninhabitable planet, scientists say.

In Stockholm, Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg—who inspired the protests—warned that time was running out. "We are living through an existential crisis that has been ignored for decades and if we do not act now it may be too late," the 16-year-old, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, told Swedish public television station SVT. Across the world, their placards formed a mosaic:

- "Like the ocean, we will rise" (Sydney)
- "Our future in your hands" (Berlin)
- "System Change not Climate Change" (Vienna)
- "Don't be a Trump" (Hong Kong)
- "The Titanic would have NO problem in 2019" (Elmshorn, Germany)

And everywhere, "There is no planet B." Montreal drew among the largest crowds, estimated by organizers at nearly 150,000. In the United States, protests were more low-key, with events held in New York, Washington, Chicago, Portland, Oregon, and St. Paul, Minnesota, where one sign read: "So bad even introverts are here!" Further south in Latin America, placards with messages such as "climate change is not 'fake news'" were seen in Buenos Aires, Argentina—while young people also took to the streets in the Chilean capital Santiago and Colombia's Medellin.

In Delhi, one of the world's most polluted cities, 200 students took part in a colorful protest, waving ribbons, juggling and performing stunts with hoops. "We have to make a choice whether we want to sit and be indifferent or do something for our planet," said 16-year-old student Srijani Datta. In Sydney, 18-year-old Charles Rickwood warned that Australia's Great Barrier Reef could be destroyed. "If current trends in the environment continue, we'll see the one, two degrees increase in our ocean then it will simply become unsustainable and we could lose the entire Great Barrier Reef," he told AFP.

### Skipping exams

European students were also out en masse. Several thousand youngsters thronged the streets of central London in a raucous demonstration with banners and placards. Packing into Parliament Square, they cheered and chanted "Change... now!" before marching past Downing Street and massing outside Buckingham Palace.

"They're not going to stop me trying to save the planet," said 15-year-old Joe Crabtree from southwest London, who had missed two exams to join the rally. More than one million marched overall, according to estimates by organizing groups such as the Youth For Climate movement and AFP reporters. The Friday for Future movement said more than 300,000 young people demonstrated in Germany alone.

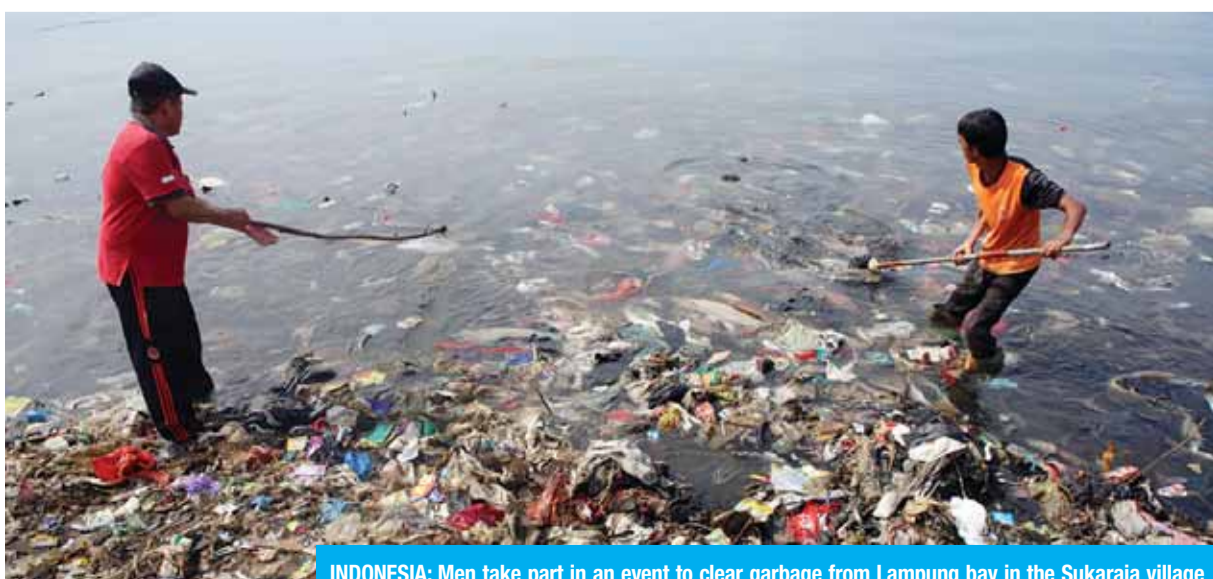
As youngsters hit the streets, nations meeting at the UN environment assembly in Kenya announced they had agreed to "significantly reduce" single-use plastics over the next decade. But experts said the pledge—which only referred to man-made global warming and made no mention of the fossil fuels driving it—fell far short of the steps needed to tackle Earth's burgeoning pollution crisis.

### 'Adults should learn a lesson'

The global action drew a mixed reaction from politicians. Germany's Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said the demonstrators should be in class while Australia's Education Minister Dan Tehan said striking was "not something that we should encourage."

But New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern hailed the action, saying: "We hear you and we're getting on with setting a path for carbon neutrality."

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres offered his strongest support yet for the strikes, writing in The Guardian newspaper: "Without ambitious action, the Paris agreement is meaningless." —AFP



**INDONESIA:** Men take part in an event to clear garbage from Lampung bay in the Sukaraja village in the Bumi Waras sub district of Bandar Lampung. — AFP



Health & Technology

# Moment of truth: Tech firms in tennis line-call battle

PARIS: A behind-the-scenes battle at the world's top tennis tournaments pits an upstart newcomer and an established star. Hawk-Eye, the British firm that innovated ball-tracking technology, has been ruling the sector for more than a decade. Its famous video simulations of contested line calls at Grand Slam tournaments are known to tennis lovers around the world. They are produced by computer-linked tracking cameras that calculate a flight path and project the ball's landing point.

But start-up FoxTenn from Spain believes it can do better by eliminating doubt from the line-call business. Hawk-Eye, which operates a dozen or so cameras placed around the tennis court, officially acknowledges a three-millimetre or so margin of error in its simulations of where the tennis ball would bounce. For FoxTenn that tiny margin is too wide and it says it can offer real-time technology that eliminates any room for debate. "What we are offering is the technology of truth and transparency, with the actual impact of the ball on the court," FoxTenn president Javier Simon told AFP. In fact, FoxTenn's 40 or so cameras around the court, backed up by scanners and lasers, effectively capture the moment of impact of the ball, without need for any simulation.

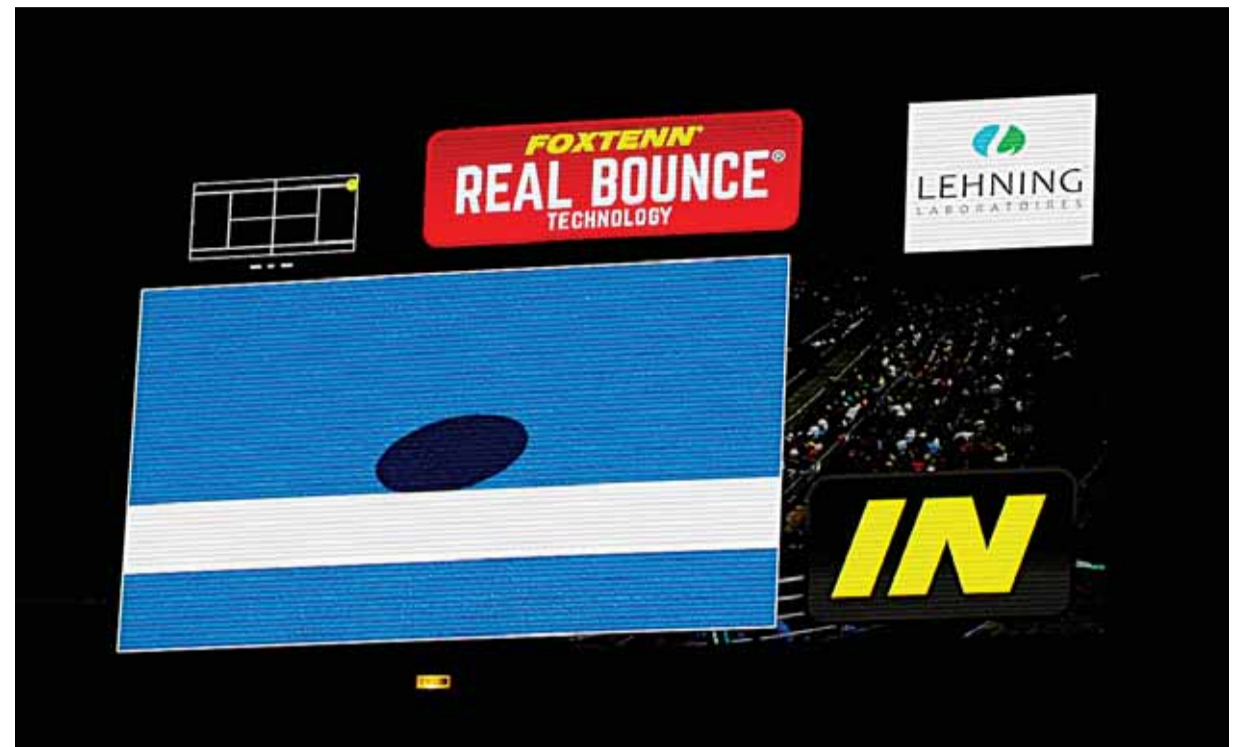
**Lobbying hard**

Simon says the technology has been given a zero-error rating in a study approved by the main tennis federations, the ATP, ITF and the WTA. Simon says

that so far around 30 men's and women's tennis tournaments have adopted the FoxTenn system, or about 20 percent of the professional circuit. "Our goal is to equip all the tournaments," he said, particularly the top-tier Masters 1000 events and the four Grand Slams.

Within a few months the line-call contracts will be coming to an end at the nine Masters events, and FoxTenn is lobbying hard for a chance to prove its worth. One tournament which already uses FoxTenn, Marseille Open, found that initial difficulties were overcome after two seasons. "At the start, I liked the idea of a challenger for Hawk-Eye, which had a bit of a monopoly," said tournament director Jean-Francois Caujolle. "FoxTenn seemed lighter to install, a bit cheaper and had real-time images, which is good." "At the start it wasn't fast enough, but they have made progress, and it's very good. Maybe it will make Hawk-Eye renovate."

Players have other things to focus on and are rarely directly concerned by behind-the-scenes technology. Roger Federer said he has no idea whether he has been exposed to FoxTenn. "I doubt it. Yeah, I don't even know about it," he told AFP. "You know the tournaments I've played. I guess there they haven't used it. Hasn't it been Hawk-Eye all the way?" French world number 19 Gael Monfils says he is used to Hawk-Eye but thinks FoxTenn may hold a potential edge "because you see where the actual ball landed".—AFP



METZ, France: In this file photograph a giant screen displays a line call by the new line-calling technology system FoxTenn during the ATP Moselle Open tennis final in Metz, eastern France. —AFP

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**Academic Certificates - Training**

- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

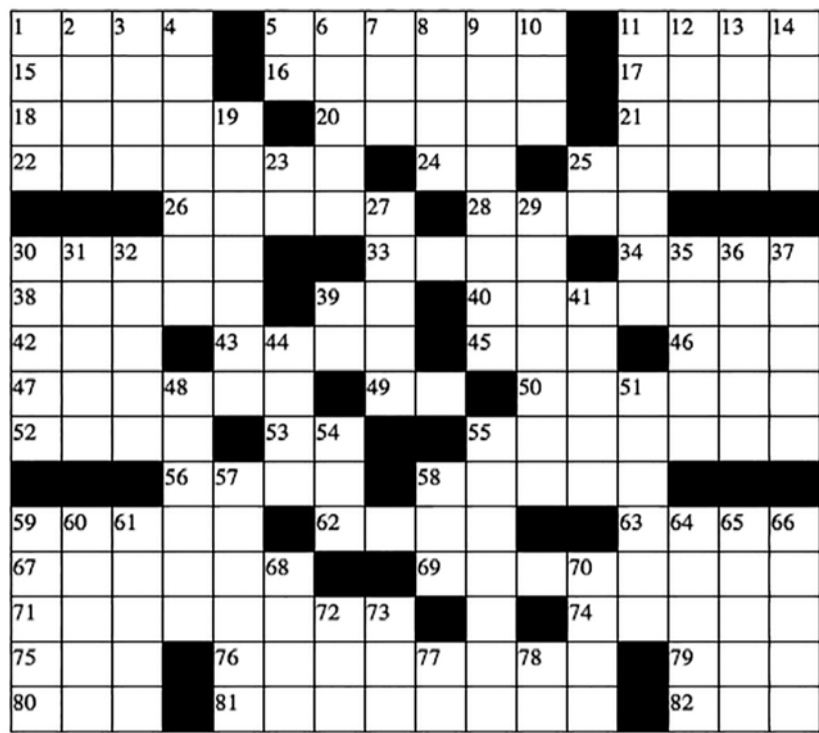
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2159



ACROSS

1. (dialect) A short straight stick of wood.
5. A large fleet.
11. Make a plat of.
15. The basic unit of money in Lesotho.
16. Any of several plants of or developed from the species *Dahlia pinnata* having tuberous roots and showy rayed variously colored flower heads.
17. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
18. Being or given to servile imitation.
20. A fine-grained unstratified accumulation of clay and silt deposited by the wind.
21. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
22. (Old Testament) The guardian archangel of the Jews.
24. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
26. African mahogany trees.
28. A domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building especially the east end of a church.
30. A city in western Germany.
33. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
34. A modified bud consisting of a thickened globular underground stem serving as a reproductive structure.
38. Of a yellowish brown color similar to olive drab.
40. An ancient region of southern Greece in the southeastern Peloponnese.
42. A member of a Mayan people of southwestern Guatemala.
43. A slight rounded elevation where the malleus attaches to the eardrum.
45. Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydrizid) used to treat tuberculosis.
46. A flexible container with a single opening.
47. Small genus of aquatic or semiaquatic plants.
49. A state in southeastern United States.
50. Very attractive.
52. A less than average tide occurring at the first and third quarters of the moon.
53. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
56. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
59. A particular environment or walk of life.
62. A flat mass of ice (smaller than an ice field) floating at sea.
63. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
67. In a vessel with two bulls, an enclosed area between the frames at each side.
69. Combined with or having undergone a chemical reaction with oxygen.
71. Like a baby especially in dependence.
74. Jordan's port.
75. A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.
76. Someone who lingers aimlessly in or about a place.
79. (British) Your grandmother.
80. The 23rd letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
81. A native or inhabitant of Vietnam.
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Winning all or all but one of the tricks in bridge.
2. A light-weight hat worn in tropical countries for protection from the sun.
3. Of or relating to near the ear.
4. The capital of Kyrgyzstan (known as Frunze 1926-1991).
5. A public promotion of some product or service.
6. A large gathering of people intended to arouse enthusiasm.
7. A unit of conductance equal to the reciprocal of an ohm.
8. On or toward the lee.
9. British statesman who as Prime Minister bought controlling interest in the Suez Canal and made Queen Victoria the Empress of India (1804-1881).
10. An associate degree in applied science.
11. An innocuous or inert medication.
12. The provision of money temporarily (usually at interest).
13. A unit of area (4840 square yards) used in English-speaking countries.
14. Having a toe or toes of a specified kind.
19. A transuranic element that has not been found in nature.
23. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
25. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
27. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
29. Taxonomic kingdom comprising all living or extinct plants.
31. A sedimentary rock formed by the deposition of successive layers of clay.
32. Silkworm moths.
35. Not invited or requested.
36. A woody climbing usually tropical plant.
37. Not fitting closely.
39. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
41. Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
44. (trademark) A liquid that temporarily disables a person.
48. A porous mass of interlacing fibers that forms the internal skeleton of various marine animals and usable to absorb water or any porous rubber or cellulose product similarly used.
51. The eighth month of the Hindu calendar.
54. Liquid containing proteins and electrolytes including the liquid in blood plasma and interstitial fluid.
55. An angular shape made by folding.
57. (Spanish) Saffron-flavored dish made of rice with shellfish and chicken.
58. A cry or noise made to express displeasure or contempt.
60. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
61. Hinge joint between the forearm and upper arm and the corresponding joint in the forelimb of a quadruped.
64. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).
65. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
66. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
68. Originally a stronghold captured by David (the 2nd king of the Israelites).
70. A challenge to do something dangerous or foolhardy.
72. Related by blood.
73. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
77. The square of a body of any size of type.
78. A radioactive transuranic element produced by bombarding plutonium with neutrons.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today, you're starting a new chapter in your life. Perhaps you're shopping for a home, a new rental or even getting your resume ready for the change. Travel arrangements may be part of your day if you intend to make a break with location as well. This is your transformation. Make it just what you'd like. Independence is part of your life which leads to new adventures too. It's like a shopping trip where only you know where to look. Enjoy your new exploit, Aries. Remember to add some practicality to your instinctual urge when making your plans.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your need to be the center of your lover's universe may fall short today which creates more upset in your already frail relationship. Others appreciate your abundance of good sense attitude when assisting them with their issues. You feel you can't even get that caring attitude right at home. Be thoughtful in understanding those you love the most. Perhaps he or she is having a bad day too with frustration being the biggest part of it. This makes the one who appreciates and flirts with you more attractive. You may find yourself thinking only of them now. Again, use your good sense. Think over any big move before jumping from the frying pan into the fire.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your quick-witted attitude needs an audience on this great Saturday. If you don't have to work then invite friends or family over for an interesting day of hashing out politics or some other argumentative subject like why did the Roman occupation of the world collapse? Pick your side and enjoy. Make sure your lover is around to see you shine when you pull people to your side of the conversation with your extraordinary views on the subject, Gemini. After all, beauty doesn't always come with the eyes. Romance comes with the whole package and you want the romance to be great today which includes a little physical play too. Shine on.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

A need to be in the middle of everything with all eyes on you is what you crave today. You can expect to be just that even though you may not agree with all that's said. It doesn't matter it's just the boost to your ego you require. You'll take it and beam like the shining light you are. Your boss gives you a friendly nudge by telling you how much you're appreciated. Your lover does something special for you today and later tells you how much you're loved. Sounds like the right day for you, Cancer. Bask and enjoy.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Love is the crux of it all. You may be thinking about chucking everything for love. Going forward in life with a new understanding of what love should be is at the forefront of your thoughts now and could cause arguments among your friends. High emotions on your part may cause eruptions with people with whom you generally agree. A need to give and to receive is high on your list of priorities and nothing needs to stand in your way. You want love and you want to give it, Leo. Others should understand your feelings if they truly love you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

On this Saturday, if you don't have to work, then find a group to join because you don't want to be by yourself today. Any kind of group that you're interested in will do. They will see your worth almost immediately and incorporate you into their duties with ease. You may enlist a friend to share this opportunity with you as well, Virgo. Later, get together with more friends only because you need to converse and enjoy company of good friends and maybe family. When you go home tired, take the time to look back over this wonderful day with joy.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Right now could be a time of greater material gain. Put your ideas into being and watch them take hold, grow and prosper. You're the center of attention wherever you are and you love it. That doesn't mean you're not proud of what you've accomplished though. You realize that the hard work you've put into your life is that which is creating the good you're now focused upon. Take time for you and loved ones tonight, Libra. Try to enjoy the time you've carved out for you without feeling selfish. You deserve special time.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Energy abounds. You can do anything you think you can because you have the vision to create and implement all you desire. Maybe it has something to do with your home whereas you want to start a new garden. That might not be something you've done before but you can make a perfect food or flower source because you know how to research. The same goes with work, Scorpio. It's not overwhelming that you make huge material gains but you want to be comfortable where you are now and continue to make money grow. You've got an angel on your shoulders for the coming days. Make use of the situation.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

You need to be the center of attention and you are. That's a good thing for you now. It helps with your confidence and gives you the time to reflect on events you've been processing lately. Take the long week-end before you make any huge decisions. Relax with your love life now. Perhaps a little physical exercise with the one you love could soothe aching muscles. Talking with those you trust is a great item on your list too. These people know you, Sagittarius. Your friends and family will give you the advice you need for thinking about any change in your life.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Conversations come easily especially when it involves work. You know what you're doing and you know how to take advantage of your work field. It's more than that too, Capricorn, you're feeling the love at home. Since you've made up your mind what you want to do with your life, you've become more confident. That helps your love life too and it's one decision that you can put aside for the moment. This is a romantic time that you'll some day look back upon with fondness. Everything is coming together for you now.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Potentially this is a great day to use practical application to expand your opportunities to make more in life. You may be sticking to a more conservative path at the moment or at least others may think you are. Higher ups find you thoughtful and conventional which is not what you feel now. You may find yourself in an emotional confrontation with someone you love or loved, Aquarius. On the other side of the equation, you are in the middle of a loving relationship that makes you proud to share your life. Whew! What a day.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You might find that you don't agree with many of the people around you now. As a matter of fact, you might find you're in a disagreement with one of your younger family members, someone who generally agrees with you. This rubs you wrong and you feel inept at making decisions today. You wonder about your capabilities for creating your best life at home. Forgetting something like a bill leaves a bad taste in your mouth for your own issues. It'll get better. Don't fret. You may have too much going on right now especially with those little lights in the sky being arranged in a challenging position, Pisces. Keep the faith.

Wordsearch Puzzle

90's Songs 3 - Word Search

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

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| BARBIE GIRL<br>CAN'T STOP<br>CRUSH<br>DANGEROUS<br>ENDLESS LOVE<br>ESCAPEDE<br>GETTO JAM<br>HONEY | LET'S RIDE<br>LINGER<br>LONGVIEW<br>MOTOWNPHILLY<br>MY WAY<br>PLUSH<br>SMOOTH<br>STAY | STRONG ENOUGH<br>THE SIGN<br>THIS KISS<br>TOO FUNKY<br>TWISTED<br>UNDERSTANDING<br>WONDERWALL |
|---|---|---|

Friday's Solution

90's Songs 2 - Solution

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

Friday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Friday's Solution

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



# Lifestyle

SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2019



Syrians whirling dervishes perform at the Philharmonie de Paris in Paris. — AFP

## Cheesy listening: Tunes change Emmental's taste

It may be grating for some, but hip-hop is music to the ears of Switzerland's most famous cheese. According to research on the musical tastes of Emmental, the holey cheese changes flavor depending on the melodies played as it ripens. The experiment—"Sonic cheese: experience between sound and gastronomy"—by Bern University of the Arts and a cheesemaker in western Switzerland probed whether the sounds and vibrations of music could impact the chemical reactions in the bacteria within cheese.

Over six months, Emmental made in Beat Wampfler's 19th Century cellar in the town of Bergdorf were exposed to A Tribe Called Quest, Led Zeppelin or Mozart. Other circles of the holey Swiss classic were kept away from music, serving as a control group. "We did two surveys, a scientific one, and another with a jury of culinary experts," said Peter Kraut, deputy director of the music department at the Bern arts university. "Both came to the conclusion that there are dif-

ferences, there are differences in taste and in the smell, according to the music with which the cheese has been refined," he added.

Chef and jury member Benjamin Luzuy said hip-hop triggered a "softer, more floral" taste, but that his favorite was Mozart-exposed Emmental. "My favorite cheese was that of Mozart. I like Mozart but it's not necessarily what I listen to... maybe a sweet little classical music it does good to the cheese," he said. Kraut said that the final step will be a biomedical survey to see if there are actual differences in the composition of the cheeses.

Wampfler, a veterinarian by day but consummate apron-wearing cheese enthusiast at night, said he was delighted the experiment worked out and saw opportunities to market cheese based on a customer's musical taste. "I already have people calling me asking if I have cheese with Balkan music, blues...(or) ACDC," he said. —AFP



Yodelers perform in front of a giant round of Emmental cheese on the final day of an experiment conducted by the University of the Arts in Berthoud, in the Emmental region, central Switzerland. — AFP photos



These pictures show rounds of cheese that have been matured for 6 month with music.



Swiss cheese maker Beat Wampfler smells a piece of cheese.

## Louis Vuitton drop Michael Jackson clothes from new collection

Louis Vuitton said Thursday they were pulling Michael Jackson-themed clothes from a new collection in the wake of the "Leaving Neverland" documentary which revived claims that the singer sexually abused children. The brand's men's autumn winter collection, designed by the label's American designer Virgil Abloh, was designed as a homage to Jackson's "prodigious talent". It was shown at Paris fashion week in January on a spectacular set inspired by his "Billie Jean" video.

Abloh—one of fashion's brightest new stars—penned a long tribute to Jackson in his notes for the show and posted a poem he wrote about him to his 3.4 million Instagram followers. He called the singer a "universally relatable marvel. Every person on Earth could mirror themselves in him". But the world's richest brand said Thursday that it would not now make any piece from the collection "that directly features Michael Jackson elements".

"I am aware that in light of this documentary the show has caused emotional reactions," Abloh told the Women's Wear Daily (WWD), the fashion

industry's house journal. "I strictly condemn any form of child abuse, violence or infringement against any human rights," he added.

### Troubling and disturbing

The collection, only Abloh's second for Vuitton, featured a black T-shirt printed with Jackson's trademark shoes and white socks as well as takes on the legendary three-zip red jacket worn by the late singer in the video for his megahit "Beat It". The invitation to the show was a sparkly Michael Jackson white glove, several variations of which also made the catwalk. The collection also included a string of looks inspired by "The Wiz", the 1978 all-black musical version of "The Wizard of Oz" in which Jackson starred.

The flag of the singer's home state, Indiana, was also emblazoned on one of Abloh's coats. The clothes were not meant to go on sale until later this year. The label said that "Leaving Neverland", which features two men who claimed Jackson sexually abused them for years, had caused the French fashion house "the greatest pain". "We find the allegations in the docu-

mentary deeply troubling and disturbing," it added in a statement issued to WWD but which it refused to release to AFP.

"Leaving Neverland" has broken streaming records in Britain and prompted radio stations from Australia to Canada to drop Jackson's music from their playlists. The creators of "The Simpsons" also shelved one of the animated series' classic episodes because it features Michael Jackson's voice.—AFP



In this file photo US popstar Michael Jackson addresses a press conference at the O2 arena in London. — AFP

## Artists paint murals of hopes and fears in war-torn Yemen

Young artists lined up across a wall in the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Thursday painting murals that reflect their fears as well as hopes in a country crippled by war. "We are here as a tribute to art and culture and to spread the message of peace in an attempt to revive what this war has taken from us," Haifa Subay, her glasses spotted with white paint, tells AFP. The graffiti artist is taking part in an open-air exhibition, painting a mural of what seems to be an abstract face with words of hope and encouragement in bold, red letters.

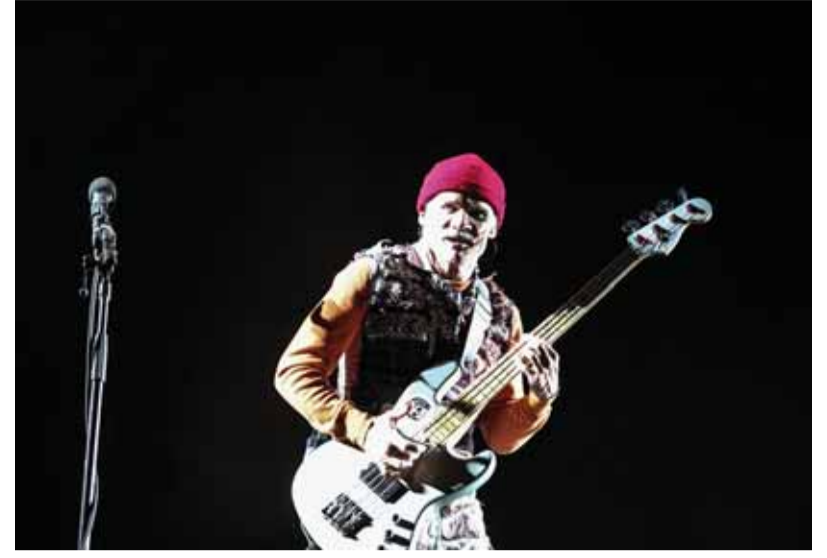
"The war has destroyed Yemen. It has destroyed all the capabilities of this beautiful country," she says from the rebel-held capital. The conflict between the pro-government forces-backed by a Saudi-led military coalition—and the Iran-aligned Huthi rebels has pushed the

country to the brink of famine. Since 2015, when Saudi Arabia and its allies intervened in the war, around 10,000 people—mostly civilians—have been killed and more than 60,000 wounded, according to the World Health Organization.

Rights groups say the real figure could be five times as high. Like Subay, Thiyazen al-Alawai hopes to bring back life to the city through his art work. "Street art in Yemen is not separate from society but a part of it," he said as people, young and old, paused to admire the artists' work. "The people (of Yemen) are not spectators, but they are participants in such art work." A teenage boy donning a hoodie and a respirator mask spray paints a wall using his country's flag colors: red, white and black.

Another wall has the word Arabia Felix, or Happy Arabia—used by the Romans to describe the part of the region to which Yemen belonged and was home to the legendary Queen of Sheba. "We just hope that Yemen returns to the way it was," said Subay.—AFP





Members of the US rock band the Red Hot Chili Peppers performs during their concert by the Giza Pyramids on the western outskirts of the Egyptian capital Cairo. — AFP photos



## RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS ROCK EGYPT'S PYRAMIDS

Californian group Red Hot Chili Peppers played in front of Egypt's great pyramids of Giza on Friday, entertaining more than 10,000 people at the site and many more over a livestream link. With the three ancient monuments silhouetted behind the stage, the funk-rock band opened with "Can't Stop" from the 2002 album "By The Way" and followed with "Californication", "Dark Necessities" and other hits.

The concert, held under tight security, was promoted by Egypt's tourism ministry, which is trying to put the country back on the map as a prime destination after an uprising in 2011 and years of subsequent turmoil scared many visitors away. "It was a lot of work to get here but

it was absolutely worth it," said fan Christina Robertson, from Madison, Wisconsin, who left five children at home to make the trip.

"I've always wanted to come to Egypt, I've always wanted to see the pyramids, it's spectacular, it's a dream, and to see Red Hot Chili Peppers here, my favorite band of all time." Singer Anthony Kiedis, bass player Michael "Flea" Balzary and drummer Chad Smith join the likes of The Grateful Dead, Scorpions and Frank Sinatra performing at one of the seven wonders of the world. The concert is the first international gig to be held at the ancient site since pianist Yanni in 2015.

Fans travelled from 67 countries, said concert organiz-

er Karim El Chiaty, Vice Chairman of Travco Group. "I think there's a big fan base in Egypt and I think for what we're trying to achieve here today, which is to promote tourism in Egypt, we needed a band of that kind of scale and that influence," said Chiaty. Red Hot Chili Peppers have sold more than 60 million albums, won six Grammy Awards and were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2012. The band is currently on a world tour and working to complete their 12th album following their 2016 release "The Getaway". —Reuters

## Defying threats, Afghan singer Aryana comes home for women

Each time Aryana Sayeed, one of Afghanistan's most famous singers, returns to the country of her birth, she braves threats and endures scrutiny right down to her choice of clothes. Still, she returns often, as much to encourage women in a restrictive country as to share her music, a mix of pop and traditional songs. "It's really hard for me as a female singer to carry on with my work in Afghanistan with the type of pressure that I have on my mind, the threats that I get on a regular basis, the attacks on social media," she said in an interview in Kabul.

"I get messages, scary ones actually," Aryana, as she is usually known, had just finished performing last week on Afghan Star, a televised singing competition. In 2017, Aryana enraged conservative Afghans when she was photographed wearing a self-colored dress at a Paris concert. Clerics threatened that she would be killed if she returned to perform a scheduled concert in Kabul. She performed anyway.

"People love to hear her voice. But they don't love her," said filmmaker Sadam Wahidi, who is working on a documentary about Aryana, who is often compared to Hollywood reality star Kim Kardashian. Aryana's success in Afghanistan and among Afghans living abroad illustrates how much the treatment of women has changed since the 2001 ouster of the Taliban by US-led forces. But the vitriol she draws shows how intractable some attitudes remain.

Born in Kabul, she fled Afghanistan's civil war at age 8 with her family, stopping in Pakistan, then Switzerland. After the family's asylum case was rejected, they hired a smuggler to get to London, and settled down. Aryana, 34, now splits her time between Kabul and Istanbul.

### 'So scary'

In her home city, Aryana travels by armored vehicle, but more often she lives in isolation. "I'm basically a prisoner in my own room," she said. "All I do is go to my room and back to the set and record the show." Women have gained the right to work and girls can attend school since the Taliban government fell. It is a stark contrast to life under the hardline Islamists, when women were banned even from appearing in public without a male relative or with faces uncovered. Playing musical instruments was also forbidden.

Still, rural Afghanistan remains more conservative than the cities, and many people object to Aryana's clothing and her promotion of women's rights. "Aryana Sayeed's concerts are not in accordance with our society and Islam," said Layeq Khan Wahdat, 26, a resident of Paktika province. "Dress-up like this can promote prostitution and seduction." Aryana's latest return to Afghanistan came as the United States discusses peace with the Taliban to end the 17-year war. The prospect of re-integration of the Taliban is chilling to the singer.

"That's so scary even to think about it," she said. "I don't want to accept that this is my last concert. If they come with the same mindset, I'm afraid the rights of women will be taken away from them again." The Taliban have said their return to Afghan society would be less harsh and that they do not oppose women's education or employment; however they are against women wearing "alien culture clothes." — Reuters



Afghan singer Aryana Sayeed is pictured at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan. — Reuters

## Founder of Afghan women's orchestra worried over peace talks

Ahmad Naser Sarmast has braved death threats, intimidation and a Taliban suicide bomb attack to bring his Afghan women's orchestra, currently performing in Britain, to the world. Now the renowned musicologist worries that peace talks between the US government and the Islamist group that controlled Afghanistan until 2001 could once again deprive his country of music.

"For me personally, in any peace talks, Zohra is a red line," he said this week as the Zohra orchestra - named after a Persian goddess of music - rehearsed for a concert in an Oxford church. "The people of Afghanistan should not be deprived of their musical rights again, should not be silenced again."

The Taliban banned music and prevented girls from going to school during their brutal five-year rule, which ended in 2001 when they were ousted by a US-led military campaign. Reports that more than 5,000 US troops may be withdrawn from the country have triggered alarm among many Afghans with bitter memories of the Taliban's ultra-hardline regime. "In 2001 there was not a single girl enrolled in a school, but today over 30 percent of the school kids enrolled in schools of Afghanistan are girls," said Sarmast. "Back then, women were not allowed to leave their houses, but today, women of Afghanistan are represented in art, culture, social, political life, education, politics, everywhere." The orchestra's conductor Negin Khpalkw, moved to Kabul aged 9 because there were no schools for girls in her native province of Kunar.

Now 23, she first heard the piano when she went to audition at the music school in Kabul that Sarmast runs, falling in love with the sound of the instrument. "It was really like a bird is singing," she said, smiling. "I thought that okay, after that, I want to be a musician." Zohra orchestra began in 2014 as part of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, which Sarmast founded in 2010.

In 2014 the 56-year-old survived a Taliban suicide bomb attack on a cultural centre in Kabul, temporarily losing his hearing before surgeons removed shrapnel from his skull. The school teaches a range of subjects, from mathematics and chemistry to English, alongside music and takes both boys and girls from a variety of backgrounds. Some used to work on the streets of Kabul selling chewing gum to provide for their families.

Khpalkw, one of the first girls to enroll, recalled how the numbers quickly swelled. "When we perform and give concerts to the people in Afghanistan, they change their mind about music ... and they then entrust their daughter and their sons to the music school. Now we are 75 girls," she said. The women in the orchestra, which performs Western as well as Afghan classical music, left Afghanistan for the first time in 2017 to perform at the World Economic Forum in Davos. — Reuters

## It's not me: S Korean female stars rush to deny K-pop sex videos

Female K-pop stars and actors have rushed to issue denials that they appear in sex videos secretly shot by male singers, illustrating women's fears about victim-blaming and stigma in the face of South Korea's enduring conservative social values. In three days no fewer than five male K-pop singers, including mega star Seungri, have been identified as recipients of illicit videos made by singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young of sexual acts with women, taken without their consent.

Three are being investigated by police, while four have announced their retirements or quit their bands. There has been widespread online speculation on the victims' identities. At least four women have issued separate statements denying they appear in the videos, with actor Oh Cho-hee saying on her Instagram account that the rumors were "really not true". "I can't tell you how many calls I've received since this morning," she added. Most of their agents-including two of the biggest managers in K-pop, SM Entertainment and JYP Entertainment-said they would take legal action against further online rumors that "significantly ruin their reputation and image". Scholars and activists say the fact that being identified as a victim of sex-related offences is seen as a threat to a woman's status shows the enduring presence of traditional values and the tendency to blame victims in the South. "In an ideal world, women wouldn't worry about getting their reputation ruined for matters like these," said women's rights activist Kang Min-jin. "And for the K-pop agencies, they are worried about getting their reputation ruined because they think about female singers as their products. They are worried that their products will no longer be marketable."

### Scarlet letter

South Korea's entertainment industry has a history of targeting female stars caught up in "revenge porn" sex video scandals. In 2000, a singer who was filmed without her knowledge and consent and the footage shared with

others by her former manager-was heavily criticized by the public. Instead of being acknowledged as a victim, she had to tearfully apologize in a televised press conference for "causing trouble". She was unable to make television appearances for around five years afterwards.

An actor whose video was leaked by her ex in 1998 and shared by countless men left the country for three years, and could not return to acting for another seven years. "The women were criticized partly because they were unmarried," said Lee Soo-yeon, a researcher at the Korean Women's Development Institute. "They were seen as 'irresponsible' and even 'promiscuous' public figures because they had sex with non-husband figures. So the logic was it was partly their fault that the leak happened," she told AFP.

While producing and sharing such content have since been criminalized in South Korea, Lee said conservative views on women's chastity still prevail, as reflected in the current K-pop scandal. "A lot of people think it's inappropriate for unwed women to have sex, regardless of the view being right or wrong," she said. "And the stigma can be especially severe for women who are well-known figures."

### Sex, competition, and videotape

Beneath its glitz and glamour, the \$5 billion K-pop industry is known for cutthroat competition, grueling singing and dancing training and the hyper-sexualization of its female artists, some of whom are minors. Many stars are picked up by agencies at a young age, usually in their early to mid teens, and their lives taken over by punishingly long hours of training-with the ever-present risk of falling foul of a cut-throat screening process.

They are also closely monitored by their agents, who dictate everything from diet regimen to mobile phone use and normally impose dating bans. "This is a very unhealthy environment for anyone to grow up in," said researcher Lee, adding that many K-pop stars miss out on crucial elements of their teenage years, especially those who start their training early. Activist Kang said that young female K-pop stars are often deemed more "marketable" when they look child-like and "sexually innocent"-but at the same time, are expected to perform sexualized dance moves in provocative outfits onstage. "Many would think it's 2019 and it's ridiculous to talk about women's virginity," she said. "But the reality is that losing that image-of looking innocent-will affect a woman singer's career in this industry." —AFP



## Jackson fans sue alleged victims for 'sully his memory'

Three Michael Jackson fan groups are suing his alleged victims in France for "sully his memory" by taking part in the "Leaving Neverland" documentary, the fans' lawyer told AFP Friday. The Michael Jackson Community-which claims to be the "official fan club forum" for the "King of Pop"-and the MJ Street and On The Line groups accuse Robson Wade and James Safechuck of "lynching" the star.

The case, which will be heard by a court in Orleans in northern France in July, follows reports that Jackson's children were also considering taking legal action against the men, who say that Jackson sexually abused them when they were children. Lawyer Emmanuel Ludot, who has previously successfully sued Jackson's doctor for causing distress to his fans by giving him the drugs that killed him, said the groups "want to discredit the accusations of pedophilia" that have

long dogged the star. He said that the "indignity of the extremely grave accusations" made by Wade and Safechuck in "Leaving Neverland" had sullied the memory of the singer, who died in 2009. Jackson's image had been affected by the allegations as well as "the whole community of his fans", the lawyer said. "Leaving Neverland" was first broadcast in the US on HBO earlier this month and has since broken streaming records in Britain.

### Traitor

But the film has outraged some of the late idol's fans, who have waged an often vicious social media campaign against his accusers. A number of radio stations, from Australia to Canada have stopped playing Jackson's music after the documentary was aired, and the creators of "The

Simpsons" also shelved one of the animated series' classic episodes because it featured Jackson's voice. French luxury brand Louis Vuitton dropped Jackson-themed clothing Thursday from a collection it had shown at Paris fashion week in January, saying it found the "allegations in the documentary deeply troubling and disturbing".

Virgil Abloh, the first black designer to lead a major Paris fashion house, was assailed on social media for the decision by Jackson fans. "Shame on you for removing all items related to Michael Jackson," one wrote on Instagram, while another accused him of being a "traitor... on the white people side". —AFP



# Taylor Swift wins 'Tour of the Year' at iHeartRadio Music Awards



US singer Taylor Swift poses in the press room with her awards for Tour of the Year and Best Music Video during the 2019 iHeart Radio Music Awards at the Microsoft theatre in Los Angeles. — AFP photos

The 'Shake It Off' singer gave an empowering speech as she collected the accolade at the ceremony at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles on Thursday, during which she admitted the turn out for the extensive run "did wonders" for her "self-esteem", after people said she would be playing to half empty stadiums. She said: "One of the most wonderful things about the way that this whole tour turned out is that, for, like, the entire six months leading up to the first show of this tour, every headline that I read was, this is going to be a massive failure.

"And it really did wonders for my self-esteem. It was really great to hear people saying that I was going to be playing to nearly empty stadiums." The 29-year-old superstar went on to thank her fans for being the "unforeseeable factor" in her critics' "forecast" by coming out in force at her shows last year. She continued: "I've learned a lot.

"One of the things I've learned is that life is really unpredictable and people can make forecasts and they can make predictions, but those predictions and forecasts may not come true if there is an unforeseeable factor involved, and that unforeseeable factor in this case was my fans." Taylor Swift won two awards, Best Music Video for 'Delicate', and Tour of the Year for her 'Reputation' stadium shows and she was delighted to have proven her critics wrong.

Dedicating the award to her loyal following - who are known as Swifties - she said: "I honestly owe everything, everything in my life to you." The tour - which saw the 'End Game' hitmaker supported by Camila Cabello and Charli XCX - was in fact a huge success, with Taylor breaking her own record of having the highest grossing North American tour by a female artist, previously held by the singer's 'The 1989 World Tour'. Whilst on the podium, Taylor also promised her fans that if she has new music coming out, they will be the "first" to get the scoop. She said: "I just wanted to let you know that when there is new music, you will be the first to know."



Left to right, Song of the Year winners for 'The Middle' Grey duo member Michael Trewartha, Zedd, Maren Morris and Grey duo member Kyle Trewartha pose with their trophy.

The spectacular evening also saw Ariana Grande - who won Female Artist of the Year and Pop Album of the Year - give her 'Sweetener' album track 'Needy' its live debut, however her intimate performance at the piano was pre-recorded as she was unable to attend the ceremony, due to being in rehearsals for her imminent world tour. Country star Garth Brooks took the special guest experience to a new level, as his biggest fan, actor Chris Pratt, joined him on stage towards the end of his show-stopping medley, which featured his hits 'Callin' Baton Rouge', 'Ask Me How I Know' and 'Friends In Low Places'.

As well as presenting the star with his coveted Artist of the Decade prize, the 'Jurassic World' star joined in with a little harmonizing with Garth. Another surprise performer on the night was Coldplay's Chris Martin, who took to the stage with country pop star Kacey Musgraves for a rendition of their 2018 hit 'Rainbow'. Nicole Scherzinger and Robin Thicke introduced all of the Best New Artist nominees, Lauv, DJ Marshmello, rock group Lovelytheband and R&B hitmaker Ella Mai - who was the biggest winner of the night, sweeping up the Best R&B Song accolade for her infectious hit 'Boo'd Up', New R&B Artist and R&B Artist - to the stage for an epic medley.

The performance kicked off with a taste of Lauv's Troye Sivan collaboration 'I'm So Tired'. Bastille's Dan Smith then joined Marshmello, who played piano, for a rendition of their hit 'Happier', then Lovelytheband performed 'Broken', before triple-winner Ella ended the genre-blending performance with 'Trip'. The evening kicked off with Halsey - who won the Fangirls award - performing her catchy chart-topper 'Without Me', before she was joined for an energetic performance of '11 Minutes', with her rumoured beau Yungblud and Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker.

The evening also saw performances from John Legend, who took to a circular stage in the centre of the crowd to sing his latest song 'Preach', and Backstreet Boys provided a throwback with a rendition of classic 'I Want It That Way'. Drake, who is currently on tour, was named Male Artist of the Year, while Best Duo/Group of the Year went to 5 Seconds of Summer.

Elsewhere at the ceremony - which was hosted by T-Pain - Song of the Year went to 'The Middle', by Zedd, Maren Morris, Grey, and it also picked up Dance Song of the Year, but the track didn't also secure the Best Collaboration prize. Instead, it was awarded to 'Finesse' by Bruno Mars featuring Cardi B, who had two other songs on the shortlist, 'Girls Like You' with Maroon 5 and 'I Like It' featuring Bad Bunny and J. Balvin. Tiffany Young beat off a shortlist that featured former Fifth Harmony members Normani, Lauren Jauregui, Ally Brooke and Dinah Jane to take the Solo Breakout award. — Bang Showbiz

## Winners

- Tour of the Year:** Taylor Swift, 'Reputation' Stadium Tour
- Artist of the Year:** Ariana Grande
- Artist of the Decade:** Garth Brooks
- iHeartRadio Innovator Award:** Alicia Keys
- Fangirls Award:** Halsey
- Most Thumbed-Up Artist of the Year:** Imagine Dragons
- Song of the Year:** 'The Middle', Zedd, Maren Morris, Grey
- Female Artist of the Year:** Ariana Grande
- Male Artist of the Year:** Drake
- Best Duo/Group of the Year:** 5 Seconds of Summer
- Best Collaboration:** 'Finesse (Remix)' Bruno Mars featuring Cardi B
- Alternative Rock Artist of the Year:** Imagine Dragons
- Rock Artist of the Year:** Three Days Grace
- Country Artist of the Year:** Luke Combs
- Dance Artist of the Year:** Marshmello
- Hip-Hop Artist of the Year:** Cardi B
- R&B Artist of the Year:** Ella Mai
- Best Lyrics:** 'Consequences', Camila Cabello
- Best Cover Song:** 'You're Still the One', Harry Styles and Kacey Musgraves
- Best Music Video:** 'Delicate', Taylor Swift
- Cutest Musician's Pet:** Gracie, Lauren Jauregui
- Best Solo Breakout:** Tiffany Young
- Song That Left Us Shook:** 'I'll Never Love Again', Lady Gaga.



US singer Jordan Davis

Alicia Keys was joined by eight-year-old Egypt - whom she has with husband Swizz Beatz - as they played the piano back-to-back to Alicia's songs 'Raise a Man' and classic 'You Don't Know My Name'. As if her little boy's impressive playing skills weren't enough to win over the star-studded crowd, Egypt then burst into the famous 'floss' dance as his mum continued her performance on her feet. The 'Fallin' hitmaker - who also has four-year-old son Genesis with her spouse - was awarded the Innovator Award for her "unparalleled contributions to pop culture and social causes as an artist, songwriter, producer, entrepreneur and activist" at the ceremony at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles.



The band Five Seconds of Summer



Singer Ella Mai



Singer Garth Brooks



Singer Bebe Rexha



Singer/songwriter Alicia Keys



Lovelytheband members Mitchy Collins, Jordan Greenwald and Sam Price



Best New Pop Artist and Dance Artist of the Year winner Marshmello





## Turkish Airlines adds touch of haute couture to new cabin crew uniforms

**T**urkish Airlines showcased its new uniforms for its cabin crew at a fashion show at the International Tourism Fair (ITB) in Berlin on March 2019, with the attendance of Turkey's Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy. Eleven female and male flight attendants presented the new uniforms to ITB guests at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds on a six-meter-long catwalk. They were designed by Ettore Bilotta, an haute couturier living in Milan, who worked closely with the flight attendants in the design process.

combines the shapes and colors of the Bosphorus with a new "flow detail" symbolizing the effortless energy that flows through Istanbul as one of the most dynamic cities in the world and interface between East and West. Besides clothes, the entire collection includes hats, gloves, bags and other accessories.

Seda Kalyoncu, SVP Corporate Communications of Turkish Airlines, said, "Turkish Airlines is known for its excellent service and peerless brand experience. It is extremely important to us that our passengers have an incomparable travel experience when they are onboard our aircraft. It is equally important to us that our onboard staff not only identify with Turkish Airlines with their appearances, but also comfortably dressed for any climate around the world in order to serve our guests in optimum conditions. We have taken this step with our new cabin uniform. A uniform that has not only been developed together with the staff, but also adds a touch of classic haute couture with its practicality."

For Turkish Airlines, the new cabin uniform also is important for another reason: The airline, which flies to more international destinations than any other, is in the middle of an exciting phase of change. In addition to changing its uniforms, Turkish Airlines is changing its hub also, by moving to its new home base, Istanbul Airport. Ushering in a new era, the international hub not only meets all the requirements of the modern avi-



ation industry, it is also a gateway to the world. With its location between East and West, the airport promises to bring the world even closer together.

In addition to the high-class service itself, it is the sincere Turkish attitude to life and the unique hospitality of its geography that the airline wants to keep sharing with the world. The collection

combines all these aspects - carried by the airline's face: the cabin crew. The fashion was repeated on the March 7-8, 2019 in front of the Turkish Airlines booth.

### Crew members present collection at ITB Berlin

The result is a symbiosis of style, functionality and wearing comfort - inspired by many classic elements of Turkish culture. The airline's new uniforms integrate traditional patterns of hand-crafted glass, ceramics and calligraphy with contemporary textures and details. The collection



Buddhist devotees seen with traditional sacred tattoos during an annual sacred tattoo festival at the Wat Bang Phra temple in Nakhon Pathom province. — AFP photos



## SINS AND SPIRITS: THAIS FLOCK TO TATTOO FEST

**W**ith inky designs covering his chest and arms, one man crawls on the ground like a tiger while another twists his fingers to resemble claws and growls. The possessed devotees appear to be on the verge of attack but are quickly restrained and coaxed back to normal. It's all part of a sacred tattoo festival at the Wat Bang Phra temple in Nakhon Pathom province 80 kilometers west of Bangkok. Thailand is a deeply superstitious country where animism, folk beliefs and Hinduism seep into the majority faith Buddhism.

Every year, thousands of devotees gather at Wat Bang Phra for the annual festival, which celebrates the traditional Sak Yant tattoos. Wearers believe the intricate ink brings them good luck and protection from harm. They flock to the festival so monks can bless and "recharge" their tattoos, while some receive new ones via long metal needles with countless small jabs. "Whatever sins we committed this past year, we can wash it away when we pay respects to the elder monks who bless our tattoos," said Chalachai Pichuea 44, a motorcycle taxi driver from Bangkok.

Family business owner Wichai Krijumwan said he comes every year for the renewal process and to thank the monks "who give us these powers". The symbols favoured by devotees vary from astrological signs, wild animals or inscriptions in Pali and Sanskrit. Participants work themselves into possessed trances to resemble wild animals and charge towards a stage with a Buddha statue. Throngs of volunteers block them, then pinch their ears in an act meant to release the spirit.—AFP



A Buddhist devotee receives a traditional tattoo.



Buddhist devotees throw themselves at the stage whilst possessed by animal spirits.

## George Michael's artworks sold for £9.2 mn

**A** collection of contemporary art owned by late pop idol George Michael, including works by Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, has been sold for £9.2 million, Christie's auction house said. Michael was a keen collector of works by the Young British Art movement and developed friendships with many of the artists, visiting their galleries and studios. Christie's billed the sale of more than 200 works as a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" for fans of the tradition-defying movement from the 1980s and 1990s.

"The Incomplete Truth", a 2006 work by Hirst consisting of a dove preserved in

formaldehyde, sold for £911,250 — below its estimated price of £1.0-1.5 million. Proceeds of the auction will go towards Michael's various philanthropic ventures, the auctioneers said. The singer died of heart and liver problems on December 25, 2016 at the age of 53. During his career, both with Wham! and later as a solo artist, Michael sold more than 100 million records and had a string of massive hits between 1983 and 1996. Among his biggest hits were "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go", "Last Christmas" and "Faith". —AFP

## Sonia Rykiel parts company with fashion designer De Libran

**T**roubled French fashion brand Sonia Rykiel has parted company with designer Julie de Libran and is looking for a new investor, it said Friday. "The house announces the departure of Julie de Libran as artistic director," it said in a statement, adding that "management is working on defining the future organization of the studio to carry on the development of the brand."

De Libran, who has previously worked for Louis Vuitton and Prada, had attempted to re-energize the label, whose founder Sonia Rykiel was known as the "Queen of Knits". But the company is reported to have clocked up long-term losses, and De Libran was not able to turn that around despite quarter of its staff being laid off. Her five years in charge coincided with the death of Rykiel in 2016 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

French-born De Libran told Women's Wear Daily, the fashion industry bible, that she was "shocked" at being asked to leave given her achievements. Last year she unveiled the Pave handbag, inspired by the Paris cobblestones that student protesters threw at riot police during the May 1968 protests when Rykiel rose to fame. The



In this file photo French fashion designer Julie de Libran for Sonia Rykiel acknowledges the audience at the end of the Sonia Rykiel Spring-Summer 2019 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP

brand told AFP that the designer "had resigned" and praised her contribution to the brand.

"We are looking for a new investor and hoping to build on the heritage of the label and the expertise of the studio," a spokeswoman added. The brand is controlled by the Hong Kong billionaires Victor and William Fung, whose Hardy Amies label went into administration in January. It was the second time in a decade that the fashion house founded by the British Queen Elizabeth's former dressmaker had collapsed.—AFP



# Classifieds

Sunday, March 17, 2019

**Kuwait Times**  
 Now you can browse  
[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)  
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

**STATE OF KUWAIT**  
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[www.met.gov.kw](http://www.met.gov.kw)



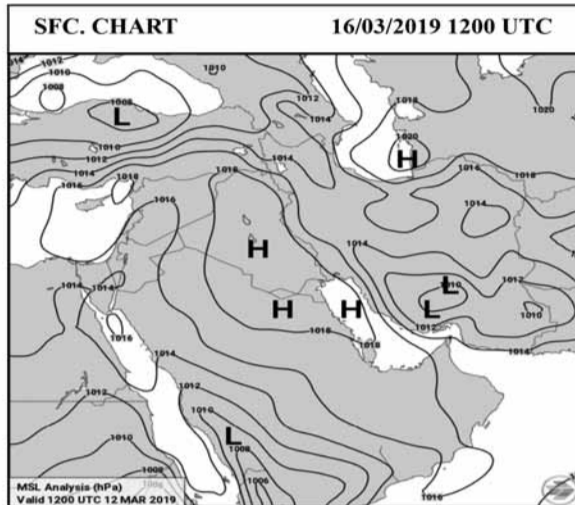
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY NIGHT:** Cool and Partly cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas with a chance for scattered light rain.

**BY DAY:** Warm and Partly cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 25 - 60 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for scattered rain.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
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STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	16 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	25 °C	12 °C
ABDALY	28 °C	11 °C
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C
JAHRA	27 °C	14 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	24 °C	16 °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	17 °C
AHMADI	21 °C	17 °C
NUWAISIB	24 °C	13 °C
WAFRA	25 °C	11 °C
SALMY	25 °C	11 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	03/17	Warm and Partly cloudy + rising dust + a chance for scattered rain	25 °C	12 °C	SE-NW	25 - 60 km/h
Monday	03/18	Warm	26 °C	11 °C	NW	15 - 38 km/h
Tuesday	03/19	Warm	27 °C	10 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	03/20	Warm	28 °C	11 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 30 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:37
Sunrise	05:56
Zuhr	11:57
Asr	15:22
Sunset	17:57
Isha	19:13

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	25 °C
MIN. Temp.	14 °C
MAX. RH	93 %
MIN. RH	22 %
MAX. Wind	W 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## SITUATION VACANT

A maid is needed to work as a part time in a house in Salmiya, must be well organized and can speak English. Tel: 66417504. (C 5450) 12-3-2019

## EMERGENCY

112

## Hospitals

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

## REQUIRED FOR PHARMACY

- Pharmacist
  - Cashier & Motorcycle Driver
- with experience (Indian, Filipino and Sri Lankan only) Male only  
 Should have transferable residence visa

Please send your CV by email:  
[q8cv2018@gmail.com](mailto:q8cv2018@gmail.com)

## International Monetary Corporation

**Kuwait Stock Exchange**  
 Highest return up +30% annually Dividends quarterly  
 In your own account in Kuwait clearing company  
 Minimum amount to be invested  
 For individuals: 40,000 KD  
 For Firms: 250,000 KD  
 @imc\_fc / Tel: 66014966

## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306



## Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

## DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 17/3/2019				Departure Flights on Sunday 17/3/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	KAC	515	Tehran	12:00
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JZR	103	Bahrain	14:40
RBG	551	Alexandria	02:25	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
RJA	648	Amman	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
JZR	704	Asyut	03:25	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	675	Dubai	17:05
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:45
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	621	Doha	18:25
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
QTR	8511	Doha	06:40	JZR	253	Amman	19:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
BAW	157	London	07:05	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	SYR	342	Damascus	20:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
IGO	1755	CNN	08:00	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:35
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40	OMA	648	Kochi	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	DLH	624	Muscat	21:20
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	DHX	171	Dammam	21:30
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	JZR	715	Sohag	22:20
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	KAC	303	Mumbai	22:30
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
				KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
				UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
				KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:25



# Trump signs first veto to secure border wall funds

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump signed the first veto of his presidency Friday, overriding congressional opposition to secure emergency funds to build more walls on the US-Mexico border. Trump declared in the Oval Office that he was "proud" to sign the veto. It came after he suffered an embarrassing defeat on Thursday when senators, including fellow Republicans, voted to terminate his declaration of an emergency on the Mexican border.

Surrounded by law enforcement officials, senior aides and people who have lost loved ones to cross-border crime, Trump said the veto reaffirming his power to get the funds without Congress was to "defend the safety of all Americans". "The mass incursion of illegal aliens... has to end," he said. "People hate the word 'invasion' but that's what it is... Our immigration system is stretched beyond the breaking point."

Trump's emergency declaration allows him to secure funding for construction of border walls after he failed to get authorization from Congress. Opponents, who accuse Trump of executive overreach and overhyping the problem on the border, could now use court challenges to halt the emergency measure.

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives and a leader in the fight to prevent Trump's wall plans, called Trump's action a "lawless power grab". "The president has chosen to continue to defy the Constitution, the Congress and the will of the American people," she said in a statement. An attempt to override the veto will be held on March 26, she announced. However, this is very unlikely to pass as a two-thirds majority is required.

Trump has made border security an overarching domestic issue in his presidency and says it will remain at the center of the agenda in his 2020 reelection bid. Although there has been a surge in arrival of families and children at the border, overall apprehensions at the frontier are down substantially from a decade or more ago. Most Republicans support Trump's position that the border is out of control. However, there were defections in Thursday's Senate vote by Republican senators angered at what they see as the president's improper seizing of power over the government purse strings - a role reserved for the legislature.

The declaration of emergency has been challenged by 16 states which sued the administration last month, contending the order was contrary to the constitution's presentment and appropriations clauses, which outline legislative procedures and define Congress as the final arbiter of public funds respectively. The lawsuit also questioned Trump's categorization of illegal border crossings as a national emergency, saying data issued by the administration itself refuted the notion.

The White House says the emergency order empowers it to pull around \$6.6 billion from other sources, mostly already-allocated funds in the Defense Department budget. But the complaint countered that tapping military funds would result in huge losses for the states' national guard units which would otherwise use the money to combat drugs. Should the states prevail, the case could work its way up to the Supreme Court, setting up a precedent-setting showdown on the separation of powers. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signs the first veto of his presidency in the Oval Office at the White House on Friday. — AFP

## Orangutan recovers after shot with 74 pellets in Indonesia

SUBULUSSALAM, Indonesia: An orangutan is slowly recovering after being shot with 74 airgun pellets in Indonesia, an official said yesterday. The 30-year-old female was found severely wounded in Aceh province last Sunday after officials received a tipoff from villagers. She was found in critical condition with her one-month baby under a jackfruit tree on a plantation owned by a villager. "The orangutans came to a villager's plantation and they were considered as threats by the owner who then attempted to expel the animals," said Sapto Aji Prabowo, chief of Aceh Conservation Agency.

Officials immediately rescued the animals but the baby died from malnutrition. Almost a week later, officials say the ape, who's been given the name Hope, is slowly recovering. "Hope is getting better, she's starting to... eat," Sapto Aji Prabowo told AFP. Orangutans are critically endangered, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with only about 100,000 worldwide.

Plantation workers and villagers are sometimes known to attack what they consider a pest, while poachers capture the animals to sell as pets. "We will investigate whether this was just an incident or (if) a mafia has been involved," said Jefrizal, the law enforcement head of Aceh Conservation Agency, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. A string of fatal attacks on the apes have been blamed on farmers and hunters. Last year, four Indonesian men were arrested over the killing of an orangutan shot some 130 times with an air rifle. — AFP



SUBULUSSALAM, Indonesia: In this handout picture taken on March 10, 2019, environmental volunteers and officers rescue a female orangutan with her baby in Sultan Daulat in Aceh province. — AFP

## MoI has no plans for amnesty; PACI...

Continued from Page 1

correctly, the second by checking the receipt they get at residency affairs departments and finally when applying

for civil ID renewal, where applicants are asked to approve the validity and correctness of the data before proceeding with the transaction," Assoussi explained.

Assoussi warned that in case the ID gets issued with incorrect data, applicants will have to pay the fees once again for the correction. "Therefore, applicants need to carefully check their names in Arabic and Latin and the passport number to make sure they match their passports," he underlined.

Ardern said some of the guns had been modified to make them deadlier. "I can tell you one thing right now - our gun laws will change," she said.

The suspect documented his radicalization and two years of preparations in a lengthy, meandering and conspiracy-filled far-right "manifesto". He live-streamed footage of himself going room-to-room, victim to victim, shooting the wounded from close range as they struggled to crawl away in the main Christchurch mosque. Thirty-six minutes after the police received the first call, Tarrant was in custody.

Commissioner Mike Bush hailed the "absolute bravery" of both police and members of the public "who put themselves in harm's way" to apprehend the suspect. "Their intervention may very likely have saved further lives." Two other people remain in custody, although their link to the attack is not clear. One man, 18-year-old Daniel Burrough, has been charged with incitement.

Revelation at the attack, and tributes to the victims poured in from around the world, including from Pope Francis and Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. US President Donald Trump condemned the "horrible massacre" in which "innocent people have so senselessly died", but denied that the problem of right-wing extremism was widespread. Australian police said they had visited Tarrant's childhood home in the town of Grafton, north of Sydney, and spoken to family members as part of their investigation.

The attack has prompted searching questions about whether rightwing extremism has been treated with enough seriousness by Western governments. Ali Soufan, a former high-ranking FBI counter-terrorism agent, warned the West was "in the midst of a surge of rightwing terrorism that has been metastasizing in plain sight while generating only a muted response from domestic counter-terrorism authorities". Ardern said she "asked our agencies this morning to work swiftly on assessing whether there was any activity on social media or otherwise, that should have triggered a response".

One victim posted a Facebook video from his hospital bed, asking for prayers for himself, his son and daughter. "Hi guys how are you. I am very sorry to miss your calls and text messages...I am really tired...please pray for my son, me and my daughter...I am just posting this video to show you that I am fully ok," said Wasseim Alsati, who was reportedly shot three times.

Men and women from the New Zealand Muslim Association in Auckland flew to Christchurch to assist with the funeral rites, washing the bodies, wrapping them in white cloth and taking them to the cemetery. None of the bodies had yet been released due to the investigation, leaving families unable to bury their dead within the 24 hours customary in Islam.

New Zealand has in the past tried to tighten firearm laws, but a strong gun lobby and culture of hunting has stymied such efforts. There are an estimated 1.5 million firearms in New Zealand, which has a population of only five million, but the country has had low levels of gun violence. Tarrant lived in Dunedin, on New Zealand's South Island, and was a member of the Bruce Rifle Club, according to media reports which quoted club members saying he often practiced shooting an AR-15, which is a lightweight semi-automatic rifle. — Agencies

## Stores looted, bank torched...

Continued from Page 1

The president and his wife Brigitte were however last seen publicly at a ski resort in the southwestern Pyrenees mountains, where they arrived for a short break Thursday night on Macron's return from a trip to Africa.

Yesterday, protesters streamed into the capital by train and car for a rally they called an "ultimatum" to the young president. Over 5,000 police were deployed, along with several armoured police vehicles. Macron, who was caught off guard when grassroots protesters began occupying traffic roundabouts in November over

fuel taxes, has loosened the state's purse strings to the tune of 10 billion euros (\$11.2 billion) to try defuse the protests. He then travelled the length and breadth of the country, engaging in marathon debates with local politicians and voters.

But the measures failed to quell the anger of the anti-capitalist demonstrators, who accuse the former investment banker of being elitist and favoring the rich. Last month the leaderless movement, which spans the spectrum from the far left to right, was tainted by allegations of anti-Semitism.

French Jewish philosopher Alain Finkielkraut was jeered and called a "dirty Zionist" by a group of "yellow vests" after he crossed their path during a protest. The protest was one of several in Paris yesterday, where thousands of climate campaigners also held a demonstration to demand that the French government uphold its commitments on reducing emissions. — AFP

## White nationalist movement spreads...

Continued from Page 1

They say it poses as much of an international threat as Islamic extremism, and even more so in the United States where white nationalist attacks have outpaced those by jihadists for years.

"White nationalism and far-right extremism is the most prominent extremist threat facing the United States today, and indeed it is a worldwide phenomenon," said Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino. "These folks fear demographic change. They use the term white genocide," he said.

The white nationalist movement has roots in concepts espoused decades ago by European and American fascists and neo-Nazis. French historian Nicolas Lebourg noted that the Christchurch suspect's manifesto cited British 1930s fascist Oswald Mosley, who developed the idea of a planet organized by race. His use of the word "Europeans" for whites was first promoted in the late 1940s by American neo-Nazi Francis Parker Yockey. "White genocide" is an idea that appeared around 1972 in the United States, Lebourg noted, and was then popularized in Europe by French writer Renaud Camus.

Indeed, the suspect's manifesto was titled "The Great Replacement," the title of a 2011 book by Camus, popular in white nationalist circles, that argued that non-white immigrants are supplanting white Europeans. But their ideas are not uniform - some white nationalists are anti-Muslim, some anti-Jewish, some capitalist, others socialist. What unites them today, analysts say, is their fundamental opposition to immigration.

Vanderbilt University professor Sophie Bjork-James said a common fear was that white Christians could become minorities in societies they have dominated for centuries. This has given rise to movements like the France-rooted "Identitarians," and Identity Evropa in the United States. White nationalists have been further emboldened by the rise of politicians espousing traditionalist views and a tough line on immigration - from

Marine Le Pen in France and Viktor Orban in Hungary to Russian President Vladimir Putin and the UKIP party in Britain.

The same holds true in the United States where President Donald Trump campaigned for the White House on an anti-immigration platform, backed by an overwhelmingly white voter base. Trump notoriously appeared to sanction the march by white supremacists and neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, and has avoided condemning violence from the far-right. Bjork-James said, "They see him as an incredible opportunity to broaden their influence."

The Christchurch suspect called Trump "a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose". While he was swift to condemn the massacre, Trump courted controversy once again on Friday by saying he did not think it showed white nationalism to be a growing problem worldwide. "I don't really. I think it's a small group of people," he told reporters in the Oval Office.

Bjork-James said the internet, especially sites like GAB and Stormfront, have helped build a global community for the otherwise disparate white nationalists. "Stormfront is a global clearinghouse for white nationalism," she said. It was filled with comments early Friday on the Christchurch attack, with some questioning the murder of women and children. One commenter rejected the debate, she noted, by saying chillingly: "Invaders are not innocent people."

She said overall the movement operates consciously as a "leaderless resistance", whose members aimed to inspire each other into action. "The lone-wolf attack is actually a part of a global strategy," said Bjork-James. The Christchurch suspect wrote that he took inspiration from other white nationalists who undertook mass killings. He cited Anders Breivik, who slaughtered 77 people in Norway in 2011; Dylann Roof, who killed nine African-Americans in a US church in 2015; Alexandre Bissonnette, who murdered six in a 2017 attack on a Canadian mosque; and others like them.

But Lebourg said that attacks more recently appear to have become part of a cycle of revenge, especially since the bombings that targeted France in 2015. The suspect's manifesto supports that: He cites revenge for historical events and recent Islamist extremist attacks multiple times. The 2015 attacks were "a tipping point for all the supremacists", Lebourg said. "Now revenge is in people's heads." — AFP

## Killer charged with murder after...

Continued from Page 1

eliminate violence and terrorism that target nations' security and stability, and human beings' safety. Kuwait expresses sincere condolences and sorrow to the victims' families, wishing a speedy recovery for the wounded, said the source.

III the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable of condolences to New Zealand Governor-General Patsy Reddy on the terrorist Christchurch mass shootings. In his cable, III the Amir stressed the position of Kuwait, which rejects this criminal act that has claimed the lives of innocent people in violation of all humanitarian laws, norms and values. The Amir conveyed his feelings of sympathy towards the families of the victims, and prayed for the swift recovery of those injured in the attack. III the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and III the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables of condolences.

Throughout the day people laid flowers at a makeshift memorial just beyond the police cordon around the Al Noor mosque, where most of the victims died. Many offerings were accompanied by handwritten letters laden with sadness and disbelief, from residents of what one local driver called the "city of sorrow". "I am so sorry that you were not safe here. Our hearts are breaking for your loss," read one of the notes.

When the police tape was lifted late yesterday, bystanders spontaneously joined police in moving the stack of bouquets closer to the mosque. An imam who was leading prayers at the Linwood mosque at the time of the attack said the Muslim community would not be shaken by the massacre. "It was a very bad day, not just all of us, all of New Zealand," said Ibrahim Abdullhalim. But, he added: "We still love this country". Across New Zealand, Kiwis responded with inter-faith solidarity - crowdfunding millions of dollars, donating halal food and even offering to accompany local Muslims now scared to walk the streets. Muslims make up just one percent of New Zealand's population.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern arrived in the city and, wearing a black headscarf, met with survivors and victims' families. Ardern said the victims came from across the Muslim world, with Turkey, Bangladesh, and Malaysia among the countries rendering consular assistance. At least one Saudi citizen, one Indonesian, four Jordanians, four Egyptians and six Pakistanis were among the dead. Sahra Ahmed, a New Zealander of Somali origin, said she was touched by the PM's gesture. "It means a lot. It is a signal to say - I am with you," she told AFP.

Police are now trying to piece together answers to the difficult questions of why and how this happened. They want to know how it was possible for the perpetrator to remain undetected by the intelligence services despite his extremist views. Ardern said the shooter was "in possession of a gun license" obtained in November 2017, and he started legally purchasing two semi-automatic weapons, reportedly AR-15s, two shotguns and a lever-action gun the following month.



Sports

# France struggle past Italy in their final Six Nations match

'I've rarely been through a Six Nations tournament like this'

ROME: France beat Italy 25-14 to finish their disappointing Six Nations campaign with a second win, condemning the hosts to a 22nd straight defeat in the tournament. Three tries from Antoine Dupont, Maxime Medard and Damian Penaud and ten points from youngster Romain Ntamack sealed victory in the Giuseppe Garibaldi Trophy between the two nations.

Tito Tebaldi replied with a try for Italy on 53 minutes with Tommaso Allan accounting for the remainder of Italy's points as the Azzurri earn a fourth straight Wooden Spoon for a whitewash.

"I've rarely been through a Six Nations tournament like this, but at least we have ended on a winning note," said France's Mathieu Bastareaud. The French have just one win against Scotland (27-10) after being thrashed by 44-8 England and losing 26-14 to Ireland last weekend. It was also disappointing final match at the Stadio Olimpico for Italy captain Sergio Parris, the holder of a record 69 caps in the tournament. Italy dominated possession in the first half but failed to convert it into a try with Parris, Leonardo Ghiraldini, and debutant Marco Zanon wasting chances.

A pair of Allan penalties had given Italy an early foothold in the game in the first 12 minutes. But France pounced on an Italy kicking error after 15 minutes in the Stadio Olimpico.

Maxime Medard powered forward, passing for Penaud who outpaced Angelo Esposito, slipping a pass inside for Dupont to dot down under the posts. Ntamack converted and then added a penalty goal as France began to get into their stride opening up a four-point lead.

France captain Guilhem Guirado went off after 20

minutes clutching his ribs with Camille Chat coming on for the hooker who watched from the sidelines along with centre Wesley Fofana who pulled out with a muscle injury just before kick-off.

### DEBUTANT ZANON UNLUCKY

Zanon came tantalisingly close to a try before the break on his first start as he chased down Allan's grubber. The 21-year-old Treviso centre had a clear run at the line but the ball hit the cushion around the post and frustratingly slipped out of his hands.

Italy went into the dressing room 6-10 with Allan converting a penalty goal to close to one point shortly after the restart as Yacouba Camara knocked the ball out of Andrea Lovotti's hand.

But Huget broke through racing down to the left crossing over the line to touch down under the posts, with Ntamack converting. Tebaldi replied by making a subtle break around a ruck, getting Italy's first try on 52 minutes for 14-17 but Allan missed the conversion after earlier failing with a penalty attempt.

Toulouse hooker Ghiraldini, 34, was stretched off with a knee injury to thundering applause for his final home game after 104 caps. Italy looked to have closed the gap when Zanon touched down but he knocked the ball on after a superb last-gap tackle from Penaud.

It was 22-year-old Penaud who sprinted through for his third try in 11 Tests to make sure of victory. Ntamack missed the chance to convert, his only slip-up of the afternoon. Italy remain waiting for their first win in the tournament since February 2015 with more disappointment for the long-suffering fans in their 100th Six Nations match and 500th in their history. — AFP



ROME: France's fly half Romain Ntamack (R) passes the ball to France's lock Gregory Aillard (L) during the Six Nations international rugby union match Italy vs France yesterday at the Olympic stadium in Rome. —AFP

## Al-Fuzaie wins fence jumping competition

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Equestrian Sports Club (KESC) rider Abdelrahman Al-Fuzaie won the tournament of the club in the 135 cm fence jumping competition.

Second place was won by Yara Al-Hunaidi followed by the Abdallah Al-Roudhan.

KESC rider Jamila Al-Mutawa won the 125 cm event followed by Abdelaziz Al-Ajeel and Abdallah Al-Gharabally. The 115 cm event was won by Suleiman Al-Tainan, ahead of Nadiya Al-Mutawa and Fahad Al-Masoud.

Meanwhile, head of KESC Jassim Al-Kharafi distributed awards and prizes, then he honored riders who won local and foreign tournaments.



## 21st Asian Clubs Handball Tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Higher Organizing Committee of the 21st Asian Clubs Handball tournament to be held at Kuwait Sports Club from March 20 until April 1, completed its preparations for this important event.

The handball hall has been renovated to meet specifications of the Asian Handball Federation. Deputy Chairman of HOC Bader Al-Osaimi thanked officials of the Public Authority for Sports who did not spare any effort in meeting all the needs of the tournament, which is being held after three years absence due to the sports suspension. He said HOC faced many challenges and obstruction that were overcome due to the cooperation between all officials.

He said the most difficult obstacle were the conditions of the Asian committee that visited the club two months ago, and asked that the electronic board must be changed, and provide two new clocks on either side



of the hall, in addition to lay a rubber floor that is available in one company around the world.

Al-Osaimi said "we hope Kuwait representatives display the hoped level and see them compete in the final match, but the important thing is the tournament's success.

## McIlroy, Fleetwood share lead at Players Championship

LOS ANGELES: Rory McIlroy charged up the leaderboard on the back nine, firing a seven-under 65 on Friday to grab a share of the lead with Tommy Fleetwood at the halfway stage of the Players Championship.

McIlroy, of Northern Ireland, went seven under par on his final 11 holes, making an eagle on the par-five 16th, a birdie on the par-three 17 and par on the par-four closing hole to reach a 12-under 132 total.

He is tied with England's Fleetwood who shot a five-under 67 for his sixth straight round under par. "It was just another good day on the golf course. I did everything pretty much the way I wanted to," McIlroy said. "My attitude has been great all year."

Ian Poulter (66), Jim Furyk (64), Brian Harman (69) and Abraham Ancer (66) are tied for third at nine-under 135 at the TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. Australia's Jason Day shot a 66 and is tied for seventh with Keith Mitchell and Kevin Kisner at eight-under 136.

After making changes last year to correct struggles, McIlroy feels he is on the right track with the Masters, and a chance to complete a career Grand Slam, just a month away. He began Friday's round with his lone bogey of the day before going on to make one eagle and six birdies.

"I felt like I came back well," McIlroy said. "Once I got a birdie on the eighth it started to snowball." McIlroy also slammed the PGA Tour for allowing players to take too much time between shots, describing it as an "epidemic". McIlroy and his playing partners had to wait on almost all the tee boxes.

"It's become somewhat of an epidemic on tour ... Honestly, I think (the Tour) should just be a little tougher and start penalizing shots earlier, and that would be an easy way to fix it," he said.

This is the second straight week Fleetwood has had a share of the 36-hole lead after starting quickly Friday with a birdie-eagle-birdie beginning to his round. "It was a bit tougher today. The greens got crustier and crustier," Fleetwood said. "All in all I am very happy."

"Happy my game is improving and I am getting up there more and more." Tiger Woods just made the cut with a one-under 71 but was left hovering along the cut line after a quadruple bogey seven on the picturesque par-three island green. He finished tied for 39th with a three-under 141 total, nine strokes back of the leaders. —AFP

## Reds stun fellow strugglers Sunwolves in late turnaround

TOKYO: Hamish Stewart nailed a last-minute penalty as the Queensland Reds produced a superb comeback to beat Japan's Sunwolves 34-31 yesterday and post their first win of the season.

The Australians trailed 21-5 at half-time but their bench provided an instant impact after the break for the visitors in Tokyo, scoring four tries in 16 minutes—two by Brandon Paenga-Amosa—in an astonishing turnaround.

"We didn't start too well but the win shows the belief and character of this team," said Reds centre Samu Kerevi. "It was a game of two halves—but we can't be starting games like that. We need to be more clinical."

After a Hayden Parker penalty restored a five-point advantage for the Sunwolves with eight minutes left, Tate McDermott pounced on a loose ball from a Harry Hockings charge-down to tie things up again.

Stewart missed the conversion but made no mistake with the late penalty as the Reds, thrashed 63-28 on their previous visit to Tokyo, won for the first time in four matches this season. It was a stinging defeat for the Sunwolves, who looked on course for a victory that would have boosted their survival hopes with critics calling for them to be boot-ed out of Super Rugby.

With competition organisers set to meet this week to discuss the tournament's future, the Sunwolves players started the game as if their futures depended on it. Tries from Jamie Booth, Rabboni Warren-Vosayaco and Dan Pryor put the Sunwolves in the driving seat, while Parker's left boot paced the hosts with 11 points.

But the game swung on three quickfire scores in the second half as Paenga-Amosa smuggled the ball over the line just before the hour mark and Harry Hoopert crashed over moments later.

Stewart converted both and when Paenga-Amosa scored a carbon-copy try in the 65th minute and Stewart again added the extras, the Reds suddenly led by five points. Keisuke Uchida darted over to level things at 26-26 and Parker's boot looked to have stopped the rot.

But the Sunwolves, who recorded their first-ever away win with a stunning 30-15 upset over the Waikato Chiefs earlier this month, were denied a second victory of the season after Hockings charged down Uchida's clearance, allowing McDermott and Stewart to finish the job.

"It was a bit of a heart-breaker," said Sunwolves centre Jason Emery. "But we can take lessons from that and it's definitely something we can use as a weapon in our next games."

Before the game, the teams observed a minute's silence for the victims of Friday's gun attacks on two New Zealand mosques, which left 49 people dead and dozens more injured. "First and foremost our prayers and love go to the people of Christchurch," said Kerevi.

"It's been an emotional couple of days and our hearts go out to those people and families who have lost so much." —AFP

## Al Boum Photo snaps Mullins' Gold Cup jinx

CHELTHENHAM: Irish trainer Willie Mullins ended years of frustrating near misses as Al Boum Photo won the blue riband of steeplechasing the Cheltenham Gold Cup on Friday.

Mullins—the most successful trainer at the Festival with 64 winners—had finished runner-up six times and it looked as if his luck was out after three of his runners failed to make it onto the final circuit.

However, superbly guided round by Paul Townend Al Boum Photo stormed clear at the final fence to hold off a fast-finishing Anibale Fly, who improved on his third in the same race last year. "It is the one I have really wanted," said Mullins, whose redoubtable mother Molly came into the ring on what was her 67th successive Festival visit. "Racing has been very good to me I have a fantastic life through it I thought if we do not win the Gold Cup so be it what will be will be."

"It was not looking too good when we lost three on the first circuit every time I looked at Paul his body language gave me positive vibes," added 62-year-old Mullins. For Townend it was redemption as he had received a 21 days ban last season for trying to steer Al Blum Photo wide of the last fence when in the lead at Punchestown.

Mullins stayed loyal to him as did the owner Marie Donnelly and left Townend tearful after crossing the line. "The first thing that went through my head was for Paul and how great it was for him to wipe away those memories," said Mullins. Townend, who is on course to be crowned Irish champion jockey with his closest challenger Rachel Blackmore, was in tears after crossing the line. "I thank the owners so much and Willie," said Townend.

"It's the Gold Cup there is only one a year that is why it is so special." For the horse's owner it was her first winner at the Festival, although she too has had some close shaves. "That's the way to go start at the top!" she smiled. Bristol de Mai took third, defending champion Native River stayed on for fourth after Richard Johnson had the devil of a time to roust him at the start. "He just wasn't the same horse as last year," said Johnson.

Hot favourite Presenting Percy may have paid for his unconventional preparation in just having one run over hurdles as he never threatened. "Never got going," said Presenting Percy's jockey Davy Russell. "Things did not fall his way, that is how it is." — AFP



## Sports

# Bucks overcome 23-point deficit to rally past host Miami Heat

## Clippers beat Bulls, strengthen hold on playoff spot

**MIAMI:** The Milwaukee Bucks overcame a 23-point first-quarter deficit to rally past the host Miami Heat 113-98 on Friday night. Giannis Antetokounmpo tallied 33 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists, giving him his 49th double-double. Khris Middleton and Eric Bledsoe had 21 and 17 points, respectively, for the Bucks, who top the NBA with 52 wins, including 25 on the road. The Bucks outscored the Heat 71-36 in the second half to seize control of the game, and Milwaukee won its league-best 16th game when trailing by more than 10 points in a game this season. The Bucks won for the first time ever in 78 tries when trailing by at least 20 points at the half. Justise Winslow scored 20 — all in the first half — and Hassan Whiteside had 14. Josh Richardson scored 11, while Dwyane Wade, Bam Adebayo, Dion Waiters and Kelly Olynyk each had 10 for the Heat, who have won six of their past nine.

### ROCKETS 108, SUNS 102

James Harden recorded a double-double, with his final assist resulting in a critical basket that helped cement Houston's win over visiting Phoenix.

Harden posted 41 points and 11 assists and finished a rebound shy of a triple-double. He added six steals, but his final assist, a pass that resulted in a Danuel House Jr. 3-pointer with just under a minute left, provided the Rockets a 105-100 lead and sealed their 10th win in 11 games. House, seeing his first action since Jan. 14 after a contract dispute punched his ticket back to the G-League, scored 18 points and finished 4 of 8 from behind the arc.

### SPURS 109, KNICKS 83

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 18 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in three quarters to lead a balanced scoring attack as San Antonio throttled visiting New York to capture its seventh straight victory. The Spurs (40-29) have used their winning streak to fly up in the Western Conference standings and to move 11 games above .500, their best mark of the season.

San Antonio posted its ninth consecutive victory at

home and dominated the hapless Knicks, who have the NBA's worst record at 13-56 and have lost eight games in a row.

### 76ERS 123, KINGS 114

All five starters scored 18 or more points, propelling Philadelphia over visiting Sacramento. Joel Embiid had 21 points and a game-high 17 rebounds, while teammate Jimmy Butler collected seven assists to complement a game-high 22 points as the 76ers (44-25) moved back into a tie with idle Indiana (44-25) for the No. 3 playoff position in the Eastern Conference. Sacramento (33-35) lost a third straight contest, including its second in two nights. The Kings were beaten 126-120 at Boston on Thursday.

### TRAIL BLAZERS 122, PELICANS 110

Damian Lillard and C.J. McCollum combined for 47 points as visiting Portland held off short-handed New Orleans. Lillard scored 24 points and passed current Spurs forward LaMarcus Aldridge for second place on Portland's all-time scoring list. Clyde Drexler is the Blazers' all-time leading scorer. McCollum finished with 23 points, Enes Kanter and Rodney Hood added 17 points each, Zach Collins scored 12, and Jusuf Nurkic had 11 points and 12 rebounds as the Blazers improved to 8-3 since the All-Star break.

### CLIPPERS 128, BULLS 121

Danilo Gallinari scored 27 points, and Los Angeles continued to better its playoff chances with a win over visiting Chicago. Montrezl Harrell scored 26 points off the bench, and Lou Williams had 21 in a reserve role for the Clippers, who remain tied for eighth in the Western Conference with the Utah Jazz. Los Angeles also moved six games ahead of the ninth-place Kings for the final playoff spot. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 17 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, and fellow point guard Patrick Beverley finished with 13 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for Los Angeles, which has won six of seven.



**MIAMI:** Dwyane Wade #3 of the Miami Heat drives to the basket against the Milwaukee Bucks on Friday at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida. —AFP

### LAKERS 111, PISTONS 97

Langston Galloway scored 23 points off the bench, one shy of his season high, and host Detroit downed depleted Los Angeles. The Pistons snapped a two-game losing streak, while the Lakers lost for the seventh time in eight games. Reggie Jackson had 20 points, five rebounds and five assists, while Andre Drummond powered for 19 points and 23 rebounds for the Pistons. The Lakers rested superstar forward LeBron James after he scored 29 points in a loss to Toronto on Thursday. Tyson Chandler (neck), Josh Hart (knee) and Lance Stephenson (toe) also sat out.

### HORNETS 116, WIZARDS 110

Kemba Walker scored 28 points, Jeremy Lamb added 18 and visiting Charlotte defeated Washington. Nicolas Batum and Tony Parker had 16 points each for the Hornets in a game between two of the teams chasing the Miami Heat for the final playoff berth in the Eastern Conference. Walker was coming off a 40-point effort in a loss to the Rockets.

Bradley Beal, who had 15 points in a loss at Charlotte last Friday, had 23 by halftime Friday night and finished with 40 points on 15-of-29 shooting. —Reuters

## Flames rout Rangers

**CALGARY:** Matthew Tkachuk collected two goals and a career-high five points—his second game of the week with at least four points—and the host Calgary Flames climbed back atop the Western Conference with a 5-1 victory over the New York Rangers on Friday night. Goalie David Rittich stopped 24 shots for the Flames, who have racked up 20 goals during a three-game winning streak. Tkachuk has been as hot as anybody through the winning spree, having netted six goals and 10 points in that span, and coming through at key times. Case in point was his game-winning goal three minutes into the second period. With the score tied 1-1, Tkachuk deflected Mark Giordano's waist-high point shot en route to his sixth four-point game of the campaign. Seventy seconds later, Tkachuk had a hand in Garnet Hathaway's tally, feeding the puck to the front of the net for a nifty redirect for his 100th career assist.

### MAPLE LEAFS 7, FLYERS 6

Jake Muzzin scored two goals and added an assist. Auston Matthews added another pair of goals and host Toronto rallied from a three-goal deficit to defeat Philadelphia. Patrick Marleau, Zach Hyman and Martin Marinčin each contributed one goal for the Maple Leafs, who snapped a two-game losing streak. Ron Hainsey, Nazem Kadri, William Nylander and Nikita Zaitsev each had two assists. Maple Leafs goaltender Frederik Andersen stopped 23 of 29 shots on goal. James van Riemsdyk paced the Flyers with a hat trick, while Jakub Voracek, Radko Gudas and Shayne Gostisbehere added one goal apiece.

### BLUE JACKETS 3, HURRICANES 0

Columbus goalie Sergei Bobrovsky made 46 saves for his sixth shutout of the season as host Columbus defeated Carolina. Adam McQuaid, David Savard and Josh Anderson scored for Columbus, with two early goals providing the Blue Jackets with a cushion as the Hurricanes peppered Bobrovsky at times. Bobrovsky stopped 22 second-period shots, as the Hurricanes held a 22-2 edge on shots but didn't change the scoreboard.

### DEVILS 3, CANUCKS 2

Damon Severson's shootout goal gave visiting New Jersey a comeback victory over Vancouver. Severson, New Jersey's seventh shooter in the shootout, was falling down as he beat Vancouver goaltender Jacob Markstrom with a wrist shot from the doorstep. He decided the contest after Vancouver's Elias Pettersson and Drew Stafford had exchanged shootout goals. The Devils posted their second straight win following seven consecutive losses. The Canucks took their 14th loss in 19 games.

### GOLDEN KNIGHTS 2, STARS 1

Ryan Reaves scored the game-winner early in the third period, and Marc-Andre Fleury had 40 saves for his league-leading 35th victory as visiting Las Vegas defeated Dallas. Max Pacioretty also scored for Vegas, which improved its lead over fourth-place Arizona to six points in the Pacific Division with its seventh win in its last eight games. Fleury extended his personal winning streak to six games, during which he has allowed a total of five goals. Roope Hintz scored for Dallas, which lost for just the second time in eight games. The Stars, playing the second half of a back-to-back that started with a 4-1 win at Minnesota on Thursday night, didn't land in Dallas until 2:30 in the morning. —Reuters

## Dominant Hamilton snatches Australian Grand Prix pole

**MELBOURNE:** Mercedes' world champion Lewis Hamilton picked up where he left off last year to reassert his authority and snatch a record-extending eighth pole position at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix yesterday.

The Briton clocked a fastest lap of one minute 20.486 to narrowly pip team-mate Valtteri Bottas, with Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel third, but a massive 0.704 seconds behind his arch-rival.

The German will start on the second row with Red Bull's Max Verstappen while Ferrari newcomer Charles Leclerc and Haas' Romain Grosjean make up row three.

Fellow Haas driver Kevin Magnussen is behind them alongside British young gun Lando Norris, who steered his McLaren to an admirable eighth in his debut qualifying session. Hamilton, 34, is the pole master in Melbourne, claiming it eight times and every year since 2014, although he has only twice won a race at Albert Park, in 2008 and 2015. He knocked out his rivals with a blistering lap at the death to claim an 84th career grid-leading time and said afterwards he was "shaking, it was so close out there".

Hamilton, who is bidding for a sixth world title to move within one of Michael Schumacher's record seven, had complained after pre-season testing in Barcelona that Ferrari was much quicker. But this has proved to be a fallacy with the Briton fastest in all three free practice sessions. "Coming from Barcelona, we have made some really big steps in the past few days with the setup. And it seems to have worked," he said. "I really was not expecting to see the performance difference we have here."

Bottas was equally stunned by their pace. "Like Lewis I'm a little bit blown away by the performance

## Ricciardo frustrated at missing out on top 10 grid place

**MELBOURNE:** Daniel Ricciardo hoped to turn yesterday's frustration into today's points after missing out on a top 10 grid slot in his first qualifying for Renault at his home Australian Grand Prix. The former Red Bull driver will line up 12th, alongside German team mate Nico Hulkenberg in 11th, on the sixth row for the Formula One season-opener in Melbourne.

"Normally if I don't qualify as well as I think I can, I seem to carry a little chip on my shoulder which normally helps me out (in the race)," said Ricciardo. "I don't think 12th represents where we are. I do believe we're better."

Ricciardo's former team mate Max Verstappen qualified in fourth place for Red Bull. Australia has provided plenty of frustration for Ricciardo in the past, most famously in 2014 when he finished second but was then disqualified for illegal fuel flow. Last

year he finished agonisingly close to the podium in fourth.

"I knew it was going to be close but I did believe we'd have the pace for Q3 (the top 10 shootout for pole)," he said. "I don't know how deep we could have got into that top 10 but I was just half a tenth (of a second) to get into Q3 and I know that was there, that was in the car. I lost it in the first sector, I was down a bit and close to a tenth there."

"I was more frustrated with myself because I knew it was there in the car." The 29-year-old said his long run pace had not been great in practice but he took confidence from overnight changes and Hulkenberg's strong Friday times. "I'm very optimistic for the race," said Ricciardo. "It will just be a case of if we can pass and attack but I'm sure we'll sneak into the points."

Hulkenberg was unable to complete his final run of the session due to an electrical problem, without which he was confident he could have made the top 10. "We had hoped to get both cars through to the top 10 so the overall result is really disappointing," said sporting director Alan Permane.

"We therefore have a little bit of work to do tomorrow, but with the good long run pace we demonstrated yesterday, we are aiming to make up for today and get both cars well into the points." —Reuters



**MELBOURNE:** Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates after taking the pole position in the Formula One qualifying session in Melbourne yesterday, ahead of the Formula One Australian Grand Prix. —AFP

we had today," said the Finn. I don't think anyone in the team could have imagined we'd be in this position after the testing we had."

### 'BETTER THAN THIS'

Vettel, who has won the last two races in Melbourne, admitted he too was surprised at the size of the gap with Mercedes. "I think everybody is, probably even ourselves," he said. "For sure there is some homework for us to understand, but I still think we have a great car, we should be better than this. We have 58 laps tomorrow to get a proper read on where we are."

"We have got to live with it today, but tomorrow is a new day," he added. Mercedes and Hamilton have been dominant in Formula One in recent years, winning the drivers' and constructors' titles five years in a row and

Ferrari-and Vettel-are desperate to catch up. While the German won in Melbourne last year and backed it up with victory at the next race in Bahrain, Hamilton roared back to sweep 11 of the remaining 19 Grand Prix to comfortably be crowned champion.

Hamilton topped Q2 in 1:21:014 from Bottas and Verstappen, with Vettel running into the gravel at Turn 12, kicking up dirt and dust. Australian Daniel Ricciardo was a big casualty, finishing 12th in his first outing for new team Renault after moving from Red Bull. His team-mate Nico Hulkenberg also missed the Q2 cut, as did Toro Rosso pair Daniel Kyvyat and Alexander Albon.

Leclerc topped Q1 with 1:22:017 ahead of Hamilton and Bottas. Red Bull newcomer Pierre Gasly was among those who failed to get out of Q1 along with McLaren's Carlos Sainz and Racing Point's Lance Stroll. —AFP

## Ireland trail by 120 runs after Afghan Shah's batting blitz

**DEHRADUN:** Afghanistan batsman Rahmat Shah fell two runs short of his maiden Test century as he guided his team to a 142-run first innings lead over Ireland on the second day of the one-off Test match yesterday.

The Irish team lost captain William Porterfield in the closing hour of the game at 22-1 after Afghan batsmen had dominated the day in the north Indian city of Dehradun. Maiden half-centuries by Asghar Afghan, with 67 runs, and Hashmatullah Shahidi (61) piled up 314 all out in reply to 172 from the visitors.

Afghanistan resumed the day's play at 90-2 with Shah (22) and Shahidi (13) sharing a second day 124-run stand for the third wicket before Andy McBrine picked up Shahidi. Shah continued his journey towards scoring the first ever Test century for the team but his innings ground to a halt at 98 off 214 balls when he chopped on a delivery by Tim Murtagh. Murtagh, who saved the day for Ireland in the first innings after scoring an unbeaten maiden Test half century at number 11, had bowling figures of 1-33. Ireland trail by 120 runs with eight wickets in hand on day three of the match after the team's battling lineup crumbled against the Afghan spin attack on day one.

Stuart Thompson picked three for 28, including the wicket of all-rounder Mohammad Nabi for nought. McBrine took 2 for 77. Andy Balbirnie (14) and Paul Stirling (8) were out at the crease at the close of the play, with Afghan bowler Yamin Ahmadzai ending the day at 1-9.

Both sides are playing their second Test after making their debut in the five-day format last year. Afghanistan lost to India inside two days in Bangalore while Ireland went down to Pakistan in Dublin. —AFP



Sports

# Super-sub Andre Gray sends Watford into FA Cup semis

Gray has scored the winner as a substitute three times in recent weeks

LONDON: Andre Gray came off the bench to fire Watford into the FA Cup semi-finals with the late winner in their 2-1 victory over Crystal Palace yesterday. Javi Gracia's side took the lead through Etienne Capoue's first half strike before Michy Batshuayi equalised for Palace after the interval.

That was the signal for Gracia to turn to Gray, who maintained his reputation as Watford's super-sub by grabbing the goal that avenged the Hornets' 2016 FA Cup semi-final defeat against Palace. The former Burnley striker has now scored the winner as a substitute three times in recent weeks, having also netted Watford's decisive goal against Everton and Leicester. Gray's latest heroics moved Watford closer to finally returning to the FA Cup final 35 years after they lost to Everton in their only other appearance.

Watford had won both Premier League meetings with Palace this season and Gracia's team went close early on when Gerard Deulofeu's strike drew a good stop from Vicente Guaita. Despite that save, Guaita looked nervous on a windy afternoon and the Spanish keeper made a hash of dealing with a Watford corner before Palace managed to clear.

It was a mistake he repeated with fatal consequences as Watford took the lead in the 27th minute. Flapping at a Jose Holebas corner, Guaita's weak punch failed to clear the danger and when the ball was diverted

back to Capoue, the French midfielder slotted into the empty net from close-range.

Watford threatened a second goal when Deulofeu unleashed a rising shot moments later, but this time Guaita was up to the task. Palace had laboured without Ivory Coast forward Wilfried Zaha, absent due to a calf strain, but they were more vibrant after the break and Heurelho Gomes had to keep out Max Meyer's diving header before Batshuayi fired just wide.

The visitors' pressure was rewarded in the 62nd minute when Gomes a risky pass to Adrian Mariappa. Mariappa was far too slow to clear and on-loan Chelsea striker Batshuayi stole possession, advancing into the penalty area to drill a cool finish past Gomes.

It was the first goal Watford had conceded in this year's competition. But Gracia responded by sending on Gray in the 77th minute and it proved an inspired move as he won it for Watford just two minutes after his introduction.

Roberto Pereyra was the catalyst with an incisive burst from midfield and the Argentine's perfectly-placed pass picked out Gray, who timed his run to poke a volley past Guaita from eight yards.

Aaron Wan-Bissaka should have forced extra-time when the ball fell to him after a Gomes mistake in stoppage-time, but the Palace defender blasted just wide. — AFP



LONDON: Watford's Spanish midfielder Gerard Deulofeu (L) tackles Crystal Palace's Scottish midfielder James McArthur during the FA Cup quarter-final football match between Watford and Crystal Palace at Vicarage Road Stadium in Watford, north of London yesterday. — AFP

## Shiffrin makes it sweet 16, Pinturault takes giant slalom

SOLDEN: Insatiable Mikaela Shiffrin won yesterday's slalom in Andorra to seal a pulsating 16th World Cup win of a record-breaking season, as Alexis Pinturault prevailed in the giant slalom. Last week the all-conquering American Shiffrin set a new record for most World Cup victories in a season with her 15th to pull clear of the previous benchmark of 14 set by Swiss legend Vreni Schneider who achieved the feat in 1988-89.

It was Shiffrin's 59th career success yesterday and it came in the week she celebrated her 24th birthday. To put that tally of 59 into context, Lindsey Vonn, who is ten years older than Shiffrin, retired with 82 career wins in February.

Shiffrin had already been assured of the slalom small globe to go alongside her super-G globe and overall title. "I'm noy on this circuit just to win Globes and then stop," Shiffrin told press after the race.

"It's my passion, I'm always full on. I

love this sport and it brings great joy to my life," she explained. She is almost certain to add the giant slalom globe on Sunday when she only needs to finish in the first 15 places.

If she does she will draw level with Lindsey Vonn (2010/2012) and Tina Maze (2013) as the winner of four World Cup titles in a season. Shiffrin came good again on Saturday, beating Swiss Wendy Holdener by 0.07sec to swell her World Cup points haul to 2,104, the second highest total in history behind the 2,414 points Maze amassed in the 2012/13 campaign.

"I'm not just here to win globes and stop," explained Shiffrin. "I still have passion and fire in me so I'm still giving it everything as I love this sport. It brings a lot of joy to life." Earlier Pinturault won the men's giant slalom with Marcel Hirscher already assured of the discipline's small globe back in sixth.

Pinturault left it late to open his giant slalom account for the season, finishing 0.44sec quicker than Swiss rival Marco Odermatt with Slovenia's Zan Kranjec at 1.03sec back in third. It was the 23rd World Cup win of Pinturault's career and in the standings it left the alpine combined world champion second behind Hirscher, who finished this last giant slalom in Andorra 1.74sec behind.

Austria's Hirscher secured his eighth consecutive overall World Cup crown last weekend in Slovenia. The 30-year-



ANDORRA: Winner of the overall FIS Alpine ski slalom US Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates with the crystal globe trophy during the podium ceremony after competing in the Women's slalom race during the FIS Alpine ski world cup championship yesterday, in Grandvalira Soldeu - El Tarter, in Andorra. —AFP

old made sure of the giant slalom globe at Bansko in Bulgaria last month. "This result wasn't what I was hoping for," said Hirscher.

"But I'm still happy with this sixth

globe in the giant." Pinturault, who claimed the combined small globe also last month, dominated the first run at Soldeu before fending off Odermatt's challenge in the second leg. — AFP

## FIFA backs 48-team World Cup in 2022

MIAMI: MIAMI: FIFA moved a step closer on Friday to expanding the 2022 World Cup in Qatar to 48 teams and hopes to confirm the plans in June if a suitable co-host can be found.

An internal feasibility study supporting the expansion, which is being strongly pushed by president Gianni Infantino, was given full backing by the FIFA council in Miami.

A final decision will now be taken in Paris on June 6 after FIFA and Qatar jointly submit the names of potential co-host nations to the governing body's Congress. Infantino, who also confirmed a new Club World Cup with 24 teams will begin in 2021 to replace the Confederations Cup, told a press conference: "You have in front of you a happy FIFA president. I am always happy but especially today because we have taken some important decisions. "We came to conclusion, yes it's feasible to move from 32 to 48 teams at the World Cup provided certain conditions are met.

"We have the duty to look into it, 90 percent are in favour of an increase but it's not as easy as that. We have to analyse matters carefully and we are working closely with Qatar." The move away from the traditional 32 teams which will see 80 matches instead of 64 — the notion was originally slated to come into effect for the 2026 tournament in North America—means one or more other countries will be asked to help Qatar stage the shortened 28-day event which is scheduled to kick off in November 2022. Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman and United Arab Emirates are all potential options yet rancorous diplomatic disputes has led to the tiny Gulf state being politically isolated from many of its former allies.

### EUROPEAN BOYCOTT

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE will need to end their diplomatic blockade of Qatar launched in 2017 if they want to be involved, FIFA's feasibility study said. "We know the situation in the Gulf region," added Infantino. "We are in the lucky position of being in football, and that means you can only care about football. I was pleased with the reaction of the Qataris. We don't want to regret not analysing the decision."

Analysts expressed scepticism, however, that regional acrimony can be overcome to enable Infantino's hoped-for expansion. "The Gulf Crisis is not going to be solved by playing football," said James Dorsey, a researcher at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

"FIFA recognises that it is out of the question to share (matches) with (the) Qataris' detractors, the Emiratis and Saudi Arabia. If you pull in Kuwait and Oman, it could aggravate the situation."

The Qatari organising committee for the 2022 World Cup meanwhile gave a lukewarm response to Friday's decision, saying organisers would continue planning for a 32-team event. "We will work with FIFA to determine whether or not a viable operating model does exist and importantly, whether it is in the best interests for football and for the tournament, and for Qatar as the host nation," a spokesman for Qatar 2022 said.

"Until we reach that conclusion, we will continue to work toward hosting a 32-team World Cup..." FIFA, meanwhile, have been told that the leading European clubs will boycott a Club World Cup expanded to 24 teams in 2021 which was also given the go-ahead at the meeting in Florida.

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. — AFP

## Champions League quarter-final, s-final draw

NYON: Champions League quarter-final and semi-final match-ups after Friday's draw:

Quarter-final first legs (1900 GMT) April 9

At Liverpool, England  
Liverpool (ENG) v Porto (POR)  
At London  
Tottenham Hotspur (ENG) v Manchester City (ENG)  
April 10

At Amsterdam  
Ajax (NED) v Juventus (ITA)  
At Manchester, England  
Manchester United (ENG) v Barcelona (ESP)  
Quarter-final second legs (1900 GMT) April 16

At Barcelona, Spain  
Barcelona (ESP) v Manchester United (ENG)  
At Turin, Italy  
Juventus (ITA) v Ajax (NED)  
April 17

At Porto, Portugal  
Porto (POR) v Liverpool (ENG)  
At Manchester, England  
Manchester City (ENG) v Tottenham Hotspur (ENG)  
Semi-finals  
Tottenham Hotspur/Manchester City v Ajax/Juventus  
Manchester United/Barcelona v Liverpool/Porto  
First leg April 30/May 1, second leg May 7-8  
Final  
June 1 at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid. —AFP

## Andreescu to face Kerber in WTA final

INDIAN WELLS: Canadian sensation Bianca Andreescu topped sixth-ranked Elina Svitolina 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 on Friday and will face Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber for the WTA title in Indian Wells. Germany's Kerber, ranked eighth in the world, ended Belinda Bencic's 12-match winning streak with a 6-4, 6-2 victory to reach the final in the California desert for the first time in her third semi-final appearance.

Kerber won the last four games of the opening set and the last three games of the second to subdue Bencic, who was coming off her first WTA title in four years in Dubai. The 22-year-old Swiss, whose career was disrupted by a string of back and wrist injuries, had beaten six top-10 players in her winning streak, including world number one and defending Indian Wells champion Naomi Osaka in the fourth round here.

But she couldn't find a way past Kerber, who broke Bencic from 30-0 down in the final game of the opening set. Kerber dropped her serve in the opening game of the second set, but broke Bencic twice to lead 3-1 before the Swiss clawed back another break.

But Kerber, taking full advantage of Bencic's 27 unforced errors in the match, won the next three games, to clinch it. "It's always tough to play against Belinda," Kerber said. "She played so great in the past few weeks."

"I was trying to focus only on my side of the court. I was trying to play concentrated, and going for it when I had the chance. "I really enjoy the semi-finals here - it was already twice here, and I'm really happy to be in the final for the first time now."

Kerber, 31, will be playing 18-year-old Andreescu for the first time. "I'm really looking forward to a really tough battle. She's here as a wild card, and she beat a lot of good players," Kerber said. "She has nothing to lose, she enjoys her tennis and she's a great player."

Andreescu, ranked 60th in the world after starting the year at 152, continued a stellar run that included a quarter-final victory over former world number one Garbine Muguruza. She's the first wild card to reach the women's final at Indian Wells.

"It's incredible," she beamed when told of the achievement. "Another goal of mine was to make history and I just did." "I really need a moment to soak this all in. This is just so incredible," an emotional Andreescu told the crowd. "This past week has been a dream come true." — AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
<b>ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE</b>		
Tottenham Hotspur v Crystal Palace FC	beIN SPORTS	15:00
Fulham FC v Liverpool	beIN SPORTS HD 2	17:15
Everton FC v Chelsea FC	beIN SPORTS HD 2	19:30
<b>SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA</b>		
SD Eibar v Real Valladolid	beIN SPORTS HD 3	14:00
RCD Espanyol v Sevilla FC	beIN SPORTS HD 3	18:15
Valencia C.F v Getafe CF	beIN SPORTS HD 3	20:30
Villarreal CF v Rayo Vallecano	beIN SPORTS HD 10	20:30
Real Betis v FC Barcelona	beIN SPORTS HD 3	22:45
<b>ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE</b>		
Genoa CFC v Juventus FC	beIN SPORTS HD 4	14:30
Atalanta v AC Chievo Verona	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Empoli v Frosinone Calcio	beIN SPORTS	17:00
SS Lazio v Parma Calcio 1913	beIN SPORTS	17:00
SSC Napoli v Udinese Calcio	beIN SPORTS HD 7	20:00
AC Milan v Internazionale Milano	beIN SPORTS HD 4	22:30
<b>GERMAN BUNDESLIGA</b>		
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v SV Werder Bremen	beIN SPORTS	15:30
Eintracht Frankfurt v FC Nuremberg	beIN SPORTS	17:30
Bayern Munich v FSV Mainz 05	beIN SPORTS	20:00
<b>FRENCH LEAGUE</b>		
Olympique Lyonnais v Montpellier HSC	beIN SPORTS HD 6	16:30
Stade Reims v FC Nantes	beIN SPORTS	17:00
FC Girondins de Bordeaux v Stade Rennais	beIN SPORTS HD 6	19:00
Paris Saint-Germain v Olympique Marseille	beIN SPORTS HD 6	23:00



**25** McIlroy, Fleetwood share lead at Players Championship



**26** Dominant Hamilton snatches Australian Grand Prix pole



**27** Shiffrin makes it sweet 16, Pinturault takes giant slalom



## Wales thrash Ireland to win Six Nations

Anscombe kick 20 points to help beat an ill-disciplined Ireland



CARDIFF: Wales' lock Alun Wyn Jones (C) holds up the trophy after being crowned Six Nations rugby champions after beating Ireland at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, south Wales, yesterday. — AFP

CARDIFF: Wales claimed a record third Six Nations Grand Slam of coach Warren Gatland's reign yesterday as Gareth Anscombe kicked 20 points to help beat an ill-disciplined Ireland 25-7.

The stunning victory extended Wales' winning streak to 14 matches, moving them to second in the World Rugby standings and handing Gatland's team a massive psychological boost looking ahead to this year's Rugby World Cup in Japan.

The Grand Slam was the 12th achieved by Wales, who opened this campaign with a 24-19 victory over France before following up with wins over Italy (26-15), England (21-13) and Scotland (18-11).

It was the third under Gatland in his 50th and final Wales game in European rugby's showcase tournament following Grand Slams in 2008 and 2012, and a first Six Nations title since 2013.

Anscombe, who scored six penalty goals and a conversion, said: "It's hard to put into words what this means, we've worked incredibly hard over the last year.

We have a habit of winning. It's a special group and we worked hard for each other.

"For me it's a day and weekend to remember for Welsh rugby."

Wales captain Alun Wyn Jones admitted the team had "just put a big target" on their backs going into the World Cup, adding that there was "still potential in us".

Ireland captain Rory Best called Wales "a very determined side and hard to beat here".

"We couldn't get footing in the game. Our set-piece wasn't up to the standard that we expect. They put a lot of pressure on us and we struggled to respond."

The tone of what turned out to be an electrifying start was set from the off.

Gargantuan winger George North followed up on Anscombe's kick-off, catching Jacob Stockdale in possession and driving him into touch.

The crowd, barely in their seats after stirring anthems, were quickly galvanised as Ken Owens peeled off the attacking line-out, Hadleigh Parkes gathering

Anscombe's dink over the top to touch down within two breath-taking minutes, the fly-half converting.

Kiwi-born Parkes, who made his Super Rugby debut alongside Anscombe for the Auckland Blues before relocating to Wales in 2014, was then on hand to produce a superb try-saving tackle on Stockdale in what turned out to be a disappointing Ireland's best chance of the game.

World Rugby player of the year Johnny Sexton caught the Welsh defence flat-footed with a clever raking cross-kick, Stockdale expertly gathering and shrugging off Gareth Davies as he steamed down the line before Parkes hauled him down with the line beckoning.

Influential playmaker Dan Biggar made an earlier-than-expected entry after North went off with an injured left wrist, Anscombe slotting in at full-back with Liam Williams moving to the wing.

When Sexton was pinged for a ruck infringement in the 18th minute, Anscombe made no mistake with the penalty to stretch Wales' lead.

### Ireland's ill-discipline

Sexton spurned a shot at goal himself after a rare spell of Irish pressure, but Adam Beard launched himself into the attacking Irish maul off the line-out, Justin Tipuric isolating Irish skipper Rory Best and forcing a knock-on.

Things weren't going Ireland's way, experienced No 8 CJ Stander then losing control of a quick tap and go to lose all momentum, coach Joe Schmidt left holding his head in despair.

Anscombe increased the home side's lead to 16 points with two further penalties just before half-time, ironically the same lead France held over Wales after the first 40 minutes in the opening match of this Six Nations campaign.

Alun Wyn Jones, equalling Gethin Jenkins as the most capped Welshman of all-time with 134 caps (including nine matches for the British and Irish Lions), was to the fore as the go-to line-out jumper and around the park with ball in hand. — AFP

## Huddersfield move closer to relegation

LONDON: Huddersfield slipped closer to Premier League relegation as the bottom club blew a two-goal lead in their 4-3 defeat at West Ham, while Burnley are in deep trouble after losing 2-1 against 10-man Leicester yesterday. Jan Siewert's side looked to have kept alive their faint hopes of beating the drop as they raced into a 3-1 lead in east London. But a second-half collapse culminated in Javier Hernandez's last-gasp winner for West Ham, leaving Huddersfield 16 points from safety with only seven games remaining.

Mark Noble put West Ham ahead with a 15th-minute penalty after 18-year-old Aaron Rowe, making his first professional start, brought down Manuel Lanzini. Huddersfield were level just two minutes later when Juninho Bacuna headed in from Aaron Mooy's corner for the Terriers' first away league goal since Boxing Day.

Karlan Grant gave Huddersfield the lead with a close-range finish in the 30th minute and the January signing from Charlton scored again in the 65th minute with a fantastic 20-yard strike. But Angelo Ogbonna reduced the deficit with 15 minutes left and Hernandez completed West Ham's gritty fightback with an 84th-minute header from Samir Nasri's cross.

Former Manchester United striker Hernandez wasn't

finished yet and he struck again in the final seconds with a header from Felipe Anderson's cross. At Turf Moor, Burnley's survival bid was dented as they were rocked by Leicester. Leicester defender Harry Maguire was sent off in the fourth minute for a trip on Johann Berg Gudmundsson as the Burnley midfielder ran clear on goal. It was the fastest Premier League red card in four years, but Leicester weren't fazed as James Maddison opened the scoring with a superb 33rd-minute free-kick.

Burnley's teenage forward Dwight McNeil equalised with a fine finish in the 38th minute. But Leicester snatched the points in the 90th minute when defender Wes Morgan struck after Youri Tielemans' cross deflected into his path.

Burnley are one place and two points above the relegation zone, with third-bottom Cardiff holding a game in hand. In the day's other game, Matt Ritchie's last-gasp equaliser rescued Newcastle in their 2-2 draw at Bournemouth.

Salomon Rondon blasted Newcastle into the lead with his 10th goal of the season, this one a powerful free-kick on the stroke of half-time. However, Josh King equalised with 48th-minute penalty awarded for Federico Fernandez's foul on Nathan Ake.

King's second goal arrived in the 81st minute after good work from Dominic Solanke, but Ritchie had the last word with a fierce half-volley. today, Liverpool can replace Manchester City on top of the table if they win at Fulham, while Chelsea look to improve their top four prospects at Everton. — AFP

## City come from two goals down to reach last four

LONDON: Premier League leaders Manchester City recovered from two goals down to beat Championship side Swansea City 3-2 at the Liberty Stadium yesterday to progress to the FA Cup semi-finals. Having secured a last-eight spot in the Champions League to go with their League Cup title, City made a strong start as they looked to continue their quest to become the first side to win all four major trophies in an English season.

However, they were opened up after 20 minutes by Connor Roberts who drew a foul from Fabian Delph in the penalty area and Matt Grimes converted from the spot to give Swansea the lead. Nine minutes later it was two as former Manchester City youth player Bersant Celina finished off a flowing Swansea move to stun his former employers.

The Premier League side struggled to break Swansea down after the break, but Bernardo Silva's goal in the 68th minute got City back in the match. From then on it was all Manchester City and an own goal off the back of Swansea goalkeeper



SWANSEA: Manchester City's German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan (left) vies with Swansea City's Welsh midfielder Daniel James during the FA Cup quarterfinal match at The Liberty Stadium yesterday. — AFP

Kristoffer Nordfeldt after substitute Sergio Aguero's 77th-minute penalty had come back off the post levelled the tie. Aguero missed a glorious chance to score seven minutes from time, but the Argentine striker had the final say when he headed the winner two minutes from time. — Reuters