

Friday Times

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There can only
be one winner!

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There can only be one **winner!**

PUBG takes hold in Kuwait's gaming communities

By Ramona Crasto

I jump off the plane carrying us to Sanhok Island with 99 others and have only 35 minutes to find two guns and enough ammo to survive. I see two parachutes glide towards me and run for cover while frantically searching for weapons. Footsteps appear on the map, someone is close by. I jump from the window of the house and shoot him from behind; 1 dead, 50 to go till I get my chicken dinner.

You might think I'm dreaming. Only the sand at my feet reminds me I'm in Kuwait. Actually I'm gaming - using my mobile on the bus, waiting in line, sitting at the doctor's office - and playing a virtual fight to the death video game.

Online gaming has spread globally and anyone with a mobile and an internet connection can play. Violence and risky behavior tied to gaming, however, has led to controversy and in some instances, games being banned.

PUBG: PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds may be the next target. Played by more than 400 million people worldwide, it's been tied to some violent episodes and already a district in the state of Gujarat in India imposed a ban on the game. In Kuwait, at least one stabbing has been linked to the game and rumors have circulated in recent days that it might be banned here soon.

PUBG is a multiplayer battle royale game in which up to 100 players parachute onto an island and scavenge for weapons and equipment to kill others, while avoiding getting killed themselves. The safe area of the game's map decreases in size over time, directing surviving players into tighter spaces to force encounters. The last player or team standing wins the round.

The pros and cons of gaming

Advocates and critics of online gaming are divided over its growing popularity. Some argue that there are positive aspects and others fear the influence of the normalization of excessive violence. Studies suggest that online games are good for the brain and body. Playing video games directly affects and impacts regions of the brain responsible for memory, spatial orientation, information organization and fine motor skills. Minecraft offers a number of educational benefits, like teaching kids how to use objects to explore

environments and solve problems, while games like Civilization and Age of Empires teach problem solving and history on a more "global" level.

Donovan Ferrao, 26, believes the virtual world should be set apart from the actual world - both should never be mixed. "I have been playing DOTA and PUBG since they were first released. To me, these games are a means of relaxation after a long day at work. Speaking of violence, most game can be customized to be less gory. PUBG is just like paintball - if a game is being banned or under fire for being violent, then so should selling guns, be they toys or real."

Children and gaming violence

At the same time, younger children especially are often influenced negatively by video games. Gamer brain is becoming increasingly problematic in schools, where children act out scenes from violent mature video games, resulting in acts of sexualized and physical violence toward other students.

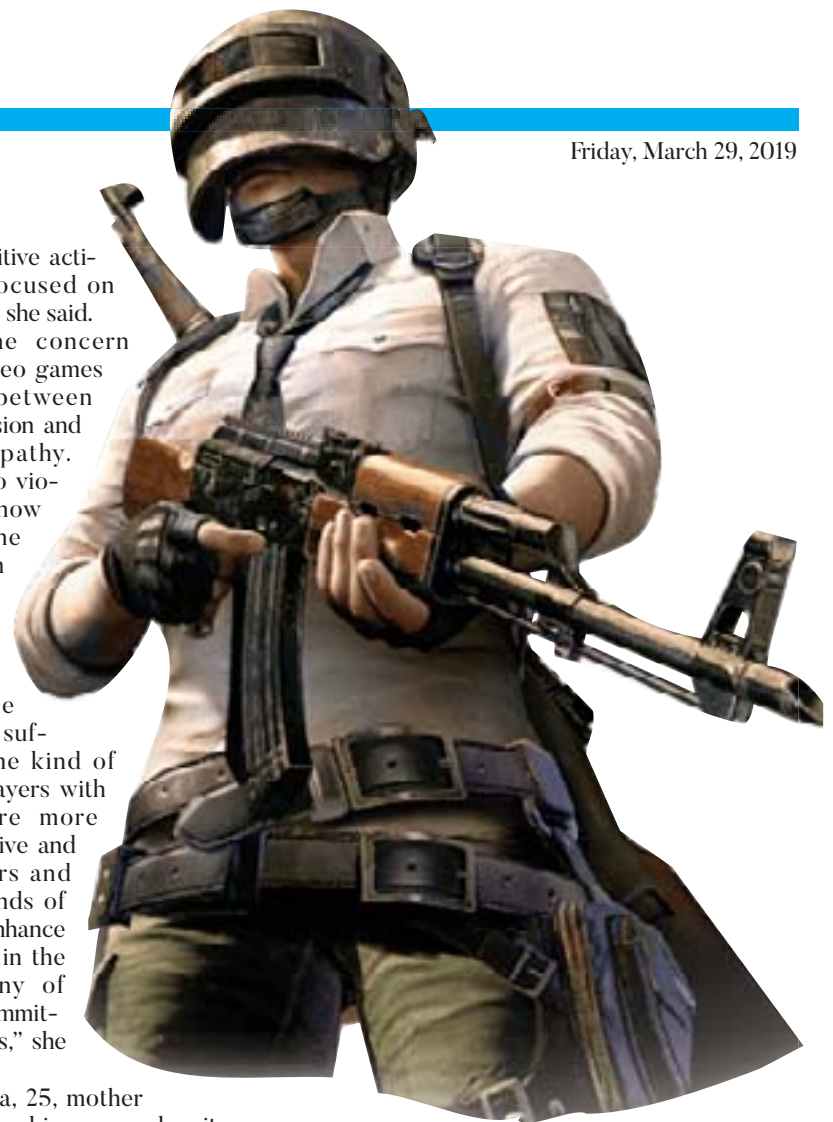
"We need to consider the fact that as the society has become less sensitized to violence on TV and in the world, it has also become less sensitized to violent games and the reactions players get mentally or emotionally from playing them," explains Psychologist Darlene Haddad. "On a positive note, gamers become good at developing better attention spans and

require less cognitive activation to stay focused on demanding tasks," she said.

"However, the concern about violent video games is the link between increased aggression and decreased empathy. When it comes to violent games and how they affect the brain, it differs in the types of brain we are looking at. You have the male, female, teen, adult and people that are already suffering from some kind of mental issues. Players with these issues are more prone to aggressive and violent behaviors and playing these kinds of games will only enhance their aggression in the real world, many of whom end up committing violent crimes," she added.

May Al-Sharaa, 25, mother of a child, said it's a big no-no when it comes to violent online games. "I would never want my child to play such games. Most of these games glorify killing humans, which might encourage one to think that killing another person is very normal. Even with age restrictions, children somehow find a way around it. Parents should avoid giving a cellphone to kids before the age of 12. There is enough violence already in the world - we don't need any more of it through such games," she told Kuwait Times.

But it isn't all bad. For someone who has never played games that involve killing another player online, Haroon Khan, 20, chose Fortnite over PUBG. "Fortnite is very different from PUBG. The graphics are colorful and more animated and one needs to be very skillful to play this game. You need to build your own defenses and strategize in order to reach the end. Of course, one becomes aggressive while playing such games, but it's the same with all games, be it football online or on the field. It is a phase - once the game is done, it's all gone," said Khan.



Normal teens' brains show brain function changes associated with violent video games. In a study at the Radiological Society of North America, Indiana University School of Medicine researchers did MRI tests on teenagers' brains 30 minutes after playing violent video games and found the results showed increased activity in the region of the brain that governs emotional arousal, as well as decreased activity in the self-control area of the brain.

Games are not the root cause

Owner of Hydra Gaming Center in Kuwait, Mohammad Al-Harbi has played all of them from Final Fantasy to Counter Strike. He started his own gaming center in 2016 when the gaming scene was more thriving than today. "It is not fair to blame games for a person's behavior. Mortal Kombat series is one of the most violent games I know of, and has never been blamed for a person's behavior. The reason PUBG has been making headlines is because it is easily accessible these days. There should be more restrictions and parental control to avoid children below a certain age to play these games rather than completely banning it. Many use video games to escape their stressful life at work or home and simply relax. For some it's a hobby and passion while in today's world it is also taken up as a profession."

However, the debate around whether normal functioning teens would display signs of aggression after playing violent games is still unclear. Recently, the American Psychological Association said these teens would only feel slightly more aggressive for only 30 minutes after playing violent games. When it comes to the adult brain, playing violent action adventure games for prolonged periods does not make adults more aggressive, say researchers from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and the University Clinic Hamburg-Eppendorf in Germany. However, adults can still become addicted to these games just like teens.

Kuwait Times

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Kuwait's neighborhoods:

Exploring Shamiya

By Faten Omar

As part of our occasional series exploring various areas of Kuwait, Kuwait Times visited Shamiya to learn more about this historic residential area.



Shamiya is located near Kuwait City between the First and Second Ring Roads, consisting of 10 residential blocks. Although the Shamiya Gate is named the same as the area, the gate is not in Shamiya but near the ice skating rink on Soor Street in Kuwait City.

Shamiya Mayor Ibrahim Abdulaziz Al-Mashael told Kuwait Times about the history of Shamiya, adding that the area had the first mayoral office in 1961 - established on Independence Day.

He pointed out that Shamiya is one of the most modern residential areas. It emerged after the wall between it and Keifan was knocked down in 1957. "Shamiya is one of the

most famous areas in the Kuwaiti capital - it was an open field where freshwater was available for travelers on their way to Sham. The area was known as a desert oasis where traders rested before making their way to the Levant," Mashael added. The name Shamiya is derived from this use of the area as a location for traders from Sham.

Many traditional Kuwaiti homes in the area have been replaced with modern mansions and some of Kuwait's oldest merchant families live in the area.

The mayor noted that Shamiya is now a developed and advanced area. "When I became the mayor of Shamiya, I organized educational, health, social and security



Mayor of Al-Shamiya, Ibrahim Abdulaziz Al-Mashael



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committees to follow up and serve the area's residents. We are now developing our education system to help students improve and get a better education."

Mashaal said the area has an intimate vibe, where all the neighbors know each other. He knows to whom every house belongs and how many family members live in it. "Shamiya's residents would like to remain this way, but some people have chosen to rent their houses to strangers and made this an investment area. This

doesn't seem okay to me and other residents, as we would like the area to remain a residential one," he said.

Shamiya did not become a residential area until the 1930s, when the first clay dwellings were built. The palace of the late Prince Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was the first building built in Shamiya in the 1930s. It was used by the independent American Oil Company for a period of time until 1962. It was then allocated to the ministry of education.



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US Embassy celebrates Independence Day



US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman and Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah cut the ceremonial cake as Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and the ambassador's wife Vicki Silverman look on at the US Independence Day celebration Wednesday evening.



The US Embassy in Kuwait held its annual Independence Day celebration at its premises in Bayan Wednesday evening, hosted by US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman and his wife Vicki Silverman. The ambassador, during his remarks, reaffirmed Washington's commitment to Kuwait's security. "Let me take this opportunity to state, as the President did to His

Highness the Amir at the White House last September: The United States remains committed to Kuwait's security."

Silverman also highlighted the growing importance of economic diversity and innovation and entrepreneurship to Kuwait's economy. "Ladies and gentlemen, a strategic partnership means having an interest in your partner's success. This evening, I will highlight this

embassy's encouragement of economic diversification through innovation and entrepreneurship in Kuwait."

Several local SMEs and innovation hubs including Sirdab Lab, Cubicle as well as leading innovators like Zain showcased their activities with booths at the Independence Day celebrations. The ambassador also noted that innovation requires "quality education" and

that the "embassy is expanding its support of training for public school English teachers", with more than 400 teachers trained so far.

Senior Kuwaiti officials attended the event, including Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah among others.

Life of 'Great Giver' celebrated

By Faten Omar

Family and friends from abroad and Kuwait gathered at the 2019 Global Biking Initiative (GBI) biking event in Kuwait, to celebrate the life of the "Great Giver". A team of bikers came to Kuwait to cycle for a cause against child labor, child trafficking and child abuse in the name of the late Ahmed Hashim Al-Gharabally, a well-known local entrepreneur, humanitarian and activist.

Ninon Al-Gharabally, Ahmed's mother, told

Kuwait Times she is heartbroken because she lost Ahmed, the "Great Giver", as everyone used to call him. She said Ahmed was a kind man and cared for everyone - he did not discriminate on the basis of color, religion or social status. "He initiated a campaign to encourage humane treatment and respect for Kuwait's street cleaners through social media. The street cleaners found love in a hopeless place. Now, I'm cooking for street cleaners to keep his legacy alive," she said.

She added that her son helped spawn several social initiatives and entrepreneurial endeavors. He was smart, extremely competent, energetic and passionate about human rights. "Ahmed was continually inspiring others and taking the lead in promoting positive change in Kuwait and beyond. He brought every occasion to life with his vibrant soul and engaging contributions. He was such an inspiration in life."

Gharabally broke down in tears as she described her late son. "My adored son Ahmed passed away on May 30, 2017. Ahmed was a part of me - he was the air I breathe, the eyes that I see with. I can say he is my soul mate and many people can vouch for that. I loved him intensely and still do," she said. "He was loved and respected by everybody who knew him. His passion in life was in helping people and his ability to give defied all descriptions. He was a giver - he gave everything. He was passionate about human rights and he also loved laughter and having fun. He loved kids and was a kind and tender soul that wanted the best for everyone and strived to be his best," she said.



Ahmed Al-Gharabally



Ninon Al-Gharabally and her son Fasial.

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Two lawmakers, ex-MP under probe over inflated accounts

MoCI vows to control meat prices during Aussie livestock ban

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that two current lawmakers and one former MP, in addition to an unspecified number of businessmen, have been referred for legal investigations over inflated bank accounts. The lawmaker said the suspects have been sent to the public prosecution for legal investigation over funds that were deposited to their accounts without any reasonable explanation.

Adasani said that one of the men saw KD 11.7 million enter his account between the beginning of 2016 and Oct 2017, although he is not involved in business and does not have any business interests. This account saw suspected transactions worth over KD 10 million. The owner of the account also withdrew over KD 2

million in cash. He also said a member of the 2013 Assembly transferred some KD 600,000 in Aug 2016 without explaining the reasons for the transfer.

Adasani however did not disclose the names of the men under investigation, but he said he has the details. He however added former MP Abdullah Al-Tamimi had sued him because he accused him of receiving money from the prime minister, MP Mohammed Tana had confessed that he was offered a fortune to resign and that MP Faisal Al-Kandari had filed a case against him. Adasani held the ministers of finance and interior responsible for not taking the necessary legal procedures against suspected cases of money laundering and others and vowed he will grill them in the National Assembly.

In late 2011, the public prosecution interro-

gated 13 MPs for inflated bank accounts amid allegations of political bribery, but the prosecution freed them and shelved the case over a lack of legislation to press charges against them. Adasani however stressed that the law has been amended and there are enough laws like the conflict of interests and anti-money laundering laws and the penal code. These laws have been amended and new legislations have been issued, so there is no lack in legislation, he said.

Meanwhile, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan stressed the ministry is keen on implementing law number 10/1979 and the amended law number 117/2013 pertaining supervising trading in various goods and controlling their prices through inspection campaigns on various co-ops, markets, outlets, restaurants and butcheries.

Responding to a parliamentary inquiry concerning the measures taken by the ministry in preparation for suspending Australian sheep exports to Kuwait and other GCC states for two to four months annually, which might lead to unjustified meat price increases, Roudhan stressed that the consumer protection department will be alerted to follow up meat prices and control them on a 24/7 basis, adding that the ministry's complaints hotline 135 will always be ready to receive complaints.

In addition, Roudhan said the ministry is about to offer an e-system project to control prices for public bidding, adding that the system will provide consumers with weekly pricelists of around 500 items so that they can monitor prices themselves and choose which outlet to purchase products from.

Kuwait: Golan Syrian Arab land occupied by Israel

NEW YORK: Kuwait has anew reiterated that the occupied Golan Heights is a Syrian Arab land occupied by Israel, the occupying power. This came in Kuwait's speech at the meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, which discussed the Golan Heights issue, which was delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. "The seizure and annexation of land by force is unacceptable and contravenes the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions. The decision of Israel - the occupying power - to impose its laws, authority and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and has no legal effect at the international level, the Kuwaiti diplomat said.

"What I have mentioned is not only the position of the State of Kuwait or the position of the League of Arab States, but the position of the Security Council in accordance with its resolution 497, unanimously adopted in December 1981," he stressed. "We have all seen the international reactions that opposed any step aimed at annexing the territories by force and rejecting any illegal measures aimed at increasing tension in the Middle East," he added. "We reiterate our support for Syria's just demand and its right to restore the entire occupied Syrian Arab Golan. We reiterate that the Security Council in its resolutions on Syria always affirms its commitment to Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity," he said. With regard to the work of UNDOF, Otaibi praised efforts of its members and their work amidst the security conditions they face, including the dangers of mines, explosive devices and the possibility of the presence of terrorist cells in their area of work. "We firmly believe that this force is one of the few remaining sources of stability in the region, and here lies the importance of maintaining its presence and the Council's support for its work so that it can carry out its responsibilities," he said.

Meanwhile, Kuwait said that the continuous nine-year Syrian crisis is a reminder that the Security Council is unable to protect international peace and security. Otaibi said during the UNSC session. "As the crisis enters its ninth year, we remember the death of hundreds of thousands of people in the war in Syria and the immigration and displacement of millions," he said. He added that Kuwait fully supports the UN Secretary General's appeals to resolve the situation in Syria, calling on all parties to commit to the Turkish-Russian ceasefire agreement in Idlib, respect the interna-



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. — KUNA

tional humanitarian law and protect human rights.

They also include allowing the delivery of humanitarian aid, boost international efforts to reach a political solution in Syria and support the UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen to execute the terms of the UNSC resolution no. 2254 and the Geneva II Conference on Syria 2012. Meanwhile, Otaibi spoke of the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, held this month. It was the seventh donors' conference following the first three held in Kuwait, the fourth in London and the last three in Brussels.

The ambassador hailed the generous pledges made during the conference by different countries, adding that Kuwait pledged \$300 million for the next three years. Since the beginning of the crisis, Kuwait had donated about \$1 billion and \$900 million, he noted. He added that there are still 11.7 million people in need of humanitarian aid. Otaibi also highlighted the recent defeat of the so-called Islamic State (IS) this month in the areas the terrorist group controls in Syria, which is a positive step in the war against terrorism. Moreover, the ambassador called on the international community to respect Syria as an independent state, expressing his regret over the US decision to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syria's Golan Heights. — KUNA

10,000 expats who were cheated will not be deported

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The residency affairs investigations directorate decided to not deport 10,000 workers sponsored by fake companies whose owners - six Kuwaitis - have already been referred to public prosecution over human trafficking charges, said security sources. The sources explained that for humanitarian reasons and for being victims themselves, the criminal security sector had been instructed to allow these laborers to legalize their stay in Kuwait, pay the fines and transfer their residencies to other companies.

Overstaying patients

In view of growing number of complaints about lack of hospital beds, the health ministry urged foreign embassies in Kuwait to convince their nationals who refuse to being discharged after receiving treatment prescribed by their doctors to leave public hospitals, said informed sources. The sources added that scores of complaints had been filed against expat reluctant to leave hospital or ICU rooms after concluding their treatment plans, adding that the health ministry urged the interior ministry to take legal actions against these patients.

Meanwhile, the sources added that the health ministry will issue a decision next week terminating the contracts of 88 expats working in various sectors. The sources explained that the decision includes four lists of names including sports coordinators, social workers, PC operators, data entry clerks, specialized engineers, electricity, AC and medical equipment maintenance mechanics, electronics and wireless communication technicians and typists.

Sheikh Nasser: National Museum of Qatar fabulous cultural masterpiece

Strong Kuwait-Qatar relations hailed

DOHA: Representative of HH the Amir of Kuwait, First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, has expressed admiration of the National Museum of Qatar's new premises, describing it as a distinctive cultural and scientific masterpiece. In statements to KUNA after representing HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the inaugural ceremony of the National Museum of Qatar in Doha Wednesday, Sheikh Nasser voiced pride of Qatar's inauguration of this great cultural edifice.

"It a pleasure for me to represent His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in opening the National Museum of Qatar, which I consider a source of pride for Gulf Cooperation Council states," he said. He congratulated Qatari people and government on opening a marvelous cultural masterpiece. Sheikh Nasser also noted that he had conveyed the greetings of HH the Amir to Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser during his meeting with them.

For his part, Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Hafeez Al-Ajmi hailed Qatar's inauguration of

the new museum. It is an amazing civilizational achievement and a new symbol of the Qatar's cultural renaissance, Ajmi told KUNA on the sidelines of the event. He congratulated Qatari leadership and people on the new museum. Ajmi emphasized the strength and depth of bonds between Kuwait and Qatar and the steadily growth of bilateral relations in all domains.

The 40,000-square-meter museum was designed by French architect Jean Nouvel who drew inspiration from the desert rose, a flower-like formation that occurs naturally in the Gulf region when minerals crystallize in the crumbly soil just below the surface of a shallow salt basin. It embraces as its centerpiece the restored historic Palace of Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al-Thani (1880-1957), son of the founder of modern Qatar. The museum's gallery path, which includes eleven galleries take, visitors from the formation of the Qatar peninsula to the nation's diverse present. Giving voice to the nation's rich heritage and culture and expressing the aspirations of its people. The museum also provides a space for discovery, creativity, and community engagement as well as diverse educational opportunities. — KUNA



DOHA: Representative of HH the Amir of Kuwait, First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani are seen during the inaugural ceremony of the National Museum of Qatar. — KUNA

PM meets IT, investment officials



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday at Seif Palace with Chairman and CEO of Public Authority of Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority Salem Al-Othaina and Director General of Kuwait Direct

Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in addition to Amazon Web Services Vice-President Teresa Carlson and her accompanying delegation. The meeting was attended by Minister of Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi. — KUNA

Warm weather at weekend, chance of rain showers

KUWAIT: The weather in Kuwait will be warm with partial clouds in the coming days, said meteorologist Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi. The country is currently affected by high pressure that will recede gradually, allowing Sudan's seasonal low pressure to affect the weather, Al-Qarawi told KUNA yesterday. Yesterday's weather was

moderate with southwesterly winds, turning to northwesterly light to moderate speedy winds. Clouds were medium with a chance of thunderstorms, mainly from today evening until mid-next week.

The weather yesterday night will be relatively cold and partially cloudy with multi-directional to light to moderate northwesterly winds, between six to 28 km/h with a chance of light fog in some areas. The lowest temperature was between 13 to 15 Celsius with light to moderate sea waves between one to three feet.

As for today morning, it will be warm and partially cloudy with multi-directional to north-easterly light to moderate winds between eight to 35 km/h and a chance of light rain. —KUNA

Speaker: Kuwait strongly believes in the GCC

JEDDAH: Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly (parliament) Marzouq Al-Ghanem has affirmed that Kuwait, people and leadership, solidly advocates existence of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This Kuwaiti view of the GCC is not based on emotions, instead by a political doctrine and strategic destiny, Ghanem said, addressing the second regular meeting of heads of GCC legislative assemblies and shura councils.

The GCC is a significant entity; not only for the GCC countries' citizens, but for all Arab and Muslims as well as all nations of the globe, he continues. Expressing satisfaction that heads of all legislative bodies of the GCC member states are partaking in the current meeting, Ghanem says the full participation "came contrary to what the enemies and those of ill intentions desired to see."

Ghanem noted that the inter-GCC differences must not be exaggerated, affirming that such problems must be tackled with action. Kuwait, namely HH the Amir, the parliament, government and people believe in the GCC. "We have always counted on the Gulf, defended it...This is not mere sentiment, rather a political doctrine and a strategic destiny," he stressed.

Ghanem lauded the joint GCC states' stance rejecting the recent US declaration considering the Golan Heights as "Israeli ter-



JEDDAH: Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem delivers his speech during the second regular meeting of heads of GCC legislative assemblies and shura councils. — KUNA

ritory". "Such solidarity sends a clear message to whom it may concern that the Arab Gulf peoples will not approve unilateral and flagrant steps that may jeopardize regional peace and security," Ghanem said. He urged his fellow conferees to coordinate stances ahead of the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference, due in Doha in a week, to jointly address this issue. — KUNA



Modi promises 'new India' as he launches election campaign

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Pakistan minister brands US envoy 'little pygmy' in Twitter row

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JERUSALEM: Tourists standing at Mount of Olives watch the Old City of Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock mosque in the centre yesterday. — AFP

UAE urges Arab openness to Israel

Decision 'not to talk' with Israel complicates finding a solution

DUBAI: Relations between Arab states and Israel need to shift to help progress towards peace with the Palestinians, a senior United Arab Emirates official was quoted yesterday as saying. The decision by many Arab countries not to talk with Israel has complicated finding a solution over the decades, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said, according to Abu Dhabi-based daily The National.

"Many, many years ago, when there was an Arab decision not to have contact with Israel, that was a very, very wrong decision, looking back," Gargash said, in unusually candid remarks. "Because clearly, you have to really dissect and divide between having a political issue

and keeping your lines of communication open."

His comments came after the UAE and other Gulf states criticized US President Donald Trump's recognition this week of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau captured from Syria in a 1967 war. They also followed a visit last month by Trump's senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner to Gulf Arab states to seek support for the economic portion of a long-awaited US proposal for Israeli-Palestinian peace. Gulf Arab states host US troops and are important for Washington's regional defense policy.

Israel has formal diplomatic relations with only two Arab states, neighboring Egypt and

Jordan. But an Israeli cabinet minister visited Abu Dhabi's Grand Mosque last year and fellow Gulf state Oman hosted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on a surprise trip, the first time an Israeli leader had visited the Sultanate in 22 years.

Israel sees Arab states as its natural allies against regional powerhouse Iran. But many in the Arab world resist following Jordan's and Egypt's lead as long as the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory continues. Gargash said he expected increased contact between Arab countries and Israel through small bilateral deals and visits by politicians and athletic delegations. Israeli athletes won gold in an Abu Dhabi judo competition in October, and its national anthem

was played.

"The strategic shift needs actually for us to progress on the peace front," Gargash said. "What we are facing, if we continue on the current trajectory, I think the conversation in 15 years' time will really be about equal rights in one state," he added, alluding to a possible fusion of the Israeli and Palestinian polities in place of the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. He said this conversation was currently on the margins but this would change. "A two-state solution will no longer be feasible because a sort of reduced rump (Palestinian) state will no longer be practical," Gargash added. — Reuters

International

Friday, March 29, 2019

US ‘approved secret’ nuclear power work for Saudi Arabia

Lawmakers fear nuclear arms race in the Middle East

WASHINGTON: US Energy Secretary Rick Perry has approved six secret authorizations by companies to sell nuclear power technology and assistance to Saudi Arabia, according to a copy of a document seen by Reuters on Wednesday. The Trump administration has quietly pursued a wider deal on sharing US nuclear power technology with Saudi Arabia, which aims to build at least two nuclear power plants. Several countries including the United States, South Korea and Russia are in competition for that deal, and the winners are expected to be announced later this year by Saudi Arabia.

Perry’s approvals, known as Part 810 authorizations, allow companies to do preliminary work on nuclear power ahead of any deal but not ship equipment that would go into a plant, a source with knowledge of the agreements said on condition of anonymity. The approvals were first reported by the Daily Beast. The Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) said in the document that the companies had requested that the Trump administration keep the approvals secret. “In this case, each of the companies which received a specific authorization for (Saudi Arabia) have provided us written request that their authorization be withheld from public release,” the NNSA said in the document. In the past, the Energy Department made previous Part 810 authorizations available for the public to read at its headquarters. A Department of Energy official said the requests contained proprietary information and that the authorizations went through multi-agency approval process.

Many US lawmakers are concerned that sharing nuclear technology with Saudi Arabia could eventually lead to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told CBS last year that the kingdom would develop nuclear weapons if its rival Iran did. In addition, the kingdom has occasionally pushed back against agreeing to US standards that would block two paths to potentially making fissile material for nuclear weapons clandestinely: enriching uranium and reprocessing spent fuel.

Concern in Congress about sharing nuclear technology and knowledge with Saudi Arabia rose after US-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed last October in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. The Part 810 authorizations were made after November 2017, but it was not clear from the document whether any of them were made after Khashoggi’s killing. Representative Brad Sherman, a Democrat, called on Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during a congressional hearing on Wednesday to release the names of the companies that got the approvals by the middle of April, and Pompeo said he would look into it. Sherman also said the Trump administration had attempted to

evade Congress on sharing nuclear power with the kingdom.

Pompeo said the administration was working to ensure any shared technology nuclear power would not present proliferation risks. Last month, Democratic House members alleged in a report that top White House aides ignored warnings they could be breaking the law as they worked with former US officials in a group called IP3 International to advance a multibillion-dollar plan to build nuclear reactors in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia.

IP3 did not immediately respond to a request for comment about whether it was one of the companies that got a Part 810 authorization. Separately, the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, accepted a request by Senators Marco Rubio, a Republican and Bob Menendez, a Democrat, to probe the administration’s talks on a nuclear deal with Saudi, the GAO said on Wednesday. — Reuters



MOGADISHU: Somali examine the dead body of a civilian killed after an explosion outside a restaurant in Mogadishu yesterday. —AFP

Somalia bomb explosion hits restaurant; 11 dead

MOGADISHU: At least 11 people died when a bomb exploded on a busy street and ripped into a nearby restaurant in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu yesterday, medics said. Security officials and witnesses reported bodies strewn on the ground as plumes of smoke rose high into the air after the bomb detonated on Mogadishu’s Maka Al-Mukarama road, one of the seaside capital’s main thoroughfares, an area busy with businesses and travelers.

It struck as people were eating lunch. “The death toll we have confirmed so far is 11 people, with 16 others wounded,” said Abdulkadir Abdirahman Adan, director of the Aamin Ambulance service, adding that the toll could still rise. “There could be more losses.” Witnesses described scenes of devastation. “The car bomb struck a restaurant along the road,” said Abdulahi Osman,

who was nearby to the explosion. “This really was a disaster.” Vehicles were tossed into the air by the blast, which also damaged nearby buildings. Witnesses said several cars and three-wheeler motorbikes were destroyed by the force of the explosion. “I saw 16 people carried from the blast scene – and more than 10 of them were already dead,” Osman added.

Ambulance workers rushed in to help take the wounded to hospital. “I don’t know whether they were dead or wounded, but I could see several people strewn in the street – some of them were motionless,” said Suado Ahmed, another witness who was at the scene moments after the blast. The bombing is the latest in a recent string of blasts in the capital, which has been hit regularly by Shabaab attacks. “There was a heavy blast – presumably caused by a vehicle loaded with explosives,” said Adan Abdikadir, a government security officer.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombing. However, Mogadishu is regularly targeted by the Al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab insurgents, who have been fighting for over a decade to topple the government. Shabaab fighters fled fixed positions they once held in Mogadishu in 2011, and have since lost many of their strongholds. But they retain control of large rural swathes of the country, and continue to wage a guerrilla war against the authorities. —AFP

In Iraqi Kurdistan, a robe for religious coexistence

ARBIL: With her robe featuring a cross, crescent, two stars and the winged symbol of Zoroastrianism, a Kurdish artist hopes to reconcile a part of Iraq ravaged by jihadists. Shanaz Jamal, 40, says she has already been assured by the authorities in the autonomous northern region of Kurdistan that they will send her work to the Vatican to be put on display. A Muslim, she explains how she embroidered “3,000 beads including semi-precious stones traditionally used for Kurdish crafts” onto the white ecclesiastical cloak. After five months of endeavour, she stitched together eight symbols representing the main communities in Kurdistan and Iraq, which are both predominantly Muslim.

But there is also the Jewish Star of David and the sun and temples of the Yazidis — the minority in northern Iraq persecuted by the Islamic State group (IS) for their faith in what the UN has described as possible genocide. From the beginning, Jamal says, she planned to offer her artwork to Pope Francis as a “symbol of peace and harmony in the world”. “I want to show that women in Kurdistan want coexistence and fraternity between all religions,” she said.

“I do not see any difference between them: they all share love,” she added, repeatedly glancing at the ornate robe. Experts and activists see reconciliation between the various communities as the number one priority in Iraq. Without it, they say, the country’s reconstruction will be impossible and the 1.8 million people displaced by the conflict won’t want to return. Situated on the lands of ancient Mesopotamia, Iraq has been ruled by many civilizations and is today a patchwork of peoples and faiths.

Their coexistence was shattered in 2014 when the IS jihadists seized large swathes of Iraq and neighboring Syria. Now, more than a year after Iraq declared victory over IS, tensions persist, especially in the north of the country where minorities accuse each other of crimes. —AFP

International

Phone bill? Cars? Wealthier Egyptians lose subsidies, prompting complaints

Holders of around 400,000 subsidy cards may lose access

CAIRO: Many of the Egyptians crammed into a tent in a Cairo suburb have been told they are about to be kicked off the government's food subsidy program because they are too wealthy. The reason may be a good job, a newish car, a big phone or electricity bill or expensive school fees.

Some people have travelled across the country to reach the tent - the only place where they have the opportunity to convince officials in person that there has been a mistake. If they fail, they will no longer be able to use a smart card that gives them access to subsidised rice, pasta and other food staples. Pensioner Gamal Abdel Shakour, one of hundreds of people gathered in and around the tent during a recent visit by Reuters, said he'd been wrongly identified as spending more than 800 Egyptian pounds on his monthly phone bill.

"How can I be spending more than 800 pounds on my cellphone when my entire pension is roughly 650 pounds? Am I not going to eat?" said Shakour. Changes to food support are highly sensitive in Egypt, where a decision to cut bread subsidies led to deadly riots across the country in 1977.

The latest effort to reform the 86 billion Egyptian pounds (\$4.95 billion) a year food subsidy program does not touch bread, the country's

most important staple, and so far has only targeted one section of society - the better off. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has also cracked down on dissent, including public gatherings, making a repeat of the events more than 40 years ago unlikely. But complaints over the implementation of the scheme are an early sign that Sisi's bid to rein in generous state subsidies used by more than 60 million Egyptians may not be easy.

The officials involved in the latest reforms relocated from an office in a smarter part of the capital after the crowds made locals nervous. The changes to the subsidy program that caused bread riots in 1977 were agreed as part of former President Anwar Sadat's IMF loan deal. Sisi's government has also turned to the IMF. In 2016, it signed a \$12 billion loan. The lender has specified that food subsidies should only reach those most in need. The loan program also involved raising fuel and electricity prices and a currency float. This has contributed to soaring inflation that has eroded consumer spending power. Cheap food has helped ease the pain. "With another round of steep energy subsidy cuts to be implemented this summer, the authorities would be mindful of not going overboard and risking food or hunger riots," Naeem Brokerage head of research Allen Sandeep said. The government



GIZA, Egypt: Egyptian fishermen sit in their boat in the Nile off El Warraq Island in the Egyptian capital Cairo's twin city of Giza. — AFP

has said there will be two more phases of the subsidy card reform, but it has not said who will be targeted.

The supply ministry made the first phase of changes to the program in November when it removed people who were dead or living overseas and then said in February its next target would be those with higher incomes. "We're talking about board chairmen, board members, head judges and generals, people like that," Supply Minister Ali al-Moselhy said.

The holders of around 400,000 subsidy cards received the notice at the bottom of their food receipts in March to say they would be removed from the program in April, a spokesman for the ministry said. Along with the 800-pound cellphone bill limit, anyone who spends 30,000 Egyptian pounds (\$1,727.12) per child on school fees annually, uses an average of 650 KW of electricity per month, drives a car made in 2014 or later or has a high-paying job, would be automatically removed.—Reuters

Uncovering Iran's sanctions-busting sale of fuel oil on the high seas

SINGAPORE: It was a quiet day in January, and many oil traders were still on holiday, when two sources in the industry called to alert me to something unusual - a supertanker that had gone off radar for two weeks appeared off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and was pumping out fuel oil to two smaller vessels. The sources said it appeared that the supertanker was selling Iranian oil in violation of US sanctions. If confirmed, the sale would shine a rare light on how traders and shippers were evading the sanctions. My first task was to identify and monitor the vessels involved. I called up satellite data offered by Refinitiv, a sister company of Thomson Reuters, that show the movements of ships around the world. I also reached out to three other institutions that track the passage of ships and confirmed that the supertanker, the Grace 1, had its Automatic Identification System, or transponder, switched off between Nov. 30 and Dec. 14, 2018, meaning its location could not be tracked.

The transponder is an instrument that all large commercial ships are required to keep on, to pinpoint their location. However, it's difficult to police vessels that switch it off on the high seas. The satellite data showed the supertanker re-appearing in waters near Iran's port of Bandar Assaluyeh. The data also includes the ship's draught - how deep a vessel sits in water - and it was near maximum at the time, indicating its cargo tanks were full.

The Grace 1 then lined up next to two smaller tankers between

Jan 16 and Jan 22 in waters offshore Fujairah in the UAE, the data showed. When both left the area, their cargos were full. Following tankers via satellite images wasn't enough, however. I contacted the companies managing the Grace 1 and the two smaller vehicles. Reuters also mobilized journalists in Baghdad and Tripoli in Libya to talk directly to ship managers, port officials and shipping agents about the transactions.

No response

The Grace 1, a Panamanian-flagged tanker, is managed by Singapore-based shipping services firm IShips Management Pte Ltd, according to shipping data. IShips did not respond to several requests for comment via email or phone. I visited the Singapore office listed on IShips' website but was told by the current tenant that the company had moved out two years earlier. The manager of Kriti Island, one of the smaller vessels, e-mailed me a document, the Certificate of Origin, showing the oil was loaded from the port of Basra in Iraq.

The next step was to go to Iraq to establish the authenticity of the document. An official from Iraq's state oil marketer SOMO told Ahmed Rasheed, a Baghdad-based Reuters correspondent, the document was "faked" and "completely wrong". The official declined to be identified by name, citing the marketer's communications policy. Two other Iraqi oil industry sources with direct knowledge of Basra port and oil industry operations also told Rasheed the document was forged.

The two sources said the document bore the signature of a manager who was not working at Basra port on the stated dates. The document also contained contradictory dates: It indicated a loading period of Dec 10 and 12, 2018 but a sign-off date for the transaction of 11 months earlier, at Jan. 12, 2018. Basra port loading schedules reviewed by Reuters did not list the Grace 1 as being in port between Dec 10-12. Major oil traders form a small group and soon talk was spreading that Reuters was investigating the Grace 1 transactions. Reuters received several unsolicited calls, text messages, and even a legal notice by e-mail aimed at preventing the publication of such an article.—Reuters

Time has come for Hagia Sophia to be mosque: Erdogan

ISTANBUL: President Recep Taayyip Erdogan said Wednesday it was time to rename Istanbul's landmark Hagia Sophia as a mosque, saying that it had been a "very big mistake" to convert it into a museum. "Hagia Sophia will not be called a museum. It will be taken out of that status. We will call Hagia Sophia a mosque," Erdogan told A Haber television during an interview. "Those who come to Hagia Sophia will visit Hagia Sophia mosque," he said. The former church and mosque, now a museum, often sparks tensions between Christians and Muslims over Islamic activities held there, including the reading of verses from the Koran or collective prayers.

Its secular status allows believers of all faiths to meditate, reflect or simply enjoy the astonishing architecture of a building dating back to the sixth century. Erdogan is campaigning for votes for his Justice and Development Party (AKP) ahead of municipal elections on March 31. The Turkish leader said the plan would be discussed after the elections. "We think the time has come to take such a step given there is a demand" from the Turkish people, he said.

Such a move is likely to cause anger among Christians and raise tensions between historic foes Turkey and Greece, both NATO members. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras visited the Hagia Sophia in February. Asked about the criticism, Erdogan said: "There are attacks targeting Al-Aqsa mosque," referring to the compound in Jerusalem known to Jews as the Temple Mount. "Those who remain silent on this cannot dare to give advice to us on (Hagia Sophia)," he added.—AFP

Maltese security forces seize tanker hijacked by migrants

Migrants in chaos-wracked Libya face trafficking, kidnap, torture, rape

VALLETTA: A tanker that was hijacked by migrants off Libya docked in Malta yesterday after the Maltese armed forces took control of the vessel. The Palau-flagged tanker Elhiblu I had picked up the 108 migrants including women and children on Tuesday evening and then headed back to Tripoli. But six nautical miles from port the ship suddenly changed course and headed north toward Europe.

Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said Wednesday the vessel had been hijacked and vowed that the migrants would not be allowed to disembark in Italy. The 52-metre (170-foot) tanker was about 30 nautical miles from Malta when the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) established communications with the captain. "The captain repeatedly stated that he was not in control of the vessel and that he and his crew were being forced and threatened by a number of migrants to proceed to Malta," the AFM said in a statement on Thursday morning.

"AFM Patrol Vessel P21 stopped the tanker from entering the Maltese territorial waters. "An AFM Special Operations Unit team was dispatched to board and secure the vessel in order to hand over control of the ship to the captain." It said the team was backed up by several naval vessels and a helicopter. Escorted by the Maltese navy, the tanker arrived in the port of Valletta around 8:30am (0730 GMT), where the AFM said it would "be handed

over to the police for further investigations".

'People are very upset'

The German charity Sea-Eye, whose ship Alan Kurdi was in the rescue zone off Libya, said it had overheard radio messages between a European military aircraft and the captain of the tanker, both before and after the hijacking. "The captain of the ship rescued the people and requested assistance. He said unequivocally on the radio that people are very upset and do not want to be brought back to Libya," Sea-Eye said in a statement. "Tripoli, however, was the destination port of the cargo ship." Migrants in chaos-wracked Libya face trafficking, kidnap, torture and rape, according to the United Nations and aid groups.

Following Rome's increasingly tough anti-migrant stance, vessels that pick up migrants making the perilous journey across the Mediterranean increasingly return them to Libya. Boatloads of rescued migrants have in recent months refused to disembark in Libya, prompting the authorities there to use force. The UNHCR's special envoy for the central Mediterranean, Vincent Cochetel, tweeted Thursday that the "safety of crews (is) as important as safety of human beings fleeing a hellish situation & not wanting to return there."

"With a robust rescue at sea capacity & predictable disembarkation on both sides of the Med, this would not have happened." The European

Union announced on Wednesday it will suspend ship patrols that have rescued tens of thousands of migrants in the Mediterranean and brought them to Italy, in the face of deep resistance from Rome's

populist government. Migrant arrivals from North Africa and the Middle East have been sharply reduced since a 2015 peak when Europe faced its worst migration crisis since World War II. — AFP

Pakistan minister brands US envoy 'little pygmy'

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani minister has branded the US ambassador to Kabul a "little pygmy" in a high-level diplomatic Twitter row that erupted over ongoing peace talks between Washington and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The furore underscores the delicate balance of regional tensions as the US steps up a push to find a way out of Afghanistan, more than 17 years after the invasion.

It began after Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan reportedly suggested an interim government in Afghanistan to help smooth the talks process, making the comment during a briefing with local reporters on Monday. Khan's comments caused uproar in Afghanistan, which has long held neighboring Pakistan's shadowy intelligence services responsible for supporting and training the Taliban. Kabul recalled its ambassador on Tuesday,

and the Pakistani foreign office tried to downplay Khan's comments on Wednesday, saying they had been reported "out of context... leading to an unwarranted reaction". But shortly after US ambassador to Afghanistan John Bass issued a tweet rebuking Khan while alluding to his past as captain of Pakistan's World Cup-winning cricket team and numerous cheating scandals in the sport involving Pakistani players. "Some aspects of #cricket apply well in diplomacy, some do not. @ImranKhanPTI, important to resist temptation to ball-tamper with the #Afghanistan peace process and its internal affairs. #AfgPeace," the tweet read. Pakistanis outraged at the snub to their leader from a foreign envoy in another country took to Twitter in response including Khan's minister for human rights, Shireen Mazari. —AFP



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Dhaka office block inferno kills five with many feared trapped

Three die after jumping from the blazing 19-floor building

DHAKA: A huge fire tore through a Dhaka office block yesterday killing at least five people with many others feared trapped in the latest major inferno to hit the Bangladesh capital. Three people died after jumping from the blazing 19-floor building while two others appeared to have died from the effects of the blaze, officials said.

People were seen screaming for help from windows, while some lowered themselves down the side of the building. Media reports said at least six people had been seen leaping from flaming windows. "Three people appear to have died after jumping from upper floors of the building," United Hospital spokesman Sazzadur Rahman Shuvo told AFP. They had serious head injuries but no apparent burns. He said at least eight other people were being treated at the hospital.

A military spokesman, Abdullah Ibne Zaid, said the body of a Sri Lankan man was brought to the army's Kurmitola Hospital and another 45 people were being treated there. Another fatality was reported at the Dhaka Medical College hospital. Helicopters dropped water on the blaze as flames and thick black smoke poured out of the windows. Scores of firefighters were backed by navy and air force specialists, authorities said. Hundreds of panicked onlookers crowded the streets in the upmarket Banani commercial district.

Trapped in flames

Shoikot Rahman ran to safety after hearing colleagues raise the alarm, narrowly escaping the smoke and flames engulfing the building. "When I heard a fire broke out in the building, I quickly rushed out of the building," he told AFP. "Many of my colleagues are still trapped in the office." There was no official word on how many people were trapped inside. Fire disasters regularly hit Bangladesh's major cities where safety standards are notoriously lax.

A massive blaze in Dhaka's old quarter on February 21 killed at least 70 people and injured 50 others. Fire service officials said chemicals illegally stored in an apartment building exploded and set alight five buildings and nearby streets. That blaze took more than 12 hours to control. A June 2010 fire in the nearby neighborhood of Nimtoli, one of the most densely populated districts of the capital, killed 123 people.

In November 2012, a fire swept through a nine-story garment factory near Dhaka killing 111 workers. An investigation found it was caused by sabotage and that managers at the plant had prevented victims from escaping. Experts said inspections on buildings in the city frequently found fire stairs blocked with stored goods and exit doors locked. Authorities are still carrying out a drive to close down illegal chemical stores and warehouses in apartment buildings, launched after the disaster in the old city. — AFP



DHAKA: People trapped inside a burning office building gesture at Bangladeshi firefighters for help in Dhaka yesterday. A huge fire tore through a Dhaka office block, killing at least five people with many others feared trapped in the latest major inferno to hit the Bangladesh capital. — AFP

18 Guatemalans killed by hit-and-run driver

GUATEMALA CITY: A truck driver barreled into a group of indigenous Guatemalans on Wednesday night, killing 18 before fleeing the scene as police began a manhunt. The incident occurred at the entry point to the western town of Nahuala, which has a population of around 65,000, most of whom are K'iche' Maya.

A group of people had converged at the scene of another hit-and-run in which a local community leader was killed, when they in turn were hit by a truck with its lights off on a road without street lighting. "In total there are 18 deaths that have been counted in this tragedy," fire department spokesman Cecilio Chacaj told AFP, revisiting down a previous toll of 30 that he attributed to early chaos on the scene where bodies were piled up on top of another.

Chacaj added the dead included three minors while 20 had been wounded, some seriously, and were being treated in hospitals. The government announced three days of mourning from Thursday, while President Jimmy Morales tweeted: "We are currently coordinating actions to provide all the support to the victims' families. My condolences." Chilling images broadcast on local television showed the victims' bodies in their brightly colored clothing laid out in a line on the asphalt, as relatives cried out in anguish.

Driver on the run

Police spokesman Pablo Castillo told reporters that an operation to capture the driver was now under way. He added that investigators were initially prevented from getting to the scene by angry relatives but were given access after opening a dialogue with community leaders. Local reports said the man killed in the first accident was a community leader and president of the state Council of Urban and Rural Development, though authorities have not confirmed this. The semi-trailer did not have its lights on when it struck the group of people which may have been why the driver did not spot them, while the highway was also unlit, according to local media. Traffic rules are frequently ignored in Guatemala, a Central American country of some 16.5 million people. — AFP

Database maps fashion factories to crack down on slavery

LONDON: A fashion data organization aims to crack down on slavery and worker abuse by mapping every clothing and footwear factory in the world, with a free, open-source tool launched yesterday. The Open Apparel Registry (OAR) seeks to untangle often opaque supply chains by identifying every factory by name and address, increasing transparency for workers and businesses.

"This is a powerful tool that will help brands and retailers know who else is working with factories so that they can collaborate," Leslie Johnson, head of the C&A Foundation, which funds the database, told a London news conference. "It will help factories enhance their credibility. And it will help civil society groups to identify who is sourcing from a factory when there is a problem. Ultimately, it will help workers get access to remedy quicker." The C&A Foundation partners with the Thomson Reuters Foundation on its human trafficking coverage.

Fashion is recognized as a high risk industry for worker abuse, while complex international supply chains as products are sourced, manufactured, packaged and distributed can make it hard to spot forced labor. A growing number of big brands, from sportswear giant Adidas to fashion retailers H&M and ASOS, are sharing information about their supply chains amid mounting regulatory and consumer pressure on companies to ensure their products are slavery-free.

The OAR gathers data released by brands, factory groups, governments and other sources, and allows users to search for factories by brand names and locations. Advocates said it would help both worker rights groups looking to apply pressure on brands with worker abuse in their supply chains, and firms hoping to work with other businesses sourcing from the same factories to press for improvements.

"I think it is going to be really helpful," said Martin Buttle, a spokesman for the Ethical Trading Initiative, a global group that aims to improve labor conditions for workers. "There are a lot of issues in apparel supply chains but one of the reasons why trying to tackling those issues is so difficult is that supply chains are so opaque ... Nobody knows who is sourcing where." About 25 million people worldwide were estimated to be trapped in forced labour in 2016, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) and rights group Walk Free Foundation. — Reuters

International

Facebook bars white nationalism, stepping up the hate speech curbs

Facebook charged with racial discrimination in targeted housing ads

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook announced it would ban praise or support for white nationalism and white separatism as part of a stepped-up crackdown on hate speech. The ban will be enforced starting next week at the leading online social network and its image-centric messaging service Instagram. "It's clear that these concepts are deeply linked to organized hate groups and have no place on our services," the social network said in a statement. Facebook policies already banned posts endorsing white supremacy as part of its prohibition against spewing hate at people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity or religion.

The ban had not applied to some postings because it was reasoned they were expressions of broader concepts of nationalism or political independence, according to the social network. Facebook said that conversations with academics and "members of civil society" in recent months led it to view white nationalism and separatism as linked to organized hate groups. "Going forward, while people will still be able to demonstrate pride in their ethnic heritage, we will not tolerate praise or support for white nationalism and separatism," Facebook said.

People who enter search terms associated with white supremacy will get results referring them to resources such as Life After Hate which focus on helping people turn their backs on such groups, according to the social network. Amid pressure from governments around the world, Facebook has ramped up machine learning and artificial intelligence tools for finding and removing hateful content while remaining open to free expression.

"Unfortunately, there will always be people who try to game our systems to spread hate," Facebook said. "Our challenge is to stay ahead by continuing to improve our technologies, evolve our policies and work with experts who can bolster our own efforts." Facebook said the new ban would not apply to topics such as

American pride and Basque separatism, which "are an important part of people's identity," according to the statement.

Difficult to enforce

Mark Potok, a senior fellow at the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, believed Facebook's new ban could limit the spread of white nationalist rhetoric but doubted it would rid the world of the ideology. "We'll see if they are able to enforce this," Potok said. "There are thousands of white nationalists posts on Facebook every day. They weren't able to stop the Christchurch video so it will be challenging to do this" he said, referring to the stream of the deadly attacks at New Zealand mosques earlier this month.

The New Zealand massacre demonstrated the global reach of a white nationalist movement that preaches an imagined "European" ideal, rejects immigration and shares often vicious threats over the internet. Some analysts say it is a cohesive movement bound together online that stretches across Europe into Russia, has a deep following in the US and Canada. They say it poses as much of an international threat as Islamic extremism, and even more so in the United States where white nationalist attacks have out-paced those by jihadists for years.

According to some researchers, white nationalists have been emboldened by the rise of politicians espousing traditionalist views and a tough line on immigration—from Marine Le Pen in France and Viktor Orban in Hungary to Russian President Vladimir Putin; and the UKIP party in Britain. The same holds true in the United States where President Donald Trump campaigned for the White House on an anti-immigration platform, backed by an overwhelmingly white voter base. Trump notoriously appeared to sanction the march by white supremacists and neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, and has avoided condemning violence from the far-right.



CALIFORNIA: The Facebook sign and logo are seen in Menlo Park, California. US officials accused Facebook of discrimination yesterday for using its targeted advertising to limit who sees postings for certain kinds of housing. — AFP

Facebook charged

In another development, US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) charged Facebook Inc yesterday with violating the Fair Housing Act, alleging that the company's targeted advertising discriminated on the basis of race and color. HUD said Facebook also restricted who could see housing-related ads based on national origin, religion, familial status, sex and disability. Facebook said it was surprised by the decision and has been working with HUD to address its concerns and has taken significant steps to prevent ads discrimination across its platforms.

The social media giant said last week it would create a new advertising portal for ads linked to housing and employment that would limit targeting options for advertisers. "Facebook is discriminating against people based upon who they are and where they live," HUD Secretary Ben Carson said. "Using a computer to limit a person's housing choices can be just as discriminatory as slamming a door in someone's face." The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing and related services, which includes online advertisements, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status. — Agencies

BBC pays damages to Ukraine president over Trump report

KIEV: The BBC yesterday said it had agreed to pay damages to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko over an article that incorrectly claimed Kiev paid \$400,000 to secure a meeting with US leader Donald Trump. Poroshenko, who is seeking re-election in weekend polls, sued the broadcaster over the report from May last year. The article on the BBC website claimed that Kiev gave Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen a "secret payment of at least \$400,000" to "fix talks" at the White House in June 2017.

"We apologise to Mr Poroshenko for any distress caused and have agreed to pay him damages, legal costs and have participated in a joint statement in open court," the BBC said in a statement on its news site. It did not give any indication of the size of the payment.

Poroshenko had said via lawyers that the article harmed his "political and business" reputation and caused him "substantial distress and embarrassment".

Allegations of "serious corruption" were especially damaging because of Poroshenko's "promotion of a number of anti-corruption measures in Ukraine", a claim said. Poroshenko was elected in 2014 after Ukrainians took to the streets to oust his Kremlin-backed, graft-tainted predecessor. But Ukrainian and Western observers have repeatedly questioned pro-Western Poroshenko's resolve to reform the country's kleptocratic system. There was speculation ahead of the June 2017 talks that Trump would refuse to meet the Ukrainian leader.

Washington did not announce the sit-down in advance - as is customary - and when it was described, the White House called it as a "drop-in" with the US president. Cohen has since been sentenced to three years in prison for election finance fraud, bank fraud, tax avoidance and lying to Congress, after implicating Trump in some of those crimes. Poroshenko is trailing comedian Volodymyr Zelensky in polls as Ukrainians prepare to vote in the first round of a presidential election at the weekend. — AFP

Denmark to deprive jihadists' children of citizenship

COPENHAGEN: Children born abroad to Danish jihadists will no longer receive Danish citizenship, the minority government announced yesterday after striking a deal with its populist ally the Danish People's Party. "Contrary to current rules, children who will be born in regions prohibited to Danes... will not automatically receive Danish nationality," the immigration ministry said in a statement. "As their parents have turned their back on Denmark, there is no reason for the children to become Danish citizens," Immi-

gration Minister Inger Stojberg was quoted as saying in the statement.

The proposal must still go through parliament. No date has been set for the vote but it is expected to pass. The fate of foreign fighters with the Islamic State group and their families has become a major international headache since the fall of the last vestige of its so-called caliphate in Syria. Since 2016, it has been a criminal offence under Danish law to have fought in conflict zones for a terrorist group. The courts have already convicted 13 people for having joined or tried to join a terrorist organization.

Nine of those were stripped of their Danish nationality and expelled from the country. The others could not be stripped of their citizenship as they did not hold dual nationality. Under the new rules, holders of dual nationality can lose their Danish citizenship by simple administrative order. — AFP

Britain's May seeks to save Brexit after pledge to quit

Mounting tensions, frustrations over UK's inability to leave

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May sought yesterday to salvage her unpopular EU divorce deal after another day of political drama that saw her offer to resign and the fractured parliament fail to find a way out of the Brexit chaos. Mounting tensions and frustrations over Britain's inability to leave the EU three years after a divisive referendum culminated Wednesday in May's decision to play her trump card and promise to stand down as premier if her plan is passed.

EU leaders last week offered Britain a Brexit extension until May 22, but only on condition that parliament votes through the deal by today, the day Britain was originally scheduled to leave the European Union. If the parliamentary vote does not take place, May will have to spell out to EU leaders what steps Britain will take by a deadline of April 12, or risk crashing out of the bloc without any arrangements in place.

May's resignation pledge played on rivalries that have been driving much of the resistance to her vision for ending the 46-year EU partnership from the fiercely eurosceptic wing of her Conservative party. "I know there is a desire for a new approach - and new leadership - in the second phase of the Brexit negotiations and I won't stand in the way of that," May told a packed

meeting of party members Wednesday. Her promise immediately turned the votes of some likely contenders for the job she took on shortly after the referendum in which Britons narrowly voted to leave the EU.

'Sacrifice in vain?'

May's handling of Brexit has provoked anger and frustration both at home and abroad and even ridicule in some quarters. But former foreign minister Boris Johnson said he would now back the premier "on behalf of the 17.4 million people who voted for Brexit". "I feel very, very sorry and though it fills me with pain, I'm going to have to support this thing," he told The Daily Telegraph newspaper. But any momentum the prime minister may have gained was punctured by a decision by her crucial allies in Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to continue fighting the deal.

The hardline group props up May's minority government and plays an outsized role in the political saga that has consumed Britain and left its EU partners increasingly perplexed. "We will not be supporting the government if they table a fresh meaningful vote," the DUP said in a statement. The DUP is opposed to provisions in May's deal to keep a free-flowing border be-



LONDON: Anti-Brexit activists display the Union and EU flags as they demonstrate outside the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, London yesterday. — AFP

tween Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, an EU member state. They worry that this would give Northern Ireland a different economic status from mainland Britain, one of the key sticking points in May's deal.

The DUP's announcement means the odds are still heavily stacked against May's ability to overcome two thumping defeats and get her Brexit deal through parliament on a third attempt.—AFP

Europe: Grim Reaper of the British leaders

LONDON: Theresa May's announcement that she will quit as leader if her Brexit deal is approved makes her the fourth British prime minister to fall foul of the European curse. The issue is a particular problem for the Conservative Party, pitting its traditional, eurosceptic wing against its more pro-EU modernizers, and all four victims have been Tory leaders. Here is the trail of British leaders taken down by the Euro issue:

Margaret Thatcher

The "Iron Lady" was already weakened by the disastrous roll-out of her new "Poll Tax", but it was Britain's relationship with the nascent European Union that delivered the coup de grace. She had long wrestled with whether Britain should join the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), a forerunner of the Euro, deciding to join in 1990 - but not before losing trusted finance minister Nigel Lawson. Keen to bolster her credentials among eurosceptics, she then made a famous speech against European federalism. The tone of the speech was too much for some members of her government, with deputy prime minister Geoffrey Howe's subsequent resignation triggering a rebellion that saw Thatcher herself quit three weeks later.

John Major

Major took over from Lawson as Thatcher's finance minister, overseeing Britain's doomed entry into the ERM, and replaced Thatcher after her reluctant departure. But his government also oversaw Britain's humiliating exit from the ERM on "Black Wednesday", when Britain was no longer able to keep the pound above its agreed lower limit. Major then negotiated the Maastricht Treaty that furthered political integration and founded the European Union despite bitter opposition from many in his own party. He was caught on a hot mic calling three

rebels "bastards" and survived one leadership attempt. But he was fatally weakened going into the 1997 general election against Labor's rising star Tony Blair and went down in a record defeat.

David Cameron

Political calm on the European front under Blair was shattered when Conservative Party leader David Cameron promised a referendum on Britain's membership in 2016. He was trying to head off the rise of the stridently eurosceptic UK Independence Party (UKIP), whose leader Nigel Farage had capitalized on growing voter anger with the EU to pose a genuine electoral threat to the Tories. Cameron hoped to gain meaningful concessions on immigration to sell Britain's EU membership, but failed and was left stunned when the country voted by 52 percent to 48 percent to leave. He ended his six-year tenure hours later, saying the country "requires fresh leadership" to manage the departure.

Theresa May

Interior minister Theresa May, who supported Remain but kept a low-profile during campaigning, took over from Cameron after infighting took out the party's big-hitting pro-Brexit candidates. She rebranded herself as an enthusiastic supporter of leaving, setting out red lines on quitting all the EU's institutions. But she was fatally weakened by her hapless performance in a snap election, called in an attempt to bolster her majority and pass the required legislation in a parliament dominated by Remain supporting MPs.

Surviving as leader only through a pact with Northern Ireland party the DUP, much of May's authority slipped away to MPs and her ministers, who forced her to soften her negotiating position. Nearly two years of talks yielded May's much-vaunted Withdrawal Agreement, but it was immediately attacked from both sides and roundly rejected twice by the House of Commons. Unable to secure the changes demanded by MPs and refusing to countenance leaving without a deal, May eventually ran out of road and MPs pounced to take charge of the process. In what appeared to be a final gambit, May announced on Wednesday she would quit if MPs approved her deal, although she has not yet said what will happen if it is rejected - as seems likely.—AFP

Despair and anger as Venezuelans endure paralyzing blackout

CARACAS: Venezuelans wavered between despair and rage Wednesday as they endured a third day of a near-nationwide blackout that has paralyzed their country-the second such outage this month. "Food stocks are starting to rot. There's no water. The transport virtually doesn't work. There's no means of communication," said Nestor Carreno, who was forced to shutter his pizzeria in a formerly upscale district of Caracas.

"I don't know how my family is doing. Insecurity is growing." A cacophony of saucepans being banged out of windows and car horns in the street has filled the capital since the start of the vast outage. Memories of the first, which began March 7 and lasted a week-forcing citizens to seek water from rivers and sewage outflows as pumps came to a halt-fed the anguish. Many residents stocked up on food and water.

The government of President Nicolas Maduro, which blamed the blackouts on US "cybernetic" attacks and opposition "sabotage" and "terrorism," ordered the closure of public offices and schools, which was extended to Thursday. Communications Minister Jorge Rodriguez said a new power cut had plunged some parts of Caracas and other regions into the darkness once again, shortly after electricity had been restored.

He said work was continuing to fix "equipment damaged by terrorism." The outage was affecting 21 of Venezuela's 23 states, according to social media users. The government has given no official information on its scale. Juan Guaido, the opposition leader whom the US and many of its allies recognize as the country's interim president over Maduro, called for a national protest on Saturday over "the lack of public services." — AFP

International

Friday, March 29, 2019

Modi promises a 'new India' as he launches election campaign

Promise of handouts by Congress could dent Modi's momentum

MEERUT: Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially launched his party's general election campaign yesterday with a rally in India's most populous state, promising development with national security in seeking votes for another term. A coalition led by Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is widely expected to retain power in a staggered election beginning on April 11, especially given recent tension with old rival Pakistan.

"This country has seen governments that only made slogans, but for the first time, they are seeing a decisive government that knows how to demonstrate its resolve," Modi told the rally in the city of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh state, which has the most members of parliament of all states. "Our vision is of a new India that will be in tune with its glorious past," he said to roars of approval from the crowd who waved BJP flags and chanted for another term for Modi.

The rally was held in a field flanking a main road, surrounded by farm land. Vendors sold BJP mugs, T-shirts and clocks. The general election, the world's biggest democratic exercise with about 900 million eligible voters, will be held in phases ending on May 19. Votes will be counted on May 23. Tension with neighboring Pakistan soared last month after a suicide bomb attack in the Indian part of the disputed Kashmir region killed 40 Indian paramilitary police. The bombing was claimed by a Pakistan-based militant group.

India retaliated with an air raid against a sus-

pected militant camp in northern Pakistan. In December, the main opposition Congress party defeated the BJP in three major rural states as a lack of jobs and weak farm prices dented Modi's popularity. But pollsters say Modi's chances have improved significantly thanks to his tough stance on Pakistan. At the rally, Modi repeatedly spoke about the Indian bombing of the suspected militant camp. He also referred to a test on Wednesday in which India shot down one of its own satellites in space, which he said made India a space power.

PM promises a prosperous society for all

Modi also promised economic growth and a prosperous society for all. Modi's main challenger is the opposition Congress party, which was for decades India's dominant political party. One Modi supporter derided a recent Congress offer to hand out 6,000 rupees (\$87) a month to the poorest families if it was voted back into power. "I know how the economy works," said chartered accountant Anupam Sharma. "GDP would be decimated." Modi was due to address another rally in Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, later on.

Promise of handouts

The main opposition Congress party's promise to give sizable cash handouts to India's poorest families if voted to power could re-energise its campaign to oust Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the general election starting in two weeks. Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has held the advantage in the run-



GUWAHATI: Supporters of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) shout slogans in support of their party during an election rally at Kaliabor, some 186 km from Guwahati, the capital city of India's northeastern state of Assam yesterday. — AFP

up to the election, boosted by a wave of nationalism after military clashes with old rival Pakistan last month. Pollsters say Congress may have pegged back some of that advantage with its announcement, but it was not clear to what extent.

Bhawesh Jha, founder of CNX, one of India's largest polling companies, estimated that many voters in relatively poor and populous states in-

cluding Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh - where Congress won power in local elections late last year - could be swayed by the handouts. "Even if 4-5 percent of voters go in favor of the Congress, it will be a big disaster for the BJP," Jha told Reuters, adding that it would particularly help Congress where it is in a direct contest with the ruling party. "I think this could be a game changer."—Agencies

Curb on Kashmir property ownership is 'discriminatory'

NEW DELHI: A legal restriction that bars non-residents from owning property in India's northern state of Jammu and Kashmir is "constitutionally vulnerable" and discriminatory, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said yesterday. Repeal of the measure adopted in 1954 to safeguard the special status of India's only Muslim-majority state has support from many in the Hindu-dominated region of Jammu, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to hold an election rally.

"It is used as a political shield by many but it hurt the common citizen of the state the most," Jaitley said in a Facebook post. "It denied them a booming economy, economic activity and jobs." The comments come ahead of general elections to be held in phases starting from April 11, at which Modi is seeking re-election. Campaigning is likely to be dominated by issues of national security, and Kashmir in particular.

India and arch-rival Pakistan, which both claim the Himalayan region in full but rule it in part, have said they carried out airstrikes on enemy territory and downed each other's jets late last month. The clash followed a suicide attack claimed by a Pakistan-based militant group that killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary police in Indian-administered Kashmir. Political leaders in Kashmir, where Indian forces are battling an armed insurgency, have warned that any attempts to revise the constitutional provision, known as 35A, would trigger unrest.

No links to suicide blast

In another development, Pakistan said yesterday it had found no links between militants swept up in a recent dragnet and a suicide attack in Indian-administered Kashmir last month that brought the nuclear-armed rivals to the brink of war. The announcement by Pakistan's foreign office comes after India provided Pakistani officials with a list of 90 suspected militants and 22 locations of alleged training camps.

"While 54 detained individuals are being investigated, no details linking them to Pulwama have been found so far," the foreign office said, referring to the area where the attack occurred in Kashmir in February. "Similarly, the 22 pin locations shared by India have been examined. No such camps exist." The statement said Pakistan was "willing to allow visits, on request, to these locations".—Agencies

'Racist' German advertisement infuriates women

SEOUL: A German advertisement showing an Asian woman getting aroused after smelling dirty laundry worn by white men has fueled anger in Seoul, with many women calling it racist and demanding an apology. The commercial, produced by German DIY-store chain Hornbach, shows white men working outside in a garden before removing their sweaty clothing and dumping it in a box. The ad then cuts to a grey, industrial city that resembles Tokyo, where an Asian woman buys a bag of dirty clothes-previously worn by the men-opens it and moans with pleasure, as the commercial ends with a slogan saying: "That's how the spring smells".

An online petition asking for a public apology from the German firm and the removal of the ad had secured almost 1,000 signatures by Thursday afternoon. Angry users on social media accused the company of promoting stereotypes against Asian women. "How many more Asian female voices will you need to take us seriously and be aware of your thoughtless deeds and apologize?" a South Korean woman tweeted to Hornbach, which uploaded the ad on March 15.—AFP

International

Pompeo blasts China's 'shameful hypocrisy' on Muslim minorities

Beijing slams US criticism of Muslim treatment as 'absurd'

BEIJING: China yesterday hit back at criticism from the United States' top diplomat who called its treatment of Muslims "shameful hypocrisy" after speaking with a former prisoner from a Chinese detention camp. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made the comment after meeting with Mihrigul Tursun, a member of the Uighur ethnic group who has spoken publicly in the US about what she said was widespread torture in China's prisons for the minority group. Beijing claims the camps are "vocational training centers" that provide language classes and employment, steering locals away from extremism.

Pompeo's comments are "extremely absurd and grossly interfere in China's internal affairs", said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a regular press briefing. "Currently, the overall situation in Xinjiang society is stable ... and all ethnic groups get along harmoniously," he said. "We urge the US to respect the facts ... and stop the malicious smearing and groundless accusations against the Chinese side," Geng added.

As many as one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are being held in internment camps in Xinjiang, according to a group of experts cited last year by the United Nations. Former detainees say they were detained for simply following Islamic traditions, such as having a long beard or wearing a veil. "China must release all those arbitrarily detained and end its repression," tweeted Pompeo, who had also met with relatives of those detained in

Xinjiang. After months denying the existence of the internment camps, Beijing last year launched a public relations campaign to defend its "training centers", organizing visits for diplomats and media from friendly countries. However, a delegation of three EU officials who visited Xinjiang in January as part of a carefully organized visit said they had the impression that the people they had spoken to in a "training centre" were reciting a dictated speech.

On Wednesday, Pompeo also criticized Beijing's trillion-dollar Belt and Road project after Italy decided to join China's "Silk Road" infrastructure initiative. He accused China of practicing "debt-trap diplomacy" with its state-owned or state-controlled enterprises only looking after their own interests. "The US side's statement is inconsistent with the facts," dismissed Geng. "No country sinks into a so-called debt trap because of their co-operation with China."

'Poisonous influence'

Meanwhile, China has said it is investigating other public security officials to "thoroughly eliminate the poisonous influence" of former Interpol chief Meng Hongwei, who is facing possible graft charges. Meng—who had also served as vice minister of public security—has been expelled from the Communist Party and his official positions while his case was handed over to prosecutors.

He had vanished last September during a visit



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo testifies before the House Appropriations Committee's State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Subcommittee about his department's FY2020 budget request. — AFP

to China from France, where Interpol is based, and was later accused of accepting bribes. The Public Security Ministry said in a lengthy statement late Wednesday that it held an internal meeting that "stressed that it is necessary to completely and thoroughly eliminate the poisonous influence of Meng Hongwei".

It said that Meng's expulsion was "all his own

doing" and that he had used state assets to support his family's extravagant lifestyle, echoing a party anti-graft watchdog statement announcing his expulsion on Wednesday. All party cadres involved in Meng's case will be dealt with, the statement said, adding that it is "necessary to thoroughly eliminate the legacy of Zhou Yongkang and Meng Hongwei". — Agencies

Hong Kong an omen; Taiwanese president vows Island's defense

WASHINGTON: Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen vowed yesterday to ensure the island's defense as she warned of lessons from Hong Kong, saying Beijing will not allow freedoms in territories it controls. Tsai was speaking as she made a transit stop in Hawaii during a tour of three Pacific island nations that are among the dwindling allies that recognize Taipei rather than communist China.

Beijing, which considers the self-ruling democratic island a province awaiting reunification, protested to the United States for allowing the stopover by Tsai, who similarly transited through Los Angeles and Houston last year. In remarks delivered from Hawaii by video to the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, Tsai accused China of stepping up efforts to "alter the status quo" and to "undermine our democratic institutions." "China's actions have underscored the

need for Taiwan to increase our self-defense and deterrence capabilities," she said. "To be clear, we seek peace, not hostility. But we must be capable of defending our freedom, democracy and way of life," she said. Tsai, whose Democratic Progressive Party emphasizes Taiwan's separate identity, warned that the island should heed lessons from Hong Kong, where Beijing has tightened its grip against dissent, including banning a pro-independence party.

China guaranteed rights including freedom of expression under its "one nation, two systems" principle - also proposed in the past for Taiwan - when it assumed control of the former British colony in 1997. "The Hong Kong example is deeply concerning. It is a good case study for Taiwan," Tsai said. "It reflects that democracy is inherently incompatible with the Chinese regime, especially the CCP system," she said, referring to the Chinese Communist Party.

"Hong Kong is a reminder that all politicians in Taiwan, regardless of political party, should carefully avoid falling into a trap laid by China, which includes economic incentives and other promises but ultimately is to the same destination," she said. Tsai voiced gratitude to the US Congress on the 40th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act, which required Washington to provide the island with the means of self-defense even as the United States switched recognition to Beijing. — AFP

Mystery deepens over raid at North Korea's embassy

MADRID: The mystery over a commando-style assault on North Korea's embassy in Madrid, allegedly led by man who had an Uber account in the name of "Oswaldo Trump", deepened Wednesday after a shadowy group committed to overthrowing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un claimed responsibility. A dissident organization known as the Cheollima Civil Defense (CCD) said it had orchestrated the raid carried out on February 22 to end illicit activities rampant in North Korea's foreign missions.

It denied using any violence, saying in a statement on its website that its members were invited into the embassy "and contrary to reports, no one was gagged or beaten." But the statement contradicts a Spanish National Court report published a day earlier, which said a group of people had roughed up employees of the embassy and robbed computers before fleeing.

The alleged leader of the group, Adrian Hong Chang, a 35-year-old Mexican who had an Uber account in the name of Oswald Trump, contacted "the FBI in New York five days after the assault"

with information related to the incident in the embassy, the court added. The embassy raid came just days before a high-stakes nuclear summit in Hanoi between Kim and US President Donald Trump that ultimately failed to reach an accord. The timing has fuelled speculation that the assailants were trying to get information on North Korea's former ambassador to Spain, Kim Hyok Chol, who became North Korea's top nuclear negotiator after he was expelled from Spain in 2017.

FBI

CCD said the raid had no links to the Hanoi summit - which ended abruptly with no agreement - and that no other governments were involved until after the event. But it added it had "shared certain information of enormous potential value with the FBI in the United States, under mutually agreed terms of confidentiality." Hong Chang, who lives in the United States, first visited the North Korean embassy in Madrid on February 7, presenting himself as Matthew Chao, a "managing partner" at a firm he called Baron Stone Capital, according to the court's report. He said he was interested in investing in North Korea and asked to meet with embassy's charge d'affaires. Hong Chang later visited a shop where he would buy the knives and fake guns which were later used during the raid on the embassy before leaving Spain on February 9. He returned to Spain on February 19 via Prague. Three days later a group of ten men led by Hong Chang broke into the embassy and tied up its occupants and covered their heads with plastic bags. — AFP

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Friday Times

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Lifestyle

Two persons hug by the Louvre museum pyramid at dawn in Paris. — AFP

Paris marks 30 years of Louvre's pyramid

See Page 25

Grande says early career was 'hard' on her mental health

The 'Thank u, Next' hitmaker has thanked her fans for being supportive of her spate of "random, impulsive and excessive" music releases but admitted not sticking rigidly to a traditional schedule of bringing out new songs and having to promote them have made her feel "much more connected" and given her a new lease of life. She shared a post on Twitter which read: "Just saying. Thanks for being supportive of my random, impulsive and excessive music releases. "The first few years of this were really hard on my mental health and energy. "I was so tired from promo trips and was always losing my voice and never knew what city I was in when I woke up. "It was so much. It was worth it and i am grateful for everything i learned and accomplished when I did things that way, of course. "But I just feel so much more connected now and yeah... If I feel like I'm able to make special things with my incredible friends quickly, why not share them right away? "It's a very dope feeling and has breathed so much air back into my lil lungs. (sic)" The 25-year-old singer - who has released two albums, 'Sweetener' and 'Thank U, Next' since August 2018 and six singles over the last year - admitted she has found it more "authentic and rewarding" to bring music out on her own terms.



Eva Green thinks Weinstein's fall is a 'miracle'

The 'Dumbo' actress - who is one of dozens of women who claimed to be a victim of the disgraced producer's alleged unwanted sexual advances - thought the movie mogul was "a god" when they first met but she's delighted he's now disappeared from the limelight after multiple people stepped forward to accuse him of misconduct. She said: "He was like a god. He could make you, destroy you. You think, maybe something will change — I could win an Oscar! "So the first time you meet him you feel privileged. But what happened [to him] is a miracle. There is justice. "But you know, there are a***holes everywhere, in every field." While the 38-year-old star is pleased the scandal brought a greater awareness to sexual harassment on movie sets, she was amused by the employment of intimacy coaches to choreograph love scenes. She told ES magazine: "They have a coach for sex scenes? I think that is quite funny." However, Eva does think sex scenes should be "clinical". She added: "But I believe the way to kill the fear of the sex scene is to rehearse it like a dance or a fight. So clinically you say, you do this, you grab my hand, you do that, rather than get carried away by passion." The French actress currently lives in London and has no desire to move to Los Angeles after "hating" her brief stint there early in her career.



Chris Evans doesn't like to be suffocated by relationships

The 'Avengers: Endgame' star - who is currently single - has opened up about his bachelor lifestyle and admitted he still wants to have time to do his own things when he's in a relationship, describing himself as an "autonomous guy". Speaking to the Hollywood Reporter, he said: "I'm the one who fears being enveloped. I was always a really autonomous guy my whole life. Camping by myself is one of my favorite things. "I really like to be with someone who also has their own thing to do as well, you know? If I'm with someone who just kind of adopts my life, that can feel a bit suffocating." The 37-year-old star also revealed he has "chilled out" when it comes to smoking marijuana after explaining how he had some "strange connections" when he was living with other aspiring actors in Hollywood's Oakwood Apartments complex in Toluca Lake. He added: "You know, I've chilled out on weed. I used to love it, but now I think it's the one thing that gets in my way. It zaps your motivation. "I think apathy kind of bleeds in, and you start to think, 'Well, I'm not apathetic, I just don't feel like doing that.' And it's like, no - you would feel like doing that if you weren't stoned. And, you know-I'm 37. I can't be smoking weed all the time. That's crazy." Meanwhile, movie star Chris - who has starred as Captain America in 10 Marvel Cinematic Universe films - recently admitted that growing up, his favorite superhero was actually Batman, although he was "more into cartoons" at the time. — Bangshowbiz

Seth Rogen launches cannabis brand

The 'Pineapple Express' actor and 'Superbad' producer Evan Goldberg have been working on their company, Houseplant, for five years so to see the brand launch in Canada is a "dream come true". Seth said in a statement: "We have been working on this quietly for years and seeing everything come together is a dream come true. We could not be more passionate about this company and are dedicated to doing everything the right way. It is extremely important to us to treat cannabis with the reverence it deserves. What a time!" The pair co-founded the brand with licensed cannabis producer Canopy Growth Corp (CGC), who own a 25% stake in Houseplant and will help with infrastructure and facilities to grow the drug. Strains sold by the company include Sativa, Indica, and Hybrid but it is only available in Canada and there are not currently believed to be any plans to expand into the US. Evan said: "We are so proud to be launching in Canada, our home. After spending five years diligently preparing for the launch of this company, we're excited to be able to share our passion for cannabis with Canadians in this way." And the company hope their range of product can help people "learn to love" the drug. They said in a statement: "Houseplant is the result of years of experience and dedication, with each element and expression thoughtfully designed to make it easier for people to learn to love cannabis as much as Houseplant does."



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Friday, March 29, 2019

Thurman hails #MeToo but warns of danger of 'crushing creativity'

US actress Uma Thurman said the #MeToo movement is transforming Hollywood for the better but warned that it shouldn't be used to "crush people's creativity". The star of "Pulp Fiction" and the "Kill Bill" movies, whose actress daughter Maya Hawke will appear in Quentin Tarantino's new film, "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", said the movement is a "long overdue correction" to the treatment of women in the film industry.

"I am so happy about it especially as I have a 20-year-old daughter who has decided to give her life to film, television and the theatre," she said. But the actress, who is starring in a new Netflix show "Chambers", which premiered Wednesday at the Series Mania festival in the northern French city of Lille, warned against a slip into puritanism. "In a certain way I don't want this to crush people's creativity," she told reporters.

'Don't want to get arrested'

"It would still be nice to fall in love with your leading man and not get arrested," Thurman added, referring to her marriage to fellow actor Ethan Hawke, who she met on "Gattaca" in 1997. Thurman, 48, had earlier married English star Gary Oldman after meeting him on the set of "State of Grace". "I think we are moving from a very ignorant place to a better, more creative place that is

based on respect," the actress said.

She said the #MeToo effect was "definitely producing a better working environment for women. There were so many situations where you could not have been in a worse working environment — I take that back, actually you probably could — but you had to survive that kind of stuff. It is definitely safer," she said. "I get 12 shades of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) just watching myself now," she joked, after looking at a showreel of her earlier work.

Thurman — who plays a grieving mother in the new Netflix supernatural horror series which will start streaming next month — said #MeToo has "already made a difference" to the kind of roles being written for women. "There are lots more real parts (around) and you don't just sit around talking about men, although I admit I talk about men all the time," she added.

Von Trier is 'real artist'

The depressingly ironic thing, she said, "it seems to me that before Women's Lib there were often better roles for women in Betty Davis" films and the like than there were in recent years. Thurman, who made her big screen debut as Venus in Terry Gilliam's "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" when she was just 16, said working with Tarantino had been her career high so far. "I truly feel blessed having worked with him. He is such a genius."

But she also defended the controversial Danish auteur Lars von Trier, whose latest shocker, "The House That Jack Built", was seen as giving the finger to the #MeToo movement. Thurman, who played the first victim of its woman-hating serial killer, admitted that it could be difficult working with the director, having also starred in his notorious 2013 movie, "Nymphomaniac". "I think he is funny. His material is tough, and it was tough for me to do, but he is a real artist. I respect him," she said. — AFP



US actress Uma Thurman poses during a photo call on the occasion of the 'Series Mania Festival' in Lille, northern France, on March 26, 2019. — AFP

Fury at Rammstein's 'repulsive' Holocaust clip

German hardrock band Rammstein sparked protests from politicians, historians and Jewish groups yesterday with a video showing band members dressed as concentration camp prisoners with nooses around their necks. Critics accused the Berlin-based group of a cynical publicity stunt playing with Nazi-era imagery to generate media hype and online clicks for their new single.

No strangers to controversy, the band has long employed dark militaristic imagery and in a 1998 video used footage from Leni Riefenstahl's 1936 Nazi propaganda film "Olympia". "With this new video, the band has crossed a line," said Charlotte Knobloch, ex-president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. "The instrumentalization and trivialization of the Holocaust shown in the images are irresponsible," she told Bild daily. "Rammstein is misusing the suffering and murder of millions for entertainment purposes in a frivolous and repulsive way."

The industrial metal band founded in 1994 is known for their grinding guitar riffs, taboo-breaking antics and theatrical stage shows heavy on pyrotechnics. Their songs have dealt with subjects from cannibalism to necrophilia, and the band name itself evokes the 1988 Rammstein air show disaster that killed 70 people and injured more than 1,000.

Frontman Till Lindemann, 56, asked in a 2006 interview whether the band would again dabble in Nazi themes, said: "No. Because I am fed up with allegations of being a rightwing band." However, in the new promotional clip, the band members are dressed in black-and-white striped concentration camp garb and seemingly awaiting their execution by hanging. Lindemann is shown bleeding from a facial cut and guitarist Paul Landers, 54, wears a Star of David.

At the end of the 35-second clip, the song title "Deutschland" (Germany) appears in Gothic letters. Bild quoted a line-up of politicians who voiced anger and disgust, with Jewish historian Michael Wolffsohn labeling it "a new form of desecration of the dead". Germany's anti-Semitism commissioner Felix Klein called it "a tasteless exploitation of artistic freedom" that "represents the transgression of a red line".

A year ago, German rappers Farid Bang and Kollegah sparked outrage with lyrics boasting that their bodies were "more defined than Auschwitz prisoners". The scandal spelt the end of the German music industry's sales-based Echo prize which had been awarded to the duo and helped spark large rallies calling for solidarity with Jews in Berlin and other cities. — AFP



In this file photo taken on August 01, 2013 Til Lindemann of German rock band Rammstein performs with flares on stage during heavy metal Wacken Open Air (WOA) Festival 2013 in Wacken, northern Germany. — AFP

Cardi B points to 'limited options' for drugging, robbing men



Red-hot rap queen Cardi B is working to quash controversy over resurfaced footage in which she admits to drugging and robbing men, pointing to "limited options" in her days as a stripper. Social media backlash has swirled in recent days over the three-year-old clip taken from an Instagram live session, with the unfiltered rapper saying she "drugged (men) up, and I robbed them. That's what I used to do."

Responding to the criticism over the video, the now 26-year-old went on the offensive on Instagram, saying she had discussed "things I had to do in my past right or wrong that I felt I needed to do to make a living." "I was blessed to have been able to rise from that but so many women have not." The expletive-laden video appears to be a response to allegations that she hadn't earned her success, with Cardi saying in it: "nothing was... handed to me."

But the clip triggered the hashtag #SurvivingCardiB, a reference to the bombshell docuseries "Surviving R Kelly" that refocused attention on sex abuse accusations against that R&B star. Many Twitter users alleged a double standard, saying her actions were comparable to those of male performers accused of sexual assault. "The men I spoke about in my live were men that I dated that I was involve with men that were conscious willing and aware," she posted on Instagram late Tuesday. — AFP

China Fashion Week



Models display the creations from “the zrsh” collection by Zhu Lizhen during the China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AFP photos



'30 years behind' but China breakdancers spinning towards Olympics



This photo taken on March 18, 2019 shows Wang Shenjiong, who was head coach of China's national breakdancing team at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games, during a training session at his studio in Shanghai. — AFP photos



This photo taken on March 18, 2019 shows breakdancers taking part in a training session at a studio in Shanghai.



A breakdancer performs in front of the audience during the French final of the Red Bull BC One Cypher competition on March 18, 2019 in Lyon.

"Mama Said Knock You Out" booms through a speaker as a handful of B-boys bust out their breakdancing moves in sporadic spurts of energy. The 1990s LL Cool J hip-hop classic and their gear — tattoos, beanie hats and caps — hark back to breakdancing's American roots. But this is Shanghai, and "breaking" is in the global spotlight like never before.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Wednesday gave it the provisional nod for inclusion at the Paris 2024 Games. Decried by sporting traditionalists, the move is designed to make the Games "more youthful and more urban", according to IOC president Thomas Bach. Wang Shenjiong, better known as "Danny" and a pioneer of breakdancing in China, said Olympic acceptance caps breaking's journey from the streets and being "a rogue dance in smoky nightclubs".

Wang was China's head coach when breakdancing made its debut at the Summer Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires in October, and he has worked to help drum up support for the Olympic cause. "Without the support of a big platform, any grassroots culture will become more and more niche, or even vanish," said the 37-year-old, sporting a retro tracksuit. "Through the Olympics we will take the competition to the most professional and highest level," he added, admitting however that some B-Boys were concerned about commercialization. "The spirit of hip-hop culture is peace, love, unity, having fun."

Wang zips off his tracksuit top to go bare-chested, spinning on one arm before landing back to the floor with a thwack as younger disciples stop and admire at his Shanghai dance studio. Wang is a relative veteran — most breakdancers are over the hill by 25, he says — and has watched breaking grow in China since the late 1990s. "If you master breaking, you are like Superman — but superior," said Wang.

'What matters is creativity'

At last year's Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires, China's "X-Rain" finished eighth of 12 in the boys' competition, which was won by Russia's "Bumblebee". Japan's "Ram" won girls gold. Wang picks out Olympic 2024 hosts France, the United States, Japan and South Korea as among the strongest nations. There is also the Netherlands, Russia and Ukraine, he said, the spread of countries underlining how breakdancing has grown since its beginnings on the mean streets of early 1970s New York.

China may not strike many as the obvious place to find breakdancing. But hip-hop and rap culture have recently found popularity in the country, fuelled in part by a highly successful reality rap show that debuted in 2017. Even China's government has caught on, appropriating rap rhythms to promote the Communist Party, while cracking down on explicit lyrics and even tattoos.

Wang cites rough estimates of 10 million Chinese engaged in some form of "street dance" — breaking, hip-hop, popping and other genres. Wang began "breaking" in 1997, picking up moves from visiting Japanese and American students, and had a solid foundation thanks to his skills as a former gymnast. From Shanghai, the scene spread to other Chinese cities after 2000. "Overall China has lagged about 30 years behind and it is difficult to catch up in skills and physical fitness," he said of Chinese breakdancing in comparison to the likes of the US. There is also a lack of creativity, though that has begun to change, he said. "Chinese breakdancers are transforming a type of dance while overseas dancers are making a total new one," said Wang. "What matters for breaking is the creativity, not the degree of completion." — AFP



Singapore defends UN bid for street food honor

Singapore yesterday defended nominating its street food for UN recognition as a bid to "safeguard" local culture after the move sparked a cross-border culinary clash with Malaysia. The city-state is home to many open-air food courts where vendors, known as "hawkers", serve dishes such as chicken and rice, noodles and satays at relatively cheap prices.

Singapore announced last year it would nominate its hawker

culture to be designated as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO, and if successful it will join items such as traditional Japanese cuisine and Belgian beer on the list. But the move sparked anger in Malaysia — while the country's street food is similar to that in Singapore, Malaysians claim it is generally far superior.

Announcing Singapore's nomination had been officially submitted this week, senior National Heritage Board official Yeo Kirk Siang insisted the bid was not meant to show the city's street food was "better" than that of other countries. "It's not about countries trying to prove that their cultural practices are better, unique, or that it originated from the country," he told a press conference.

"What the nomination is about is whether the cultural practice is valued by the community within that country... and whether they are committed to safeguarding these practices within their coun-

tries." Officials also hope the bid will encourage the younger generation to get more involved in the street food business. The news that Singapore was moving forward with the nomination raised hackles in Malaysia, however, with one Facebook user writing: "When Singapore realised it has no culture that is singularly its own, it will claim what's others."

Singapore and Malaysia have had a testy relationship since a stormy union in the 1960s but tempers really boil over when it comes to food — where particular dishes come from, and who makes the best versions, is often the subject of heated debate. The outcome of Singapore's bid is due at the end of 2020. — AFP



'KAWS:HOLIDAY' an inflatable sculpture by US artist and designer Brian Donnelly, known professionally as Kaws is shown at Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong. — AFP photos



A woman works at an antiques stall in a street in Hong Kong.

Art ambition: Hong Kong battles Beijing as dreams for culture soar

At a sunny Hong Kong art studio Kacey Wong gazes out through the bars of a cage, painted communist red — his work a protest in a city struggling to square its vast cultural ambitions with an increasingly assertive Beijing. Better known for its high-end commercial galleries — and glamorous fairs like this month's Art Basel — Hong Kong is striving to turn itself into a cultural heavyweight through a spate of new multi-million-dollar public art spaces.

But local artists warn Beijing's growing influence is creating a climate of fear that is stifling creativity and threatens the nascent grassroots art scene Hong Kong says it wants to enrich. "The way I look at it is that all government-supported art space... is already not safe," said Wong, who sat in his cage outside Hong Kong's government headquarters last July 1 — the anniversary of the city's return to China by Britain. "The red line is invisible and it's shifting all the time," Wong, 49, told AFP.

Hong Kong has rights unseen on the mainland but fears they are being steadily eroded were compounded last year when a highly-anticipated show by Chinese political cartoonist Badiucuo was cancelled, with organizers citing threats made by the Chinese authorities. Talks by dissident author Ma Jian were pulled just a week later by the new Tai Kwun arts centre, before being reinstated at the last moment. The freedom of the city's publishing has also taken a hit, with five booksellers known for printing gossip titles about China's leaders disappearing in 2015 and resurfacing in custody on the mainland.

'Obedient artists'

The unprecedented challenges to freedom of expression come at a time of staggering public investment in Hong Kong arts and culture. As well as Tai Kwun — a \$484 million renovation of a former colonial prison and police station led by The Hong Kong Jockey Club in partnership with the government — there is the 60,000-square-metre harbourfront M+ gallery due to open in 2020. M+ and the Xiqu centre, a recently-opened Chinese opera venue, are part of the vast West Kowloon Cultural District costing upwards of \$2.8 billion.

The city's Chief Executive Carrie Lam has said that West Kowloon's success would "elevate the status of Hong Kong to among the great cities of the world". But others fear Hong Kong could follow the model of Singapore, which has a thriving, government-supported arts scene but is at the mer-

cy of authorities who can withhold or withdraw funding if work is deemed to breach their guidelines.

Critics say this pushes locally-based creatives to self-censor and avoid delving too deeply into topics deemed sensitive by the government. "Tai Kwun and West Kowloon will provide opportunities," said Wen Yau, a PhD student researching artist participation in social movements at Hong Kong Baptist University. "So it's quite an easy way to get all these people in and they will be obedient artists because once you depend on the funding it's hard to say no."

Cosmin Costinas — the director of Para Site, one of Hong Kong's oldest contemporary art centres — said the city's artists were not yet self-censoring, but admitted censorship was a problem, albeit one caused primarily by middle men. "I think it's important to understand that the majority of them (censorship cases) have not come directly from sources of power but from different intermediaries that were themselves afraid," he said. His words echoed the experience of AFP.

West Kowloon's press office refused to allow directors at M+ and the Xiqu centre to be interviewed on this subject and a Tai Kwun press officer also turned down an interview on behalf of Tobias Berger, head of arts. One exception was Eve Tam, director of the Hong Kong Museum of Art — due to reopen later this year after a revamp — who said she would give "freehand to the artist to have their own position" on sensitive issues.



Jim Lambie's 'Metal Box (Bucharest)' is shown at Art Basel in Hong Kong.



A gallery staff member (L) opens the door over photojournalist Liu Heung Shing's 'Wednesday, August 21, 1991' at Star Gallery during Art Basel.

'Can't help their homeland'

Still, some creatives aren't taking any chances. "Some of my artist friends moved away, to Germany and to Taiwan. They don't want to stay in Hong Kong," said Man Chan, 32, an artist and assistant at Wong's studio. "Of course they are angry but how however hard they try they can't help their homeland. So they just go." Even among those who remain in Hong Kong, some have sent their work abroad.

Last year hand-drawn sketches of Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement — month's-long pro-democracy demonstrations — were part of an exhibition on dissent at London's British Museum.

M+ told AFP at the time it was still "carefully evaluating this recent past" and was not considering the works for its collection. But there are young artists in Hong Kong who are still fighting on their home turf.

"I've always been someone who cares about Hong Kong and an artist who's willing to discuss these topics through my creations," said Siu Wai-hang, 32, whose video work depicting the July 1 pro-democracy protest won the Hong Kong Human Rights Art Prize in 2018. Wong agrees. "Don't think people will just totally give up and won't do anything even in a super suppressive regime. People will be doing Banksy-like (works). There'll be invisible platforms." —AFP

Lifestyle | Feature

FROM OUTRAGE TO ICON: PARIS MARKS 30 YEARS OF LOUVRE'S PYRAMID



In this file photo taken on July 28, 1988, shows the construction site of the Louvre Pyramid, designed by Chinese-US architect Ioh Ming Pei, in the main courtyard (Cour Napoleon) of the Louvre Palace (Palais du Louvre) in Paris.

It was once decried as an architectural “obscurity”, but as the Louvre’s glass pyramid turns 30 today, it has become a cherished icon of the French capital. One eminent writer called for revolt in the streets when French president Francois Mitterrand’s flamboyant culture minister Jack Lang first unveiled the plans for what is now regarded as Chinese-American architect I M Pei’s masterpiece.

Plonking a modernist pyramid into the centre of a Renaissance palace was considered sacrilege, with one satirical magazine calling it a tomb and joking that Mitterrand — who was suffering from cancer — “wants to be the first pharaoh in our history”. Pei — who will be 102 next month — remembers “receiving many angry glances in the streets”, with up to 90 percent of Parisians said to be against the project at one point.

Yet in the end, even that stern critic of modernist “carbuncles”, Britain’s Prince Charles, pronounced it “marvelous”. Over the next few days, JR, one of the world’s most famous street artists, will create a huge collage with the help of 400 volunteers to celebrate its 30th birthday by revealing “the Secret of the Grand Pyramid”.

Masterstroke

The sphinx-like Mitterrand, who had embarked on a string of grand projects to transform the French capital, hedged his bets from the start. “It’s a good idea, but like all good ideas it is difficult to do,” the wily old Socialist leader had warned Lang. A whole wing of the Louvre was then occupied by the French ministry of finance, which held the purse strings of the state, and would be difficult to budge.

The museum’s huge “Napoleon Courtyard was an appalling car park,” Lang said. “The museum was handicapped by the lack of a central entrance.” Pei’s masterstroke was to link the three wings of the world’s most visited museum with vast underground galleries bathed in light from his glass and steel pyramid. Such was his success that the conservative French daily *Le Figaro*, which had led the campaign against his “atrocious” design for years, celebrated his genius with a supplement on the 10th anniversary of the pyramid’s opening in 1999.

Pei, who grew up in Hong Kong and Shanghai, was not the obvious choice for the job, having never worked on a historic building before. But Mitterrand was so impressed with his modernist extension to the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC that he insisted he was the man for the Louvre. Already in his mid-60s when the project began, nothing had prepared Pei for the hostility his plans would receive. He needed all his tact and dry humor to survive a series of encounters with planning officials and historians.

‘You’re not in Dallas now’

One meeting with the French historic monuments commission in January 1984 ended in uproar, with Pei unable even to present his ideas. “You are not in Dallas now!” one of the experts shouted at him during the “terrible session”, where he felt the target of anti-Chinese racism. Not even Pei’s winning of the Pritzker Prize, the “Nobel of architecture” in 1983, assuaged his detractors.

Lang said he is still “surprised by the violence of the opposition” to Pei’s ideas. “The pyramid is right at the centre of a monument central to the history of France (the Louvre is the former palace of the country’s kings).” The Louvre’s then director, Andre Chabaud, resigned in 1983 in protest at the “architectural risks” Pei’s vision posed.

The present incumbent, however, is in no doubt that the pyramid helped turn the museum around. Jean-Luc Martinez is all the more convinced having worked with Pei in recent years to adapt his plans to cope with the museum’s growing popularity. Pei’s original design was for up to two million visitors a year. Last year the Louvre welcomed more than 10 million. “The Louvre is the only museum in the world whose entrance is a work of art,” Martinez insisted.

The pyramid is “the modern symbol of the museum”, he said, “an icon on the same level” as the Louvre’s most revered artworks such as the “Mona Lisa” or the “Venus de Milo”. Pei is not alone in being savaged for changing the cherished landscape of Paris. In 1887, a group of intellectuals that included Emile Zola and Guy de Maupassant published a letter in the newspaper *Le Temps* to protest the building of the “useless and monstrous Eiffel Tower”, an “odious column of sheet metal with bolts.” — AFP



A man walks past small pyramids during preparation works of the installation of French contemporary artist and photographer Jean Rene, aka JR in the main courtyard Cour Napoleon of the Louvre Museum. — AFP photos

Paris’ Louvre museum: Eight centuries of history

From a medieval fortress protecting Paris to one of the world’s biggest and most-visited museums, the Louvre has been reinvented many times over the centuries. Today it attracts 10 million visitors a year, most of them tourists drawn by star attractions such as the Mona Lisa and Venus de Milo. On the 30th anniversary of the inauguration of I.M. Pei’s landmark glass pyramid within one of its courtyards, here is a look back over some of the colourful episodes in the long life of the Louvre.

1190: watchtower

It started off as a Middle Age fortress set up by King Philippe-Auguste in 1190 as part of an enclosure to defend Paris, then several times smaller than it is today. As part of the fortification, the moated Louvre Castle monitored entry from the river Seine just as the Tower of London did with the Thames. The base of its “Grosse Tour”, a large tower that served in part as a dungeon, still exists today.

1546: royal palace

As Paris expanded, the fortress lost its defensive role and was occasionally used as a royal residence. But when King Francis I returned after being imprisoned in Spain, he announced it would be converted into his main residence. Celebrated French Renaissance architect Pierre Lescot designed the luxurious palace, with work starting in 1546 on its now-famous facade interspersed with columns, bas-reliefs and statues. It became home to successive monarchs, each adding to its transformation, but lost its status as a royal residence after Louis XIV moved in 1678 to Versailles, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) outside of the city.

1725: arts salon

The Louvre evolved into a centre for arts, the prestigious Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture taking up residence in the 1690s. In 1725 the academy exhibited its members’ work for the first time in its Salon Carré (Square Salon). Such “salons” or shows became major events in the arts world. A handful of artists worked and lived in the Louvre during this time, including Jean-Baptiste Simeon Chardin and Rococo painter Jean-Honore Fragonard, but they were driven out as the space was reclaimed for a museum.

1793: museum

Soon after the start in 1789 of the French Revolution that overthrew the monarch, the governing Assembly decided the Louvre should be turned into a museum and its royal collections displayed to the public. The National Museum opened in 1793. Napoleon I played a key role in its formation, remodeling the space and increasing its collection with acquisitions from his various conquests. He married Marie-Louise of Austria in the Louvre in 1810. After a first presentation of just over 700 paintings and objects, the Louvre today exhibits about 35,000 pieces from a collection nearly 20 times larger.

1830: artists stand guard

During the three-day 1830 July Revolution that overthrew another king, artists acted as national guardsmen to watch over the Louvre’s masterworks and stop looting. Eugene Delacroix kept an eye on Egyptian antiquities; Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres safeguarded works by Raphael. Both men are today proud features of the Louvre’s collection, which includes Delacroix’s most famous painting “Liberty Leading the People”, inspired by those “Three Glorious Days”.

1911: Mona Lisa missing

In 1911 the number of visitors to the Louvre reached a new peak with crowds flocking to see the empty space where Leonardo da Vinci’s “Mona Lisa” used to hang. The painting, acquired by Francois I centuries before, had been stolen. An Italian laborer was discovered to be the thief and the work was found two years later in Florence. It was returned by special train to the Louvre, becoming its star attraction. — AFP

SWEET AND TANGY GLAZED SALMON



Use salmon's skin to stop it from drying out, release fat

Starting salmon with the skin side down in a pan is a neat way to cook fish. The skin protects the fish from drying out. The skin also releases fat into the pan, which is then used to cook the second side until it is golden brown, no extra oil needed. To help keep the fish from sticking and allow the fat to puddle under the fish (and not just around it), sprinkle a thin layer of salt and pepper over the cold pan before adding the fish. And make sure to use a nonstick pan. Follow this recipe with your kids.

SWEET AND TANGY GLAZED SALMON**Ingredients****Servings: 4**

Start to finish: 35 minutes (Prep time: 10 minutes)

Prepare Ingredients:

1/4 cup maple syrup
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon lime juice, squeezed from 1 lime
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
Salt and pepper

4 (6-ounce) skin-on salmon fillets

1 lime, cut into wedges

Gather Cooking Equipment:

Medium saucepan

12-inch nonstick skillet

Tongs

Spatula

Instant-read thermometer

Serving platter

Aluminum foil

Rubber spatula

Large spoon

Preparation

In medium saucepan, combine maple syrup, vinegar, soy sauce, lime juice, and garlic. Set aside. In a 12-inch nonstick skillet, sprinkle 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in even layer. Place salmon fillets, skin side down, in skillet. Wash your hands. Sprinkle tops of fillets with 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon pepper.

Cook salmon over medium heat, without moving salmon, until fat begins to puddle around fillets and skin begins to brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Use tongs and spatula to carefully flip fillets. Cook, without moving fillets, until center of each fillet registers 125 F on the instant-read thermometer, 6 to 8 minutes. Turn off heat. Transfer fillets, skin side down, to serving platter. Cover platter with aluminum foil. Cook maple syrup mixture in saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally with rubber spatula, until thick and syrupy, 4 to 6 minutes (sauce will be very bubbly when it thickens). Turn off heat. Spoon glaze evenly over salmon. Serve with lime wedges.

Chef's Note:

To flip fish, gently slide spatula under fish to loosen skin from skillet, then use tongs to flip fish.

Nutrition information per serving:

326 calories; 112 calories from fat; 12 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 109 mg cholesterol; 691 mg sodium; 16 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 13 g sugar; 38 g protein.

Rethinking pasta primavera to make it taste like spring

You'd never know that pasta primavera, a pseudo-Italian dish that appears on virtually every chain restaurant menu, actually has roots in French haute cuisine. The usual reproduction a random jumble of produce tossed with noodles in a heavy, flavor-deadening cream sauce tastes nothing like spring. Surprisingly, when we dug up the original recipe from New York's famed Le Cirque restaurant, our colleagues found it wasn't all that inspiring either, despite taking about 2 hours to prepare and dirtying five pans.

First, the vegetables (which had been painstakingly blanched one by one) were bland. Second, the cream-, butter-, and cheese-enriched sauce dulled flavor and didn't really unify the dish. If we wanted a true spring-vegetable pasta with a few thoughtfully chosen vegetables and a light, but full-bodied sauce that clung well to the noodles and brought the dish together we'd have to start from the beginning.

SPRING VEGETABLE PASTA

Ingredients

Servings: 4-6

Start to finish: 1 hour

1 1/2 pounds leeks, white and light green parts halved lengthwise, sliced 1/2 inch thick, and washed thoroughly, plus 3 cups coarsely chopped dark green parts, washed thoroughly

1 pound asparagus, tough ends trimmed, chopped coarse, and reserved; spears cut on bias into 1/2 inch lengths

2 cups frozen peas, thawed

4 cups vegetable broth

1 cup water

4 garlic cloves, minced

2 tablespoons minced fresh mint

2 tablespoons minced fresh chives

1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest

plus 2 tablespoons juice

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper

1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 pound campanelle (farfalle and penne are acceptable substitutes)

1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (1/2 cup), plus extra for serving

Preparation

Bring leek greens, asparagus trimmings, 1 cup peas, broth, water, and half of garlic to boil in large saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer gently for 10 minutes. While broth simmers, combine mint, chives, and lemon zest in bowl; set aside. Strain broth through fine-mesh strainer into 8 cup liquid measuring cup, pressing on solids to extract as much liquid as possible (you should have 5 cups broth; add water as needed to equal 5 cups). Discard solids and return broth to saucepan. Cover and keep warm.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add leeks and pinch salt and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until leeks begin to brown, about 5 minutes. Add asparagus spears and cook until asparagus is crisp-tender, 4 to 6 minutes. Add pepper flakes and remaining garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add remaining 1 cup peas and continue to cook for 1 minute longer. Transfer vegetables to bowl and set aside. Wipe out pot with paper towels. Heat remaining 1/4 cup oil in now-empty pot over medium heat until shimmering. Add pasta and cook, stirring often, until just beginning to brown, about 5 minutes.

Add warm broth and bring to boil. Cook, stirring frequently, until most of liquid is absorbed and pasta is al dente, 8 to 10



SPRING VEGETABLE PASTA

minutes. Off heat, stir in Parmesan, lemon juice, vegetables, and half of herb mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve immediately, passing extra Parmesan and remaining herb mixture separately.

Nutrition information per serving:

605 calories; 155 calories from fat; 17 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 4 mg cholesterol; 436 mg sodium; 88 g carbohydrate; 10 g fiber; 13 g sugar; 18 g protein.



Some 10,000 monks live at Tibetan Buddhist Yarchen Gar in Western Sichuan's Garzi Prefecture

Sizzling Sichuan: Exploring China's quintessential province

Sichuan - the 'China of China'. This far west province is a microcosm of all that draws visitors to the Middle Kingdom. Fiery food, sleepy pandas, a diverse set of ancient cultures and wild natural landscapes are just a handful of Sichuan's perennial attractions.

In 2018 there are more reasons than ever to travel to the land of four rivers. Sichuan's capital has grown into a cool, modern city full of interesting design and art, new railway lines are opening to the farthest reaches of the province's interior - including a new 'roof of the world' line that will shuttle travelers to Tibet - and one of China's most prized national parks has recovered from a devastating earthquake. So prep your tastebuds for a peppercorn tingling, because the time is now to see the most Chinese of China's provinces.

Chengdu - an ancient and modern city

Capital city Chengdu is the centre of one of China's four best-known regional cuisines, featuring bold spices

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and face-numbing peppercorns. This perhaps also explains the city's famous fire-breathing and face-changing opera performances - in some way an expression of the heat-laden dining experiences. But beyond Chengdu's ancient temples and centuries-old teahouses is a hip contemporary culture only just gaining recognition among travelers: chic design hotels, hot clubs and creative brewpubs, and a bevy of art museums that stretch from imaginatively-presented relics of Sichuan's past to contemporary spaces featuring local and national artists.

Visiting pandas in Sichuan's forests

Chengdu's Giant Panda Breeding Research Base - an ex-situ conservation effort that aims to eventually rewild the bamboo scarfers - is undoubtedly the best place in the world to get up close and personal with the panda, but it's not Sichuan's only option. Outside the city of Ya'an, 150km west of Chengdu, the Bifengxia Panda Base maintains a more natural atmosphere - here you hike up a forested gorge, past waterfalls and cultural relics, to see a small group of pandas in the midst of a pleasant wooded setting typical of central and southern Sichuan.

Into the mountains of Sichuan

Push deeper into western or northern Sichuan, and the lowland plains of the Chengdu Basin give way to the rugged foothills of the Tibetan Plateau. National parks highlight the most scenic areas here, with standout Jiuzhaigou National Park's cerulean lakes and wide waterfalls once again open to tourists in limited numbers after a 2017 earthquake tore through the north of Sichuan and closed the park for months.

Further west, three serene valleys in Four Sisters Mountain National Park give visitors the chance to hike on unpaved trails under the shadow of four towering peaks fronted by glaciers and remote lakes. And in the far southwest of the province, Yading Nature Reserve has been rebranded as a sort of latter-day Shangri-la, combining Tibetan temples and culture with one- to four-day hiking routes through pristine nature virtually untouched by modern development.

Exploring Tibetan Culture in Kham

A new Tibet-Sichuan railway line will connect Chengdu with Lhasa in just 15 hours when it opens in 2025. Travelers who don't want to deal with the permit and travel agency constraints (and expense) of visiting the Tibet Autonomous Region should look a little closer at Western Sichuan, which roughly corresponds to Kham, one of historical/cultural Tibet's three traditional provinces.

This area is home to a two-hundred-year-old monastery and printing press in the town of Dege. Some 40,000 monks live at Seda's Larung Gar Buddhist Academy and another 10,000 monks and nuns call Yarchen Gar Buddhist Academy home. Quaint mountain monastery towns like Langmusi and Garze are equally perfect for learning about Tibetan culture and religion, or just exploring the surrounding hillsides. For wandering freely through Tibetan cultural areas, Sichuan is one of the best choices in all of China.

Holy Sites of the Chengdu Basin

Several religious sites close to Chengdu offer the chance to escape the city bustle and get a glimpse of China's diverse history.



The summit of Emei Shan, one of China's four holiest mountains



Historic, chilled-out Langzhong is a good place to discover ancient Chinese culture and literature



Sichuan is known for its spicy, tongue-numbing peppercorns and chillis



Chengdu's Anshun Bridge was mentioned by Marco Polo in his 13th century writings about China

Le Shan is home to the famed 71m tall Grand Buddha, carved straight into a cliff face in an effort to appease the swirling waters of three mighty rivers that converge here. The area attracts pilgrims from across the country to marvel at this powerful Buddha from land and by boat.

Others head up Emei Shan, through serene forest paths (or quick cable car rides) that wind past 9th-century temples to 3099m Jinding Peak. Get up early enough and you can watch the sunrise phenomenon known as 'Buddha's Halo' - rising light reflecting off clouds to create the mystical appearance of humans gliding through the skies. The Taoist highlight of Sichuan is Qingcheng Shan. This mountainside complex of ancient temples and misty forests is renowned as the birthplace of this traditional Chinese religion, to which pilgrims have so-journeyed for more than 2000 years to spend their days living in monasteries and meditating on the beauty of the region.

Ancient River Towns

Sichuan's historic riverside towns are the perfect places to slow down and relax for a bit. Found mostly along the 'Tea Horse Road', a historic trading route between Tibet and Sichuan (sometimes referred to as the Southern Silk Road), these laid-back destinations offer a nice combination of small-town leisure, historic architecture and bucolic countryside.

Riverfront teahouses and a network of pleasant walking paths recommend Liujiang. Boutique guesthouses and restored Qing architecture, plus historical connections to the Romance of the Three Kingdoms (one of China's most important literary sagas) make Langzhong a great escape. And ease-of-access on a quick direct bus from Chengdu make Pingle the simplest village to reach. No matter which you choose, they're all great options in which to unwind after exploring one of China's most diverse set of experiences across Sichuan. (www.loneplanet.com)



Sichuan's numerous breeding centers and nature reserves make it one of the best places in China to spot pandas



Serene Yading Nature Reserve combines Sichuan's incredible mountain scenery and Buddhist spirituality

Comic

Word Search

Animals 3 - Word Search

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

- ANTELOPE
BAT
BEAVER
BUFFALO
COYOTE
CRANE
DOLPHIN
DUCK
- GAZELLE
GOOSE
HUMMINGBIRD
JAGUAR
LAMPREY
MONKEY
ORCA
PARAKEET
- PUMA
RATTLESNAKE
TURTLE
WALRUS
WHALE

Yesterday's Solution

Animals 2 - Solution

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

- BABOON
CAMEL
CHIMPANZEE
COBRA
CROW
DOVE
GOPHER
HAWK
- LION
MACAW
NIGHTINGALE
PANTHER
PEACOCK
PIG
PORCUPINE
RACCOON
- ROADRUNNER
SWAN
TIGER
WOLVERINE
WREN

Crossword 2170



ACROSS

1. A language unit by which a person or thing is known.
5. A woman host.
12. The airforce of Great Britain.
15. (Norse mythology) Ruler of the Aesir.
16. A false statement.
17. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir known for his beauty and skill with bow and skis.
18. A starch made by leaching and drying the root of the cassava plant.
19. Soft suede glove leather from goatskin.
20. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
21. Highly excited.
22. A unit of information equal to 1024 bytes.
23. A witty satiric verse containing two rhymed couplets and mentioning a famous person.
25. The deep vascular inner layer of the skin.
28. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
30. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
31. Any of various minerals consisting of hydrous silicates of aluminum or potassium etc. that crystallize in forms that allow perfect cleavage into very thin leaves.
34. (Norse mythology) Wife of Thor and guardian of the home.
37. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike

part of an organism.

39. Cattle that are reared for their meat.
40. Pertaining to or resembling amoebae.
42. European freshwater game fish with a thick spindle-shaped body.
45. Being one more than fifty.
46. A unit of atmospheric pressure equal to one thousandth of a bar.
48. Moving quickly and lightly.
51. A farewell remark.
52. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
53. (zoology) Lacking a tail or taillike appendage.
55. A condition requiring relief.
56. A rounded thickly curled hairdo.
58. The Judeo-Christian God.
59. (British) A title of respect for a member of the English gentry ranking just below a knight.
62. A port town on the Atlantic coast of Portugal southeast of Lisbon.
64. Type genus of the Coraciidae.
68. (Irish) Ancient Irish god (probably a god of the sun).
71. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
72. Any object that radiates energy.
76. Informal terms for a mother.
77. A game whose object is to form words from a group of randomly chosen letters.
78. A master's degree in business.
79. Seed of a pea plant.
80. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
81. A light touch or stroke.

DOWN

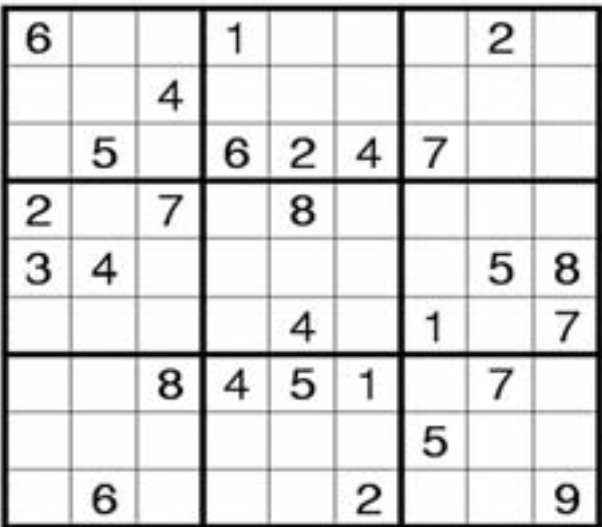
1. A member of a people who have no permanent home but move about according to the seasons.
2. A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people.
3. Of lesser importance or stature or rank.
4. Something that baffles understanding and cannot be explained.
5. Toweling consisting of coarse absorbent cotton or linen fabric.
6. In operation or operational.
7. What you can repeat immediately after perceiving it.
8. (prosody) Of or consisting of trochees.
9. Greek geometer (3rd century BC).
10. A unit of force equal to 1000 newtons.
11. (of something seen or heard) Clearly defined.
12. British writer of novels who was born in India.
13. On or toward the lee.
14. An imperfection in a device or machine.
24. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
26. Annual to perennial woody herbs of temperate North America, Europe and Asia.
27. A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
29. Divulge information or secrets.
32. The lowermost portion of a structure partly or wholly below ground level.
33. Far away from home or one's usual surroundings.

35. Any of a class of organic compounds that contain the divalent radical -CON-HCO-.
36. (psychiatry) A psychological disorder of thought or emotion.
38. Type genus of the Anatidae.
41. Submerged freshwater perennials.
43. The locus of feelings and intuitions.
44. The cry made by sheep.
47. Transfer somebody to a different position or location of work.
49. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
50. A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
54. A unit of electrical charge equal to the amount of charge transferred by a current of 1 ampere in 1 second.
57. A heavy ductile magnetic metallic element.
60. Disposed of as useless.
61. Silklike nylon fabric.
63. A city in northwestern Turkey.
65. A slender double-reed instrument.
66. Avatar of Vishnu.
67. The sixth month of the civil year.
69. A small cake leavened with yeast.
70. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
73. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
74. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
75. A doctor's degree in dental medicine.

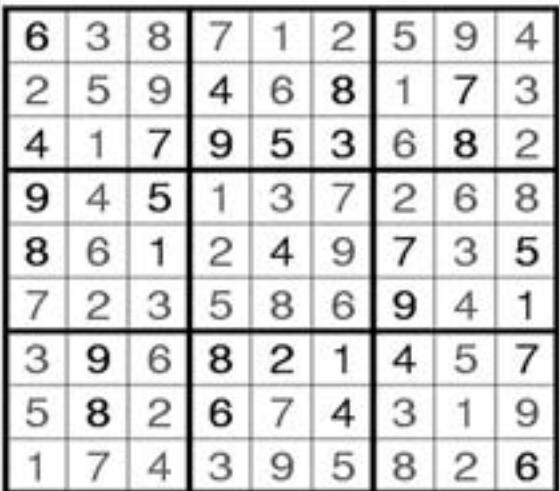
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



TV Listings

AM MOVIES
ACTION

01:20 The Charnel House
03:05 Overdrive
04:50 Jack Reacher: Never Go Back
07:00 The Charnel House
08:45 Overdrive
10:30 Dragonheart
12:15 Jack Reacher: Never Go Back
14:25 Nerve
16:10 The Hunt For Red October
18:25 Boyka: Undisputed
20:10 Robin Hood
22:00 Tombstone

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:50 Into Alaska
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 Intruders
03:35 Great White Invasion
04:25 Into Alaska
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Wildest Latin America
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Escape To Chimp Eden
08:00 Escape To Chimp Eden
08:25 Wildest Middle East
12:00 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
12:55 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
13:50 Great White Invasion
14:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
15:40 Extinct Or Alive
16:35 Intruders
17:30 Whale Wars
18:25 Animal Cops Houston
19:20 Air Jaws: Walking With Great Whites
20:15 Hanging With The Hendersons
21:10 Amanda To The Rescue
22:05 Wildest Latin America
23:00 Intruders
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees

BBC FIRST

00:25 EastEnders
01:00 The Split
01:55 Holby City
02:50 Inside No. 9
03:50 Doctors
04:20 Agatha Raisin
05:05 Death In Paradise
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Friday Night Dinner
07:25 Call The Midwife
08:20 Agatha Raisin
09:05 Death In Paradise
10:00 Father Brown
10:55 Doctors
11:25 Doctors
11:55 Holby City
12:50 Casualty
13:40 EastEnders
14:10 Father Brown
15:00 Holby City
15:55 Doctors
18:30 The Coroner
20:10 The Split
21:05 Line Of Duty
22:05 The Cry
23:05 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
23:50 Doctors

crime & investigation network

00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 What The Killer Did Next
02:00 The Killing Season
03:50 Britain's Biggest Heists
04:45 The First 48
05:30 Police Patrol
06:15 I Married My Killer
07:00 Homicide Hunter
08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
08:20 The First 48
09:05 Jo Frost On Britain's Killer Kids

09:50 Homicide Hunter
10:35 Britain's Forgotten Serial Killer: Trevor Hardy
11:30 Shannon Matthews
12:25 The First 48
13:20 Diabolical Women
14:15 Police Patrol
15:10 It Takes A Killer
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Britain's Biggest Heists
18:00 The First 48
19:00 Police Patrol
20:00 Motive For Murder
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Police Patrol
23:00 It Takes A Killer

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:25 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
00:50 Broad City
01:40 Review
02:05 Takeshis Castle Thailand
02:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:00 Broad City
03:45 Are We There Yet
04:10 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
04:35 Impractical Jokers
05:00 Are We There Yet
07:05 Lip Sync Battle
07:55 Ridiculousness Arabia
08:20 Takeshis Castle Thailand
08:45 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
09:15 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
09:45 Comedy Central Presents:
Menna W FINA
10:15 Friends
12:20 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
14:30 Disaster Date
15:45 Friends
18:00 Impractical Jokers
19:30 Ridiculousness Arabia
20:00 Takeshis Castle Thailand
20:30 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
21:00 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
21:30 Comedy Central Presents:
Menna W FINA
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 The Alternative Comedy Experience
23:30 This Is Not Happening
23:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah

Discovery Family

00:30 Xploration Outer Space
01:20 Beverly Hills Groomer
02:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
03:00 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Xploration Outer Space
06:20 React To That
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 React To That
10:20 Beverly Hills Groomer
11:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Xploration Outer Space
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 React To That
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 Beverly Hills Groomer
17:25 Pick A Puppy
17:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:15 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:30 Deception With Keith Barry
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:00 How It's Made
22:25 How It's Made
22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:15 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 Deception With Keith Barry

ID

00:50 People Magazine Investigates
01:45 Dead Of Winter
02:40 Dead North
03:35 Body Cam
04:30 People Magazine Investigates
05:25 Murder By Numbers
06:20 Married With Secrets
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 Disappeared
08:55 Killer Outbreaks
09:50 The Detectives Club: New Orleans
10:45 Grave Secrets
11:40 Evil Stepmothers
13:30 On The Case With Paula Zahn
14:25 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
15:20 Disappeared
16:15 Suspicion
17:10 Grave Secrets
18:05 Evil Stepmothers
20:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
20:30 Dates From Hell
21:00 Obsession: Dark Desires
23:00 Forbidden: Dying For Love

Disney

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

Disney Junior

00:00 PJ Masks
00:15 PJ Masks
00:30 The Lion Guard
01:00 Sofia The First
01:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:00 PJ Masks
02:50 The Hive
03:00 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 The Hive
04:40 Zou
05:25 The Hive
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
06:35 The Hive
06:45 PJ Masks

07:00 PJ Masks
07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
08:00 Disney Muppet Babies
08:20 Paprika
08:40 PJ Masks
09:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:15 Puppy Dog Pals
09:30 Vampirina
09:45 Fancy Nancy
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Elena Of Avalor
11:00 Puppy Dog Pals
12:00 Disney Muppet Babies
12:20 Paprika
12:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:40 PJ Masks
14:40 Paprika
15:00 Claude
15:40 Vampirina
16:30 Paprika
17:00 Disney Muppet Babies
17:30 PJ Masks
17:55 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
18:00 Puppy Dog Pals
18:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:00 Fancy Nancy
19:30 Vampirina
20:00 PJ Masks
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Sofia The First
21:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
21:30 Elena Of Avalor
22:00 Puppy Dog Pals
22:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
23:00 Fancy Nancy
23:30 Vampirina

Discovery Channel

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

XD

00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Boyster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Boyster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Marvel's Avengers: Secret Wars
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Gravity Falls
09:00 Lab Rats
09:50 Mighty Med
10:40 Kickin' It
11:30 Lab Rats Elite Force

11:55 Lab Rats Elite Force
12:20 Phineas And Ferb
12:35 Gravity Falls
13:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:29 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:29 Furiki Wheels
16:00 Big City Greens
16:29 Space Chickens In Space
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:29 DuckTales
18:00 Phineas And Ferb
18:29 Lab Rats
19:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:00 Big City Greens
20:29 Gravity Falls
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
22:29 Furiki Wheels
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja

E! HD

00:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 Botched
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
22:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
23:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry

itv CHOICE

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

HD

00:30 America's Book Of Secrets
01:15 Ancient Aliens
02:00 Ancient Impossible
02:45 Million Dollar Genius
03:30 UFO Hunters
04:15 Ancient Aliens
05:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
05:45 Weapons At War
06:30 America's Book Of Secrets
07:15 Ancient Aliens
08:00 Ancient Impossible
08:45 Million Dollar Genius

09:30 UFO Hunters
10:15 Ancient Aliens
11:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
11:45 Weapons At War
12:30 America's Book Of Secrets
13:15 Ancient Aliens
14:00 Ancient Impossible
14:45 Million Dollar Genius
15:30 UFO Hunters
16:15 Ancient Aliens
17:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
17:45 Weapons At War
18:30 America's Book Of Secrets
19:15 Ancient Aliens
20:00 Ancient Impossible
20:45 Million Dollar Genius
21:30 UFO Hunters
22:15 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
23:45 Weapons At War

HISTORY

00:20 Swamp People
01:05 Pawn Stars
01:30 Pawn Stars
01:50 American Pickers Best Of
02:35 Storage Wars
03:00 Storage Wars
03:25 The Zodiac Killer: Case Closed?
04:15 River Hunters
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Big Easy Motors
06:20 Big Easy Motors
06:45 Swamp People
07:30 Pawn Stars
08:15 American Pickers Best Of
09:00 Storage Wars
09:45 River Hunters
10:30 Forged In Fire
11:15 American Pickers
15:00 Counting Cars
17:15 Road Hawks
18:00 Road Hawks
18:45 Counting Cars
19:30 WW2 Treasure Hunters
21:00 Who Killed Tupac?
22:40 Milwaukee Blacksmith
23:30 Road Hawks

NAT GEO people HD

00:45 The Food Files
01:10 Carnival Eats
01:40 Miguel's Feasts
02:05 Chasing The Sun
02:35 Miguel's Feasts
03:00 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
03:30 Fish Tank Kings
04:25 Route Awakening
05:20 A House Of Its Time
06:15 Poh & Co.
06:40 Poh & Co.
07:10 Miguel's Feasts
07:35 Chasing The Sun
08:05 Miguel's Feasts
08:30 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
09:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:55 Route Awakening
10:20 Route Awakening
10:50 A House Of Its Time
11:15 A House Of Its Time
11:45 Poh & Co.
12:10 Poh & Co.
12:40 Places We Go
13:05 Chasing The Sun
13:35 Miguel's Feasts
14:00 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
14:30 Fish Tank Kings
15:25 Route Awakening
15:50 Route Awakening
16:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
16:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
17:15 Poh & Co.
17:40 Poh & Co.
18:10 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
19:05 Miguel's Feasts
19:30 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
20:00 Fish Tank Kings
21:00 Route Awakening
21:30 Route Awakening
22:00 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
22:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
22:55 Poh & Co.
23:20 Poh & Co.
23:50 Gok's Chinese Takeaway

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Whew! Life is returning a little more to the normal side right now. You may be thinking a little more coherently although you still have thoughts of change in your mind. At least you're able to make more logical decisions right now without the pressure of inferior emotions tugging at your heart strings so ardently. You're able to step back and see the bigger picture. It doesn't mean you won't make the change, Aries. It only means you're in possession of logical deduction somewhere in this confusion. You may want to help or reach out for advice to an old friend who's been in this same situation themselves. You're not as judgmental now.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Be watchful at work that you don't run haphazardly into a situation because of your making an unadvisable decision which doesn't show you in the best light. Work and home are places you can't seem to get a leg up on and that is frustrating. You'd rather be out with friends but that might not be best for you right now. Being out alone away from everyone might just hit the spot tonight. Maybe a dinner alone at a favorite restaurant and time to yourself shopping for clothing or just all-around looking is a great way to spend time, Taurus. Take time to regroup with yourself. Think of better times in the future.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Just about the time you think that building security is going your way, you fight with someone very important in your work group. Perhaps it's because you have your mind on romance, either with the one you're with or with someone new. It's hard to think about material success, though you need too, when this person is so prevalent on your mind. You're thinking of spending the rest of your life with what you perceive to be your soulmate, Gemini. Maybe you should change the range of your thoughts to include the fact that he or she will be with you in the future and you need to create the best for both of you. Thoughts of your childhood run through your mind creating daydreams of what could be.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have a need that is so overwhelming for change in your life that you may feel as if you're walking in circles rather than proceeding in a straightforward direction. Look to your friends and family for advice as to how to achieve your goals. Everyone has some story chock full of how they made it from which you can glean a good idea. Pick a person whom you know is happy, well thought of and has the prosperity they like. Material success is one of your personal needs, Cancer. In picking out this person and admitting to him or her what you desire that person will probably take you under their wing and help. This is a compliment to their judgement.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A good conversation with those you love where you were able to impart your thoughts and know that they were being given due consideration gives this day a needed boost. Although you can anger easily, try to stay calm. Work yields a huge influence in your life. Try to make it a great one that you love. Take time to be with family and friends, Leo. This is one of the best days you've had in a long time with those you love. Having your loved ones close and doing something that makes you all happy is where it's at today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Don't be surprised if a friend brings a great opportunity for a new job to you today. This could be in the consultation field because this friend knows what you're good at and how well you communicate with others. Though it may not be what you consider your best quality, you may want to look this prospect over. Sometimes friends and relatives know more about our abilities and the way they can be utilized than we do. Enjoy the compliment and look into the job situation, just for grins if for nothing else. You may get a great surprise.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a great time to be at work because you get to the bottom of any problem and make sense of it. Others know this and come to you for your advice. This could be on any practical application from advertising to building a widget. This isn't a day that goes by quickly though. It's a day that should give you the ability to work and keep busy. You may even receive compliments for your day's accomplishments which you take with a grain of salt. It's kind of lackadaisical without any real joy. Make your joy.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

All this thinking has put you into the mood for wanting company even when you're working. You want to talk and explain your reasoning for different projects but that could cause you to be questioned. That's not an issue you want to stir up because you don't like someone pushing you to change your mind. Friends are the same. This isn't the day to be with others except maybe for your dog or cat. Pets love you and want to be close without condemnation of any sort. Perhaps you should think of getting an animal to share your home if you don't have one, Scorpio. Unconditional love is always there for you then.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You're on point at work today even though you don't think you want to be the leader. When no one else wants to either, then you're nominated. Besides coworkers think you have knowledge they don't and they seem to follow you. You'd rather be home doing something entirely different but here you are, at work and in charge. That's because work mates think you're capable of making the hard, practical decisions they can't, Sagittarius. You can take the time to go inside and reflect your emotions once you get home. Know that people can and do count on you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

If you don't have someone to enjoy a strong love life with, you feel very uneasy and unhappy. Love is a strong desire now and you might stay with someone or start with someone you really aren't sure you'd like to keep. You're very serious now and you need to work. Ambition is part of that phenomenon that keeps you a much-needed busy. You're thinking about your life going by and that you may end up alone. That won't happen for you, Capricorn. Unless you want children quickly, then you have no reason for making an emotional decision now especially if you feel it's wrong.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Family and home draws you in today. You'd rather be with them in comfort than at work today. If you can take some time for you it would be better but if not, do the minimum it takes to succeed at work. As soon as practical, go home to being treated special. Perhaps a pizza or other takeout and enjoying time with loved ones is just what the doctor ordered. Make the most of being with those you love and let them bathe you in their love. This will be one of the nicest days in a while.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Group activities at work find you in the middle of a project. You're able to converse on a variety of subjects with fascinating results. You love taking responsibility for your career actions. You're thinking in a conventional way and others listen wholeheartedly. You were the first out of bed this morning willing to embrace the day before others in your family were and it's continued all day long. This shows your desire to do better with everything you touch, Pisces. Make it even better tonight by bringing home pizza and a salad. Go for a walk to relax a little later.


Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antiga	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Niger	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

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Kuwait Times
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Department: Heart & Vascular Center



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ENT Specialist



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- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
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- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ YAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Intractable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastrosocopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment

◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass

◆ Transanal minimally Invasive surgery

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- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care




Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

daralshifa


Tele:1802 555

Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com



مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital


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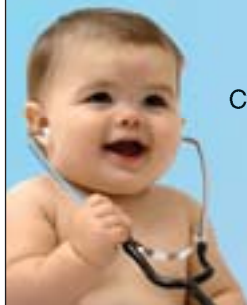
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- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

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Kuwait Times Classifieds

Friday, March 29, 2019

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STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm with light to moderate south westerly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

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

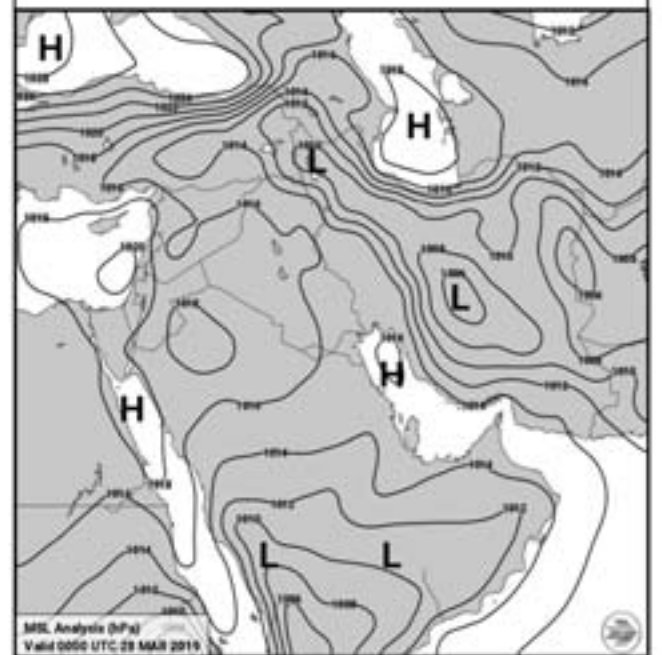
WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	26 °C	18 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	27 °C	14 °C
ABDALY	27 °C	15 °C
BUBYAN	00 °C	00 °C
JAHRA	28 °C	16 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	26 °C	17 °C
SALMIYAH	23 °C	18 °C
AHMADI	24 °C	17 °C
NUWAISIB	24 °C	15 °C
WAFRA	25 °C	14 °C
SALMY	26 °C	15 °C

SFC. CHART

28/03/2019 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	03/29	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	25 °C	14 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	03/30	Warm and Partly cloudy and rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be	24 °C	16 °C	SE	15 - 50 km/h
Sunday	03/31	Unstable and Cloudy and rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	25 °C	18 °C	SE	20 - 50 km/h
Monday	04/01	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	27 °C	17 °C	SE-S	12 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:24
Sunrise	05:43
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:04
Isha	19:21

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	25 °C
MIN. Temp.	12 °C
MAX. RH	98 %
MIN. RH	27 %
MAX. Wind	SE 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Firman** (Christian), S/o Sebesthiraj, Passport No: H8366062, Civil ID No: 283092507206, Date of birth: 25.09.1983, (native district: Thanjavur), Residing at No: 19/33, Kela Veethi, Papanasam Post and Taluk, Thanjavur - 614205, has converted to Islam with the name of Fareedh.S. (C 5448)

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Pakistani, 28 year old, B.Sc, diploma in (CE), Job: Quantity surveyor, looking for an Islamic girl with normal education. Contact email: jasmelabegun23@gmail.com (C 5506) 25-3-2019

Business

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2019

38 AUB's AGM approves a dividend of 20% in cash and 10% in bonus shares



40 Daimler and China's Geely join forces to build next-gen smart car



41 China pledges to expand market opening as US trade team arrives



RIYADH: SABIC headquarters in Riyadh. — Reuters file photo

Aramco to buy SABIC in \$69bn megadeal

Saudi giant looking to expand downstream activities

RIYADH/DUBAI: The world's largest oil producer Saudi Aramco has agreed to buy a 70 percent stake in Saudi Basic Industries Corp (SABIC) from the kingdom's wealth fund for \$69.1 billion in one of the biggest deals in the global chemical industry.

The agreement to help boost Aramco's downstream growth plans comes after months of talks between Aramco and the Public Investment Fund (PIF), which contributed to the delay of Aramco's planned multi-billion dollar initial public offering. "This is a win-win-win transaction and a transformational deal for three of Saudi Arabia's most important economic entities," said Yasir al-Rumayyan, managing director of the PIF.

The deal could inject billions of dollars into the PIF, giving it the firepower to proceed with its plans to create jobs and diversify the largest Arab economy beyond oil exports, including a mega business zone in the northwest of the country. Aramco has been increasing its investments in refining and petrochemicals to secure new markets for its crude, as it sees growth in chemicals as central to its downstream expansion strategy.

SABIC and Aramco said in a statement the agreed purchase price was 123.39 riyals per share, a slight discount from SABIC's closing price on Wednesday.

"Share price at 123.4 is fair given it is a strategic, long-term investment and given that SABIC is one of the most defensive, uncyclical segments as its growth is mainly related to population growth," said Mazen Al-Sudairi, head of research at Alrajhi Capital.

"We think it's a fair offer and makes sense from a pure valuation perspective," said Yousef Hussein, an analyst at EFG-Hermes.

Aramco's Chief Executive Amin Nasser said the deal - which is subject to certain closing conditions, including regulatory approvals - represented an "historic moment" and a "great opportunity for growth," Saudi-owned broadcaster Al Arabiya reported.

He told Al Arabiya there were a number of options to finance the deal. "Cash, borrowing and bonds are all available to us," he said. The Saudi economy was "the biggest winner," Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said in a tweet. Aramco said it has no plans to buy the remaining shares in SABIC, the world's fourth-biggest petrochemicals firm.

"Solidifying our relationship in this way strategically positions SABIC and Saudi Aramco to accelerate exciting developments in our global chemicals business," said Yousef Al-Benyani, SABIC Vice Chairman and CEO. Aramco plans to increase its refining capacity from 4.9 million to 8-10 million barrels per day by 2030.

Saudi Aramco and SABIC have petrochemicals production capacity of 17 and 62 million tons per year, respectively. "We think that Aramco will now run all of its future expansion plans directly through SABIC, and with a big part of the 2030 vision focused on expanding petchems, this only bolsters SABIC's long-term growth potential," Hussein said.

Bond on the way

Aramco is expected to issue its first international bond over the coming weeks, a deal which is likely to partly back the SABIC acquisition, sources previously told Reuters. An international bond sale by Aramco will almost certainly require the company to obtain a credit rating and disclose financial information in a prospectus, and the oil



giant has so far been reluctant to disclose many details of its finances.

Aramco's IPO initially planned for 2018 has been postponed. Saudi officials have said the new date for the public offering is now 2021 due to the world's top oil producer's plan to acquire the strategic stake in SABIC. Aramco CEO Nasser told Al-Arabiya he expected the IPO to happen in 2021 and that the company needed at least a year from the deal's completion before the IPO, so that Aramco financial statements can reflect the SABIC acquisition.

A major goal of the planned Aramco listing - which was initially slated for the end of 2018 and could prove the biggest IPO in history - was to raise money for the PIF, making the fund an engine for transforming the Saudi economy.—Reuters

Business

AUB's AGM approves a dividend of 20% in cash, 10% in bonus shares

Chairman reports another strong year of growth for AUB in 2018



MANAMA: Ahli United Bank B.S.C. holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and its Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) at the Bank's headquarters in Seef District, Bahrain yesterday.

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank B.S.C. yesterday held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and its Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) at the Bank's headquarters in Seef District, Kingdom of Bahrain. The meetings were presided over by AUB's Chairman Meshal AbdulAziz Alothman and were attended by shareholders representing 74.6 percent of Bank's total issued shares.

The AUB AGM approved the distribution of a cash dividend of 20 percent (\$5.0 cents per share), totaling \$398.8 million, together with a bonus share issue of 10 percent (ten shares per 100 ordinary shares) to shareholders registered as at 28 March 2019.

AUB's shareholders also approved the repur-

chase by the Bank of its own shares up to a maximum of 10 percent of its issued shares in accordance with the terms and conditions set by the regulators.

At their EGM held on the same day, AUB's shareholders resolved to extend, for a further two years, their standing authorization for the Board of Directors to decide on the timing, pricing and other terms of the issuance of up to \$4 billion in bonds, loans or other financial instruments, as necessary to support the growth plans of the Bank.

Reporting to the shareholders, AUB's Chairman Alothman said: "Despite the continuing challenges in our operating environment, I am

pleased to report another strong year of growth for AUB in 2018, as we continued to prioritize our core businesses and build on our competitive strengths to attract customers, deposits and high quality assets.

Our robust financial performance for the year reflected these strengths, with consolidated net profit up by 12.7 percent to a record level of \$697.5 million on the back of very resilient and broad-based earnings momentum, which enables us today to propose an increase in shareholders' dividend to 20 percent in cash and 10 percent in bonus shares in respect of 2018".

"As we transition into 2019, the AUB Group will continue to implement its plans in a focused



Meshal AbdulAziz Alothman

and committed manner with continued emphasis on meeting the needs of our clients and rewarding our shareholders", concluded Alothman.

US Q4 GDP revised down; profits weak

WASHINGTON: The US economy slowed more than initially thought in the fourth quarter, keeping growth in 2018 below the Trump administration's 3 percent annual target, and corporate profits failed to rise for the first time in more than two years.

Gross domestic product increased at a 2.2 percent annualized rate, the Commerce Department said on yesterday in its third reading of fourth-quarter GDP growth. That was down from the 2.6 percent pace estimated in February. The economy grew at a 3.4 percent pace in the third quarter. The expansion will be the longest on record in July.

The revisions to the fourth-quarter GDP reading reflected markdowns to consumer and business spending, as well as government out-

lays and investment in homebuilding. For all of 2018, the economy grew 2.9 percent as previously reported, despite the White House's fiscal stimulus of \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts and more government spending. Growth last year was the strongest since 2015 and was an acceleration from the 2.2 percent logged in 2017.

Compared to the fourth quarter of 2017, the economy expanded 3.0 percent, revised down from the 3.1 percent reported last month. President Donald Trump has highlighted the year-on-year growth figure as proof that fiscal stimulus, which has contributed to a swelling of the federal government deficit, has put the economy on a sustainable path of strong growth.

Trump likes to showcase the economy as one of the biggest achievements of his term, declaring last July that his administration had "accomplished an economic turnaround of historic proportions." On the campaign trail, Trump boasted he could boost annual GDP growth to 4 percent, a goal analysts always said was unrealistic given low productivity, among other factors.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast GDP in the fourth quarter being revised down to a 2.4 percent. There are signs the slowdown in

growth persisted early in the first quarter, with retail sales rising modestly and manufacturing production and homebuilding tepid.

That was underscored by weak profits in the fourth quarter. After tax corporate profits were unchanged for the first time since the third quarter of 2016, after growing at a 3.5 percent rate in the third quarter. A profit measure that corresponds to S&P 500 profits fell \$34.2 billion in the fourth quarter.

The economy is facing headwinds from the fading stimulus, slowing global growth, Washington's trade war with China and uncertainty over Britain's departure from the European Union.

These contributed to the Federal Reserve's decision last week to bring its three-year campaign to tighten monetary policy to an abrupt end. The US central bank abandoned projections for any interest rate hikes this year after increasing borrowing costs four times in 2018. Growth in consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, increased at a 2.5 percent rate in the fourth quarter instead of the previously reported 2.8 percent pace. Consumer spending remains un-

derpinned by a strong labor market. Growth in business spending on equipment was revised down to a 6.6 percent pace from a 6.7 percent rate. Investment in intellectual products was lowered to a 10.7 percent rate from the 13.1 percent pace reported in February. Investment in residential construction was revised to show it contracting at 4.7 percent rate instead of at a 3.5 percent rate, marking the fourth straight quarterly decline.

Government investment fell at a 0.4 percent rate, instead of growing at a 0.4 percent pace as previously reported. But exports were revised up to show them rising at a 1.8 percent pace instead of the 1.6 percent rate reported last month. Imports were revised down, leading to a smaller trade deficit that cut one-tenth of a percentage point from fourth-quarter GDP growth.

The trade deficit was previously estimated to have subtracted 0.22 percentage point from output. Inventories increased at a \$96.8 billion rate in the fourth quarter instead of the \$97.1 billion reported last month. Inventory investment added one-tenth of percentage point to GDP growth last quarter as estimated last in February. — Reuters

Business

Friday, March 29, 2019

Skyfall: Another budget airline goes down as sector struggles

10 low-cost airlines collapsed in 2018

PARIS: Iceland's budget carrier WOW Air collapsed yesterday, the latest in a string of low-cost airlines to go under after the fiercely competitive industry suffered from rising fuel prices last year. Here is some background on the challenges plaguing the sector.

Almost 10 low-cost airlines collapsed in 2018, including Belgium's VLM Airlines, Denmark's Primera Air and Cyprus' Cobalt Air. This year has not started much better. WOW Air, which transported more than a third of people travelling to Iceland, ceased operations and cancelled all its flights on Thursday after failing to find investors to save it from going under.

In February Berlin-based airline Germania, which transported more than four million passengers a year, cancelled its own flights and filed for bankruptcy.

Other ailing budget airlines have only narrowly escaped folding this year, such as the British Flybe, which a consortium led by Virgin Atlantic is bidding to buy for just one penny per share.

Even the Irish budget airline Ryanair—the industry leader—has felt the pressure. It is restructuring after a net loss of 20 million euros (\$22 million) in the last three months of 2018, its first quarterly loss since 2014.

'Unrestrained competition'

Competition is fierce for short-haul flights in Europe as airlines drop prices hoping to win

over thrifty holiday seekers, pushing their profit margins lower. The average cost of a Ryanair flight, for example, is now below 30 euros. Olivier Fainsilber, aviation analyst at consultancy Oliver Wyman, said it was a time of "unrestrained competition" after relatively low barriers allowed many new companies to enter the market. "Economic Darwinism has always been strongly at work in the airline sector," he said.

"To be successful you must be very efficient."

Companies have also faced stiff competition from low-cost subsidiaries set up by big operators such as British Airways parent company IAG. Sebastian Zank, an analyst at Scope Ratings, said Germania's collapse "shows again that to survive in Europe's crowded sector, carriers need to be niche players or have an extensive network as is the case with budget leader Ryanair and multi-brand operators like Lufthansa Group and IAG".

"The marginalization of smaller airlines and more industry consolidation appear inevitable," he added.

Oil slick

Surging oil prices have added to the industry's woes. At the height of the spike in July 2018, the price of an oil barrel nearly reached \$75 — up from \$50 at the same time the previous year.

"There will always be highs and lows, but it is when a period gets tense that we see who manages to hold on," said Fainsilber. "You need



PARIS: Iceland's budget carrier WOW Air collapsed yesterday, the latest in a string of low-cost airlines to go under after the fiercely competitive industry suffered from rising fuel prices last year.

to have a little war chest." European airlines were also hit by a drop in the euro, which lost five percent against the dollar in 2018. The outlook for this year is not as bleak, with passenger

numbers expected to remain stable, however oil prices have ticked upwards. "There is also growth, it's just that the incline is not as steep as in the past," said Fainsilber. — AFP

Eurozone 'not resilient enough' to weather another crisis: IMF chief

PARIS: The eurozone is in better financial shape than a decade ago, but not solid enough to withstand another economic crisis, the head of the International Monetary Fund said yesterday. IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde told a Paris conference that the currency union "is not resilient enough" to emerge unscathed from "unexpected economic storms".

Lagarde acknowledged that the currency union was now "more resilient than a decade ago when the global financial crisis struck. "But it is not resilient enough," she said.

"Its banking system is safer, but not safe enough. Its economic well-being is greater overall, but the benefits of growth are not shared enough," Lagarde told the gathering, which was organised by the French central bank. The warning comes as signs are multiplying of slower economic growth, especially in powerhouse Germany and the bloc's second-biggest economy, France.

On Friday, indications of a weak first quarter for the eurozone mounted as a closely-watched survey pointed to March output being dragged further down by manufacturing weakness. Manufacturers in the 19-nation single currency bloc "reported their steepest downturn for six years" as pressure mounted from trade wars and Brexit fears, data company IHS Markit said. On Wednesday, the European Central Bank added to growth worries when its chief Mario Draghi hinted that interest rates would stay low for longer than previously anticipated, to stimulate growth and inflation.



The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is seen in Washington, DC. —AFP

Show new resolve

"Some can rightfully argue that Europe has been slow to produce a fully developed financial ecosystem," Lagarde warned, saying Europe was still wounded from the last crisis. "These events left painful economic scars on many households and companies, sowing the seeds of economic disparity across member countries and within," she said, adding that "now is the time to give euro area finance another big push".

She called for the eurozone to "show new resolve and complete the banking and capital markets unions, so it can harvest the benefits now and in the future". On banks specifically, she said "we need a European banking system that can bend in a storm without breaking, we need a banking system that will truly diversify risks across the ecosystem and irrigate growth".

She urged eurozone leaders "to reignite the discussion, to negotiate in good faith and make the difficult compromises to unlock the full potential of the banking union". She also said banks needed to establish a "common deposit insurance" which would act as a "vital shade tree" when risks rose. — AFP

Oil falls as Trump calls on OPEC to boost output

LONDON: Oil fell yesterday after US President Donald Trump called for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to boost crude production to lower the price of the commodity.

International Brent crude oil futures slid \$1.14 to \$66.69 a barrel by 1244 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down \$1.02 at \$58.39 a barrel. "Very important that OPEC increase the flow of Oil. World Markets are fragile, price of Oil getting too high. Thank you!" Trump wrote in a post on Twitter.

Brent crude has risen more than 25 percent this year on the back of moves by OPEC and allies like Russia to cut output, as well as plummeting Venezuelan production. On top of US sanctions, power cuts have crippled Venezuela's oil industry. The country's main oil export port of Jose and four crude upgraders, needed to convert Venezuela's heavy oil into exportable grades, have been halted since Monday, industry sources said.

US sanctions have also hit Iranian crude exports. Analysts said they expected the United States in early May to extend some sanction waivers on Iranian oil, but might reduce the number of countries receiving them. The 180-day exemptions were granted in November to China, India, Greece, Italy, Taiwan, Japan, Turkey and South Korea.

"Enjoy it whilst it lasts. The upcoming six months will bring relatively healthy demand for OPEC oil," PVM's Tamas Varga said in a note. — Reuters

Business

Daimler and China's Geely join forces to build next-gen smart car

The new vehicle will go on global sale in 2022

BERLIN: Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler and Chinese auto giant Geely announced plans yesterday to develop the next generation of electric Smart cars to be made in China in a joint venture. Under the agreement, expected to be finalized by the end of the year, the new vehicle will go on global sale in 2022, the German and Chinese car giants said in a statement.

The 12-strong board of directors of the new venture will be made up of six executives from each company. The new Smart cars will be styled by the Mercedes-Benz Design network with engineering provided by Geely. Prior to the launch of the next generation, Daimler will continue to produce the current "fortwo" model of the Smart car at its plant in Hambach, north-eastern France. The Smart car will then leave its historic home in France to be manufactured in China, but Daimler insists no jobs will be lost.

'New beginning'

"None of our colleagues at Smart will lose their jobs as a result of these decisions," said Daimler boss Dieter Zetsche in a statement. "On the contrary. We need the passion and creativity of the Smart team more than ever. After all, these changes are no ending for Smart-but a new beginning." Daimler says 500 million euros (\$562 million) will be invested in the Hambach plant, which will assume "an additional role" pro-

ducing a compact electric vehicle under the new 'EQ' product brand. "All jobs will be sustained through our new project which will consist of creating a new assembly line for the construction of a Mercedes-Benz electric SUV in Hambach," Serge Siebert, CEO of Smart France, told the Le Republicain Lorrain newspaper on Wednesday.

Geely is owned by Chinese billionaire Li Shufu, who is also Daimler's main shareholder having acquired nearly 10 percent in the German manufacturer in February 2018. Li's investment, reportedly worth around 7.2 billion euros, in the Stuttgart firm raised political concerns about Beijing's ambitions in Germany. Last year, Germany's economy minister warned Berlin would be "especially watchful" over the new major investor.

However Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed the move, saying "we are open to trade partners and at first glance do not see any violations". The rise of the Chinese car giant has been swift. Founded in 1986, Geely was originally a low-cost home appliance manufacturer before founder and boss Li transformed it into an auto group in the late 1990s, becoming one of China's leading private manufacturers.

'Made in China'

In 2010, while Geely and its entry-level vehicles represented only a few percent of the Chinese market, the group paid \$1.5 bil-



This combination created yesterday of file pictures shows Chinese carmaker Geely's CEO Li Shufu (left) and the CEO of German auto giant Daimler AG Dieter Zetsche.

lion to buy Volvo Cars. The bold move saw the Chinese company acquire a premium Swedish brand, known for the safety and the robustness of its models. The following year, Geely invested \$11 billion in Volvo to launch a new line of cars, which saw the brand take off in China. Last week, Geely reported worldwide sales of 2.15 million vehicles (up 18.3 percent year on year) and announced a net profit for 2018 of 1.66 billion euros (up 18 percent on 2017) on a turnover of 14.1 billion euros (up 15 percent). Daimler can boast similar sales figures, with Mercedes Benz shifting 2.4 million vehicles in 2018, including 130,000 Smart cars in 40 markets worldwide.— AFP



A smart vision EQ fortwo concept car of German Daimler AG (top) and an electric car prototype of Chinese car manufacturer Geely. —AFP photos

Swedbank sacks CEO, share trading halted amid scandal

STOCKHOLM: Swedish lender Swedbank, which is embattled over allegations of money-laundering in Baltic countries, fired its CEO and suspended trading of the company's shares on the Stockholm stock exchange yesterday.

"The developments during the past days have created an enormous pressure for the bank. Therefore, the board has decided to dismiss Birgitte Bonnesen from her position," chairman Lars Idermark said in a statement. Chief financial officer Anders Karlsson will serve as acting CEO until a permanent replacement is appointed.

"It's been a dramatic morning. As chairman (of the board of directors) of Swedbank, I regret this deeply," Idermark told shareholders as they gathered for their annual general meeting. At the same time, Swedbank's share was suspended from trade in Stockholm after losing a quarter of its value since February 18, the day before the reports of money laundering emerged. It has lost 30 percent of its value since its peak this year in mid-January. According to tabloid Afton-bladet, Bonnesen, whose position became untenable as the share price tumbled yesterday, will receive a golden parachute of 21.5 million kronor (two million euros, \$2.3 million). The developments came a day after Sweden's economic crime authorities raided the bank's headquarters outside Stockholm in an insider trading case. — AFP

EU risks trade war with Malaysia over palm oil: Mahathir

LANGKAWI: The European Union risks opening up a trade war with Malaysia over its "grossly unfair" policies aimed at reducing the use of palm oil, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday. This month, the European Commission concluded that palm oil cultivation results in excessive deforestation and its use in transport fuel should be phased out by 2030. Malaysia, the world's second biggest palm oil producer after Indonesia, relies on the crop for billions of dollars in foreign exchange earnings and hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Mahathir, 93, said the EU's increasingly hostile attitude towards palm oil, a commodity used in everything from chocolate spread to lipstick, was an attempt to protect alternatives that Europe produced itself, like rape seed oil. "To do that kind of thing to win a trade war is unfair," Mahathir told Reuters in an interview on Langkawi, a tropical resort island 30 km off Malaysia's mainland.

"Trade wars are not something we like to promote but on the other hand it is grossly unfair for rich people to try and impoverish poor people."

Mahathir, an architect of modern Malaysia and a trained physician, swept to power in a stunning election victory last year on a promise to revive a flagging economy and end the corruption that plagued the tenure of former leader Najib Razak. Najib is facing numerous corruption charges over the alleged misuse of billions of dollars from Malaysian state fund 1Malaysia Development

Berhad (1MDB), some of which was raised by US investment bank Goldman Sachs. Najib is due in court next week in the first trial relating to 1MDB. He has pleaded not guilty and denies wrongdoing. Goldman Sachs is facing charges in Kuala Lumpur over its role in helping raise \$6.5 billion for 1MDB. Goldman denies wrongdoing and says officials under Najib's administration lied to mislead its staff.

'When the time comes'

Mahathir, who was previously prime minister for 22 years from 1981 to 2003, said Goldman could only do business in Malaysia "if they pay us what we are asking for", reiterating a figure of \$7.5 billion given by the finance ministry. "Because they were not prudent ... they are supposed to study the borrowers and lenders properly," he said, adding that he was willing to negotiate with the bank. Mahathir said his government was also in talks with the US Department of Justice over Goldman Sachs.

Goldman Sachs did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In an effort to reduce Malaysia's debt after the 1MDB scandal, Mahathir is considering the listing or sale of stakes in state-owned enterprises, including Malaysia Airlines. There has been speculation this could include selling a portion of Petronas, Malaysia's national energy behemoth and the world's third-biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas. But Mahathir said this was not on the cards. "It has always even given the government good returns. We have no plans to privatize or to sell Petronas," he said. There is daily speculation in Malaysia about when Mahathir, who is well into his nineties, will hand over power to one-time foe and former deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim. Mahathir, whose five-year term would end in 2023, had originally promised to cede control to Anwar in 2020. "I will step down when the time comes ... but we have not fixed a date," he said. "I promised I will not go up to five years. I stand by my promise." — Reuters

Business

China pledges to expand market opening as US trade team arrives

Premier denies trust deficit with US

BOAO, China/BEIJING: China will sharply expand market access for foreign banks and securities and insurance companies, especially in its financial services sector, Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday as senior US officials arrived in Beijing for more trade talks.

The government will also work on more favorable policies for foreign investors to trade Chinese bonds, Li said in a speech at the annual Boao forum held on China's southern island of Hainan. "We are quickening the full opening of market access for foreign investors in banking, securities and insurance sectors," he said. Li's remarks add to speculation that China may soon announce new rules that will allow foreign banks and insurance firms to increase their presence in China.

China has pledged to further open its massive financial markets to foreign investors since last year amid a trade war with the United States. Foreign businesses have long complained that liberalization has been too narrow and implementation spotty.

Sources told Reuters on Wednesday that the United States and China have made progress in all areas under discussion in trade talks, with unprecedented movement on the touchy issue of forced technology transfers as China had put proposals on the table that went further than in the past, but sticking points remain.

Li said the business scope of foreign banks, as well as market access for credit rating companies, bank card settlements and non-bank card payments, will all be "expanded sharply", with restrictions on the scope of foreign securities companies and insurance brokers expected to be removed. "Such measures will be implemented this year in a relatively forceful way," he

said. Li said China will also announce policies to help foreign investors to invest in and trade China's bonds, just before Chinese bonds' inclusion in the Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Index, one of the most widely tracked in the world, scheduled to start on Monday.

But global investors' access to hedging instruments continues to be restricted, and clarification on tax collection policy is needed, ASIFMA, a financial industry lobby, noted in a report last week. Li said China will also issue more favorable rules for foreign acquisitions of Chinese listed firms. Beijing is drafting rules related to a new foreign investment law that was passed earlier this month. The rules are expected to be completed this year. Beijing will revise and shorten a "negative" list of areas where foreign investment is restricted, and will publish it before the end of June, Li said.

Non trust deficit with US

In a meeting with foreign and Chinese business executives yesterday afternoon, the premier said he doesn't think there is a deficit of trust between China and the United States.

"We need to prevent a trust deficit from occurring - otherwise the damage it could do to US-China relations is incalculable," said Li, adding that trade frictions remain a sticky point. China must protect intellectual property, otherwise there is no hope for the nation's transformation, Li said.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin arrived in Beijing yesterday and are scheduled to have a working dinner with Vice Premier Liu He. Talks are expected to last for a full day today. Beijing

March from 0.2 percent in the last three months of 2018, and then speed up to 0.4 percent in subsequent quarters. Separately, the Commission's business climate index, which helps point to the phase of the business cycle, fell to 0.53 in March from 0.69 in February, against a decline to only 0.66 that was expected by economists.

The mood in both key sectors of the euro zone economy—industry and services—turned out worse than forecast, with industry declining to -1.7 point from -0.4 in February against expectations of a fall to only -0.8 and services easing to 11.3 from 12.1 against expectations of a decline to 12.0.

"The fact services sentiment declined is a serious concern," said Rosie Colthorpe, assistant economist at Oxford Economics. "It perhaps reflects the fact that worries in the externally-focused manufacturing sector are starting to spill over to the domestic economy. Overall, continued weak sentiment readings present a downside risk to our first euro-area GDP forecast of 0.4 percent quarter-on-quarter."

The survey showed that consumers' expectations about prices 12 months ahead eased in March to a reading of 17 from 18 in February and selling price expectations in industry also declined to a reading of 7.0 in March from 9.0 in February, continuing a falling trend from the start of the year. — Reuters



BEIJING: US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer (center) leaves a hotel in Beijing yesterday. US negotiators arrived for the latest round of their trade talks yesterday as the economic superpowers edge towards a deal to resolve a months-long spat that has rattled the global economy. — AFP

said yesterday US and Chinese negotiators still face a "large amount of work" as they meet for fresh talks aimed at resolving a months-long trade war. US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin arrived for two days of meetings in Beijing with China's top economic official Liu He, the first since China put into law new measures seen as an olive branch in their high-stakes

stand-off. While US President Donald Trump has voiced hope that he could soon hold a signing ceremony with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, negotiations have dragged on, suggesting substantial differences remain. Liu, Mnuchin and Lighthizer have "made some progress" after holding several phone calls recently, commerce ministry spokesman Gao Feng said at a weekly press briefing. — Agencies

Eurozone economic mood eases more than expected, bodes ill for Q1

BRUSSELS: Economic sentiment in the euro-zone weakened more than expected in March, mainly due to a bleaker outlook among manufacturers and services, suggesting first-quarter growth could be lower than previously thought, European Commission data showed yesterday.

The Commission said in its monthly survey that its index of economic sentiment in the 19 countries sharing the euro eased to 105.5 points in March from 106.2 in February, weaker than the 105.9 reading expected by economists polled by Reuters. "The decline ... shows that business confidence continues to suffer and that the start of a growth recovery hasn't really happened so far. First quarter GDP is therefore set to disappoint again," ING economist Bert Colijn said.

The European Commission forecast in February that euro zone growth would accelerate to 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter in January-

UK identifies fresh Huawei risks to networks

LONDON: Britain has identified "significant" issues in Chinese giant Huawei's engineering processes that pose "new risks" for the nation's telecommunications, a government report found yesterday.

"Further significant technical issues have been identified in Huawei's engineering processes, leading to new risks in the UK telecommunications networks," read annual findings from the government's Huawei Cyber Security Evaluation Centre (HCSEC) oversight board. Huawei is the leading manufacturer of equipment for next-generation 5G mobile networks that will bring near-instantaneous connectivity for smartphones, but some Western nations have barred it amid fears Beijing could gain access to sensitive communications and critical infrastructure.

A Huawei spokesman on Thursday told AFP that the company was taking the concerns "very seriously" and they would be used as part of its

"ongoing" process to improve its capabilities. HCSEC stressed that it "does not believe that the defects identified are a result of Chinese state interference". However the board added that "no material progress has been made by Huawei in the remediation of the issues reported last year".

And it concluded: "Overall, the oversight board can only provide limited assurance that all risks to UK national security from Huawei's involvement in the UK's critical networks can be sufficiently mitigated long-term." HCSEC was formed in 2010 to mitigate perceived risks arising from the involvement of Huawei in critical national infrastructure.

The government-led board includes officials from Britain's GCHQ cybersecurity agency as well as a senior Huawei executive and representatives from the UK telecommunications sector.

Yesterday's report "details some concerns about Huawei's software engineering capabilities", the Huawei spokesman added. "We understand these concerns and take them very seriously."

"The issues identified... provide vital input for the ongoing transformation of our software engineering capabilities," he told AFP. The spokesman added that Huawei's board of directors had last year launched a company-wide \$2.0-billion (1.8-billion-euro) transformation plan to enhance those capabilities. — AFP

Sports

McIlroy, Tiger, Johnson open with wins at WGC Match-Play

England's second-seed Justin Rose down Argentine 53rd seed Emiliano Grillo

WASHINGTON: Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy and world number one Dustin Johnson were among the top seeds and past champions to capture opening group stage matches Wednesday at the WGC Match-Play Championship.

The 64-player showdown at Austin Country Club uses a round-robin format to determine 16 players for a weekend knockout event to decide a champion, although it's a format untested until this year by Woods, who qualified for the first time since 2013.

The 14-time major champion opened solidly but unspectacularly with a 3&1 victory over US 61st seed Aaron Wise, leaving 13th seed Woods atop his all-American group after Brandt Snedeker and Patrick Cantlay halved.

"We were both struggling a little bit," Woods said. "It was just trying to beat the guy in front of you and I was able to advance." Woods—who won the event in 2003, 2004 and 2008 — fell 1-down when Wise birdied the eighth, ninth and 10th holes. But Wise made bogeys at 13, 15 and 17 to hand Woods the win.

"I was up early then down and up. There was a lot of ebb and flow in this match," Woods said. "It's not like we were playing great golf. Somehow I came out with the win." Fourth seed McIlroy, the 2015 WGC Match-Play winner coming off a Players Championship victory two weeks ago, downed US 64th and last seed Luke List 5&4. McIlroy never trailed and never lost a hole and closed with back-to-back seven-foot birdie putts at 13 and 14 to secure the triumph. "I rode my luck a little bit," McIlroy said. "I had some missed shots but somehow got away with most

of them. I played well. To birdie 13 and 14 to close the match out was nice.

"I needed to respond to what he did and I feel like I did that well so that gives me a little bit of confidence going into tomorrow." US top seed Johnson, the 2017 winner who captured last month's WGC Mexico event, opened with a 4&3 win over US 55th seed Chez Reavie. "I like the golf course. it sets up well for me," Johnson said. "It plays tough. The greens are tricky. They are firm. You've got to hit quality golf shots if you're going to get close to the hole."

ROSE, CASEY WIN OPENERS

England's second-seeded Justin Rose downed Argentine 53rd seed Emiliano Grillo 2&1. "I was fairly steady. I didn't give away much, took care of the par-5s for the most part," Rose said. "Not electrifying golf but just good enough to get the job done." England's 10th-seeded Paul Casey, a two-time WGC Match-Play runner-up coming off his second consecutive PGA Valspar crown just three days ago, beat Mexico's 58th-seeded Abraham Ancer 5&3.

"I was trying to manage the energy," Casey said. "I was tired the past couple of days. Form and confidence are fine. I'm trying to get the energy back up. "That was one of the best matches I've played around this golf course."

Also on his game was English 30th seed match-play wizard Ian Poulter, the 2010 champion who beat US 48th seed Kevin Kisner 2-up to avenge his ouster from last year. "It was painful. I wasn't going to roll over like last year," Poulter said. "It was a match I wanted to win.



AUSTIN: Tiger Woods of the United States plays his second shot on the fifth hole in his match against Aaron Wise of the United States during the first round of the World Golf Championships-Dell Technologies Match Play at Austin Country Club in Austin, Texas. — AFP

Today was really important to come out strong and do whatever you need to do."

AUSSIE NO. 12 DAY FALLS

In the "Group of Death" where only one can advance, Australian 12th seed Jason Day blew a 3-up lead after eight holes and lost to US 52nd seed Jim Furyk 2-up while Swedish 37th seed

Henrik Stenson beat US 20th seed Phil Mickelson 2&1. Danish 50th seed Lucas Bjerregaard upset US fifth seed Justin Thomas 3&2 in the biggest upset while two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson lost 1-up to US 57th seed Kevin Na and reigning Masters champion Patrick Reed, the US 16th seed, lost to US 51st seed Andrew Putnam 3&2. — AFP

Marquez, Rossi return for Argentina push and shove

TERMAS DE RIO HONDO: Valentino Rossi will resume his bitter feud with Marc Marquez in Argentina on Sunday, 12 months after he accused the world champion of "destroying the sport" when he was shoved off the track at Termas de Rio Hondo.

Rossi came to grief on his Yamaha at the hands of his long-standing Honda rival in 2018 in a move which resulted in a 30-second penalty for the Spaniard. Marquez's attempts to apologise to the seven-time world champion were strenuously rebuffed even if the drama failed to prevent him from eventually going on to secure a fifth MotoGP title.

"This is a very bad situation, because he destroyed our sport, he doesn't have any respect for his rivals, ever," said a furious Rossi, adding he was "scared" to be on the same track as Marquez. "When you go 300km/h on the track, you have to have respect, you have to be strong, you have to make the maximum, but doing it like this is over." "If all the riders race like this, then this is a very dangerous sport and it will finish in a bad way." In a rain-affected race in 2018, it was Britain's Cal Crutchlow who emerged the unlikely winner in Argentina. Honda rider Crutchlow was third in the 2019 season-opener in Qatar earlier this month behind Ducati rider and race winner Andrea Dovizioso who edged out second-placed Marquez in a thrilling finale. — AFP

Hamilton warns Mercedes of Ferrari recovery

MANAMA: Defending champion Lewis Hamilton has warned his Mercedes team "to stay on their toes" at this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix where Ferrari will be seeking to bounce back after being beaten at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

Hamilton, who came home second in a damaged car behind in-form team-mate Valtteri Bottas, said he was delighted, but surprised by Mercedes' comprehensive maximum points showing in Melbourne.

The five-time champion said that he, like most observers, had felt that Ferrari were the fastest team in pre-season testing and favourites to set the pace at the Albert Park track where a fired-up Bottas dominated.

"I think everyone was surprised by our showing in Australia," he said. "No-one was expecting to see a gap like that with Ferrari. They were ahead—that is what we saw in testing—but it wasn't the case that weekend.

"We just did our normal job, but I am sure they will come back strong. So, we have to be ready and we have to stay on our toes." Ferrari's four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel, who finished fourth behind Red Bull's Max Verstappen in Australia, will be seeking his third straight victory in Bahrain in Sunday's race.

Like his new team chief Mattia Binotto, the German hopes that

Ferrari's disappointing Australian race was merely a blip. "In Bahrain, we have to ensure that we have understood and rectified the areas where we were weak in Australia, which therefore meant we were unable to fully exploit our car's potential," said Binotto.

"We expect to see the effect of the corrections we have made, but we are well aware that our competitors will once again be very strong. With that in mind, we are keen to get back on track and face them."

The two Ferraris, with Vettel fourth and new boy Charles Leclerc fifth, were a minute adrift of Mercedes in Melbourne, a gap that team boss Toto Wolff said he did not expect to see repeated. "We've seen the potential of Ferrari's package in Barcelona and we expect them to come back strong in Bahrain," he said, adding that he believed Red Bull would also "be in the mix." "Claiming a maximum 44 points from the first race was a fantastic result," Wolff added.

"But the fight has only just begun. Ferrari will try everything they can to hit back and Melbourne showed that Red Bull should have something to say in the fight, too." The 5.4km Sakhir circuit is expected to be kinder to Ferrari than the semi-street track in Melbourne.

The Italian outfit will also be boosted by their record in Bahrain where they are the most successful team with six wins, including last year's success for Vettel which followed a front row lockout of the grid.

After his stunning success in Australia, where he said he drove the "race of my life", Bottas will be intent on endorsing his new-found speed and aggression in Sunday's floodlit race. A three-team battle looks likely with Hamilton also keen to regain supremacy and ensure that he does not allow Bottas to gain early season control in the title race. — AFP

Sports

Disabled Kazakhs fight for rights amid Paralympics push

Kazakhstan to hold World Para Powerlifting Championships this summer

ALMATY: In a gym in Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty, Paralympic weightlifter Alina Solodukhina's slight shoulders are feeling the strain under more than 60 kilogrammes of cast iron. Solodukhina, who has dwarfism and is 125 centimetres (4.1 feet) tall, began weightlifting in 2017 and won a bronze medal at the Asian Paralympic Games in Indonesia last year.

Her success is symbolic of the ex-Soviet country's drive to brand itself as a new power in para sports, even though disabled Kazakhs encounter multiple obstacles in everyday life and progress to make society more inclusive is slow.

"For the moment, all my focus is on this," the 25-year-old said of the World Para Powerlifting Championships the country is hosting this summer. A successful showing could help her qualify for the Paralympic Games in Tokyo next year.

But Solodukhina would also like the bid to promote para sports to lead to a better life for some of her colleagues in the weightlifting team and other disabled people. "My condition does not stop me doing what I want to do. But for wheelchair users, life is far more difficult," she said after a training session taking in bench presses, weight machines and a stint on the treadmill. "I would not say (Kazakhstan) has excellent conditions for them."

Kazakhstan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015 and has claimed improvements in inclusion and access for over 600,000 people registered as

disabled, particularly in the last decade. But the overhaul of the Soviet approach to disability that saw handicapped people live in isolation from society has been plodding. "Just getting out of the house is hard enough," said wheelchair-bound activist Zhaslan Suleimenov.

Suleimenov, 42, who is based in the capital Astana, recently renamed Nur-Sultan in honour of the country's first president Nursultan Nazarbayev, faces multiple barriers to social integration.

In 2009, Suleimenov was sentenced to prison on extremism charges that he contested both during and after the eight years he spent behind bars, where he said he experienced torture and mistreatment. Conditions, particularly for disabled prisoners, were "terrible", he said, a factor that motivated his activism. Conditions for handicapped people in the capital are not much better, said Suleimenov, pointing to inaccessible streets and public transport.

Last year, Kazakh authorities proudly unveiled a training centre for disabled athletes just outside the capital but getting there is challenging. "That place is on the other side of the river. Reaching it would be a struggle for me," said Suleimenov. On a recent afternoon Suleimenov tried to squeeze his wheelchair into a narrow lift outside the office of a local non-profit organisation where he is volunteering while participating in a vocational training programme.

After several failed attempts, Suleimenov



ALMATY: Kazakh Paralympic weightlifter Alina Solodukhina, 25, trains at a gym in Almaty on March 20, 2019. — AFP

asked a man nearby to lift him out of the wheelchair and place him on a chair taken from the organisation's office to make the journey down to the ground floor. Leaving the building, his next challenge was a five-minute manoeuvre over the

thick and sticky coating of ice and compressed snow that typically covers the city into the spring months. "We have to hope for the help of passersby," he said after one loaded him onto a bus home. — AFP

One good Read, two Folaus: Super Rugby talking points

WELLINGTON: Four talking points ahead of this week's games in Super Rugby:

READ READY TO ROLL

All Blacks skipper Kieran Read will be back at No.8 on Friday to give a timely lift to the Canterbury Crusaders as they return to New Zealand to take on the Hurricanes in Wellington. "It's been awesome watching the boys go well, but I have been really enjoying training the last few weeks," said the double World Cup-winning back row forward.

"I can't wait now," added Read, who sat out the first six weeks while his bad back was kept in cotton wool ahead of him leading New Zealand's campaign for a third straight trophy in Japan later this year.

Defending champions Crusaders have endured a difficult two weeks with the gun attacks in their home city of Christchurch deeply affecting all at the club and then seeing their 19-match win streak ended in Sydney last Saturday by the NSW Waratahs.

HIGHLANDER SMITH FACES WEEKS OUT

The struggling Otago Highlanders have a bye, but they still suffered a potentially devastating blow this week when it was revealed that their All Black scrum-half Aaron Smith faces an extended injury lay-off. The Highlanders have only two wins and now face a tough run including four New Zealand derbies in the next five weeks almost certainly without their 82-Test star.

Smith picked up an ankle injury late in last week's loss to Auckland Blues and coach Aaron Mauger told stuff.co.nz he would be out "for four to six weeks" and he would look for an experienced halfback to fill in. "We're not in this week so we have a bit of time up our sleeves to have a look around," he said.

NO BULL FROM HUMAN

Northern Bulls travel to their favourite away venue-Kings Park in Durban-with coach Pote Human insisting their 56-20 mauling by the Chiefs last weekend is firmly behind them.

Human has made two changes to the starting XV after the Pretoria debacle, bringing in scrum-half Embrose Papier and lock Eli Snyman.

"We trained well this week and have put that humiliating loss behind us," insisted Human as the three-time champi-

ons seek a fourth victory in six outings this season.

The Pretoria side hope to complete a hat-trick of victories over the Sharks in the Indian Ocean city after winning 40-10 last season and 30-17 the year before.

ONE FOLAU ISN'T ENOUGH

Israel Folau's younger brother John could make his Super Rugby debut for the NSW Waratahs on Friday alongside his superstar sibling against Japan's Sunwolves.

John, a wing who has played rugby league with the Parramatta Eels, was a late call-up to the bench after Curtis Rona was ruled out with an injury.

The Waratahs are looking build on last week's upset of the reigning champion Crusaders in Sydney, but they will have to do so without Wallabies Bernard Foley and Adam Ashley-Cooper, who are being rested.

The New South Wales club will venture north from Sydney to Newcastle for a Super Rugby match for the first time as they host the Japan side.

"This round for us will be celebrating country rugby and with close to 30 percent of the squad hailing from the regional NSW, we recognise just how important country rugby is to our player pathways," said coach Daryl Gibson. — AFP

Kane eyes NFL after football career

LOS ANGELES: England striker Harry Kane is keen to pursue a kicking career in the NFL once his football days are behind him. The Tottenham star told ESPN in an interview Wednesday he believes his dead ball ability could translate to success as an NFL place kicker one day. "That's real," Kane told ESPN of his NFL ambitions. "Something that in 10 or 12 years I definitely want to try."

Kane is a huge NFL fan and has forged a friendship with New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady via social media in recent years, stating that he has drawn inspiration from the six-time Super Bowl winner's career.

Kane said his desire to attempt to break into the NFL as a kicker was linked to his competitive drive. "It goes back to that drive to be the best," he told ESPN. "Even if I download a game on my phone, can I be the best in the world?"

"If you play in the Premier League and the World Cup and you then play in the NFL would you then be considered one of the greatest sportsmen ever?" Kane, 25, would be well into his 30s by the time he attempted to break into the NFL.

However NFL kickers regularly play deep into their 30s and early 40s in a position which requires them to be on the field for just a few seconds per game. Indianapolis Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri is the oldest active player in the NFL at the age of 46. Kane meanwhile said Brady's career path—where he was an unfancied late draft pick who would become the greatest quarterback in history—had inspired him in his own career. — AFP

Sports

Friday, March 29, 2019

‘Not in spirit of cricket’: MCC backtrack on Mankad judgement

Rule governing ‘Mankad’ was essential to avoid unrestrained backing-up

LONDON: CRICKET’S lawmakers MCC appeared to backtrack on the Ravichandran Ashwin ‘Mankad’ controversy on Wednesday when they said that the Indian’s running out of Jos Buttler in an IPL game was “not within the spirit of the game”.

Earlier this week, the MCC insisted that the rule governing the ‘Mankad’ was essential to avoid unrestrained backing-up. England batsman Buttler, playing for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL, was on Monday run out by Kings XI Punjab skipper Ashwin as he backed-up.

The method of dismissal, named after former India player Vinoo Mankad, is legal but is seen by many as going against the game’s values, unless the batsman has been warned first.

On Wednesday, the MCC’s manager of the Laws Fraser Stewart told British media in the UAE that they had now reviewed their original statement. “Having extensively reviewed the incident again and after further reflection we don’t think it was within the spirit of the game,” Stewart said.

“We believe the pause was too long between the time Ashwin reached the crease and the moment it was reasonable to expect the ball would be delivered. “When Buttler could have reasonably expected the ball to be delivered, he was in his ground.”

However, he added: “It is also unfair, and against the spirit of cricket, for non-strikers to leave their ground too early. All these debates wouldn’t be necessary if non-strikers remained in their ground until the ball is on its way down the pitch.” Monday’s incident was particularly contentious as Buttler was still in his crease when Ashwin arrived, only for the bowler to pull out of his action and wait for him to step forward before whipping off the bails.

While Ashwin remained unrepentant of his act that he said was “within the rules”, legendary spinner Shane Warne, a member of the MCC World Cricket Committee, was not convinced. The Australian called Ashwin’s act “disgraceful and low”. — AFP



JAIPUR: This combination of file pictures created on March 26, 2019 shows (L) Rajasthan Royals’ Jos Buttler walking back to the pavilion after he was dismissed by Kings XI Punjab’s Ravichandran Ashwin. Shane Warne led criticism of India’s Ashwin after a controversial run-out which put cricket’s unloved ‘Mankad’ dismissal in the spotlight. — AFP

Pastrnak hat trick leads Boston Bruins over Rangers

NEW YORK: David Pastrnak continued his torrid return from injury with a hat trick and two assists, and the Boston Bruins won their 12th straight at home, 6-3 over the New York Rangers on Wednesday night. Pastrnak failed to record a point March 19 in his first contest back after missing 16 with a thumb injury, but he has five goals and six assists in four since. On Wednesday, he set career highs with his 36th goal and five points in a regular-season game while helping the playoff-bound Bruins extend their longest home winning streak since a 14-game run in 2008-09. Boston also avoided being swept in the three-game season series by the Rangers, who will miss the playoffs for

a second straight campaign and are 2-8-5 since Feb. 24.

STARS 2, FLAMES 1

Dallas took another step toward clinching a playoff spot with a win at Calgary, but they may have paid a heavy price with goalie Ben Bishop leaving the game due to injury. Late in the second period, Bishop came up lame after sliding across the crease while tracking the play and immediately departed due to a lower-body injury. It’s the second time this month Bishop has been hurt during a game. After getting injured on March 14, he missed two games. The Stars, who hold the first Western Conference wild-card spot, received 20 saves from Bishop and another 15 stops from Anton Khudobin. Alex Radulov and Miro Heiskanen put Dallas up 2-0 with the Flames’ TJ Brodie scoring late.

AVALANCHE 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3

Tyson Barrie had a goal and two assists, and Nathan MacKinnon added a goal and an assist to lead Colorado to victory over Vegas in Denver. Matt Calvert and Gabriel

Bourque also scored goals for the Avalanche, which won for the fifth time in six games and moved two points ahead of Arizona for the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference. The Avalanche and Coyotes, who both have five games remaining, play Friday night in Denver. Philipp Grubauer had 34 saves to pick up his career-high 16th win of the season, improving to 5-0-1 in his last six starts.

FLYERS 5, MAPLE LEAFS 4 (SO)

Sean Couturier scored in the fifth round of a shootout to lift host Philadelphia past Toronto. Flyers goaltender Carter Hart, who made 38 saves through regulation and overtime, stopped William Nylander’s fifth-round attempt to preserve the win. Couturier had the only successful shootout attempt among the 10 skaters who participated. The Flyers snapped their three-game home losing streak. Travis Konecny, Radko Gudas, Couturier and Ryan Hartman each scored in regulation for the Flyers, who remained mathematically alive in the race for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. — Reuters

Injured Hazlewood, Starc on track for World Cup

SYDNEY: Australia have received a boost with injured fast bowling spearheads Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc resuming bowling this week and on track to be fit for their World Cup defence. Hazlewood has been sidelined since January with a back injury, while Starc pulled out of Australia’s Twenty20 and one-day tour of India last month with a “substantial” muscle tear. The pair’s return to the

nets is timely after Jhye Richardson returned home this week from Australia’s one-day series against Pakistan with a dislocated shoulder. “When the squad gets announced I’ll probably be 65-70 percent and I’ve still got a good four or five weeks from that date to get ready to play one-day cricket,” Hazlewood said in a Cricket Australia podcast.

Australia’s World Cup squad must be named by April 23 with the tournament starting on May 30 in England. The team will have a training camp in Brisbane in early May and are expected to play some warm-up games against New Zealand before heading to Britain. “I don’t think I’ll be fit for those but the one-day warm-up games in England I think I’ll be right,” said Hazlewood. Starc, the 2015 World Cup player of the tournament, is also faring well in his comeback since picking up the injury during the second Test against Sri Lanka in early February. — AFP

England Women seal Twenty20 whitewash over Sri Lanka

COLOMBO: England Women smashed over 200 runs for only the second time in a Twenty20 international as they beat Sri Lanka to complete a 3-0 series whitewash in Colombo yesterday.

Danielle Wyatt made 33-ball 51 and fellow opener Amy Jones scored 57, while Natalie Sciver and Tammy Beaumont stitched an unbroken 88-run partnership for the third wicket in the tourists’ 204-2.

It was England’s second-highest total in the shortest format of the game behind only the world record 250-3 scored against South Africa Women last June in Taunton.

Only three Sri Lankans reached double figures as they laboured to 108-6 in 20 overs, handing England a 96-run victory.

The win was England’s 10th in a row as they complete a successful tour of India and Sri Lanka.

England were 2-0 down in the one-day series in India but won the dead rubber and went on to clinch the T20 series 3-0.

Heather Knight’s side continued their run of clinical performances to beat Sri Lanka 3-0 in the one-dayers that preceded the T20 clean sweep.

“We talked about imposing ourselves on Sri Lanka and be quite ruthless,” England coach Mark Robinson told the England and Wales Cricket Board website.

“You’ve got to keep your standards as the games go on and these girls have been fantastic.” England will next host West Indies in June before taking on rivals Australia in the Women’s Ashes series. — Reuters

Sports

Friday, March 29, 2019

Wizards edge Suns despite Booker's 50-point effort

24-point run lifts Thunder over Pacers

PHOENIX: Thomas Bryant's three-point play with 2.8 seconds remaining lifted the visiting Washington Wizards to a 124-121 win over Phoenix on Wednesday, spoiling a 50-point night from the Suns' Devin Booker. With time expiring in a tie game, Bradley Beal drove baseline and lofted an alley-oop pass to Bryant, who laid it in and added a free throw. After a timeout, Phoenix inbounded, and Troy Daniels' corner 3-point attempt went off the rim at the buzzer as the Suns dropped their fifth consecutive game. Booker, who scored 59 points at Utah on Monday, became the first player in Suns history to score 50 or more points in consecutive games. The 22-year-old is the youngest in NBA history to accomplish the feat. Jabari Parker had 28 points and a career-high 15 rebounds for Washington, which had lost five straight, and Beal scored 28 points. Reserve Jordan McRae contributed 21 points, and Bryant finished with 18 points and a career-high 19 rebounds.

THUNDER 107, PACERS 99

Paul George scored 31 points and Russell Westbrook had yet another triple-double to lead Oklahoma City past visiting Indiana. Early in the second half, the Thunder looked headed for yet another lackluster defeat as the Pacers built an 11-point lead. But then came a massive third-quarter push. The Thunder scored 24 consecutive points over a stretch of nearly seven minutes to seize control. Westbrook finished with 17

points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists. Steven Adams scored 25 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for the Thunder, his highest-scoring game since Dec. 14. Bojan Bogdanovic led the Pacers with 28 points.

WARRIORS 118, GRIZZLIES 103

Golden State needed a late surge and 28 points apiece from Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant to hold off host Memphis. Curry hit six 3-pointers and Durant missed just one shot for the Warriors, who moved a half-game ahead of Denver in the race for the top seed in the Western Conference. Jonas Valanciunas (27 points, 13 rebounds) and Bruno Caboclo (17 points, 13 rebounds) recorded double-doubles for Memphis, which lost for just the second time in its past seven home games.

TRAIL BLAZERS 118, BULLS 98

Seth Curry scored a team-high 20 points as Portland topped Chicago for a fifth straight victory. Continuing a strong run while stepping in for injured guard CJ McCollum (knee), Curry shot 8-for-11 from the floor as part of the Blazers' 51.8 percent (43-for-83) effort. Al-Farouq Aminu notched 12 points and 11 rebounds for Portland, and Rodney Hood scored 15 points. Chicago's Shaquille Harrison scored a game-high 21 points and added 10 rebounds, and Wayne Selden had 11 points and 12 rebounds. The Bulls were missing Lauri Markkanen, who



PHOENIX: Langston Galloway #9 of the Detroit Pistons drives to the basket against the Phoenix Suns on Wednesday at Talking Stick Resort Arena in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

was shut down for the season due to fatigue.

JAZZ 115, LAKERS 100

Rudy Gobert recorded 22 points and 11 rebounds to help Utah beat Los Angeles in Salt Lake City. Lakers star LeBron James was rested in the second of back-to-back games. Derrick Favors

added 20 points, and Jae Crowder scored 16 for the Jazz, who have won three straight games and eight of their past nine. Utah defeated Los Angeles for the 13th time in the past 15 meetings. Kyle Kuzma scored 21 points, and JaVale McGee added 16 points and 13 rebounds for the Lakers, who lost for the 21st time in the past 29 contests. — Reuters

Federer ready for Anderson barrage after Miami romp

MIAMI: Roger Federer is preparing himself for a barrage of Kevin Anderson big serves after the Swiss superstar sealed his place in the ATP and WTA Miami Open quarter-finals in just 61 minutes on Wednesday.

Federer is celebrating 20 years at this tournament and edged closer to his fourth title in South Florida as the up and coming Russian Daniil Medvedev was swatted aside 6-4 6-2. Next up for the 20-time Grand Slam-winning legend is the South African world number seven who famously beat the 37-year-old at Wimbledon in 2018 over five dramatic sets.

That triumph was Anderson's only win over Federer in six attempts - and the only time he's won a set. But having classily dealt with Medvedev, the former world number one knows it won't be as straightforward with the 6 ft 8 in Anderson at the other end of the Hard Rock Stadium's center court.

"I think if you beat me at Wimbledon, you've got my attention," smiled Federer. "He's got a

great serve and I'm happy he's playing again after his injury. "So from that standpoint, I know what I'm about to expect tomorrow. The matches I have played against him I know can be extremely close always, just because of his sheer possibilities that he has on the serve.

"I believe that probably the best surface for him is this kind of a type of hard court here in the States where he's spent a lot of his time practicing, as well. "I've just got to make sure I protect my serve very well and slice maybe sometimes, get into the rallies, and then find a way. So it will be interesting to see how it's going to go."

Defending champion John Isner, meanwhile, powered his way to the semi-finals as Roberto Bautista Agut, who sent world number one Novak Djokovic crashing out in the previous round, was seen off 7-6 (7-1), 7-6 (7-5). Isner will face Canadian teen sensation Felix Auger-Aliassime in the last four.

The 18-year-old Auger-Aliassime became the youngest ever Miami semi-finalist after seeing off world number 13 Borna Coric 7-6 (7/3) 6-2.

In the women's draw, Simona Halep moved closer to reclaiming her world number one crown after a well-executed 6-4 7-5 triumph over China's Wang Qiang.

Following Petra Kvitova's exit on Tuesday, Halep needs only to reach Saturday's final to knock Naomi Osaka off the top of women's tennis after being deposed following the Japanese's second major win at the Australian Open earlier this year. — AFP

Hopman Cup departs Perth after 31 years

SYDNEY: The unique mixed teams Hopman Cup in Perth has been axed after 31 years and replaced by the ATP World Team Cup, officials said yesterday in a revamp of the season-opening tennis calendar. Two of the three cities to host the new men-only tournament-Sydney and Brisbane-had already been announced with Perth now confirmed as the third.

It means the popular Hopman Cup, won this year by Swiss pair Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic, has had to make way. "While many may be looking at this change and saying we've lost something, we've actually gained something," said Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley.

"This global event, which will be broadcast in every country around the world, will showcase this great city (Perth) to the world. "The ATP Cup will launch the global tennis season for the men-this is their event, it means a lot to them and they've thrown their support behind it 100 percent," he added.

Hopman Cup founder and former tennis

great Paul McNamee told broadcaster ABC it was a sad day. "Nothing could've been embraced by the people of the city more than the Hopman Cup in Perth, so my immediate feeling is sadness that it's not going to be there anymore, and concern about where the Hopman Cup may be in the future," he said.

The International Tennis Federation said it was keen to keep the mixed team format alive and had received interest from cities around the world keen to host the Hopman Cup. "We are in discussions with potential partners to decide where and when this tournament will be next hosted," said ITF president David Haggerty.

"We will keep the Hopman Cup alive and look forward to successful future editions of this unique event." The Association of Tennis Professionals, which runs the men's game, voted in London earlier this year to award the new ATP Cup tournament, which carries 750 ranking points, to Australia.

It will be played annually over 10 days-with the inaugural event beginning on January 3, 2020 — in the lead-up to the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the year. Sydney will host the final of the 24-team event with Brisbane and Perth holding round-robin games, with nations split into six groups. Eight teams will make it to the knockout phase. — AFP

Sports

Chelsea snatch PSG triumph to set up semi-final showdown with Lyon

Barcelona ease into semi-final clash with Bayern Munich

PARIS: Maren Mjelde fired Chelsea into the last four of the Women's Champions League and a clash with all-conquering Lyon after her stoppage time strike saw them squeeze past Paris Saint-Germain 3-2 on aggregate on Wednesday.

Elsewhere, Barcelona eased into a semi-final clash with Bayern Munich thanks to Lieke Martens' seventh-minute strike that sealed a 4-0 aggregate win for the Catalans over Lillestrom SK. Bayern comfortably progressed after a 5-1 thumping of Slavia Prague that gave the Germans a 6-2 overall victory.

Norway international Mjelde met Karen Carney's pinpoint pass seconds into added time to snatch the tie and spark wild celebrations after the Blues let their 2-0 first-leg advantage slip and risked being dumped out by a powerful PSG performance.

Her late strike was enough for Emma Hayes's side to go through despite losing 2-1 on the night and being completely outplayed by PSG. The Parisiens were all over Chelsea in a dominant second-half display, and levelled the tie through Marie-Antoinette Katoto two minutes after the break and a comical own goal from Blues keeper Ann-Katrin Berger.

Roared on by a passionate home crowd led by a hardcore ultras group who protested treatment they received by police at the first leg in England-when fans were caught with weapons and drugs-the hosts looked favourites as the tie headed towards extra time, but Mjelde nipped in to slot past Christiane Endler and book a huge tie with European champions Lyon.

"I'm so disappointed for my team, so much effort completely wiped out by a moment of carelessness. I am disappointed for them because they gave everything," said PSG coach Olivier Echouafni.

SOMMER'S NIGHT

Reynald Pedros's Lyon kept up their hunt for a fourth straight Women's Champions League after Eugenie Le Sommer's brace won a thrilling encounter with Wolfsburg 4-2 and knock the German side out for the fourth year in a row.

France forward Le Sommer struck in the 60th and 80th minutes to send Lyon into the last four 6-3 on aggregate after Denmark striker Pernille Harder clawed dogged Wolfsburg back from an early 2-0 deficit with two goals in three second-half minutes.

Lyon, ahead 2-1 from the first leg in France, looked set to cruise through following a cheeky eighth-minute free-kick from Dzsener Marozsan and France captain Wendy Renard's penalty 17 minutes later.

Harder drew Wolfsburg-who lost the 2016 and 2018 finals to Lyon-level on the night with two quickfire strikes in the 53rd and 56th minutes to leave them needing to score twice more without reply to progress.

However Le Sommer killed any hopes of what would have been an incredible aggregate comeback when she headed Lyon back in front on the hour mark, and 20 minutes later she guided Delphine Cascarino's cross past Almuth Schult and ended the match as a contest.—AFP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Canadian defender Ashley Lawrence (R) vies for the ball with Chelsea's English defender Millie Bright during the UEFA Women's Champions League quarter final second Leg football match between Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea at the Jean Bouin stadium in Paris. — AFP

Africa football spreads its wings by staging Super Cup in Qatar

DOHA: A 20,000-seat stadium in Qatar capital Doha will be the unlikely setting today for the CAF Super Cup showdown between Esperance of Tunisia and Raja Casablanca of Morocco.

The annual one-off match pits the winners of the CAF Champions League and second-tier CAF Confederation Cup against each other and has been staged in Africa since its 1993 debut.

But CAF, the Cairo-based governing body of African football, announced last year that the match would be hosted by Doha without offering an explanation.

Qatar will stage the 2022 World Cup-the first Middle East nation awarded the rights to host the biggest single-sport global tournament. The small nation with huge oil and gas reserves will go into the World Cup as Asian champions having defeated Japan 3-1 in the final in Abu Dhabi last month.

Qatar Football Association officials are hopeful of a big crowd for the Super Cup match, noting in a statement that Esperance and Raja have large followings in the Gulf state.

Esperance and Raja are among the giants of African football, winning six CAF titles apiece, including the most prestigious, the Champions League, three times each.

A dramatic second leg comeback in the 2018 Champions League final brought glory to Esperance as they trounced Al Ahly of Egypt 3-0 having trailed by two goals after the first leg.

Saad Bguir was the two-goal star of the return match in

Tunisia, but in Doha he may have to settle for a place on the bench, as he has done in recent Champions League matches.

Like virtually all successful African clubs, Esperance rely on a mix of local and foreign talent to ensure a steady flow of titles. Apart from numerous Tunisian stars, coach Moine Chaabani can call on Cameroonian Franck Kom, Ivorian Fousseny Coulibaly, Algerian Youcef Belaili and Libyan Hamdou Elhouni.

Esperance travelled to Doha in good form after completing the group stage of their Champions League title defence unbeaten having won four matches and drawn two.

Raja have been less successful lately, failing to qualify for the quarter-finals of the Confederation Cup they won so impressively last season.

The Casablanca outfit won only one of six group matches, and the 4-1 thrashing of AS Otoho Oyo in Congo Brazzaville came too late to salvage a disappointing mini-league campaign.

A team coached by Frenchman Patrice Carteron lie third in the domestic league, but are 17 points adrift of bitter rivals Wydad Casablanca entering the final third of the season.

Although Tunisia and Moroccan clubs are among the strongest in Africa, neither country has been particularly successful in the Super Cup. Tunisian clubs have won three matches and lost eight and those from Morocco have also triumphed three times while failing five times.—AFP

Robben gives up hope of a return against Dortmund

BERLIN: Bayern Munich's veteran Dutch winger Arjen Robben has admitted he is unlikely to make a fairy-tale return from injury in the Bundesliga club's top-of-the-table clash against Borussia Dortmund next week.

Robben, 35, has been out of action for several months and is set to leave Bayern after a decade of service at the end of this season. An iconic figure at the club, he had hoped to return to fitness in time for the Dortmund game, but now appears to have given up on the idea.

"I still don't know whether I will be fit, we will have to see, but I think it is probably unrealistic," Robben told Munich newspaper Abendzeitung at a charity run in central Munich on Wednesday evening. "I am on the road to recovery, but I am not yet training with the team," he said. "I think it will take a bit more time. All I can do is keep working hard and fighting to get back on the pitch."

Robben's last appearance for Bayern was in a 5-1 Champions League win over Benfica on November 27. Since then, he has struggled with a thigh injury and ongoing muscular issues. He was expected to return to full fitness after Bayern's winter training camp in Doha in January, but nearly three months on, he is still out of action. In his 10 years at the club, Robben has become a Bayern legend, scoring 143 goals in 305 appearances and winning 11 domestic titles. His finest moment came at Wembley in 2013, when he fired Bayern to victory in the Champions League final with an 89th minute winner against Dortmund.—AFP

Sports

Friday, March 29, 2019

Solskjaer 'beyond excited' after landing permanent Man Utd job

I didn't think this would happen when he was appointed: Neville

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said he was "beyond excited" to be handed the Manchester United manager's job on a full-time basis as the club announced yesterday he had signed a three-year deal.

The Norwegian, 46, has inspired a dramatic revival of United's fortunes since taking over from the sacked Jose Mourinho in December, winning 14 of his 19 games and leading the Red Devils to the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

Solskjaer, who scored 126 goals in 366 appearances for United, was already a hero to fans as the man who scored the stoppage-time winner in the 1999 Champions League final to complete a historic treble.

In his short spell in charge he has lifted United back into contention for a top-four finish in the Premier League and is preparing for a mouthwatering Champions League clash against Barcelona next month.

"This is the job that I always dreamed of doing and I'm beyond excited to have the chance to lead the club long-term and hopefully deliver the continued success that our amazing fans deserve," he said in a statement on manutd.com.

Solskjaer told MUTV he had relished the support from the fans since he replaced Mourinho. "I've always had it but I have to say the last few months have been absolutely crazy with the way they've taken to the players, to me and to the coaching staff. We've really appreciated that

support and hopefully we can pay them back now."

After Mourinho was sacked following a 3-1 loss to Liverpool on December 16, Molde boss Solskjaer was given the task of reviving United's flagging fortunes but was expected to return to the Norwegian club following his caretaker spell.

At that stage Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino was the firm favourite for the permanent Old Trafford hotseat after an impressive few years at the helm at Spurs.

But Solskjaer forced the hand of Manchester United hierarchy by sheer weight of results, becoming the first United manager to win his first six league games. The Norwegian also helped cleanse the toxic atmosphere at United, where Mourinho had fallen out with a number of key players.

France World Cup winner Paul Pogba and Marcus Rashford in particular have thrived under Solskjaer, who has been credited with restoring an attacking verve missing under a succession of managers.

United's executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward said: "More than just performances and results, Ole brings a wealth of experience, both as a player and as a coach, coupled with a desire to give young players their chance and a deep understanding of the culture of the club."

Rashford yesterday posted an image of himself and Solskjaer on Instagram with the caption: "Congrats boss." Former United defender



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Norwegian manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer poses with a team jersey bearing his name during a photo call at Old Trafford yesterday after it was announced that he was appointed as the club's full-time manager on a three-year contract. — AFP

Gary Neville welcomed the appointment and urged the club to back the new full-time boss financially.

"I'm delighted for Ole," Neville tweeted. "I didn't think this would happen when he was ap-

pointed. However the results and spirit in the club have been incredible since he arrived and he deserves it. He now needs support in the transfer market in terms of finance and the right resource!" —AFP

Ranieri's problems multiply as Roma face Napoli

ROME: Claudio Ranieri's AS Roma homecoming is quickly threatening to turn sour with the veteran coach facing a multitude of problems ahead of Sunday's match against Napoli. Ranieri, who was appointed one week after being fired by English Premier League side Fulham where he had been in charge for three months, appears to have leapt from the frying pan into the fire.

Having been knocked out of the Champions League by Porto, which led to the downfall of predecessor Eusebio Di Francesco, fifth-placed Roma have lost ground in the race for the Champions League places next season.

They are four points adrift of the top four where they must finish to qualify. Napoli are second with 60 points, 15 behind runaway leaders Juventus who host Empoli tomorrow.

Rome-born Ranieri, in his second stint in charge of the club where he also began his playing career, has inherited a team plagued by injuries and form problems and with an infuriating tendency to switch off during matches.

Having beaten Empoli in his first game, Ranieri's side then lost 2-1 to SPAL, continuing a string of defeats against teams from the lower half of the table. Ranieri gave a withering assessment of the performance against SPAL.

"We need to be more determined, more of a team and also

improve our tactics, because we ran hard, but with no real reasoning and that's not good enough," he said. Italian media reported that tempers flared in the Roma dressing-room at halftime at SPAL with a furious row between strikers Stephan El Shaarawy and Edin Dzeko.

The club have not commented on the reports. Roma go into Sunday's match with injury problems, something which has been a feature of their season. El Shaarawy and full back Alessandro Florenzi both left the Italy squad with calf problems during the international break and are unavailable while Daniele De Rossi, Lorenzo Pellegrini and Javier Pastore are doubtful.

La Repubblica newspaper calculated that Roma's squad have suffered 40 muscular injuries between them this season. There are also worries about the form of goalkeeper Robin Olsen after his performance in the 3-3 draw for Sweden against Norway on Tuesday, with suggestions that Ranieri could turn to Antonio Mirante.

Olsen's long-term future at the club, after some unconvincing displays, is also in doubt. Meanwhile, forward Diego Perotti denied comments by his father Hugo, a former player, about a possible return to Argentina to play for Boca Juniors.

"My father dropped me in it and I'm angry," Perotti told Tyc Sport in Argentina. "I still have two years of my contract to go and I'm not returning to Argentina at the moment."

Ranieri warned that the players were playing for their future at the club. "There's a plan in place if Roma get into the Champions League. If we don't, quite a few of these guys could change clubs," he said.

"I can't say if there will be a revolution if Roma don't qualify for the Champions League, but if they don't get the revenue from that competition something will inevitably have to change." — Reuters

Zidane's second coming at Madrid 'like winning a trophy'

MADRID: Real Madrid's players feel like they have won a trophy following Zinedine Zidane's return to the club after a troubling 10-month spell in the wake his departure, defender Alvaro Odriozola said. Zidane resigned as Madrid coach last May after winning a third consecutive Champions League title, but the Frenchman made a remarkable comeback earlier this month when Santiago Solari was sacked.

That was less than five months after Julen Lopetegui was also removed from the role due to disappointing results. The European champions, who were knocked out of this year's Champions League in the last 16 by Ajax Amsterdam after a chastening 4-1 defeat, enjoyed a therapeutic 2-0 win over Celta Vigo in Zidane's first game back in charge.

They will be looking to extend the positive feeling his return has brought when they host Huesca on Sunday. "Zidane's return has reignited the hopes of supporters and for us it's practically like winning a trophy, we are very happy," Odriozola said in an interview with website La Galerna.

"We have talked about what he likes about my game and about my weak points, 'Zizou' always tells you the truth and players appreciate sincerity like that." Madrid are 12 points behind runaway La Liga leaders Barcelona and have no realistic prospect of winning a trophy this season after they were also eliminated in the Copa del Rey semi-finals by Barca.—Reuters



Disabled Kazakhs fight for rights amid Paralympics push

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