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New recruits with 21 diseases on MoH list to be denied entry

Cross-eyed, pregnant expats barred • Residents exempt, except for contagious diseases

Govt rejects raising annual leave; call for debt write-off

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Head of the National Assembly's health and labor committee MP Humoud Al-Khudhair said yesterday that the government rejected amendments to the labor law to raise annual leave in the private sector from 30 to 35 days. The law had been approved by the Assembly in the first reading last month with the government's approval, but the second and final vote on the legislation was delayed without any reason.

Khudhair did not say when the government made the rejection, which is expected to block its passage in the Assembly. The government has the right to reject laws approved by the Assembly, which also

has the right to override the government's rejection by approving the law again by a two-thirds majority, or waiting until the next term to pass it with a simple majority. Lawmakers had said the main purpose of the law is to lure more Kuwaitis to the private sector, which is dominated by expatriates. The amendment would have reduced the gap between benefits offered by the public and private sectors.

Meanwhile, MP Majed Al-Mutairi said yesterday that five lawmakers have submitted a request to the Assembly urging speeding up the approval of a draft law calling on the government to write off bank debts on Kuwaiti citizens. The lawmaker said his proposal has so far received strong positive response by MPs and the public, and as a result he and other MPs have urged the Assembly for a quicker debate to approve the legislation. The proposed law calls for writing off consumer and housing loans taken by Kuwaiti citizens from local banks to help them meet the increasing cost of living, according to Mutairi.

MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl said yesterday that a member in a committee formed by the defense ministry to probe the Eurofighter jet deal was found to hold a

forged university degree. The lawmaker questioned how someone who has committed forgery can investigate a multibillion-dollar deal suspected to be marred by corruption. He said that an Assembly committee found some big names in a list of those suspected to have fake university degrees, including some who were appointed members in the municipal council and another leading a department in the information ministry. He said the government silence on the issue is suspicious.

Meanwhile, a number of MPs agreed that more cooperation is needed among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, particularly on the legislative front. Kuwaiti lawmakers Rakan Al-Nisf and Ouda Al-Ruwai made the remarks after taking part in a meeting yesterday in Jeddah of a GCC parliamentary committee dealing with coordination and foreign affairs.

The talks covered several major issues a week before top lawmakers from across the Gulf are due to meet here, Nisf said. The main objective of the talks is to seek better foreign relations, according to Ruwai, who revealed that the meeting also finalized a number of development and youth-led projects.

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: In a bid to cut expenses, achieve health security and prevent the entry of unfit people, the health ministry announced a new list of 21 diseases and ailments that will prevent newly-recruited expatriates from entering Kuwait, said informed sources.

The sources said the new list includes brittle diabetes, irregular high blood pressure, cancer, strabismus (being cross-eyed), weak eyesight, kidney failure, lameness, contagious diseases, HIV, hepatitis B and C, microfilariasis, malaria, leprosy, pulmonary tuberculosis, tinnitus, fibrosis and calcification of the lungs, inflammation of the pleura, hypertrophy contractions, pregnancy (for women applying for jobs) and other conditions due to which an expat applying for a visa to enter Kuwait will be deemed unfit and rejected.

The sources justified the measure by the health ministry as an attempt to prevent overburdening the ministry budget, as expats with such conditions will cost a lot to be treated at a time when the ministry is cutting its expenses. Notably, the sources stressed that expats with valid residencies in Kuwait who are diagnosed with any of the abovementioned diseases will not be deported, except those with infectious and contagious diseases like AIDS, hepatitis B and C and tuberculosis.

News in brief

Uber confirms Careem acquisition

DUBAI: Global ride-hailing giant Uber will acquire its Middle East rival Careem for \$3.1 billion in the region's largest technology industry transaction, the two companies announced yesterday. "Careem and Uber are joining forces. We have reached an agreement in which Uber will acquire Careem for \$3.1 billion," a joint statement said. Careem will retain its branding, services and separate app in the greater Middle East region, and expand its services to include mass transportation, delivery and payments. — AFP

Dubai allows increase in school fees

DUBAI: Dubai will allow a modest increase in school fees for the majority of students in the 2019-2020 academic year, after last year's freeze triggered a delay in the London listing of a major school operator. The Dubai government said it will allow an increase in school fees for 90 percent of students by a maximum 2.07 percent from the 2019-2020 academic year. Schools in which the quality of education is declining according to the government's index will not be allowed to increase their fees. — Reuters

US approves F-16 sale to Morocco

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday approved the sale of 25 F-16 fighter aircraft to Morocco for \$3.8 billion, the State Department announced. Besides the new Block 70/72 F-16s, equipped with state of the art electronic systems and weaponry, Washington also approved the modernization of 23 F-16s already in the Moroccan air force fleet, for \$983 million. The State Department said the sale would not affect the balance of forces in the region. — AFP

Sharif gets bail on medical grounds

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Supreme Court agreed yesterday to release jailed former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on bail for six weeks to receive medical treatment but said he would not be allowed to leave the country. Sharif is serving a seven-year sentence imposed last year for failing to disclose the source of income that allowed him to acquire the Al-Azizia Steel Mills in Saudi Arabia. The sentence would be suspended for six weeks from the date of Sharif's release. — Reuters

Asus pushed malware: Kaspersky

TAIPEI: Taiwanese laptop maker Asus unknowingly pushed malware to thousands of computers after one of its servers was hacked last year, potentially affecting more than one million people, Russian cybersecurity firm Kaspersky Lab said. More than 57,000 people installed the malicious backdoor on their Asus computers after hackers attacked a server for the company's live software update tool, Kaspersky said. Asus said it had upgraded its software. — AFP



ALGIERS: Algerian students demonstrate in the capital yesterday against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. — AFP

Army chief calls for declaring Bouteflika unfit

ALGIERS: Algeria's army chief called yesterday for President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to be declared unfit to govern, in a rare direct intervention by the military after weeks of mass protests demanding the ailing leader step down after two decades in power. The move would potentially clear the way for elections to be organized in the coming months unless the president recovers. "It is necessary, even imperative, to adopt a solution to get out of the crisis which responds to the legitimate demands of the Algerian people, and which guarantees the respect of the provisions of the constitution and safeguards the sovereignty of the state," General Ahmed Gaid Salah said in a televised speech.

The armed forces chief of staff, considered loyal to Bouteflika, added that the solution "is in article 102" of the constitution, under which parliament could declare the president unable to perform his duties due to serious illness, a decision that members of parliament's lower and upper house need to ratify by a two-thirds majority.

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Mexico demands Spain apology for colonial 'abuses'

MADRID: The 500-year-old wounds of the Spanish conquest have been ripped open afresh with Mexico's president urging Spain and the Vatican to apologize for their "abuses" - a request Madrid said it "firmly rejects". Spain's centuries of dominance in the New World, backed by the Catholic Church, leapt from the history books to the headlines when Mexican President Andres

Manuel Lopez Obrador called Monday on Spanish King Felipe VI and Pope Francis to apologize for the conquest and the rights violations committed in its aftermath.

"I have sent a letter to the king of Spain and another to the pope, calling for a full account of the abuses and urging them to apologize to the indigenous peoples (of Mexico) for the violations of what we now call their human rights," Lopez Obrador said. He made the remarks in a video, filmed at the Mayan ruins of the indigenous city of Comalcalco and posted on Facebook and Twitter. "There were massacres and oppression. The so-called conquest was waged with the sword and the cross. They built their churches on top of the (indigenous) temples," added the anti-establishment leftist.

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MEXICO CITY: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador speaks during his daily morning press conference at the National Palace yesterday. — AFP

Small sums spell success as kids go back to school

ADANA, Turkey: Like many students of her age, 16-year-old refugee Fatmeh dreams of becoming a doctor. And a modest monthly sum of less than €10 could make all the difference. Originally from the Syrian city of Aleppo, the teenager has been living in Adana in southern Turkey for six years with her father and three small brothers. To help feed the family, the father sells Syrian pastries that she helps make at home. "I missed the first term of school to help my dad look after my three little brothers and prepare the pastries," she told AFP between classes at public school in Adana.

Fatmeh is one of 460,000 refugees in Turkey - most of them Syrian - whose

family benefits from monthly supplements aimed at keeping school-age children in class rather than out working. The money - 35-50 Turkish liras for boys, and 40-60 liras for girls (\$6-\$11) - is part of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education program, funded by international sources like the European Union and managed by the UN children's fund UNICEF, the Red Cross and the Turkish authorities.

If the sums seem meager, it can be a boon for poor Syrian families who often live on basic aid and informal work, especially those with several school-age children. The amount is similar to that given to Turkish families by the social services so

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ADANA, Turkey: A teacher gives Turkish language lessons to Syrian children at the Turkish Youth and Sport Center on March 18, 2019. — AFP

Local

US recognition of Israel's sovereignty on Syrian Golan fuels tension: Kuwait

Step undermines US role as peace sponsor: Jarallah

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah expressed regret over the recognition of the Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights by US President Donald Trump, saying "we expected steps defusing regional tension."

"We had expected and hoped there will be steps to defuse the tension in the region," Jarallah said in a statement to reporters on Monday following his participation in a reception held by the Greek Embassy in Kuwait on the occasion of the European country's national day, adding that this recognition will fuel tension. He stressed that Kuwait considers the Golan Heights a Syrian territory, affirming that this move is a violation of international law and Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 497, which calls on Israel to cancel the 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights.

Jarallah pointed out that this recognition would undermine the role of the US as a mediator and sponsor of the peace process in the region, calling on the Americans to reverse this step, which will result in consequences and negative reactions.

Strategic alliance

Meanwhile, Jarallah said that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's recent visit to Kuwait was an opportunity to discuss a host of issues including the proposed



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah (right) cuts the cake during a reception held by the Greek Embassy to celebrate Greece's national day. — KUNA

Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA). There has been a progress in discussion over MESA with new ideas on the table, Jarallah told reporters. There are new ideas proposed by the US and Saudi Arabia, said Jarallah, adding that there would be a meeting for all parties of this alliance to discuss these ideas thoroughly in a drive to enable the launch of MESA.

The new ideas, explained Jarallah, were about economic, defense and investment aspects of the alliance, the establishment of a free trade zone, security and cybersecurity cooperation. In the meantime, Jarallah said relations with Greece were excellent and cited a recent visit by Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf to Athens and signed cooperation agreements. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kuwait Michael Davenport visited Kuwait Times yesterday and met with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Cabinet briefed on Austrian Chancellor, US Secretary visits

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet about outcome of a visit of Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and his talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah over bilateral relations and cooperation, in addition to regional and international developments. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet about a recent visit by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to co-chair the 3rd Strategic Dialogue, which explored cooperation on defense, counter-terrorism, cyber-security, trade, investment and education, said Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.



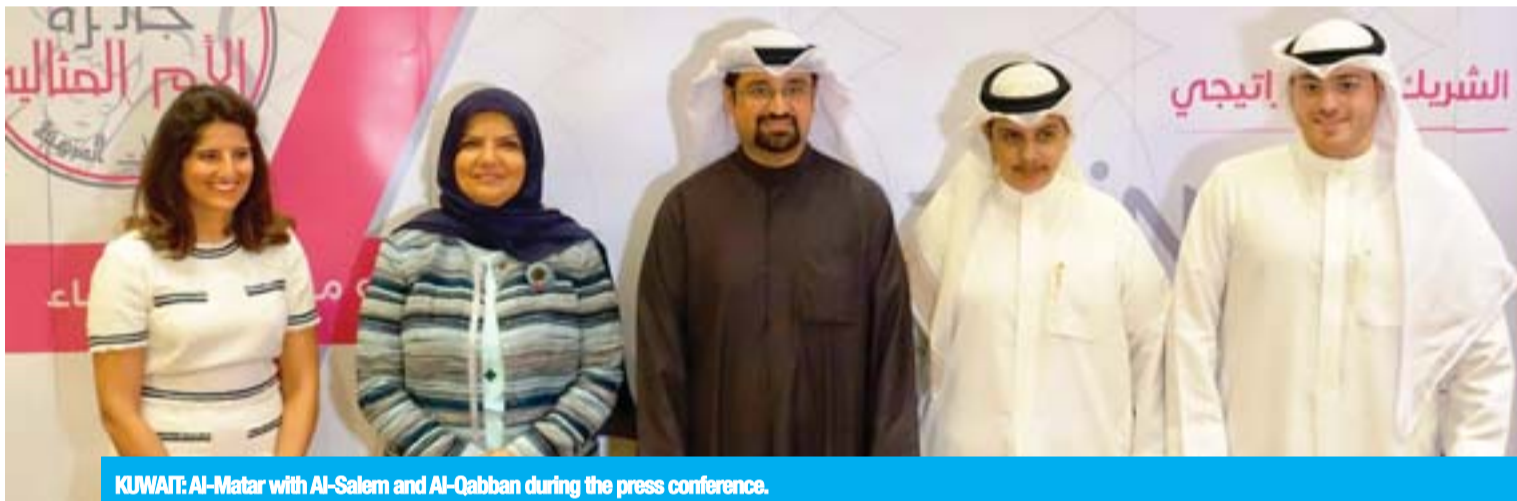
KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also briefed the cabinet about his recent participation in an extraordinary meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Istanbul, Turkey, last Friday to discuss the dual terrorist attacks on mosques in New Zealand. The meeting called on the UN Human Rights Commissioner to establish an observatory monitoring acts of hatred, aggression and violence against Muslims. It also called UN Secretary General to convene an urgent UN General Assembly meeting to declare Islamophobia as a racist act. On the other hand, the government commended Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan for refuting a parliamentary grilling by MPs Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie and Mubarak Al-Hajraf.

Meanwhile, the cabinet said it was confident the upcoming Arab Summit, due in Tunisia on March 30-31, would address pressing Arab causes amidst critical developments around the world. The cabinet took note of the delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir to the summit. His Highness the Amir will be accompanied by Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Minister of Finance Nayef Al-

Hajraf, and officials from the Amiri Diwan and the foreign ministry, Saleh said in a statement after the cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday.

In the meantime the cabinet expressed sincere condolences on the deadly ferry accident that happened lately in the Tigris in Mosul, Iraq. Over 100 people, mostly women and children, are reported to have died after the ferry capsized in the Tigris River in Mosul on Thursday, official Iraqi health source announced. The cabinet also expressed strong condemnation of the explosions that took place near the government headquarters in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, and the double bombing in the city of Lashkargah in southern Afghanistan, as well as the armed attack on the village of Ojosago Beul in the center of Mali, resulting in the deaths of a number of victims and wounded. The Kuwaiti cabinet also congratulated Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on swearing in as president of the Republic, wishing the new president success in fulfilling his tasks and hoped to see further development in the ties between the two countries. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Al-Matar with Al-Salem and Al-Qabban during the press conference.

Zain strategic partner of seventh Ideal Mother award

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership of the seventh consecutive edition of the Ideal Mother Award. The event, organized by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center, aims at shedding light on the distinguished efforts exerted by mothers of children with mental disabilities, and comes under the patronage of Chairman of Sanad Kuwaiti Foundation for Disabled Children Sabeeka Al-Jaser.

Zain took part in the press conference held to announce the seventh edition of the award, which witnessed the attendance of Award Director and President of Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center Aisha Al-Salem, Head of the Award's Organizing Committee Fawzia Al-Qabban, Zain Kuwait's External and Internal Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Matar, as well as the award's sponsors.

Zain's strategic partnership of this annual event comes in line with its support of the various social causes that are of interest to all segments of the society, especially within the special needs sector.

The company is keen on reinforcing its partnerships with the many public and private entities that cater to people with special needs and their families within the local community all year round.

The Ideal Mother Award, to be held for the seventh consecutive year, mainly aims at shedding light and recognizing the most distinguished and dedicated individual efforts of mothers who care for and develop their children with mental disabilities. The organizing committee will honor 20 distinguished mothers from across Kuwait, the GCC during the special event held at Jumeirah Hotel.

Zain constantly shoulders initiatives that work towards enhancing the society's welfare, especially within the special needs sector. Zain's long-term cooperation with the various private and public entities that cater to people with special needs springs from its belief in the importance of having a positive print by supporting and launching initiatives that cater to various interests of the community.

Zain dedicates a great part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strate-

gy towards people with special needs. The company recently participated in a special event organized by the Public Authority of the Disabled on the occasion of the International and Arab Day of People with Special Needs. During the event, Zain organized a number of recreational activities to share the joys of this day with people with special needs and their families. The company also sponsored the annual charity marathon organized by Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network (FSHN) and aimed at supporting children with special needs in Kuwait. Zain also regularly conducts visits to social care centers during multiple seasons all-year round.

Zain constantly finds ways to shoulder initiatives that work towards enhancing the society's welfare. Zain's long-term cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor as well as other public entities springs from its belief in the importance of having a positive print in the society by sponsoring and launching initiatives that cater to various interests of the community.

Saffron smeared, scented, a sign of a crowned camel



KUWAIT: One can grow mildly intoxicated with the powerful yet wonderful whiffs engulfing the camel race arena after crowning the winners. The feeling would seep in because of the henna-like saffron mixture smeared on the camels' heads and necks; a tradition and gesture to honor and reward the winning camels. Ingredients of the yellowish and heavily-scented putty mainly include rosewater and musk, in addition to 10 other kinds of Arabian perfumes and aromatic herbs. — KUNA



Local

Amir receives senior state officials, outgoing ambassadors

Amir to attend, patronize national operetta today



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Ukrainian Ambassador to Kuwait Volodymyr Tolkach. — Amiri Diwan photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Sudanese Ambassador to Kuwait Mohieddin Salem.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday the outgoing Ukrainian Ambassador to Kuwait Volodymyr Tolkach, the outgoing Sudanese Ambassador to Kuwait Mohieddin Salem, and the outgoing South African Ambassador to Kuwait Mzolisa Bona. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali

Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meetings. Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, as well as His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-

Mohammad as well as the outgoing Sudanese and South African ambassadors to Kuwait. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Kuwait Saqer Al-Raisi. The outgoing Ukrainian ambassador also met with His Highness the Prime Minister

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. Separately, His Highness the Amir is set to patronize and attend a national operetta to be held at Bayan Palace today at 10:30 am. In other news, His Highness the Amir expressed his deepest sympathies over the victims of landslides and flash floods in Iran, triggered by heavy rains that lashed

provinces across the Islamic Republic. His Highness the Amir extended his condolences in a cable he sent to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, saying he was distraught over the tragic loss of lives caused by the natural disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar messages to the Iranian president. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the South African Ambassador to Kuwait Mzolisa Bona.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Kuwait eyes more cooperation with India, China on development projects

NEW DELHI: The Kuwaiti Ambassador to India has noted importance of boosting bilateral ties with India and has hinted at current coordination with another regional power, China, to execute Kuwait's development schemes with less dependence on oil. The envoy, Jassim Al-Najim, was speaking yesterday at a national conference as chief guest in the prestigious Jamia Millia Islamia university in New Delhi. The convention, themed 'India, China and the Arab World Exploring New Dynamics,' was organized by Indo Arab Cultural Centre at the university, in cooperation with the Kuwait Embassy.

Relations between India and the Arab world are not confined to trade and economics but also includes fine arts, architecture and sculpture as a collection of antiquities discovered on Kuwaiti island of Failaka proves, he said in his address to the convention. "Trade between India and Kuwait flourished since the 19th century until now and Kuwait has been an important trading partner for India with total trade of \$9 billion in 2016-17 and seventh largest crude oil supplier to India in the same period," he added. Bilateral cooperation currently encompasses social, cultural sectors in the backdrop of political consensus and mutual support in all international forums dealing with Kuwait-China relations, the ambassador said.

On Kuwait's ties with China, he has indicated that Kuwaiti leaders view the relations with this Asian nation as important, hailing the strategic partnership the Kuwait Amir, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, established after talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to China in July 2018. "Under the



NEW DELHI: The Kuwaiti Ambassador to India Jassim Al-Najim (left) visits the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Library at the Jamia Millia Islamia university in New Delhi. — KUNA

strategic partnership framework, China and Kuwait will maintain and strengthen high level exchanges and communication in order to expand consensus and deepen political trust. The two countries will also support each other on issues concerning the sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

In addition, both the countries have agreed to promote the 'Chinese Belt and Silk Road Initiative' since its announcement in 2013 and the Kuwaiti leadership has decided to attune the Kuwait Vision for 2035 with the Chinese devel-

opment project. This is done in order to turn Kuwait into a financial hub and gradually diversify the economy and bring in sustainable development. He also stressed the Chinese economy's role in the efforts of Kuwait to reduce dependence on oil exports. Ambassador Najim and the participants in the conference also paid a visit to Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Library in the university which was opened in 2011 with Kuwaiti support and boasts to be one of the best in the town with plenty of reference books in Arabic. — KUNA



BAGHDAD: Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials meet in Baghdad yesterday. — KUNA

Iraqi, Kuwaiti officials meet in Baghdad

BAGHDAD: Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials held talks in the Iraqi capital yesterday on a number of files of common interest. The Kuwaiti side was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, while Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Nizar Khairullah headed the Iraqi delegation. The discussions addressed a number of files of mutual concern and means of enhancing bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries. The meeting's agenda included preparations for the seventh session of the supreme ministerial committee, due in

Kuwait soon. The Kuwaiti delegation includes the Ambassador to Iraq Salem Al-Zamanan, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar, Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Ghanem Al-Ghanem and Deputy Assistant of the Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Salem Al-Shebli. It also included the Minister Advisor Mohammad Al-Humoud, Head of the Foreign Ministry's Arab Department Ismail Shafiq and Representative of the Ministry of Transport Marine Captain Karim Jabbar. Jarallah and his delegation arrived in the Iraqi capital earlier yesterday, starting an official mission in the neighboring country. In an earlier statement, Jarallah said the mission is in line with joint keenness on keeping channels of communications 'open and active.' — KUNA

ABK celebrates Mother's Day with staff

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) celebrated Mother's Day with staff and the community on Thursday, March 21, 2019. The bank marked the event in appreciation of mothers and the vital role they play in building the family home, raising children, and the daily encouragement given by mothers to their children to guide their careers and build a future. ABK also celebrated this occasion with the elderly by sponsoring the Ministry of Social Affairs' Mother's Day event, which was held at Rimal Hotel and Resort. The event aimed to spread joy amongst senior citizens in the midst of a fun ambiance with gifts distributed to elderly mothers on this special day.

Special gifts were distributed to all female bank staff and photos were taken of them at work, to be handed to them as Mother's Day memorabilia to remind them of the important role they play in the society. ABK is committed to social responsibility and respects the sacrifices mothers make to come to work on a daily basis while also ensuring the wellbeing of their families. Events such as these reiterate the bank's commitment and gratitude towards its employees.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received yesterday Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Alaa Al-Hashemi. During the meeting, the Ambassador handed Ghanem a formal invitation from the Speaker of Council of Representatives of Iraq, Mohammad Al-Halbousi, inviting him to attend Baghdad summit for Parliaments of neighboring countries scheduled on April 20th. — KUNA

Ex-minister Haifi becomes accredited bariatric instructor internationally



Dr Ziad Al-Alyan, CEO of Central Circle Company (right) and Osama Al-Sultan, COO of Sidra Hospital.



(From left) Haitham Al-Khalid Chairman, Dr Ziad Al-Alyan, Dr Mohammad Al-Haifi and CEO Saeed Ratib.



KUWAIT: Sidra Hospital recently celebrated former health minister Dr Mohammad Al-Haifi for becoming an accredited bariatric instructor internationally, while the hospital was recog-

nized as a 'center of excellence.' Sidra celebrated the evening with strategic partners such as Johnson & Johnson Company, and Central Circle Company who helped equip the hospital.



Haitham Al-Khalid



Dr Mohammad Al-Haifi

New sterilization system in operation at Sidra Hospital



KUWAIT: Head of the operations sector at Sidra Hospital Osama Al-Sultan said a new sterilization system has been put into operation at the central sterilization department of the hospital. He said this system is the most advanced sterilization and infection control technology worldwide. He said the operation of the new system is in agreement with the administration's vision to raise the level of medical services the hospital extends to its patients.

Sultan said the installation and operation of the modern sterilization system comes as part of Sidra Hospital's ambitious strategy to extend integrated medical services for all family members in various specialties. He said the implementation of that vision required upgrading infrastructure and supplies of the most modern medical technology to reflect the new philosophy, which includes all society members, adding that the hospital now presents medical services at the highest level of efficiency with reasonable cost that is accepted by the great majority of citizens and expats through a distinguished medical team and highly efficient healthcare providers.

Sultan said Sidra Hospital is considered the first and a pioneer at the Arabian Gulf region level. It operates this modern system and uses this advanced technology, adding that a contract was signed with Central Circle Company.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chairman of Sales at Central Circle Company Nizar Salem said the V-PROmax2 system by STERIS Company (USA) is considered the most recent and developed in the field of sterilization and infection control. He said the American company is considered one of the pioneering companies specialized in the field of sterilization and infection control. He said technicians and operators at Sidra Hospital were trained on the use of the system, adding that the system works with hydrogen peroxide fumes to deal with surgical tools and sterilize them efficiently, with high quality at a high speed.

Salem said the existence of such a system is important to implement international quality standards to prevent infection due to the exposure of surgical tools, which will boost safety for the patient for a speedy recovery, while reducing the stay period at the hospital.



Education Ministry to have limited power in hiring expatriate teachers next year

Ministry needs 680 teachers, only allowed to hire up to 500

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: New job vacancies for expats that the Ministry of Education (MoE) will hire for the 2019-2020 school year will be restricted for teachers alone as per the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) regulations, well-informed educational sources said. The CSC informed the ministry that it will not authorize the appointment of expats in MoE unless they are teachers, the source said, adding that MoE needs 680 teachers, but will only be allowed to hire 400 to 500.

The sources said a hiring committee to be dispatched to Palestine, Jordan and Tunisia has been formed and will leave soon, which is considered late compared to previous years when committees used to be dispatched in February. "This

delay will lead to delaying those teachers' recruitment just like what happened last year and will make the best teachers get better contracts in other GCC states that usually start the process much earlier," the sources warned.



Hiring committee two months' late

Cash flow

Well-informed sources said that amendments to annex number 13 of Al-Debdebah solar power project aim to improve cash flows for the project contractor. The sources added that top amendments include payments to purchase 4-8 (16 in some cases) per cent of the materials in a way that allows the contractor to have enough cash at hand and reduces bank interests.

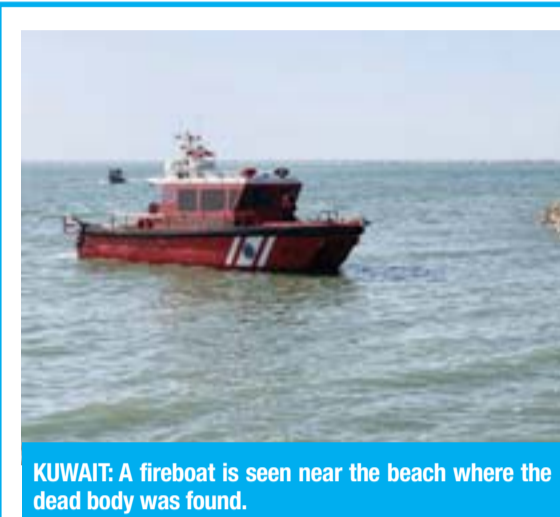
Energy Transition Index

Kuwait has jumped nine places to be ranked 87th world-

wide on the Energy Transition Index issued by the World Economic Forum, comprising of 115 countries. Kuwait scored 49 percent in the index, which is a 4 percent improvement compared to last year. Kuwait also scored 55 percent on the system performance and 43 percent on readiness for transition compared to 37 percent in 2018.

The Energy Transition Index measures economies in two ways. Firstly, each economy is assessed for its energy "system performance". This takes into account three criteria regarded as critical for transitioning to the future, namely: Security and access, environmental sustainability and economic growth and development. The latter measures economic impact to households, industry and export revenues. It also depends on assessing infrastructure, human resources and energy system structures.

Meanwhile, Qatar came first in GCC states as it was ranked 65th on the index, followed by UAE, which was ranked 67th. Oman was 68th, while Bahrain came in at 92 and Saudi Arabia 98. Notably, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Austria, UK, France, Holland and Iceland were respectively ranked as the top 10 countries on this year's index.



KUWAIT: A fireboat is seen near the beach where the dead body was found.

Dead body washes ashore near heritage village

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An Asian man was found dead at the beach near Youm Al-Bahar Heritage Village in Kuwait City. Preliminary investigations indicate that the man drowned while swimming on the beach and his body was washed ashore. The body was recovered by the forensics department, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said in a statement.

Separately, KFSD's public relations department said the prevention sector will stop receiving transactions in all departments and service centers today and tomorrow as part of KFSD's strategy to upgrade integrated electronic systems in order to present the best services to the public. Patrons will be welcomed on Sunday as usual.

Motorist killed in Airport Road accident

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti woman died in a horrific accident on Airport Road when her vehicle collided with a dump truck. Police and paramedics rushed to the scene and pulled out the citizen from her sedan. She was rushed to Adan Hospital but died on arrival. The dump truck's Syrian driver was taken to the police station for questioning.

Firearm possession

Detectives arrested a girl in her twenties and found an imported liquor bottle in her bag, which she claimed was for her personal use. Detectives searched her car and found a pistol in the trunk. She first said she did not know the owner of the pistol, but later said a man in his 50s had left it there. When questioned, the man denied her claims, but the girl told police that there are messages in her mobile phone proving that the pistol is his. The girl had sent a message to the man asking him about pistol rounds. Both were detained for further action with regards to the possession of a firearm.

In a separate case, police are looking for a Kuwaiti, thought to be a fireman, after he barged into the main

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's building and fought with an officer on the sixth floor, where the office of the director general is located. He then attempted to ram the building with his car, damaging several cars in the process. After that, he hurled a brick on the outer glass facade and damaged it. The suspect attempted to meet the director general to tell him about a problem he faced, but when an officer wanted to know what the problem was, the suspect fought with him.

Cop, fireman fight

Police and firemen received a call about a blaze in a car on Sixth Ring Road. On the way there, a collision took place between a fire engine and a civil car driven by a policeman. A police source said the policeman chased the fire engine all the way to the burning car, then an argument evolved to a fight and blows were exchanged. When a policeman attempted to break up the fight, a fire officer hit him on the head with a walkie-talkie, injuring him in the process. Later, both men dropped charges and reconciled.

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

39,269 mines removed since Iraqi invasion

KUWAIT: As many as 39,269 mines have been discovered and removed from oil sites since the Iraqi invasion in 1990, Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel said.

In response to a question by MP Rakan Al-Nisf, Fadhel explained that in November 2016 Singapore's Explomo Technical Services Company won a contract to clear Kuwaiti oil sites from mines and unexploded ordnance, adding that the company has completed nearly 32 per cent of its work, the Middle East Monitor reported.

The Kuwaiti minister added that Kuwait Oil Company regularly surveys its oil sites looking for foreign objects, including mines, ammunition and explosives to ensure the safety of its personnel and equipment. He added that there have been no explosions in the Kuwaiti oil sites since the Iraqi invasion.

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International

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019



'No cemetery, no vote',
Christian voters warn
ahead of Indian polls

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US and Russia lock horns over Venezuela, raising the stakes

Page 8



LONDON: Britain's Conservative Party Chief Whip Julian Smith reaches for his dropped mobile phone which fell onto 10 Downing Street, London yesterday. Britain's parliament began plotting a new Brexit strategy after seizing the initiative in the floundering process from Prime Minister Theresa May's government in a historic vote.—AFP

UK parliament plots Brexit Plan B

PM sidelined; three ministers quit over Brexit

LONDON: Britain's parliament sought a new Brexit strategy yesterday after seizing the initiative from Prime Minister Theresa May in a historic vote, with the risk of a chaotic "no-deal" departure looming. Lawmakers exasperated by Britain's failed efforts to find a way out of the European Union after three years of debates and negotiations voted Monday to give themselves a broader say on what happens next. The motion creates parliamentary time for MPs to come up with their own Brexit proposals as Britain tries to stave off a messy divorce in two weeks. The unprecedented measure passed by a 329-302 margin and saw three junior ministers quit the government to vote against the premier.

Richard Harrington said he resigned as business minister because May's approach and the resulting impasse had left Britain with "a democratic deficit". Junior foreign minister Alistair Burt also quit, saying: "We have to come to a conclusion for the country's sake". The Times newspaper said the vote left May "humiliated" and bracing for early national polls. The Financial Times agreed that Britain's leader now "risked losing control of Brexit".

Starting over

The measure was backed primarily by pro-EU MPs who want to either reverse Brexit or preserve much closer economic relations with the remaining 27 EU states. But no one is entirely clear about how parliament is going to approach its new role in the week the 46-year UK-EU partnership was scheduled to have to come to an end. EU leaders pushed back Brexit day to April 12 after meeting May in Brussels last week and deciding that Britain still did not know what it wanted to do. One of the co-sponsors of the measure to take over the Brexit process from May, Hilary Benn, said lawmakers would first probably get a range of options to choose from on Wednesday. "The first time round it will just be 'here are the

propositions' and you vote for as many as you would like," Benn told BBC radio. "We may then change the system for next week as we are trying to narrow it down."

The biggest worry for May is a mooted plan for parliament to then in the following days take an even firmer grip of the Brexit agenda by passing legislation that forces the government's hand.

Parliament's initial votes will be non-binding instructions that only carry political weight. May has already signaled that she might ignore them if they contradict her Conservative party's 2017 election platform. It included a vow to take Britain out of the EU customs

union and single market—the two vast organizations that open borders and regulate trade across most of the European continent. But Burt said he resigned precisely because he felt that the "government should adopt any fea-

sible outcome as its own in order to progress matters".

Rethinking Brexit

Parliament is now effectively re-considering how to go about Brexit all over again. Everything is back on the table and May's deal—twice resoundingly rejected by lawmakers this year—is just one of a half-dozen or so approaches that may be up for debate. May herself admitted "with great regret" Monday that there was "still not sufficient support in the House to bring back the deal for a third meaningful vote". Her efforts to bring inside anti-EU rebels in her own party have been fruitless despite months of talks. But there are some hints that the current political shift could be scaring some of the rebels into line. Brexit hardliner Jacob Rees-Mogg, head of the European Research Group of eurosceptics, said on Twitter: "The choice seems to be Mrs May's deal or no Brexit". But the tiny Northern Irish party that supports her in parliament, DUP, continues to oppose the agreement and it remains unclear when or even if May will bring it back for a vote. If parliament does beat the odds and adopt the deal, Britain would leave the EU on May 22.—AFP



Risk of chaotic 'no-deal' exit

Golan Heights, an Israel-Syria flashpoint

NICOSIA: The Golan Heights, which the United States declared as Israeli territory on Monday, has long been disputed by Syria and Israel after Israel occupied the strategic plateau in 1967 before annexing the part under its control. A vital source of water in the arid region, the Golan Heights overlooks Galilee and Lake Tiberias on the side held by Israel, which amounts to around 70 percent of the territory. The armistice line with the Syrian-controlled side lies just 50 kilometers from Damascus. Here is some background.

Occupied and annexed

Syrian forces used the Golan Heights to fire on Israel during the 1967 war, prompting the Israeli army to enter and seize 1,200 square kilometers of territory. Israel occupied a further 510 square kilometers during the next war in 1973, but that was returned a year later in a deal that drew a ceasefire line and created a demilitarized buffer zone, monitored by a UN observer force. In 1981 Israel passed a law formally annexing the occupied area. During the Israel-Syria wars of 1967 and 1973, more than 150,000 people—most of them Syrians—fled the area. Around 18,000 Syrians from the Druze sect—most of whom refuse to take Israeli citizenship—remain in the occupied Golan. Around 20,000 Israeli settlers have moved in, spread over 33 mostly agriculture-based settlements.

Water

The fertile volcanic plateau, famed for its apples, is also key to the region's water supply—an important issue in stalled peace talks between Israel and Syria, which remain technically at war. Three tributaries—the

Banias, the Dan and the Hasbani—cross the highlands and help form the headwaters of the Jordan River. The river system, which flows into the Sea of Galilee, provides about 40 percent of Israel's water. Syria has demanded a return to the pre-1967 border, which would give it a foothold on the shore of Galilee and rights to the lake's waters. Israel wants guarantees over its control of the vital water source.

Renewed tension

After a fairly quiet period, tensions flared in the Golan Heights with the start of the 2011 uprising against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime. That year, in protests marking the anniversaries of the creation of Israel and the 1967 war—in May and June respectively—Palestinian refugees living in Syria rushed the ceasefire line. Israeli troops opened fire, killing around 30 people, according to the UN. The area has since witnessed fierce fighting between Syrian rebels and the regime, with fire occasionally landing in occupied territory and prompting Israeli retaliation. In 2014, 45 UN observers were held hostage for two weeks by Al-Nusra Front, then Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate.

Israel has occasionally clashed with the Syrian regime and with its Iran-backed ally Hezbollah in the Golan Heights. Israel is concerned that Tehran and the Lebanese militia are embedding themselves along its frontier. In January 2015, an Israeli strike targeted Hezbollah on the Syrian side of the demarcation line, killing Iranian soldiers, including a general. This month, Israel's army said it had uncovered a unit created by Hezbollah across the ceasefire line in the Syrian Golan Heights, led by a commander previously jailed over an attack on US forces. In its latest human rights report published on March 14, the United States referred to the Golan Heights as "Israeli-controlled" as opposed to "Israeli-occupied". The wording presaged Trump's Twitter declaration a week later that Washington should recognize Israeli sovereignty. Trump followed that up on Monday by signing a proclamation that declared the Golan belongs to Israel at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his side.—AFP

Brexit scenarios: The paths ahead

LONDON: With British MPs set to vote on finding a way forward on Brexit, various outcomes are possible. Britain is left with four general directions: back a deal, go for no deal, a long delay or stopping Brexit. Those options could entail various courses of action, including Prime Minister Theresa May's resignation and a general election.

Leave with deal on May 22

British MPs have twice rejected by overwhelming margins a draft divorce agreement struck between London and Brussels in November last year. A new vote on the agreement, which allows for a long transition period and time for trade ties to be negotiated, will only be brought forward if it has sufficient support to pass. If MPs overcome numerous objections from "Brexiters" and "Remainers" and approve the deal, Britain will leave the European Union on May 22.

No-deal Brexit April 12 or later

If the deal is not passed, and no other course of action can be agreed, the default option would be that Britain leaves without a deal. According to a European official that hard deadline would be midnight Brussels time on April 12 but French President Emmanuel Macron said this was not "necessarily" the case and a later date for no-deal Brexit could be agreed. May has not ruled out the possibility of a no-deal, though MPs have voted against ever leaving without a deal.

New plan, long Brexit delay
MPs are set to hold "indicative votes"

this week on a range of alternative Brexit options that could rip up the withdrawal agreement and remove some of May's red lines, such as ending freedom of movement. If a course of action can be agreed, Britain could ask EU leaders for another, much longer delay by April 12. That would mean it would have to hold European Parliament elections at the end of May. The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, has advised EU leaders that this longer extension should be at least until the end of 2019 and possibly much longer to allow for a proper change in Brexit strategy.

The longer delay would allow time for a change in prime minister if May quits. It would also open up other options such as holding a general election or, perhaps, a second referendum. Britain's Electoral Commission has budgeted for European elections and could hold them at short notice but May has said it would be "unacceptable". "I don't believe it's right to be in a situation of holding European parliamentary elections three years on from people having voted to leave the EU," she said.

Stop Brexit

This is by far the least likely option but is still a possibility. An estimated one million people flooded London on Saturday calling for a second referendum on EU membership. An online petition asking the government to end the Brexit process has garnered more than 5.5 million signatures since last Wednesday. The European Court of Justice has ruled that Britain could unilaterally revoke its Article 50 notification - the formal pro-

cedure for leaving the EU.

New PM, elections?

Within these four general pathways, there is the possibility that May might resign or a general election could be triggered.

May resigns

The price of getting rebel Conservatives to support May's deal could be her stepping down as prime minister. She is opposed to cancelling Brexit, a longer extension, or a Brexit solution that runs contrary to the Conservative manifesto. She has also said she does not intend to lead the Conservatives into the next general election. That is slated for 2022 but could happen within weeks. Several contenders have been mooted to replace May, among them David Lidington, Michael Gove, Boris Johnson, Jeremy Hunt, Sajid Javid and Dominic Raab.

General election

If parliament comes up with an option that the government finds impossible to deliver or runs against the Conservative manifesto, a general election could be the only option left. A general election could come through the government losing a confidence vote in parliament, or by the government seizing the initiative and calling a snap poll. It would reset parliament and a clear outcome with a government majority could result in a much stronger administration. However, for both major parties, finding a clear Brexit manifesto that all their MPs can commit to could prove a challenge.—AFP

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International

US and Russia lock horns over Venezuela, raising the stakes

US calls Russia deployment of planes 'reckless escalation'

CARACAS: The United States has accused Russia of "reckless escalation" of the situation in Venezuela by deploying military planes and personnel to the crisis-stricken South American nation that Washington has hit with crippling sanctions. The Russian planes and military personnel arrived outside the Venezuelan capital Caracas on Saturday, according to local media reports, two months after the Trump administration disavowed President Nicolas Maduro.

Washington has recognized opposition leader Juan Guaido as the country's legitimate president and demands that Maduro leave power, which Russia has described as a US-backed coup against the socialist government. "The United States condemns Russia's deployment of military aircraft and personnel to Caracas, which is another contradiction of both Nicolas Maduro's and Russia's calls for non-intervention in Venezuela and is a reckless escalation of the situation," a State Department spokesman said.

The vice president of Venezuela's Socialist Party, Diosdado Cabello, confirmed two planes had flown to the country from Russia, but he did not give a reason or say they carried troops. "The planes from Russia landed in Venezuela because they were authorized by the only government that there is in Venezuela, and it's called the government of Nicolas Maduro," Cabello said in a speech broadcast on state television. The Kremlin declined to comment on the planes yesterday or to the accusations from the US State Department.



Russian planes and military personnel deployed

Meanwhile, US and Russia clashed publicly over Venezuela on Monday, raising geopolitical stakes over the oil-producing nation after Moscow sent dozens of soldiers to Caracas amid what it alleged was a budding "coup." US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned his counterpart Sergei Lavrov over the phone that "the United States and regional countries will not stand idly by as Russia exacerbates tensions in Venezuela." The tense conversation came after Russia sent two planes reportedly carrying around 100 soldiers and 35 tons of military equipment to Venezuela's main airport outside Caracas on Saturday.

One independent Venezuelan journalist, Javier Mayorca, reported that the deployment also included General Vasily Tonkoshkurov, a top official who heads the Mobilization Directorate of Russia's armed forces. Although Russian state news agency Sputnik described the troop arrival as a movement to "fulfill technical military contracts," the development unsettled Washington, which has thrown its weight behind opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president against President Nicolas Maduro.

"The continued insertion of Russian military personnel to support the illegitimate regime of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela risks prolonging the suffering of the Venezuelan people who overwhelmingly support interim President Juan Guaido," Pompeo said, according to his office. The Organization of American States echoed the US condemnation. "It is unacceptable that a foreign gov-



CARACAS: General view of a sector without light during a power outage in Caracas yesterday. A new blackout hit many regions in Venezuela including much of Caracas, sowing alarm two weeks after a nationwide outage that paralyzed the country. — AFP

ernment engages in military cooperation programs with a usurping regime that has been declared illegitimate by resolutions and Inter-American law, which also threatens hemispheric peace and security," read a statement from the OAS General Secretariat.

US 'coup'

Lavrov said in a statement he had complained of "attempts by Washington to organize a coup d'etat in Venezuela" during his conversation with Pompeo. Such moves "constitute violations of the UN charter and

undisguised interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state," it said. Russia and China are the main allies of Venezuela. Both have lent billions of dollars to the oil-rich South American country, propping up Maduro's cash-strapped government. Russia previously signaled its support for Maduro by sending two Tu-160 bombers to Venezuela last December to take part in a military exercise. Russia's President Vladimir Putin has a record of ordering his military-or paramilitary-forces into several theaters to challenge US strategies, notably in Syria and Ukraine. — Agencies

News in brief

US universities implicated

WASHINGTON: The US Education Department has opened investigations into eight universities tied to a major admissions scam, Politico has reported, citing people close to the matter. If the department finds the colleges violated federal education regulations, it could impose penalties up to cutting off their access to federal student loans and grants. Letters were sent informing the presidents of Yale, Wake Forest University, the University of San Diego, Stanford, Georgetown, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Southern California and the University of California, Los Angeles about the probe. The move comes after the Department of Justice accused dozens of wealthy parents including two famous actresses of being involved in an operation that charged from \$15,000 to millions of dollars to help them get their children into elite schools. — AFP

Man jailed for 'egging'

LONDON: A man who struck British opposition Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn while holding an egg in a pro-Brexit protest was jailed for 28 days yesterday. The 31-year-old suspect, John Murphy, from Barnet in the north of the city, was charged with assault by beating in a pro-Brexit protest. Chief Magistrate Emma Arbuthnot told Westminster Magistrates' Court that she had taken into account the "current climate" in jailing the man, calling it "an attack on our democratic process". Corbyn was not hurt in the incident, which occurred during a visit to the Finsbury Park Mosque in his Islington constituency in north London. Corbyn said he was "shocked and surprised" by the attack, in a statement read to court. — AFP

'Red line' in Taliban talks

BERLIN: The rights of women constitute an "absolute red line" for the Afghan government in peace negotiations between the US and the Taliban, Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani said yesterday. "There will be no restrictions on girls' schooling - we shall not sacrifice what we have been building for 18 years," Rabbani told Bild daily, voicing strong support for the peace talks in Qatar. "Negotiation is the only way to end this conflict and these problems," he said. But he added: "Let's be clear - when we talk of peace that does not mean we are giving in. This is not about re-establishing the Taliban regime in the country. "If we have peace, stability and foreign investment in this country then people will not want to leave Afghanistan for Germany. They will stay put. That is why the peace process is so important." — AFP

Female reporters resign

VATICAN CITY: The all-female editorial team behind the Vatican's women's magazine have resigned over what they describe as attempts to stifle their reporting and bring in more "obedient" journalists, its founder said yesterday. "We are throwing in the towel because we feel surrounded by a climate of distrust and progressive de-legitimization," Woman Church World founder Lucetta Scaraffia wrote in an editorial published by Italian religious news blog Il Sismografo. The magazine - which has not shied away from tackling hard-hitting issues such as the sexual abuse of nuns by priests - began life seven years ago as an insert and is published along with the Vatican's L'Osservatore Romano newspaper. Scaraffia said the new editor of L'Osservatore, Andrea Monda, was attempting to "weaken" the monthly by bringing in external collaborators in a bid to control the editorial line. — AFP

Pentagon authorizes \$1bn for border wall

WASHINGTON: Acting Pentagon chief Patrick Shanahan has authorized \$1 billion to build part of the wall sought by Donald Trump along the US-Mexico border, the first funds designated for the project under the president's emergency declaration. The Department of Homeland Security asked the Pentagon to build 57 miles (92 kilometers) of 18-foot (5.5-meter) fencing, construct and improve roads, and install lighting to support Trump's emergency declaration.

Shanahan "authorized the commander of the US Army Corps of Engineers to begin planning and executing up to \$1 billion in support to the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Patrol," a Pentagon statement issued late Monday read. The acting defense secretary cited a federal law that he said gives the Pentagon broad authority to build infrastructure "across international boundaries of the United States in support of counter-narcotic activities of federal law enforcement agencies." The statement was released a day before Shanahan was due to testify

Israel-Hamas fighting abates along border

GAZA: Cross-border fighting between Israel and Hamas abated yesterday after a day of Palestinian rocket attacks and Israeli air strikes, but Israel said it reserved the right to strike again and kept its forces massed at the Gaza frontier. The biggest Israeli-Palestinian escalation in months, which began on Monday with the longest-range Palestinian rocket attack to cause casualties in Israel for five years, appeared to have been curbed overnight by Egyptian mediation.

But even if brought to an end, the crisis could have an impact on an Israeli election in two weeks in which right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is fighting for his political life, arguing that he must stay in power to keep Israelis safe.

Israel responded to Monday's rocket attack with a wave of strikes on targets belonging to the Hamas militant group that controls the Gaza strip. Seven Israelis were injured in the initial rocket attack and five Palestinians were wounded by the retaliatory Israeli strikes, although most of the targets hit appeared to have been evacuated in advance. A senior Israeli official on board the plane of Netanyahu - who flew home cutting short a visit to the United States to deal with the crisis - said Israel had not yet stood down.

"We are prepared to deliver another

blow, if necessary," Israeli Army Radio quoted the official as saying. The border area fell quiet yesterday morning after Hamas said Egypt had brokered a truce. As in past escalations that ended with Egyptian mediation, Israel denied it had agreed to a ceasefire with Hamas, which it views as a terrorist group. Rocket warning sirens, which had sounded in Israeli towns near the border on Monday night, fell silent by morning.

The escalation was the biggest since November between Israel and Hamas, which fought three wars between 2007 and 2014 and have come to the brink of all-out conflict several times since. Security is a major issue as Netanyahu, in power for a decade, faces his strongest electoral challenge from a centrist coalition led by a top general. The right-wing leader is beset by corruption allegations which he denies. He argues that he has kept Israelis safe with a tough stance towards the Palestinians that could be weakened if he leaves office.

In Washington, he met US President Donald Trump, who reversed decades of US policy to sign a proclamation recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war. Reporters who flew with Netanyahu quoted the senior Israeli official as saying Trump's move was proof that Israel could retain land captured in a "defensive war", an apparent suggestion of a permanent hold over other areas captured in 1967, such as parts of the West Bank.

Military misgivings

There have also been reported misgivings within the military, including from America's top marine who last week warned that deployments to the US-Mexico border pose an "unacceptable risk" to the force, according to documents obtained by The Los Angeles Times. In memos addressed to acting

Pentagon chief Patrick Shanahan and Navy secretary Richard Spencer, General Robert Neller wrote that he had been forced to cancel or reduce exercises in five countries. Neller added the declaration meant the corps could not afford to rebuild hurricane-hit bases in North Carolina and Georgia. "The hurricane season is only three months away... and we have Marines, Sailors, and civilians working in compromised structures," Neller wrote.

Court showdown

The declaration has also been chal-



TEXAS: A wall along one of the several layers of the US-Mexico border fencing is seen in the border town of McAllen, Texas. Acting Pentagon chief Patrick Shanahan has authorized \$1 billion to build part of the wall sought by Donald Trump along the US-Mexico border. — AFP

lenged 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. 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. 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



GAZA: Palestinians gather next to the rubble of a building in Gaza City, after Israeli air strikes hit dozens of sites across the Strip overnight in response to rocket fire from the Palestinian enclave. — AFP

house in Mishmeret, a village north of Tel Aviv. It said the rocket had been launched from the enclave, some 120 km away. Retaliatory Israeli air strikes in Gaza lit up the night sky and explosions rocked the densely-populated coastal enclave, destroying targets that included the office of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

The military said extra Israeli soldiers and tanks had been moved to the border. In the morning, with the bombing having stopped, Gazans picked through the rubble of destroyed buildings to search for valuables and documents. Some Gaza universities were shut but schools were open, although many families kept children home. "We don't want war, but if Israel wants it then what should we do? We ask our factions to respond," said Mohammad

Sayed, 40. "But we hope Egypt reaches a deal to end this." Gaza militants fired barrages of rockets into Israel late into Monday night. Some were shot down by Israeli defenses and others landed in empty areas. Israel remained on high alert yesterday and ordered schools near the border closed and residents to stay near bomb shelters.

"I told my kids that everything is going to be all right and that it will be over. We trust the government will solve the problem," Eliav Vanunu, whose house in the Israeli border town of Sderot was damaged by a rocket on Monday night, said on Israel Radio. Gaza is home to 2 million Palestinians, mostly descendants of people who fled or were driven from homes in Israel on its founding in 1948. — Reuters

International

'No cemetery, no vote', Christian voters warn ahead of India polls

India seizes cash, drugs, booze in pre-vote crackdown

MUMBAI: Christian voters in the Indian city of Mumbai have demanded more burial grounds ahead of national elections next month, claiming they are being forced to pile bodies on top of each other due to overcrowding in cemeteries. India will hold a general election from April 11 and campaigning is now in full swing, with job security, hardship among rural communities and tackling terrorism the key talking points so far.

Christians total 2.3 percent of India's 1.3 billion population, and an estimated 900,000 of the community live in the country's financial capital Mumbai and its satellite cities, according to Christian associations. Mumbai Christians want to get their voices heard and add burial grounds to the list of election topics. "We are going to meet the candidates and make a strong pitch for burial grounds," Kasber Augustine, a member of the Bombay Catholic Sabha said. The community's members met at the weekend to discuss the problem and yesterday launched the #NoCemeteryNoVote hashtag to help publicize their demands.

"The community has no option but to bury one body over the other. We do shroud burials now to save space," Augustine said. There are six public cemeteries in Mumbai and three in its neighboring district of Thane, considered a Mumbai suburb. To make effective use of space, the community uses shrouds instead of wood coffins, digs out the remains after about two years once the body is decomposed. The remains are deposited into miniature vaults, but their numbers are also running low.

Community members said that bodies are rarely decomposed when another comes for burial, leading to an unpleasant experience for family members who see the remains of their loved ones juggled to make space.

"You don't have a dignified living. And then you don't have a dignified death," said Dolphy D'souza, former national vice-president of the All India Catholic Union. With a population of about 18 million, overcrowding is an everyday affair in Mumbai - from packed trains, traffic congestion and cramped housing.

In death, people should get peace and space, said Christian community's members, adding that previous promises made by authorities to provide more cemetery space had not been kept. Parliamentarian Rajan Vichare of regional party Shiv Sena that controls the civic bodies of Mumbai and Thane said work on a new burial ground in Thane was nearing completion. "Nothing happens overnight. It will be ready in another six months. I will be mentioning this during my election speeches," said Vichare, who will be contesting the elections this year.



Mumbai voters demand more burial grounds

Pre-vote crackdown

Meanwhile, Indian authorities have seized more than \$70 million worth of cash, booze and illegal drugs under special laws designed to curb vote buying during the world's biggest election, officials said yesterday. Around 900 million Indians are eligible to vote in the mammoth polls, which start April 11 and run nearly six weeks in a huge endeavor some experts say could cost \$10 billion.

From the moment the election was announced on March 10, special laws took effect banning all Indians from carrying large amounts of money, gold or silver to reduce the risk of politicians buying votes. Officials such as police and railway staff are granted temporary powers during the campaign to seize booze, cash or other goods they believe are being used to sway voters.



AHMEDABAD: Indian election officials test and prepare Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) at a distribution centre ahead of the Indian elections in Ahmedabad. — AFP

So far, authorities have confiscated 4.4 million liters of liquor and 1.5 billion rupees (\$21.8 million) in cash considered suspicious, the election commission said in a statement. Illegal drugs worth an almost similar amount had been seized, the commission said. "Freebies" stockpiled in trucks along highways worth an estimated 120 million rupees were also confiscated. No exact description of the goods was provided, but in the past political parties have used mobile phones, televisions and other electronic gadgets to entice voters.

Poorer voters are particularly targeted by unscrupu-

lous politicians during elections and plied with cash and luxury items to garner support and influence. To combat this, special election laws prohibit anybody from possessing more than one kilogram of gold or silver, or carrying in excess of one million rupees, until the results are declared on May 23.

In the 2014 elections, 16 million liters of liquor and 17,000 kilograms of drugs seized. This election, a mobile-based application lets voters report any wrongdoing taking place in their electorate, in a bid to clean up the poll. — Agencies

India opposition urges delay to Modi biopic as election looms

NEW DELHI: India's main opposition Congress party has petitioned election officials to delay the release of a flattering new Bollywood biopic about Prime Minister Narendra Modi until after upcoming elections. Critics have said the film, due for release on April 5, is blatant propaganda and an attempt to woo voters before polls open six days later in India's almost six-week election.

Congress, which hopes to unseat Modi in the vote, said on Monday that screening the movie, "PM Narendra Modi", would break election laws and that it should not hit cinemas until after voting ends on May 19. "This is no artistic venture. It is a political venture and that is what we have told the Election Commission and should not be allowed," senior Congress figure and former minister Kapil Sibal told reporters.

The movie relates the Hindu right-wing leader's journey from his childhood days selling tea at a railway station to becoming chief minister of his home state Gujarat and leading his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to a thumping victory against the Congress in 2014 elections. Under Indian election rules now in effect, the publication of any content deemed as campaign material-including advertisements, films and even social media-requires the election commission's prior approval.

Another election silence law bans all campaign material, even if approved by the commission, 48 hours from

the opening of polls. The commission said they have asked the makers of the Modi film to respond to the Congress's claims. Its producers would have to show that the film is an artistic rather than a political work. The movie has also become embroiled in another controversy, with two top lyricists publicly denying penning songs for the soundtrack after their names were mentioned in the film poster.

The makers released a two-minute trailer of the film last week saying it is "based on a true story", with Bollywood actor Vivek Oberoi playing Modi through various stages of his life. The trailer depicts Modi as a child selling tea and his transformation to a young stick-wielding member of Hindu supremacist organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. It covers his days as a Hindu "sage" in the Himalayas, and later as a nationalistic politician issuing warnings to India's arch-rival Pakistan. The trailer also shows Modi lamenting the deadly riots that erupted in Gujarat when he was chief minister in 2002.

Critics and victims' families have accused Modi of doing little or nothing to stop days of rioting that left more than 1,000 people dead, a majority of them Muslims. Congress's petition came as Eros Now, an online video platform, yesterday released the trailer for its own hagiographical biopic of Modi, "Modi: Journey of A Common Man", directed by Bollywood filmmaker Umesh Shukla, releases on the site next month. The ten-part series will "highlight many important incidents that made Modi devote his life for the service of the country," said a press release announcing the trailer.

Half of Indians satisfied
Most Indians are happy with the direction of the country and economic prospects for the next generation, a Pew survey published weeks ahead of general elections showed, although the level of satisfaction has fallen over time. Lack of employment opportunities is India's biggest

problem, said more than three-quarters of those polled, and that had not changed through most of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure, the survey found. The survey published on Monday said concerns about terrorism and Pakistan loomed large even before last month's crisis triggered by an attack on a security convoy in Indian Kashmir that Pakistan claims as its own.

Three-quarters of Indians believe Pakistan to be a threat and 59 percent said terrorism had become worse. "But despite these worries, most Indian adults are satisfied with the direction of their country and the economic prospects of the next generation," Pew said, summing up the survey result. Of those polled, 54 percent said they were satisfied with the way democracy is working in India. But satisfaction had declined 25 percentage points from 2017, when 79 percent voiced approval.

Men are more likely than women to give Indian democracy a thumbs-up, though one in five women decline to offer an opinion, it said. There were 2,521 respondents in the Pew Survey run from May 23 to July 23, 2018, the final year of Modi's term before the election, at which about 900 million people are eligible to vote. Modi is considered the frontrunner to win the election that begins on April 11, but his lead is narrowing and several polls have suggested his Hindu nationalist-led group may fall short of a clear majority required to rule.

Renewed tension with arch foe Pakistan has shifted attention somewhat from bread-and-butter issues to national security over the past month, to the advantage of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. Critics have accused the BJP of creating a climate of fear among India's Muslim minority by promoting a Hindu-first agenda and targeting it for the slaughter of cows they consider sacred and have sometimes questioned its allegiance to India. The BJP denies bias but says it opposes appeasement of any community. Muslims make up about 14 percent of India's population of 1.3 billion. — Agencies

Millions of Indian women, homeless left behind ahead of elections

NEW DELHI: Millions of women and homeless people will be barred from voting in India's elections because of biases and difficulties in getting identification papers, human rights groups said yesterday, warning this would increase their marginalization. Every Indian who is 18 years or older has a right to vote in polls due to start on April 11, with about 900 million citizens eligible to take part. But the country's homeless population, who mostly live in cities and are estimated to number more than 4 million by human rights groups, are likely to be denied this right despite efforts by authorities to get them registered.

The Delhi Election Commission, whose motto is "no voter left behind", accepts night shelters, street-lights and flyovers as temporary residences. This enabled more than 10,000 homeless people in the capital New Delhi to receive voter identity cards in 2014, ahead of the last general election, said Ashok Pandey of Shahari Adhikar Manch, an advocacy group. But since then only another 3,000 homeless people have been signed up.

"If they are not at the given address when they do the verification, their name is cancelled. That's a problem because they keep moving," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. —Reuters

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From bitcoins to tomatoes: All change in Georgia after currency slump

After years spent farming money in his uncle's basement in Tbilisi, Georgian tech entrepreneur Shota Siradze turned over the dingy space to a more traditional crop: Tomatoes. Until November, the dark cellar underneath his family's Soviet apartment block had served as an unlikely head office to Siradze's thriving cryptocurrency business. The cellar was one of many moribund spaces - garages, farms and warehouses - that had taken on a new life as Georgia fell in love with bitcoin and triggered a virtual gold rush.

Bitcoin began circulating in 2009 as an electronic currency operating outside the traditional banking system. It is created as payoff for solving a run of complex sums that are used to verify transactions on blockchain - the system underpinning the currency - and is stored online. Bitcoin's value has ranged from a fraction of a dollar to nearly \$20,000 in its short life, spawning countless copycat currencies and many millionaires. But as the virtual coins slumped to a current low of about \$4,000, Siradze's operation became unprofitable, forcing the 29-year-old and his business partner to reconsider their options.

"As prices went down, we started thinking about alternatives and came up with this," said Siradze, pointing at two rows of tomatoes ripening on the vine under artificial light inside a room heated by a cryptocurrency mining computer. A few tomatoes will not a fortune make, but it keeps the space occupied and machines busy earning a bit of spare change.

Crypto capital

Georgia, a former Soviet republic of 4 million people, became a global cryptocurrency powerhouse in the past five years as cheap energy, tax breaks and business-friendly regulations spurred investment, according to the World Bank. Global tech firm Bitfury, a world leader in blockchain, set up shop in Georgia in 2014. In its wake, as the value of cryptocurrencies soared, a crypto craze ignited locals. Thousands began mining: The process of producing bitcoins by solving maths problems with high-powered computers. Bitcoin cash machines appeared in Tbilisi as cryptocurrency operations took root, injecting life in often abandoned buildings.

Last year, the World Bank estimated about 5 percent of Georgian families were involved in the business, which sucked up almost 15 percent of the country's energy demand, making it the world's third largest producer of cryptocurrencies. The slump in bitcoin's value, however, meant revenue from mining no longer even covered the energy costs, forcing many to halt operations, said Vano Narimanidze, a co-founder of Association Blockchain Georgia networking group.

About 80 percent of all mining ventures in Georgia turned off the lights, said Narimanidze, and many rooms that had buzzed with computer fans fell still once more. "People sold their houses, their cars, to buy (currency) miners and some of them were lucky enough to get back the money they put in," said Siradze. "But most of them lost out." Only big businesses and those operating in tax-free zones or areas where electricity is cheap are still running, he added.

End of the party

Siradze and his partner Irakli Pruidze had to pull the plug. The two former IT workers owned a few processors of their own and ran a consultancy helping others to set up mining farms in exchange for a share of their profits. One farm occupied the top floor of a disused warehouse inside a historic brandy factory in Tbilisi. It folded in November. Most machines were sold, the rest left idle, collecting dust alongside a Stalin bust and a few Soviet-era posters.

A few kilometres away, another 1,000 miners - a group of processing units - lie unused inside a dis-banded electronics factory that had briefly buzzed as a data center. "This was an old useless factory of spare parts that stopped working after the fall of the Soviet Union. We gave it a new function but unfortunately not for a long time," said cryptocurrency businessman Lasha Khanishvili.

Re-invention

While some entrepreneurs have simply switched off their machines hoping value might bounce back, others have found new uses for their machines and spaces. "You can just wait - or do something else while waiting," said Siradze. Narimanidze, of the Association Blockchain Georgia, sold three miners that had each earned him about \$40 a day in 2018, and kept three more in his family's rural home. "They keep the house warm in winter," he said.

Excess heat generated by computer servers has long been a problem for cryptocurrency miners worldwide, with media reports citing a host of innovative uses for all that hot air, be it drying strawberries or powering radiators. Siradze and 30-year-old Pruidze opted for tomatoes. Using LED lights and hydroponic technology, which replaces soil with water, they set up a mini farm in their basement office, growing 10 plants that have produced about 6 kilos of tomatoes since autumn, only worth about \$30 at retail price. "We want to go bigger," said Siradze, who hopes to expand his basement allotment into the rooftops and join a growing global trend for urban farming. — Reuters



President of the Majlis-e-Itehadul Muslimeen (MIM) Asaduddin Owaisi and Hyderabad parliament constituency candidate greets residents as he campaigns ahead of India's general election in Hyderabad yesterday. India is not just the world's biggest democracy, its elections are also the most grueling - with nearly six weeks between the first round of voting on April 11 and the last. — AFP

BJP in bloody struggle with Bengal rival

At an election rally in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal, a local leader from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) described how workers from the state's ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) had disrupted a public meeting in January by destroying their vehicles. "So, we thrashed them in retaliation, smashed their vehicles and burnt their party office," Arup Das, a district secretary of the Hindu nationalist BJP, roared at the rally in the town of Kharagpur. "Stand up and protest," Das said to the crowd. "Trinamool Congress will run away in fear."

Political differences have been erupting into tension and sometimes violence across India ahead of the general election in April-May, but it's particularly bad in West Bengal. Both the BJP and the TMC are accusing each other of killings, beatings, vandalism and making false allegations to the police. After losing three state elections late last year, and with weak farm incomes and slow jobs growth undermining his backing in the BJP's traditional Hindu base in the north, Modi is driving hard to pick up support in West Bengal.

The push has set him and the BJP on a collision course with firebrand politician Mamata Banerjee, the TMC leader and the state's chief minister. For Banerjee, popularly called 'Didi' or elder sister, defeating the BJP's challenge is vital to cement her power base and bolster her image as a possible future prime minister if opposition parties win enough seats to form a coalition government. "BJP is rising in West Bengal," said Udayan Bandyopadhyay, head of the political science department at Bangabasi College in Kolkata, the state capital.

There is a sense of anti-incumbency that is working against Banerjee, who has won the previous two state assembly elections, Bandyopadhyay said. BJP did well at village council polls last year and a recent survey showed

the party winning eight out of the 42 parliamentary seats in Bengal, up from two currently.

To be sure, Modi could win the national election without taking many seats in West Bengal. What could have been a close contest has changed in recent weeks because of a suicide car bomb attack in Kashmir that killed 40 police officers. That led to an Indian warplane attack on what the Indian government said was a "terrorist" training camp in Pakistan, and subsequent retaliation by the Pakistanis. Pollsters say they expect Modi to get a boost because of the sense of nationalism stirred by the events in Kashmir. And the disarray among parties opposed to the BJP will also play in its favor.

Save democracy

The BJP has been holding a series of mega rallies in West Bengal headlined by top BJP leaders, including Modi himself. Rather than emphasizing its national agenda, such as driving economic growth and providing affordable housing, the BJP in West Bengal has been focusing more on accusing TMC of corruption and Banerjee of running a dictatorship. The BJP said it had to cancel several visits by senior leaders to address rallies as Banerjee's administration denied permission for their helicopters to land.

The BJP's West Bengal President Dilip Ghosh said police and other government officials were being used by Banerjee to thwart democracy in the state. "I've announced openly everyone should carry batons, bamboos and if goons attack you, you hit back. So we are fighting back. Now goons are afraid to turn up," said Ghosh. On Saturday, Rahul Gandhi, president of the Congress party that is the main national opposition group, also accused the TMC of regularly harassing and beating up its workers in Bengal.

Still, it will be an uphill task to defeat 64-year-old

Banerjee, an aggressive and strong-headed politician with grassroots appeal. Posters of Banerjee in a quintessential Bengali lower middle-class cotton sari and rubber flip flops are seen across the state. In January, she brought together more than 20 regional parties, including the Congress, on one stage in Kolkata, or Calcutta, as the city was previously known, under the 'United India' banner. It was a show of opposition to the BJP that drew hundreds of thousands from rural Bengal.

The Muslim vote

Banerjee has announced government subsidies and incentive schemes aimed at benefiting the poor. But critics say she is attracting voters by funding local clubs and organizing events, such as mass marriages, where gifts can be made. Hindu groups linked to the BJP also accuse her of appealing Muslim voters, who make up about one third of the electorate, by providing separate schools, hospitals and training institutes for the community and handing out stipends. "Since independence there has never been a bigger anti-Hindu government in West Bengal," said Jishnu Basu, the general secretary in charge of south Bengal for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Hindu nationalist parent of the BJP. Banerjee did not respond to requests to be interviewed for this article. Derek O'Brien, TMC's parliamentary party leader, said the allegations from the BJP were "shameless" and that Modi's party aimed to divide communities. "They use their dirty tricks department to create this conversation of polarization. It is sickening," he said.

Although elections are still weeks away, some voters are already saying the BJP could bring prosperity to the state. "The verdict of the general public is to give BJP a chance this time," said 71-year-old Gour Majhi, a potato farmer, at the Kharagpur BJP rally. — Reuters

Coup maker faces tough transition to civilian leadership

For five years, Thailand's Prayut Chan-O-Cha ruled undisputed as the head of a junta that had grabbed power from a democratically elected government - now, he looks poised to become a civilian prime minister himself. It would likely be a tough transition for the imperious former army chief, who can hope to stay on despite Sunday's inconclusive general election thanks to changes critics say his government made to skew the parliamentary system in the junta's favour.

Prayut will need patience and compromise to work for the first time with an opposition and coalition allies: these are not qualities associated with a leader who, after a career in the military, appears more comfortable with command and control. His government will have to develop "some significant savvy at parliamentary wheeling and dealing to ... govern without resorting to threats," said Anthony Nelson, director at the D.C.-based advisory firm, Albright Stonebridge Group.

The election came at a sensitive time - just six weeks before the coronation of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who assumed the throne after the death of his father, who reigned for 70 years. Any government that emerges will take over after the elaborate May 4-6 coronation. "Investors will be watching closely the next several months to see if Thailand's political stability holds through the coronation and the formation of the next cabinet," Nelson said.

Prayut's pro-army party said the former general's leadership skills will help him adapt to a civilian role. "He's a highly merciful person. If he is in a civilian government, you will see him turn over a new leaf. You will see good things from him," Anucha Nakasai, a board member of the Palang Pracharat party, told Reuters.



Prayut Chan-O-Cha

Number crunching

Prayut's ambition to extend his rule through the ballot box is not assured. The results of Sunday's poll are still unclear and although the Palang Pracharat appears to have won the popular vote, there is a chance that it will fall short of the parliamentary seats required to rule. If Prayut does make it, his government may be vulnerable to charges that he did so only because of a constitutional change introduced three years ago by the junta that made it very difficult for its opponents to win an election. His legitimacy won't be helped by suspicions that the election was manipulated to thwart a party loyal to the junta's populist nemesis, self-exiled former premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

Prayut will also have to make concessions to coalition partners, whose price for support may be powerful cabinet seats. His biggest challenge, however, might be in parliament. He can become prime minister thanks to the near-certain backing of the junta-appointed members of the 250-seat Senate that would give him the overall majority of 376 parliamentary seats that is required to form a government. However, his coalition may not command a majority in the 500-strong lower House of Representatives and could be outnumbered by a "democratic front" of opposition parties, the biggest of which will be a Thaksin-linked party. — Reuters

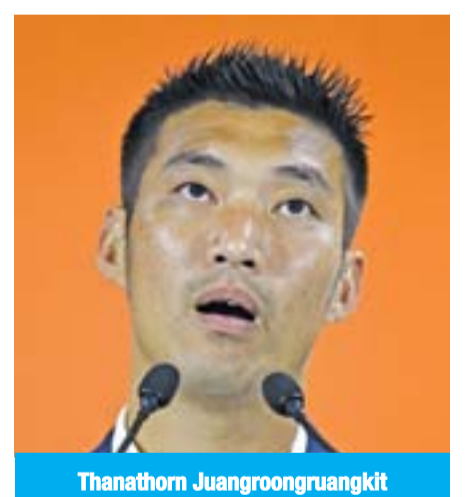
Party redraws map, gives glimpse of future

Dynamized by a telegenic billionaire, staffed by trendy graduates and powered by the millennial vote, Future Forward (FFP) has emerged as a new force in Thai politics, with a mission to restructure an unequal economy and take an axe to the army's influence. At FFP's headquarters in Bangkok the euphoria was barely concealed as early results from Sunday's election showed it on track to 30 lower house seats, with a proportional party list system likely to reward their five million-plus ballots with dozens more.

If the results play out - and the menace of legal troubles fades for Future Forward - it will be Thailand's third largest party, barely a year after being formed. Its agenda is radical: re-writing the constitution to excise the military from politics, slashing the defense budget, ending conscription and addressing Thailand's chasmic inequality. And its 40-year-old figurehead, Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, scion of the Thai Summit auto-parts group, says he is in it for the long haul.

"The party was not formed just to run in this election," he told AFP, asserting "our end game" is to help Thailand return to a democracy. "Our agenda is the public agenda... we are here because we want to push for genuine change." Thanathorn knocks back a mug of water handed to him by a young aide, wearing a Future Forward t-shirt and brogues - without socks - like several other staffers. Despite his vast wealth, which he put in a blind trust before the polls, Thanathorn's pull comes from a mix of coruscating takedowns of the ruling junta and a deft common touch.

The tone of his campaign was in stark contrast to more staid rivals, engaging in what amounted to a conversation with his fans over Twitter and rallies. At headquarters there is a notable absence of the deferent "wais" of respect among the junior



Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit

staff - and none of the hushed reverence normally associated with corridors of Thai power. Instead, aides buzz around laptops scribbling totals from constituencies, wide-eyed at the party's unexpected momentum.

Some just recently graduated, reflecting the hitherto untapped demographic of millions of millennials. Many were first time voters, wearied by Thailand's carousel of coups and short-lived governments and a political stage populated by ageing generals and grandstanding politicians who refuse to exit. "The new division is between the people who support the military regime and the people who oppose the military regime," Thanathorn added.

Their policy platform is more far-reaching than Pheu Thai, which is on course to be the largest lower house party despite being several million votes down on the last election in 2011. It is still linked to ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, a divisive 69-year-old who lives in self-exile but still plays the political game from overseas. Future Forward scooped up seats across the country, in part aided in their quest for proportional party list seats by the dissolution of the Shinawatra-linked Thai Raksa Chart party. It was taken out by a court just weeks before the election for running a princess as candidate for premier. "People voted strategically," said Napisa Waitoolkiat, political scientist from Naresuan University. — AFP

Business

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STRASBOURG: People take part in a demonstration in favor of the new copyright directive ahead of the vote on copyright in the Digital Single Market at the European Parliament yesterday. — AFP

EU demands scrutiny of 5G risks

Bloc ignores US calls for ban on China's Huawei

STRASBOURG: EU nations will be required to share data on 5G cybersecurity risks and produce measures to tackle them by the end of the year, the European Commission said yesterday, shunning US calls to ban China's Huawei Technologies across the bloc.

The aim is to use tools available under existing security rules plus cross-border cooperation, the bloc's executive body said as it addressed issues surrounding expansion of the next-generation networks that are key to online connectivity between everything from vehicles to household devices.

The European Union move came despite US pressure to boycott Huawei, citing fears of China using the company's equipment for espionage. Huawei has strongly rejected the allegations and launched a lawsuit against the US government.

The EU provided additional detail on the plans first reported by Reuters on March 22, with European digital chief Andrus Ansip saying that the measures announced yesterday aimed to address concerns about foreign governments using companies for espionage.

Last week French President Emmanuel Macron said that Europe was waking up to potential Chinese dominance in the region. Ansip said that 5G technology would transform the economy and society, but that this cannot happen without full security built in.

"It is therefore essential that 5G infrastructures in the EU are resilient and fully secure from technical or legal backdoors," Ansip said in a statement.

EU countries have until the end of June to assess

cybersecurity risks related to 5G, leading to a bloc-wide assessment by Oct 1. Using this, EU countries would then have to agree measures to mitigate risks by the end of the year. Such measures could include certification requirements and tests of products or suppliers regarded as potential security risks. The bloc will decide by Oct. 1, 2020, whether to take further action.

The EU has already passed a new law to give permanent status to the EU Cybersecurity Agency and to guide on cybersecurity certification. The Commission said it will be up to individual EU countries to decide if they want to exclude companies from their markets on national security grounds.

Big telecoms operators, which view 5G as the next big moneyspinner, oppose a Huawei ban, saying that such a move could set back 5G deployment by years.

Huawei, the world's biggest producer of telecoms equipment ahead of the likes of Sweden's Ericsson and Finnish company Nokia, faces intense scrutiny in the West over its relationship with the Chinese government and US-led allegations that its equipment could be used for spying. Australia and New Zealand have stopped operators using Huawei equipment in their 5G networks.

Copyright reform

The European Parliament also adopted controversial copyright reforms championed by news publishers and the media business, but punishing tech giants that lobbied against it. Despite an intense debate in parliament,

MEPs meeting in Strasbourg ended up passing the draft law with 348 votes in favor, 274 against, and 36 abstentions. European lawmakers were sharply divided on the copyright issue, with both sides subjected to some of the most intense lobbying the EU has ever seen from tech giants, media firms, content creators and online freedom activists.

Launched in 2016, the revamp to European copyright legislation was seen as urgently needed, not having been updated since 2001, before the birth of YouTube or Facebook.

The reform was loudly backed by media companies and artists, who want to obtain a better return from web platforms that allow users to distribute their content. But it was strongly opposed by Silicon Valley, and especially Google that makes huge profits from the advertising generated on content it hosts, and also by supporters of a free internet who fear it will result in unprecedented restrictions to web freedom.

The final days before the vote were marked by marches and media stunts, including tens of thousands of people protesting in Germany on Saturday under the slogan "Save the Internet". There were similar protests in Austria, Poland and Portugal, while major Polish newspapers on Monday printed blank front pages in an appeal that MEPs adopt the reform. "I know there are lots of fears about what users can do or not-now we have clear guarantees for freedom of speech, teaching and online creativity," Commission Vice President Andrus Ansip said after the vote.

Germany was at the heart of the anti-reform movement, led by Julia Reda, a 32-year-old Pirate Party MEP who has spearheaded a campaign against two of the law's provisions that have become flash-points in the debate. Reda said the vote marked a "dark day for internet freedom" and decried that MEPs refused, albeit narrowly, to modify the text before the final vote.

Reda's main worry was Article 13, which aims to strengthen the bargaining power of rights holders with platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Soundcloud, which use their content.

Under the reform, European law for the first time would hold platforms legally responsible for enforcing copyright, requiring them to check everything that their users post to prevent infringement.

'Details matter'

Reda and her supporters warned that Article 13 would require platforms to install expensive content filters that would automatically and often erroneously delete content from the web. Backers of the law, led by its rapporteur MEP Axel Voss, answered that filters are not a requirement but they do not explain how companies can comply with Article 13 without them. The second article advocated the creation of a "neighboring right" to copyright for news media. It should enable news companies to be better paid when their output is used by information aggregators like Google News or social networks such as Facebook. — Agencies

Next US recession is likely to be shorter, milder

LONDON: If armies are often studying how to fight the previous war, economists and investors are usually expecting the next recession to resemble the last slump.

The progressive inversion of the US Treasury yield curve and signs of a broad deceleration in manufacturing activity and freight movements have focused investors on the possibility of another recession in 2019/2020. But whenever it comes, the next business cycle downturn is very unlikely to resemble the wrenching depression that followed the global financial crisis in 2008 in terms of either severity or duration.

Since the end of the Second World War, recessions have generally become shorter and milder, while expansions have become longer and less frenzied. Post-war recessions have generally been milder because of shifts in the composition of the economy, labour force and sources of personal income.

Counter-cyclical fiscal and monetary policies have also dampened the business cycle and promoted greater economic stability. In contrast, the downturn that followed the global financial crisis was much more like a pre-war economic crisis than any of its post-war predecessors. US manufacturing output slumped almost 21 percent between December 2007 and June 2009, more than twice the average decline of 8.4 percent during the previous 10 recessions.

And the recession lingered for 18 months, almost double the post-war average of 10 months, according to the Business Cycle Dating Committee of the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Illiquidity and insolvency in large parts of the financial system between 2007 and 2009

propagated a much worse downturn in real economic activity than any of its 10 predecessors. The experience is seared into the collective memory, but it would be a mistake to assume the next recession will be as painful - confusing a worst-case scenario with the most likely expected outcome.

Statistically, the next recession is likely to be shorter, lasting less than a year, and milder, with economic activity, employment and incomes contracting much less.

The next recession, when it arrives, is therefore likely to have a much smaller impact on commodity consumption and prices as well as a smaller effect on other asset markets. So far, there have been only a few signs of the excessive complacency, relaxation of credit standards, and risk-taking in the financial system that contributed to the subprime housing bubble and subsequent crash. Credit quality is cyclical and will continue to weaken the longer the current expansion lasts, but, provided the deterioration is not too great, the next recession is unlikely to be fuelled by a financial crash on the scale of 2008. —Reuters

Bahrain to use Huawei in 5G rollout despite US warnings

DUBAI: Bahrain, headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, plans to roll out a commercial 5G mobile network by June, partly using Huawei technology despite the United States' concerns the Chinese telecom giant's equipment could be used for spying. Washington has warned countries against using Chinese technology, saying Huawei could be used by Beijing to spy on the West. China and Huawei have strongly rejected the allegations.

VIVA Bahrain, a subsidiary of Saudi Arabian state-controlled telecoms firm STC, last month signed an agreement to

use Huawei products in its 5G network, one of several Gulf telecoms companies working with the Chinese company. "We have no concern at this stage as long as this technology is meeting our standards," Bahrain's Telecommunications Minister Kamal bin Ahmed Mohammed told Reuters yesterday when asked about US concerns over Huawei technology.

A senior State Department official told Reuters the US routinely urges allies and partners to consider the risks posed by vendors subject to extrajudicial or unchecked compulsion by foreign states.

No foreign company is restricted by the government from providing equipment for Bahrain's 5G network, Mohammed said, adding mobile operators choose who they work with. Australia and New Zealand have stopped operators using Huawei equipment in their networks but the European Union is expected to ignore US calls to ban the Chinese company, instead urging countries to share more data to tackle cybersecurity risks related to 5G networks. — Reuters

Weak single-family homebuilding weighs on US housing starts

Housing starts drop 8.7% in Feb, single-family starts decline 17%

WASHINGTON: US homebuilding fell more than expected in February as construction of single-family homes dropped to more than a 1-1/2-year low, but the outlook for the housing market is improving amid declining mortgage rates.

Housing starts decreased 8.7 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.162 million units last month, the Commerce Department said yesterday. The percent decline was the largest in eight months, and bad weather could have contributed to the sharp drop in homebuilding last month.

Housing starts data for January and December were revised higher. Building permits fell 1.6 percent to a rate of 1.296 million units in February. While that was the second straight monthly drop in permits, they are now outpacing starts, which suggests a pickup in homebuilding in the months ahead. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast

housing starts falling to a pace of 1.213 million units in February. The housing market hit a soft patch last year, squeezed by higher mortgage rates, pricey lumber, and land and labor shortages, which led to tight inventories and more expensive homes. But borrowing costs have eased as the Federal Reserve signaled it was halting further interest rate increases this year amid growing headwinds to the economy.

The 30-year fixed mortgage rate dropped to an average of 4.28 percent last week, the lowest in more than a year, from 4.31 in the prior week, according to data from mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac. House price inflation is also slowing.

Land, labor shortages

Still, homebuilders remain constrained in their ability

to construct more homes for the lower end of the market. A survey last week showed confidence among homebuilders was steady in March, with builders still complaining about the scarcity of skilled workers and land, as well as zoning restrictions in many major metro areas. Investment in homebuilding contracted 0.2 percent in 2018, the weakest performance since 2010. The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies after the housing starts data, while US Treasury yields fell slightly.

Single-family homebuilding, which accounts for the largest share of the housing market, tumbled 17.0 percent to a rate of 805,000 units in February, the lowest level since May 2017. The percentage drop in single-family homebuilding was the largest since February 2015.

Single-family homebuilding fell in all four regions last

month. Permits to build single-family homes were unchanged in February at a pace of 821,000. These permits are now leading housing starts, suggesting a rebound in single-family construction in the coming months.

Starts for the volatile multi-family housing segment jumped 17.8 percent to a rate of 357,000 units in February. Permits for the construction of multi-family homes fell 4.2 percent to a pace of 475,000 units last month. Housing completions increased 4.5 percent to 1.303 million units in February, the most since January 2008. Multifamily home completions surged 40.4 percent to 473,000 units, the highest since April 1988. Single-family home completions fell 10.0 percent to 816,000 units, indicating the inventory shortage could persist for a while. There was also a decrease in the number of homes under construction last month. — Reuters

First quarterly Al-Danah draw taking place today!

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is holding the first quarterly Al-Danah draw today, where the winner will claim a cash prize of KD 150,000. This will be aired live on "Diwaniyat Al-Yaqout and Al-Ansari" program on Kuwait Pulse (88.8 FM) at 1.30 pm, the draw will take place in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah second quarterly draw for 2019 will be held on 26 June, for the prize of KD 250,000, and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 will be held on 25 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf



Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the cus-

tomers account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

The Al-Danah draws are all approved by and held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce. Furthermore, Gulf Bank have partnered with Ernst and Young Kuwait (EY) with reference to "Al-Danah Prize Draw" system in order to assist in assessing processes, technical controls considering relevant parameters and provide recommendations in-line with industry leading practices. The study was conducted in line with industry standards and control requirements relevant to similar prize draw schemes wherein, a detailed review of prize draw management system along with draw scheme parameters, data extraction for draw, filtration of customers as per defined business criteria and necessary system interactions was conducted to advise on any potential areas of improvements.

Lincoln Navigator and Continental honored with 'Car of the Year' awards

KUWAIT: The all-new Lincoln Navigator has been named best large premium SUV, and the Lincoln Continental Presidential the best mid-sized executive sedan, in the 2019 Middle East Car of the Year awards.

The awards, now in their sixth year, are the most coveted automotive awards in the region, combining the expertise and experience of 19 motoring journalists from the GCC and Levant, who work through multi stage nomination and scoring process to arrive at their list of winners. Members of the public are also encouraged to vote.

"Lincoln is honored to be named the best among such a strong field of competitors," said Sarah Rae, director of Lincoln Middle East. "The entire Lincoln team is very proud of the work that was done to create a truly differentiated, luxury Lincoln experience in both our all-new Navigator and our Continental."

The Lincoln Navigator: Best Large Premium SUV

The Lincoln Navigator has added to its growing list of international awards by being named the best large premium SUV in the Middle East. As Lincoln's flagship SUV, Navigator combines modern luxury with advanced technology to elevate family travel to first-class. A modern design turns heads, while Navigator's smooth power helps families move confidently along the road.

A twin-turbo 3.5-litre engine produces best-in-class 450 horsepower and 691 Nm of torque, providing smooth power whenever you need it, delivered through a 10-speed transmission to the vehicle's four-wheel-drive system. Lincoln Drive Modes allow the driver to use one of seven presets tuned to suits driving conditions or the type of driving they

want to do. A luxurious, spacious interior allows first-class seating for everyone aboard, with 10 power outlets to keep all passengers charged and connected. The driver and front-seat passenger enjoy Perfect Position Seats, which offer massage, heating and cooling functionality, and can be adjusted up to 30 different ways.

The Lincoln Continental Presidential

The ultimate expression of the Lincoln brand, the Presidential Line introduction in the region brings luxury and refinement to new levels. The Presidential line pushes the Continental to even greater heights, with curated design themes inspired by the love of travel, the arts, culture, fine food, architecture, fashion and more.

Powered by a prodigious 400-horsepower twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 and seamless six-speed SelectShift transmission, the Continental is designed to provide effortless performance in each of its three drive modes. Coupled with an intelligent all-wheel-drive system and Dynamic Torque Vectoring, the Continental provides outstanding handling characteristics during spirited driving.

Designed to provide a serene experience, the all-new Continental's beautifully detailed interior is crafted to be physically comforting, visually soothing and peacefully quiet. From the warmth of its authentic wood accents to the simplicity of its controls, every aspect of this all-new interior environment is designed to provide luxurious comfort for all occupants.

An interior highlight is Lincoln's Perfect Position Seats - inspired by private jets and high-end office furniture - which can be adjusted up to 30 ways. The patented design allows the seat to adjust to individual body shapes and weights for optimal stretch and comfort. High cushions extend and adjust independently, allowing one leg to remain at rest while the other engages the pedals. Optional heating and cooling settings optimise comfort in any climate, while available massage functionality helps reduce muscle fatigue in the upper legs and lower back.

Rear passengers enjoy first-class travel amenities with such available features as audio and climate control, adjustable sunshades, and reclining, heated, cooled and massaging seats. The streamlined interior provides generous rear legroom.



Bertelsmann profits boosted by Michelle Obama's book

BERLIN: German media and publishing group Bertelsmann reported net profits of over one billion euros for the fourth straight year yesterday, a figure boosted by sales of Michelle Obama's memoir.

Last year, the group profit of Bertelsmann, which also owns television station RTL and several European-wide magazines, reached 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion), exceeding the company's milestone target of one billion euros.

The operating profit was 2.59 billion euros, two percent down on last year's record level of 2.64 billion euros, while sales revenue rose 2.8 percent to 17.7 billion euros, returning to the highest level since 2007.

"We became a faster-growing, more digital, and more international group," chairman and CEO Thomas Rabe said in a statement. "Organic growth is higher than it has been for years, and nearly half of our revenues came from digital activities."

The profit figures were buoyed by sales of "Becoming" by US former first lady



BERLIN: (From left) Chief Executive Officer of publishing giant Penguin Random House Markus Dohle, Chairman and CEO of German media and publishing giant Bertelsmann Thomas Rabe, Bertelsmann's CFO Bernd Hirsch, and Immanuel Hermreck, Chief Human Resources Officer, pose for photographers after the company's annual results press conference in Berlin yesterday. — AFP

Michelle Obama, through publishing arm Penguin Random House. "The most successful book of the year was Michelle Obama's 'Becoming', which has sold nearly 10 million copies, just in the company's English-, Spanish- and German-language territories to date," Rabe said.

Music division BMG had a strong growth year, acquiring production companies Big Bang & Fuzz and World Circuit, and signing artists such as former Beatles drummer

Ringo Starr, Lenny Kravitz, and Yusuf, otherwise known as Cat Stevens. The service provider Arvato and learning division Bertelsmann Education Group also recorded "strong growth".

The group's digital portals saw an increase in sales of 10 percent over one year, thanks mainly to the discovery app AppLike.

For the current year, Rabe says the group is aiming for "continued sales growth" and "high operating profitability". — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.200
Euro	347.090
Sterling Pound	403.070
Canadian dollar	227.870
Turkish lira	55.010
Swiss Franc	308.050
US Dollar Buying	303.000

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.766
Indian Rupees	4.420
Pakistani Rupees	2.208
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.703
Nepali Rupees	2.748
Singapore Dollar	226.000
Hongkong Dollar	38.764
Bangladesh Taka	3.595
Philippine Peso	5.804
Thai Baht	9.667
Malaysian ringgit	77.801

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.174
Qatari Riyal	83.606
Omani Riyal	790.903
Bahraini Dinar	808.290
UAE Dirham	82.877

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.500
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.556

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.222
Tunisian Dinar	104.900
Jordanian Dinar	429.660
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.030
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.327

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.840
Canadian Dollar	227.560
Sterling Pound	403.080
Euro	346.230
Swiss Franc	304.470
Bahrain Dinar	808.025
UAE Dirhams	83.125
Qatari Riyals	84.365
Saudi Riyals	81.920
Jordanian Dinar	429.830
Egyptian Pound	17.590
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.706
Indian Rupees	4.415
Pakistani Rupees	2.164
Bangladesh Taka	3.611
Philippines Peso	5.798
Cyprus pound	18.080
Japanese Yen	3.760
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.760
Malaysian Ringgit	75.555
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.725

Thai Bhat	10.590
Turkish Lira	54.880
Singapore dollars	224.770

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.393786	0.407686
Czech Korune	0.005324	0.014624
Danish Krone	0.041990	0.046990
Euro	0.336319	0.350019
Georgian Lari	0.112616	0.112616
Hungarian 0.000996	0.001186	
Norwegian Krone	0.031579	0.036779
Romanian Leu	0.055329	0.072179
Russian ruble	0.004739	0.004739
Slovakia	0.009090	0.019090
Swedish Krona	0.028842	0.033842
Swiss Franc	0.299670	0.310670
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.208183	0.220183
New Zealand Dollar	0.203673	0.213173
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.221594	0.230594
US Dollars	0.300100	0.305400
US Dollars Mint	0.300600	0.305400
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003050	0.003851

Chinese Yuan	0.043799	0.047299
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036669	0.039419
Indian Rupee	0.003809	0.004581
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002677	0.002857
Korean Won	0.000258	0.000273
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071031	0.077031
Nepalese Rupee	0.002608	0.002948
Pakistan Rupee	0.001566	0.002366
Philippine Peso	0.005794	0.006094
Singapore Dollar	0.219815	0.229815
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001362	0.001942
Taiwan	0.009739	0.009919
Thai Baht	0.009289	0.009839
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.792326	0.803826
Egyptian Pound	0.017636	0.020236
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000209	0.000269
Jordanian Dinar	0.424149	0.433149
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022101	0.046101
Omani Riyal	0.783812	0.789492
Qatar Riyal	0.079266	0.084206
audi Riyal	0.080033	0.081333
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.096760	0.104760
Turkish Lira	0.048484	0.059984
UAE Dirhams	0.081398	0.083098
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business



2019 Nissan Altima



Nissan LEAF e+ exterior

Nissan Intelligent Mobility: The rate of change is accelerating at stunning speeds

Vision of a zero-emission, zero-fatality future for driving

KUWAIT: In 20 years, the car we know today would have evolved enormously in terms of design, connectivity and the role it plays in our lives beyond simply moving people far and wide. Those vehicles won't drive the way they do now - in fact, many will drive themselves. They won't produce the same levels of pollution as we will be well on our way to a cleaner planet.

As an organization committed to zero-emission, zero-fatality future for driving, Nissan has launched a long-term strategy to move customers around the world toward a safer and more sustainable future. Launched in 2016, the Nissan Intelligent Mobility (NIM) strategy has enabled the engineering of future-ready cars that are being tested and rolled out around the world in efforts to deliver positive impact.

Nissan Intelligent Mobility is the blueprint for realizing our vision of a zero-emission, zero-fatality future for driving. As we work to make mobility safer, smarter, and more sustainable for society, we will also make driving more enjoyable and more exciting. NIM encompasses three core areas of innovation that inspire how cars are driven, powered and integrated into society:

- Nissan Intelligent Driving gives our customers more confidence through increased safety, control, and comfort for everyone on board.
- Nissan Intelligent Power makes driving more exciting for our customers by making it cleaner and more efficient.
- Nissan Intelligent Integration keeps customers more connected by conveniently linking our cars to the wider society.

This isn't just about our cars. It's about how we, as Nissan, are connecting both to the larger mobility systems...and the broader society.

Most importantly, NIM is a reality today, present in numerous models, and at all levels of the Nissan range. We are committed to the democratization of technology and firmly believe that technological innovation should be accessible for all. For example, cutting-edge Nissan Intelligent Mobility technologies have been integrated into the 2019 Altima as standard. These include Nissan's Rear Cross Traffic Alert, which helps drivers to detect stationary objects when reversing. When an object is



detected, the system warns the driver with visual and audible warnings.

The new Altima also provides front, side and rear safety monitoring and intervention technologies - including Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection. This intelligent feature uses radar technology to monitor a vehicle's proximity to the vehicle ahead, giving the driver audible and visual display warnings to help the driver reduce the vehicle's speed if a potential frontal collision is detected. If the driver fails to respond, the AEB system can apply the brakes, helping the driver to avoid the collision or reduce the speed of impact if it is unavoidable. Other intelligent technologies present in the car include Lane Departure Warning (LDW), radar-based Blind Spot Warning (BSW), Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA) and High Beam Assist (HBA).

As can be seen through the technologies present in the all-new Altima, through NIM, we are working towards a global goal of helping to reduce the number of road fatalities. The technologies we are developing help drivers avoid road risks and which make vehicles that help protect people. Nissan Intelligent Driving gives our customers more confidence through safety, control and comfort. This also includes our development of autonomous drive technologies and advanced driving systems: ProPILOT, ProPILOT Park, and Automatic Emergency Braking are all examples of Nissan Intelligent Driving.

Nissan's commitment to innovation and intelligent

safety can be seen further when it is considered that next year six models - roughly 1,000,000 Nissans in total - are set to include standard Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB).

When we consider 'Intelligent Power' Nissan is and has been a pioneer in electric vehicles both on the road and the race track. We are the world's leading EV brand (with more than 372,000 LEAFs sold to-date), and this season has marked our entry into the Formula E championships.

Our participation in Formula E, a championship designed to demonstrate the potential of sustainable mobility, is the ultimate showcase of the brand's Intelligent Power pillar in action: a compelling synergy between driving excitement, reducing emissions, and moving people to a better world. The championships also have a growing fan base and Nissan's entry to the championships gives us a platform to extend the message of NIM to an even wider audience.

Our commitment is that the innovations we have made when creating our Formula E racing car, and the experience we are set to gain from the championships will be put to good use on the road. For example, the battery and powertrain technology employed in the Formula E racing series is at the cutting edge of current EV know-how. We are looking to explore every opportunity to learn from the championships and apply it to our road car programs where possible. Our aim? Enhancing customer ownership and every day driving experience of our EV range.

Finally, Nissan is committed to providing consumers with a more connected experience by linking cars to the wider community. Nissan Intelligent Integration is about thinking beyond the vehicles themselves, instead creating a true mobility ecosystem that makes peoples' lives easier and our society better.

For example, the Nissan LEAF can be controlled remotely by owners using a smartphone app; you can set the temperature inside your Nissan LEAF or check the remaining battery charge before you even get inside. The app also contains GPS information, so you can use it to see the changing infrastructure along your route to plan it accordingly or pinpoint your car's location from your



smartphone. You can even set your car to charge using the app. This is integrated technology that available now and is something that will continue to be enhanced and rolled out to more models in the future.

Nissan Intelligent Mobility is about delivering more autonomy, more electrification, and more connectivity in order to move people to a better world. Looking ahead, we believe that a connected ecosystem of drivers, cars, and communities is key to a cleaner and safer world. With this goal in mind, Nissan is playing a central role in defining what the roads of the future will look like, from EV, to autonomous cars to traffic management systems to mobility services. This combined with the dramatic shifts and growth that is taking place in the automotive sector means that we aim to be at the forefront of this ever-changing mobility landscape and its digital transformation.

Life after ECB's 'Super Mario' unnerves global investors

LONDON/NEW YORK: "Whatever it takes" is a daunting legacy for any departing central bank chief to bequeath a successor and leaves world markets anxious about what is to come after Mario Draghi leaves the European Central Bank later this year.

Draghi's 2012 pledge to save the euro won the confidence of financial markets and arrested the currency bloc's debt crisis. Investors admired his willingness to break new policy ground—manoeuvring past internal and external opposition—and clear communication of the ECB's thinking.

With growth and inflation flagging again, and the ECB's policy arsenal depleted, whoever succeeds him may need to be similarly bold. Growing questions about the orthodoxies of economic policy—including monetary policy models—could present an additional test.

Mohamed El-Erian, chief economic adviser for Allianz SE in California, said replacing Draghi, if badly handled, could create significant uncertainty at a time when the ECB faces slowing economic momentum. "Add to that concern about the eroding effectiveness of unconventional monetary policies, and the list of challenges facing the next ECB President gets quite significant," said El-Erian, a long-time central bank observer.

Big questions

Draghi, nicknamed "Super Mario", looks set to end his eight-year term without having ever executed a rate rise.

But after years of ultra-easy monetary policy, including negative interest rates and an unprecedented 2.6 trillion euro asset purchase scheme, economic growth is weakening yet again. Inflation is below the ECB's near-2-percent target and Germany's 10-year bond yield has dropped back below zero.

Investors fear the ECB's window to normalise

policy has closed, meaning it has little in its toolkit to face the next recession. Like other central banks, it is also struggling to explain why falling jobless rates have failed to lift inflation, market expectations for which are at their lowest since 2016 after weak German data on Friday exacerbated growth fears.

This raises big questions for the next ECB head, to be appointed by politicians, probably after the European Parliament elections in May. Could a weak economy force a revival of quantitative easing (QE), with possible stock purchases given a scarcity of eligible bonds?

And to prevent a Japanese-style low-inflation, low-growth rut, the next ECB chief may have to mull unorthodox policy steps adopted by the Bank of Japan such as yield-curve control.

"The issue of having too few tools for the next slowdown, is a challenge for all central banks, but in the case of the ECB you could have a big political crisis to deal with as well as the more normal central banking day job," said Andrew Balls, global fixed income CIO at PIMCO. Potential candidates for the job are already discussing these possibilities.

Finnish central bank chief Olli Rehn, seen as an outside tip, said this month that the ECB should follow the US Federal Reserve and review its entire policy framework given the failure to lift inflation after years of extraordinary stimulus. Inflation has been below the ECB's target since 2013. For Francesco Papadia, former ECB head of market operations, the balance sheet remains a key tool if further action is needed to shore up the economy. The hefty asset purchases under Draghi have doubled the ECB's balance sheet to 4.68 trillion euros.

"The scarcity of some bonds could be dealt with the inventiveness the ECB has shown over the years, for instance they could purchase bank loans or equities, like the BOJ," said Papadia. "They could also come up with completely new tools, consistent with their record of bold innovations." Economists polled by Reuters favoured ECB board member Benoit Coeure to succeed Draghi but saw Finland's Erkki Liikanen as a more likely choice. Rehn, German Jens Weidmann-long a policy hawk to Draghi's dove-and France's Francois Villeroy de Galhau are also potential candidates.

"Nobody can be more dovish than Draghi. Whoever it is, is going to be on the more hawk-

ish end," said Giles Rothbarth, portfolio manager in BlackRock's European equity team.

Big shoes to fill

Few had predicted the ECB's change of speed after Draghi took over from Jean-Claude Trichet in November 2011. With the debt crisis raging, Draghi had soon overridden northern European concerns about money-printing. "Draghi is big shoes to fill-his 'whatever it takes' speech is precisely what was needed at the time," said Bob Michele, head of global fixed income at JPMorgan Asset Management.

Investors said the ability to communicate with markets and the boldness to fight a crisis were crucial qualities for a successor, and that they valued stability more than asset performance during a central bank chief's tenure. Returns on the euro have fallen 17 percent during Draghi's term, while those on bank stocks are 1 percent lower.

The euro rallied 10 percent in the year after that July 2012 speech, however, while Italy's 10-year bond yield dropped to around 4 percent from above 6 percent. An analysis of introductory policy statements by ECB economists shows they generally became easier to read under Draghi. For former Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill, Draghi, Bank of England Governor Mark Carney and Fed chairman Jerome Powell represent a step forward as central bank heads because they have experience beyond academic circles.

All three worked at banks. Powell and Carney have government experience, while Draghi later worked at the World Bank. "Whoever replaces Mario, I hope they are as open-minded, savvy and not too narrow-minded economists," said O'Neill.

High flux

Half the ECB board and more than a third of the rate-setting Governing Council will be replaced this year. Richard Barwell, a former BoE economist and head of macro research at BNP Paribas Asset Management in London, said the reality is the loss of an "entire dream team" that has driven the policy agenda. Coeure, for example, was a dynamic force in the ECB's market operations team that designs key crisis-fighting tools. Belgian Peter Praet brought heavyweight power to the influential economics unit. — Reuters

India seeks bids for \$5bn in transmission lines to fuel renewables

NEW DELHI: India will launch \$5 billion of transmission-line tenders in phases, beginning in June, to route a targeted 175 gigawatts (GW) of power from renewable sources into the country's grid by 2022, the secretary at the ministry of renewable energy, Anand Kumar, said.

India, the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, has pledged to cut emissions and have clean energy account for at least 40 percent of its installed capacity by 2030, up from 21.4 percent now, while looking to manage its energy appetite as its population becomes more prosperous.

The renewable energy targets would require investment in feeder lines and infrastructure upgrades. India has awarded tenders for 12 GW of transmission lines since December, while bids for a further 16 GW will be launched by the end of June. Another 38 GW will be bid out before March 2020, he said.

Building transmission lines for 66 GW worth projects would need an estimated investment of 430 billion rupees, Kumar said. India, which receives twice as much sunshine as European countries, wants to make solar central to its renewable expansion as part of the fight against climate change.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has set a goal to raise solar power generation to 100 GW and wind to 60 GW by 2022. The other 15 GW would come from biomass and hydropower.

Research analysts have been skeptical about India meeting its ambitious targets. Consultancy firm WoodMac and research firm CRISIL have said India

would not meet its renewable energy target due to policy issues, including cancellations of auctions of tenders, rights to land use and tariffs. India has cancelled tenders for renewable energy projects with a capacity of at least 5 GW, saying the bid prices were too high. Solar and wind energy developers have also complained about the difficulty of leasing land and duties on solar equipment imports.

But Kumar says the government must be careful not to buy power at any cost.

"The mandate of the government is that we should buy power at a competitive price which is affordable," he said. The government is determined to overcome roadblocks, and is in talks with states to ensure easy land availability. It has asked distribution companies to borrow from the government-run Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency to ensure timely payments to power producers. Modi's government changed rules for the awarding of renewable energy projects in 2017, leading to higher competition, lower prices and greater acceptance of renewable energy.

"Earlier tariffs were about 6.17 rupees per unit and now we are getting bids as low as 2.44 rupees a unit," Kumar said, adding that India was ahead of its internal target to award 135 GW of renewable energy projects by March 2019.

"Projects of 103 GW have been installed or are under implementation, and over 37 GW are under various stages of bidding," he said, adding that bidding for the targeted renewable energy addition would be completed by March 2020.

A renewable energy project typically takes two years to build. Kumar expressed confidence that bidding for the remaining projects would be finished by March 2020 and help India meet its 2022 target. A shift to renewables could mean lower use of coal and diesel-fuelled power.

None of India's private power producers plans to invest in new coal-fired power plants in at least the next five years, two industry sources told Reuters. Almost all of India's new capacity addition is expected to come from renewable energy. — Reuters

Business

KAICO and Peugeot celebrate 50 years of successful partnership

2019 models of Peugeot SUV range unveiled on the occasion

KUWAIT: Kuwait Automotive Imports Company, Kaico Al Shaya & Al Sagar, the exclusive distributors of Peugeot vehicles in Kuwait is celebrating 50 years of successful partnership with the renowned French manufacturers. On the occasion, Kaico revealed the 2019 models of Peugeot SUV range which includes the 5008, 3008 & 2008 models.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of Kaico, stated on this occasion: "The success and growth of Peugeot brand is a result of excellent work and dedication by business partner such as Kaico. We will continue to accomplish great achievements together and vow to keep a customer-centric approach to honor the trust our clients has given us."

The all-new Peugeot 3008 is the French manufacturer's offering in the SUV/crossover range of vehicles and aims to be a class leader, going up against well-established models in the automotive industry.

The 3008 with 1.6L turbo engine offers a decent drive, plus a classy and well-specked interior. It also offers plenty of visual appeal thanks to a refined body and a classy design complemented by silver bodywork accents, larger 16-inch alloy wheels, and daytime running lights.

Best SUV to buy

The powerful 1.6-litre turbo engine with an six-speed automatic offers excellent performance for daily use. The 3008 is as spacious, comfortable and practical as a SUV should be. It's good to drive, with light, accurate steering and impressive handling. The ride quality is excellent; with the larger 18-inch alloys fitted the car manages to soak up the majority of bumps and rough surfaces. When on the move, road and tire noise is minimal, as is wind noise at motorway speeds.

The 3008's interior has an attractive design, with Peugeot's i-Cockpit. Just relax and let the i-Cockpit look after all your sensory needs and comfort. You can instantly change the car's ambiance to suit your mood and journey



with the fragrance diffuser's 'Boost' and 'Relax' modes, all in the comfort of multi-point massage seats whilst enjoying the beautiful natural light from the large panoramic sunroof.



Overall, the cockpit is a classy one, with plenty of soft-touch materials throughout, including the leather effect door trim panel material, which has a quality feel alongside the leather effect on the seats. Equipment levels on the 3008 models are impressive, with sporty styling, full LED headlights and indicators, and even LED lighting in the interior. Sat navigation is standard with 3D mapping, and there's also Apple CarPlay and Android Auto functionality too.

The 3008 offers fairly generous passenger space both in the front and rear. The boot is very spacious though,

offering a class-leading 520 liters of space. Safety is excellent, which is proved by a five-star Euro NCAP rating. As standard, the 3008 comes with autonomous emergency braking and a lane departure warning system beside active safety brake system. As an all-round proposition the Peugeot 3008 certainly ticks lots of boxes. It is impressive to drive without sacrificing comfort, and is an attractive, stylish car. Combine all that with a desirable, high-end interior and the Peugeot 3008 is a class-leader in the mid-size SUV market.

KFH-Bahrain enables GCC nationals to open bank account remotely in Bahrain

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House - Bahrain "KFH-Bahrain", a leading Islamic bank in Bahrain and a main contributor in developing the financial sector in the Kingdom, has announced the latest updates of its mobile application "KFH Jazeel Banking". It is the first Fintech banking platform that enables resident GCC nationals in GCC countries to open saving accounts in the Kingdom of Bahrain, remotely and conveniently, thus eliminating the need to travel.

The latest update allows GCC customers to conduct banking transactions and access financial services within the Kingdom of Bahrain, in addition to opening and managing savings accounts, opening Wakala Investment accounts, issuing Credit Cards, alongside various other banking services. A primary feature of the platform is the eKYC "Electronic Know Your Customer" capability, which verifies individual customer information through an embedded video conferencing system fully integrated with the Bank's call center, eliminating the need to visit any of the branches in person.



Abdulhakeem Al-Khayyat and Khalid Rafea

Abdulhakeem Al-Khayyat, the Managing Director and CEO of KFH-Bahrain, said, "We are delighted to be the first bank to enable GCC nationals to open accounts remotely through our digital banking platform without visiting a branch. We leverage on the latest Fintech technologies to provide excellent financial services to GCC citizens. We are committed to continuously develop the KFH Jazeel Banking platform by offering unique services and following through on our new concept of sustainable community banking. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) and the Economic

Development Board (EDB) for their continuous efforts to position Bahrain as a leading FinTech hub in the region and for enabling us to open such accounts for our GCC customers. They spared no efforts and support to ensure that all necessary mechanisms are in place to maintain the integrity of the procedures, policies and implementations related to combating financial crimes while providing outstanding services."

In addition, Khalid Rafea, the Executive Manager and Head of Retail Banking Group at KFH-Bahrain said: "We are very proud of this latest addition to our KFH Jazeel banking application. Since launching the application in 2018, we have worked diligently to improve the platform's features and services, staying true to our promise of providing our customers with a holistic digital banking experience."

Speaking about the new features, Subah Abdullatif Al-Zayani, Deputy Head of Retail Banking Group at KFH said: "One of the main enhancement pillars is to elevate the customers' satisfaction, therefore, we have updated the process of opening an account to create a more seamless and convenient experience. We have also added another instant feature, enabling users to open Wakala Investment Accounts with ease, for validity periods ranging from one month up to five years. As for our line of Credit Cards, customers can now directly issue cards through the app and determine a suitable limit in addition to managing their cards features. We will continue to offer the latest technologies and services to enhance the experience of KFH's customers."

VIVA offers gift vouchers with postpaid plans

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launches gift vouchers offer, KD 25 and KD 50, upon subscription to any VIVA's postpaid plans.

This offer grants customers the opportunity to enjoy an exclusive gift voucher when they subscribe to any of VIVA's Postpaid plans ranging from KD 15 to KD 55 with an add-on device. The voucher is redeemable for bill discounts or a new smart device from the many selections available.

On this occasion, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "VIVA reiterates its commitment to providing unique promotions designed to create an exceptional customer experience and reward its postpaid customers for their continued trust in VIVA."

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on the 20th of March 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al-Hassad has have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period.

The weekly draw announced the grand prize winner of KD 10,000 as Abdulhadi Buolayan.

20 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Mohd Hanif Shamsuddin, Khatoun Ali Al-Haddad, Faisal Fahad Al-Jallel, Mariam Mohammad Al-Trkait, Zainab Khalaf, Jassim Mohammad Al-Kandari, Jaman AlAzemi, Fatemah Wasfi Khshaim, Subhi Mohammad Al-Sagheer, Souad Abdulla Al-Jasmi, Hussain Habeeb Al-Jassam, Ahmad Al-Daaij, Hamoud Dhaifallah Mazayad, Ali Abdullah Al-Qattan, Mahmood Ali Hdayah, Lila Hameed Al-Halwachi, Ali A Amir Al-Muallim, Sameera Sulaiman Mohammad, Faez Yousif, Zahraa Hasan AlAradi.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 4 quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000 that will help the lucky winners achieve their dreams and aspirations in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000. One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad Islamic Account is the prize draws on the holy occasion of both Eid ul-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, when the winning customers will receive the eid prizes of KD 100,000 each. May the Eid always bring prosperity and blessings to the Islamic nation.

AnadoluJet adds Erbil to its international flight network

KUWAIT: The successful sub brand of Turkish Airlines, AnadoluJet added a new international destination to its flight network with flights to Erbil (Iraq) after its previous flights to TRNC -Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

AnadoluJet offers its advantageous prices to the passengers flying from Gaziantep and/or Diyarbakir to Erbil. The flights from both cities started on March 21, 2019.

On the new Erbil flights of AnadoluJet, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee M. Ilker Ayci stated: "Turkish aviation history is undergoing a significant period of change. Istanbul Airport gives courage to Turkish Airlines and its sub brands to make strides towards their goals. I am quite happy



Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee M Ilker Ayci

to see that AnadoluJet, our successful sub brand, aims further than its borders by adding Erbil to its flight network following TRNC -Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus."

Began on March 21, 2019, AnadoluJet's Gaziantep - Erbil - Gaziantep and Diyarbakir - Erbil - Diyarbakir reciprocal flights are now conducted three days in a week and tickets are offered for the special price of \$99 for the launch period.



NBK announces winners in 'Zeina Save & Win' campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait concluded its latest "Zeina Save & Win" campaign launched during 2018, rewarding ten new customers with KD 250 each in the quarterly draw, and another KD 500 in the annual draw which was held end of last year.

The Zeina Account was specifically designed to cater to young customers that do not exceed the age of 15 years old, in an aim to educate them from a very early age about banking and saving for the future. Zeina Account gives customers access to a debit card, in addition to services and activities that enable them to learn about the basic principles of saving and managing their account.



Bedoor Al-Adasani

The winners of KD 500 in the annual draw are:

- Muneerah Talal Fahad Al-Ghanim
- Manar Salah Mohammad Ali
- Omar Khaled Abdulwahab Al-Shati
- Abdulaziz Fawaz Abdulaziz Al-Othman
- Roqaya Mohammad Taher Darweesh
- Mariam Faisal Mansour Al-Sabah
- Sheikh Ali Saud Ali Al-Sabah
- Nouf Jassem Bader Al-Sumait
- Salah Sulaiman Abdulaziz Al-Othman
- Zainab Ibrahim Abbas Bakhs

The winners of KD 250 each in the quarterly draw were:

- Abdullah Faisal Eissa Al-Yaqoub
- Ghaliyah Adel Mebred Al-Azmi
- Abdulaziz Ahmad Mohammad Al-Besher
- Zaid Husain Ismail Al-Jazzaf
- Muneerah Naser Al-Enezi
- Zahraa Ali Abdullah Abul
- Mohammad Bader Naser Al-Lanqawi
- Nour Fawzi Saleh Al-Attar
- Faisal Saad Faisal Al-Mutawa
- Nour Hassan AbdulSalam

Commenting on the draw, Bedoor Al-Adasani, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We congratulate the winners in the Zeina Save & Win campaign, which we launched last year to reward our young customers on a quarterly and annually basis. We promise Zeina Account holders with new and unique campaigns."

Al-Adasani added: "In addition to the rewards launched throughout the year, the Zeina Account offers unique services for a banking experience that is dedicated to young customers, giving them access to ongoing activities that aim to educate them about saving. The account is also a great way to help parents plan for the future of their children."

In addition to these rewards, the account gives a free Zeina Debit Card, the choice between an interest-bearing Savings Account or an interest-free Trust Account, exclusive events held all-year-round and many discounts with the Zeina Debit Card.

What's On



LAPA organizes Arab Youth Festival at Al-Shaheed Park



Weather conditions did not prevent large audiences from flocking to Al-Shaheed Park theatre to attend a concert within the Arab Youth Festival organized by LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) for artist, Abdul Aziz Al-Wees last Sunday. Accompanied by the Arts Group band, Al-Wees sang many of his most favored songs that highly appealed to the audience.

ACK, KSCC sign agreement for joint research

ABB Engineering Technologies Co (KSCC) (ABB) and the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on March 12, 2019 to collaborate and cooperate on science and technology research, leveraging expertise from automation major ABB and nurturing talent from privately-owned ACK.

As part of the MOU, which will be applied in accordance with the laws and regulations of the State of Kuwait, ABB and ACK will jointly develop projects and trainings aimed at providing advanced technical support and services to industries in Kuwait and throughout the Middle East region. The non-legally-binding agreement will promote the mutual exchange of personnel, facilities and equipment, and relevant information.

ABB Kuwait has been integral to the development of infrastructure in the state of Kuwait since 1956, today we are proud to support the continued generation and transmission of electricity, assist in providing abundant drinking water, power the new hospitals, bridges and airports and provide the technology to ensure Kuwait remains one of the leading producers of oil and gas in the world with the adoption of digital.

Through internships at ABB or its subsidiaries, ACK students will have the opportunity to get field experience. Dean of the School of Engineering at the Australian College of Kuwait, Dr Mohammad Abdul Niby expressed his appreciation for this move and said that this MOU defines the guidelines for a strong cooperation with ABB which will come with benefits for both parties in several aspects such as research, exchange of expertise, consultations, etc. He added that several collaboration plans are already in mind and the near future will witness the effectiveness of this relation.

College faculty will also participate in ABB projects and in technical support studies for the industry. Tareq Khalil- Country Sales Directory for Automation-expressed his belief that this partnership will be beneficial, both to the local ABB organization and the university especially in the avenue of knowledge exchange especially as we are in the dawn of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The MOU was signed by the President of ACK, Prof Isam Zabalawi and Paul Dennis Country CEO and will remain in effect until further notice.

ABB (ABBN: SIX Swiss Ex) is a pioneering technology leader in power grids, electrification products, industrial automation and robotics and motion, serving customers in utilities, industry and transport & infrastructure globally. Continuing a history of innovation spanning more than 130 years, ABB today is writing the future of industrial digitalization with two clear value propositions: bringing electricity from any power plant to any plug and automating industries from natural resources to finished products. As title partner in ABB Formula E, the fully electric international FIA motorsport class, ABB is pushing the boundaries of e-mobility to contribute to a sustainable future. ABB operates in more than 100 countries with about 147,000 employees.



Established in 2004, ACK is one of the first private universities in Kuwait. The College offers world-class higher education on home ground through international learning partnerships. Courses of study are available at diploma and bachelor degree levels and in specializations within Engineering, Business, Aviation and Maritime studies.

ACK offers a personalized approach to learning where each student has an academic advisor who is available for scholastic and career guidance. At the same time, ACK places importance on the overall College experience and accordingly a wide range of sporting and club activities are available so that students can pursue their hobbies and interests with others and establish lifelong friendships.

GUST hosts lecture on World Nuclear Developments

Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) Global Studies Center (GSC) hosted a lecture on its campus led by Benoit Pelopidas, Junior Chair of Excellence in Security Studies at Sciences Po in Paris. The lecture was under the headline "Scoping Future Nuclear Worlds." Pelopidas is also an affiliate of the Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) at Stanford University, and is a visiting fellow with Princeton University's Program on Science and Global Security and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies. He shed light on a number of topics including the issue of the common policy approach of "managing a stable nuclear world," and highlighted the changes it is blind to. He also presented a strong case on why upcoming developments would probably surprise the general public, and then went on to use archival material and cutting-edge research to analyze how the boundaries of possible nuclear futures are decided.



CBK receives students from Al-Raja' school

Within its 8th Ya Zeen Turathna campaign, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently received students from Al-Raja' school for girls: one of the special education schools, so that the students could explore Kuwaiti heritage, traditions and some of our ancestors lifestyles.

In this regard, CBK's deputy director for corporate communication, Amani Al-Wer'a stressed that the visit highlights CBK's care for people with special needs as an integral part of the community. She added that the visit included showing an educational documentary about Kuwaiti traditions and old Kuwaiti terminology in addition to holding a number of competitions.

Al-Wer'a added that craftsman, Jamal Al-Ali also held a special workshop during which both students and their teachers took part in making a miniature of an old Kuwaiti house which was gifted to the school administration in the end along with an encyclopedia about old Kuwaiti dialect.



Pelopidas focused on the construction of confidence in the validity, acceptability, and sufficiency of the existing knowledge about nuclear weapons, and their ethical and political implications. Empirically, his focus is on nuclear "close calls" and French nuclear history. He edited a volume on the experience of the so called 'Cuban missile crisis' and the lessons learned from it. His latest essay on self-censorship in nuclear security studies will be published in the Journal of Global Security Studies.

Director of the Global Studies Center, Dr Fahad Al-Sumait, said, "All too often in this part of the world, we sometimes feel disconnected from some of the realities and dangers facing countries in other corners of the globe. I hope that after this discussion, those who attended will begin to think more critically, and walk away more aware of geopolitical changes happening around us."

With this lecture, GUST continues to build on its mission to become a knowledge-hub that benefits and engages students, academics, and the wider community in Kuwait. Previous events hosted by the GSC include a discussion to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, sponsored by the US Embassy in Kuwait; a lecture by Dr Peter Sluglett, an expert on Middle Eastern history and Director of the Middle East Institute at NUS, entitled: "An Improvement on Colonialism? The 'A' Mandates and their Legacy in the Middle East"; and one by Dr Daniel Brumberg, the Kuwait program visiting professor at the Paris School of International Affairs, on US-Arab Relations in a Time of Crisis.



Um Amer Secondary School for girls visits KAC

Within its social responsibility activities, Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) recently organized a visit for students from Um Amer Secondary School for girls to its headquarters and exhibition where the students explored KAC history since inception, developing

its fleets, the Iraqi invasion period and the present. In this regard, KAC's PR and media manager, Fayez Al-Enezi said that such enlightening visits are significant for students, especially on celebrating KAC's 65th anniversary as Kuwait's national carrier. Al-Enezi added that such visits break the

daily routine and traditional learning techniques in a way that helps learners explore and discover their talents and passions at an early age. On concluding the visit, the students took memorial photos with KAC's first plane; Kazema and were briefed about various plane types and crew uniforms.

Indonesian Embassy in Kuwait holds general election in Kuwait

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia is pleased to announce that the Government of the Republic of Indonesia will hold 2019 General Election both in Indonesia and abroad on April 2019. Election polling stations in Kuwait will open on April 12, 2019 from 8 am to 6

pm at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Daiya block 1, building no. 2, Rashed bin Ahmed Al Roumy Street.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia invites all Indonesian expatriates in Kuwait, particularly those already registered in the Electoral Roll (the list of voters), to cast their votes at the polling stations. Casting votes at drop box points will be held on April 9, 2019 only with pre-registration and special arrangements.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia kindly requests favorable cooperation of employers, both individual and corporate:

1. To inform Indonesian employees of the Indonesian

2. To grant permission to Indonesian employees to use their right to vote at the polling stations or drop box points, as guaranteed by the 1945 Indonesian Constitution
 3. To lend original passports to Indonesian employees because the original passports are required to be shown at the polling stations and drop box points.
- Daiya Block 1, Building No. 2, Rashed bin Ahmed Al Roumy Street, Kuwait City, Kuwait
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NOTICE

THEES cordially invites to another session of our series about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) on March 28, 2019 at 7 pm, in which we will continue to learn more about Prophets Musa and Haroun (AS). In this class, we will explore how Musa (AS) began a discussion with Pharaoh and answered all his questions, supported with miracles, and how Pharaoh reacted. We will see what Pharaoh eventually suggested to end their debate about Allah's existence and the duty to worship Him alone. We will then discuss some signs that are indicative of Allah's existence and how to prove Allah's existence to an atheist. We will also examine how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reacted to the Makkans' request to regulate prices when they rose, connecting that to Musa's story. Finally, we will discuss briefly the meaning of jihad and the best type of jihad, eliciting many practical lessons from Musa's encounter with Pharaoh.

Health & Science

NASA scraps all-women spacewalk for lack of well-fitting suits

WASHINGTON: The US space agency NASA scrapped Monday a planned historic spacewalk by two women astronauts, citing a lack of available spacesuits that would fit them at the International Space Station. Christina Koch will now perform tasks in space Friday with fellow American Nick Hague instead of Anne McClain as originally planned. Had Koch and McClain done their spacewalk together, it would have been the first ever by two women astronauts.

Until now, male-only or mixed male-female teams had conducted spacewalk since the space station was assembled in 1998 — 214 spacewalks until now. McClain worked outside the station last week with Hague when she realized that a "medium"-sized upper half of her spacesuit fit her better. "Because only one medium-size torso can be made ready by Friday, March 29, Koch will wear it," NASA explained.

The spacesuits aboard the ISS are in fact assemblies of several parts put together as best adapted to each astronaut's body, explained Brandi Dean, spokeswoman of the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas where American astronauts are based. She said two upper parts in each of the three available spacesuit sizes are currently held at the ISS: medium, large and extra large.

"We do our best to anticipate the spacesuit sizes that each astronaut will need, based on the spacesuit size they wore in training on the ground, and in some cases astronauts train in multiple sizes," she said in explaining the problem that hampered Friday's planned spacewalk.

"However, individuals' sizing needs may change when they are on orbit, in response to the changes living in



KAZAKHSTAN: In this file photo, NASA astronauts Christina Hammock Koch and Nick Hague, members of the International Space Station (ISS) expedition 59/60, react shortly before the launch onboard the Soyuz MS-12 spacecraft from the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. — AFP

microgravity can bring about in a body. "In addition, no one training environment can fully simulate performing

a spacewalk in microgravity, and an individual may find that their sizing preferences change in space." — AFP

Man mauled in shark attack on Barrier Reef

CAIRNS, Australia: A man has been bitten on the leg by a shark in Australia's Great Barrier Reef, authorities said Monday, the fourth such attack in six months at the popular tourist site. Paramedics were called to a diving pontoon at Hardy Reef off the Queensland coast just after midday local time after the man, aged in his 20s, was bitten on his thigh. His injuries did not appear to be life-threatening and he was taken by helicopter to a nearby hospital in a stable condition, Queensland ambulance and rescue authorities said.

It is the fourth shark attack—including one fatality—in six months in the Whitsunday Islands region. A 33-year-old man died in November after his legs and arm were mauled. In September, a woman and a 12-year-old girl were bitten and seriously hurt by sharks within 24 hours of each other in the same area. Authorities had set out baited lines to capture and kill several sharks after the September attacks.

Australia has one of the world's highest incidences of shark attacks, but fatalities remain rare. Shark attacks are considered to be uncommon in the Whitsundays, a collection of spectacular tropical islands and popular tourist destination at the heart of the Barrier Reef. — AFP

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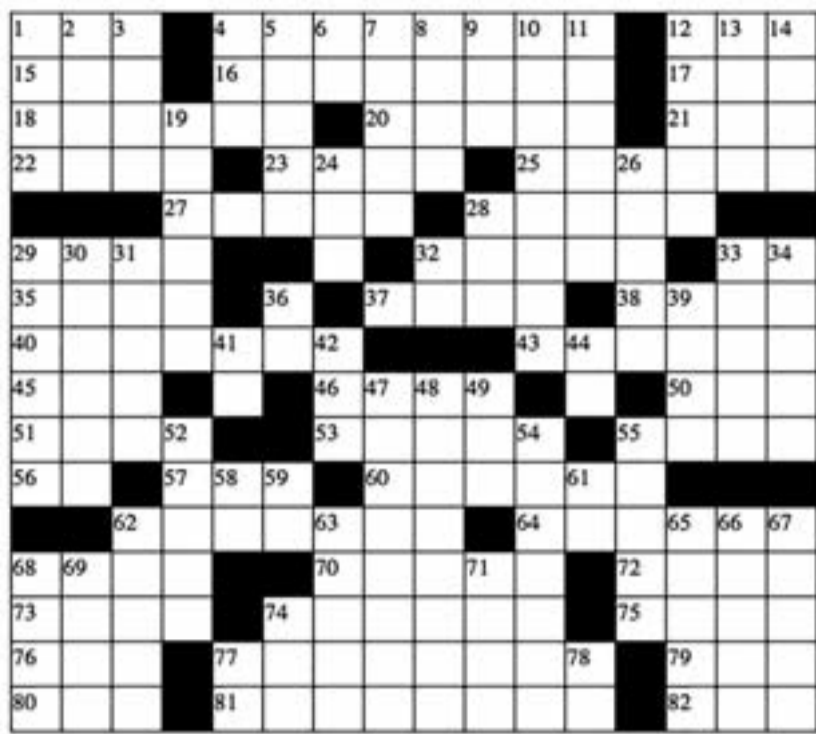
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com **Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228**
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Stars

CROSSWORD 2168



ACROSS

1. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
4. Characterized by friendship and good will.
12. Inflammation of the urethra of unknown cause.
15. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
16. Of or relating to Galileo or his works.
17. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring in the air.
18. A midnight meeting of witches to practice witchcraft and sorcery.
20. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
21. One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
22. Heal or recover.
23. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
25. Of or relating to a dialect of Sotho or the Bantu people who speak it.
27. Native to Egypt but cultivated widely for its aromatic seeds and the oil from them used medicinally and as a flavoring in cookery.
29. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
35. A feeling of intense anger.
37. An intuitive awareness.
38. An informal conversation.
40. Speak unfavorably about.
43. (of words) Formed in imitation of a natural sound.
45. Edible tuber of any of several yams.
46. Type genus of the Apidae.
50. Hormone released by the hypothalamus that controls the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone from the anterior pituitary.
51. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
53. A rotary duplicator that uses a stencil through which ink is pressed (trade mark Ronco).
56. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
57. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
60. Small often spiny insectivorous mammal of Madagascar.
64. United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
68. An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
70. The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
72. Employed in accomplishing something.
73. Type genus of the Alciidae comprising solely the razorbill.
75. A small cake leavened with yeast.
76. Intentionally so written (used after a printed word or phrase).
79. (British) Your grandmother.
80. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
81. A kind of polyester fabric.
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. A mixture of mashed malt grains and hot water.
2. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
3. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
4. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
5. New Zealand conifer.
6. Being nine more than forty.
7. (Greek mythology) A sorceress who detained Odysseus on her island and turned his men into swine.
8. By bad luck.
9. Call upon in supplication.
10. A substance derived from amygdalin.
11. Romanian violinist and composer (1881-1955).
12. Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
13. Used of the language of the deaf.
14. The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
19. Expletives used informally as intensifiers.
24. A fatal disease of cattle that affects the central nervous system.
26. Informal terms for a (young) woman.
28. (informal) Of the highest quality.
30. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
31. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
32. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
33. The basic unit of money in Nigeria.
34. Unable to relax or be still.
36. Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
39. A blind god.
41. A monarchy in northwestern Europe occupying most of the British Isles.
42. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
44. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
47. In a manner having a powerful influence.
48. Of or relating to inertia.
49. A fractional monetary unit of Japan and Indonesia and Cambodia.
52. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
54. United States composer and rockabilly tenor popular in the 1950s (1936-1988).
55. Of inferior or mixed breed.
58. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
59. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
61. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
62. United States anarchist (born in Italy) who with Bartolomeo Vanzetti was convicted of murder and in spite of world-wide protest was executed (1891-1927).
63. Happen or occur again.
65. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).
66. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
67. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
69. English essayist (1775-1834).
71. Fill to satisfaction.
74. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
77. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
78. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You're more sensitive than you generally are. People are not very understanding because most think you never get your feelings hurt. That isn't true but you present your life as if it is. Work mates don't know that you are in this mode and might cause problems for you now. You could find yourself in a workplace romance if you're not careful. You need to weigh all the options, Aries. This isn't the time to be making that sort of decision. You're not yourself now. If you're in a relationship already, then keep the status quo. Go home and try to make that connection live up to what it did for you in the first place. You know your tendency to like adventure. This could be one of those.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Whew, today, thank goodness is better. You're ready and willing to take on anything at work. You know you're in a good spot theoretically and emotionally. Mental work is easily done and you can see the project to fruition in your mind before you ever start on it. It's the same way with your life because it appears to you in much the same way that a job does. From beginning to end, you have your life mapped out. Taurus. Your love life is making it much easier on you now because it seems to be better than it's been in a long, long time. You feel on top of the world and you're appreciative. Do something to celebrate this wonderful feeling after work with someone you love.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You need others in work and at home. You can't function correctly if you don't have the people who are seeking you out to bounce ideas off, get and get the encouragement. Loneliness is part of your life right now when you're not in a roomful of people exchanging ideas but is at the crux of your thoughts. You've got a love for the underdog, so to speak, that drives you onto higher desires, Gemini. You don't mind giving if you get too. Tonight, take in a movie or good television program. Let yourself.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

It may be uneasy at work today. You're not in the mood to allow anyone to tell you what to do now. Power struggles ensue. That won't work out nicely if the power skirmish is with your boss. Try to keep from showing your displeasure at any turn of events which shows that isn't what you want. Cancer. If a friend or family member gives advice on your love life, listen. Don't tune them out. Though you don't want to hear it, loved ones, not your new lover, really do have your happiness at heart. Keep your temper in check today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This isn't the best time to try to talk to others about work ideas or any other important information. You can't seem to get your thoughts from your brain to their ears in the manner in which you want them to understand. They're just not hearing you. Your usual eloquent speech which can get any point across isn't working now. You may find yourself unhappy because you think others are picking on you. It's just the day, Leo. Watch that you don't allow someone into your emotions now who has an agenda of their own. Make intelligent decisions.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today at work you may be asked to do something that goes against your moral fiber. You won't be able to live with yourself if you do. Always follow what you consider to be right. You know this won't work anyway but if you're told by your boss to do it, you really think you have no choice. That brings a new set of circumstances to your life. Do you stay on a job you feel isn't honest? Frustration sets in as you know the decision you're going to make. Start looking for a new job or think of changes to your career to you'd like to make so you can work in harmony with your soul.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today is a day for playing, you think. If you can take off from work, it may be best because you're not in the mood to be stuck at the job. You want freedom to pursue your love interest and to be with friends. It's not that your job is boring. It's your mindset now. Be careful you don't allow yourself too much freedom in believing or perhaps idealizing your friends enough that you let them get away with issues that hurt you. Libra, you're not a selfish person but sometimes it's better to think of you with at least a modicum of ego. Think of you today.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You're a little uneasy today and it may be because of your love life. In the last couple of days you've figured out that you need someone to share life with and you know you don't want to be alone. The only problem is do you really want to have to do all the things it takes to maintain a good relationship when you're in the middle of making money. The familiar questions are do I have the time, what are the benefits, etc.? You're well aware of the benefits but the time is the issue. Emotionally, Scorpio, you need the love.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, you grasp abstract and spiritual ideas easily. Furthermore, you can communicate those ideas in practical usage in everyday life. This day has you looking for love. Perhaps it's renewing the stir that you and your lover first felt or it's finding a new love altogether. You want and need the kind of love that makes you smile just from looking at him or her, that kindles a fire inside that even sex can't put out, Sagittarius. You're emotional now and feel as if you need to protect those who can't protect themselves. Know that we're all living life to learn. You can't make everyone better.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

People listen to you at work because you're forceful in your speech and seem to know what you're talking about. In truth, you do. You feel as if the sky is the limit for your work endeavors. It's the same in your private life as well. Something has taken over to make you feel as if there is nothing impossible for you if you set your mind to it, Capricorn. You're also contending with a little bit of a wandering eye right now while you question your love life. Get out and socialize with friends. It'll make you feel better.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your romantic nature is showing. You have the desire to help any underdog in any situation. Love is on your mind. Thinking about your weekend might be still hot on your mind. You need to look yourself over now and make sure that your life is working for you. Think about all you want, weigh the circumstances that seem to have crept up in a hurry on you, Aquarius and decide if this is what you really want. You don't feel in the mood to change directions now but who knows more than you what you need?



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is a great time for living in what some perceive as a daydream. The only problem with this is you want love for love's sake. Perhaps it's not for the right reasons. You're romantic in nature right now and may not make the best decisions especially since you're also looking for excitement. Spelling it out, the grass isn't always greener over the fence. Watch yourself now, Pisces. Momentary excitement doesn't always leave you with the love you really desire. Knowing someone you've come to love and creating family together can make excitement last especially when you work at it. Take a romantic holiday with your special someone and relight the spark.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Animals 1 - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| ALLIGATOR | JACKAL | REINDEER |
| BARRACUDA | LEOPARD | SLOTH |
| BISON | LLAMA | SWORDFISH |
| CHINCHILLA | MEADOWLARK | TURKEY |
| COUGAR | MOOSE | WOLF |
| DONKEY | OTTER | |
| EAGLE | PARROT | |
| FERRET | PELICAN | |

Air Flight - Solution

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

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|
| AILERONS | INSTRUMENTS | TAIL FLAPS |
| AIRPLANE | LANDING | TAKEOFF |
| AIRSPEED | PEDALS | TRIM TABS |
| ALTIMETER | PILOT | TURBULENCE |
| ALTITUDE | PRESSURE | WINGS |
| COCKPIT | PROPELLER | |
| CONTROLS | RUDDER | |
| FLYING | SPOILERS | |

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019

A street artist performs amidst heavy traffic in Managua, Nicaragua, on March 25, 2019. — AFP



APPLE PIVOT LED BY STAR-PACKED VIDEO SERVICE

With Hollywood stars galore, Apple unveiled its streaming video plans Monday along with news and game subscription offerings as part of an effort to shift its focus to digital content and services to break free of its reliance on iPhone sales. Director Steven Spielberg, TV host Oprah Winfrey and Hollywood stars Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon and Steve Carrell made appearances at the event that brings Apple into direct competition with Netflix and the rest of the entertainment sector.

"We all want to be heard, but we also need to listen... to be able to harness our hopes and dreams and heal our divisions," Winfrey told a packed audience in the Steve Jobs Theater on Apple's campus in Silicon Valley. "That is why I have joined forces with Apple. The Apple platform allows me to do what I do, in whole new way."

The Apple TV+ service, an on-demand, ad-free subscription service, will launch this year in 100 countries, the company said. "We believe deeply in the power of creativity," Apple chief executive Tim Cook said. "Great stories can change the world. We feel we can contribute something important to our culture and to our society through great storytelling." Apple revealed only a few of the programs to launch but announced it was working with celebrities on both sides of the camera including Octavia Spencer, JJ Abrams, Jason Momoa and M Night Shyamalan.

The new content will be available on an upgraded Apple TV app, which will be on smart television sets and third-party platforms including Roku and Amazon's Fire TV. Apple will also allow consumers to subscribe to third-party services like HBO and Starz from the same application. The cost of the service, along with financial deals with content creators, were not disclosed. "These people could go where the money is, but they are going where Apple is," Creative Strategies analyst Carolina Milanesi said of the star power on display at the event.

She expected Apple TV+ to be more of a channel at its streaming video service, similar to an HBO, than to be a "one-stop-shop" that would stand alone. Apple is aiming to leverage its position with some 900 million people worldwide who use at least one of its devices. But some suggested Apple's path may be harder than anticipated.

"I don't want to know which famous people Apple has signed up. I want to know if the annual budget is \$1bn or \$10bn," tweeted Benedict Evans, a Silicon Valley investor and blogger. "Getting audience for a TV platform is like orbital mechanics — the only way to go up is to burn more fuel." While some view Apple's move as a reinvention of the iconic company, analyst Richard Windsor said on his Radio Free Mobile blog that the video service "is very unlikely to ever be big enough to wean Apple off of its long addiction to selling hardware."



Apple CEO Tim Cook speaks during the launch of Apple tv+ at Apple headquarters.



Director Steven Spielberg speaks during an event launching Apple tv+ at Apple headquarters on March 25, 2019, in Cupertino, California. — AFP photos



Actors Steve Carrell, Reese Witherspoon and Jennifer Aniston speak during the launch event.

More than 300 magazines

Meanwhile, a new Apple News+ service at a cost of \$9.99 per month will include The Los Angeles Times and Wall Street Journal, digital news sites and more than 300 magazine titles including Rolling Stone, Time, National Geographic Wired and The New Yorker. "We think Apple News+ will be great for customers and great for publishers," Cook said. Apple News+ was launched in the US and Canada in English and French and will be available later this year in Britain and Australia, the company said.

Separately, the company said it was launching a new game subscription service called Apple Arcade later this year with at least 100 titles at launch. "Apple Arcade will introduce an innovative way to access a collection of brand new games that will not be available on any other mobile platform or in any other subscription service," Apple said in a statement. The game service will be available in 150 countries, with pricing to be announced later. The move comes as Apple shifts to emphasize digital content and other services to offset a pullback in the once-sizzling smartphone market,

and with many news organizations struggling to monetize their online services.

Selling privacy

Apple highlighted privacy and data protection for its new services, responding to consumer concerns about personal information bought and sold by Silicon Valley firms. It said advertisers would not be able to track the activity of subscribers to the news service and its Arcade would have no ads, ad tracking or additional purchases. On additional services, Apple said it would offer a credit card in partnership with Goldman Sachs to be integrated with Apple Pay.

Those signing up will get a physical card and one for a digital wallet, with the two companies pledging to refrain from sharing or selling data to third parties for marketing and advertising. Apple Card features that could shake up the credit card industry include not charging fees, giving users cash back on purchases, and providing tools for people to better manage their debt. — AFP



China Fashion Week



Models display the creations from the "J BY HO" collection by Hao Jia during the China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AFP photos



Models display the creations from the "We Wear Culture" collection by Zhang Kejia during the China Fashion Week.



Models display the creations from the "Beisege & Phoenix Xian" collection by Lin Qifan and Eason Lee during the China Fashion Week.





Ooredoo successfully concludes sponsorship of Thriller - LIVE

Ooredoo Kuwait concluded its sponsorship of the international sensation: Thriller - Live, a show celebrating the music of The Jackson 5 and the solo work and life of The King of Pop in a spectacular concert created to celebrate the career of the world's greatest entertainer. The international sensation has played 5000 shows to over 5 million fans in over 30 countries. The six shows were staged over four consecutive days at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) in Kuwait City. Along with its sponsorship of the show, Ooredoo distributed special gifts and memorabilia and set up a special photo-booth for guests to take photos.

This sponsorship is in line with Ooredoo's role towards the community and the importance of effectively taking part in international events and activities catered to the savvy Kuwaiti audience from all generations who appreciate such events. JACC is considered a national landmark and our support with their activities stems from Ooredoo's strong belief in the partnership between the private and public sectors, especially when it comes to events that unite all the people of Kuwait, from different backgrounds.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Mijbil



Mijbil Alayoub

Alayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said: "We are very pleased in our collaboration in such an international show, which witnessed an immense crowd of Michael's fans from all across Kuwait. We look forward to taking part in other events that are yet to come with JACC".

Othman Aljeeran, Head of Public Relations Department at JACC added "We are proud to have presented to our audience Thriller Live show as part of our 2018/2019 cultural season titled Bridging Cultures, which showcases a

number of artistic and musical shows as well as fabulous performances by famous international ensembles brought to you for the first time in Kuwait including dance performances and entertaining shows suitable for all age categories. We thank Ooredoo for sponsoring the show and looking forward for more collaborations in the future."

About Thriller

Now in its record breaking 10th year in London's West End, Thriller Live is a spectacular concert created to celebrate the career of the world's greatest entertainer. The international sensation has witnessed 5000 shows played globally to over 5 million fans in over 30 countries. The show took the audience on an electrifying visual and audio journey through the magic of Michael's 45 year musical history, the audience experienced over 2 hours of non-stop hits by an exceptionally talented cast and band including: I want you back, ABC, Can You Feel It, Off The Wall, The Way You Make Me Feel, Smooth Criminal, Beat It, Billie Jean, Dirty Diana, Rock With You, They Don't Care About Us, Dangerous, Thriller plus many more!



Stolen Picasso unearthed by 'Indiana Jones of art'

A Dutch art detective dubbed the "Indiana Jones of the Art World" has struck again, finding a Picasso painting worth 25 million euros stolen from a Saudi sheikh's yacht on the French Riviera in 1999. Arthur Brand said he had handed back the 1938 masterpiece entitled "Portrait of Dora Maar", also known as "Buste de Femme (Dora Maar)", to an insurance company earlier this month.

The discovery of the rare portrait of Maar, one of Pablo Picasso's most influential mistresses, is the culmination of a four-year investigation into the burglary on the luxury yacht Coral Island, as she lay anchored in Antibes. Two



This handout picture released on March 25, 2019 shows Dutch art detective Arthur Brand posing with stolen Picasso painting "Buste de Femme (Dora Maar)" on March 14, 2019 at his Amsterdam home. — AFP

decades after its theft and with no clues to its whereabouts, the French police were stumped — and the portrait, which once hung in the Spanish master's home until his death in 1973, was feared lost forever. But after a four-year trail which led through the Dutch criminal underworld, two intermediaries turned up on Brand's Amsterdam doorstep 10 days ago with the missing picture.

"They had the Picasso, now valued at 25 million euros wrapped in a sheet and black rubbish bags with them," Brand said. It was yet another success for Brand, who hit the headlines last year for returning a stolen 1,600-year-old mosaic to Cyprus. He won world fame in 2015 after finding "Hitler's Horses", two bronze statues made by Nazi sculptor Joseph Thorak — a discovery about which he had a book out earlier this month.

Drugs and arms deals

The theft of the Picasso, valued at around seven million dollars at the time, baffled French police, sent the super-rich scurrying to update boat security and prompted the offer of a big reward. In 2015, Brand first got wind that a "Picasso stolen from a ship" was doing the

rounds in the Netherlands, although "at that stage I didn't know which one exactly."

It turned out that the painting had entered the criminal circuit, where it circled for many years "often being used as collateral, popping up in a drug deal here, four years later in an arms deal there," said. It took several years and a few dead ends before pinning down that it was actually the Picasso stolen from Saudi Arabian billionaire Sheikh Abdul Mohsen Abdulmalik Al-Sheikh's yacht as the mega-cruiser was being refurbished, Brand said.

Brand put out word on the street that he was looking for "Buste de Femme (Dora Maar)" and in early March he struck gold. "Two representatives of a Dutch businessman contacted me, saying their client had the painting. He was at his wits' end," said Brand. "He thought the Picasso was part of a legitimate deal. It turns out the deal was legitimate — the method of payment was not," Brand laughed.

Brand called the Dutch and French police — who had since closed the case — and who said they would not prosecute the current owner. "Since the original theft, the painting must have changed hands at least 10 times," said Brand. Brand said he had to act quickly, otherwise the painting may have disappeared back into the underworld. "I told the intermediaries, it's now or never, because the painting is probably in a very bad state... We have to act as soon as we can."

'Hung it on my wall'

Then, just over a week ago, Brand's doorbell rang at his modest apartment in Amsterdam, and the intermediaries were there with the painting. After unwrapping it, "I hung the Picasso on my wall for a night, thereby making my apartment one of the most expensive in Amsterdam for a day," Brand laughed.

The following day, a Picasso expert from New York's Pace Gallery flew in to verify its authenticity at a high-security warehouse in Amsterdam. Also present was retired British detective Dick Ellis, founder of Scotland Yard's art and antiquities squad, representing an unnamed insurance company. "There is no doubt that this is the stolen Picasso," Ellis, who now runs a London-based art risk consultancy business, told AFP.

Ellis is famous for recovering many stolen artworks including Edvard Munch's "The Scream", lifted from the National Gallery of Norway in 1994. "It's not only the public interest to recover stolen works of art," he said. "You are also reducing the amount of collateral that is circling the black market and funds criminality." "Buste de Femme" is back in possession of the insurance company, which now had to decide the next steps, Brand and Ellis said. — AFP



Britain's Prince Charles (2-L) and his wife Camilla (L) unveil a sculpture of English poet, playwright and actor William Shakespeare along with Havana City Historian Eusebio Leal, in Old Havana in the Cuban capital, on March 25, 2019. — AFP

Prince Charles unveils Shakespeare statue in Havana

Britain's Prince Charles unveiled a statue of William Shakespeare in Havana when he took to the streets of old city Monday as part of the first visit by the British royal family to communist-run Cuba. Surrounded by a curious throng of Cubans and foreign tourists, Charles and his wife Camilla were given a guided tour of Havana landmarks by Cuban historian Eusebio Leal.

Wearing sunglasses in the Caribbean sun, the heir to the British throne drew applause when he unveiled the statue of the 16th Century English playwright in the Cuban capital's Mercaderes street. The royal couple visited a boxing gym as well as a dance center run by Carlos Acosta — recently named director of the Royal Ballet in England's second city, Birmingham.

The 70-year-old prince and his wife, the Duchess of Cornwall — who added Cuba to a tour of Caribbean states at the request of the British government — were later scheduled to be guests of honor at a dinner hosted by President Miguel Diaz-

Canel. "It's an honor for us to receive them and to show them with pride the nation that we are," Diaz-Canel said on Twitter. "The visit reflects the good state of our relations," he said.

The royal trip comes as US President Donald Trump threatens to tighten sanctions against Cuba, branding Havana part of a "troika of tyranny" along with leftist Latin American allies Venezuela and Nicaragua. British governments have long used royal visits as soft diplomacy and Charles' visit comes as British Prime Minister Theresa May is seeking new overseas markets amid Brexit. Trade between the two countries has fallen off sharply in recent years, despite Cuba's growth as a destination for British tourists, shrinking to \$63.6 million in 2017 from \$168.6 million in 2013. Britain sees opportunities in Cuba's booming tourism sector as well as energy. Around 200,000 British holidaymakers come to the island each year. — AFP

'Found it!' New York City button shop saves the day

Since the 1960s, a narrow little New York shop has specialized in solving the fashion crises of customers who are desperate to find just the right button, a list that includes a US first lady, a renowned academic and even Kermit the Frog. Tender Buttons, housed in a 12.6-foot-wide brownstone on Manhattan's Upper East Side, is stuffed to the ceiling with a cornucopia of clothing fasteners. For decades, it has been providing relief to anyone who has lost an unusual button and needs to replace it.

"Each button has its charm, its quality, its aesthetic," said Millicent Safo, who opened the store in the 1960s with her friend Diane Epstein as an artistic jaunt inspired by New York's burgeoning pop art scene. Safo runs the shop, named after a book of poems by Gertrude Stein, following Epstein's death in 1998. Decades later, the shop is stuffed to the rafters with buttons, some dating back to the 17th century, organized in multiple floors of Safo's slender townhouse.

"A woman bought a dress in Rome and lost a button on the airplane. And we had the button. It was a very proud moment, Safo said. She steadfastly

maintains the store's tradition of sharing the often rich history of each button with the customer in pursuit of it. "When you came to buy a humble shirt button, you got the entire history of that button," Safo said.

That includes the metal and faceted glass buttons from 1890 that sell for \$225 each and that collectors describe now as "Victorian jewels" but once called the less-politically correct "Gay 90s," Safo said. "It was a time when the railroads were being built and everyone was prospering," she said, explaining why the enormous, showy knobs emerged as status symbols just before the turn of the century.

In the 1890s, such a button may have secured a cape. In the 1980s, they were snapped up for couture wear by Chanel's newest creative director, a rising designer named Karl Lagerfeld, who died last month, she said. The fashion visionary who dressed former first lady Nancy Reagan, the late James Galanos, also was a customer. As was Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who sat down for a cold beer with then-President Barack Obama in the Rose Garden of the

White House in 2009. When Kermit the Frog needed to secure his raincoat for an appearance on the U.S. children's television show "Sesame Street," the Muppets' clothing designer turned to Tender Buttons for help.

Much of the store's inventory is contemporary. But it also includes antiques such as early American buttons made of copper, tin and brass and engraved with "Long Live the President - GW" to commemorate George Washington's inauguration as the nation's first president. The buttons sell for up to \$4,000 apiece. Safo was unable to provide a figure for the total number of buttons in the store. A Columbia University professor did manage to count them, but she said she had forgotten the total.

This week, Fabio Malaver, 53, a household butler, clutched a Mulberry suit bag and scoured the wall displays for an exact match to replace a long-lost button. Asked if he had found what he was looking for, he replied emphatically: "Yes, yes!" — Reuters

Lifestyle | Features

Filmmaking icon **Tim Burton** soars to new heights with **'Dumbo'**

He has never liked the Big Top, mainly due to the caged animals and freaky clowns, but for legendary director Tim Burton there is no denying the romance of running away to join the circus. And even more so if the adventure involves a flying elephant, says the 61-year-old Californian, who is hitting red carpets with his 26th feature, a remake of the 1941 Disney classic "Dumbo."

"The thing I liked about 'Dumbo' was just the idea — the image of a flying elephant and a misfit — and all that sort of stuff is very appealing to me," he told AFP.

The visionary behind a slew of hits spanning four decades, from Gothic animation to screwball comedy, Burton recalls being something of a misfit himself — the other kids at school called him "weirdo." But like "Dumbo," Burton's Achilles heel was his superpower. The outsider persona gave him space to grow into one of Hollywood's most sought-after creatives when he might just have been part of the crowd.

The theme of alienation or disability as a source of strength runs through much of his oeuvre, and his most recognizable characters, from Beetlejuice and Batman at the start of his career through Edward Scissorhands, Ed

Wood and Sweeney Todd, have been outsiders. "You can have a misfit perceived as something and they use that as a positive thing," says Burton, pointing to Dumbo's big, floppy ears — a source of shame that becomes an advantage.

The live action update follows the 1941 animated Disney fable in some aspects — as in the original, Burton's pachyderm protagonist is mute — but the human characters get a bigger role. And while Jon Favreau's 2017 "Beauty and the Beast" hewed close to the 1991 animated version — notwithstanding some extraneous backstory — "Dumbo" is a very different creature from its wartime progenitor. "I felt liberated that I didn't have to follow too much, because it's not really a story, it's a very simple fable," Burton told AFP. Among the new stuff, the movie manages to retain some of the elements which gave the original its charm, such as the heartbreaking scene in which Dumbo visits his caged mother.

From 'Batman' to 'Dumbo'

In this telling of "Dumbo," which hits US theaters on March 29, the elephant calf is born in the circus of ringmaster Max Medici (Danny DeVito) and placed in the custody of Holt Farrier (Colin Farrell), a World War I veteran and widower who has lost an arm in battle.

Farrier does not get along with his kids, who discover what Dumbo can do when he holds a feather in his trunk. Filmed at Pinewood Studios, the iconic home of "James Bond" and "Star Wars" near London, the production's main hurdle was that its protagonist — a CGI animal added in post-production — was never on set.

Burton, a cult filmmaker of Gothic sensibilities whose mainstream plaudits have included a Golden Globe and two Oscar nominations, says he didn't see the final cut until just weeks ago. "We had a stuffed animal. We had a guy, Ed, who learned lots of elephant moves so he was very valuable because he made it more interactive," said Burton. The filmmaker was never a fan of the circus as a child but says he enjoys the fantasy of an itinerant life as a traveling show runaway.

"I like the idea, that phrase you used to hear: 'I'm going to run away and join the circus.' Right? Not literal-



ly, but the idea — like you're going to go join a bunch of other misfits from around the world ... I always liked that concept," he muses. "Dumbo" reunites Burton with Michael Keaton — his Beetlejuice and The Caped Crusader from the director's two "Batman" films — who plays the ruthless circus owner Vandevere. DeVito — the evil Penguin in the sequel "Batman Returns" — is the good guy here, a struggling ringmaster whose Big Top is acquired by Vandevere.

'Ups and Downs'

With his latest project, Burton comes full circle, bookending a career that started with a job at Disney as an animator on "The Fox and the Hound" (1981). But the relationship did not last long: the Mouse House sacked its apprentice for wasting time and money on the short film "Frankenweenie," which was considered too dark for children.

"I didn't have the patience to be an animator," says Burton. Disney, he says, has hired and fired him more

times than he can count over the years. "So it's like a family history in a weird way," he said. "It has its ups and downs, like any family." Burton says it is Disney's mix of monsters and magic — its refusal to shy away from difficult and sometimes taboo themes like death and divorce — that makes it special.

The studio, he says, doesn't patronize its young audiences, in an age when children are often assumed to be too fragile to be confronted with life's harsher realities. He recalls seeing a screening of 1940's "Pinocchio" — a family movie that doesn't pull its punches — and being surprised by the tears and shocked reaction of the modern audience to the puppet's death. "The world changed. The world has gotten worse, but people are getting more protective. I don't quite understand myself," he said. — AFP



In this file photo taken on March 11, 2019 US director Tim Burton arrives for the world premiere of Disney's "Dumbo" at El Capitan theatre in Hollywood. — AFP photos

Film cameras start to roll again in Damascus studios

On a long-disused film set outside Damascus featuring mud houses, palm trees, alleyways and camels, actors in flowing robes are making a television series that the producers say is part of a gradual revival of their industry. Like most other sectors of the economy in Syria, the film and television business has been hit hard by a war that has killed half a million people, forced millions from their homes and

laid waste to swathes of the country since 2011.

Any films or TV series made by Syrian production houses during the war were rarely bought by the customers in the Gulf and elsewhere that once made up an important part of their market. Actors and directors moved abroad. Studios lay silent. However, fighting around Damascus ended last year after a series of massive government offensives, reflecting a wider increase in state control around the country, and Syrian studios are starting to work again.

Ziad Al-Rayes, head of the television producers' association in Syria, said it was again possible to film comfortably and effectively. "Here you can find four seasons. Here you have mountains, desert, valleys and snow," he said. It is cheaper to film in Syria than elsewhere, he added. The television series being produced outside Damascus is about a Sufi cleric called Muhiy Al-Din bin Arabi, and is set in historic Mecca, the holy city of Islam located in modern-day Saudi Arabia.

It is being made to air in the United Arab Emirates, the producers said. Television series are also being made for broadcast in Lebanon and in Syria's two closest allies Russia and Iran, the producers' association said. The film set was part of a large studio lot that was unused for most of the war and shows signs of disrepair. A nearby set in the same studio is made up like an ancient Roman city. During the war many famous Syrian actors left the country to work in other Arab states. One well-known actor, 41-year-old Qays al-Sheikh Najib, is now filming for the first time in Syria for eight years, playing a photographer in a new series called A Safe Distance, which looks at how the Syrian war affected people. "Syrian actors always tried to keep up their good level and they could maintain their level in the Arab world," he said. — Reuters

BRITISH ACTOR **TERENCE STAMP** REVELS IN LGBT ICON ROLE

Renowned for dating some of the world's most beautiful women, British 1960s film icon Terence Stamp said he was as surprised as anyone to become a gay icon after playing a transsexual woman in the film "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert". In the Australian LGBT+ movie, which this year celebrates its 25th anniversary, Stamp played Bernadette, winning plaudits for the sensitivity he brought to the role.

The Oscar-nominated actor, who held the title of the world's best-looking man in the 1960s, said that to be approached by "gay guys on the street ... saying how much they liked 'Priscilla' brings a light into my life". "I can't think of anything that's more attractive than light," Stamp told the Thomson Reuters Foundation before a screening of the movie at the BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival. Directed by Sydney-born Stephan Elliott, "Priscilla" traces the adventures of two drag queens and a transsexual woman as they cross the Australian outback performing for enthusiastic crowds while also facing homophobic locals.

The 1994 film was a global smash, garnering Golden Globe and BAFTA best actor nominations for Stamp and winning an Oscar for best costume design. Stamp said he was initially wary of signing up for the film, not because of its content, but due to a bruising encounter with Australian paparazzi when he previously visited the country with his then-girlfriend, model Jean Shrimpton. But once filming had started, he was hooked.

"I just didn't believe I was up there in fishnets and high heels actually doing it," said 80-year-old Stamp, now with a shock of white hair, at the British Film Institute in London. Playing a transsexual woman set his role apart from the two other leading parts played by Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce, said the actor who has worked with directors ranging from Federico Fellini to Steven Soderbergh.

"I was essentially different from Hugo and Guy; they were playing dressing up queens and I wasn't. (My role) was more about what I felt emotionally," Stamp said. "I had to think about what it would be like to be born into the wrong body and born into a body that wasn't the same as one's emotions." His androgynous nature helped, he added. "It's one of my strengths as performer. I've got a kind of more developed feminine side so it was a chance to knowingly explore that," Stamp said.

Nominated for a best supporting actor Oscar for the 1962 Peter Ustinov-directed "Billy Budd", Stamp has not steered away from touching upon issues of sexuality over the course of his almost 60-year film career.

In 1968, he played a character in Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini's "Theorem" who seduces every member

of an upper-middle-class Milanese family, including the maid. Divorced from Australian Elizabeth O'Rourke in 2008, Stamp is currently working on a project with rising Hollywood star, Briton Edgar Wright, director of 2017 action film "Baby Driver". Looking back over a career that encompasses disparate films from Hollywood mega-hit "Superman" to the Soderbergh-directed "The Limey", Stamp said he remained most proud of "Billy Budd". "Partly because it was the first, but also to be cast by somebody like Ustinov was something that gave me a great deal of self-confidence in my film career," Stamp said. "During the shooting, I just thought, 'Wow! This is it.'" — Reuters



Terence Stamp

John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 'Bed-In' remembered at 50

In March 1969, newlyweds John Lennon and Yoko Ono skipped a honeymoon and instead staged a "bed-in" in Amsterdam to promote world peace during the Vietnam War. Dressed in white, the artistic duo received visitors and held press conferences from bed in the presidential suite atop Amsterdam's Hilton Hotel from March 23-29.

A photo exhibition and other events remembering Ono and Lennon, the Beatles songwriter who was shot and killed in New York in 1980, are being held this week in the Dutch capital to commemorate the events 50 years ago. Amid flowers and self-made signs reading "Hair Peace" and "Bed Peace", the couple put forward a simple strategy for achieving world harmony: reject violence of all forms.

"If you believe violence will solve the problem, that's up to you. I don't," John told one reporter. "Nobody's ever tried the peace thing." The incident was memorialized in "The Ballad of John and Yoko", released shortly before the Beatles broke up: Drove from Paris to the Amsterdam Hilton / Talking in our beds for a week / The news people said, "Say what you doing in bed?" / I said, "We're only trying to get us some peace."

In 2012, Ono released for free "Bed Peace", a documentary about the Amsterdam bed-in and a second bed-in the couple held several months later in Montreal, Canada. At one point, Ono dismisses a book of poems and manifestos handed to her by a self-styled "revolutionary". "I'm sorry, no matter how beautiful your poem is, if you can't share with people, it's crap," she said.

To honor their memory, a white "Peace Tulip" will be planted outside the hotel on Thursday. Other commemoration events in Amsterdam include a film evening, concert and tour of the famous room #902. Fifty years later, world peace has not yet arrived. Skeptics at the time pointed out that not everybody can afford to stay in bed all day or be as famous as John and Yoko. "Stop asking if it's going to work, do something yourself," an annoyed Lennon told one reporter in the documentary. "Grow your hair, wear a sign." — Reuters



New Costner movie features men who chased Bonnie & Clyde

A new film starring Kevin Costner and Woody Harrelson takes a fresh angle on the bloody tale of outlaw duo Bonnie and Clyde, focusing instead on the two detectives who ended the lovers' criminal rampage across the United States. In "The Highwaymen", directed by John Lee Hancock, Costner plays former Texas Ranger Frank Hamer, one of a posse of officers who shot the pair dead in a dawn ambush in Louisiana in 1934. Harrelson plays his partner Maney Gault.

"We've chosen this one story about Bonnie and Clyde, and rather than tell their story, we've told the story of the men who hunted them down and risked their lives to bring a murder spree in America to an end," Costner told Reuters. The 1967 movie "Bonnie & Clyde" starred Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway as the gangster pair believed to have murdered 13 people, robbed banks, and staged kidnaps and car thefts. But the new flick takes a very different path, Costner said in Madrid during a promotional tour.

"They were made heroic in the 1967 movie and that's too bad. But that's how it was made. The men that chased (them) were just average men doing their job," the veteran US actor said. "The Highwaymen" will premiere on streaming service Netflix on March 29. Asked whether movies that go straight to streaming services have the same cache as those released in cinemas, Costner noted that film and television producers were increasingly experimenting with releasing their work online. With their high-quality long-form programs, Netflix and others are raising the bar for traditional TV production, he said. "Television didn't (have) a very big hold over me until you started having extended stories," he added. — Reuters

Classifieds

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm and Clouds will decrease gradually with moderate to fresh south westerly wind to north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust.

BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h with a chance for mist forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING			Unstable weather	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 26/03/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	21 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	27 °C	20 °C		
ABDALY	26 °C	19 °C		
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C		
JAHRA	24 °C	19 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	22 °C	20 °C		
SALMIYAH	22 °C	20 °C		
AHMADI	23 °C	20 °C		
NUWAISIB	28 °C	20 °C		
WAFRA	28 °C	21 °C		
SALMY	27 °C	17 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	03/27	Warm	27 °C	15 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Thursday	03/28	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for mist forming at night	26 °C	16 °C	VRB-NE	06 - 35 km/h
Friday	03/29	Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	27 °C	16 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h
Saturday	03/30	Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundersy at times	28 °C	18 °C	SE	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:26
Sunrise	05:46
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:03
Isha	19:20

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	24 °C
MIN. Temp.	19 °C
MAX. RH	100%
MIN. RH	71 %
MAX. Wind	S 75 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	11.6mm

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

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112

Airlines

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Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
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	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 27/3/2019				Departure Flights on Wednesday 27/3/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	341	Sohag	00:05	MSC	416	Sohag	13:10
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	123	Dubai	13:40
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	521	Al Najaf	13:55
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KIS	6033	Mashhad	14:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	KUH	386	KRT	14:10
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
MSC	403	Sohag	01:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	RBG	218	Asyut	14:25
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	RBG	554	Alexandria	14:45
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	CLX	792	Hanoi	15:40
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	743	Dammam	15:55
JZR	502	Lahore	03:35	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
KAC	796	Madinah	04:10	ETD	304	Muscat	16:20
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	OMA	646	Abu Dhabi	16:35
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	JZR	105	Bahrain	16:55
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	AZQ	4566	Baku	17:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00
JZR	1736	Cairo	05:10	SVA	505	Madinah	17:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:45
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	JZR	405	Kochi	17:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	KAC	615	Bahrain	18:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:35	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	JZR	253	Amman	18:40
KUH	385	KRT	08:10	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	JZR	721	Alexandria	19:20
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	BAW	156	London	20:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	541	Cairo	20:05
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	561	Amman	20:15
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:10	KAC	101	London	20:35
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	KAC	671	Dubai	20:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ABY	126	Sharjah	20:35
SYR	341	Latakia	11:00	JZR	151	Mashhad	20:35
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	UAE	856	Dubai	20:45
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	JZR	301	Istanbul	20:50
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10	KAC	773	Riyadh	21:15
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	21:20
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KAC	617	Doha	21:20
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	FDB	056	Dubai	21:20
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	11:55	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	21:20
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	JZR	211	Jeddah	21:30
MSC	415	Sohag	12:10	KAC	155	Istanbul	21:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	QTR	1071	Istanbul	21:35
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	IRA	664	Shiraz	21:45
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	117	New York	21:50
KIS	6023	Mashhad	13:00	GFA	214	Bahrain	21:55
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	SAW	704	Damascus	22:00
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	JZR	221	Riyadh	22:05
RBG	213	Sohag	13:45	JZR	213	Jeddah	22:15
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	SYR	342	Latakia	22:25
RBG	553	Alexandria	14:05	AXB	890	Mangalore	22:30
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	JZR	141	Al Najaf	22:45
				IAW	158A	Al Najaf	22:45
				MEA	405	Beirut	23:05
				QTR	1075	Doha	23:15
				AHY	120	Baku	23:45

Pakistan's Khan fears conflict risk while India in election mode: FT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said he feared another security incident with India, after the two nuclear-armed countries engaged in a dangerous escalation that fuelled "war hysteria" in New Delhi ahead of elections next month. In an interview with the Financial Times yesterday, Khan said tensions were still high even after the crisis over a militant attack in the disputed region of Kashmir had eased with the release of an Indian pilot captured by Pakistani forces. "I'm still apprehensive before the elections, I feel that something could happen," Khan told the newspaper.

Pakistan and India, which have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947, passed through a crisis last month after India accused Pakistan of being behind a militant attack that killed 40 policemen in Pulwama, in Indian-controlled Kashmir in February. Islamabad denied responsibility for the attack, which was claimed by Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e Mohammed, but the attack prompted India to launch a cross border air strike against what it said was a militant training camp in Pakistan.

Pakistan responded with air strikes of its own and in an ensuing dog fight over Kashmir, at least one Indian plane was shot down and its pilot captured. The pilot was subsequently returned to India, leading to an easing in the crisis. Khan has offered to hold

talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue, the latest in a long series of confrontations over Kashmir, a majority Muslim region that is claimed by both countries. However he said Modi's government appeared to be using the tensions for electoral purposes.

"When Pulwama happened I felt that Mr Modi's government used that to build this war hysteria," Khan told the Financial Times. "The Indian public should realize that this is all for winning the elections, it's nothing to do with the real issues of the subcontinent." He repeated a denial that Pakistan was involved in the Pulwama attack and said a crackdown had been launched against militant groups. Although the immediate crisis has eased, parts of Pakistani airspace continue to be closed to overflights, causing severe disruption to several international airline operations.

A spokesman for Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority said major airports had been re-opened and most commercial flights resumed after Pakistani airspace was closed during the height of the standoff but some areas were still closed. "Part of the airspace is still closed for overflying - it's partially open and partially closed. All major airports are open but a small part of the airspace is still closed," the spokesman said, declining to elaborate.—Reuters

Time for a change: EU lawmakers vote to scrap clock shifts

STRASBOURG: European Union lawmakers voted yesterday to scrap the practice of moving clocks forward by an hour in spring then back again in the autumn in the bloc from April 2021, two years later than the EU executive initially proposed. The European Parliament voted by 410 to 192 in favor of ending the practice of seasonal time shifts. The vote is not the last word on the issue but will form the basis of discussions with EU countries to produce a final law. The countries have yet to take a stance.

EU law has required all countries in the bloc to observe daylight saving time, moving clocks forward by an hour on the last Sunday of March and back by an hour on the final Sunday in October. The practice of switching the clocks, also observed in countries such as the United States, was first introduced in World War One to save energy by prolonging evening daylight in summer.

The European Commission proposed in September ending the practice after an EU-wide opinion survey showed a large majority in favour of doing so. The survey generated 4.6 million responses, with 84 percent of respondents wanting to end seasonal clock changes. Critics say the survey was dominated by Germans, who

made up 70 percent of the respondents.

A parliament report in favor of operating on a single time throughout the year said scientific studies link time changes to diseases of the cardiovascular or immune systems because they interrupt biological cycles, and that there were no longer any energy savings. "New technology and different ways of living mean that we no longer earn anything (from time change), in fact we don't save," Marita Ulvskog, the lawmaker in charge of the time change file, told the EU parliament during a debate on the issue on Monday.

If the Commission's original proposal had passed, the coming weekend would have been the last occasion to set clocks forward, with EU countries then deciding whether to stick to permanent summer time or switch back in October to permanent winter time. Countries would not then be able to change their clocks forward and backward during the year, but would be free to decide which time zone they wanted to be in.

The European Union will have 27 members once Britain leaves the bloc. The UK government has indicated it will stick to the current system after Brexit. The seasonal time shift has also been the subject of debate in the United States, where legislators have tried unsuccessfully to abolish it. For now, Hawaii and most of Arizona do not follow the practice since World War Two of adjusting clocks. Russia decided in 2011 to switch to permanent summer time in an attempt to improve citizens' well-being but shifted to permanent winter time in 2014 after public complaints. The majority of countries outside Europe and North America do not adjust their clocks.—Reuters

Army chief calls for declaring...

Continued from Page 1

Based on article 102, the chairman of parliament's upper house, Abdelkader Bensalah, would serve as caretaker president for at least 45 days in the nation of more than 40 million people. El Bilad television said the constitutional council had convened in special session after Salah's intervention.

The 82-year-old Bouteflika uses a wheelchair and has rarely appeared in public since suffering a stroke in 2013. He has often flown to France or Switzerland for treatment. Bouteflika said last month he would run for a fifth term in office, despite concerns about his ability to rule, triggering a wave of protests that brought hundreds of thousands into the streets.

On March 11, after returning home from medical check-ups in Switzerland, he made the surprise announcement that he was pulling out of the race. But he also postponed the elections, angering protesters who saw the move as a ploy to stay in power. Although credited with helping foster peace after Algeria's decade-long civil war, Bouteflika has faced criticism for alleged authoritarianism. His current mandate expires on April 28.

The army chief's call was welcomed with car horns honking in Algiers, where hundreds of students who have been at the forefront of the protests were back on the streets yesterday. They were led by a group in traditional costumes representing several regions of the country, and holding signs saying: "We are all Algerians, we are all united". "Algerian leaders think we will give up... of course not.

We will be back here every Tuesday until they all leave," said Sayet, 24, who studies architecture.

Researchers like Samy Bouchaib from the state-run Renewable Energy Development Centre joined the rally in the square outside the capital's main post office. "We are opposed to fossilized power. We need a renewable power with youthful competences," said Bouchaib. There were also demonstrations in the Mediterranean port city of Bejaia where several hundred students marched, vowing to keep up the pressure. "We want to continue marching even during the holidays," said Saidi Mohamed, as fellow students around him chanted slogans calling on the country's political system to "go away".

They were joined by farmers driving tractors and employees of the state-run forestry department in their khaki uniforms. "What is happening is unprecedented in the history of Algeria. We all lived to see this moment," said Sabrina Zougui, a teacher of French literature who joined the protests. "We must say no to the (political) system and move toward a state of law," she added.

Algeria's powerful military has traditionally manipulated politics from behind the scenes. The last time it stepped in during a crisis was in 1992, when the generals cancelled an election that Islamists were poised to win. That move triggered a civil war that killed an estimated 200,000 people. Algerians have dark memories of that conflict and the military is highly sensitive to any instability.

Bouteflika, among the veterans of the 1954-62 war of independence against France who dominate Algeria, consolidated his power by outfoxing would-be rivals in the military and security services, and containing grassroots discontent. When the "Arab Spring" protests toppled Arab leaders across the region eight years ago, oil revenues enabled him to boost state spending and buy peace in the streets.—AFP



In this file video grab taken from footage broadcast by Algeria's "Canal Algeria" on March 11, 2019, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (R) meets with Algeria's army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah in the capital Algiers.—AFP

Avenatti arrested, accused of fraud and extorting Nike

LOS ANGELES: Michael Avenatti, who shot to fame as the lawyer of adult film star Stormy Daniels, was arrested on Monday on charges of trying to extort more than \$20 million from Nike and for embezzling a client's money. The celebrity attorney, who represented Daniels in her lawsuit against President Donald Trump, was arrested in New York based on separate complaints filed in that city as well as California. He was released later Monday following an initial court appearance and after signing a \$300,000 personal recognizance bond. His travel was also restricted to California and New York.

According to the complaint filed in New York and involving the sports apparel giant, Avenatti devised a scheme to extort millions of dollars from Nike by threatening to damage the company's reputation right before its quarterly earnings and the start of the NCAA men's basketball tournament. He accused Nike of being involved in a basketball bribery scandal and vowed to go public with his allegations unless the company agreed to multi-million dollar payments to him under the guise of legal work, authorities said.

"Calling this anticipated payout a retainer or a settlement doesn't change what it was - a shakedown," New York federal prosecutor Geoffrey Berman told reporters. The complaint states that Avenatti, 48, and a California-based lawyer known for representing celebrities approached Nike on March 19 with a list of financial demands. The following day, in a telephone conversation with attorneys for Nike, Avenatti stated that if his demands were not met he would "take \$10 billion off your client's market cap... I'm not f**king around," according to the complaint. Authorities said he haggled with Nike attorneys over the amount he should be paid, finally telling them he would "ride off into the sunset" if he received \$22.5 million. Berman said his office launched a probe after being contacted by Nike.

Less than an hour before his arrest was announced, Avenatti tweeted that he would be holding a press conference Tuesday to "disclose a major high school/college basketball scandal perpetrated by @Nike that we have uncovered". "This criminal conduct reaches the highest levels of Nike and involves some of the biggest names in college basketball," he added. In a statement, Nike said it had reached out to federal officials after the initial meeting with Avenatti as it would not stand being extorted. "Nike has been cooperating with the government's investigation into NCAA basketball for over a year," the statement said. "When Nike became aware of this matter, Nike imme-



NEW YORK: Attorney Michael Avenatti speaks to the press after leaving the federal courthouse in Manhattan on Monday.—AFP

diately reported it to federal prosecutors."

Speaking to reporters after his court appearance in New York, Avenatti said he was confident he will "be fully exonerated and justice will be done". "As all of you know, for the entirety of my career, I have fought against the powerful - powerful people and powerful corporations," he said. "I will never stop fighting that good fight."

Avenatti - who at one point entertained the possibility of running for president - embezzled a client's money in order to pay his own expenses and debts and also defrauded a bank by using phony tax returns to obtain millions of dollars in loans, according to the two-count criminal complaint filed in California. "The investigation paints an ugly picture of lawless conduct and greed," Nicola Hanna, the US attorney for the Central District of California, told reporters.

At odds with Avenatti's claim to be fighting for the most vulnerable, Hanna said a two-year probe conducted by his office paints a picture of "a corrupt lawyer who instead fights for his own selfish interests by misappropriating close to a million dollars that rightfully belong to one of his clients". "Lawyers have a sworn duty to obey the law and protect their clients," Hanna said. "Mr Avenatti has breached that duty and violated the principles of honesty and fairness that he claims to uphold."

He said Avenatti, who is due to appear in a California federal court on April 1, faces up to 50 years in prison if found guilty in the case. He faces up to 47 years in prison on the four extortion-related charges filed in New York. Daniels - who dropped Avenatti as her lawyer earlier this month - reacted swiftly, saying in a tweet that while she was saddened by the news reports, she was not shocked. "I made the decision more than a month ago to terminate Michael's services after discovering that he had dealt with me extremely dishonestly and there will be more announcements to come," she said.—AFP

Small sums spell success as kids...

Continued from Page 1

as to avoid complaints that Syrian refugees get preferential treatment, says Mathias Eick, a spokesman for the EU's humanitarian operations. "We've assigned 86 million euros to the program to date," he told AFP.

Turkey is home to around 3.5 million Syrian refugees, and most of those benefiting from the program are Syrian. According to UNICEF data, around 600,000 school-age Syrian children are in education in Turkey while another 400,000 are not. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of students who have officially signed up for classes end up skipping school to work and help their families survive.

At Fatmeh's school in Adana, teachers listed absent students and contacted their parents to persuade them to let their children return, with the program as an incentive. "The teachers in school were able to persuade my father by explaining how the aid could help," she said. "It

wasn't hard because he always pushed me to go to school, but it was me who helped out in the house."

Twelve-year-old Moussab, also from Aleppo, found himself back at school three weeks ago after missing the first term. "We needed the money so I skipped school to work in a tailor's workshop. I earned 500 lira a month," he said. Reem Zeidane, one of the school's administrators, said last month they managed to bring back 45 of the 150 children who were absent from classes. "This payment makes a big difference for the families, especially those who have four or five children," Zeidane said.

Turkish authorities and UNICEF have also set up a "non-formal" education program, including Turkish courses, for refugee children and adolescents who have not attended school for at least three years. As part of this program, 13-year-old Ali takes Turkish lessons every morning in a youth center in Adana. In the afternoon, he works in a car workshop for a monthly salary of 400 lira. Ali's father, Hamza, is unemployed after two accidents at work, and his mother is ill. With four sisters, three of them in school, he is the main breadwinner. "If one day our situation improves, I'll quit work and sign up for school," he said.—AFP

Mexico demands Spain apology...

Continued from Page 1

"The time has come to reconcile. But let us ask forgiveness first."

Spain's rejection was immediate and blunt. "The government of Spain deeply regrets that the letter the Mexican president sent to his majesty the king, whose contents we firmly reject, has been made public," a statement said. "The arrival, 500 years ago, of Spaniards to present Mexican territory cannot be judged in the light of contemporary considerations," it said. "Our two brother nations have always known how to read our shared past without anger and with a constructive perspective."

The demand for an apology comes as Spain gears up for a snap general election on April 28 in which conservative parties are trying to portray Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez as a weak defender of the nation's interests because of his attempts at dialogue with Catalan separatists. The leader of centre-right party Ciudadanos, Albert Rivera, said Tuesday the Mexican president's letter "is an intolerable offence to the Spanish people".

Esteban Gonzalez Pons, a lawmaker in the European Parliament with the conservative Popular Party, said Lopez Obrador should "stop fighting" dead Spanish conquistadors and instead fight Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro "who continues to kill". Mexico has stayed neutral in Venezuela's crisis and unlike Spain it

has not recognized opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president. Arturo Perez-Reverte, one of Spain's most popular contemporary writers, also weighed in, saying if the Mexican president "really believes what he says he is a fool". "If he doesn't believe it, he is no shame," he added. But far-left party Podemos said the Mexican president was "right" to demand an apology.

After making his remarks, Lopez Obrador visited the city of Centla, the scene of the first battle between Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes and the indigenous peoples of the land now known as Mexico, on March 14, 1519. With the help of horses, swords, guns and smallpox - all unknown in the New World at the time - Cortes led an army of fewer than 1,000 men to defeat the Aztec empire, the start of 300 years of Spanish rule over Mexico. The abuses continued until independence in 1821, and beyond, Lopez Obrador said. "Thousands of people were murdered during this period. One culture and civilization imposed itself on another," he said later in a speech.

Mexico has a complicated relationship with its colonial past. Its history, culture, food and the Mexican people themselves are the product of "mestizaje", the mixing of the Old and New Worlds. According to a government study, 98 percent of Mexicans have some combination of indigenous, European and African ancestry. But although that mixture made modern Mexico - and gave the world chocolate, tacos de carnitas and Day of the Dead - it is also a past tainted by violence, rape and oppression. Lopez Obrador, 65, took office in December after a landslide election win that represented a firm break with Mexico's traditional political parties. A folksy populist, he pulls no punches in going after elites and has sought to cast himself as a champion of indigenous peoples.—AFP

Sports

Brexit, a threat to Britain's sporting hegemony?

EU exit could undermine the multi-billion-dollar Premier League and Formula One

PARIS: Can British sport, which has benefited massively from the opening of European borders, survive Brexit? Experts say the uncertainty created by Britain's probable EU exit could undermine the multi-billion-dollar Premier League and Formula One.

Since its inception in 1992, the Premier League has become the richest football league in the world, a financial juggernaut fuelled by huge television contracts that has attracted a global audience.

The analysts interviewed by AFP are cautious in their assessment of Brexit's impact, not least because the entire political process hangs in the balance-but they all point to factors that could reduce Britain's attractiveness to sports stars.

Big wages and an English-speaking environment have attracted foreign players in their droves to the Premier League-nearly 63 percent of the players registered in October 2018 were non-British, according to the CIES Football Observatory.

"Part of the Premier League's brand proposition is that it very diverse, very cosmopolitan and clearly you have got many of the best players in the world," Simon Chadwick, professor of sports enterprise at Salford University in northwest England, told AFP.

"In terms of fan engagement, there is something for everyone in there. So anything as a country that we do to challenge what exists already is potentially a major risk."

The post-Brexit landscape will partly depend on the extent of the immigration restrictions placed on foreign sportsmen and women once Britain has left the EU. That could potentially determine the willingness of stars like

Chelsea's Belgian midfielder Eden Hazard and Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah to play in England. The rapid development of the Premier League came on the back of the 1995 Bosman ruling which freed up players' movement in Europe, unshackled them from clubs and created the conditions of the current transfer market.

Other factors played a role, not least English clubs' five-year-long exile from Europe following the 1985 disaster at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels when 39 people were killed after Liverpool supporters attending the European Cup final charged into the Juventus section and a wall collapsed.

"English clubs built their financial power (before Bosman)," Didier Primault, sports economist at the Centre of Law and Economy of Sport in Limoges, France, said. The horrors of Heysel were compounded by the Hillsborough disaster four years later when 96 Liverpool fans were crushed to death during an FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest.

"With that as the background, the clubs had no choice but to rebuild their stadiums, make them safer and to develop and diversify their revenues," Primault added.

Eventually, the increasingly attractive package caught the attention of foreign investors. Russian magnate Roman Abramovich snapped up Chelsea and spent heavily to recruit foreign players, followed by Abu Dhabi investors who bought Manchester City and delivered their first league title for 44 years. Cross-town rivals United are owned by the Glazer family from the United States.



SILVERSTONE: In this file photo taken on July 08, 2018 Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen races during the British Formula One Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. The new Formula One season is under way but the action on the track is being overshadowed by concerns over the implications of Brexit, with so many teams calling Britain home. — AFP

BROADCASTING LANDSCAPE CHANGING

The huge expansion was assisted by enormous leaps in the value of broadcasting contracts, especially from Rupert Murdoch's Sky. Premier League clubs are now on a different level financially — 13 English clubs are among the 30 generating the highest profits, according to a report by Deloitte this year.

Can that pace be maintained? "Brexit has come at a

bad time for the Premier League," Chadwick said, pointing out that Spain's La Liga and the German Bundesliga have made strides in recent years. "The competition is catching up. The Premier League has always had 'first mover' advantage — it has always got to those overseas markets first, it has always got the TV deals first, and I think a lot of these other leagues have become savvy and are responding to it." — AFP

Lightning stun Bruins, step closer to history

TAMPA BAY: Anthony Cirelli scored the game-winner with 53 seconds left, Steven Stamkos tallied twice in a four-point game, and the host Tampa Bay Lightning rallied past the Boston Bruins 5-4 on Monday night. Cirelli scored his 18th goal just as a late power play ended, completing Tampa Bay's third-period comeback from a 4-2 deficit in a battle between the Eastern Conference's top two teams. Victor Hedman had a goal and an assist, and Nikita Kucherov also scored for the Lightning, who have won 10 of 12 and improved to 20-4-0 against Atlantic Division foes. The win was the 59th of the season for Tampa Bay, marking the fourth time a team has reached that plateau in a single season. The Lightning need three wins in their final five games to equal the 1995-96 Detroit Red Wings for the most in a single season in NHL history.

MAPLE LEAFS 7, PANTHERS 5

John Tavares had his first career four-goal game to reach a career-best 45 for the season as Toronto held on to defeat visiting Florida. Zach Hyman added a goal and two assists while Patrick Marleau and Jake Muzzin also scored for the Maple Leafs. Mitch Marner added three assists, and William Nylander had two. Frederik Andersen made 31 saves for the Maple Leafs. Jayce Hawryluk and Jonathan Huberdeau each scored twice for the Panthers, and Michael Matheson added a goal.

STARS 5, JETS 2

Dallas erupted for three goals in a five-minute span of the second period, powering a win at Winnipeg to snap a two-game losing streak. The victory allowed the Stars to increase their lead for the first wild-card in the Western Conference to three points over the Colorado Avalanche and five points over the Minnesota Wild and Arizona Coyotes. Dallas has six games to play in the regular season. Radek Faksa and Tyler Seguin each produced two-goal games for the Stars, who also got a tally from Esa Lindell. Kyle Connor and Patrik Laine responded for the Jets.

PREDATORS 1, WILD 0

Ryan Johansen's short-handed goal early in the first period was all the offense Nashville could garner, but also all that it needed in a victory at Saint Paul, Minn. Predators goalie Juuse Saros made 29 saves for his third shutout of the season. Nashville snapped a modest two-game losing skid and clinched its fifth straight playoff berth. The Predators are within two points of division leading Winnipeg and two points ahead of third-place St. Louis, though both teams have a game at hand on Nashville.

Mick Schumacher to test Ferrari F1 car in Bahrain

PARIS: Mick Schumacher, son of seven-time world champion Michael, will make his Formula 1 test debut with Ferrari in Bahrain on April 2, the Italian team announced yesterday. Schumacher will then take the wheel of Alfa Romeo's vehicle the next day.

"I am really looking forward to what I'm sure will be a great experience," said Schumacher. The 20-year-old will also make his Formula 2 debut this weekend in Bahrain after being crowned Formula Three champion last year with Prema, an Italian team allied with the Ferrari Drivers Academy

with whom he joined in January.

"I am consciously putting all thoughts of the test to one side, because I am also very much looking forward to competing in my first F2 race," he added. Michael Schumacher has not been seen in public since suffering head injuries during an accident on December 29, 2013 while skiing with Mick and his condition is a secret closely guarded by his family.

The 50-year-old left a huge legacy at Ferrari, winning five of his seven F1 world championships the Italian team. His son was selected for testing alongside Briton Callum Hogg, who will also test for Alfa Romeo in Spain on May 14-15.

"Mick and Callum are drivers on the way up," Ferrari team boss Mattia Binotto said. "I believe that driving in an official setting such as the tests in Bahrain and Barcelona can be very useful at this stage of their careers." — AFP



NEWARK: Jeff Skinner #53 of the Buffalo Sabres skates with the puck during the third period against Drew Stafford #18 and Damon Severson #28 of the New Jersey Devils at Prudential Center on Monday in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP

BLUES 3, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 1

Zach Sanford had a goal and an assist, and Jordan Binnington made 24 saves to lead St. Louis past visiting Vegas for its fourth straight victory. Ryan O'Reilly and Ivan Barbashev also scored goals for the Blues, who improved to 26-9-4 since Jan. 1, the best record in the Western Conference during that span. It was the fifth straight victory for Binnington, who improved to 21-4-1 in his rookie season. The Blues also completed a three-game sweep of the Golden Knights in their regular-season series. William Karlsson scored a power-play goal for Vegas.

DEVILS 3, SABRES 1

Pavel Zacha scored the go-ahead goal on the power play in the third period, and Cory Schneider made a season-high 45 saves as New Jersey skated to a victory over Buffalo in Newark, N.J. Blake Coleman also scored with the man advantage, and Miles Wood added an empty-net goal for the Devils, who have won two in a row after losing 10 of their previous 12 (2-9-1). Schneider has turned aside 79 of 81 shots to defeat Buffalo in both encounters this season. The 33-year-old's lone blemish came in unconventional fashion, as Sam Reinhart scored from center ice in the first period.

PENGUINS 5, RANGERS 2

Matt Cullen scored the tiebreaking goal in the second period, and rookie Teddy Blueger scored twice as Pittsburgh scored five unanswered goals to win at New York. The Penguins won their third consecutive game

and moved into a tie for second place in the Metropolitan Division with the New York Islanders. Justin Schultz also had two goals for Pittsburgh, and Nick Bjugstad scored. Matt Murray made 33 saves and improved to 6-0-0 lifetime against the Rangers in the regular season. He also improved to 8-2-2 in his past 12 starts. New York got goals from Brendan Lemieux and Vinni Lettieri.

KINGS 3, FLAMES 0

Derek Forbort's first-minute goal held up as the winner, as visiting Los Angeles rode a 42-save shutout by Jack Campbell to a victory over Calgary. The Kings, who sit last in the Western Conference and have long since been eliminated from playoff contention, have won three consecutive games. Jonny Brodzinski and Tyler Toffoli scored for Los Angeles in the third period. Calgary saw its three-game winning streak end in inglorious fashion. The Flames lost an opportunity to ensure having home-ice advantage in the first round of the playoffs, but they remain atop the conference.

RED WINGS 3, SHARKS 2

Dylan Larkin scored in the opening minute, Jonathan Bernier made 39 saves, and visiting Detroit defeated slumping San Jose. Andreas Athanasiou and Christoffer Ehn also scored for Detroit, which has won four of its past five games. The Sharks have lost six straight for the first time since March 2017. Evander Kane and Tomas Hertl scored the goals for San Jose, which won six consecutive games prior to the slide. Martin Jones made 20 saves. — Reuters

Will Brexit hurt the Premier League?

LONDON: The Premier League is taking Europe by storm this season but the dark clouds of Brexit threaten the English top-flight's long-held position as the richest league in world football.

No deal has yet been agreed on the terms under which the United Kingdom will leave the European Union, leading to uncertainty among British businesses.

Despite its international profile, the Premier League is no different, particularly with so much of its success across the globe based on its cosmopolitan collection of players, coaches and owners. So what could Brexit mean for the Premier League?

WEAK POUND

The value of the British pound has plunged since the referendum result in 2016, making transfer fees paid to European competitors much more expensive. Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino referred to the weak pound as one of the reasons his side failed to sign any players in pre-season and compared the impacts of Brexit to a car crash.

Football finance experts Deloitte also signalled the weakening of the pound as a contributory factor in Manchester United surrendering top spot in its Football Money League and falling behind Spanish giants Barcelona and Real Madrid.

RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN TALENT

In backing the Remain campaign in 2016, the Premier League's former executive chairman Richard Scudamore described leaving the EU as "incongruous" to the league's commitment to openness.

The global appeal of the competition depends on recruiting the best players, no matter where they are from, and an end to free movement for European players makes that a more onerous task.

"The Premier League is essentially the hub for a constellation of star brands," Simon Chadwick, professor of sports enterprise at Salford University, told AFP.

"Therefore, any measures that are adopted to restrict the inward flow of overseas talent could ultimately diminish the Premier League's market positioning, thereby undermining its competitive advantage."

EU national players, including many who represent South American and African nations at international level but hold EU passports, will have to satisfy much stricter requirements to be handed a work permit.

The current system for non-EU players takes into account international appearances, the transfer fee, proposed wages and recent playing history to determine whether they receive a Governing Body Endorsement (GBE) from the Football Association.

Were these restrictions applied across the board, marquee signings would not be stopped. However, in the ever more competitive transfer market British clubs could be robbed of the opportunity to find hidden gems at the lower end of the market.

Chelsea's N'Golo Kante and Manchester City's record signing Riyad Mahrez, who were both plucked from relative obscurity in France before winning the Premier League for Leicester City, have been cited as players who would be unlikely to receive a work permit. — AFP



Mick Schumacher

Sports

Federer wary of Medvedev after Miami Open victory

Halep books place in Miami q-finals with a win over Venus

MIAMI: Roger Federer admits he faces a real battle to land the 101st title of his career with the in-form Daniil Medvedev next up after Serbian Filip Krajinovic was dispatched 7-5 6-3 on Monday at the ATP and WTA Miami Open.

The Swiss superstar produced an excellent all-round performance despite being tested by the world number 103 who belied his lowly ranking by producing some excellent tennis during an exciting first set.

Federer, however, stylishly weathered the storm to seal the win - the 52nd of his career in Miami - and set up an intriguing last eight match with the highly-rated Medvedev.

The Russian, who is at a career high ranking of 15, saw off American Reilly Opelka 7-6 (7/5) 6-7 (5/7) 7-6 (7/0), and has won four ATP hard-court titles, including three since last August.

Federer beat him twice last year but is already a fan. "He's clever how he plays the court because he can play it up and down, and he's unusual when he plays from back," said the Swiss, who hit 14 aces and won an impressive 74% of points on his first serve.

"It's a bit of a different approach. Thankfully I played him last year twice in Basel and Shanghai and I'm very impressed about his progress. I must say the last year has been unbelievable for him."

Krajinovic struggled with injury last year as problems with his ankle, left foot and hand restricted him to just seven tournaments in the first seven months of 2018. Yet some fierce hitting from the back of the court

surprised the predictably pro-Federer crowd and a brilliant run and flick over the net handed him an early break for 3-2.

Keeping the pressure on, however, was a different matter as Federer broke straight back before pocketing the opening set. The second set wasn't as competitive, Federer easing home and finishing with 35 winners compared to the Serbian's 18.

HALEP DOWNS WILLIAMS

Elsewhere, number 24 seed Grigor Dimitrov was beaten by world number 77 Jordan Thompson in straight sets ensuring the Australian will meet 2018 Wimbledon finalist Kevin Anderson who beat Portugal's Joao Sousa 6-4, 7-6 (8/6).

Simona Halep, meanwhile, got the better of Venus Williams once again as the Romanian made light work of the 38-year-old American to book a place in the quarter-finals with a 6-3, 6-3 win.

"I was pretty strong with my serve and knew where to bother her," said the reigning French Open champion who will meet China's Wang Qiang in the last eight. "When I saw I can win easy games with my serve, it gave me great confidence," she added.

Bianca Andreescu, the 18-year-old Canadian sensation who won the title in Indian Wells, was forced to withdraw in the second set of her fourth round match with Anett Kontaveit. Andreescu was 1-6 0-2 down before a shoulder injury ruined her chances of another run to the finals.



MIAMI GARDENS: Roger Federer of Switzerland plays a point against Filip Krajinovic of Serbia during day 8 of the Miami Open presented by Itau at Hard Rock Stadium on Monday in Miami Gardens, Florida. — AFP

The Estonian will meet Taiwan's Hsieh Su-Wei who continued her excellent form with a 6-3, 6-7 (0/7), 6-2 win over Caroline Wozniacki. Petra Kvitova, the world number 3, booked her place in the last eight, beating

Caroline Garcia 6-3, 6-3 in a match which was held up for one hour and 40 minutes because of rain in South Florida. Kvitova plays Australian Ashleigh Barty for a place in the semi-finals. — AFP

Premier League managers can exploit VAR: Analyst

LONDON: Canny Premier League managers should be seeking to "manipulate" VAR technology to their advantage when it is introduced next season, according to analyst Rory Campbell. VAR (the video assistant referee system) was largely deemed a success at last year's World Cup in Russia and is being used in many domestic leagues including Spain, Italy and Germany.

But England-based players have had a slow introduction to VAR, which has been used in the Champions League knockout phase and some FA Cup games this season but will be rolled out in the Premier League in the 2019/20 season.

Campbell, who has worked with West Ham in the area of technical analysis, said managers should take the time to find out how the technology will impact the game and how they can stay on top of changes.

"If I were a manager I would be putting in huge resources as to how we are actually going to manipulate VAR-how we can understand how to use it to our benefit," Campbell said at last week's Betting on Football conference in London.

Campbell, owner of consultancy firm C&N Sporting Risk, said managers could learn a lot if they get to sit down with referees before the new season starts. "The clubs presumably will be at the briefing for referees," said Campbell. "That would be the most important meeting for every EPL (English Premier League) manager to understand-how each individual referee might handle VAR or be told how to handle it."

"VAR is bigger than anything they are doing at the moment. There is so much they can do to give themselves an edge over their rivals and manipulate a game. It sounds a bad word but there is a rule set and enough flexibility within them to exploit it."

Warren Llabias, managing director of RedZone.bet, a bookmaker specialising in American sports such as NFL, baseball and basketball, agrees with Campbell.

However, he concedes even after two decades of video assistance in the NFL, howlers can be made and says it can take teams four weeks at the start of a new season to get used to the tweaking of the system.

"Coaches that are very good at managing set-pieces and exploiting rule changes regarding discipline in the box will see an uplift in their teams and there will be opportunities there," said Llabias.

"Like in NFL, teams that are well-structured and well-organised will adapt the quickest. The best coaches will make it work to their advantage." Llabias also said the introduction of VAR could erode perceived home advantage as pressure on referees will ease.

"He (the VAR referee) will not be in the middle of the pitch being called names by 50,000 people so home advantage may no longer count," said Llabias, who cited how in the NFL decisions are referred to an office in New York.

"He is not as influenced by the crowd as he is away from the boos and the cries so he can make a more informed decision based on information, not the emotion of the crowd."

There has been some frustration expressed by fans at the length of time it takes for VAR decisions to be made and Lee Richardson, CEO of Gaming Economics, said football could learn lessons from rugby.

"In rugby you know what you are waiting for, you are listening in, seeing re-runs. It adds to the drama," said Richardson. I feel football is handling it particularly badly." —AFP

Utah Jazz top Suns despite Booker's 59

SALT LAKE CITY: Rudy Gobert scored a season-high 27 points and collected 10 rebounds to lead the Utah Jazz to a 125-92 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Monday night. Devin Booker scored a season-high 59 points for the Suns. Gobert broke the NBA single-season dunk record with 274 while picking up his 59th double-double of the season. The old dunk mark of 269 was set by Dwight Howard set in 2007-08. Dunks have been an official stat only since 2000. Derrick Favors and Ricky Rubio added 18 points apiece for the Jazz, who won for the seventh time in eight games. Booker hit 19 of 34 field-goal attempts and 16 of 17 from the free-throw line, but it wasn't enough to prevent Phoenix from losing for the seventh time in the past nine games.

TRAIL BLAZERS 148, NETS 144 (2OT)

Jusuf Nurkic scored 32 points and had a game-high 16 rebounds to lead Portland to a double-overtime victory against visiting Brooklyn. But Nurkic suffered a serious left leg injury with 2:22 left in the second overtime when fouled while going for an offensive rebound. He was taken off on a stretcher and then to a local hospital. Damian Lillard added 31 points and a game-leading 12 assists for the Blazers, who clinched an NBA playoff spot for the sixth year in a row. In reserve, Seth Curry scored 20 points and Rodney Hood 18 as Portland completed a homestand 4-0.

MAGIC 119, 76ERS 98

Nikola Vucevic had 28 points and 11 rebounds, and Orlando took a major step in its push toward the playoffs with a home win over Philadelphia. The Magic went undefeated during their five-game homestand and

Euro clubs reiterate refusal to play in 2021 Club World Cup

AMSTERDAM: The umbrella organisation representing more than 200 European clubs reiterated yesterday that its members would not take part in FIFA's planned 2021 Club World Cup under current circumstances.

However, the European Club Association (ECA) said it would contemplate changing its position if FIFA sat down and discussed changes to the international match calendar. "We are not willing to participate in this competition at this moment in time because of the congested calendar," ECA chairman Andrea Agnelli told reporters. "Having said this, we are more than available to discuss changes for the future."

Agnelli complained that FIFA had given too little information about basic matters such as who would qualify for the planned competition. "The way this has been managed is like managing the local lottery for thanksgiving," said Agnelli. "As it stands, we have nothing there."

"We (the clubs) are the ones taking the risks, we are investing in the long term, we are investing in players, in infrastructure, we are the ones who carry the entrepreneurial and financial risks."

Agnelli, also the president of Juventus, added that he did not know how his club could qualify for the competition. "I don't understand how we could take part because there is no access list," he said.

FIFA decided at a meeting of its policy-making Council in Miami earlier this month to go ahead with a revamped Club World Cup, featuring 24 teams, from 2021. The existing Club World Cup is staged annually and features seven teams.

Agnelli, who said FIFA had overlooked ECAs request not to make a decision in Miami, did not accept the argument that the tournament would occupy a slot in the calendar usually allocated for the Confederations Cup, which will no longer be played.

"(The argument of) substituting the Confederations Cup with the Club World Cup doesn't make much difference in our view so there is a congested calendar which can only be addressed in the years to come," he said.

Agnelli also denied that the ECA has proposed playing Champions League matches at weekend from 2024 onwards, when the present format is due to be altered. — Reuters



SALT LAKE CITY: Derrick Favors #15 of the Utah Jazz shoots the ball against the Phoenix Suns on Monday at vivint.SmartHome Arena in Salt Lake City, Utah. — AFP

are now just a half-game behind the Miami Heat for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. The two teams play a pivotal game tonight in Miami. Evan Fournier chipped in 24 points and seven assists for Orlando. Joel Embiid had 20 points and 10 rebounds for the 76ers. Philadelphia's Ben Simmons did not play due to a stomach virus.

GRIZZLIES 115, THUNDER 103

Bruno Caboclo scored a career-high 24 points to lift

Memphis past visiting Oklahoma City. Caboclo hadn't scored more than 16 points in any of his 60 previous NBA games over five seasons. He also tied his career high with 11 rebounds. Jonas Valanciunas added 18 points and 14 rebounds for Memphis, and Delon Wright had 18 points and 13 assists. Tyler Dorsey contributed 21 points. Paul George led the Thunder with 30 points but was just 10 of 29 from the floor. Dennis Schroder scored 26 points for Oklahoma City, and Russell Westbrook added 16 points and seven assists. — Reuters

Malinga cleared to play IPL

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's limited-overs captain Lasith Malinga has been cleared to play the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season after his country's cricket board granted the paceman permission to skip the domestic 50-overs tournament yesterday.

Selectors had earlier made it mandatory for Sri Lanka players to participate in the Super Provincial One-Day Tournament if they

want to be considered for the May 30-July 14 Cricket World Cup in England and Wales.

However, Sri Lanka Cricket said they have decided to release the 35-year-old fast bowler as he would benefit from opportunity to play with "much stronger opposition in the IPL tournament, which consist of international players."

Malinga, who has taken the most wickets (154 in 110 matches) since the first edition of the IPL in 2008, was bought by the Mumbai Indians for 20 million Indian rupees (\$290,444) in the January auction. He had worked as a bowling mentor with the same franchise after going unsold in 2018 auctions. — Reuters

Osimhen hat-trick powers Nigeria to Olympics triumph

JOHANNESBURG: Victor Osimhen scored a hat-trick as Nigeria swept aside Libya in the second half to win 4-0 Monday and reach the third qualifying round of the 2020 Olympic Games football tournament.

The Belgium-based striker was drafted into the team after a shock 2-0 first leg loss last Wednesday and demonstrated his worth with the treble. Nigeria won the tie 4-2 on aggregate and will face Kenya or Sudan, who take a two-goal lead into the return match in Nairobi Tuesday, in the next round during June.

Osimhen, on loan to Charleroi from Bundesliga outfit VfL Wolfsburg, opened the scoring after 33 minutes of a first half staged in 33 degree celsius (92 fahrenheit) heat.

Nigeria should have been more than one goal ahead by half-time in southeastern town Asaba as they were denied several times by the woodwork. The second half was one-way traffic toward the

Libyan goalmouth and Osimhen completed his hat-trick with goals on 67 and 82 minutes.

Libya needed a goal to move ahead on aggregate through the away-goal rule, but it was Nigeria who netted again, this time through David Okereke in the final minute. The Nigerian squad finished the match four million naira (\$1,100) richer as senior team captain Ahmed Musa promised a million naira for every goal his compatriots scored.

Nigeria are the most successful African country in Olympics football, winning the 1996 Atlanta tournament and finishing runners-up to Argentina in Beijing 12 years later. In Abidjan, the Ivory Coast hammered Niger 6-1 to equal the biggest winning margin set by Kenya in a 2020 qualifier in Africa. Leading 2-1 from the first leg, the Ivorians scored three goals in each half at home with Italy-based Willy Bracciano bagging a brace. Ivory Coast are likely to face tougher opposition in the third round when they come up against Guinea, who surprisingly eliminated Senegal.

A further seven qualifiers are scheduled for today with Ghana and South Africa poised to advance after building impressive first leg leads. Olympics qualifiers are restricted to under-23 footballers with three over-age stars permitted at the finals. — AFP

Sports

England's young guns lay down Euro 2020 marker

Sterling is a role model for Sancho and Hudson-Odoi

LONDON: England's 5-1 victory over Montenegro will likely be remembered for the racist abuse aimed at their players but it was another indicator of why Gareth Southgate's side should be considered among the favourites for Euro 2020.

Just two games into their qualifying campaign, England's place at next year's championship already looks assured. They top Group A with six points after two wins, including their opening 5-0 thumping of the Czech Republic.

Last year's World Cup semi-finalists have scored five or more goals in consecutive matches for the first time since 1984. England, ranked fifth in the world, have not won a major tournament since the 1966 World Cup on home soil and next year will have a similar advantage, with at least two of their group games at Wembley, plus the semi-finals and final.

Southgate, though, is shaping a squad built for much further into the future as he looks to banish England's record of under-achievement. At 18, Callum Hudson-Odoi was handed his full England debut in Podgorica, becoming the second-youngest player to start a competitive match for England after Wayne Rooney.

West Ham's Declan Rice, 20, also started for the first time in midfield, while Jadon Sancho, who impressed against the Czechs, watched on from the bench on his 19th birthday. Marcus Rashford (21), Joe Gomez (21) and Trent Alexander-Arnold (20) were among those not even involved for the past two games due to injury, but who have already made their mark on the international stage under Southgate.

FAITH IN YOUTH

Hudson-Odoi has yet to make a Premier League start for Chelsea but a consistent feature of

Southgate's reign, helped by his knowledge of the players as former manager of the England under-21s, has been his faith in youth.

"I can't wait for clubs to pick players 50, 100 times. That is not the landscape we are operating in," said Southgate. "What we have seen in different positions is players we think are good enough so we'll play them."

Others tipped for bright futures at international level include Manchester City midfielder Phil Foden, who was in the squad that won the 2017 under-17 World Cup alongside Sancho.

Southgate's approach was rewarded with a first World Cup semi-final in 28 years in Russia and England backed up that impressive performance by qualifying for the last four of the Nations League, with the finals to be held in Portugal in June.

Even one of the youngest squads at the World Cup has evolved over the past eight months. Of the 11 who started the semi-final defeat by Croatia, only six did so in Montenegro on Monday.

Two of those who remain, Harry Kane, 25, and Raheem Sterling, 24, seem like veterans given the striking youth of the players around them. Captain Kane scored against both the Czech Republic and Montenegro to take his international tally to 22 goals in just 37 matches but says he does not expect to reach his peak for another few years.

Sterling is a role model for players such as Sancho and Hudson-Odoi. A teenage prodigy himself, he had to cope with plenty of criticism for failing to perform at international level, particularly after an embarrassing Euro 2016 exit to Iceland.

But the Manchester City forward has matured as a player and a leader on the pitch and is in devastating form for club and country. After scoring a hat-trick



PODGORICA: Montenegro's defender Zarko Tomasevic (R) heads the ball next to England's forward Raheem Sterling during the Euro 2020 football qualification match between Montenegro and England at Podgorica City Stadium on Monday in Podgorica, Montenegro. — AFP

against the Czechs, he scored his sixth goal in four England games against Macedonia in a match marred by racist abuse from the home fans in Podgorica.

Southgate will be wary of thinking too far ahead,

mindful of past failures to convert promise into the hard currency of results. But he knows he has an abundance of talent at his disposal, twinned with the zest of youth as he plots a new era for England. — AFP

Southgate condemns racism as UEFA charges Montenegro

LONDON: Gareth Southgate has called for education to stamp out racism in football as European governing body UEFA opened disciplinary proceedings against Montenegro following abuse aimed at black England players during his side's 5-1 Euro 2020 qualifier win in Podgorica.

Raheem Sterling celebrated the fifth goal on Monday by cupping his ears towards the home fans as a sign of defiance, while Callum Hudson-Odoi said he and Danny Rose heard monkey noises aimed at them.

"Sanctions are worthless if there is nothing alongside that to help educate people," said England coach Southgate. "My kids don't think for one minute about where people are born, what language they speak, what colour they are."

"There's an innocence about young people that is only influenced by older people. So we have to make sure that the education is right for everybody."

"In our country, (it's) the same. I've said this before, I'm not sitting here just criticising what's happened tonight because in our country we have the same issue. We're not free of it."

Sterling's goal capped a fine performance in which Ross Barkley struck twice and Michael Keane and Harry Kane also scored as England overcame the hosts' early opener to seal an impressive victory.

England coach Southgate said the racist chanting had marred the win, which leaves England in charge of Group A following two big wins. Sterling tweeted a picture of his goal celebration, saying: "Best way to silence the haters (and yeah I mean racism)".

"It's 2019 now, I keep saying it. It's a shame to see this going on and we can only bring awareness to the situation," he told Sky Sports. "It's now time for the people in charge to put a real stamp on it because you can fine someone, but what is that going to do?"

UEFA announced on Tuesday that disciplinary proceedings had been opened, with charges against Montenegro including racist behaviour and crowd disturbances. The case will be dealt with on May 16.

The Football Association called the abuse "unacceptable at any level" and said it would assist UEFA's investigation. "On Monday evening, England players were subjected to abhorrent racist chanting while playing in a UEFA EURO 2020 qualifier in Montenegro," said an FA spokesman. "This is unacceptable at any level of the game and we welcome UEFA's decision today to take disciplinary action. "Our immediate focus is on supporting UEFA with their investigation and the players and staff involved." UEFA regulations state that if supporters engage in racist behaviour then "the member association or club responsible is punished with a minimum of a partial stadium closure".

Article 14 also states that additional sanctions can be imposed depending on the situation, while "disciplinary measures may be combined with specific directives aimed at tackling such conduct".

Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) praised the England players for their reaction in a match it said it had designated as "high risk" prior to it taking place, and called for heavy sanctions.

"We commend the reaction of the England players involved. No human being should have to face abuse and vilification for their race or identity, something that many Montenegrins will understand from the divisive and bloody recent history of the Balkans," FARE said in a statement. Kick It Out campaigner Troy Townsend said the incidents showed UEFA had "failed the game" in its handling of racist abuse. British Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton tweeted: "Congrats to @England on their 5-1 win against Montenegro last night, you're doing us all proud. What you faced with the chants was despicable. Completely unacceptable, no room for this behaviour in any sport. #loveoverhate #silencethehater." — AFP



LISBON: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) vies with Serbia's defender Nikola Milenkovic (B) during the Euro 2020 qualifying group B football match between Portugal and Serbia at the Luz stadium in Lisbon on Monday. — AFP

Ronaldo injured as Portugal held by Serbia

LISBON: Captain Cristiano Ronaldo left the field with a thigh injury as Portugal drew 1-1 against Serbia in an Euro 2020 qualifier on Monday. Ronaldo was replaced after 30 minutes in Lisbon as Fernando Santos' reigning European champions drew for a second time in their opening two games of the campaign after they were held by Ukraine on Friday. There was no word whether the five-time Ballon d'Or winner would be fit for play for his club Juventus in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final at Ajax on April 10. William Carvalho wasted the best of the early chances at Benfica's two-thirds empty Estadio da Luz.

Serbia failed to clear the ball in the box before it fell to the unmarked Real Betis midfielder who's side-footed shot glanced past the post after five minutes. Ajax playmaker Tadic opened the scoring from the penalty spot two minutes later.

City to return to China after Beijing debacle

SHANGHAI: Manchester City will return to China this year for the first time since their ill-fated visit of 2016, when a game with cross-town rivals United was called off at the last minute. The first overseas Manchester derby was cancelled just hours before kick-off because of an unplayable surface at Beijing's "Bird's Nest" stadium following heavy rain.

Pep Guardiola's City will hope there is no repeat when they compete in the 2019 Premier League Asia Trophy, which will be held in Nanjing on July 17 and nearby Shanghai on July 20.

The other teams will be Newcastle United, West Ham United and Chinese-owned Wolverhampton Wanderers, the Premier League said yesterday. Each side will play two

Wolves goalkeeper Rui Patrício collided with an advancing Mijat Gacinovic in the box and Tadic tucked the spot kick away with ease to take a shock lead over the Euro 2016 winners. Ronaldo was denied an equaliser two minutes later as his effort was very well saved Marko Dmitrovic. The 156-time international left the field on the half hour mark after he pulled up chasing a ball on the left wing. He received quick treatment from members of the medical team before returning to action but was replaced by Pizzi minutes later as Pepe took over the skipper's armband. The visitors were level with three minutes of the first half to play. Porto's Danilo Pereira hammered his shot from outside the box into the top corner past a helpless Dmitrovic. Carvalho should have put his side into the lead 25 minutes into the second half.

Guerreiro chipped a cross to the back post, Bernardo Silva then played it into the middle of the box but Carvalho couldn't make a solid enough contact with the ball to challenge Dmitrovic. Fernando Santos' outfit were denied a second penalty on 73 minutes after the linesman overruled referee Szymon Marciniak's original decision for off-side.

The hosts pressed on for the winner in the closing ten minutes but Mladen Krstajic's outfit defended stubbornly to claim a point in their first game of the campaign. Next for Portugal is a Nations League semi-final against Switzerland on June 5 and Serbia travel to Kiev in a Euro 2020 qualifier two days later. — AFP

games in the mini tournament, which is likely to be testing for the players with peak temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius (86F) and the possibility of torrential rain.

The Asia Trophy was similarly dogged by pitch problems-again after rain-when it was held in Hong Kong in 2013. Then-Sunderland manager Paolo Di Canio labelled the muddy surface "a killer pitch" and Tottenham Hotspur's Jan Vertonghen suffered an ankle injury on the water-logged surface. While uncomfortable conditions for players and disruptive to managers' pre-season preparations, the Premier League and clubs see such trips as a prime opportunity to grow their fan bases in China, the world's second-biggest economy.

City recently purchased a stake in Chinese third-tier club Sichuan Jiuniu as part of their overseas expansion drive. "In Manchester City we have the reigning Premier League champions competing for the trophy," the league's interim chief executive Richard Masters said when naming the July line-up. "I have no doubt the fans can expect some competitive and thrilling Premier League action." A glut of European football clubs look set to visit China in pre-season, with Barcelona and Tottenham Hotspur also committed to coming. — AFP

France cruise past Iceland in Euro qualifying

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe scored one and set up two more as France routed Iceland 4-0 at the Stade de France on Monday night to move to the top of Group H in Euro 2020 qualifying. The result gives France six points from their first two matches and puts them ahead Turkey, who also won 4-0 on Monday, on goal difference.

"It was our objective to take six points but the manner was good as well," France manager Didier Deschamps told the post-match press conference. Deschamps praised his team's "offensive efficiency" against a "dense" Icelandic defence.

"When the opponent plays very defensively it can be very difficult to find a way through so that was a good sign," said Deschamps, although he acknowledged that Icelandic fatigue near the end played a role. He added that he was pleased that all three strikers - Mbappe, Antoine Griezmann and Olivier Giroud - scored. "They are the champions of the world and you saw that today," acknowledged Iceland manager Erik Hamren. "Five shots on goal and they scored four. That's top class"

From the start Mbappe's movement mesmerised the Icelanders, though his contribution to the opening goal after 11 minutes was straightforward. The visitors cleared a corner only as far as Benjamin Pavard. The right back switched the ball to Mbappe, alone on the left. The young star had time to aim his cross which Samuel Umititi met at the near post with a header that glanced off the inside of the far post and into the goal. Four minutes later, Giroud almost headed another, from a cross by Pavard, but Hannes Halldorsson leapt and stretched to palm the ball over. For the next 45 minutes, France, who have never lost to Iceland, gave the impression that they had slipped down a couple of gears and were content to take the long-range shooting opportunities the packed Iceland defence was allowing.

Iceland meanwhile worked courageously and managed to force the occasional small threat. After 68 minutes, Iceland were again punished for failing to put distance on a clearance. France moved the ball to Pavard who swerved across in from the right that lured Halldorsson into a desperate dive for a ball he could not reach.

'SOMETHING DIFFERENT'

Giroud kneed the ball into the empty net for his 35th France goal. That moved him into third on the all-time list of France scorers, breaking a tie with David Trezeguet. The Chelsea striker trails only Michel Platini, on 41, and Thierry Henry, the all-time leader on 51.

"He's not playing much for his club," said Deschamps. "But he remains effective and brings something different to the other two strikers."

Gaps began to appear in the Iceland defence. "As long as its 1-0 we have a chance, but after 2-0 we had problems," Hamren said. Mbappe added a third after 78 minutes. Griezmann slipped a pass between two defenders to the advancing Mbappe who shrugged off a timid challenge and slid the ball past Halldorsson.

Six minutes later, Mbappe returned the assist with a neat backheel that sent Griezmann scampering through the frozen Icelandic backline to poke the ball into the corner of the goal. "We've started well with two nice team performances" Paul Pogba told French broadcaster M6. "We knew what we were up against. They are a team that doesn't let in a lot of goals but today we did our job." — AFP

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McGregor retires amid comeback talks

Remains suspended for Las Vegas brawl



NEW YORK: In this file photo taken on September 20, 2018 two-division UFC champion Conor McGregor of Ireland arrives for a press conference at Radio City Music Hall in New York to announce his mixed martial arts match against UFC lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov of Russia. Mixed martial star Conor McGregor said he had retired from the sport, vowing to hang up his gloves for the second time in three years. — AFP

NEW YORK: Conor McGregor's announcement that he is to retire from mixed martial arts (MMA) sent shockwaves around the sporting world yesterday, but in a sport that seldom plays by normal rules it could mean his comeback is closer than ever.

As recently as Monday on an American TV chat show, the 30-year-old former two-weight Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) title-holder said he was in negotiations to fight in July. Only a few hours after that broadcast, the Irishman took to social media to announce he was walking away from the sport that has made him famous and earned him hundreds of millions of dollars. "Hey guys quick announcement, I've decided to retire from the sport formally known as 'Mixed Martial Art' today," McGregor posted on his verified Twitter account <https://www.mmfighting.com/2019/3/26/18281973/conor-mcgregor-tweets-hes-decided-to-retire-from-mma>. "I wish all my old colleagues well going forward in competition." It was the second time that McGregor had announced on

Twitter that he was leaving the sport. A month after losing to Nate Diaz in March 2016 he said he had decided to "retire young".

That retirement lasted a matter of days and he subsequently signed an agreement to fight Diaz later in the same year, winning a five-round war of attrition on points. McGregor's management did not respond to a request for comment yesterday, but UFC President Dana White said he understood McGregor's decision given his wealth and the commercial success of his whiskey brand.

"He has the money to retire and his whiskey is killing it. It totally makes sense," White said in a statement. "If I was him I would retire too. "He has accomplished incredible things in this sport. I am so happy for him and I look forward to seeing him be as successful outside of the Octagon as he was in it."

HIGH-STAKES GAME

With his fame and popularity allowing him to

wield the kind of negotiating power never seen before in MMA, McGregor and White, who played a major role in transforming UFC into a global brand, have clashed before. According to media reports in the United States, the latest dispute is over McGregor's ability to headline a card with no title on the line.

McGregor has not fought since a fourth-round lightweight title fight loss to Khabib Nurmagomedov in October 2018 that sparked an ugly post-fight brawl and led to a fine and a six-month ban. Dagestani champ Nurmagomedov was banned for nine months and is not expected to defend the belt until November or December.

Given their past dealings, McGregor's tweet and White's statement could well be tactical moves in a high-stakes game in which the winner gets to decide what happens next. Outclassed in that bout, McGregor has distanced himself from his coach, John Kavanagh, and needs a fight or two to re-establish

himself as a title contender.

A win in a trilogy fight against Diaz would both burnish his reputation and prove a popular pay-per-view draw with fans. Renowned for his trash-talking, McGregor has never been far from controversy inside and outside the cage, and he was recently arrested in Florida after smashing a fan's phone.

He has made no secret of his desire to make as much money as he can, telling Reuters in 2017 that he made \$140 million from his boxing bout with Floyd Mayweather and that he aimed to eclipse the earnings of soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo.

Whether he fights again or not, the final chapter in the story of Conor McGregor is still likely to be a long way off. "There's a lot of politics going on," McGregor told chat show host Jimmy Fallon in Monday's TV broadcast.

"The fight game is a mad game, but like I said, to my fans, I am in shape and I am ready. There are a lot of opponents (out there)..." — Reuters

Smith's IPL return overshadowed by Buttler's 'Mankad' dismissal

JAIPUR: Ravichandran Ashwin's controversial "Mankad" dismissal of England batsman Jos Buttler sparked outrage on Monday, with current and former cricket greats accusing the Kings XI Punjab captain of unsportsmanlike behaviour.

Spinner Ashwin took the bails off at the non-striker's end while Buttler was backing up, with the controver-

sial move overshadowing his side's 14-run victory over Rajasthan Royals and the return to IPL cricket of Australia's Steve Smith.

The term "Mankad"—used when a bowler runs out a non-striker before delivery—was coined 70 years ago when Indian all-rounder Vinoo Mankad twice ran out Bill Brown at the bowler's end during India's tour of Australia in 1947.

It is considered to be against cricket's spirit of fair play and Buttler, who scored 69 off 43 deliveries, walked dejectedly back to the pavilion after an argument with the India bowler. Former England captain Michael Vaughan said Ashwin's actions were unacceptable. "If @josbuttler had been warned well that's fine ... if he hasn't and it's the first time I think @ashwinravi99 is completely out of order ... watch how often this happens from now on!!!!!! #IPL", he wrote on Twitter.

Buttler's Rajasthan team-mate Jofra Archer, who will soon qualify to play for England, also took to Twitter to

express his anger. Archer wrote of Ashwin: "You show no confidence in yourself or your bowlers to get the job done so you resort to that? #greatcaptaincy"

Ashwin was unrepentant, however. "No real argument to that. I didn't even load and he left the crease. It's always been my take on it, because it's my half of the crease," he said.

Royals skipper Ajinkya Rahane played down the controversy and said his team will take it "sportingly". "We are not supposed to comment on a controversial issue. The match referee will take the call," he said.

Smith, who along with compatriot David Warner made his return to the IPL after missing the previous edition due to a ball-tampering controversy, walked out into a charged field of play.

The former Australia captain took time to settle down before hitting England paceman Sam Curran for a four and six in one over. Curran, who took two wickets, got his revenge in his very next over as he sent Smith

trudging back to the pavilion with KL Rahul taking a sharp catch while running to his left from long-on.

Bowlers soon struck back as the Royals batting collapsed from 148-2 to 164-9 as a disappointed Smith looked on from the dugout. On Sunday, Warner enjoyed a run-filled comeback to the world's most popular T20 league, scoring 85 off 53 balls for Sunrisers Hyderabad, who also lost their opening match.

Bans from state and international cricket for Smith and Warner end on March 28 but the duo are keen to get among the runs in the IPL, ahead of the 50-over World Cup starting in May. The suspension did not include club games but IPL's governing council decided not to allow the disgraced duo in the 11th edition of the T20 league last year in a bid to avoid controversy.

The pair were banned for cheating during a Cape Town Test in March last year along with teammate Cameron Bancroft, whose nine-month ban has already finished. — AFP