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Draft law grants Bedoons full humanitarian and civil rights

Assembly-government meeting nods to Bedoon law



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: An expanded meeting led by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and attended by top government officials including ministers yesterday approved a draft law for a durable and fundamental solution for tens of thousands of stateless people or Bedoons living in the country, the Speaker said.

Ghanem told reporters that Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, the Justice Minister in addition to top representatives for the foreign and interior ministries attended the meeting - the first of its kind at this level to look into a solution for the decades-old Bedoons problem. Head of the government agency for Bedoons Saleh Al-Fadhlah and the head of the UN refugees body also attended.

Ghanem revealed no details on the nature of the solution or any details about the draft law but said another meeting for NGOs and activists will be held later in the Assembly to discuss the issue. He said the law will be finalized before the new term of the National Assembly opens next month and will be submitted to the Assembly for debate

and approval in the new term.

The Speaker reiterated that the proposed solution will not undermine the national identity of Kuwait and aims at providing a fundamental and lasting solution for Bedoons whose unofficial count stands at 120,000. Bedoons claim the right to Kuwaiti citizenship but the government insists that a majority of Bedoons or their forefathers crossed the border from neighboring countries and destroyed their identification documents to claim the right to Kuwaiti nationality.

The government however has repeatedly acknowledged that around 34,000 of the Bedoons qualify for consideration for citizenship but the rest belong to other countries.

Authorities have stepped up pressure on the Bedoons to force them to reveal their original identity. A majority of the Bedoons however rejected government claims.

Just before the National Assembly went into summer recess some two months ago, its human rights panel approved a draft law to grant Bedoons full humanitarian and civil rights that include free education, medical services and allow them to get jobs in the private and public sectors.

Kuwait dismisses Iraqi protest over a border platform

KUWAIT: Kuwait has dismissed Iraqi objections that a platform installed within Kuwait's territorial waters would affect demarcation of maritime borders, affirming that the country was exercising its full sovereignty. A Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry source was reacting to a reported Iraqi memorandum submitted to the UN Security Council (UNSC) to protest Kuwait's installation of a platform over Fishat Al-Eij - a piece of land located within Kuwait's territorial water, claiming it would

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Iran gives Europe 2 more months to save nuke deal

DUBAI: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani gave European powers another two months to save a 2015 nuclear deal yesterday, but warned that Tehran was still preparing for further significant breaches of the agreement if diplomatic efforts failed. His statement came as Iranian officials appeared to give a guarded welcome to a French proposal to save the atomic pact by offering Iran about \$15 billion in credit lines until the end of the year if Tehran comes fully back into compliance.

Rouhani said talks with European

powers were moving forward, raising hopes of at least a pause in a diplomatic confrontation between Iran and the West that has stoked already heightened tensions across the region. Iran emerged from years of economic isolation after agreeing a deal with world powers in 2015 to curb its nuclear development program in exchange for sanctions relief. However, US President Donald Trump pulled out of the deal last year, arguing it did not go far enough, and reimposed sanctions.

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TEHRAN: President Hassan Rouhani (center) chairs a cabinet meeting in the capital Tehran. — AFP

India 'citizenship list' causes anger and confusion

GUWAHATI: After living in India all his life, father-of-two Gokul Chandra Saha woke up last weekend to learn he was among almost two million people in the religiously diverse state of Assam that the government had suddenly deemed to be foreigners. Saha, 68, a Hindu, insists he has the documents to prove his Indian credentials and is hoping to appeal against the decision, one case among many in what has proved to be a highly controversial and confusing effort to roll out of a "National Register of Citizens" in Assam.

The register, initially feared to be a stalking horse for the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to expel Muslims, has in fact ensnared many people from both religions. Whether it be from the Muslim or Hindu perspective, there is much anger, confusion and despair with many people insisting they have been unfairly made stateless. "There is a complete mess somewhere," Saha told AFP, adding that his two daughters, who used the same property document to prove their Assam connections for the list, had been deemed citizens. "It's harassment, I have not able to sleep for the past two nights."

Assam, a poor and isolated state in India's far northeast neighboring Bangladesh, has long seen large influxes of migrants from elsewhere. Bengali speakers make up around 30 percent of Assam's 33 million population. About two-thirds of the Bengalis are Muslim, the rest Hindu. Assamese speakers, the largest community, are mostly Hindu. Tensions in the ethnic and religious melting

pot have at times boiled over into violence with 2,000 Bengali Muslims butchered in one day in 1983.

These tensions have increased pressure for a lasting political solution, which local Hindu politicians said would come in the form of the citizens' register. The register is intended to omit everyone unable to prove they were in the state before 1971, when millions fled into India during Bangladesh's war of independence. Those born in Assam after 1971 have to prove that their parents or grandparents entered India before that.

With the BJP vowing to pursue its pro-Hindu agenda on many fronts, Muslims - which make up 13 percent of India's 1.3 billion population - feared they would be the main targets for exclusion on the register. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government had also flagged expanding the register nationwide, fuelling fears it would be used to evict Muslims. But when the list of citizens was

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Facial recognition becomes an opt-in feature: Facebook



Facebook logo is seen on a computer in Washington, DC.

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook said facial recognition technology applied to photos at the social network will be an opt-in feature. The change that began rolling out to users around the world came as the leading social network remains under pressure to better protect privacy and user data, including biometric information.

Nearly two years ago, Facebook introduced a face recognition feature that went beyond suggesting friends to tag in pictures or videos but could let user know when they were in images they had permission to see elsewhere on the service. Facebook is doing away with a "tag" suggestion setting in favor of an overall facial recognition setting which will be off by default, according to a post by artificial intelligence applied research lead Srinivas Narayanan.

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British PM demands October 15 election after defeat over Brexit

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday demanded an Oct 15 snap election after lawmakers seeking to prevent a no-deal Brexit dealt him a humiliating defeat in parliament which he cast as an attempt to surrender to the European Union. Parliament's move leaves Brexit up in the air, with possible outcomes ranging from a turbulent no-deal EU exit to abandoning the whole endeavor - both outcomes that would be unacceptable to swathes of the United Kingdom's voters.

An alliance of opposition lawmakers backed by 21 rebels from Johnson's Conservative Party defeated the government on Tuesday on a motion allowing

them to try to pass a law which would force a three-month extension to Britain's EU exit date. Johnson vowed never to delay Brexit beyond Oct 31 and challenged opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn to agree to an Oct 15 election.

"Can I invite the leader of the opposition to confirm, when he stands up shortly, that if that surrender bill is passed, he will allow the people of this country to have their view on what he is proposing to hand over in their name with an election on October the 15th?" Johnson told parliament. However, he needs the backing of two-thirds of law

Continued on Page 24



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson gestures as he reacts to main opposition Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn during his first Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons yesterday. — AFP

Local

Crown Prince receives top Kuwaiti officials, outgoing ambassadors

Prime Minister meets KRCS, IFRC delegation



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA photos



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



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



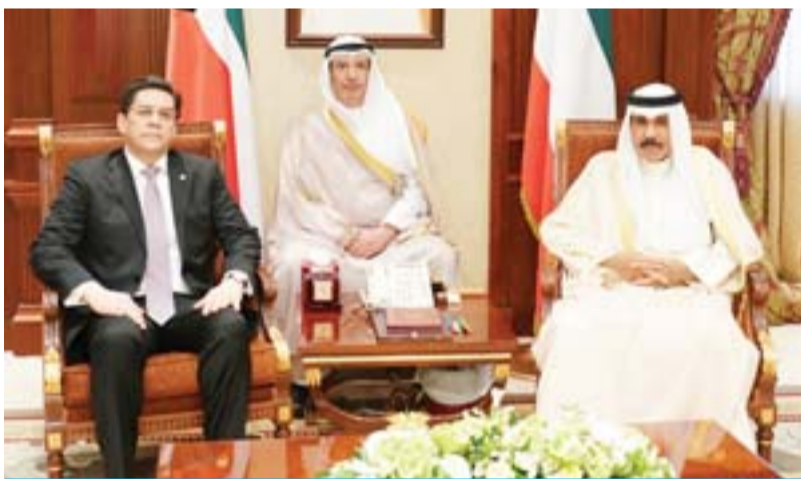
His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Kuwait Kandeepan Balasubramaniam.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Cambodia's Ambassador to Kuwait Tan Bunpa.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Honduran Ambassador to Kuwait Nelson Valencia Garcia.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Honduran Ambassador to Kuwait Nelson Valencia Garcia.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Elhadj As Sy.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Sheikh Nawaf also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness then received Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime

Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh. Furthermore, His Highness received the outgoing Ambassadors of Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Honduras; respectively Kandeepan Balasubramaniam, Tan Bunpa and Nelson Valencia Garcia. Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, head of protocol at the Crown Prince Diwan, attended the three meetings. His Highness the Prime Minister also

received the outgoing Honduran Ambassador to Kuwait in a separate meeting. Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister received, with the attendance of Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Elhadj As Sy and his accompanying delegation. — KUNA

Kuwait joins 'Int'l Charity Day' celebrations

KUWAIT: The UN celebrates the 'International Day of Charity' today, in recognition of humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of those in need globally. Kuwait is known as one of the top countries in the field of charity, as it was named 'Humanitarian Center' and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was also granted the title of 'Humanitarian Leader' by the UN. Kuwaiti charity has achieved unparalleled successes globally since the beginning of charity work in Kuwait in 1913, as it marked a milestone in the areas of humanitarian giving, without distinction or discrimination. In this regard, Amiri Diwan Advisor and Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq said yesterday that the Kuwaiti charity work always proves the giving of the Kuwaiti people around the world with the generous support and guidance of His Highness the Amir. Since official launch of IIOC in 1986, the charity has spared no efforts in providing projects to dozens of countries around the world in different areas, he said.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Board of Directors of 'Patients Helping Fund' Society Dr Mohammad Al-Sharhan praised the unlimited support of the Kuwaiti charity work, as the Patients fund was able to provide humanitarian support to the needy patients inside and outside the country. The assistance provided varied between medicines and medical devices to the needy patients, as well as paying the treatment expenses for people in need, he added. In the meantime, Chairman of the Board of 'Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society' Jamal Al-Nouri, said Kuwaiti march has become one of the most effective and successful pillars of the state's foreign policy. Nouri said that since its establishment, the association is keen to provide humanitarian aid in Asia and Africa as well as projects such schools, institutes, mosques, wells, orphans and health centers. The Association seeks through educational and charity projects to enable beneficiaries to receive education and raise the efficiency education, and measure the impact of educational projects on communities and its development, he said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Archive photos showing Kuwaiti charity projects in different place around the world. — KUNA photos

Local

GCC labor ministers approve draft banning forced labor, discrimination

Municipal Council committee reviews requests, recommendations

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said the meeting of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) labor ministers, which was held in Muscat, Oman yesterday resulted in taking several decisions including the approval of the final draft of defining and banning forced labor and discrimination in the job place, as thanks were sent to Qatar for its efforts in implementing the initiatives. Thanks were also sent to Saudi Arabia in regards to the national policy to fight discrimination. She said the next meeting will see the board election of the International Labor Organization and it was agreed to back Saudi Arabia's nomination for the permanent seat.

In regards to the governance of professional qualifications, standards, and professional tests at GCC countries, Aqeel said that an agreement was reached to ask the executive office to hold a technical meeting to discuss qualifications and standards at GCC countries, in coordination with the education training committee at the secretariat general of the GCC no later than the first half of 2020. Meanwhile, she said that the budget proposal for the labor department at the executive office was approved, as well as the participation of GCC countries in Dubai Expo 2020, and it was agreed to have an effective participation at the expo.

Panel meeting

In other news, the Hawally committee at the Municipal Council headed by Abdullah Al-

Roumi approved the Awqaf Ministry's request to expand Shaaban Mosque which has an area of 792 square meters in Salmiya. Meanwhile, it rejected a Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) request to approve investment at Al-Sadd Park in Shaab. It also rejected a letter from the Public Authority for the Disabled in regards to allocating a sandy yard for vehicle parking in Hawally. Furthermore, it referred the proposal of deputy chairman Abdullah Al-Mahri in regards to placing speed bumps opposite Kuwait University and the Australian College in Mubarak Al-Abdullah (Block 5, Street 5). The



Four fish market shops closed

committee also postponed the proposal of Abdullah Al-Roumi in regards to dig a car tunnel under Messila Bridge that links Taawon Street with the Sixth Ring Road, as requested by the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART). It also discussed a request by the US Embassy to give it the right to use the buffer zone covering an area of 47,668 square meters.

Market violations

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry closed four shops at the Sharq Fish Market yesterday for committing violations. The ministry explained that the violations were documented in reports and recommendations by the relevant committee in the ministry. The ministry said inspection teams continue monitoring markets to make sure owners are licensed and do not violate the law.

Pharmacy profession

Health Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Drugs and Food Control Dr Abdallah Al-Bader said the Pharmaceutical Profession Development Committee began receiving pharmacists' contributions and suggestions to plot the new vision of the pharmacy profession in Kuwait, through the establishment of a contact channel through email: innovationgate@moh.gov.kw. Dr Al-Bader said receiving suggestions in three fields: the first is the development of pharmaceutical practices, services and activities; the second is in the field of occupational development of manpower in the pharmacy fields; and the third is the development of rules and regulations. Contributions should be received before October 3, he added. He said the committee is keen on reviewing the current situation and account for the needs and effectively be in contact with workers in the field, adding that communication will build a base for pharmaceutical data and clinical pharmacy indicators to follow up projects and programs.

Co-ops to replace plastic bags with eco-friendly ones



KUWAIT: Kuwait Voluntary Work Center's Chairperson Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks during the meeting. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait Voluntary Work Center announced yesterday that the Union of Consumer Co-operative Societies (UCCS) agreed on replacing plastic bags with environment-friendly biodegradable bags. The remarks were made by the center's Chairperson Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, after meeting with advisors from the Environment Public

Authority (EPA), deputy chairman of the UCCS Khaled Al-Hodheiban and heads of co-operative societies. The replacement aims to protect the environment and reduce harm caused by non-biodegradable plastic bags that could threaten the lives of humans and other living creatures, Sheikha Amthal, also member of the Supreme Council for the Environment added. —KUNA

Sixteen new teachers arrive to Kuwait

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The first batch of new teachers who were contracted in Jordan for the 2019/2020 school year arrived in Kuwait yesterday, while other batches are scheduled to arrive later from

Jordan, Tunis and Palestine. Head of new teachers reception committee Fahad Al-Hayan said it is important to make the new teachers feel comfortable and ease all procedures related to bringing them from abroad through cooperation between state departments, adding that the committee received 14 male and female teachers yesterday. Hayan said the committee coordinated with the Public Authority for Manpower to open files for the teachers and give them a preliminary loan of KD 200, adding that VIVA Telecom will give each teacher a free line in addition to KD 5 internet subscription.

Kuwait affirms deeply rooted oil relations with Vietnam



Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel affirmed yesterday the deeply rooted relations in the field of oil shared between Kuwait and Vietnam. Fadhel revealed that he met with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Vietnam's Minister of Industry and Trade Tran Tuan Anh and discussed exchanging expertise and trade relations, especially in the oil sector. Fadhel stressed importance of Kuwait's mission to invest in Vietnam, most importantly the oil sector. Vietnamese officials applauded remarkable improvement in the Nghi Son Refinery Petrochemical Complex project, stressing Vietnam's keenness and

support for the success of the project, which estimates 40 percent of market fuel needs, he added. Fadhel expressed deep appreciation to Vietnamese government efforts in the project and hailed the relations between Vietnam, Japan and Kuwait. The Nghi Son Refinery Petrochemical Complex project established in April 2008 between Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) by 35.1 percent, Vietnam Petrovietnam 25.1 percent, Japan Idemitsu Kosan by 35.1 percent and Mitsui Chemicals Inc. 4.7 percent. — KUNA

Kuwait suggests new membership payment method for Asian panel

BAGHDAD: Kuwait presented a new method of paying for memberships at the Standing Committee of the Asian Parliamentary Administrative and Financial Regulations. During the committee's meeting yesterday, Kuwait suggested that parliaments of member-states would pay equal membership fees, head of the Kuwaiti delegation MP Rakan Al-Nisf said. Kuwait also suggested that the Asian Parliamentary Committee would set membership fees according to each country's GDP, he added.

In a speech at the start of the meeting, Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammed Al-Halbousi pointed out that his country is witnessing positive progress in all facilities, which was strengthened after its victory over the so-called Islamic State (IS). He pointed out that the battle is not over in Iraq, as there are still problems left by terrorism, such as displaced people, reconstruction of cities, care for vic-

tims, treatment of social, psychological and intellectual effects, as well as addressing the remnants of the Islamic State's thought. He said his country expects the meeting of the Asian Parliamentary Committee to provide mature visions and projects to all member countries of the Asian continent.

He pointed out that the main problems of Asia are foreign interventions and sharp polarizations through the policies of the axes, which drained the budgets of States and spread hatred in his opinion. He stressed that Iraq has adopted a clear strategy for its part, such as the policy of self-distancing from political and military conflicts, and to build bridges of convergence of wills and defuse crises. He affirmed that Iraq will not allow being part of international conflicts, and calls for the resolution of disputes, and today it is establishing important strategic partnerships with all. — KUNA

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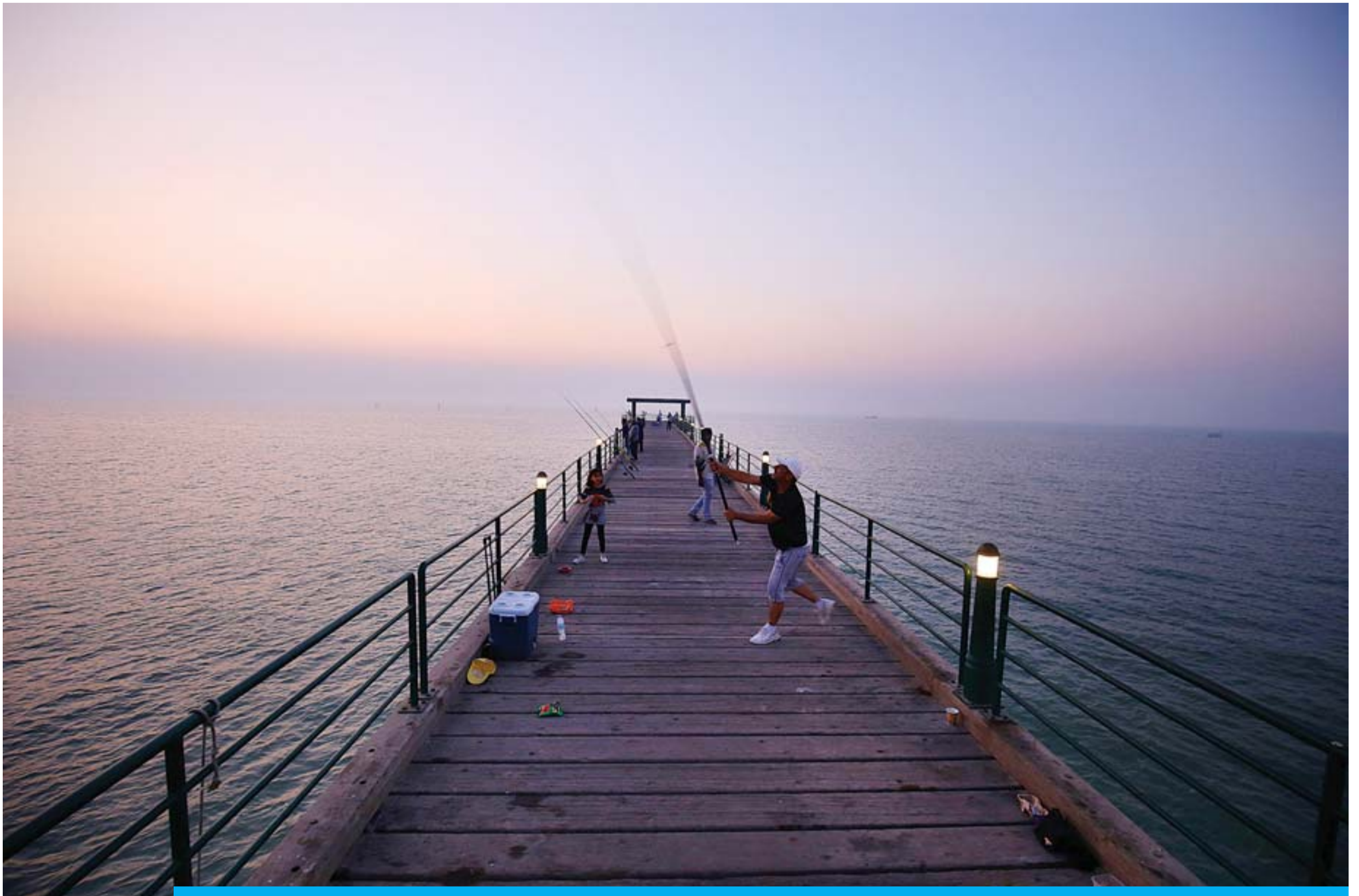
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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A man casts his fishing rod on a pier at sunset in Kuwait City. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Ahli United Bank collects six tons of plastic waste for recycling in 2019

‘Creating a positive difference in shaping the future’

KUWAIT: As part of its social efforts, which give concern and support for the environmental top priority, Ahli United Bank (AUB), through its recycling program, managed to collect about six tons of plastic waste in 2019 compared to two tons in 2018 through its project in cooperation with Omniya Recycling Factory by placing recycling bins in the bank's Head Office and different branches, as well as establishing collection points in the surrounding areas in a number of regions of Kuwait such as Salwa, Rumaihiya, Bayan and Jahra to serve the residents of these regions. This initiative has succeeded in saving around 58 cubic meters of landfills, in addition to the positive reflection on reducing the amount of waste and promoting the recycling culture. This initiative also supported a Kuwaiti youth initiative that is in line with the New Kuwait Vision 2035.

Commenting on the success of this initiative, Sahar Dashti, General Manager of the Customer Protection and head of the social responsibility Team at Ahli United Bank

said: “Caring for and preserving the environment is a priority of our social responsibility where AUB's annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) report 2018 was issued under the title of ‘Youth and Environment’. In this sense and as part of our activities to preserve the environment, we continue our efforts to recycle plastic waste through our successful partnership with Omniya Recycling Factory.”

“The inappropriate disposal of plastics is environmentally unacceptable,” Dashti added. “So it is our duty as a national institution and individuals to take the responsibility to apply the right methods of waste disposal being part of the aspired environmental change for a better Kuwait to bring back our local environment as beautiful and clean as it was.”

“Through this initiative, we aim to send a message that plastic as a material is not the problem,” Dashti affirmed. “Plastic as the most diverse and durable material contributes positively to society and reduces Co2 emissions in addition to its main uses in different fields such as health, construction



and technology. To prevent disposal of plastic as waste to the environment, we

need to bring about a real behavioral change that begins with the actions of

every member of our society to continue in the generations to come.”



Kuwaiti military official attends Eager Lion drills in Jordan

AMMAN: Colonel Staff Mishal Aba Al-Khail on Tuesday highlighted the importance of the Kuwaiti army taking part in the joint Eager Lion military exercises amid the current international and regional changes. The drills, being co-sponsored by the Jordanian and the US armies, gathered troops from 30 countries, including 23 army officers from Kuwait, he said. “The Kuwaiti Army is keen on participation in all previous rounds of these exercises. This year, 17 Kuwaiti officers are taking part in the Command Post Exercise (CPX) and six others act as observers in various sectors,” he revealed. “The drills help the partners exchange experience and test their military preparedness and operational engagements in various fields and the accelerated changes regionally and internationally.” Col Staff Aba Al-Khail pointed out. The multi-national drills aim to coordinate the response of partner forces to new risks such



AMMAN: A group picture of Kuwaiti officers taking part in the Command Post Exercise (CPX), part of Eager Lion drills in Jordan. —KUNA

as terrorism, cyberterrorism and trans-border crimes, he added.

As part of their participation in the drills, Kuwaiti officers took part today in the senior commanders' symposium that gathered 200 top brass from the general staff of the participating armies. The symposium, sponsored by Chief of the General Staff of the Jordanian Army Major General Youssef Al-Haniet, focused on the combat against terrorism, extremism and cyberterrorism as well as the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

The Eager Lion 2019 drills kick-started on Sunday, August 25, 2019 and concludes today. The first round of these exercises took place in Jordan in 2011. Nearly 8,000 troopers and officers take part in these exercises; they are from, besides the cosponsors Jordan and the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Australia, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Norway, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Canada, Japan, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Qatar, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Brunei, Kenya and Tajikistan. —KUNA

Governor urges tapping youth potentials

KUWAIT: Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Sabah has called for relying on national youth capabilities in developing the Asimah Governorate. In a statement during his reception on Tuesday of a delegation from the Information Ministry's

Tourism Sector and several students of the architecture engineering of the Kuwait University, Sheikh Talal reiterated the need for benefiting from Kuwaiti youth and their creativity in overhauling the Sailor's Day Heritage Village in the Gulf Street. He described the village as a touristic and cultural project that aims to boost internal tourism. The governor said that the project envisages the development of the village's infrastructure, utilities, restaurants, cafes, funfair and entertainment areas to meet needs of all family members. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Sabah speaks during the meeting. —KUNA

Local

Brazil ambassador to Kuwait reassures Amazon rainforest fire to be extinguished by next month

Brazilian agriculture and livestock delegation due in Kuwait in two weeks

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Amazon rainforest has been on fire for several weeks now with extensive damage dealt to its rich biodiversity. But according to Brazilian Ambassador to Kuwait Norton de Andrade Rapesta, people should not be overstressed as Brazil has been battling several forest fires almost every year. "There are several wild fires that happen around the world every year," Ambassador Rapesta told a press conference held at the Brazilian embassy in Kuwait yesterday, downplaying the huge level of concern that the Amazon rainforest fires have garnered worldwide. "Amazon fires have been happening almost every year, and we know how to handle them," the ambassador proclaimed. "I am almost sure that by next month, the fire currently masticating the Amazon rainforest will be out, mainly because the summer and the dryness will officially end by then."

"I know how important the rainforest is to the world, and so news that the fires are started deliberately by some people to serve personal interests are not accurate," Ambassador Rapesta said. "Deforestation in the area has been ongoing not because of us, but because trees are being cut for their byproducts. We are not even allowed to use mahogany trees or good trees back in Brazil. But those good trees are smuggled out of the Amazon by unscrupulous individuals," he said. The Amazon region is covered by the

rainforest and is shared by eight other countries, the envoy noted. "Brazil is located exactly on the equator and the line that divides the globe goes through countries with rainforests," Ambassador Rapesta said. "As global warming increases, the possibility of more dryness annually could actually threaten the large portions of rainforests."

The period between July, August and September is the drought season in Brazil, so fires normally ignites then, according to Ambassador Rapesta. "The fire were

trated in areas with savannahs and small trees."

Brazil is one of the countries with the largest extent of protected areas covering 12 percent of the continental protected areas worldwide, Ambassador Rapesta said. As per native vegetation in Brazil, it amounts to 66.3 percent of territory; 25 percent as native vegetation, 13.8 percent to the indigenous estates, 10.4 percent to conservation units, and 16.5 percent still vacant and unregistered lands. Out of remaining 30 percent, less than third is dedicated to farming and crops. The envoy admitted that combatting illegal practices in the area is the main challenge. "Seventy percent of deforestation takes place outside rural estate, mostly in public vacant areas, and mostly are from logging theft or land grabbing activities," he told reporters.

There are criticisms of where the Amazon Funds are going since it receives billions of dollars from other countries. According to records, since its creation in 2018, the Amazon Fund has received \$1.3 billion in grants from the government of Norway and Germany and from Petrobras. Regrettably though, almost 40 percent of it have been allocated to NGO projects which have not used them adequately or with enough transparency. Ambassador Rapesta said that the Amazon Funds normally goes to NGOs, but most of the funds go to paying large salaries of people who are involved in them. "The truth is that this mechanism has been proven ineffective in controlling deforestation," he said. "The changes by the Brazilian government when it



KUWAIT: Brazilian Ambassador to Kuwait Norton de Andrade Rapesta speaks during a press conference yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

“ Amazon fires happen almost every year ”

not in the rainforest part, but in the areas where there are savannahs," he explained. "The rainforest areas are jungles with huge trees as high as 30-40 feet, and with high humidity on almost 24/7 basis. We call it 'flying rivers', so how can the areas with too much humidity be burned? This proves that the fires are mostly concen-

comes to the Amazon Fund are not intended to do away with it, but rather to make it more effective."

Meanwhile, the envoy said that a delegation from Brazil's Agriculture and Livestock Ministry will pay a visit to Kuwait on September 17-19 to talk about agreements, and meet senior Kuwaiti government officials. The delegation will see the possibility of increasing business and trade opportunities and production of agri-business, the envoy revealed.

KIB sponsors MOI's back to school campaign

KUWAIT: As part of their leading corporate social responsibility programs, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored a media campaign coinciding with the start of the 2019-2020 school year, which was launched by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) entitled 'our eyes are on our children'. The campaign was held on the occasion of back-to-school season, aiming at educating parents and students about the importance of road safety and accident prevention at the start of the school year.

The campaign featured a series of awareness messages spread by the General Department of Public Relations and Security Media through various social media platforms, audio-visual media, SMS and instructional brochures. Additionally, the campaign included a special program for visiting schools to hold awareness lectures and seminars throughout the year.

Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "Our sponsorship of this campaign came as part of our strong commitment to positive-



ly impact the local community. For this reason, we aim at supporting both public and private organizations that seek to educate and spread awareness. We are proud of the recent efforts made by the MOI's campaign in reducing traffic congestion, as well as spreading awareness amongst parents and students about the possible risks faced when going to school by car or on foot. Also, this campaign shed light on how to handle these risks and prevent them."

Najia also pointed out the importance of cooperating with security organizations and the MOI, which aim at protecting children and providing them with a safe environment. In turn, this reflects positively on the local community,

improving its overall safety and stability.

At the end, Najia congratulated students on the new academic year and wished them a year full of accomplishments. He also encouraged students to further their education and continue their academic pursuits, as education is undoubtedly the cornerstone of a better and brighter future for the nation.

It is worth mentioning that KIB always strives to organize school visits to spread awareness, as part of its series of back-to-school initiatives. The bank aims at enriching students with vital and interesting information, as well as actively engaging with diverse segments of the local community through various activities and initiatives.

Nine human trafficking cases sent to prosecution

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry sent nine new cases of human trafficking to the public prosecution recently as investigations led to pressing charges against individuals and companies who were

sent to the judiciary. Informed sources said the cases concern laborers who were brought to Kuwait with paid visas issued for fake companies and individuals who trade illegally in work permits. Meanwhile, the sources said that investigations revealed that the price of the 'fake residence visa' reached up to KD 2,000 for some nationalities, while visas are sold to some Arab and Asian nationals for around KD 1,500. The sources also mentioned an effective role played by human rights' activists in Kuwait which led to discovering those involved in said cases. — Al-Qabas

Firemen battle transformer blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Hawally fire station men fought a fire in a power transformer in the area, as flames also spread to a vehicle parked nearby. No injuries were reported, and an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the blaze.



Crimes

Maid deported after testing positive for HIV

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower said an Asian domestic helper was deported back to her country after she tested positive for HIV at the expatriate labor shelter's clinic. An official source said the shelter receives expatriates without valid visas who wish to rectify their legal status, after which their file is examined to make sure they are not wanted for felonies, and tests are conducted to make sure that they do not suffer from any infectious diseases. The helper had a blood sample taken from her after she arrived at the shelter, and was tested two times, where the result came positive for HIV infection in both, the sources noted.

Cabby mugged

A Syrian taxi driver answered a call from a woman, but when he arrived to the requested location, two men beat him up severely and left him unconscious. After regaining consciousness, the man discovered that his money and two smartphones were stolen. In his statements to local police, the driver said a woman called him and asked to be taken from Qurain to Mahboula. He said that when he arrived in the area, he called the woman but she did not answer, rather he was surprised by an SUV stopping in front of him, then two persons came out and beat him up. Detectives are investigating.

Cellmates brawl

A Central Prison inmate suffered a broken nose after he was severely beaten by a cellmate in a case that was registered as a felony. The victim, Egyptian, was hospitalized while the culprit, Jordanian, was taken to the proper authorities for further investigations in the case.

Police protection

An Egyptian woman accused her neighbor of verbally insulting her and threatening to cause her harm. She lodged a complaint against him and asked for police's protection from him. Police are summoning the suspect for questioning.

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

KFSD conducts Jleeb crackdown

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The prevention sector at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) carried out a wide inspection campaign in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh under the command of Deputy Director General for Prevention Sector Maj Gen Khalid Abdullah Fahad. The campaign resulted in issuing warnings to several facilities that were found in violation of fire safety conditions.





Putin and Modi vow to boost military ties

North Korean defector mothers struggle in vastly different South



SRINAGAR: People gather to make calls at a makeshift phone booth set up by Indian security forces outside a camp during a lockdown. — AFP

Teen dies by stone-pelting in Kashmir

‘These deaths have happened because of terrorists, stone pelters and puppets of Pakistan’

NEW DELHI: The army in Indian Kashmir said yesterday a teenager died after being hit by stone-pelting protesters in the restive region that has been under lockdown for a month. Asrar Ahmed Khan died on Tuesday night after succumbing to wounds he received on August 6, senior army officer Lieutenant General Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon said at a news conference in Srinagar.

“This makes it the fifth civilian death in the (Kashmir) Valley in the last 30 days,” Dhillon said. “These deaths have happened because of terrorists, stone pelters and puppets of Pakistan,” he said. But he added: “This is the calmest period in the history of Kashmir, if I can say that.” A report by the local News18 network however said the

teenager had died from pellet injuries sustained during a protest against the Indian government.

Indian forces regularly use shotguns in clashes in Kashmir that fire hundreds of metal pellets at a time, blinding and maiming thousands in recent years. Kashmir has waged a three-decade-long armed rebellion against Indian rule with tens of thousands of lives, mostly civilians, lost in the conflict. On August 5, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government stripped the part of Kashmir it controls of its autonomy.

Communication clampdown

Ahead of its shock announcement, India rushed tens

of thousands of extra troops to the region to join 500,000 already in the valley, and imposed a strict communications clampdown that remains largely in place. Indian forces have also detained several thousand people, according to multiple sources, including local politicians. A senior government source told AFP last week that at least 500 protests and incidents of stone throwing have occurred since August 5, leaving nearly 100 civilians and 400 members of the Indian security forces injured.

AFP has spoken to relatives of three people they alleged have died — including a man and woman in separate incidents after tear gas was released near them, and a teenager who drowned while being chased by police.

The decision to bring Kashmir under the direct rule of Indian government has enraged Pakistan which also claims the region. Dhillon accused Pakistan of fomenting trouble and said two Pakistani “terrorists” had recently been arrested.

He showed videos of the two men as they pledged their allegiance to UN-designated terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba. “These videos clearly show how citizens of Pakistan are being pushed into the Kashmir Valley to undertake terrorist activities...to disrupt peace,” Dhillon said. Kashmir has been the spark for two major wars and countless clashes between the two nuclear-armed arch-rivals. — AFP

UK Tories in ‘unprecedented’ disarray over Brexit

LONDON: Britain’s ruling Conservative Party is imploding this week as a result of a no-holds-barred battle over Brexit that has seen the expulsion of 21 moderate MPs, including Winston Churchill’s grandson, experts said. In a culmination of decades of infighting over Europe, Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday axed the lawmakers, some of them former ministers, after they voted against the government’s hardline Brexit strategy.

Among those targeted were Philip Hammond, finance minister for three years until July, and Ken Clarke, parliament’s longest-serving MP dubbed “the Father of the House”. Nicholas Soames, the grandson of wartime prime minister Churchill — widely considered the greatest Conservative leader — was also told he must now sit as an independent. The cull, which could bar them from standing as Conservatives at the next election, came hours after Phillip Lee resigned to join the Liberal Democrats — the fifth ruling party MP to quit this year.

“Sadly, the Brexit process has helped to transform this once great party into something more akin to a narrow faction,” he wrote in his resignation letter. He noted the party was no longer the “broad political church” he joined as a young man. “It has increasingly become infected with the twin diseases of populism and English nationalism,” Lee said.

‘Like something out of N Korea’

The Conservatives, one of the world’s oldest and most successful political parties, have long been dominated by divisions over Britain’s relationship with Europe. The issue contributed to Margaret Thatcher’s 1990 resignation after 11 years in power, while directly causing ex-premiers David Cameron and Theresa May to step down in the past four years. But political historians say the current fractures — and the response to them — are different.

“(It’s) unprecedented historically, both in terms of the scale... and the threat of deselection coming directly from the leadership,” said Nick Crowson, professor of contemporary British history at the University of Birmingham. The sacking of such prominent Conservatives by Johnson, who had himself voted against the previous government twice earlier this



LONDON: A protester wearing a mask of Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson and in fancy dress is seen near the Houses of Parliament in central London. — AFP

year, has reportedly shocked even those working in Downing Street. “It’s like something out of North Korea,” one aide told the Politico website. “I honestly think they’ve completely overreached.”

Wedge issue

It was not supposed to be this way. Cameron called the 2016 referendum in a bid to unify his party behind continued EU membership, with Nigel Farage, then leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), ascendant in the polls. But when Cameron lost the vote — with 52 percent of Britons favoring Leave — and he was forced to resign, Brexit became the defining issue driving an ever bigger wedge through the party.

May tried to promote consensus between the two rival camps, balancing her cabinet between Leavers like Johnson and previous Remainers such as Hammond. However, her strategy failed as a string of Brexit hardliners resigned from the cabinet while moderates also left the government in disagreement. In February, three Conservative MPs quit the party to join a breakaway group of pro-EU lawmakers from

the Labour party, while another left to sit as an independent in April. But with Brexit stalled amid opposition to the divorce deal that May struck with Brussels, voters deserted the Conservatives for Farage’s new Brexit Party in European Parliament elections this year. The party came a humiliating fifth in the vote, setting the stage for hardliners seized the initiative. Boris Johnson became leader vowing to leave the bloc “do or die” on the delayed deadline of October 31, installing key figures in the victorious 2016 Vote Leave team in government. This has left the moderates opposed to a no-deal Brexit in what Hammond called Tuesday “the fight of a lifetime”. “I am going to defend my party against incomers, entryists... people who are at the heart of this government who care nothing about the future of the Conservative party,” he told the BBC.

Some political analysts believe predictions of the party’s demise are premature — but the Brexit-fueled divisions will be tough to repair. Oliver Patel, of University College London’s European Institute said: “Whichever option (they) choose, a large part of the party will be against it, whether it’s a deal, no deal or no Brexit.” — AFP

US venue cites Christian ‘beliefs’ in refusing mixed race wedding

WASHINGTON: An event venue in the southern United States refused to host a mixed race couple’s wedding, stating that the union went against its “Christian beliefs,” in a viral video that has drawn a barrage of criticism. The husband-and-wife-to-be — he black and she white — had been in contact with Boone’s Camp Event Hall in Mississippi for several days, before receiving an email rejecting their request to hold their nuptials at the facility.

The groom’s sister then went to the venue to ask in-person why the wedding had been rejected, filming an exchange in which a woman bluntly told her: “We don’t do gay weddings or mixed race.” Asked why, the woman responded: “Because of our Christian race. I mean our Christian beliefs.” The episode gained traction following an article published Sunday by local news website Deep South Voice.

Following the episode, the event space’s Facebook page was taken down, but not before the woman posted several excuses, stating that she had grown up in Mississippi where the unspoken rule dictated “staying with your own race.” At her husband’s request, she said, she had searched the Bible for text supporting her notions on mixed race marriages. “After searching Saturday evening, Saturday night, most of the day Sunday and sitting down with my pastor Sunday night after church I have come to the conclusion my decision which was based on what I had thought was correct to be supported by The Bible was incorrect!” she posted. Marriage between blacks and whites was legalized in the United States in the 1967 Supreme Court decision Loving v. Virginia. In 2016 Mississippi, which is located in the US Bible Belt, passed a “religious freedom” bill allowing businesses to refuse services based on religious beliefs about same-sex marriage or transgender people. — AFP

International

Bahamas officials search for Dorian survivors as storm heads for Florida

‘One of the greatest national crises in our country’s history’

MARSH HARBOUR: The wreckage of pulverized homes, beached boats and floodwaters covered miles of the Bahamas in Hurricane Dorian’s wake yesterday, as rescuers searched for survivors of the worst storm to ever strike the island nation. The scope of the damage and humanitarian crisis was still unfolding as aerial video of the Abaco Islands in the northern Bahamas showed wide swaths of destruction and officials warned the current death toll of seven was likely to rise. Aid agencies estimated that tens of thousands of people would need food and other support.

“We are in the midst of one of the greatest national crises in our country’s history,” Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Minnis told a news conference. “No effort or resources will be held back.” Some storm victims remained on rooftops, awaiting rescue, according to media reports early yesterday. “We can expect more deaths to be recorded. This is just preliminary information,” Minnis said. “Marsh Harbor has suffered, I would estimate, in excess of 60 percent damage to their homes,” Minnis said, referring to the port on Great Abaco.

“The Mud, as we know, has been completely destroyed or decimated,” he said referring to a shantytown known as the Mud and the Peas. Aerial video of the Bahamas’ Great Abaco Island showed miles of flooded neighborhoods, littered with upturned boats, and shipping containers scattered like toys. Many buildings had walls or roofs partly ripped off.

“Victims are being loaded on flatbed trucks across Abaco,” one Twitter user with the handle @mvp242 said, describing a rain-blurred photograph of limp bodies strewn across a truck bed. Other posts on Twitter said entire communities were swept away. After rampaging through the Caribbean as one of the most powerful hurricanes ever recorded, Dorian wind speeds dropped on Tuesday to make it a Category 2 storm on the five-step Saffir-Simpson intensity scale. It maintained that level on Wednesday, but forecasters warned it was still dangerous.

Residents of coastal Florida, Georgia and South

Carolina were bracing for Dorian’s approach yesterday, with the National Hurricane Center warning the slow-moving storm could make landfall in South or North Carolina Thursday or Friday. More than a million people have been ordered to evacuate.

Dorian packed sustained winds of 105 miles per hour (165 kph) and was moving north-northwest at 8 mph, as it churned about 95 miles (155 km) east of Daytona Beach, Florida, the NHC said in an 8 a.m. EDT (1200 GMT) advisory. Hurricane-force winds had expanded to 60 miles (100 km) from the storm’s core. Heavy rains and storm-surge waters moving inland could cause life-threatening flash floods, the NHC said. The risk extended from Jupiter, Florida, to Surf City, North Carolina. Tornadoes were possible along the Florida coast, with the risk later moving to Georgia and South Carolina.

Long lists of missing

With telephones down on Abaco and Grand Bahama islands, residents posted lists of missing loved ones across social media sites. A single Facebook post by media outlet Our News Bahamas seeking the names of missing people had 1,600 comments listing lost family members since it went live on Tuesday.

The exact toll in the Bahamas will not be clear until the storm passes and rescue crews are able to access devastated areas, said Theo Neilly, the Bahamian consul general in Washington. As many as 13,000 homes in the Bahamas may have been destroyed or severely damaged, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said, in the strongest storm to hit the Bahamas.

Josh Morgerman, who went to the Great Abaco Island on Aug. 31, said Dorian was the most intense storm he had experienced in three decades of chasing hurricanes. “Thought I was playing it safe by riding it out in a solid-concrete school on a hill in Marsh Harbour,” he said on Twitter. “Thought wrong ... Winds pounded the building with the force of a thousand sledgehammers.”

When the storm’s eye passed over the island,



FREEPORT: Debris left by Hurricane Dorian litters Grand Bahama International Airport. —AFP

Morgerman said he fled to a better-built government building that he found filled with others who had escaped collapsed houses. Food may be required for 14,500 people in the northern Bahamas’ Abaco Islands and for 45,700 people in Grand Bahama, the UN World Food Program said. The preliminary estimates were based on an assessment by representatives of Caribbean nations, the WFP and other groups.

The US Agency for International Development said

on Twitter it was air-lifting critical relief items, such as plastic sheeting, hygiene kits, and water containers, from Miami to the Bahamas. The US Coast Guard said four of its helicopters were assisting in humanitarian efforts. Dorian, which killed one person in Puerto Rico before striking the Bahamas on Sunday, is tied for the second-strongest Atlantic storm to make landfall with Gilbert (1988), Wilma (2005) and the 1935 Labor Day hurricane. —AFP

California boat fire probe begins as search goes on

SANTA BARBARA: Federal safety investigators on Tuesday promised an exhaustive probe into the fire that killed 34 people on a dive boat as many of the charred bodies remained trapped in the sunken wreckage off the California coast or missing in the ocean. After recovering the remains of 20 people from the 75-foot (23-meter) Conception or from the waters where the dive ship sank off Santa Cruz Island, officials said they believed none of the 14 victims initially classified as missing had survived the fast-moving flames.

“There were several other victims that were seen by the divers - between four and six - that are still between the wreckage, but due to the position of the boat they were unable to be recovered before nightfall,” Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown told reporters. “Today, efforts will be made to stabilize the boat so that divers can safely enter it, search it and recover additional victims,” he said.

The five survivors, including the boat’s captain and four crew members, were above deck when the blaze broke out at about 3:15 a.m. Pacific time and escaped in an inflatable boat. A crew member who perished was apparently sleeping below deck with the passengers at the time. National Transportation

Safety Board member Jennifer Homendy said 16 investigators were already assigned to the probe, including specialists in operations, engineering, survival factors and fire analysis.

‘Mayday, mayday, mayday’

The investigators will collect all perishable evidence while on scene for at least a week, she said, but the Conception would remain on the ocean floor, more than 60 feet below the surface, until a site survey had been completed. A few scant details about the victims, who ranged in age from 17 to 60, began to emerge as emergency workers planned to use DNA analysis to identify the remains of the 20 bodies recovered so far. Most of the victims were from the Santa Cruz and San Jose area, authorities said.

“Mayday, mayday, mayday” A memorial to the victims grew alongside a dock not far from where the ship was usually docked in Santa Barbara as members of the close-knit boating community reeling from the tragedy wove flowers into a wood and wire fence and constructed a makeshift memorial with flowers and candles. “It’s just such a horrific notion to think what the people down in the below decks, the people sleeping down there must have gone through,” said Judy Weisman, 72. “How terrifying.” An audio recording of a desperate call made to the U.S. Coast Guard as flames engulfed the boat offered a glimpse into that terror as a man could be heard pleading for help.



SANTA BARBARA: Candles are lit in Santa Barbara Harbor at a makeshift memorial for victims of the Conception boat fire. —AFP

“Mayday, mayday, mayday!” he said in the garbled recording of the call. “That’s a distress, this is the Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles on channel 1-6, what is your position ... and number of persons on board? Over,” the dispatcher answered. “Twenty-nine. Twenty-nine POB,” said the man, using the abbreviation for “people on board” a vessel. “I can’t breathe! ... Twenty-nine POB.” The dispatcher requested the GPS location of the vessel at least two more times but the caller apparently failed to respond.

Marine biologist Kristy Finstad, 41, was leading the dive trip on the Conception, according to her brother, Brett Harmeling. Finstad co-owned Worldwide Diving Adventures, which had chartered the boat for a three-day excursion to the Channel Islands. “No final word on my sister Kristy; however it is likely she has transitioned to be with the good lord,” Harmeling said in a Facebook post on Tuesday. A sea shell inscribed with the name “Kristy” was hung on the wooden fence at the dock. —Reuters

Pentagon frees \$3.6 bn for wall construction on Mexican border

WASHINGTON: The US Defense Department said Tuesday it was freeing up \$3.6 billion in funds budgeted for other projects to build a wall on the Mexican border as ordered by President Donald Trump. Six weeks after being confirmed by Congress, Defense Secretary Mike Esper has signed off on the diversion of funds from 127 “deferred military projects” both inside and outside the country, said Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffmann.

In February Trump, frustrated that Congress would not provide funding for the 18-foot (5.5-meter) barrier, declared a “national emergency” at the border in order to obtain \$6.6 billion from other budgeted accounts for wall construction aimed at stemming the flow of undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America. That included an initial \$2.5 billion from Pentagon spending that was to have been used for programs to combat the drug trade and other operations. Multiple lawsuits against the wall led a federal judge to place an injunction blocking the funding

until he cases could be reviewed.

But in a major political victory for the president, in July the Supreme Court overturned that ruling, allowing work to go ahead. Since then, Pentagon funds have gone toward Department of Homeland Security projects to replace existing portions of wall along the 2,000 mile (3,200 kilometer) frontier, while no new wall has been erected. In addition, the Defense Department has deployed thousands of uniformed troops to the Mexican border to help monitor security and provide backup logistics for hundreds of thousands of detained migrants.

‘Slap in the face’

Building the wall was one of Trump’s central campaign pledges in the 2016 president election battle, along with a promise that Mexico, and not US taxpayers, would foot the estimated \$25 billion bill. With a new election coming up next year, Trump has recently appeared sensitive to charges that no new mileage of wall has been built yet. “When we rip down and totally replace a badly broken and dilapidated Barrier on the Southern Border, something which cannot do the job, the Fake News Media gives us zero credit for building a new Wall. We have replaced many miles of old Barrier with powerful new Walls!” Trump tweeted in July.

“The Wall is going up very fast despite total Obstruction by Democrats in Congress, and else-



TIJUANA: In this file photo taken on June 18, 2019 view of the Mexico-US wall. —AFP

where!” he wrote last week. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Tuesday that Trump’s was pursuing the wall “to boost his own ego” and called it “a slap in the face to the members of the Armed Forces.” While Pentagon chief Esper’s go-ahead signaled a likely surge in new wall building work immediately, the project could face more legal challenges.

Jack Reed, the senior Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, called for Congress to oppose “misusing defense dollars in this manner.”

“Clearly, this administration is trying to circumvent Congressional authority and this ill-advised attempt should be legally challenged and struck down by the courts,” Reed said in a statement. The American Civil Liberties Union meanwhile said it would sue on the grounds of abuse of power by Trump. “The fact that the government sat on these so-called ‘emergency funds’ for seven months further confirms that this is nothing but an unlawful power grab,” said ACLU staff attorney Dror Ladin. —AFP

US judge consults residents on drug kingpin’s early release

WASHINGTON: Washington residents, called on to participate in an extraordinary poll, appeared divided over whether to free early a drug kingpin accused of fueling the crack epidemic in the nation’s capital during the 1980s. Speaking at community forums, online or by phone line, 243 people opposed reducing Rayful Edmond’s sentence, 239 said they were in favor of it, and 28 people were unsure, according to results sent Friday to the judge presiding over the case.

Widely considered the face of Washington’s crack epidemic, Edmond was given a life sentence in 1990 for having overseen a network of 150 drug dealers. Each month, the network imported nearly a ton of Colombian cocaine into the city, turning a revenue of nearly \$10 million. Some 30 homicides have also been attributed to Edmond’s organization, but the extravagant kingpin was never directly implicated in any of the cases.

Despite the seriousness of the accusations against him, federal prosecutors in February asked that his sentence be reduced, due to his cooperation in multiple criminal investigations since the end of the 1990s. In an unprecedented move, the judge presiding over the case requested that Washington seek feedback from city residents, to help inform the ultimate decision. “I haven’t heard of that before,” said Mark Osler, a law professor at the University of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota.

Edmond “played such a big role in such terrible events in the community history that the judge probably feared there could be an outrage,” said Osler, a former federal prosecutor. In the collected responses, multiple people highlighted the suffering that Edmond caused in Washington’s primarily black neighborhoods.

“Crack destroyed families, kids were abandoned, sold, left in dirty, filthy apartments, and professional people lost their jobs, blue collar, welfare moms... Sad cases,” said one survey participant who was cited in the formal results summary. “Rayful will answer for all of his wrongdoing,” the participant added. But others pointed out that the charismatic dealer, known for his flashy fashion sense and lavish lifestyle, was also an icon in his neighborhood, where he would pay the rent or for meals of poorer residents.

In 1996, Edmond was sentenced to an additional 30 years for dealing drugs while in prison. It was only then he turned on his former associates and began cooperating with authorities. Many media outlets speculated it was to obtain an early release for his mother, who was also arrested for her involvement in his drug network. —AFP

International

'Close friends' Putin and Modi vow to boost military, trade ties

'With each meeting with President Putin, we get closer and our relationship grows'

VLADIVOSTOK: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised his "close friend" Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday as the pair said they would work to boost military, trade and energy ties. The leaders met on the first day of Russia's economic forum in the Pacific coast city of Vladivostok, an annual event since 2015 as Moscow looks to bolster relations with Asia amid tensions with the West.

"I'm very grateful to my close friend Vladimir Putin for this opportunity," Modi said at a press conference following talks and a tour of a naval shipyard. "We have reached a new stage in collaboration," he said, adding that the pair discussed "unprecedented" mutual investment in oil and gas industries. A joint statement called for cooperation in military and technological spheres, with the possibility of creating joint ventures in India to develop and manufacture civilian aircraft. It also called for a reorganization of the UN Security Council to reflect the "global realities" of a multipolar world.

For his part, Putin hailed his "great friend, Mr Modi" and said India was "our

strategic partner." "Special attention was paid to trade and economic cooperation in the talks," he said, though details of major trade deals were not immediately announced. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was also to visit Vladivostok, along with Mongolian President Khaltmaa Battulga and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

But Putin was spending most of his time yesterday with Modi, who in an interview ahead of the meeting spoke of the "special chemistry" he shared with the Russian leader. "With each meeting with President Putin, we get closer and our relationship grows," he told the newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta. Modi pointed out that mutual ties also extend to nature, as every year "Siberian cranes migrate to my home state Gujarat". The Indian leader said he wanted to discuss tiger conservation with Putin, a lover of big cats. After shaking hands warmly on Modi's arrival, the two men boarded a Russian navy patrol ship and headed to the Zvezda shipyard about 40 kilometres (25 miles) across a bay from Vladivostok.

Arms deals

India is a key client for Russia's arms industry and trade between the two countries amounted to approximately \$11 billion in 2018. Russia and India in 2015 signed a \$1 billion agreement to jointly make Kamov Ka-226 military helicopters, part of the "Make in India" initiative to encourage foreign companies to manufacture their products there. But the deal has been pushed back repeatedly.

A major global arms importer looking to modernize its armed forces, India is keen to produce more on its own soil, and in March launched a joint venture with Russia to manufacture AK-203 assault rifles. Rostec, the umbrella corporation that controls Kamov, is "hopeful" that the summit can kickstart the helicopter project, its director for international cooperation, Viktor Klodov, said last week. India last year purchased the Russian S-400 advanced air defense systems for over \$5 billion, with deliveries to be made by 2023, defying US warnings of sanctions on countries buying Russian arms. — AFP



VLADIVOSTOK: Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) shakes hands with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a joint press conference ahead of the Eastern Economic Forum. — AFP

S Africa and Nigeria tighten security after xenophobic attacks

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa and Nigeria stepped security yesterday after deadly attacks on foreign-owned stores in Johannesburg triggered reprisal assaults on South African businesses in Nigerian cities. The centre of Johannesburg and the impoverished suburb of Alexandra were calm as police stepped up patrols following two days of looting, AFP reporters saw.

Shops cautiously began to open again, as some residents sifted around in wrecked stores, rummaging for food and anything usable. Amid mounting concern for relations between South Africa and its neighbors and Nigeria — the continent's most populous market — President Cyril Ramaphosa reiterated his condemnation of the violence.

"We face a huge challenge. A number of people (are) taking the law into their own hands," he said in Cape Town, ahead of a three-day meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) due to be attended by 15 African leaders. "Taking action against people of other countries is not right," he said. "South Africa is home for all. We are not the only country that has become home for people fleeing." Five people, most of them South Africans, have been killed and at least 289 have been arrested since the violence flared on Sunday.

Dozens of shops have been destroyed in Johannesburg and nearby Pretoria, the country's political capital. Trucks suspected of being driven by foreigners have also been torched in the southeastern province of



ABUJA: A man tries to set a bonfire on the road during a demonstration and attacks against South Africa's owned shops. — AFP

KwaZulu-Natal. South Africa is a major destination for economic migrants from neighboring Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. But others come from much farther away, including South Asia and Nigeria. The influx has led to sporadic outbreaks of violence against foreign businesses, sparked by the perception that jobs are being taken away from South Africans.

In 2008, xenophobic violence left 62 dead, while in 2015, seven people were killed in attacks in Johannesburg and Durban. But the latest rash of attacks has sparked particular concern. It comes against a background of persistently grim news about the economy. Nearly one in three of South Africans are unemployed.

Nigerian anger

In Nigeria, police yesterday said security

had been strengthened around South African businesses after apparent reprisal attacks in several cities against stores operated by the supermarket chain Shoprite, the telecoms giant MTN and other firms. But in the capital Abuja, a crowd of more than 100 demonstrators clashed with police outside a shopping mall which has a Shoprite store.

They burned tyres and hurled rocks before being repelled by a dozen police, an AFP journalist saw. Nigerian celebrities also took to social media in outrage, with music star Burna Boy leading calls for a boycott of South Africa while fellow stars Teni the Entertainer and Davido condemned the violence. On Tuesday, Nigeria summoned the South African ambassador for talks and said President Muhammadu Buhari was sending an envoy to convey his displeasure to Ramaphosa. — AFP

Migrants deplore conditions in new Greek camp

THESSALONIKI: Freshly transferred from a packed camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, some migrants say conditions in their new home on the mainland are even worse. "We left Moria hoping for something better," said Sazan, a 20-year-old Afghan, referring to the main camp on Lesbos. "And in the end, it's worse." Sazan is one of around 1,000 Afghans ferried in from Lesbos — where conditions had become increasingly unsanitary and unsafe — to the mainland.

After six months of what he described as "hell" in Moria, Sazan said he had hoped for better. But at the Nea Kavala camp near the major northern port city of Thessaloniki, new arrivals complain of lack of access to basics such as water and electricity, he said. Staff at the camp are struggling to find enough tents and to put basic facilities in place. There were currently only 200 tents for 1,000 people, a source at the citizen protection ministry told AFP. Other migrants ferried off Lesbos would be transferred to other camps, the source said.

This ministry had taken over responsibility for migrants after new conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis did away with the migration policy ministry after taking office in July. But a summer surge in arrivals took the government by surprise, as migrants made the crossing to the Greek islands that sit in the Aegean Sea just miles from the Turkish mainland. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said the island of Lesbos was sheltering nearly 11,000 people



NEA KAVALA: Migrants fill bottles with drinking water at Nea Kavala refugee camp, near the city of Kilkis, northern Greece, on September 3, 2019. — AFP

at the end of August — four times the capacity of its camps.

Tougher measures

"We thought Moria was the worst thing that could happen to us," said Mohamed Nour, as he tried to settle his three children into a makeshift tent at the Nea Kavala camp. "They told us it would only be a temporary stay, but we've been here for two days now and the conditions aren't good," the 28-year-old said. The ministry has promised to transfer the migrants to other camps by the end of the month. But 15-year-old Tamim said he has heard that before. He told AFP he had already been at Nea Kavala for three months. "They told us the same thing when we arrived," he said. "It was better at Moria. At least we had English lessons. Here, we don't have anything to do."

In the meantime, staff at the camp have been scrambling to get extra tents and toilets installed for the new arrivals. "We need more doctors and infrastructure to meet the needs of hundreds of children," said one camp worker, 35-year-old Angelos. Greece is currently home to more than 70,000 migrants and refugees across its territory.

Rights groups have denounced the response of the new government, which has tightened border controls and withdrawn the right for asylum seekers whose application is rejected to appeal the decision. One migrant, at least, said he was glad to be off Lesbos. Korban, 19, arrived with his family on Tuesday from the overcrowded camp. "At Moria, there was brawling and jostling every day," he said. "It was hell. The only thing left for us to do now is to be patient and keep our hopes up." — AFP

New Italy govt leans left after populist downfall

ROME: Italy's new coalition government will be sworn in today, drawing a line under a crisis sparked by the far right with a more moderate and pro-European line-up. Incoming Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte presented his cabinet after hammering out a deal between former foes from the anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the centre-left Democratic Party.

He said it would work with "intense passion" to revive spirits in Italy, which is plagued with high debt, high unemployment and widespread dissatisfaction over immigration and the country's rapport with Brussels. Cabinets members will take the oath at 10 am (0800 GMT), ushering in a new political era after the collapse of the populist coalition in August. Luigi Di Maio, head of the Five Star Movement (M5S), will be foreign minister, while Roberto Gualtieri from the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) has been given the finance post in the eurozone's third largest economy.

At just 33 years old, Di Maio will be the youngest foreign minister in Italy's history. The 21-member cabinet will have seven women ministers. Gualtieri, who has chaired the European Parliament's committee on economic and monetary affairs for the past five years, will have to move fast to deal with Italy's most pressing issue — the upcoming budget.

Conte gave the interior portfolio to Luciana Lamorgese, a former Milan security chief, while Lorenzo Guerini,

former head of the parliamentary intelligence services oversight committee COPASIR, will be defence minister. The M5S and PD agreed to put aside their differences to prevent the country heading to the polls after strongman Matteo Salvini pulled his far-right League from government last month while MPs were mostly at the beach.

The new coalition will have to be approved by both houses of parliament, possibly by the end of the week, to ensure it has a majority. The small left-wing Free and Equals party is expected to offer its support. Conte — who had been a compromise prime minister for the League-M5S coalition — will continue in the top job. Italian markets have welcomed the new government, with Milan's FTSE Mib up nearly 1.7 percent after the announcement. The spread between Italy's bond yields and those of rock-solid Germany also narrowed to 146 from 158, indicating investor confidence over the political outlook.

'Tricky'

But the road to a deal has been rocky, with bickering over posts and the government program, and political observers have warned that the nascent coalition may not run its full course to 2023. Italy is notorious for rapid political turnover: Conte's new government will be the 67th in just 73 years. "Governing will be trickier than agreeing a coalition," Berenberg economist Florian Hense said in a note. "The upstart Five Stars have been the bane of the established PD for the past six years. Conte's ability to broker compromises between the parties will be even more crucial than it was for his previous coalition," he said. The government's first challenge will be submitting the 2020 budget to parliament by the end of September, and then to Brussels by October 15. — AFP

Guatemala's UN anti-corruption body shuts

GUATEMALA CITY: UN anti-corruption prosecutors pulled the curtain down on more than a decade of high-profile investigations in Guatemala when its mandate ended Tuesday, heightening fears of a return to impunity in the Central American country. President Jimmy Morales sparked an international outcry in January when he announced he would not renew the mandate of the UN-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala.

The body, known by its Spanish acronym CICIG, has been in the eye of the storm since it began investigating Morales' own family for corruption. "Guatemalans are witnessing the exit of CICIG, which is due to pressure from people from dark sectors," said Eleonora Muralles, head of a victims' group. "It investigated those powers that were previously hidden and now are unmasked, belonging to economic elites that were untouchable here. Now they want to reverse the work so that there be no more investigations," said Muralles, president of the association of Families and Friends against Crime and Kidnapping.

Alvaro Montenegro, a member of the Alliance for Reforms collective, said CICIG "touched the heart of impunity and corruption" in Guatemala, by targeting "characters who have very strong

economic power." CICIG was set up in 2007 to investigate organized crime groups, which have gained influence since the end of the country's armed conflict in the 1990s.

'Decisive contribution'

UN chief Antonio Guterres paid tribute in a statement Tuesday, saying it "made a decisive contribution to strengthen the rule of law as well as investigation and prosecution capacities in Guatemala." In its final report, CICIG said it had dismantled 70 criminal structures, brought 600 people to trial and obtained 400 convictions since it began operations in 2007.

In its most high-profile case, charges were filed in 2015 against former president Otto Perez Molina and his wife Roxana Baldetti in a massive customs corruption scandal known as La Linea. Baldetti was jailed for 15 years in 2018 while Perez remains in pre-trial detention. Another former president, Alvaro Colom, was arrested in February over allegations related to graft in the public transport system.

His ex-wife Sandra Torres, defeated in last month's presidential elections, was placed under investigation Monday as part of a probe dating back to 2015. President-elect Alejandro Giammattei, who will replace Morales in January, has said CICIG will be replaced by a government anti-corruption commission with international funding. Morales in January said the UN-backed body had become "a threat to peace" in Guatemala. "CICIG gave us good experiences and ones that were not so good," Giammattei said Tuesday. — AFP

International

North Korean defector mothers struggle in vastly different South

‘Life in South Korea was the complete opposite of what I had expected’

SEOUL: When Lim reached South Korea, she thought she had left behind the miseries of poverty and an unwanted marriage for a better life with her daughter. She is one of more than 33,000 North Koreans — the vast majority of them women — who have fled to the South from hardship and repression in their homeland, where the Kim dynasty has ruled with an iron fist for three generations and stands accused of widespread human rights abuses.

The transition to a radically different, democratic and capitalist society — while juggling work, school and motherhood — is not easy. “Life in South Korea was the complete opposite of what I had expected,” Lim said. Nine years after arriving she still struggles to make ends meet, one of hundreds of North Korean single mothers in similar situations. Their plight was highlighted by the case of Han Sung-ok, who had difficulties keeping jobs while caring for her epileptic six-year-old son. Their bodies were found in a Seoul flat two months after they are believed to have died from starvation.

News of the deaths sent shockwaves across the country last month and triggered an unprecedented campaign by the defector community urging Seoul to overhaul its aid programme for North Korean refugees. “Han fled North Korea, where scores of people die from starvation, only to starve to death in South Korea,” said campaigner Heo Kwang-il.

‘Vicious cycle’

The vast majority of North Korean migrants go first to neighbouring China before making their way to the South. As the oldest daughter, Lim — who asked to be identified by her surname only — left home at 24 to provide for her family but like many others was trafficked and sold to an abusive Chinese man, with whom she had a child. After four years of what she described as “imprisonment”, Lim ran away with her toddler

daughter to Seoul.

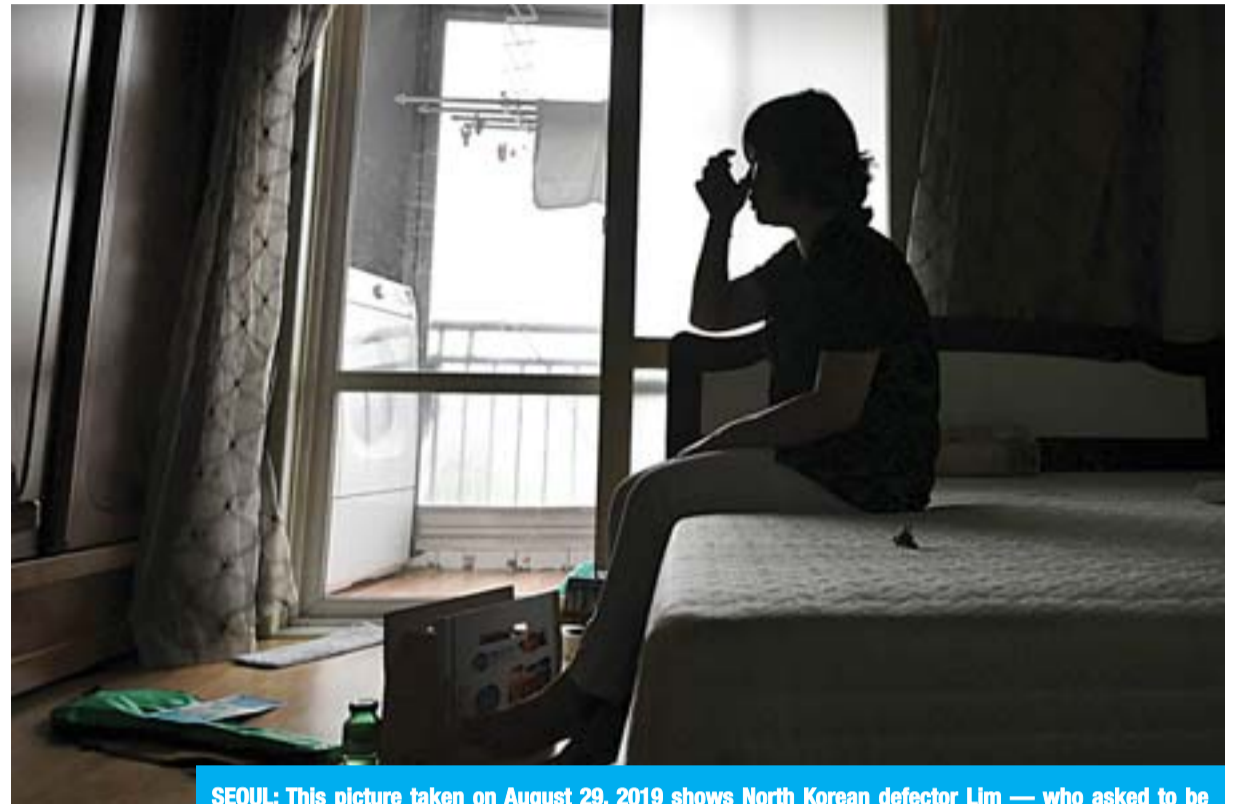
At first, she took odd jobs but with no one to help look after her daughter, Lim was forced at one point to put her into care and contemplated suicide, tormented by the guilt of not being able to provide fully for her child or her family in the North. At times she doubted her decision. “Sometimes, I wanted to go back to North Korea,” she told AFP in her tiny flat. Nowadays, she works as a waitress and is sometimes able to send money to her family in the North via intermediaries, and has no regrets — but it has taken time.

Life in South Korea is riddled with cultural and economic challenges for all new arrivals from its neighbor — the two have been divided since the Korean War fighting stopped in 1953. But single mothers face further complications without a family support network. “When they have to take care of a child, they end up seeking part-time, unstable jobs,” said Kim Sung-kyung, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies. “This starts a vicious cycle that holds them back from adjusting financially or finding stability.”

‘Korean Dream’

The South Korean government provides newly arrived defectors a lump sum of around 8 million won (\$6,600) to help them settle. They can seek additional aid but some give up, saying the system is too complex — especially if their education in the North has left them with limited literacy. Media reports say Han had sought help but was turned back by a district official who demanded legal papers to prove her status, which she could not provide.

“People come to the democratic South with the ‘Korean Dream’” but many end up suffering from depression and other illnesses, said Lee Na-kyung, a defector activist for single parents and people with disabilities from the North. Lee arrived with her husband — who has a disability — and their son in 2006



SEOUL: This picture taken on August 29, 2019 shows North Korean defector Lim — who asked to be identified by her surname only — speaking during an interview with AFP at her apartment. —AFP

but was soon homeless after spending all their money on medical treatment. She calls herself a “rare success story”, saying her aggressive personality helped her settle in her new home, where she first worked as a gas meter reader and later became a humanities instructor.

The state has a pervasive role in North Korean soci-

ety, where authorities impose extensive controls over individuals’ lives, in marked contrast to the more individualistic South. Many single mothers who come to the South “have no one to talk to and they feel cut off from the world”, Lee said. “They say even if they were poor in the North, they never felt isolated.” —AFP

Kabul ‘concerned’ about Taliban deal, seeks clarification

KABUL: The Afghan government expressed doubts yesterday about a prospective deal between the US and the Taliban, saying officials need more information about the risks it poses. US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad was in Kabul this week, when he shared with Afghan officials an agreement “in principle” that Washington has forged with the Taliban and would lead to a pull-out of American troops.

The prospect of a US-Taliban deal has caused much concern among many Afghans, who feel sidelined from the process, worry the hardline Islamists will return to power, and see a beaten America selling out their interests in a bid to escape Afghanistan after 18 years of grueling war. Sediq Sediqqi, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s spokesman, said that while the Kabul administration supports any progress in an eventual peace process, it wants to prevent any negative consequences.

Kabul is “concerned, therefore we seek clarification about this document so that we can carefully analyze the risks and potential negative consequences, and prevent any danger it may cause.”

Sediqqi said on Twitter. The statement is Kabul’s first such reaction to the prospective deal, which Khalilzad presented on Monday. Ghani and his government have until now been largely sidelined in negotiations between the US and the Taliban, who see the Afghan president as illegitimate and have insisted on dealing first with the Americans.

Kabul’s concerns build on a position expressed Tuesday by former US ambassadors to Afghanistan, who warned in a joint statement against a major troop withdrawal without a comprehensive peace accord. “A major withdrawal of US forces should follow, not come in advance, of (a) real peace agreement,” the former envoys wrote.

Five US bases

According to parts of the deal made public so far, the Pentagon would pull thousands of its 13,000 or so troops from five bases across Afghanistan by early next year, provided the Taliban hew to their security pledges. The insurgents have said they will renounce Al-Qaeda, fight the Islamic State group and stop jihadists using Afghanistan as a safe haven.

Ultimately, though, Kabul has no say on whether the US and the Taliban make a deal, and can only hope the insurgents honor a pledge to sit down with the Afghan government to build a separate



KABUL: Smoke rises from the site of an attack after a massive explosion near the Green Village. —AFP

accord. Afghans have been on tenterhooks for weeks while the US and the Taliban flesh out what are thought to be the final details of their deal.

President Donald Trump was due to look at the proposed pact this week. If he and Taliban leaders approve, it could be signed and announced any day. But even as negotiations for an accord have entered an apparent end phase, violence has surged across Afghanistan. On

Monday, the Taliban launched a massive attack in Kabul, where they targeted a fortified compound used by foreign aid groups and agencies. At least 16 people were killed, with more than 100 wounded. On Saturday, the Taliban attempted to seize the provincial capital of Kunduz in the north, and on Sunday, they launched an operation in the city of Pul-e Khumri, the capital of neighboring Baghlan province. —AFP

Indonesia sends back hundreds of shipping containers full of waste

JAKARTA: Indonesia has sent hundreds of garbage-filled shipping containers back to their countries of origin, according to the customs agency, as the Southeast Asian nation pushes back against becoming a dumping ground for foreign trash. About 250 containers seized across the archipelago in recent months have already been returned and authorities are inspecting more than 1,000 others, a customs official said.

Among them, 49 containers of waste seized on

Batam Island near Singapore have been shipped back to the United States, Germany, France, Hong Kong and Australia, said agency spokesman Deni Surjantoro. The shipments were loaded with a combination of garbage, plastic waste and hazardous materials in violation of import rules. “Imports can’t be contaminated with toxic or dangerous materials,” he said. Nearly 200 containers have also been shipped out of Surabaya, Indonesia’s second-biggest city, to the US, Britain and Germany, according to customs data.

Meanwhile, authorities near Jakarta are gearing up to send back about 150 containers while inspecting more than 1,000 others that could contain banned materials, Surjantoro said. Indonesia has been tightening its surveillance of foreign trash in response to

soaring imports. Huge quantities of waste have been redirected to Southeast Asian nations after China — which used to receive the bulk of scrap plastic from around the world — closed its doors to foreign refuse last year in a bid to clean up its environment.

Australia has pledged to stop exporting recyclable waste amid global concerns about plastic polluting the oceans and increasing pushback from Asian nations against accepting trash. Around 300 million tons of plastic are produced every year, according to the conservation organization WWF, with much of it ending up in landfills or polluting the seas, in what has become a growing international crisis. A particular environmental concern are microplastics — tiny pieces of degraded waste that absorb harmful chemicals and accumulate inside fish, birds and other animals. —AFP

Five Chinese tourists killed in New Zealand bus crash

WELLINGTON: Five Chinese nationals were killed and another six injured when a tourist bus veered off a highway and flipped during bad weather in New Zealand’s North Island, police said. Police said 27 people were in the vehicle when it crashed about 20 kilometers outside Rotorua — a popular tourist town in the Bay of Plenty area known for its hot springs.

“Unfortunately police believe that five of those 27 onboard have lost their lives as a result of the crash,” inspector Brent Crowe told reporters. Crowe said two of the survivors were seriously injured and

four were moderately hurt. “This is an absolute tragedy for Bay of Plenty roads, even more so because of the fact we have Chinese nationals, visitors to our country, who have been impacted.” Crowe declined to give details of the deceased, saying authorities were still working to identify them and contact their families in China.

He said the driver was not seriously injured and an investigation into the cause of the crash was under way. He said the accident occurred as the bus approached a bend on a winding, hilly stretch of road. “At the time, the weather was very unfavorable, there was high winds, fog and a lot of rain. The road surface was clearly wet and therefore slippery,” he said. The Chinese embassy in Wellington told TVNZ that ambassador Wu Xi was on her way to the crash site to help those involved in the crash. “The embassy attaches great importance to the tragic incident,” it said. “Our deep condolences with those who died and injured.” —AFP



This handout aerial photo taken and released from the Phillips Search and Rescue Trust shows the rescue scene of a bus crash, some 20 kilometers outside Rotorua, a popular tourist town in the Bay of Plenty area. —AFP

Nepal media bills undermine freedom of speech: HRW

KATHMANDU: Nepal’s proposed media and communication laws will have a “chilling effect” on its citizens’ right to free speech, Human Rights Watch warned yesterday as it called for the bills to be amended. The government — which is drafting and has tabled bills on media, IT and mass communications — has said the laws are necessary to improve media reporting and discourage disinformation.

But journalists and right activists say they could be used to suppress freedom of expression, with the ruling party showing less and less tolerance for dissent since coming to power in 2017. In a letter to Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli published online, HRW said the draft laws as well as previous amendments to the penal code criminalised speech in a way that was “extremely broad” and “unacceptably vague”. “These provisions carry extremely severe penalties, which will have a chilling effect on free speech,” said HRW.

The 10-page letter included a detailed analysis by the rights body on how the amendments and bills “violate international standards on upholding the right to free speech and expression”. If passed in their current form, the laws would “undermine the freedoms that Nepalis fought so hard to achieve” HRW’s South Asia director Meenakshi Ganguly said in a statement. One proposed piece of legislation, the Media Council Bill, gives the government regulator the power to fine reporters and editors up to a million rupees (\$8,600) for violating its code of conduct.

It was tabled in parliament only after an agreement was reached with Nepal’s journalist federation to amend problematic clauses. There was no immediate response from the government to the HRW letter. Several journalists, artists and regular citizens have been arrested for online postings or for expressing their political beliefs. In June, a comedian was detained after a director filed a case against his film review. —AFP

Singapore begins election processes

SINGAPORE: Singapore’s next general election could be just months away, with the government announcing yesterday that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had formed a panel to review electoral boundaries, an initial step towards calling a vote. Lee, the son of Singapore’s founding father Lee Kuan Yew, has held power since 2004 and is widely expected to step down after elections that must take place by early 2021.

The impending elections come as Singapore slashed its full-year economic growth forecast with global conditions worsening. Data last month confirmed Singapore’s slowest growth rate in a decade amid mounting fears of recession in the wealthy city-state. “The current administration has been actively thinking about not just short-term issues but also long-term challenges that the economy faces,” said Jeff Ng, an economist at Continuum Economics.

Lee’s People’s Action Party (PAP) has dominated politics over the five decades since the republic’s independence, winning all elections with significant majorities. In the last election, in 2015, the PAP won about 69.9 percent of the vote, an improvement on its worst-ever showing of 60.1 percent in the previous election in 2011. —Reuters

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief
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COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
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Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Head of the Lega Nord (Northern League) party and former Italy's Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini (center) gestures on stage as he gives a speech during a party rally in Conselve, near Padua. —AFP

Tech tools can lead fight against modern slavery: UN expert

From tracing ill-gotten gains back to their source to spotting illegal factories, technology will be key in beating slavery as a fragmenting workplace leaves many more at risk, the United Nations leading expert on slavery said yesterday. With an increase in automation and temporary contracts, billions go without rights like holiday pay or a minimum wage, but the technology which has enabled many of these changes can also be used to beat workplace abuses, said Urmila Bhoola.

"It (technology) definitely presents both a threat and an opportunity," the UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "But the opportunities for using tech as a tool to identify people who are in modern slavery and to assist them are far greater and they outweigh the threat."

Two billion people - more than 60% of the world's workers - are in informal employment, where they are not covered by formal arrangements, such as a contract, or do not have protections like sick pay, International Labor Organization data shows. Those in informal work are known to be at a higher risk of slavery, said Bhoola, as she prepares to present a report on current and emerging forms of slavery to the UN next week.

The number of informal workers is set to swell in coming years, as low-skilled workers are pushed out of more stable employment by automation and others move towards short-term jobs offered through digital platforms, she said. "If we look at the informal economy and the anticipated increase in informal work and more precariousness and vulnerability, then we are very far from decent work and human rights in the workplace," she said.

But even as technology enables some unscrupulous employers to abuse labor rights, it is also helping to identify slave-owners and offer help to those at risk, the South African lawyer said in a phone interview from Johannesburg. She cited innovative tools ranging from a project using satellite images to look out for illegal factories to secure blockchain databases that trace fashion back to the source, and simple apps giving advice and contacts to vulnerable workers. "Those tools can play a critical role," she said.

"Protecting people is about providing access to information - where to go for help, where to go if you have a grievance. If you are enslaved in domestic work, for instance, and you get one opportunity to use someone's phone, what are you able to do with that phone to get help?" Technology is not a quick fix, said Bhoola, who raised concerns that the majority of anti-slavery technology is still being developed and deployed in the West, not in the developing world where the prevalence of abuse is highest.

She called for action to ensure that slavery victims were consulted about new tools, saying those who had experienced abuse were best placed to advise on what help others in the same situation might need. Governments must also step in to prosecute abuses and ensure that businesses face the prospect of "remedy and reparation" if they are found to have committed or enabled abuses, she said.

However, with many police forces facing stretched budgets and slave-owners hiding from view, technology can help show them where to look, said Bhoola. She cited a UN report suggesting that some \$150 billion in profits is generated each year as a result of modern slavery. "If you are actually able to find where that money is emanating from, where it's going and how it is being used ... then you really have a very strong basis for addressing what is essentially a hidden crime," she said. —Reuters

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How Italy's 'Captain' Salvini steered ship onto the rocks

At a closed-door meeting on Aug. 6, Matteo Salvini's advisers told the populist Italian politician he was trapped in an unproductive coalition government and should bring it down. The next day, Salvini told Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte he was pulling his League party out of its ruling alliance with the 5-Star Movement, hoping to trigger an election that would return him to power as the unquestioned leader of a new government.

The League's eurosceptic leader, riding high in the opinion polls thanks to his hard line on immigration, had just made a major miscalculation. Salvini's plan rested on two key beliefs: that Conte would promptly resign, and that 5-Star and the opposition Democratic Party would be unable to bury their deep-rooted mutual enmity to join forces against him, five sources, including the League's economy chief Claudio Borghi, told Reuters.

But Salvini was proved wrong on both counts. Italy's onetime dominant politician, known as "The Captain" by his followers, is now on the verge of opposition wilderness, a mere spectator as 5-Star and the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) form a government without him. A master of galvanizing the masses with his fiery rhetoric and social media savvy, Salvini's dramatic reversal of fortune shows that he lacked a similar mastery of the political cut-and-thrust in the corridors of power in Rome.

Despite this summer's chastening experience, Salvini does still remain a potent political force and could be back - especially if a new 5-Star/PD government proves short-lived. Borghi told Reuters Salvini had been resisting internal party pressure to trigger elections, including from Borghi himself, but eventually relented at the August meeting. "Lots of us were telling him he had to bring down the government, even though we know there were risks," said Borghi, who attended the Aug. 6 gathering.

Bad advice

Salvini's plot to ditch 5-Star and win power alone after months of bickering over economic policies and relations with the European Union, started to go wrong from the off when Conte declined to relinquish power. That was not what Salvini had expected. A senior League source said Salvini's low-pro-

file number two, Giancarlo Giorgetti, an eminence grise who does much of the party's back-room power broking, had assured him Conte would go.

Instead Conte, a law professor plucked from obscurity to lead the coalition government, showed he had no intention of returning to academia. Rather than resign, he demanded to know why Salvini wanted to bring down the government and called for a transparent parliamentary debate. With parliament in recess for the summer break, that meant lawmakers first had to be summoned from their holidays - giving them time to come up with a plan to thwart Salvini's ambitions.

"In order to bring down the government he should have withdrawn the League's ministers from the cabinet rather than just asking Conte to resign," said Roberto Maroni, a former interior minister and Salvini's predecessor as League leader. "He gave his adversaries time to negotiate and create a new government." With Conte sitting tight, the League filed a no-confidence motion in its own government, hoping to topple it as soon as parliament reconvened on Aug. 12.

But the 5-Star Movement and many Democratic Party lawmakers were furious about Salvini's manoeuvring and returned determined to check his sprint towards a snap election. They refused to even schedule Salvini's no-confidence motion - instead giving priority to the debate demanded by Conte. "Salvini miscalculated the timing, he wanted a blitzkrieg but ended up stuck in the trenches," said Francesco Gaietti, head of Policy Sonar, a political risk consultancy in Rome.

Election taboo

Salvini's August gambit was not only mistimed because parliament was closed, but also because it meant any election would have interrupted preparations for a crucial 2020 budget. In Italy, budget season is a drawn-out process which occupies parliament from the start of October to the end of the year. Dissolving the assembly during this period is so taboo that elections have not been held in autumn since 1919.

This handed Salvini's opponents a perfect excuse to resist his election push. They said they had to save Italians from a big increase in sales tax Rome had promised the European

Commission it would enact unless alternative savings could be found in the 2020 budget. If Salvini had made his move straight after a triumph in European Parliament elections in May when the League took 34% of the vote, national elections could have been held in July - avoiding the risk of stalling such a key budget.

"Salvini had two windows of opportunity to go for a vote - either right after the EU elections or in early 2020. This August move was nonsense," said Lorenzo Pregliasco, head of polling and political analysis firm YouTrend. However, Borghi said the early 2020 option was no longer viable because Salvini had been boxed into a corner by a reform tabled by 5-Star to cut the number of lawmakers.

The change, which was due to be passed in parliament in September, would have led to a lengthy process of redrawing electoral boundaries and a referendum - effectively meaning parliament could not be dissolved for two years. Borghi said the alliance with 5-Star was breaking down and there were particular frustrations with Economy Minister Giovanni Tria. He is not affiliated to either ruling party but was keeping the League out of key policy decisions, Borghi said.

He said Tria was ignoring the League's demands for big tax cuts and repeatedly made commitments to Brussels for a deficit-cutting budget which ran counter to the League's line. Even worse, 5-Star's leader Luigi Di Maio had switched tack from taking on Brussels with the League to backing Tria in a bid to undermine the League's constant rise in the polls. "I told him: 'Matteo, you have to get rid of Tria, or you have to pull out,'" Borghi told Reuters.

Enter the old guard

Despite the questionable timing, Salvini's attack may still have come off but for the decisive return of two figures who had drifted away from the limelight: former PD prime minister Matteo Renzi and 5-Star's 71-year-old founder, comedian Beppe Grillo. Salvini was banking on 5-Star's Di Maio and Democratic Party chief Nicola Zingaretti wanting to fight elections, rather than bury their bitter rivalry and forge an unlikely alliance. —Reuters

Colombia's indigenous tribes share secrets to safeguard the Amazon

Sitting in a circle in a wooden shack on the outskirts of Leticia, the capital of Colombia's Amazonas province, indigenous leaders savored powdered coca leaves and tobacco paste as part of an ancient ritual that connects them with their ancestors. The message passed down through their tribes has stayed the same for thousands of years: preserve life. "We've been protecting the Amazon for millennia," said Julio Bombaire, one of six indigenous leaders from different Colombian Amazon tribes taking part in the ceremony.

"Our creators taught us how to take care of our land and live in harmony. We were given a mandate and a responsibility by our creator to conserve life and nature," he said. It is an age-old custom which indigenous leaders urged the presidents of Colombia, Peru and Ecuador - scheduled to meet in the border town of Leticia on Friday to discuss forest fires raging in the Brazilian Amazon - to heed and respect.

The political leaders are expected to explore how best to join forces to preserve the Amazon. The world's largest rainforest is under growing threat from deforestation and fires, which could hamper the global fight to curb climate change. An aide for Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro said on Monday he would miss the summit to prepare for surgery, although he was expected to join by video link.

Colombia's President Ivan Duque has said he wants the country to lead a "conservation pact" to protect forests in the Amazon basin, which is also shared by Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname and Bolivia, where fires are burning too. Indigenous leaders in Colombia told the Thomson Reuters Foundation their voice and participation would be crucial for any regional pact to work.

"The forest is here not because presidents have protected it but because of our knowledge that has been transferred orally from generation to generation. This isn't

Barbed wire and black humor - activists line up for protest tattoos

Ivan Loktev, a young Russian opposition activist, wanted a memento of a string of protests that have drawn tens of thousands to Moscow's streets this summer, and the crackdown that ensued. So on Tuesday, he got himself tattooed. The image, inked onto his chest, is based on a famous 1989 photograph of a Chinese



People walk along treks on the Three Crosses hill the morning after a fire burnt five hectares of the hill in Medellín, Antioquia Department, Colombia. Three men were arrested on suspicion of arson, authorities reported. —AFP

about a four-year term as president. This is forever," said Bombaire from the Muri tribe. "The danger comes from those governments who ignore or do not recognize this millennial knowledge," he said, as others murmured in agreement, bowing their heads to the floor.

'Death by a million cuts'

Countries that are home to the Amazon have struggled to stem deforestation rates in recent years. More trees are being cut down or burned to clear land for agriculture and cattle ranching, along with illegal mining and logging that is

going unchecked, environmentalists say. "How it happens in the Amazon is death by a million cuts," said Laurel Sutherland, a spokesman for the Rainforest Action Network (RAN), a U.S.-based campaign group.

"A road gets put in, then small-scale miners and people come in - they burn a little bit here, then it grows, and then the companies come in and it kind of metastasises," he said. Protection of the Amazon's forests is seen as a vital pillar of efforts to slow global warming because trees absorb carbon dioxide, the main heat-trapping gas, from the air. —Reuters

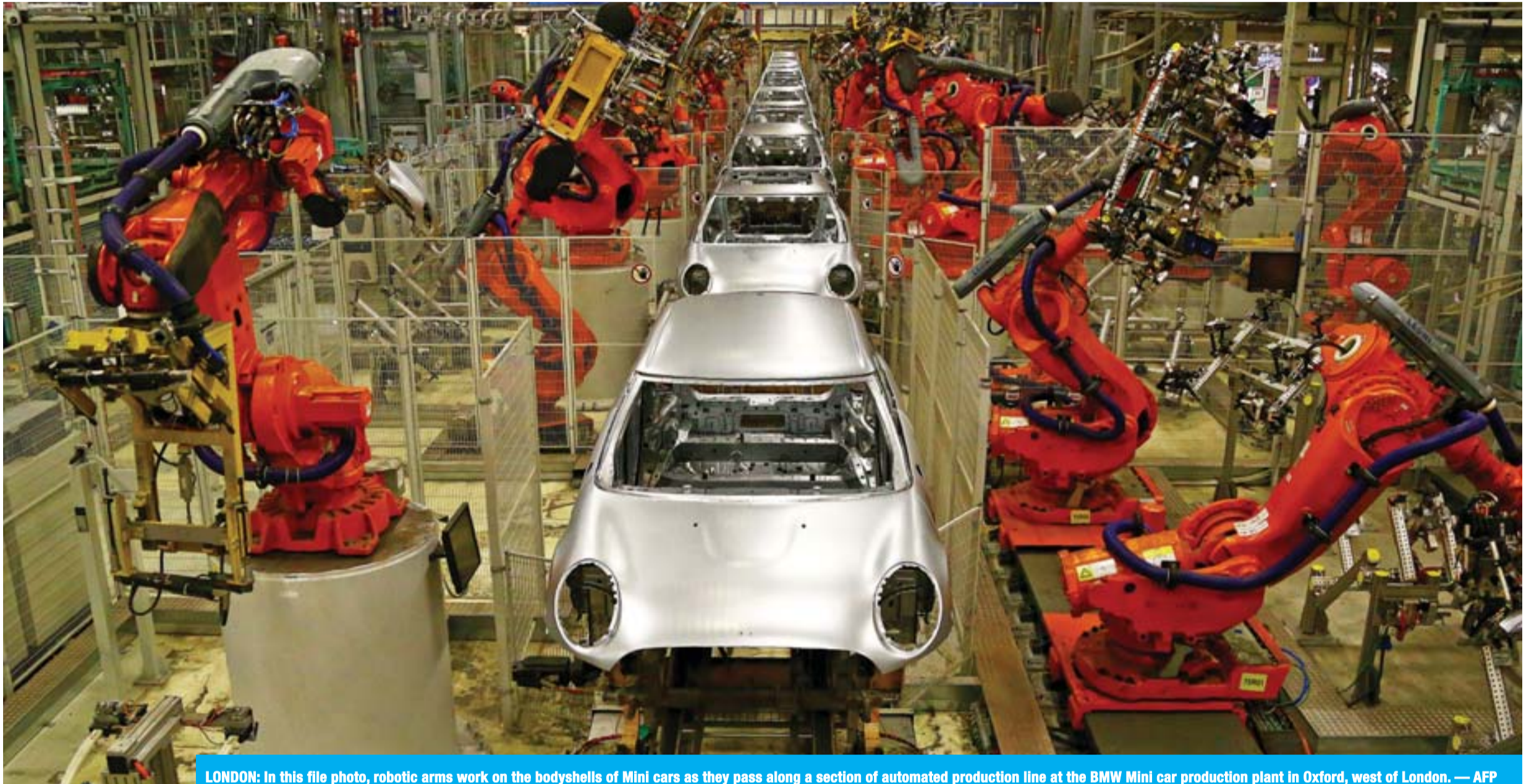
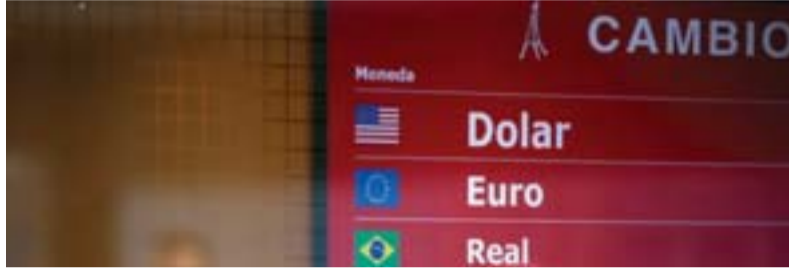
protesters facing down a line of tanks on Tiananmen Square. He hopes it will serve as a reminder that dozens of his peers are facing jail time for taking part in Moscow's biggest sustained protest movement since 2011-2013. "Today I got a tattoo of the Tank Man. (He represents) every person who tries to do something, who goes to the demonstrations," Loktev said. "Young people, the same age as me, who despite all the pressure... refuse to back down," he said. "Right there in the prison cell, they are alone." The rallies, triggered by the authorities' decision to bar a slew of opposition-minded candidates from running in a local election this coming Sunday in the Russian capital, have led to the brief detention of more than 2,000 people since mid-July. The authorities say the barred candidates faked the signatures of supporters needed to take part in the vote, an allegation the disqualified candidates deny. Courts have handed

down jail terms to scores of protesters and activists, with many still awaiting trial. A few hours before Loktev lined up in a busy art gallery to receive his tattoo, two men in their mid-20s received sentences of up to three years for using violence against police. Another received five years for a tweet.

The art gallery event was organized to raise funds for an anti-corruption group run by Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny. The authorities have frozen bank accounts associated with Navalny's foundation as part of a money laundering investigation that he says is trumped up. The gallery exhibited drawings by the politician's brother, Oleg Navalny, produced during a three-and-a-half year prison sentence he served that supporters say was also politically-motivated. Loktev's tattoo was one of his designs, in which barbed wire, black humor and political messages abound. —Reuters

Business

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12 Argentine inflation forecasts jump as uncertainty dents economic outlook**13** Lagarde promises European MPs reform, openness at ECB**14** Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons and Toyota unveil new 'Granvia'

LONDON: In this file photo, robotic arms work on the bodyshells of Mini cars as they pass along a section of automated production line at the BMW Mini car production plant in Oxford, west of London. — AFP

Brexit risk rises as UK business activity shrinks

BoE foresees 'less severe' impact of no-deal Brexit

LONDON: British business activity shrank in August, slammed by weakness in the key construction, manufacturing and services sectors, as the economy suffers from Brexit turmoil, a key survey showed yesterday. The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for all UK sectors dropped to 49.7 from 50.3 in July, according to IHS Markit, which compiles the data. A figure below 50 indicates contraction.

"The PMI surveys are so far indicating a 0.1-percent contraction of GDP in the third quarter," which would mean Britain had fallen into recession, noted Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit. Britain's economy unexpectedly shrank in the second quarter of the year.

The official definition of recession is two quarters of economic contraction in a row. "Companies have grown increasingly gloomy about the outlook due to the political situation and uncertainty surrounding Brexit, adding to downside risks in coming months," Williamson added.

Meanwhile, the Bank of England believes the impact of a no-deal Brexit on the UK economy is "less severe" than previously thought owing to better preparedness, governor Mark Carney said yesterday. In a letter to the chair of a cross-panel committee of British MPs, BoE governor Mark Carney said "improvements in preparedness mean that the appropriate set of assumptions to underpin a worst case scenario would now be less severe than those used in the disorderly scenario published in November". Rather than a gross domestic product shortfall of 8.0 percent, a no-deal Brexit would now result in "an initial peak-to-trough decline in GDP of 5.5 percent", Carney said.

Unemployment would meanwhile surge to 7.0 percent rather than 7.5 percent, up from a current 45-year low of

3.8 percent. Inflation would still soar to 5.25 percent, but that is substantially less than a previous estimate of 6.5 percent. Carney's update comes after Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday proposed holding a general election on October 15 should lawmakers force him to seek a three-month Brexit extension from Brussels rather than carrying out a no-deal exit on October 31.

Austerity ending

Britain's finance minister announced yesterday that the crisis-torn country was ending a decade of austerity and focusing on investing in growth despite the economic uncertainties of Brexit.

"We can now afford to turn the page on austerity and move forward from a decade of recovery to a decade of renewal," Sajid Javid told parliament as he announced his spending plan for the next year. "We can now afford to spend more on vital public services," he said. Javid said he intends to raise government spending by £13.8 billion (\$16.8 billion, 15.3 billion euros) on health and education as well as putting more police on the streets. "Even with the extra spending, we are still meeting the current fiscal rules," he said.

"While our biggest challenge a decade ago was getting the deficit down, our biggest challenge today is getting our long-term economic growth back to where it was." Britain and most other major economies plunged into an extended economic crisis 12 years ago.

The country was headed at the time by the "New Labor" government of Gordon Brown. The Conservative-led governments that have headed Britain since 2010 responded to the crisis by keeping to strict budget rules that slashed public spending. It has since

enjoyed a period of slow but steady growth now increasingly threatened by Brexit.

The economy unexpectedly shrank again in the second quarter on investor worries over the prospects of Britain crashing out of the EU without an agreement with Brussels on October 31.

Exports to drop

Britain could lose at least \$16 billion annually on exports to the European Union if it leaves without a deal and possibly billions more on trade beyond the bloc, UN economists said Tuesday. In a fresh report, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) found that "a loss of preferences in the EU market consequent to a no-deal Brexit will result in UK export losses of at least \$16 billion" (14.6 billion euros), representing seven percent of its overall exports to the bloc.

The economists said "this is a conservative estimate," since it only takes into account the raising of tariffs from the current zero percent that Britain pays on exports within the EU. "In reality, the losses would be much greater because of non-tariff measures, border controls and disruption of existing UK-EU production networks," they warned.

The UNCTAD economists said Britain's total merchandise exports last year stood at around \$450 billion, and that its exports to other EU countries accounted for about half of that amount. The report was released as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson lost his working majority in parliament ahead of a showdown with rebel MPs over fears he is steering the country towards a no-deal Brexit next month, which could lead to a snap election within weeks. — Agencies

India auto sector sheds 350,000 jobs in 2019

MANESAR, India: The narrow lanes in Aliyar and Kasan villages in Manesar, an automotive manufacturing hub on New Delhi's southern outskirts, would usually be packed on Sundays with migrant workers employed at the nearby plants enjoying their day off, but not anymore. These are hard times for an area dependent on the fortunes of companies like Maruti Suzuki, the carmaker with the largest market share in India, and motorbike maker Honda Motor Co's local unit. The auto and com-

ponent makers in and around Manesar, have shed thousands of jobs.

Nationwide, according to industry estimates, automakers, component manufacturers and dealers have laid off about 350,000 workers since the start of the year, in response to plunging car sales. Figures for August, like July, are expected to show a drop of more than 30 percent, making a 10th straight month of decline. As the crisis in the sector bites harder small businesses in the towns and villages around Manesar, home to one of the three plants where Maruti Suzuki cars are made, have seen a falloff in trade.

"There are already fewer workers in the village and those who still have jobs are either not getting paid for working overtime or are not spending as much out of fear they may lose work and need the money," said grocer Rahul Jain, his shelves stacked with toothpaste and

soaps from fast-moving consumer goods companies like Hindustan Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive and Dabur India. Even sales of products like cooking oil and flour have fallen. On the lower rungs of the service sector, barbers and tea stall owners said they had fewer customers. Shoe seller Subhay Singh, in Manesar's Aliyar village, has days when he doesn't make a single sale.

"My monthly earnings have halved," said Singh, who a year ago made an average 8,000 rupees a day. "I don't know what's happening." In the United States there was an old adage: "When General Motors sneezes, the Wall Street catches a cold."

In India, the impact goes well beyond the stock market. India's automotive industry is the fourth largest in the world, employing more than 35 million people, directly and indirectly, and accounting for nearly half of India's manufacturing output. — Reuters

Lebanese fiscal reforms to rein in public debt, says Al-Hariri

BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri said his government would aim to cut the budget deficit to 7 percent of GDP next year as part of reforms to bring public finances under control and rein in public debt. Lebanon also plans to keep the local currency peg to the dollar which was crucial to move ahead with long-stalled reforms, Hariri told CNBC in an interview.

Lebanon faces another credit rating downgrade and a potential test of its currency peg if the depletion of its limited foreign exchange reserves accelerates, S&P Global warned yesterday. Hariri said the challenge was to prevent a further deterioration in Lebanon's public debt burden, which is one of the heaviest in the world at around 150 percent of GDP. "Our strategy is to stabilize the problem that we have. Most important thing is not to deteriorate more, right?" he said. With Lebanon suffering from years of low economic growth, long-stalled reforms are seen as more pressing than ever to put the state finances on a sustainable path.

On Monday, Lebanon declared a "state of economic emergency", with Hariri saying the government would take emergency measures to speed up economic reforms to help overcome a worsening crisis.

Hariri said after a gathering of senior politicians and ministers that accelerating reforms would avoid a scenario similar to Greece, which fell into a debt crisis nine years ago and had to adopt tough austerity measures under tight supervision by foreign creditors. Economists and politicians say the big budget deficits over the years have been rooted in waste, corruption, and sectarian politics. "So what we are doing is, fixing our debt to GDP, our deficit and the budget to 7.6 percent this year, we want to go down to 7 percent next year, or maybe a little bit less," he said in the interview aired on Wednesday. — Reuters

Business

Argentine inflation forecasts jump as uncertainty dents economic outlook

Wall St traders pump up Argentine peso as currency controls hit home

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine economists sharply hiked 2019 inflation forecasts and cut their gross domestic product outlook for the year, according to a central bank poll released on Tuesday, following a wave of political uncertainty that beat the local peso down 26 percent in August.

The survey came two days after the government announced capital controls in a bid to halt a run on the peso currency. The controls, which followed an announcement that Argentina would extend the maturities of about \$100 billion in debt, were a massive setback for the government's free-markets reform effort.

Inflation was seen at 55 percent for the year, according to the survey of 39 analysts, up from 40 percent in the same central bank poll a month earlier. The new weakness in the peso, which fell 50.5 percent against the US dollar last year, is expected to lead to rising consumer prices over the months ahead.

Gross domestic product was forecast to shrink 2.5 percent this year, the poll said, versus the previous month's survey, which saw 2019 GDP shrinking by 1.4 percent. The poll was conducted after the Aug. 11 primary election, which triggered a sharp fall in the value of the peso currency when business-friendly President Mauricio Macri was soundly trounced by his populist-leaning rival Alberto Fernandez. Peronist Fernandez is now the front-runner ahead of the Oct. 27 general election. Macri is running for a second term, but his popularity has been beaten down by the poor economy.

"Capital controls imply a full reversal of Macri's reforms," said Alberto Bernal, chief emerging markets strategist at XP Investments in New York. "He did his best to try to change the course of the country, but the situation is dire now."

On Sunday, the government authorized the central bank to restrict purchases of dollars as it burns through reserves to prop up the peso. Fernandez's vice presidential running mate is former President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, a free-spending populist who applied heavy currency controls during her eight years in power through December

2015, when Macri took office.

Her presence on the ticket has caused concern about the return of the interventionist left to power, although the more moderate Fernandez has said he alone will set policy.

"The markets have ZERO confidence on the likely future government," Bernal said in an email. "The hope of the markets is that Alberto Fernandez will prove a pragmatist."

Peso surges

Argentina's peso surged on Tuesday, pumped up by Wall Street traders cheering President Mauricio Macri's capital controls that are aimed at protecting the beleaguered currency. The peso closed 5.39 percent higher at 55.98 per US dollar, traders said, its strongest level in a week after a near record low close on Friday. Country risk, which soared to its highest level in more than a decade last month, also fell. Traders said the central bank intervened to support the peso in the afternoon by selling dollars from its reserves. The bank, which declined to comment, has intervened in the past, selling nearly a billion dollars in the second half of last week alone.

The currency rebound gives some relief to Macri, after a shock primary election battering last month sparked a sharp crash in the country's bonds, equities and the peso, which lost around 26 percent of its value against the greenback in August alone. Argentina's S&P Mervel stock index, however, took a hit in afternoon trading, closing down 11.9 percent at a two-year low in a slide that local analysts attributed to global trade jitters.

"All the markets are in the red and a weakened country like Argentina, with a complicated political situation, gets hits even more," said Hector Scasserra, director of local brokerage firm Arpena Sociedad de Bolsa.

In Europe, the pounding of Argentina's bonds also eased after they had fallen to record lows on Monday, while there were tentative gains in some



An electronic board displays forex rates at a currency exchange shop in Buenos Aires.

foreign-traded bank shares.

Ratings agency Fitch upgraded Argentina's long-term issuer debt rating to "CC" or just barely above default from "restricted default" saying the new rating reflects their view that "a further default or debt restructuring of some kind is probable."

Index provider MSCI said it was closely monitoring developments in Argentina but that the country's "emerging market" status for the purpose of MSCI indexes remained valid for now as MSCI Argentina only held foreign-listed shares. Argentina was included in the emerging markets index in May, potentially boosting inflows to the eight stocks that were added.

Any reclassification of Argentina in the widely followed indexes would first require a public consultation from MSCI. On Sunday, the government authorized the central bank to restrict purchases of dollars as it burns through its reserves to prop up the peso. The currency controls were a 180-degree turn for Macri, a free-markets advocate who abolished capital controls after he came to power in 2015.

It was the government's latest attempt to stabilize the peso, which has lost around 20 percent of its value since opposition presidential candidate Alberto Fernandez emerged as the clear front-runner in the Aug. 11 primary election. — Reuters

Warba Bank to hold Al-Sunbula draw today

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the best investment bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, will be conducting its weekly Sunbula draw number 34 in addition to Sunbula Kids draw today at 11 am in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the bank officials. Al-Sunbula both account and fixed deposits are the perfect choices for customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while at the same time gain the opportunity to win prizes throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than KD 1 million. In the running campaign, Warba Bank continued its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each throughout the year, yet introduce the "Mega Draws" that take place on a quarterly basis to reveal five winners, the 1st winner gets KD 100,000 in cash! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest 2019 Land Cruiser 5.7 VXR. And more, as the last Mega Draw will give away 2 more Land Cruisers! As per the winning chances, each customer will be participating in the draw for each KD 10 in the Sunbula Account. It is also worth noting that the Sunbula Fixed Deposit rewards its investor with both high expected returns, reaching up to 3.5 percent, as well as winning chances. And such investors have full flexibility in choosing the desired tenure and the profit distribution method.

Furthermore, Warba Bank is leveraging on its Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request the opening of Al-Sunbula account in a simple electronic manner without having to visit the branch, through 5 simple steps in 5 minutes. New customers will be able to request opening the account at anytime, anywhere, through the new and unique electronic system used to implement this service. Representatives will then contact the customer to determine the appropriate time to visit the branch to get required signatures, verify the customer's identity, deliver his/her debit card, and activate the account.

Twitter CEO hack highlights dangers of 'SIM swap' fraud

WASHINGTON: Even with considerable security precautions in place, Twitter chief executive Jack Dorsey became the victim of an embarrassing compromise when attackers took control of his account on the platform by hijacking his phone number. Dorsey became the latest target of so-called "SIM swap" fraud which enables a fraudster to trick a mobile carrier into transferring a number-potentially causing people to lose control not only of social media, but bank accounts and other sensitive information.

This type of attack targets a weakness in "two factor authentication" via text message to validate access to an account, which has become a popular break-in method in recent years. Twitter said Friday the account was restored after a brief time in which the attackers posted a series of offensive tweets.

But Ori Eisen, founder of Arizona-based security firm Trusona, which specializes in authentication without passwords, said the rapid fix should not be seen as an answer to the broad problem of SIM swap fraud. "The problem is not over," Eisen said, noting that these kinds of attacks have been used to take over other high-profile social media accounts and for various kinds of fraud schemes.

Eisen said it's not clear how many people are attacked in this manner but that automated technology can create billions of calls that lure people into giving up information or passwords.

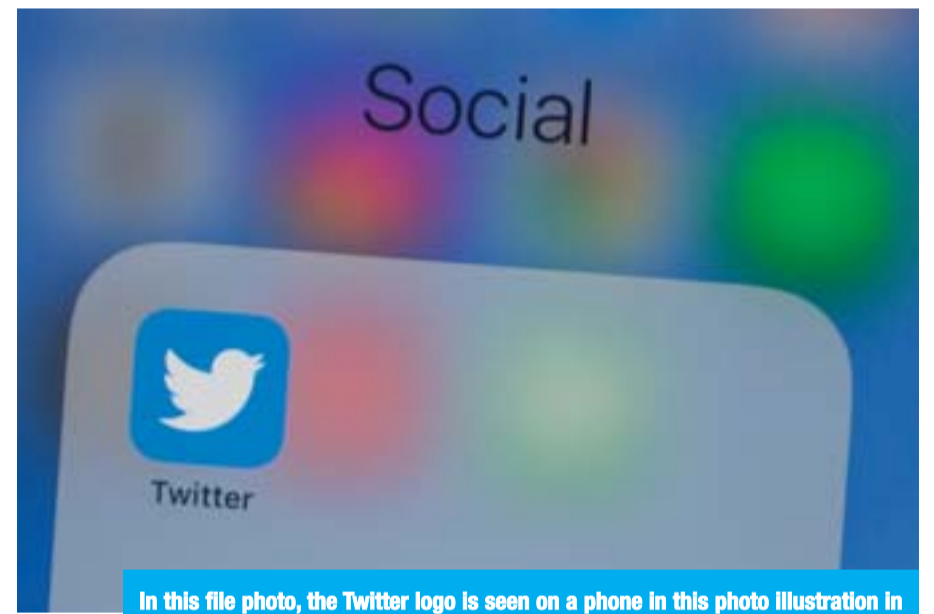
Switching phones, or fraud?

Some analysts say hackers have found ways to easily get enough information to get a telecom carrier to transfer a number to a fraudster's account, especially after hacks of large databases which result in personal data sold on the so-called "dark web." "Mobile accounts' text messages can be hijacked by sophisticated hardware techniques, but also by so-called 'social engineering'—convincing a mobile provider to migrate your account to another, unauthorized phone," said R. David Edelman, a former White House adviser who heads a cybersecurity research center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "It only takes a few minutes of confusion to make mischief like Dorsey experienced."

Thousands of these attacks have been reported in countries where mobile payments are common, including in Brazil, Mozambique, India and Spain. Researchers at the security firm Kaspersky say security systems by many mobile operators "are weak and leave customers open to SIM swap attacks" especially if the attackers are able to gather information such as birth dates and other data.

In a recent blog post, Kaspersky researchers Fabio Assolini and Andre Tenreiro said some cases come from cybercriminals paying off corrupt employees of mobile carriers—for as little as \$10 to \$15 per victim. "The interest in such attacks is so great among cybercriminals that some of them decided to sell it as a service to others," the researchers wrote.

In Brazil, some criminals have taken over victims' WhatsApp accounts, using it to ask the person's friends for "urgent payment," Assolini and Tenreiro wrote.



In this file photo, the Twitter logo is seen on a phone in this photo illustration in Washington, DC. —AFP

'Ripe' for fraud

"This is a pretty ripe avenue for fraud," said Joseph Hall, technologist at the Center for Democracy & Technology in Washington. Hall said some carriers are using artificial intelligence to separate the legitimate SIM card replacements from fraud, but that this has not been universally deployed.

"I would blame the carriers for not having more robust ways to authenticate users," he added, while also calling on Twitter to offer better safeguards. A faked tweet from the president or other prominent person could lead to "devastating consequences," such as a plunge in financial markets, Hall said.

"This kind of thing becomes hard to counteract, because even after the information comes out that it's a hoax,

people may not believe it," he said. The Dorsey case, Hall said, highlights the need for better forms of authentication, especially for large online platforms like Facebook and Twitter where messages can have an impact. This could involve a physical key that plugs into a device or a software-based system such as Google Authenticator, Hall noted.

Eisen said that paradoxically, the push for longer and more complex passwords has led to greater use of insecure text messages for authentication. "The security practitioners must come to terms with the fact that what used to work doesn't work now," he said. "We need to look for solutions that are not so easily exploited by bad guys and are easy for people to adopt." —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.700
Euro	337.150
Sterling Pound	372.340
Canadian dollar	229.790
Turkish lira	54.410
Swiss Franc	310.920
US Dollar Buying	297.400
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.868
Indian Rupees	4.232
Pakistani Rupees	1.955
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.685
Nepali Rupees	2.643
Singapore Dollar	220.640
Hongkong Dollar	38.849
Bangladesh Taka	3.596
Philippine Peso	5.875
Thai Baht	9.985
Malaysian ringgit	77.928
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.308
Qatari Riyal	83.743
Omani Riyal	791.943
Bahraini Dinar	809.620
UAE Dirham	83.013
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.500
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.427

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.224
Tunisian Dinar	110.800
Jordanian Dinar	430.550
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.346
Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd	
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.040
Canadian Dollar	228.380
Sterling Pound	371.180
Euro	336.260
Swiss Frank	303.625
Bahrain Dinar	808.555
UAE Dirhams	83.180
Qatari Riyals	84.420
Saudi Riyals	81.975
Jordanian Dinar	430.115
Egyptian Pound	18.389
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.697
Indian Rupees	4.258
Pakistani Rupees	1.941
Bangladesh Taka	3.600
Philippines Peso	5.833
Cyprus pound	18.090
Japanese Yen	3.860
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.662
Malaysian Ringgit	73.125
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	42.910
Thai Bhat	10.930

Turkish Lira	52.585	
Singapore dollars	218.446	
BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.361522	0.375422
Czech Korune	0.004911	0.014211
Danish Krone	0.040748	0.045748
Euro	0.326670	0.340370
Georgian Lari	0.102185	0.102185
Hungarian 0.000921	0.000111	
Norwegian Krone	0.029446	0.034646
Romanian Leu	0.053707	0.070557
Russian Ruble	0.004553	0.004553
Slovakia	0.009113	0.019113
Swedish Krona	0.027000	0.032000
Swiss Franc	0.302004	0.313004
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.197930	0.209930
New Zealand Dollar	0.186462	0.195962
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.223108	0.232108
US Dollars	0.300600	0.306900
US Dollars Mint	0.301100	0.306900
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002935	0.003736

Chinese Yuan	0.041197	0.044697
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036756	0.039506
Indian Rupee	0.003694	0.004466
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002787	0.002967
Korean Won	0.000241	0.000258
Malaysian Ringgit	0.068858	0.074858
Nepalese Rupee	0.002681	0.003021
Pakistan Rupee	0.001342	0.002112
Philippine Peso	0.005758	0.006058
Singapore Dollar	0.213713	0.223713
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001320	0.001900
Taiwan	0.009589	0.009769
Thai Baht	0.009617	0.010167
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.802070	0.810130
Egyptian Pound	0.018656	0.022016
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.424856	0.433856
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021407	0.045407
Omani Riyal	0.786297	0.794198
Qatar Riyal	0.083037	0.083871
Saudi Riyal	0.080167	0.081467
Syrian Pound	0.001292	0.001512
Tunisian Dinar	0.102042	0.110042
Turkish Lira	0.046147	0.055992
UAE Dirhams	0.082325	0.083153
Yemeni Riyal	0.000991	0.001071

Business

US trade deficit shrinks, but shortfall with China widens

Goods exports increase 0.9%; imports slip 0.2%

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit narrowed slightly in July, but the gap with China, a focus of the Trump administration's "America First" agenda, surged to a six-month high. The report from the Commerce Department yesterday came against the backdrop of an escalation in the trade war between the United States and China. The two economic giants slapped fresh tariffs on each other on Sunday, fanning fears of a global recession. President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned he would be "tougher" on Beijing in a second term if trade talks dragged on.

The Commerce Department said the trade deficit dropped 2.7 percent to \$54.0 billion as exports rebounded and imports fell. Data for June was revised down to show the trade gap shrinking to \$55.5 billion instead of the previously reported \$55.2 billion. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the trade gap narrowing to \$53.5 billion in July.

The politically sensitive goods trade deficit with China increased 9.4 percent to \$32.8 billion, with imports jumping 6.4 percent. Exports to China fell 3.3 percent in July. The goods trade deficit with the European Union jumped to a record high, with the shortfall with Germany the largest since August 2015.

Washington imposed 15 percent tariffs on more than \$125 billion in Chinese imports, including smart speakers, Bluetooth headphones and clothing. In retaliation, China slapped additional duties on some of the US goods on a \$75 billion target list, including a 5 percent tariff on crude oil. Additional tariffs are due in December. The trade tensions have rattled financial markets and triggered a global manufacturing recession. US financial markets were little moved by the trade data.

Exports rebound

In July, goods exports increased 0.9 percent to \$138.2 billion. But with China imposing additional tariffs on US soybeans, beef and pork, exports are likely to decline in the months ahead. China's commerce ministry said in early August that Chinese companies had stopped buying US farm products. A survey of manufacturers on Tuesday showed a measure of export orders received by factories plummeted in August to the lowest level since April 2009. In July, exports were boosted by consumer goods, which increased \$1.5 billion. Capital goods exports rose \$0.8 billion. There were also increases in exports of motor vehicles. Exports of industrial supplies and materials, however, decreased \$1.7 billion, with shipments of crude oil falling \$0.5 billion. Goods imports dropped 0.2 percent to \$211.8 billion. Economists believe imports rebounded in August as businesses probably stocked up on Chinese goods following the announcement of further tariffs.

The US-China trade tensions have caused wild swings in the trade deficit, with exporters and importers trying to stay ahead of the tariff fight between the two economic giants. The import bill was pulled down by a \$1.5 billion decline in capital goods imports. The drop in capital goods imports suggests business investment could remain weak in the third quarter after contracting in the April-June period for the first time in three years.

But imports of industrial supplies and materials rose \$0.9 billion, with petroleum products imports increasing \$1.0 billion. Imports from the European Union were the highest on record in July.

When adjusted for inflation, the goods trade deficit



MICHIGAN: In this file photo, line workers build on the chassis of full-size General Motors pickup trucks at the Flint Assembly plant in Flint, Michigan. A bump in US exports helped shrink America's yawning trade deficit in July. —AFP

fell \$0.7 billion to \$85.5 billion in July. The so-called real trade deficit is slightly above the second-quarter average, suggesting trade could again weigh on gross domestic product this quarter. Trade subtracted 0.72 percentage point from GDP in the second quarter. The economy grew at a 2.0 percent annualized rate in the

last quarter, slowing from the first quarter's brisk 3.1 percent rate. The Atlanta Federal Reserve is forecasting the economy growing at a 1.7 percent pace in the third quarter. In July, the services surplus decreased \$0.1 billion to \$19.7 billion, the lowest level since February 2016, as imports of services hit a record high. —Reuters

Lagarde promises euro MPs reform, openness at ECB

BRUSSELS: After years of hectic crisis-fighting and massive expansion of its role, the European Central Bank must review how it pursues price stability and communicate better with EU citizens, incoming president Christine Lagarde told Brussels lawmakers yesterday.

"I want to dust off our language and do without excessive technocratic jargon to allow citizens... to understand what the ECB is for," Lagarde told the European Parliament's economic affairs committee. Since the financial crisis a decade ago, the ECB has driven interest rates into negative territory and bought 2.6 trillion euros (\$2.9 trillion) of government bonds in an effort to stimulate growth and drive up inflation.

Now, external threats such as the US-China trade war are braking growth, with Germany on the brink of recession and Britain mired in Brexit turmoil. Inflation is still short of the ECB's just-below-2.0-percent target and savers and banks are grumbling that low interest rates are eating into nest eggs and harming profitability. With other central banks backed into similar corners, voices calling for their role and tools to be re-examined have grown louder.

"Given the circumstances" it might now be time for "a review of the monetary framework," Lagarde said. But the 63-year-old former French finance minister and IMF director was short on detail, saying she did not want to preempt remaining ECB governing council meetings before she takes office.

On nearer-term concerns, she reiterated that she would stick to the "same sound prin-



BRUSSELS: French President-designate of the European Central Bank (ECB) Christine Lagarde (right) speaks prior to attend a European Parliament's Committee on Economic Affairs with the Vice chair of Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs Luděk Niedermayer (left) at the EU Parliament, in Brussels, yesterday. —AFP

ciples" as current ECB boss Mario Draghi, seeing "highly accommodative policy warranted for an extended period of time". The departing president is expected to push for a new big-bang package of stimulus measures on September 12 to ward off threats such as protectionism and Brexit. Moves could include deepening negative interest rates on banks' deposits at the ECB and a relaunch of "quantitative easing" (QE) mass bond-buying to boost credit in the system.

Welcome committee

While she has extensive policy experience, Lagarde lacks the economics doctorate of previous heads of the ECB. But mem-

bers of the committee focused more on her gender, with several hailing the fact that a woman had been nominated to the top ECB post for the first time.

The European parliament cannot block Lagarde as the ECB job is the preserve of EU heads of government. But the committee will hold a vote later Wednesday as part of the legislature's consultative role in the appointment.

If all goes well, Lagarde will take office on November 1. She could be pitched immediately into crisis-fighting mode if Britain quits the European Union without a deal the day before—the current default position—with ensuing trade and financial havoc. —AFP

Greek economic growth gains pace, boosted by net exports

ATHENS: Greece's economy remained on the path of recovery in April-to-June, with its pace of expansion picking up from the first quarter thanks to a boost from net exports and government spending.

Gross domestic product expanded by 0.8 percent in the second quarter compared with a 0.2 percent growth rate in the first three months of the year, according to seasonally adjusted data released yesterday by the statistics service ELSTAT. On an annual basis, economic growth accelerated to 1.9 percent from a downwardly revised 1.1 percent clip in the previous quarter. "Second quarter GDP growth was broadly in line with market consensus and in line with projections for a growth

rate of 2.0 percent or slightly higher for the year as a whole," said National bank economist Nikos Magginas.

Data showed that exports of goods and services, up 3.3 percent compared to the first quarter, outpaced imports which fell 0.8 percent, producing a positive contribution to domestic economic output. While government spending also boosted GDP in the second quarter, household spending shrank 0.7 percent on an annual basis and by 0.4 percent quarter-on-quarter. Weaker consumer spending was likely due to households putting off planned expenditures until after the national election that took place in July.

"We will likely see a sharp rebound in consumer spending in the third quarter, given that consumer confidence hit a 19-year high in August," Magginas said. Greece's 180 billion euro economy grew 1.9 percent last year, driven mainly by net exports, with private consumption also providing a boost. Greece emerged from a decade of bailouts in August last year and is now relying on financial markets to cover borrowing needs. — Reuters

Commerzbank, Deutsche CEOs warn of ECB rate cut fallout

FRANKFURT: The CEOs of Germany's two largest listed banks yesterday warned that a further cut in interest rates by the European Central Bank would deal a blow to savers and the financial system while having only minimal effect on the economy. The stern message comes a week before an ECB policy meeting at which decision makers are expected to lean towards a stimulus package that includes a rate cut.

Deutsche Bank CEO Christian Sewing told a banking conference that his compa-

ny's customers had said they would not invest more if credit were 0.10 percentage points cheaper. A rate cut would "only drive up asset prices and further burden savers", he said. Lower rates would help those who are indebted or invested in assets, but the majority of the population would not benefit, he said.

"That divides society further," he said. Over the long term, low rates are ruining the financial system, he added. Commerzbank CEO Martin Zielke backed Sewing's stance.

"I also don't consider this a sustainable, responsible policy," Zielke said. Banks in Germany and across Europe have long complained about ECB policy which requires banks to pay to park their cash at the central bank, hurting their profits. Banks in Germany paid 2.4 billion euros (\$2.7 billion) to the central bank to hold cash in 2018, the German government said in response to a parliamentary inquiry on negative interest rates. — Reuters

Australian economic growth hits 10-year low

SYDNEY: The Australian economy has recorded its weakest annual growth in a decade, official data released yesterday showed, expanding just 1.4 percent in the year to June.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported the economy grew 0.5 percent between April and June compared with the previous quarter, a small increase driven by mining exports and government spending. "The external sector drove GDP growth this quarter, while growth in the domestic economy remains steady," chief economist Bruce Hockman said.

Australia has avoided recession for almost 28 years but yesterday's figures will fuel concerns about the economic outlook with growth falling to its lowest levels since the global financial crisis in 2009. No other OECD nation has enjoyed such a prolonged uninterrupted period of economic growth, in part thanks to a mining boom in the 2000s on the back of strong demand for resources from China.

Shane Oliver, chief economist at AMP Capital, said the current risk of a recession "cannot be ignored", with conditions in some pockets of the economy already feeling "recession-like". "With consumer spending



SYDNEY: Shoppers travel on an escalator at a shopping center in Sydney on Tuesday. The Australian economy has recorded its weakest annual growth in a decade, official data released yesterday showed, expanding just 1.4 percent in the year to June. —AFP

still struggling to lift noticeably, falling residential construction, moderate business investment growth, the private sector side of the economy will likely remain weak," he said.

The central bank kept the main interest rate at a record low of 1.00 percent on Tuesday owing to subdued consumer spending and a slump in the housing market. Analysts believe the bank could further cut

rates in the coming months to help boost the economy. "It is reasonable to expect that an extended period of low interest rates will be required," Reserve Bank of Australia chief Philip Lowe said. But Prime Minister Scott Morrison was upbeat about the weak data, telling local radio on Wednesday he was confident recent tax cuts would stimulate the economy in the current quarter. — AFP

Facial recognition becomes opt-in feature at Facebook

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook on Tuesday said facial recognition technology applied to photos at the social network will be an opt-in feature. The change that began rolling out to users around the world came as the leading social network remains under pressure to better protect privacy and user data, including biometric information.

Nearly two years ago, Facebook introduced a face recognition feature that went beyond suggesting friends to tag in pictures or videos but could let user know when they were in images they had permission to see elsewhere on the service. Facebook is doing away with a "tag" suggestion setting in favor of an overall facial recognition setting which will be off by default, according to a post by artificial intelligence applied research lead Srinivas Narayanan.

"Facebook's face recognition technol-

ogy still does not recognize you to strangers," Narayanan said. "We don't share your face recognition information with third parties. We also don't sell our technology." People new to Facebook or who had the "tag" feature operating will get word from the social network about the face recognition setting along with an easy way to turn it on if they wish, according to Narayanan.

"People will still be able to manually tag friends, but we won't suggest you to be tagged if you do not have face recognition turned on," Narayanan said. "If you already have the face recognition setting, you won't receive a notice." The move comes amid growing concerns about facial recognition technology by law enforcement and government agencies, and with widespread use of the system for surveillance in parts of the world including China. —AFP

Business

Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons and Toyota unveil new 'Granvia' luxury people mover

Striking exterior and luxurious interior create comfort worthy of a high-end shuttle



KUWAIT: Redefining what premium stands for in the luxury people mover market, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons and Toyota have yesterday unveiled the new Granvia. Designed to provide an exceptional transportation space that addresses the growing demand for high-end shuttles, the new vehicle's elegant design, luxurious interior, powerful engine, and advanced safety features enable customers to travel in optimal comfort while enjoying total peace of mind.

The new Granvia takes the concept of a luxury shuttle to the next level with premium seating for up to seven people, including a standard feature of four leather captain's chairs with footrests— a class first. Its expansive cabin delivers a level of comfort and refinement passengers would normally associate with a high-end limousine, complete with independent rear climate control, adjustable interior illumination, and luxurious woodgrain and metallic finishing, among many other features.

Takuo Ishikawa, Chief Engineer of the new Toyota Granvia, said: "The new Granvia offers more than just efficient transportation: by pairing exceptional comfort with advanced technologies it provides greater value, excitement, and a satisfying experience for drivers and passengers alike. The combination of a high-rigidity body frame with our new 4-link coil suspension delivers superior handling stability, quietness, and safety."

Ishikawa continued: "This is a people mover that is designed to move passengers not only physically, but also emotionally. The new Granvia responds perfectly to changing customer values in different markets, particularly through its lavish interior and four independent rear captain's chairs, which take the comfort of passengers to the next level. We invite everyone to take a ride to experience this groundbreaking luxury vehicle for themselves."

"We are very excited to unveil the new Granvia, a true premium transport solution that meets the evolving needs of those desiring a spacious cabin, unrivaled comfort, and superior refinement. By providing ample personal space, we have ensured that each passenger will enjoy a smooth, comfortable ride and arrive at their destination feeling relaxed and refreshed," said Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation.

"At Toyota, we believe that travel should always be an enjoyable experience, and it was our goal to develop an exceptional vehicle that enhances people's journeys by creating memorable moments to cherish. I'd like to extend my gratitude to all of our customers for their continuous support, which is an endless source of inspiration in our drive to create 'ever-better' cars," Miyamoto added.

Prestigious profile

While conventional luxury wagons tend to strive for an organic, emotional exterior design, Toyota's engineers have created a more prestigious profile that sets the new

Granvia apart. The vehicle's wide body and low center of gravity are accentuated by cladding panels and metallic ornamentation that runs along to the bottom of the rear bumper, emphasizing its low, firmly-planted stance. The bold design is completed by a distinctive chrome garnish at the back of the vehicle, which echoes the front end and merges with the rear combination lamps.

In keeping with this luxurious exterior, Toyota's engineers have created a space with a modern design aesthetic that delights guests as soon as they enter the vehicle. The rear cabin is available with four individual reclining quilted leather captain's chairs with

armrests and power-adjustment for the backrests. Each chair also offers a fold-out Ottoman leg-rest and individual reading lamp with three levels of brightness adjustment. A combination of wood grain and satin decoration adorns the back of the front passenger seats, while the side-trim decorations flow seamlessly to envelop passengers in a comforting ambiance. The subtle, indirect cabin-side illumination perfectly complements the interior, with its positioning at waist level helping to create a calm and relaxing environment. The interior lighting is available in Amber, Clear Blue, or White, and also offers three brightness settings.



- Spacious, relaxing passenger space introduces four captain's chairs as a standard feature - a first in its class
- 3.5-liter V6 petrol engine offers a dynamic and comfortable driving experience
- Advanced preventative safety package reinforces Toyota's deep-seated commitment to passenger protection



accommodating four large suitcases or four golf bags.

Along with the high level of comfort and convenience for passengers, the new Granvia features an array of driver assistance features such as a 4.2-inch color TFT (Thin Film Transistor) Multi-information Display, a 7-inch color multimedia display with navigation function, and back monitor with guide lines. The steering wheel switches can be used to switch between tabs and change various settings. A 12-speaker Pioneer audio system is also available, providing superior sound quality.

Dynamic driving experience

Delivering a dynamic driving experience, the new Granvia is powered by a 3.5-liter V6 petrol engine with 24 valves, incorporating Dual VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing-intelligent), high compression and direct injection (D4-S) to generate a maximum output of 278 hp and 351 nm of torque, which is mated to a six-speed automatic transmission. The semi-bonneted design has enabled the Toyota development team to implement a stiff frame

with a flexible suspension, offering greater stability and maneuverability. The MacPherson strut front suspension and 4-link rear suspension systems have been newly developed to deliver excellent handling and stability, together with exceptional ride comfort worthy of a luxury shuttle.

As with any Toyota model, safety remains a top priority for the new Granvia. High-tensile strength material has been used to achieve Toyota's goal of a lightweight, yet highly rigid body frame. In order to mitigate any impact and minimize risk to pedestrians, energy-absorbing dent reinforcements have been adopted on the hood front end, enhancing its tensile rigidity.

In addition, the car offers a comprehensive array of features designed to protect its occupants, including seven SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Brake Assist (BA), Emergency Brake Signal (EBS), Blind Spot Monitor (BSM), Tire Pressure Warning System (TPWS), and Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), among many others.

Luxurious presence

The new Granvia is available in a choice of four exterior colors that have been specially selected to create an impressive and luxurious presence. Customers can choose from White Pearl CS, Black, Gray ME, and Silver ME. Meanwhile, interior color options include natural beige or black-colored seats, which can be combined with Woodgrain or Black Metallic ornamentation. The vehicle comes equipped with newly-developed 17-inch alloy wheels that further express its elegance and high-quality feel.

RBS bank takes extra hit on mis-selling scandal

LONDON: Royal Bank of Scotland has taken another sizeable hit from compensation for mis-sold credit insurance, after claims surged before last week's deadline, it announced yesterday. RBS said in a statement that it will take an extra charge of between £600 million and £900 million (\$723 million and \$1.1 billion, 660 million euros and 990 million euros) for payment protection insurance (PPI) in its third quarter results.

That comes on top of the £5.3 billion in

provisions already set aside by the bank. The financial services giant will publish its third-quarter earnings, for the three months to September, on October 24.

Britons had faced a deadline to claim compensation for mis-sold PPI that has cost the UK banking sector billions of pounds. Customers had until August 29 to question lenders whether they have had PPI added to credit products such as loans, mortgages or payment cards.

While PPI was intended to cover missed payments, for example if a policy holder lost their job, in many cases consumers were unaware the insurance had been added to a product, while others would never have benefited despite pressured into taking it. Edinburgh-based RBS is still 62-percent owned by the British government after receiving the world's biggest banking bailout during the notorious global financial crisis. — AFP

US rate cut not needed if growth continues, says Fed member

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve will not need to cut interest rates soon if the world's largest economy continues on its current path, a voting member of the Fed said Tuesday. The remarks by Eric Rosengren, head of the Boston Federal Reserve Bank, came two weeks before the central bank is due to hold its next policy meeting. Should steady growth, strong consumer spending, low inflation and wage increases persist, "then in my view no immediate policy action would be required," Rosengren said in a prepared speech.

Markets overwhelmingly expect the Fed to cut rates later this month for the second time this year as recession indicators begin to flash red and the global economy slows amid President Donald Trump's grinding trade wars. Last month, Rosengren and Kansas City Fed President Esther George were outvoted by fellow members of the Federal Open Market Committee, which cut interest rates for the first time in a decade.

In his speech, Rosengren said that, while risks for the US economy were rising, "to date, these elevated risks have not become reality." Unemployment is low, GDP growth remains steady around two percent and inflation is below the Fed's target, Rosengren noted. Meanwhile, Trump's trade wars had hit stock prices and was weighing more heavily on other, more trade-dependent economies in Asia and Europe, according to Rosengren.

The inversion of the so-called yield curve—a widely cited recession indicator that has generated alarming headlines in recent weeks—was likely less frightening than it looked, he added. US Treasuries may have become increasingly attractive to foreign investors as the rest of the global economy slows, helping drive down yields, according to Rosengren. "As a result, this is a particularly good time to carefully watch incoming data to determine whether any policy adjustments are necessary," he said. — AFP

Indonesia plans tax overhaul to make tech firms pay VAT: Minister

JAKARTA: Indonesia is preparing a bill that will make tech firms such as Alphabet Inc's Google and Amazon pay value added tax (VAT), Finance Minister Mulyani Indrawati said.

Such companies will be considered a "permanent establishment" liable for VAT in Indonesia regardless of whether they have a physical office in the country or not, Indrawati said in a statement issued by the Cabinet Secretariat late on Tuesday. The minister said it was "because they have what is called a significant economic presence, although they don't have a branch here," listing Google, Amazon and Netflix as examples of companies to be affected by the upcoming rules.

The VAT rate in Indonesia is currently 10 percent, imposed on most products and services.

Google had a tax dispute with Jakarta in 2016 over alleged tax evasion, including missing VAT payments on advertising revenues, which it resolved with an undisclosed settlement. The Indonesian government has repeatedly said it wanted to make streaming service providers such as Netflix pay their fair share of taxes. Amazon is not currently active in e-commerce in Indonesia, but operates cloud services.

The companies did not immedi-

ately respond to requests for comment. The bill, which needs parliamentary approval, is part of broader tax reforms in Southeast Asia's largest economy intended to improve revenue collection, increase compliance and attract investment.

President Joko Widodo's re-election campaign promise for a corporate tax cut will also be part of the bill, Indrawati said. The corporate tax rate would be lowered to 20 percent from 25 percent starting from 2021, while for companies with public share ownership of at least 40 percent the rate will be 17 percent from 20 percent now, she said. Indrawati said she will also propose removing income tax on dividends obtained from onshore or offshore investments if the money is reinvested within the country. Indonesia will adopt a "territorial" tax regime for personal income tax, a change from the current "world-wide" regime, she said.

The bill will also call for simpler penalties on underpayment and late submission of tax returns, relaxation of prepaid VAT rules, as well as summarize all tax incentives the government currently provides to encourage investment, Indrawati said. It was not clear when the bill would be submitted to parliament for approval. — Reuters



What's On



Jumeirah Group reveals new holistic wellness partnership with Embody Fitness

Jumeirah Group is proud to announce a new partnership with Embody Fitness in its launch of The J Club, a new cutting-edge lifestyle and wellness club, recently opened in Jumeirah Beach Hotel. Managed and operated by the founders of Embody Fitness, an award-winning fitness business established in London and Dubai, The J Club is set to become the premium lifestyle and wellness club in the region. The concept will also include a new luxuriously appointed Talise Spa as well as a new signature restaurant concept, both expected to come on stream later in the year.

Speaking about the partnership and the new launch, Jose Silva, Chief Executive Officer, Jumeirah Group said: "We are thrilled to have partnered with Embody Fitness to launch this wellness destination, leveraging Embody's industry expertise to bring together best-in-class health and wellness facilities and services for our Dubai-resi-

dent members and valued Jumeirah Beach Hotel guests." The new health club will feature a spacious 1,000 sqm indoor workout space with best-in-class equipment and technology.

The J Club also offers three dedicated group exercise studios, six tennis courts, three squash courts, a lap pool and outdoor gym. Members will also have exclusive access to the extensive beach and leisure facilities of the iconic Jumeirah Beach Hotel. James Miller, Founder and CEO, Embody Fitness, said "our ambition is to create a truly holistic and personalised wellness experience - a club where every member can find and set their own path to living fully and well."

The club will offer a wide range of personalised training programmes, expanding further into the fields of sports performance and endurance training, rehabilitation and holistic wellness services. It will continue to

build on the well-established tennis, squash and swimming offerings, as well as greatly enhancing its group exercise programmes and formats. "The J Club will provide an environment that supports and encourages its members to become a better version of themselves through learning, developing and performing better within an inspiring and innovative community" said Miller.

The Talise Spa opening later this fall, will be a new 1200sqm facility dedicated to soothing the senses, with nine treatment rooms, as well as suites boasting private wet facilities, a hammam, luxurious changing rooms, steam, sauna and a terrace overlooking the ocean where guests can linger before or after their treatment. The new Talise Spa will partner with ESPA, a natural skincare brand that combines the wisdom of traditional holistic therapies with the scientific power of the purest natural

ingredients for beautiful skin, as well as H1SPA, a new skincare treatment and method created and mastered by cosmetic surgeon Dr Yannis, for which Jumeirah Beach Hotel will be the flagship location.

A new dining concept by an award-winning chef will also be announced in the coming weeks. "Food is at the centre of people's lives and social experiences and, whilst eating well and healthily is key to overall wellness, this should not be at the cost of taste, flavour and quality ingredients. That is why we are so delighted to be working with a pioneer in the Dubai and international culinary scene to bring a new and exciting restaurant concept to The J Club" commented Miller. The new restaurant, with extensive and beautifully designed outdoor terrace, will give diners an opportunity to enjoy a healthy snack or leisurely meal, carefully crafted with wellness in mind and cooked using the best produce.



Back to School at BSK

This week saw the roads around Salwa 1 waking up to the arrival of students returning to The British School of Kuwait (BSK) for the academic year 2019/2020. Doors opened at 7.05 am where returning and new students alike from reception to year 13, dressed in pristine uniforms, were accompanied by parents, grandparents and siblings. Re-kindling old friendships, students met one-another again after a summer of travelling, keen to share their stories and looking forward to seeing their teachers once more.

Excitement wasn't just limited to the students; parents are always so happy to see their children off on a new academic year and to catch up with other friends that they always meet in and around school. The first day is a very special day for everyone involved. Director Vera Al-Mutawa, Principal Paul Shropshire, Director of Business Development Yousef Al-Saleh and Director of Human Resources Adam Al-Saleh, alongside the team of teaching staff and assistants have been busily preparing for the arrival of the students.

Anybody walking around the BSK campus would not fail to recognize the major developments, with upgraded and reconfigured classrooms, state of the art Science labs and an overall feel of the school looking like a new pin. Recognition for BSK's Facilities Team is well deserved. Head Teachers Emma Bowie, Nicholas Smith, Mark Brisbane and Scott Bryant and the teaching staff welcomed the students to their classrooms and the first day was spent familiarizing everyone with their new timetables and procedures.



Parents welcomed the changes, especially in car access to the campus, with a state of the art one-way system with ample parking that already has made a huge difference to the speed of the daily drop-off and pick-up of students. "This was the smoothest first day ever...it was amazing," commented one parent, with another whose children were joining BSK for the first time saying that he was "so impressed with how efficient and easy the process was." Vindication for the huge amount of hard work put into the planning and improvements made over the summer.

After the initial greetings and registration procedures were completed, the students were taking their first classes and celebrating the joy of being back with their friends in the familiar environment of their school. It is often said that school is a second home and for students at BSK it was without doubt a very happy homecoming.

World Malayalee Council Kuwait province formed

The World Malayalee Council (WMC) Kuwait Province was formed in Kuwait at a meeting held in Sunrise International Hotel Auditorium Mangaf.

World Malayalee Council works towards an international brotherhood of Malayalees, people of Kerala origin, to bolster their cultural, artistic and social uniqueness and give resilience and understanding towards other cultures with which they have to co-exist and interact. World Malayalee Council, the organization working with the Malayalee diaspora across the globe.

World Malayalee Council or abbreviated as WMC was formed on July 3, 1995 in New Jersey, is a non-sectarian, non-political community organization providing a global connectivity, fostering friendship and fellowship among Malayalees across the globe and having several platforms under its umbrella for training, empowerment, service, support and charity.

Objectives

The main objective of this organization is to provide a non-political forum to bring together the widely scat-

tered community of people of Malayalee / Kerala origin and strengthen the common bonds of culture, tradition and way of life. World Malayalee Council works towards an international brotherhood of Malayalees / people of Kerala origin to bolster their cultural, artistic and social uniqueness and give resilience and understanding towards other cultures with which they have to co-exist and interact. One could imagine the huge potential at our disposal, when we understand that World Malayalee Council is the largest ethnic organization in the world spread across 55 countries.

WMC Global Cabinet conducted a WMC Family Tour to Thailand from 09th to 13th August. Same time the yearlong celebrations of WMC Silver Jubilee will be inaugurated in Bangkok Thailand with the presence of the members from all world Countries. Global Executive Meeting also will be held on the same day at Bangkok. The following members are elected as office-bearers of Kuwait Province.

1. Adv. Thomas Panicker - President
2. B.S. Pillai - Chairman
3. Abdul Azeez Mattuvayil - Gen.Secretary
4. Jeral Jose - Treasurer
5. Sandeep Menon - Vice President
6. Kishor Sebastian - Vice President
7. Adv. Rajesh Sagar - Vice Chairman
8. George V Joseph - Secretary
9. Kichoo K. Aravind - Secretary
10. Shubin Jose - Joint Treasurer
11. Jossy Kishor - Convenor (Ladies wing)



NOTICE

The TIES Center invites you to another session on the stories of prophets on September 5, at 7pm. In this class, we will examine the complaints of Musa's followers, how he comforted them, and their eventual response. We will also discuss the

clear proofs shown to Pharaoh, his cousin's insistent admonitions and methods, and Pharaoh's claim of divinity. Finally, we will explore why Pharaoh ordered a tower to be built, what happened after that, the things Pharaoh accused Musa of, and how to respond to that. Come and learn more about the life and times of Prophet Musa (AS) in a serene and relaxed environment.



American German School welcomed its students at the beginning of the new school year. The school administration confirmed that it will continue to provide the best educational services to its students in all fields in order to raise their academic level. It is worth mentioning that the American German School adopts the American curriculum in addition to teaching English and Arabic as the main languages.

Health

Lesotho taps into booming medical marijuana industry

First country in Africa to allow the cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes

MARAKABEL, Lesotho: Vast white greenhouses sit high up on the slopes of Lesotho's Marakabei town, hidden from view. It's not fruit or vegetables, however, growing under the 18 plastic covers, but thousands of cannabis plants. The cannabis is grown legally by the Lesotho-based company Medigrow and is regulated by the government. "We have three rows that contain 1,200 plants each. That's 3,600 plants across the whole structure," said Medigrow's head of production Albert Theron, gazing proudly over the crop.

In 2017, the tiny landlocked kingdom of 2.1 million people decided to tap into the booming medical marijuana industry, becoming the first country in Africa to allow the cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes. In order to meet legal standards, most traces of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — the main psychoactive constituent responsible for marijuana's intoxicating effects—are removed from the seeds. The remaining medical version is primarily made of the non-psychoactive substance, cannabidiol (CBD), and can only be 0.03 percent THC.

Investing in green gold

Medigrow has invested \$19.3 million in cannabis-growing facilities around the country's capital, Maseru. A heliport is also being built to ensure the cannabis—commonly referred to as "green gold"—is shipped safely

and swiftly, said head of operations Relebohile Liphoto. The investment is spurred by the industry's positive outlook. The global market for medical cannabis is currently estimated at \$150 billion and could reach \$272 billion in 2028, according to Barclays Bank. "At the moment we have almost 2,000 kilos of biomass and we are going to produce more than 1,000 liters of CBD oil," said Liphoto. "Depending on the market, we can sell cannabis oil at between \$6,000 and \$21,000 per liter."

Mostly foreign companies

Nicknamed "Kingdom in the Sky", Lesotho is the only country in the world whose entire territory sits higher than 1,400 meters above sea level. Deputy health minister Manthabiseng Phohleli told AFP that the legalization of cannabis presented "a huge opportunity for the country", which boasts 300 days of sunshine per year. "It attracts investors," she said. "So far we have around 10 businesses operating on the territory."

Entirely surrounded by South Africa, Lesotho is also one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 159 out of 189 in the latest UN Human Development Index. Unemployment is high, public services are scant and almost a quarter of the population is infected with HIV. The government charges 30,000 euros for a one-year renewable license to grow cannabis. But the cost is too steep for most locals, and the mar-

ket is dominated by foreign companies, mainly from Canada and the United States.

Basothos miss out

Mothiba Thamae has been growing apples, peaches and raisins on 7.5 hectares (18.5 acres) of land for over two decades. He can not afford the "green gold" license. "We hoped the government would give small Basotho farmers the opportunity to cultivate (cannabis) legally," said the 38-year old, referring to Lesotho's main ethnic group. "Unfortunately they did not." Year-long sunshine and fertile soils make Lesotho ideal for cannabis plants.

Known as "matekoane" in Sesotho, the country's national language, it has been grown for centuries in rural areas. "The first historical trace of matekoane dates back to the 16th century," said Laurent Laniel, a researcher at the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. "The Koena (people) are believed to have settled in Lesotho around 1550 by buying land from San groups in exchange for marijuana."

Cannabis money is a bonus

To this day, cannabis remains an important source of revenue for many small-scale farmers. Shasha owns a corn field in the centre of the country, on which he has also been growing cannabis illegally for around 20 years. "The vegetables feed my family. Cannabis money



MARAKABEL, Lesotho: Cannabis plants grown by Medigrow, a Lesotho-Canadian company that grows legal cannabis are pictured inside a greenhouse located near Marakabei, Lesotho. —AFP

is a bonus," said Shasha. "It allows me to survive and pay for my children's education."

He sells his "matekoane" to a network of dealers like Jama, who smuggles up to 80 kilos of cannabis across the border to South Africa each month. "That yields between 400 and 500 euros," Jama told AFP. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that 70 percent of marijuana consumed in South Africa is grown in Lesotho, making cannabis the country's third source of revenue. —AFP

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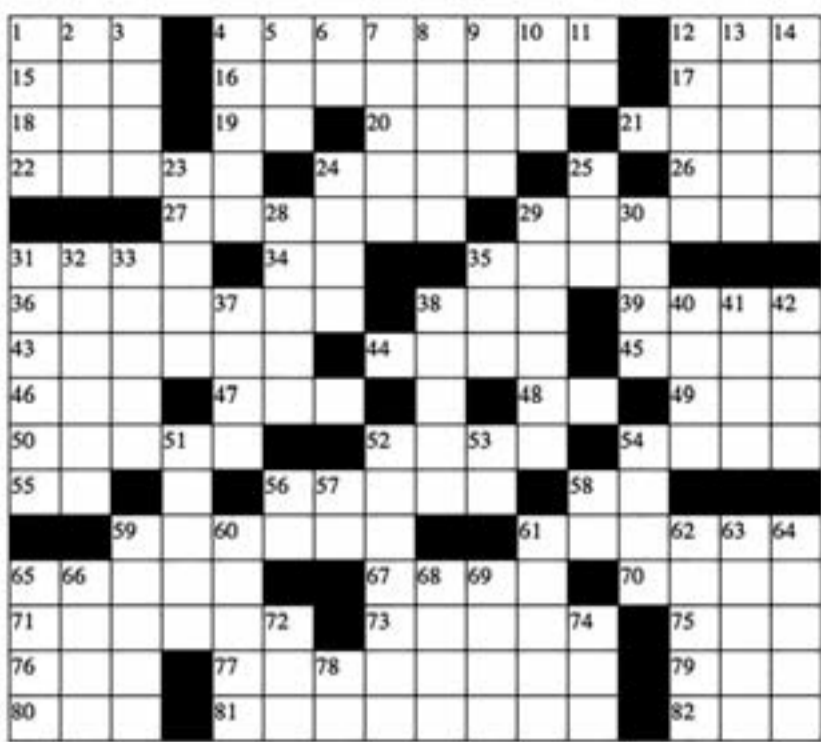
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2299



ACROSS

- A flexible container with a single opening.
- White grape grown especially in the Loire Valley in France.
- A city in northwestern Iran.
- Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
- Medieval artillery used during sieges.
- A type of submarine gun that is designed and manufactured in Israel.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A yellow trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- Make reference to.
- A large number or amount.
- An honorary arts degree.
- A slight amount or degree of difference.
- (trademark) A material used to coat cooking utensils and in industrial applications where sticking is to be avoided.
- A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- A stiff sharp-pointed plant process.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- An industrial city of eastern Poland.
- Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- 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).
- A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
- Capital and largest city of Italy.
- A branch of the Tai languages.
- A metrical unit with stressed-unstressed-unstressed syllables.
- Pasture grass of plains of South America and western North America.
- A master's degree in business.
- (Old Testament) Adam's wife in Judeo-Christian mythology.
- A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
- Tag the base runner to get him out.
- A coenzyme derived from the B vitamin nicotinic acid.
- Being or consisting of or resembling umbels.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- The sixth month of the civil year.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Events may make it easy for you to be original, have breakthroughs and find new solutions to old problems. Independence, originality and eccentricity are to the forefront. You have a burning zeal for humanitarian goals and what is best for a group or a community. With little patience for red tape and superficialities, you insist on getting right to the heart of any question. You enjoy your own life situation and feel especially kind towards a neighbor or friend. Someone may compliment you on your tastes or belongings as you visit with friends in your home later today. At this time of year there are always opportunities to talk about tradition.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

The work you do and the way you take care of your health are important keys to your best potentials now, in many respects. There is a need for focus and careful analysis in these areas of your life. Set up systems and schedules and stick to them! You may experience dissatisfaction with what you have or find around you. Perhaps it is time to weed out the unessential or find help to complete long projects that have become tedious or boring. These things that you get rid of create a space for new and more fascinating things to enjoy. Friends this afternoon bring a give-and-take opportunity into your life. You give and crave to be appreciated for your gifts.



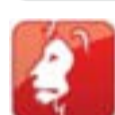
Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may have to excuse yourself from some of the interactions with co-workers in order to get your work accomplished this day. You may feel like talking a bit more than usual, happily becoming lost in conversation. It is certainly a day for thinking and ideas. There will be an urge to communicate more than usual. With your determination to become more attentive to your work, much can be accomplished. Later today there will be an opportunity to exchange information and become more involved with neighbors or siblings. Others may find you especially witty and eccentric this evening. You may have insights or breakthroughs in regard to your own living situation. You are ready for big changes and you proceed with little steps.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You bring a lot of mental skills and understanding to whatever you do and could help others take a more independent approach to their life or career. Some of your friends and even co-workers may seek you out for your psychological insight and understanding. Today may be one of those days where you seem to be spending more time in giving guidance to others than you are in achieving results from your work. You may find yourself in overtime or taking a bit of work home with you this afternoon. Your inner resources and emotions may also be accorded this evening when a young person presents you with some interesting challenges.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Things are happening and your career or path depends on your own ambition and drive, which are strong now. This is the time to get ahead by taking action. Good fortune and plain old luck surround you. You easily make correct decisions and you find the right path to move forward where career and success are concerned. Life's problems seem manageable. On the home front you will be the center of attention as you may have unexpected company. You enjoy entertaining others and can always find some type of refreshment to serve when necessary. There will be an opportunity to trade information and enjoy conversations about curious things. This can be an expansive, creative period—a time you will look back on with fondness.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a very lucky day for making plans. You feel successful. Subjects such as law, politics, education, travel and religion are some of the areas where emotionally charged issues could be discussed. Good suggestions from a guide or other person may be helpful—listen carefully. This is also a time of strong desire—perfect for starting something new or taking care of business. A business partnership that used to work to your advantage now seems less in keeping with your plans for the future and it is time for changes to be made.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Career decisions are straightforward. You make your way through ideas, concepts and your ability to express them to others. You will make career gains by your ability to sense quality and choose accordingly. Helping those who cannot help themselves—and accepting such help if you need it—is an essential lesson now. There is a mentor to be found if you need one and you may have the opportunity to play such a role for someone else. You may find yourself more than a little eager to acquire items. Your current appreciation for just about everything may lead you to overspend this afternoon. Talk to a friend this evening and make plans to exercise together throughout the winter. This is a great way to channel tensions into some physical energy.



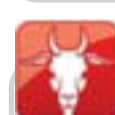
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Outer circumstances are favorable and it should be easy for you to push forward in projects and in other aspects of your life. Things may seem almost magical in the way they work out to the most positive. This is a great time to get things accomplished. Environmental contaminants connected with your work can be a problem and you may be successful in convincing higher-ups of needed changes. You may encourage co-workers to join with you regarding a cleanup project in your work environment. There are rewards! Others appreciate your attention to better working conditions. You may eventually see a domino effect with other businesses around your city where this cleanup is concerned.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your good eye-hand coordination and a sustained effort make almost any task run well. You may feel like relieving some of this intensity with exercising or just getting out and about during the noon hour today. You may even enjoy a bit of exercise with a few of your co-worker friends. You work hard and a break to refurbish your energy is important. This is a period of great mental activity and heightened communication with others. Intellectualism and the exchange of ideas have special appeal.



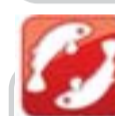
Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

There is a more dynamic and outgoing quality to your lifestyle now. Besting others in the heat of competition and taking on a leadership role means more to you now than in the past. Financial gain is the bright prospect looming before you now, as you focus on how much things really mean to you. There may be a tendency to emphasize the material too much, which could lead to the feeling that the things you own, own you instead. This can be an expansive, creative and even a romantic phase, a time you will look back on with pride and fondness. What a great time this is to reflect and understand your own situation—just how you feel about your place in the world.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You are feeling good and everything in the workplace seems to just fall into place. Your communication skills seem fine-tuned. You are perceptive and sensitive to the needs of others and you are in a good position to teach, guide or just enjoy the special personalities of the people around you. Your mind is ever on communication, how you present yourself and come across with others. It is easy for you to express yourself in a crowd—you are talented. Others could seek you out for your psychological insight and understanding.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your ideas and thoughts may run counter to accepted values: your own or those of others. You may find yourself in a disapproving mood at times. Decisions made now may have to be rethought later. You could find yourself tense. This is a great time to reflect and understand your own situation, just how you feel about the direction in which you are moving and perhaps some changes that may be needed. There could be an opportunity to rise above your own limitations. You will find that when you remove any emotional issues, you make clear and wise choices. You have an open invitation at this time to have special time with someone you love. A relaxed evening with music can provide opportunities for you to loosen up.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Countries of Europe

Find and circle all of the Countries of Europe that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message. Note: IRELAND and NORTHERN IRELAND are separately hidden and do not overlap.

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

ALBANIA	ENGLAND	LITHUANIA	SAN MARINO
ANDORRA	ESTONIA	LUXEMBOURG	SCOTLAND
ARMENIA	FINLAND	MACEDONIA	SLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA	FRANCE	MALTA	SLOVENIA
AZERBAIJAN	GEORGIA	MOLDOVA	SPAIN
BELARUS	GERMANY	MONACO	SWEDEN
BELGIUM	GREECE	NETHERLANDS	SWITZERLAND
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	HUNGARY	NORWAY	TURKEY
BULGARIA	IRELAND	POLAND	UKRAINE
CROATIA	IRELAND	PORTUGAL	SERBIA/MONTENEGRO
CYPRUS	ITALY	ROMANIA	VATICAN CITY
CZECH REPUBLIC	LATVIA	ROMANIA	WALES
DENMARK	LIECHTENSTEIN	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	

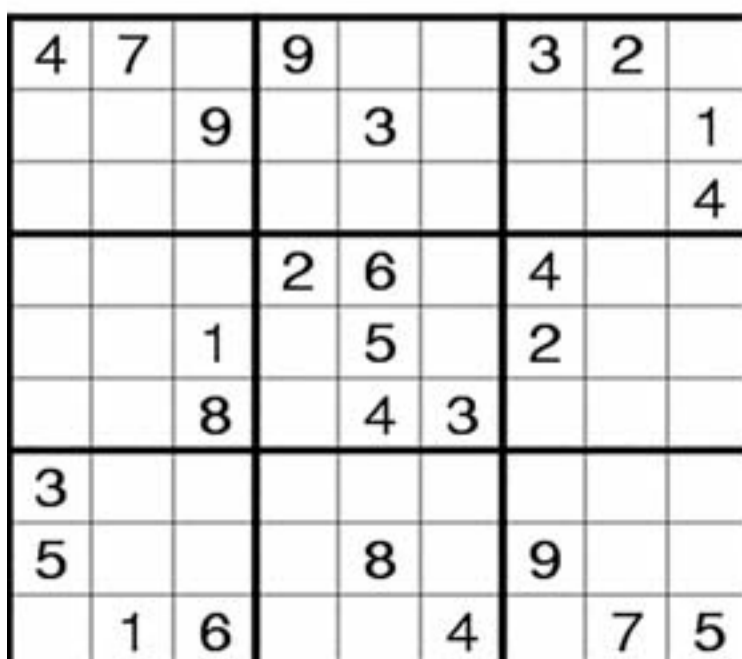
Yesterday's Solution

Computer Jargon 2

ASCII	DISK	HARDWARE	PASSWORD	SOUNDCARD
BANDWIDTH	DOCUMENT	INPUT	PERIPHERAL	SPYWARE
BIOS	DOWNLOAD	JAVA	PORT	TERAFLOP
BUG	DRIVER	JPEG	PRINT	TROJAN HORSE
CACHE	EMOTICON	KEYBOARD	REBOOT	UPLOAD
CHIP	ETHERNET	LINUX	RESOLUTION	USB
COPY	FAQ	MENU	SAVE	USERNAME
CPU	FREEWIRE	MODEM	SCROLL	VIRUS
CRASH	FONT	MULTIMEDIA	SERVER	WEB BROWSER
CYBERSPACE	FREWARE	NETIQUETTE	SMILEY	WINDOWS
DATABASE	GIGABYTE	OPEN		ZIP FILE
DESKTOP	HACKER			

The hidden word is: MICROPROCESSOR

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2019



.....
An Indian Kathakali artist performs at a cultural festival at Kalakshetra Art Village in Chennai. Kathakali is a classical dance that was created in the ancient kingdoms that now make up Kerala, a state on India's southwestern coast. — AFP
.....

INDIAN PLUS-SIZE ACTORS DEFY STEREOTYPES WITH BOLD THEATRE



A group of Indian plus-size actors and their theatre troupe, the Big Fat Company, are confronting stereotypes head on with their own brand of provocative drama, which includes gorging on cake onstage. The troupe, formed in 2017 in Bangalore and which recently performed in Delhi for the first time, wants to fight prejudice—not just in the film industry but in society as a whole. “The future of the Big Fat Company is to become obsolete because we shouldn’t exist,” founder Anuradha HR, 41, told AFP at the Old World Festival at the Indian Habitat Center.

“I mean if we were given opportunities everywhere else, you know, not considering our size, then we wouldn’t have the need for the Big Fat company,” she said. Their play, “Head2Head”, includes parts of a well-known southern Indian play about two characters—one athletic, one not—who swap heads, challenging notions about identity and appearance. This is interspersed with modern episodes depicting thinness-obsessed Bollywood and the arts, sexualized dancing and a lengthy scene involving the eating of a large, creamy cake while provocatively eyeballing the audience. “You know discrimination is very common. If I go out, if I am in a family function, people would say ‘how much are you eating?’” said actress Krithi Bettadh, 34. “I actually eat less than they eat so it’s very irritating.”— AFP



Performers take part in a production of the show ‘Head 2 Head’ in a theatre at the Indian Habitat Centre in New Delhi. — AFP photos



Performers take part in a production of the show “Head 2 Head” in a theatre at the Indian Habitat Centre in New Delhi.

Lifestyle | Gossip



ADAM LAMBERT RELEASES 'PROUD REBELLION' ANTHEM SUPERPOWER

Adam Lambert's new single 'Superpower' is dedicated to those who feel "discriminated against". The 'American Idol' alumni and Queen singer has released the opening track from the first side of his two-part project 'Velvet' and revealed the meaning behind his "proud rebellion" song. In a FaceTime interview on 'Capital Breakfast with Roman Kemp', Adam told Roman, Vick Hope and Sonny Jay: "There's a lot of crazy stuff going on in the world right now. 'I feel like there's a lot of groups of people that get discriminated against or get ostracized. 'I kind of wanted to make a song to make people in that situation feel like they didn't have to take it.' On one line, Adam belts out: "All of the witches and the demons better get out my way." The 'For Your Entertainment' singer has also teamed up with

director Millicent Hailes - who has worked on music promos for the likes of Migos, Young Thug and Lil Yachty - for the striking music video filmed on the streets of Brooklyn. 'Superpower' follows the singles 'Comin In Hot', 'Feel Something' and 'New Eyes'. Meanwhile, Adam previously admitted 'Velvet' is "partially" inspired by him being "frustrated" with chart music. The 37-year-old pop star became fed up with the songs in the top 40 all sounding the same and so he started listening to alternative bands such as Tame Impala and The Black Keys, and late music legend Prince. Speaking about the album's lead single 'New Eyes' and the rest of the record's influences, Adam said: "There's a little bit of Prince and there's a blues thing going on. "This song and the rest of the album is influenced partially by that, and partially by me seeing and playing the Top 40

game over the last 10 years and getting a little bit frustrated how everything starts to sound the same. So much of the industry tends to follow and copy. "I started listening to a lot more alternative music. "They might not be huge giant hits, but it's still widely regarded as great music and great bands." He added: "It's not necessarily about one song but about them as a group or artist and the big picture and their influence as an artist. "Bands like Tame Impala or The Black Keys ... they've had their moments with songs but they're known for creating a [certain] style of music that's in their own lane, and they've influenced a lot of other artists, including me." 'VELVET: Side A' is released on September 27.

Shears has made peace with having 'one heyday'

Jake Shears has "come to terms" with the fact you only get "one heyday". The Scissor Sisters frontman has admitted it was "heartbreaking" making "peace" with the fact that no matter how successful you are, there will always be one part of your career that you are remembered for the most. The 40-year-old singer was asked whether he felt any pressure to match the success of the Grammy-winning group with his self-titled debut solo album, which he released last year, and he admitted: "I think there'd be trepidation if I didn't know it was really good. "But you do have to come to terms with the fact that you only have one heyday. Elton's actually the one who said that. No matter who you are, you have to make your peace with that. "It was the most devastating, heartbreaking thing back then." The 'Comfortably Numb' hitmaker has been touring with pal Kylie Minogue and has a headline show coming up in London at Camden's Electric Ballroom on September 20. Jake is happy to sing songs from their back catalogue as he feels like they are "his songs", but some he says would be impossible to perform without bandmate Ana Matronic. He told The Times newspaper: "There are certain ones that I'd feel I could never do without Ana, but a lot of them feel like my songs." However, a reunion seems unlikely as Jake has admitted he and Ana don't speak to one another anymore. He said: "I wouldn't say we locked horns-there was definitely always a magical sort of alchemy, and a kind of performative tension on stage. "But I'm super proud of her. I miss her a lot." Though Jake has insisted he is focused on his solo career, he did tease the possibility of



marking the 10th anniversary of their debut album in 2020. 'Night Work' reached number two in the Official UK Chart, and the singer would love to get back together with his bandmates - Ana, Babydaddy, Del Marquis and Randy Real - to mark the occasion. The 'Take Your Mamma' hitmaker said they could release an album featuring songs that were scrapped when they were making the record, which he feels are worth seeing the light of day. He said: "I would really love to do a Night Work 10th anniversary record (in 2020). There is also an entire record that we just scrapped and there are some amazing songs. "I would love to put that stuff out in the next couple of years. It is a lot of fun and the fans will love it."

Wood releasing Chuck Berry tribute album

Ronnie Wood is releasing an album dedicated to Chuck Berry. The Rolling Stones were majorly influenced by the late rock legend and their 1963 debut single was even a cover version of his hit 'Come On'. Ronnie might not have joined the 'Satisfaction' band as bassist until 1975, but he has long been a fan of Chuck. Now he's recorded some of his best songs and even a tribute to the 'Roll Over Beethoven' hitmaker for his first solo studio project in nine years, 'Mad Lad', which is named after an instrumental originally featured on Chuck's 1960 LP 'Rockin' At The Hops' and features vocals from Imelda May. Ronnie told radio station SiriusXM: "I sing most of the songs and I have a friend called Imelda May and she is singing a couple. "Mad Lad' is an original instrumental song by Chuck. On the album I have done my own Chuck Berry tribute song. "Then it goes into 'Mad Lad'. It is a mad instrumental song and it sums me up." Chuck - who toured with the Stones - passed away at the age of 90 in March 2017. Upon hearing the sad news, the band hailed Chuck a "true pioneer of rock and roll" and said he was a "massive influence on us". They said: "The Rolling Stones are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Chuck Berry. "He was a true pioneer of rock & roll and a massive influence on us. Chuck was not only a brilliant guitarist, singer and performer, but most importantly, he was a master craftsman as a songwriter. His songs will live forever." Speaking last year, Ronnie, 72, admitted that Chuck would never "tune up" his guitars which he found "annoying", but praised his "originality". And he also recalled how he would always insist on playing his chart-topping cover of Dave Bartholomew's novelty song 'Ding-A-Ling'. He said: "Chuck had his own originality which was so fantastic. But he would never tune up, which was so annoying. And he kept playing [novelty song] My Ding-A-Ling at live shows. You would go, 'Chuck, you can't keep playing that, and he would say, 'It was number one for God's sake!'" 'Mad Lad' is set to be released in October.



Celine Dion has enough music for 'next four albums'

Celine Dion has teased that she has enough material for her "next four albums". The Canadian music icon is set to release her 12th English-language LP 'Courage' in November, and she has revealed she has been overwhelmed with submissions from various songwriters and has got her management team working out a plan for releasing as many tracks as possible. Speaking to ET Canada, the 'Because You Loved Me' hitmaker said: "I have never had so many songs presented to me to record, that I'm pretty much all set for the next four albums. "I don't know how we're gonna manage all of it! "But thank God I have some management here who are gonna figure all of that out because my part is to sing the songs as best as I can." Celine, 51, admitted she is keen to get plenty of new music released to show her fans her "new approach". She added: "I wanna give them some new songs as they wanna hear. "I wanna give them some new songs as well to show them that this is the new approach." The 'Power Of Love' singer previously revealed she had 48 songs to narrow down to 12 for her upcoming album. And she also teased that 'Courage' will be "very fun" and "very different" to her other work and feels she's "opened her wings" on the new record. She said: "The album sounds very fun, very different and I did try new things. It's still me but I have opened my wings to embrace new writers and producers. "Just to be open to different sounds. I'm not doing like an AC DC heavy metal, but there's different flavors." The 'My Heart Will Go On' hitmaker is also set to embark on the 'Courage World Tour' this month, and recently admitted she would have a "breakdown" if she looked at her all the dates. Celine - who has son RenÉ-Charles, 18, and eight-year-old twins Nelson and Eddy with her late husband RenÉ Angélil - confessed that the global run "would not happen" if she acknowledged how long it would take as she fears she'd miss her children too much. She said: "When I go on a tour you cannot look at all the dates because you'll have a breakdown and the tour will not happen. My heart won't go on."



Pattinson admits Batsuit was a tight fit

Robert Pattinson had five people "squeezing" him into the Batsuit. The 33-year-old actor - who will play the Caped Crusader in 'The Batman' - was asked to don the iconic costume for his final audition, and he joked while it took a team to help him in, he felt "strong" and "tough" afterwards. Speaking to Variety, he explained: "You do feel very powerful immediately. And it's pretty astonishing, something that is incredibly difficult to get into, so the ritual of getting into it is pretty humiliating. "You've got five people trying to shove you into something. Once you've got it on, it's like, 'Yeah, I feel strong, I feel tough, even though I had to have someone squeezing my butt cheeks into the legs.' " Meanwhile, Pattinson - who was up against Nicholas Hoult for the role of Bruce Wayne's crime fighting alter ego - got the news he'd landed the part while he was filming with 'The Dark Knight' trilogy director Christopher Nolan on his upcoming project 'Tenet'. He added: "I was absolutely relieved when [director Matt Reeves] called. It's so bizarre. I was like, 'What a coincidence this is happening'. It's absolutely crazy. I was talking about things to do with the Batsuit. How to get more movements in it." The 'Twilight' star now joins a long list of high profile names to play the iconic role. Michael Keaton received critical acclaim for his outings in the cape and cowl in 1989's 'Batman' and 1992's 'Batman Returns' - both of which were directed by Tim Burton - and he was followed by Val Kilmer and George Clooney who played Bruce Wayne and his alter ego in 'Batman Forever' and 'Batman & Robin' respectively. Christian Bale took on the role for Nolan's 'The Dark Knight' films, which are considered by many critics to be the best of the Batman outings on the big screen. — Bang Showbiz



Nicole Kidman: Meryl Streep backed Bombshell role

Nicole Kidman reveals Meryl Streep convinced her to take her 'Bombshell' role. The 'Big Little Lies' actress revealed she spoke to her co-star about the possibility of playing Gretchen Carson in the upcoming drama about female Fox News employees and their allegations against founder Roger Ailes. Speaking to Entertainment Tonight, she said: "I remember Meryl Streep saying to me, when I said, 'Oh, should I play Gretchen Carlson? She was like, 'Yes, you should.' So when Meryl says, 'Yes, you should,' you do what she says." The highly anticipated movie also stars Margot Robbie will play Kayla Pospisil, while Charlize Theron as Megyn Kelly - and Kidman was stunned by the latter's remarkable transformation for the role. She added: "For Margot, Charlize and I, we wanted to be part of a movement, and that film is part of a movement. "I walked on the set with Charlize and I was like, 'Are you kidding me?' I was like, shocked. And that was in person, up close. I couldn't believe it was her." Meanwhile, the 52-year-old star was honored for her acting work at the GQ Men of the Year Awards on Tuesday, and she hopes her own career choices can inspire other women. She explained: "A lot of the things that I do are not massive commercial successes, so being recognized allows, I think, parts to be carved for other actresses. "I always want to say that to actors and actresses - there's so many possibilities. You just have to be ready and... willing and believe in yourself."



Karen Gillan's stunt double says they love Jumanji outfit

Karen Gillan "loves" wearing her 'Jumanji: The Next Level' costume. The actress will be reprising her role as Ruby Roundhouse in the upcoming sequel, and her stunt double Jahnel Curfman admitted the revealing outfit meant the pair "put a lot of work" into their fitness for the film. She told Showbiz Cheatsheet: "I went in for my fitting and I was like, 'Karen, I swear these shorts are shorter this year. "Both of us, we bitch and complain about that costume but I think Karen and I both really love wearing it. It's a lot of fun. "We put a lot of work into it, into diet and exercise and training to make that costume look good. It is pretty badass." Although Gillan's costume sparked some controversy after the 2017 blockbuster 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle', the actress explained at the time that she felt there was "a really valid reason" for the outfit. She said: "I've experienced something similar when I worked on 'Doctor Who' and there was such an uproar about my costume when that was first revealed, so I thought it was happening all over again. "But I have to say, I'd never take on a role that was truly gratuitous for no reason. There's a really valid reason why she's wearing that. My character is really not happy about it!" Meanwhile, 'Jumanji' co-star Jack Black has recently opened up about how Gillan's character has "evolved" for the upcoming sequel, which is set to be released on December 13. He revealed: "Also, I should say that Karen is kicking ass in the new 'Jumanji'. Your character has evolved and now you've got more stuff and rad stuff to do this time. I can't say what, because that would be spoiler alerts."

Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Mary Poppins shocker: 'I swear a lot' admits Julie Andrews



British actress Julie Andrews arrives at the pier of the Excelsior Hotel during the 76th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP

Mary Poppins, cover your ears. Hollywood legend Julie Andrews shocked the world Tuesday by confessing that she has something of a filthy mouth. "I do swear a lot. Mr Disney found out that quickly," the veteran actress revealed when a flywire she had been hoisted up on the set of "Mary Poppins" broke sending her crashing to the ground "like a ton of bricks." "I think I said a few words he (Walt Disney) had not heard very often," she added.

Andrews, now 83 but looking and sounding decades younger, insisted that she was "never a goodie two shoes" as she picked up a lifetime achievement award at the Venice film festival. Although she made her name and won an Oscar playing the prim English governess in the 1964 Disney classic, Andrews said that like her, the character had a hidden and far more mischievous inner life. "On the outside she is very proper... but look at the lining of her jackets and her skirts—they are very colorful and wicked. "She had another secret personality that was a little more playful," she said.

forced when she played Maria von Trapp the following year in "The Sound of Music", which tells the story of a novice nun who becomes a governess. But the actress admitted that she had found the story too schmaltzy when she saw the musical version of it on Broadway. "I thought it was too sentimental and saccharine and over the top. I mean, you have mountains and nuns and seven children, but all together!" she told reporters.

"So I decided with the director Robert Wise that we would try to be as stringent as we possibly could. I think it made a big difference. "It is still a sweet and loving film, but we saved it from being too saccharine," she said. Andrews also disclosed that she was knocked flat several times during the shooting of the movie's iconic opening aerial panorama in a mountain meadow.

She was repeatedly tossed over by the down-draft from the helicopter on which the camera was mounted, Andrews said. "All I had to do was run towards the camera and start singing," but each time she would end up "eating grass and dirt".

the rain. "It was so beautiful there in Salzburg (in Austria) but it rained, rained, rained." Andrews—who has started directing in her eighties—also paid tribute to her late husband, the director Blake Edwards. He wrote both "Victor Victoria"—now regarded as a LGBT classic on a par with "La Cage aux Folles"—and "S.O.B." for her, a film industry satire in which she plays a family-friendly star who ends up in a porn flick.

She said the man behind the "Pink Panther" films and "10" "really knew me. He was so clever." Andrews, who was made a dame by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II at the turn of the century, revealed she has written a memoir with her daughter Emma Walton Hamilton, which will be published in October. As well as her sometimes potty mouth in private, the actress said her other big fault was that she was a terrible cook. Yet Andrews said that the upbeat message of her best-known films were very much a reflection of her. "I am very much a glass-half-full person," she said. And just like Mary Poppins, the only thing that gets her riled is when someone shows "a lack of thought or consideration for other people." — AFP

'Too saccharine'

Andrews' butter-wouldn't-melt image was further rein-

Gay icon

Her abiding memories of the filming are the cold and

Holocaust 'masterpiece' causes uproar at Venice film festival

A searing adaptation of one of most controversial books about the Holocaust divided critics at the Venice film festival yesterday, with some fighting each other in the dark to get out of its first screening. "The Painted Bird", based on Jerzy Kosinski's highly contentious 1965 novel about a Jewish boy surviving the worst human nature can inflict on him in an unnamed Eastern European country, was hailed as a masterpiece by some and an unwatchable ordeal by others. But its staggering central performance from nine-year-old Czech Roma boy Petr Kotlar—who witnesses a panoply of depravity from incest, bestiality and rape to mutilation and murder—has had co-stars Harvey Keitel and Stellan Skarsgard as well as the critics in raptures.

That did not stop some running for the exits at its first screening. In the very first scene, the boy's pet ferret is taken from him by boorish peasants and burned alive. The Hollywood Reporter called the black-and-white epic "heart-wrenching... and the ideal film treatment" of the novel, which itself sparked outrage in Kosinski's native Poland when the writer first hinted that the story was autobiographical.

of what can happen when Europe turns inward as it was doing now, drawing a parallel between the attitudes to migrant children fleeing wars in Syria, Libya and Afghanistan and the rejection and abuse his hero suffers.

'Kosinski lied'

"Bad times are coming to Europe," he told reporters.



German actor Udo Kier poses during the photocall for the movie "The Painted Bird" of Czech director Vaclav Marhouk.

"Looking at the populists who are running so many European countries at the moment like Hungary, Poland, Russia, in the Czech Republic too and of course the US," Marhouk said the film took 11 years to make. "I didn't know when I started that this story would become much more accented by what happened in Europe three years ago, when so many people came here to save their lives," he said. Because of the fury Kosinski sparked in Poland, the director decided to have most of the film's sparse dialogue in Slavic Esperanto "so no nation would be associated with villagers" who mistreat the boy and hand him over to the Nazis.

Despite being accused of plagiarizing other Polish books, Kosinski's novel is still seen by many as a classic. "When Kosinski said it was his autobiographical story he was lying," Marhouk said. "In fact he spent the World War II with his parents among Polish villagers. And those villagers tried to save them... That's not a big problem for the book (because it is fiction). But many people in Poland still think this book is about them." — AFP



Canadian actor Barry Pepper poses during the photocall for the movie "The Painted Bird" of Czech director Vaclav Marhouk.



Czech director Vaclav Marhouk poses during the photocall for his movie "The Painted Bird". — AFP photos

Female-focused Toronto film fest gets under way

With a special tribute to Meryl Streep, a gala line-up dedicated to women filmmakers and an inaugural award for female talent, organizers say this week's Toronto International Film Festival will honor leading ladies in the movies. A-listers from Natalie Portman to Nicole Kidman, and Kristen Stewart to Streep, will tread the red carpet at North America's biggest film festival, also known as TIFF, which opens today and runs through September 15.

The festival in Canada's largest city is seen as a key step on the journey to Oscar glory—recent Best Picture winners including "Green Book" and "The Shape of Water" emerged as frontrunners here. Among world premieres generating buzz this year are Taika Waititi's Nazi satire "Jojo Rabbit," and star-studded death-row tearjerker "Just Mercy," featuring Jamie Foxx, Michael B. Jordan and Brie Larson. They will show alongside heavyweights fresh from the ongoing Venice festival such as "Joker."

Venice triggered controversy by only putting two films directed by women on its main prize program—a storm compounded by the decision to invite director Roman Polanski, who admitted to statutory rape decades ago. Toronto's organizers said it was a "priority" to correct the industry's historic imbalance against women. "We've really just chosen to foreground gender and the representation of gender," festival boss Cameron Bailey told AFP. "As a concern in movies generally, there's a long history of this from the very beginning... it affects films at every stage."

'No-brainer'

More than 300 films from 84 countries will be shown to critics, auteurs and regular movie buffs in Toronto, including 133 world premieres. Nearly half of the festival's gala films are directed by women—nine of 20 — including all three on the Saturday evening line-up. DreamWorks' animation "Abominable," written and directed by Jill Culton, tells the story of a young Chinese girl trying to help a magical yeti return to his family.

It is followed by the world premiere of the biopic of TV personality Fred Rogers, "A Beautiful Day in the

Neighborhood," directed by Marielle Heller and starring Tom Hanks. The night concludes with "Hustlers," the true story of a group of New York strippers who swindled Wall Street businessmen out of huge sums. It stars Jennifer Lopez and is directed by Lorene Scafaria. For the first time, the festival will hold a full prize-giving "tribute gala" honoring outstanding careers in film.

Streep, who is currently promoting Netflix's Panama Papers thriller "The Laundromat," will receive the inaugural actress prize. Festival co-head Joana Vincent said the decision to honor Streep was a "no-brainer," telling AFP: "She's so incredibly talented, and it's this incredible, surprising performance in "The Laundromat" that felt so fresh and different. "And she's Meryl Streep! Who else would you want to give your inaugural tribute award?"

Another new award honoring outstanding young female talent will go to Mati Diop, a black 37-year-old French director whose film "Atlantics"—a haunting ghost story about African migrants—won the Grand Prix at Cannes. "Joker" star Joaquin Phoenix will pick up the inaugural actor award, while Waititi gets the director prize.

Rock'n'roll

TIFF will open Thursday with the documentary "Once Were Brothers: Robbie Robertson and the Band," a biopic of the musical group which formed in Toronto in the 1960s and became one of the most successful rock outfits of all time. The film features interviews with a who's who of rock'n'roll including Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and Eric Clapton.

Martin Scorsese, who Robertson has worked with on the scores for "The Wolf of Wall Street" and upcoming "The Irishman," also appears. Later in the week, Portman will be in town to promote Fox's astronaut drama "Lucy in the Sky," Stewart stars in Amazon's political thriller "Seberg," and Kidman features in the Warner Bros movie adaptation of Donna Tartt's sprawling novel "The Goldfinch." — AFP



In this file photo US singer/songwriter Ariana Grande attends Billboard's 13th Annual Women In Music event at Pier 36 in New York City. — AFP

Ariana Grande sues fashion firm over 'look-alike model'

US pop star Ariana Grande has sued fashion retailer Forever 21 for using her trademark style to promote its products without her permission, including adverts featuring a "look-alike model." Grande is seeking \$10 million over claims the brand, and its spin-off cosmetics line Riley Rose, created an online campaign with striking similarities to her music videos, such as "7 Rings," from late last year. The lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles district court Monday, claims the campaign was intended to trick consumers into believing Grande had endorsed Forever 21's youth-oriented products.

"Even a single social media post by Ms Grande can garner fees of several hundred thousand dollars, and her longer-term endorsement arrangements command fees in the millions of dollars," it said. Grande has 163 million Instagram followers, making her the most-followed woman on the photo- and video-sharing social media platform. Images from Forever 21's Instagram account cited by the lawsuit showed a model wearing purple camouflage clothing and a pink headband and boots similar to those worn by Grande in the "7 Rings" music video. The images appear to have been taken down from the company's social media accounts. A Forever 21 statement denied the allegations, adding that the fashion firm has "worked with (Grande's) licensing company over the past two years." "We are hopeful that we will find a mutually agreeable resolution and can continue to work together in the future," it added. Bloomberg News reported last week that Forever 21 was preparing for a bankruptcy filing. — AFP



Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. arrives for his trial on his sexual assault case in New York. — AFP

Actor Cuba Gooding Jr's groping trial delayed

Oscar-winning actor Cuba Gooding Jr's trial over accusations he groped a woman in New York was adjourned Tuesday until next month after prosecutors asked for more time to prepare their case. The trial of the "Jerry Maguire" star was scheduled to start on Tuesday but a state criminal court judge granted a prosecution request that it be delayed until October 10. Gooding's lawyer Mark Heller told reporters after the short hearing that he was extremely confident the case would be dismissed, describing the allegations as "totally unfounded."

"We are confident this will become a hallmark case for the #NotMe movement," he said, using a term he coined to refer to celebrities who are falsely accused of sexual offenses. Gooding, 51, is accused of grabbing the woman's breast without her consent in a Manhattan bar on a night out in June. He is charged with forcible touching and could face up to a year in prison if convicted. Gooding won an Academy Award in 1997 for his performance as a football player in "Jerry Maguire." He recently played OJ Simpson in "The People vs OJ Simpson: American Crime Story." — AFP



File photo shows US actress Meryl Streep arriving for the screening of the film "The Laundromat" on September 1, 2019 presented in competition during the 76th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP



File picture shows Natalie Portman posing for photographers at the premiere of "Vox Lux" at the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto, Ontario. — AFP

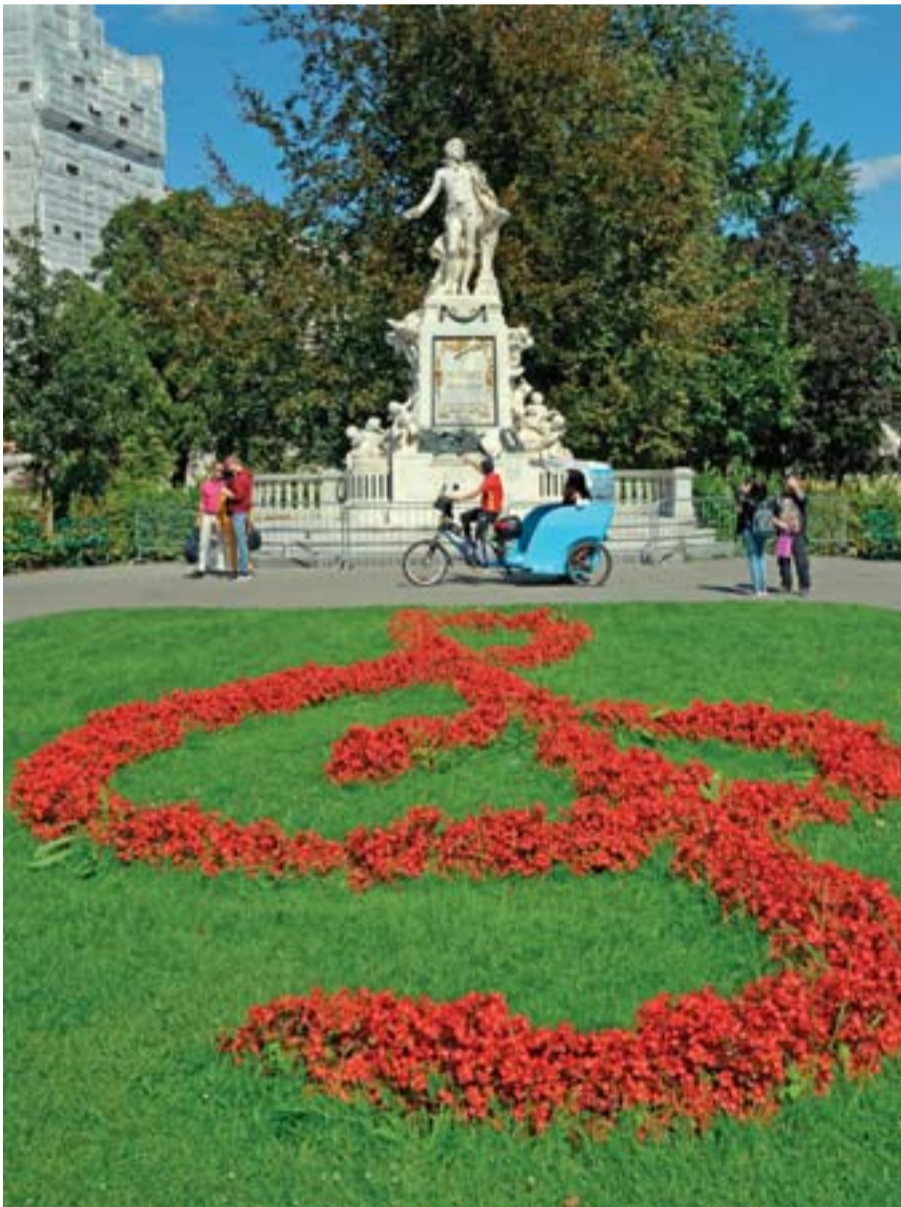


A carriage passes by the Saint Stephen's cathedral in Vienna Austria. — AFP photos



A long row of parked bicycles are seen outside the State Opera house in Vienna, Austria.

Report crowns Vienna 'most liveable city' for second year



A statue of the most famous Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is seen in the Burg garden in Vienna, Austria.

The Austrian capital Vienna has retained its ranking as the world's most liveable city, according to an annual report from the Economist. Vienna once again came ahead of Melbourne—which had held the top ranking for seven years until losing it to Vienna in 2018 — according to a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) released yesterday. The top two were followed by Sydney, Osaka and Calgary.

Each year the EIU gives 140 cities scores out of 100 on a range of factors such as living standards, crime, transport infrastructure, access to education and healthcare, as well as political and economic stability. Vienna—known for its convenient public transport, refreshing Alpine tap water and varied cultural life—scored 99.1 points out of 100, as it did last year. “Western Europe and North America continue to be the most liveable regions in the world,” the EIU said in a press release.

Europe claimed eight of the top 20 spots, with cities in Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Canada making up the rest. However, the City of Light, Paris, dropped six places to 25th due to the anti-government “yellow vest” protests—images of which went around the world. For the first time, the index noted the effects of climate change on liveability, with New Delhi and Cairo plunging in the rankings to 118th and 125th place respectively due to “poor air quality, undesirable average temperatures and inadequate water provision”.

“We expect problems relating to climate change to put increasing pressure on liveability scores in the coming years and for the number of cities affected to grow,” Agathe Demarais of the EIU said. Improvements in liveability that had taken place in emerging markets’ cities in recent years—thanks to greater stability as well as better education and healthcare—are under serious threat from



an increasingly adverse climate,” she said. London and New York rank 48th and 58th respectively as they continue to struggle under the perceptions of the risk of crime and terrorism and overstretched infrastructure. The least liveable cities were Karachi, Tripoli, Dhaka, Lagos and, at the very bottom, Damascus. Vienna also won top place in another survey, the annual quality of living index by human resources consulting firm Mercer, for the 10th time in a row in 2019. — AFP

The Burgtheater is pictured in Vienna, designed by German architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) and Austrian architect Karl von Hasenauer (1833-1894) and completed in 1888.



In this file photo people ice-skate in front of the Vienna City Hall, designed in 1883 by Austrian architect Friedrich von Schmidt (1825-1891) in Vienna, Austria.



People walk through the Helden Tor (Hero's Gate) near the Hofburg palace in Vienna, Austria.



In this file photo people sit on a bench in front of the Karlskirche, or St Charles' church, on the Karlsplatz square in the Austrian capital, Vienna.



In this file photo a tourist stands on the snow-covered garden to take pictures of the Schoenbrunn Castle in Vienna, Austria, as freezing temperatures of the last days changed to a snowfall.

Walmart halts ammunition sales for assault-style rifles

TEXAS: Walmart Inc, the nation's largest retailer, said on Tuesday it would stop selling ammunition for handguns and some assault-style rifles in all its stores across the United States, and called for action on gun safety after a string of mass shootings, including at Walmart stores in Texas and Mississippi. Walmart also called for a strengthening of background checks for gun buyers and action to take guns out of the hands of those who pose a risk of violence, which was followed by an almost identical message from grocery operator Kroger Co.

Both Walmart and Kroger, which exited the firearms and ammunition business last year when its Fred Meyer unit stopped such sales, said they are now asking customers not to bring guns into their stores, even when allowed by local laws. The two retailers are among a growing number of US companies, such as Delta Air Lines and Bank of America, that are responding to the debate over guns and gun safety as mass shootings have proliferated, risking backlash from powerful gun owners' groups while elected leaders consider options.

"It's clear to us that the status quo is unacceptable," Walmart's chief executive officer, Doug McMillon, said in a letter to employees. "As a company, we experienced two horrific events in one week, and we will never be the same." Kroger, in a statement from corporate affairs vice president Jessica Adelman, spoke about "the growing chorus of Americans who are no longer comfortable with the status quo and who are advocating for concrete and common sense gun reforms."

Kroger said it was "joining those encouraging our elected leaders to pass laws" on background checks and keeping firearms out of the hands of those at risk for violence. McMillon said Walmart's decision follows his visit to El Paso, Texas, on Aug. 6, three days after a gunman went on a rampage at a Walmart store there, killing 22 people.

Walmart Inc said it would stop selling ammunition for handguns and some assault-style rifles in all its stores across the United States. McMillon in the letter

described himself as a gun owner and said that company founder Sam Walton was "an avid outdoorsman who had a passion for quail hunting." Walmart will stop selling handgun sales in Alaska, the only state where it still sells hand guns. The halt on the ammunition and handgun sales will come into effect when current inventory is sold out. Kroger had sold guns in 43 of its Fred Meyer stores in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska before announcing in March 2018 that it would exit the firearms business.

Praise and criticism

The retailers' latest moves sparked immediate reaction from groups on both sides of the gun control debate. "The tide is turning," said Shannon Watts, founder of Moms Demand Action, a gun control advocacy group. The announcements "send a strong cultural signal that when lawmakers don't protect their constituents, companies will protect their customers." The National Rifle Association (NRA), a pro-gun group with deep political ties, said Walmart was succumbing to pressure from "anti-gun elites." "Lines at Walmart will soon be replaced by lines at other retailers who are more supportive of America's fundamental freedoms," it said. It did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Kroger move.

Walmart said its latest actions would reduce its share of the ammunition market from around 20% to a range of about 6% to 9%, and would trend toward the lower end of that range over time. US gun and ammunition stores had total sales of about \$11 billion last year, of which 19% was ammunition, according to market research firm IBISWorld. The move reflects growing corporate activism on guns. Walmart, like rival Dick's Sporting Goods, had previously ended sales of assault rifles and raised the minimum age for gun purchases to 21.

Bank of America last year said it would no longer lend to companies making military-style firearms for civilians, and airlines Delta and United last year said



CALIFORNIA: People walk outside a Walmart store in San Leandro, California. Walmart, America's largest retailer announced that it will reduce the sales of gun ammunition that can be used in handguns and assault style rifles, including .223 caliber and 5.56 caliber bullets. — AFP

they were no longer offering discounted rates to the NRA. The latest move will leave Walmart focused on weapons for hunting, including deer rifles, shotguns and related ammunition. "The general principle is if we don't sell the firearm we wouldn't sell the ammunition," a spokesman for Walmart said.

Just last month, Walmart said it would not change its

policy on selling firearms even as it took down signs and playable demos of violent video games. On Friday, McMillon in his letter to employees said he would send letters urging action on "common sense measures" to the White House and the Congressional leadership, calling for debate of the reauthorization of a ban on assault weapons, to determine its effectiveness, as well. — Reuters

Shake-up 'won't affect Russian, Saudi oil pact'

VLADIVOSTOK: Leadership changes in Saudi Arabia's oil industry will have no effect on cooperation between Moscow and Riyadh, two top Russian officials said, indicating the shake-up won't derail a global pact to support oil prices by curbing output. Separately, senior sources from OPEC and the oil industry said they expected Saudi Arabia to stick to its policy of restraining oil output as long as Riyadh wants to sell a stake in state oil firm Aramco.

Saudi Arabia this week named a replacement for Khalid Al-Falih as Aramco chairman, and a few days earlier created a ministry for industry and mineral resources separate from the energy ministry, in a move that appears to diminish Falih's authority. He remains Saudi energy minister. Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak praised Falih and said the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries would continue to coordinate output with non-OPEC producers.

"We will continue our international cooperation with our colleagues, with my friend Mr Falih," Novak told reporters. He said he planned to visit Saudi Arabia to prepare for Russian President Vladimir Putin's trip there scheduled in October. Ties between OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia and non-OPEC Russia have developed since 2016 after the producer group and a number of non-member countries formed the so-called OPEC+ alliance. — Reuters

India 'citizenship list' causes anger...

Continued from Page 1

finally published on Saturday, many Bengali-speaking Hindus such as Saha found they had been excluded. Other families told AFP of how some of them were not included in the register, while relatives had made the cut, even though they supplied the same documents.

While there are no clear answers as to how or why individuals have been included or excluded, bureaucratic bungling amid the mountains of paperwork appears to be one factor. From Modi downwards, senior figures in Delhi are keeping quiet. One senior official, without wanting to be named, told reporters claims that the list was biased against a particular religion "has absolutely no basis", adding that equal numbers of Hindus and Muslims were excluded.

However there appears to be some hope for the Hindus left off the list, as they have the support of powerful politicians. Bengali-speaking Hindus rallied behind

the BJP, helping it to come to power in state elections in 2016. Local BJP leaders are now pressuring the national government to pass a quick legislative fix to protect their voting base.

Meanwhile, powerful politicians have made no such calls to protect Muslims such as Syed Burhan Ahmed, who says they have been left off the list unfairly. "My son and my daughter used my legacy (documents) but they have not included my name in the NRC. How is it possible?," the 85-year-old retired Assam government employee said. Those left off the register have 120 days to appeal at so-called Foreigners Tribunals, and if they fail, they can appeal against that decision through the courts.

The government has stressed that those omitted will not become stateless, and that any decisions taken would be consistent with India's "democratic traditions". But there are fears the appeal process could become as chaotic as the registration system, with critics saying tribunal staff are unqualified. "Muslims like me have been living in Assam for generations. Our forefathers came to this land centuries back. We have valid documents to prove our Indian citizenship and yet there are doubts," Ahmed said. — AFP

members of the detained British-flagged tanker Stena Impero. The Swedish-owned tanker was detained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards on July 19 in the Strait of Hormuz waterway for alleged marine violations, two weeks after Britain detained an Iranian tanker off the territory of Gibraltar. That ship was released in August.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi appeared to back the main terms of the French proposal in a statement yesterday. "Our return to the full implementation of the nuclear accord is subject to the receipt of \$15 billion over a four-month period, otherwise the process of reducing Iran's commitments will continue," the semi-official news agency Fars quoted Araqchi as saying.

"Either Europe has to buy oil from Iran or provide Iran with the equivalent of selling oil as a credit line guaranteed by Iran's oil revenues, which in some sense means a pre-sale of oil," Araqchi added. Government spokesman Ali Rabie said Iran would stick to its nuclear commitments "if France can get the approval of the US and announces it." He added: "If they cannot get the approval, then we will take the third step."

The United States would have the economic clout to block any credit line for Iran. Washington has not commented on the proposal which would contradict its stated policy of imposing "maximum pressure" to force Tehran to rein in its nuclear and missile programs as well as what the White House views as its destabilizing regional behavior. Iran's English-language Press TV issued a short report stating: "Iran has rejected a \$15 billion loan offered by EU" — though Western and Iranian sources had described the French plan as the offer of a credit line, not a loan. Precise details of the plan have not been made public. — Reuters

British PM demands October 15 election...

Continued from Page 1

makers and opposition parties are united in wanting to prevent a no-deal Brexit before agreeing to an election.

Johnson said his strategy was to get a Brexit deal by an EU summit on Oct. 17 and "get Brexit done". He said the British government was making substantial progress and would succeed in removing the Irish border backstop. The showdown between prime minister and parliament continues yesterday, including a vote on the attempt to block no deal. Finance minister Sajid Javid told parliament he was "turning the page on austerity" as he promised the biggest spending increases in 15 years, a move widely seen as part of the government's push for an election.

As the three-year Brexit crisis approaches a crescendo, the United Kingdom was edging towards an election as most British politicians see no other way to break the impasse. The government has scheduled a vote on an election, but Labor lawmakers said they wanted the block on a no-deal Brexit implemented before any election. Sterling jumped 1% against the dollar to trade above \$1.22 for the first time since Aug. 30.

Opposition parties and Conservative Party rebels said they would not allow a no-deal Brexit to be "smuggled" through under the cover of an election. "We're not going to dance to his tune," said Keir Starmer, the Labor Party's point man on Brexit. "We're not going to vote with Boris Johnson today to deprive ourselves of the opportunity to

complete the business that we've just seized control of the house to do." Beyond the frantic push and shove of British politics, the United Kingdom fundamentally has three main Brexit options: leave with a deal, leave without a deal or cancel Brexit.

An October election would open up three likely options: a Brexit-supporting government under Johnson, a Labor government led by veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn or a hung parliament that could lead to a coalition or minority government of some kind. The type of Brexit that emerges from that election is unclear, though there would be little time for a deal before the Oct. 31 deadline. An avowedly pro-Brexit government could overturn any laws aimed at preventing a no-deal Brexit.

In a sign of just how far Brexit has distorted British politics, Johnson's Conservatives vowed to expel the 21 rebels — including the grandson of Britain's World War Two leader Winston Churchill and two former finance ministers — from the party. Johnson also lost his working majority in parliament. In one piece of good news for Johnson, the face of the 2016 Vote Leave referendum campaign, a Scottish court ruled that his decision to suspend parliament later this month was lawful. "This government is going to get a deal from our friends in Brussels," Johnson said. "We will get an agreement."

The EU has refused to renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement reached with Johnson's predecessor Theresa May last November. Ireland said Johnson has not yet presented any solutions to solve the Brexit impasse and there were reports in British newspapers that Johnson's top adviser Dominic Cummings had described negotiations as a sham. When asked if that was how he saw the Brexit negotiations with the EU, Cummings said: "No. I never said that." — Reuters

Facial recognition becomes an opt-in...

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"Facebook's face recognition technology still does not recognize you to strangers," Narayanan said. "We don't share your face recognition information with third parties. We also don't sell our technology." People new to Facebook or who had the "tag" feature operating will get word from the social network about the face recognition setting along with an easy way to turn it on if they wish, according to Narayanan.

"People will still be able to manually tag friends, but we won't suggest you to be tagged if you do not have face recognition turned on," Narayanan said. "If you already have the face recognition setting, you won't receive a notice." The move comes amid growing concerns about facial recognition technology by law enforcement and gov-

ernment agencies, and with widespread use of the system for surveillance in parts of the world including China.

Also, Facebook on Tuesday confirmed it is dabbling with no longer making a public display of how many "likes" are racked up by posts. Such a change could ease pressure to win approval with images, videos or comments and, instead, get people to simply focus on what is in posts. Facebook-owned Instagram earlier this year announced it was testing hiding like counts and video view tallies in more than a half-dozen countries, with account holders still able to see the numbers but masking amounts from others.

"We are considering hiding like counts from Facebook," a spokesman for the leading social network told AFP on Tuesday. Twitter has also experimented with hiding numbers of times tweets were "liked" or "retweeted," according to product lead Kayvon Beykpour. Twitter found that people engaged less with tweets when they couldn't see the counts. "When you remove engagement indicators, people engage less," Beykpour said while briefing journalists at Twitter headquarters in San Francisco last month. — Agencies

Iran gives Europe 2 more months...

Continued from Page 1

Tehran responded with two separate moves that breached some of the terms of the deal, although it says it still aims to save the pact.

Rouhani had threatened to take further measures by Sept 5 unless France and the other European signatories of the pact did more to protect Iran from the impact of the US penalties. "I think it is unlikely that we will reach a result with Europe by today or tomorrow ... Europe will have another two months to fulfill its commitments," Rouhani said, according to state TV.

"The talks between Iran and European countries are moving forward ... but we have yet to reach a conclusion," he added. Iran would continue with plans to breach the pact further and accelerate its nuclear activity, Rouhani said, without giving a fresh deadline. "The third step (in reducing Iran's commitments) will be the most important one and it will have extraordinary effects," state TV reported him as saying.

Iran's vital crude oil sales have plummeted by more than 80% under the US sanctions. The remaining signatories of the deal have been working to save an agreement that they say will bring Iran back into the international fold and prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb. Iran has repeatedly said its nuclear program is for electricity generation and other peaceful purposes. In a possible olive branch to the West, Iran state TV said authorities would free seven crew

es, said the source, and Iraq has been informed about it. An official letter informing the Baghdad government was sent to the Iraqi embassy in Kuwait on February 8, 2017.

Kuwait answered memos sent by Iraq on September 5, 2017 and September 12, 2018, in which Baghdad urged Kuwait to delay the installation of the platform until after installation of maritime border signs beyond sign No 162. The source said the Kuwait position was included in two memos sent from Kuwait Embassy in Baghdad to the Iraqi foreign ministry on July 26, 2017 and on September 26, 2018, affirming Kuwait was exercising its sovereignty.

The Foreign Ministry source said Kuwait has been requesting Iraq to start maritime border demarcation negotiations ever since 2005. "The State of Kuwait called on the brothers in Iraq to end this issue through international maritime arbitration in line with the UN treaty on law of sea of 1982," he said. Kuwait, he said, would continue to coordinate with Iraq to address all outstanding issues "in order to prevent distortion of relations." — KUNA

Kuwait dismisses Iraqi protest over...

Continued from Page 1

undermine demarcation of maritime borders beyond sign No 162. The source, in a statement to KUNA, said Kuwait received the Iraqi memo and responded to it immediately. The source said Kuwait's territorial waters were specified by a decree issued on December 17, 1967, and updated on October 19, 2014. The decree was in compliance with UN treaty on law of seas of 1982. He said Fisht Al-Eij is a natural piece of land over the sea level and is located within Kuwait's territorial waters.

Therefore, the installation of the platform is a sovereign right of the State of Kuwait within its territories and territorial waters," affirmed the source. The platform installed in Khor (inlet) Abdullah is for security purposes,

Sports

Nationals shock Mets with seven-run ninth inning in 11-10 thriller

Martin, Freese rescue Dodgers against Rockies

WASHINGTON: Kurt Suzuki's three-run, walk-off home run capped a seven-run ninth inning and lifted the host Washington Nationals to a stunning 11-10 win over the New York Mets on Tuesday. After the Mets scored five times in the top of the ninth to build a 10-4 lead, Trea Turner doubled home Victor Robles in the bottom of the inning to make it 10-5. Anthony Rendon's single brought home a run, and with the bases loaded, Ryan Zimmerman doubled to the wall in right-center off Edwin Diaz (1-7) to pull Washington within 10-8. That brought up Suzuki, whose 16th homer of the year capped the improbable comeback. The teams combined for 12 runs on 11 hits, including three home runs, in the ninth inning. Javy Guerra (3-1) got the win by getting the final out in the top of the ninth. Washington has won five of its last six and 10 of 12, winning on the biggest comeback in the bottom of the ninth inning in franchise history. It also marked the biggest blown ninth-inning lead in Mets club history.

Royals 6, Tigers 5

Jorge Soler broke the Kansas City single-season home run record with his 39th of the season, and Ryan O'Hearn hit a walk-off homer in the ninth inning to give the Royals a win over visiting Detroit. Soler hammered a three-run shot in the third inning, passing Mike Moustakas' previous club record set in 2017. O'Hearn won it with his first career walk-off home run, a one-out shot off Zac Reiner (0-1). Kansas City's Ian Kennedy blew a save for the first time in 15 chances when he allowed an RBI single to Ronny Rodriguez in the top of the ninth. However, Alex Gordon's throw from left to the plate was in time to keep Willi Castro from scoring the go-ahead run on the play.

Yankees 10, Rangers 1

James Paxton tied a season-high with 12 strikeouts while pitching seven scoreless innings of one-hit ball, and New York hit five homers in a rout over visiting Texas. Gary Sanchez homered twice and Didi Gregorius belted a three-run homer for the Yankees, who won for the seventh time in nine games a day after getting blanked for the first time in 221 games. Brett Gardner and Edwin Encarnacion added two-run homers for the Yankees, who raised their season total to 261 — six away from the single-season franchise record they set last season.

Dodgers 5, Rockies 3

Russell Martin and David Freese hit back-to-back home runs in the seventh inning, and Justin Turner added another homer in the eighth inning as Los Angeles rallied for a victory over visiting Colorado. The Dodgers increased their home run total to 248, one shy of the 2000 Houston Astros, who hold the National League record for a single season. Daniel Murphy and Nolan Arenado hit home runs while Chi Chi Gonzalez pitched into the seventh inning, but the Rockies saw their losing streak extend to eight games, matching a season high.

Diamondbacks 2, Padres 1

Ketel Marte had three hits, Josh Rojas had two hits and an RBI, and Merrill Kelly threw seven scoreless innings in Arizona's victory over San Diego at Phoenix. Kelly (10-13) gave up three hits and struck out nine while outdueling Padres right-hander Ronald Bolanos, who gave up two runs and five hits in six innings in his major league debut. San Diego broke up the shutout in

the ninth inning on a two-out RBI single by Wil Myers before Archie Bradley struck out Nick Martini with the bases loaded for his 11th save, all since July 30.

Twins 6, Red Sox 5

Miguel Sano slugged a two-run home run, Nelson Cruz added a solo shot, and Minnesota held off host Boston in the opener of a three-game series. Sano had three RBIs, and Jake Cave drove in a pair for Minnesota, which won for the ninth time in its past 10 games. Rafael Devers crushed a three-run homer, and Andrew Benintendi also went deep for the Red Sox, who fell for just the third time in their past nine games.

A's 7, Angels 5

Matt Chapman hit a three-run homer, and Seth Brown drove in two runs with a pair of triples, helping host Oakland overcome Mike Trout's 44th home run in a victory over Los Angeles. Mike Fiers ran his unbeaten streak to 21 starts despite serving up home runs to Trout and Albert Pujols, benefitting from four innings of one-run relief by the Oakland bullpen in a game that was tied 5-5 in the middle of the sixth. Brown's second triple came in the bottom of the sixth, scoring Mark Canha to put Oakland on top for good at 6-5. Kris Davis followed with a sacrifice fly to give the A's a two-run cushion.

Brewers 4, Astros 2

Jordan Lyles scattered six hits and two runs over 6 1/3 innings as host Milwaukee earned a split of its two-game interleague series against Houston. Lyles (10-8) improved to 5-1 with a 2.56 ERA over seven starts since joining the Brewers via a trade with Pittsburgh on July 29. Zack Greinke (14-5) took his first loss in six starts with the Astros. He allowed four runs on eight hits with four strikeouts over six innings. Astros center fielder George Springer was carted off the field after the top of the fifth inning after crashing into the outfield wall while corraling a Ryan Braun fly ball. He was being evaluated for a head injury, and the team listed him as day-to-day.

Phillies 6, Reds 2

Bryce Harper drove in his 100th run of the season to help lift visiting Philadelphia over Cincinnati, becoming the first Phillies hitter with at least 30 home runs and 100 RBIs in a season since Ryan Howard in 2011. Scott Kingery homered for the second consecutive game, Adam Haseley doubled twice and scored two runs, and J.T. Realmuto and Corey Dickerson added two hits apiece for the Phillies, who have won the first two games of the four-game series. Nick Vincent (1-2), Ranger Suarez, Mike Morin, Jose Alvarez and Hector Neris each threw one scoreless inning of relief for Philadelphia, which won the series opener 7-1 on Monday. Blake Parker gave up Cincinnati's second run, in the eighth inning.

Cubs 6, Mariners 1

Nicholas Castellanos hit a three-run homer and finished with four RBIs, Willson Contreras and Kyle Schwarber added solo shots, and Chicago cruised over visiting Seattle. Contreras went deep in his first game back from a stint on the injured list because of a right hamstring strain. Ben Zobrist also enjoyed a successful return to the Cubs as he went 1-for-3 with a walk and two runs in his first appearance since leaving the team in early May because of personal reasons. Chicago



WASHINGTON: Kurt Suzuki #28 of the Washington Nationals hits a walk off three run home run in the ninth inning during a baseball game against the New York Mets at Nationals Park in Washington, DC. —AFP

Marlins 5, Pirates 4

Garrett Cooper's 444-foot home run in the 10th inning gave visiting Miami a win over Pittsburgh to break a three-game losing streak. Cooper also had an RBI double, and Miguel Rojas hit a tying homer in the ninth for Miami, which had lost 15 straight road games. Adam Conley (2-7) got the final out in the ninth, and Jose Urena pitched the 10th for his first save. Adam Frazier hit a solo homer and a two-run single for Pittsburgh, which had won four straight.

Braves 7, Blue Jays 2

Ronald Acuna Jr. emerged from a slump to hit a triple and score twice in Atlanta's win over visiting Toronto. Acuna, who went 1-for-4 with a walk, ended an 0-for-15 streak with a leadoff triple and came around to score the first run. He scored again in the fifth, giving him a National League-best 111 runs. The Braves won their sixth straight and 14th in their last 16, and they have claimed 10 in a row at home, leaving them two shy of the franchise's modern-era record set in 2000.

Cardinals 1, Giants 0

Jack Flaherty threw eight scoreless innings to lead the St. Louis past visiting San Francisco. The Cardinals won for the 20th time in their last 25 games while the Giants lost for the seventh time in eight games. Flaherty (9-7) allowed just two baserunners: Stephen Vogt on a second-inning walk and Mike Yastrzemski with a single with two outs in the sixth. Carlos Martinez, pitching for the fourth straight day, closed out the Giants in the ninth inning to earn his 18th save. Marcell Ozuna's sixth-inning homer produced the game's only run.

White Sox 6, Indians 5

James McCann belted a three-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning, and Eloy Jimenez followed with his second homer of the night as visiting Chicago posted a victory over Cleveland. The late rally helped Chicago snap a season-high-tying, seven-game losing streak and improve to 8-6 against Cleveland this season. Roberto Perez's three-run homer off Evan Marshall (4-2) staked the Indians to a 5-2 lead in the seventh inning before the White Sox rallied for four runs in the eighth against Carlos Carrasco (4-7).

Orioles 4, Rays 2 (Game 1)

Anthony Santander hit a tiebreaking home run in the sixth inning, and Baltimore snapped Tampa Bay's five-game winning streak with a victory in the opener of a doubleheader in St. Petersburg, Fla. Trying to avoid any potential impact from Hurricane Dorian, a decision was made to move up Wednesday's scheduled series finale to Tuesday, forcing the traditional doubleheader. Both teams will be off Wednesday. After Baltimore's Rio Ruiz tied the game at 2 with a two-run homer in the fifth, Santander put the visitors ahead with a solo shot down the right field line the next inning. The victory snapped a three-game slide for the Orioles, who got an insurance RBI double from Mark Trumbo in the ninth.

Rays 2, Orioles 0 (Game 2)

Austin Meadows hit a fourth-inning solo homer, and seven Tampa Bay pitchers held Baltimore to five hits to secure a split of the doubleheader in St. Petersburg, Fla. The Rays used a bullpen approach to stymie Baltimore hitters in the nightcap. Diego Castillo (3-8) was credited with the win after pitching two innings and Emilio Pagan earned his 17th save, as the Rays as a staff struck out 13 without a walk. Tampa Bay's Ji-Man Choi left the game in the seventh after being hit in the face by the ball while sliding into third on a triple. Teammate Eric Sogard exited in the eighth when he was beated in helmet by a pitch. —Reuters

Victory for Sebastian Soderberg at the 2019 Omega Masters

CRANS: Sebastian Soderberg of Sweden has won the 2019 OMEGA Masters in Crans Montana. The dramatic final day finished with a play-off involving five golfers at the top of the leaderboard, including the current World Number 2, Rory McIlroy. Soderberg's superb precision and play helped him to earn the eventual win and the tournament's top prize - including the winner's check, trophy, red championship jacket and an OMEGA Seamaster Aqua Terra 150M Master Chronometer.



Sebastian Soderberg & Raynald Aeschlimann



Sebastian Soderberg

OMEGA is a company of the Swatch Group, the largest manufacturer and distributor of watches and jewellery in the world. The 41mm watch features a symmetrical 18K Sednagold case and a sun-brushed brown dial with a distinctive horizontal "teak" pattern. There is also a date window at 6 o'clock and 18K Sednagold hands and indexes filled with white Super-LumiNova. Presented on a brown leather strap, the timepiece is powered by the OMEGA Master Chronometer calibre 8901, certified at the industry's highest standard for precision and performance by the Swiss Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS). This is the 19th year that OMEGA has title-sponsored the competition, which is celebrating its 80th edition this year.

OMEGA was thrilled to watch its own players, including Rory McIlroy, Sergio Garcia and Tommy Fleetwood join a very strong leaderboard, including the

eventual winner Sebastian Soderberg, for the four days of competition. Raynald Aeschlimann, President and CEO of OMEGA, watched the action unfold and said, "The OMEGA Masters is one of our favourite sporting competitions and it has been great to watch another year of top talent right here at our home in Switzerland. Many congratulations to Sebastian Soderberg. He showed exactly what it takes to win here and he should

be immensely proud of his achievement." The OMEGA Masters is renowned for its heritage, famed winners and majestic mountain scenery that delights players and spectators every year. Although it was first played in 1923, this prestigious competition has been title sponsored by OMEGA since 2001. Taking place in Switzerland, it is a special "home advantage" for the brand.

Fearless Japan relish rematch against Boks

TOKYO: Coach Jamie Joseph insisted that World Cup hosts Japan will have no fear going into their final warm-up against revenge-seeking South Africa after naming a strong team Wednesday. The last time the teams met, hitherto tournament no-hopers Japan stunned the Springboks 34-32 on the English south

coast in their opening game of the 2015 World Cup — an upset of such seismic proportions a movie about it has just been released.

Adamant there will be no sequel, Joseph's opposite number, South Africa coach Rassie Erasmus, named a full-strength side for Friday's encounter in Kumagaya, north of Tokyo. The return to the starting line-up of Springbok captain Siya Kolisi after injury is the only change to the team that drew 16-16 with the All Blacks in Wellington six weeks ago on the way to capturing their first Rugby Championship since 2009.

"We're elated that coach Erasmus has picked what I think is their strongest line-

up," Joseph said after countering with a starting fifteen led by talismanic captain Michael Leitch, now recovered from a lengthy groin problem.

"It shows respect and it gives our players something to look forward to. I've faced a lot of questions this last week about if I think it's a risky game before the World Cup but unless we play the best teams, we'll never get a true measure of where we are."

Joseph, who took over from Eddie Jones after the last World Cup, has set a target of reaching the quarter-finals for the first time and the Brave Blossoms limbered up by winning the Pacific Nations Cup over the summer.

"Obviously this is a step up," said the former All Black, who has left out experienced hooker Shota Horie to give him time to recover from a neck issue, replacing him with Atsushi Sakate in a meaty front row also including Uwe Helu and Luke Thompson.

"It will be a physical World Cup," added Joseph, whose side kick things off against Russia in Tokyo on September 20 before further Pool A games against Ireland, Samoa and Scotland. "That's part of the reason we wanted to play South Africa. It's the final page in our preparation, but it's not a must-win game — the next game (against Russia) is a must-win. It's about performance." —AFP

England pick Marchant for Italy match despite WCup omission

LONDON: England have selected from outside their World Cup squad for Friday's final warm-up match against Italy by naming Joe Marchant at outside centre in a "mix-and-match selection".

Marchant is not in the 31-man squad bound for Japan on September 8 but slots into the midfield alongside Piers Francis, with captain Owen Farrell starting the final warm-up fixture at fly-half.

Two further players not picked for Japan 2019 are present on the bench in lock Charlie Ewells and flanker Matt Kvesic.

Ruaridh McClochie finally makes his debut on the right wing after two aborted attempts in the double header against Wales due to hip and hamstring injuries. The Bath sevens specialist forms a rapid back three alongside Anthony Watson and Leicester flyer Jonny May. Henry Slade has lost his battle with a knee injury and misses the last opportunity to get some game time before the World Cup and Ben Youngs is given another run at scrum-half.

Star number eight Billy Vunipola will make his fourth start of the campaign. Mark Wilson makes his first start of the summer at openside flanker and Tom Curry is given another run at six. "We have gone with a mix-and-match selection policy to develop our adaptability and the team's ability to cope with any situation," said England coach Eddie Jones.

England have enjoyed a promising World Cup warm-up series, with a win against Wales at Twickenham and crushing victory over Ireland only slightly offset by a narrow defeat in Cardiff. Italy complete the four fixtures in the nation's first outing at St James's Park, two days before the squad set off for a pre-tournament training camp in Miyazaki.

"We have had a solid training week in Treviso with hot conditions so we are looking forward to testing ourselves against Italy on Friday night," said Jones. "Then we hop on the plane and are ready to go to Japan." —AFP

Sports

Smith holds firm in Ashes return after Stuart Broad double strike

Persistent rain kept players off the field for several hours

MANCHESTER: Steve Smith marked his Test return after suffering concussion by helping Australia recover from the early loss of their openers on the first day of the fourth Ashes Test at Old Trafford yesterday.

Australia were 98-2 off 26 overs at lunch after Stuart Broad's double strike, which included David Warner's exit for a duck, reduced them to 28-2. Marnus Labuschagne was 49 not out and on the verge of his fourth successive Test fifty since coming in as Smith's concussion substitute.

Smith, felled by a 92 miles-per-hour (148 kph) Jofra Archer bouncer in the drawn second Test at Lord's, was 28 not out after adding an unbroken 70 for the third wicket with Labuschagne. Persistent rain during and after the scheduled 40-minute lunch break kept the players off the field for several hours, although the umpires were aiming for a 4:00 pm (1500 GMT) restart. Ashes-holders Australia are looking to bounce back from a stunning one-wicket defeat in the third Test at Headingley, where Ben Stokes's 135 not out saw England square the five-match series at 1-1.

Australia captain Tim Paine took the bold decision to bat first after winning the toss, even though both top orders have struggled this Ashes. But just four balls into the innings Broad, again leading England's attack in the absence of regular new-ball partner James Anderson, had Warner caught behind for nought as he tried to withdraw his bat — a carbon copy of one of the left-

handers' dismissals earlier this series.

It was the fifth time Broad had snared Warner this series. Marcus Harris had kept his place alongside Warner at the top of the order after Australia dropped the struggling Usman Khawaja but the left-hander fell for 13 when Broad trapped him lbw from around the wicket with a ball that nipped back.

Kumar Dharmasena eventually responded to Broad's prolonged appeal by raising his finger, with his decision upheld on umpire's call after Harris's review, leaving Australia in trouble at 28-2.

Harris's exit brought Smith to the crease for his first Test innings since Lord's, a match where he made 92 despite being struck by Archer.

Smith, who had scored 144 and 142 in Australia's 251-run win in the series opener at Edgbaston — his first Test since a 12-month ball-tampering ban — left his first ball, from Archer.

But Smith, top of the world Test batting rankings, got off the mark fifth ball by expertly driving Archer through extra-cover for four. All-rounder Stokes did cut one back sharply to Labuschagne but England's review of Marais Erasmus's not out lbw decision foundered on umpire's call.

Smith was soon back in the old routine, pulling Stokes for four, with Labuschagne square-driving fast bowler Craig Overton, the only change to England's side, for his eighth boundary. —AFP



MANCHESTER: Australia's Steve Smith ducks a bouncer on the first day of the fourth Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at Old Trafford in Manchester, north-west England yesterday. —AFP

Rashid 'excited' to lead Afghans in Bangladesh Test

CHITTAGONG: Afghanistan's spin prodigy Rashid Khan faces a tough challenge as he captains his side for the first time against Bangladesh in only his war-torn country's third Test starting today. Afghanistan obtained Test status in 2017. In their first outing in June 2018 India thrashed them inside two days, but in the second in March they beat fellow newcomers Ireland by seven wickets.

Leg-spinner Rashid was named skipper for all three formats after their dire World Cup campaign in England and Wales when they lost all nine matches and were dogged by several controversies.

The Indian Premier League (IPL) star will become the youngest ever Test captain at the age of 20 years 350 days when he steps out in the Test match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

He will overtake Zimbabwe's Tatenda Taibu, who made his debut as Test captain just eight days older than Rashid against Sri Lanka at Harare in 2004. "It's quite good to be leading the team at such young age I think. It's a big opportunity for me to learn something in a very young age," Rashid told reporters in Chittagong yesterday.

"Representing your team in Test matches is always a huge proud moment and a pleasure for me. But leading the team is something very special." The Afghan side have been through turmoil in recent months.

In April 2019, the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) named Rahmat Shah as Test captain, replacing Asghar Afghan, who led the side in their first two Test matches. But Rashid's appointment as Test captain after the World Cup means Shah was removed before he took charge of a match.

They will be up against a side who have won five of their last 10 Tests at home, including one each against England and Australia. Bangladesh are expected to field a spin-heavy attack against the visitors for the one-off Test, but interim Afghan coach Andy Moles said they have no fear.

"We have massive respect for Bangladesh team. They are a level above us. (But) we are not scared of Bangladesh," Moles told reporters in Chittagong on Monday. "We are under no illusion that this is going to be a tough examination of our skills. If we could show application and concentration, we are capable of doing something special over the next five days."

Bangladesh Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan said he was not bothered by criticism for their over-reliance on spin. Bangladesh played their last home Test against West Indies in November without any pace bowlers. And Mustafizur Rahman, their lone pacer in the two-match series, bowled just four overs in the opening Test.

Four spinners accounted for all 40 wickets as Bangladesh defeated West Indies 2-0 in the series. "I personally don't feel bothered. When we play in England and Australia, they play four seamers and no spinner. Do we criticise that?" Shakib said ahead of Afghanistan Test.

"So I don't think there is anything to be worried about this," he said. Bangladesh (from): Shadman Islam, Momintul Haque, Soumya Sarkar, Shakib Al Hasan (capt), Mahmudullah Riyad, Mohammad Mithun, Mushfiqur Rahim, Liton Das, Taijul Islam, Mosaddek Hossain, Nayeem Hasan, Mehedi Hasan, Taskin Ahmed, Ebadat Hossain, Abu Jayed.

Afghanistan (from): Rashid Khan (capt), Ihsanullah Janat, Javid Ahmadi, Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmat Shah, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Asghar Afghan, Ikram Alikhil, Mohammad Nabi, Qais Ahmad, Sayed Ahmad Shirzad, Yamin Ahmadzai, Zahir Khan Pakteen, Afsar Zazai, Shapoor Zadran. —AFP

Pakistan appoints Misbah head coach, chief selector

LAHORE: Pakistan yesterday appointed former captain Misbah-ul-Haq as head coach and chief selector in a bid to lift the national team's performance. The cricket-mad nation failed to reach the semi-finals of the 2019 World Cup in July, prompting the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) not to renew head coach Mickey Arthur's tenure.

Bowling coach Azhar Mahmood and batting coach Grant Flower were also shown the door. The PCB said Misbah will be head coach for three years. "Former captain Misbah is confirmed as Pakistan men's national team head coach in all three formats on a three-year contract," said a statement.

"In line with the PCB's commitment to ensure transparency, accountability and role clarity at all levels, Misbah was also named as the chairman of selectors with head coaches of the six first-class cricket association sides as his fellow

selectors." Misbah will be Pakistan's 30th head coach — but it is the first time that the head coach will also be the chief selector, along the lines of the system in New Zealand. Another former captain, legendary paceman Waqar Younis, was named as bowling coach for three years. He had two previous stints as head coach.

A five-man PCB committee also interviewed former Australian batsman Dean Jones and former Pakistan coach Mohsin Khan before deciding unanimously in Misbah's favour. Misbah and Younis will start with a three one-day internationals and three Twenty20s at home against Sri Lanka from September 27 to October 9.

Pakistan travel to Australia in November for Tests in Brisbane and Adelaide. Misbah is Pakistan's most successful Test captain with 26 wins in 56 Tests and 11 draws. He played 75 Tests, 162 one-day internationals and 39 Twenty20 matches for Pakistan in a career which ended in 2017.

Misbah described the role as challenging. "I know expectations are high, but I am absolutely ready and up for the task otherwise I would not have thrown my name in the hat for one of the most challenging and covet-



LAHORE: Former Pakistani cricket captain and newly appointed head coach of national cricket team Misbah-ul-Haq speaks during a press conference in Lahore yesterday. Pakistan appointed former captain Misbah-ul-Haq as head coach and chief selector in a bid to lift the national team's performance. —AFP

ed roles in Pakistan cricket," he said in a press release.

"We have some of the most talented and exciting cricketers, and I will like to help them train and prepare in such a way that they can play intelligently, smartly and fearlessly. "I am aware this

will require a change in the dressing room culture but if we have to compete consistently at the highest level, we have to embrace these modern day requirements." Pakistan are seventh in Test rankings, sixth in ODIs but are top ranked in Twenty20s. —AFP

Cowboys, Elliott agree to \$90m deal

NEW YORK: Running back Ezekiel Elliott and the Dallas Cowboys agreed to a six-year, \$90 million contract that ends his five-week holdout and makes possible his presence in the starting lineup Sunday against the New York Giants.

ESPN reported Elliott is in line to receive \$30 million in guarantees, trumping the \$45 million Todd Gurley received from the Rams. Elliott is expected at practice on Wednesday, not long after Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and his son and team vice president Stephen Jones rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange.

Elliott and his agent, Rocky Arceneaux, left his holdout headquarters in Cabo San Lucas on Monday with the expectation that a contract extension with the Cowboys

would be finalized before the Week 1 home game against the team's NFC East rival.

Arceneaux told reporters at the DFW International Airport that a deal is "very close." "I think Zeke is showing he's committed by coming back to Dallas," Arceneaux said. "We didn't come here not to do a deal. We're talking. They're committed and we're committed. That's why we are here."

Elliott bolted for Mexico in July as the Cowboys boarded a team charter for Oxnard, Calif., site of their summertime training camp. Elliott, 24, has two years remaining on his rookie contract and is scheduled to earn \$3,853,000 in 2019 and \$9,099,000 in 2020. The two-time NFL rushing champion is targeting a deal that would make him the highest-paid player at the position.

According to ESPN's Adam Schefter, Dallas' five-year contract extension with right tackle La'el Collins that was made official on Tuesday freed up almost \$6 million in salary-cap space. Some of that could be earmarked for Elliott, although the



Ezekiel Elliott

Cowboys have a queue of skill-position talent waiting to be paid.

Quarterback Dak Prescott, who did not hold out, is reportedly chasing a contract worth \$35 million or more per season. Wide receiver Amari Cooper is in the final year of

his deal, and the receiver market continues to escalate. Saints star Michael Thomas signed a five-year, \$100 million deal in August, and Falcons All-Pro Julio Jones is in line to raise the bar higher in his ongoing negotiations with Atlanta. —Reuters

Brady, Patriots chase more history as NFL centenary kicks off

LOS ANGELES: New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady is plotting another improbable chapter of his record-breaking career as the National Football League kicks off its 100th season today.

Almost 100 years after the Dayton Triangles defeated the Columbus Panhandles in what is regarded as the first meeting between two NFL teams, the Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers will launch the 2019-2020 campaign in a blockbuster season-opener at Soldier Field. Thursday's kick-off marks the 199th game between the two bitter NFC North rivals, who will play out the 200th instalment of their rivalry at Lambeau Field later in the season.

Brady and the Patriots meanwhile make their season bow in another eye-catching divisional clash on Sunday, when they face Ben Roethlisberger and the Pittsburgh Steelers at Gillette Stadium. The Patriots start the season as the team to beat, led by the age-defying 42-year-old Brady in what will be the quarterback's 20th season in the NFL. Brady completed the 2018-2019 season by winning a record sixth Super Bowl crown as the Patriots shut down

the free-scoring Los Angeles Rams in Atlanta.

Once again, Brady will start the season looking over his shoulder at a crop of talented young rivals eager to knock the veteran quarterback and the Patriots off their perch. If recent history is any guide, however, Brady will be relishing the challenge. Last season Brady outduelled the Kansas City Chiefs' young prodigy Patrick Mahomes in the AFC Championship game, before nervlessly vanquishing Jared Goff and the Rams in a low-scoring Super Bowl.

Brady, who signed a new contract with the Patriots last month, says his latest arm-wrestle with Father Time represents a journey into the unknown. "I'm ready to go this year and that's really what matters," Brady said.

"It's a unique situation I'm in. I'm in my 20th year with the same team. I'm 42 years old, so pretty much uncharted territory, I think, for everybody."

After becoming the oldest quarterback to win the Super Bowl last season, Brady could become the second quarterback to reach four consecutive Super Bowls this year.

A successful defence of the NFL crown would make the Patriots only the second team in history to win back-to-back Super Bowls. Brady, however, heads into the season missing one of his favourite receiving targets following the retirement of tight-end Rob Gronkowski.

However Patriots head coach Bill Belichick has proven time and again that he remains a master of roster manipulation, repeatedly building championship-winning teams despite retirement or departure of key figures.

Gronkowski's decision to quit the sport at the age of 29, meanwhile, and the stunning retirement of Indianapolis Colts quarterback Andrew Luck on August 24, were further reminders of the brutal demands that the NFL makes of its players.

Gronkowski revealed he had known during the Super Bowl win over the Rams that he was probably playing his last win, describing being in tears on the night of the victory as he struggled with pain from a muscle injury.

Luck meanwhile shocked the NFL with his retirement last month, saying he was weary from an "unceasing, unrelenting" cycle of injuries. "The only way I see out is to no longer play football," the 29-year-old said.

Whether Luck and Gronkowski's early retirements are the first sign of a trend of players deciding to hang up their cleats earlier, or an outlier, remains to be seen.

Either way, however, the NFL remains far and away the most watched professional sports league in the United States, even allowing for recent dips in viewing figures.

This season meanwhile may see the patience of fans put to the test, with the introduction of video reviews designed to correct particularly egregious refereeing blunders.

The use of video replay technology has been expanded to cover pass interference calls after a botched call in last year's NFC Championship game between the Rams and New Orleans Saints, which ultimately cost the Saints a certain victory. Critics fear the expanded use of video replays will lead to more stoppages. —AFP

Sports

Love match: Romance powers Svitolina and Monfils at US Open

Svitolina, credits Monfils with helping raise her game

NEW YORK: Elina Svitolina's blossoming romance with Gael Monfils is propelling the couple's deep runs at the US Open, and the Ukrainian urged the French star to keep pace after Tuesday's quarter-final victory.

Svitolina, who broke the psychological barrier of reaching a Grand Slam semi-final at Wimbledon in July, became the first Ukrainian to make the last four of the US Open with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Britain's Johanna Konta. Boyfriend Monfils, the 13th seed in the men's draw, is through to a fourth quarter-final at Flushing Meadows and will look to equal his best Slam run when he meets Italian Matteo Berrettini later.

"We are pushing each other and we are now trying to join each other in the semi-finals," Svitolina said. "Now it's time for him to step up his game!" The pair set up a joint Instagram account, which currently attracts close to 100,000 followers, after going public with their relationship at this year's Australian Open.

Svitolina, 24, credits Monfils with helping raise her game as she looks to translate last year's WTA Finals success in Singapore into a maiden Grand Slam singles triumph for Ukraine.

She is attempting to go one step further than compatriot Andrei Medvedev, who lost the men's 1999 French Open final in five sets to Andre Agassi. "I think hitting with him, it has definitely helped me to improve my reaction and my footwork, move really quickly," Svitolina said of the impact Monfils has had.

"I think (I'm) more calm, if you want to describe it in few words. It's more calm and I talk more now with my coach. I'm more open with my coach and also with, you know, with Gael about the tennis and my feelings. This really changed, I think, for the past, I don't know, nine, 10 months."

Monfils watched from Svitolina's players box as she faced Simona Halep at Wimbledon, although she was blown away by the eventual champion in her first major semi-final after four losing quarter-final appearances at other Slams.

"He's there for me, he's supporting me, and I'm there for him as well," she said during her run at the All England Club. "He understands, I understand, what we're going through. It's great."

Svitolina will have another chance Thursday to reach her first Grand Slam final, and she believes lessons learned from past failures have prepared her to take the next step. "I had some tough matches round of 16, quarter-finals before I started to win them. I think it's been tough and painful losses sometimes, but I think they gave me this push, this confidence and maybe helped me in some matches," Svitolina said.

"I don't think that I was expecting going into this tournament that I'm going to make semis. I'm just taking one match at a time. "It's a Grand Slam. There is lots of pressure. You have to just go out there, do your job and don't think too much what's going on around you, and who handles it the best wins."

Svitolina, set to climb to at least third in the WTA rankings after her performance here, could next face Serena Williams, who is seeking a 24th Grand Slam crown to equal the all-time record held by Australia's Margaret Court.

"Definitely it's a big challenge to play against her. I mean, doesn't really matter who I'm going to play in semi-final. It's a challenge," Svitolina said. "Person who reaches the semi-final is playing well. It's something that you have to bring your best game to beat them." — AFP



Svitolina (right) and Monfils.

Metzelder investigated over child pornography

BERLIN: Former Germany and Real Madrid footballer Christoph Metzelder, 38, is under investigation for allegedly sharing child pornography via the messaging service WhatsApp, German prosecutors confirmed yesterday.

"We can confirm an investigation against Christoph Metzelder on suspicion of sharing child pornography, including digital images," a spokeswoman for the Hamburg prosecutor's office, Liddy Oechtering, told AFP.

The 2002 World Cup finalist is alleged to have used WhatsApp to send pornographic photos of children to a woman in Hamburg, Oechtering said.

The recipient of the photos was then questioned as a witness after a third person had reported the transfer of images to Hamburg police, Oechtering later clarified to national news agency DPA.

The spokeswoman confirmed reports that investigators had carried out raids in two locations on Tuesday, but declined to give further details.

According to a report in Der Spiegel magazine, the raids were on Metzelder's home and offices in Duesseldorf, and led to the seizure of a laptop and a mobile phone.

Oechtering said the footballer had not been detained, adding that "we are currently analysing the materials seized".

Metzelder played for major clubs such as Madrid and Borussia Dortmund in a career spanning 15 years.

He retired from football in 2014 and has since worked as a pundit for Sky Sports Germany and president of his local club TuS Haltern.

Since 2006, the 38-year-old has run a foundation in his own name to



Christoph Metzelder

support socially disadvantaged children across Germany.

He has also recently appeared as a pundit on public broadcaster ARD, which said Wednesday that it had "suspended the co-operation until the accusations have been clarified". His is the second high-profile legal case involving a former Germany defender in two days.

On Tuesday, prosecutors in Munich confirmed that Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng was under investigation for a reported dangerous assault on his ex-partner. —AFP

AIU will not appeal USADA decision to withdraw charge against Coleman

NEW YORK: The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) said yesterday it would not appeal the decision by the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) to withdraw a whereabouts charge against American sprinter Christian Coleman.

USADA had charged Coleman with three failures to properly file whereabouts information in a 12-month period, but withdrew it on Monday after receiving guidance from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on how to calculate the window.

The AIU, which oversees integrity issues in international athletics, including doping, had the right to appeal but said they would not exercise that option.

"Based on the facts of the case and clear advice about the interpretation of the current International Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI) received from WADA, the AIU has decided not to appeal the USADA decision regarding Coleman," AIU chairman David Howman said in a statement.

Coleman had been charged because athletes are required to notify anti-doping officials where they can be reached for a certain period daily.

If testers cannot contact the athlete at the designated location three times inside a 12-month period, he is considered to have committed an anti-doping violation and subject to a ban of up to two years.

USADA said Coleman had whereabouts failures on June 6, 2018 and January 16 and April 26, 2019, but under ISTI guidelines, the first failure is backdated to the first day of the quarter, which in Coleman's case would have been April 1, 2018.

His April 2019 failure, therefore, fell outside the 12-month window and was not considered an anti-doping violation. The AIU said it would welcome changes to the rules to ensure filing failures are no longer backdated.

"We note that the ISTI is currently under review by WADA and we would support a change in the wording to ensure that in the future, filing failures are recognised when they occur and never backdated," Howman added.

Coleman is set to represent the United States in the 100 and 200 metres at the Sept. 27-Oct. 6 world championships in Doha. — Reuters

Inter fans tell Lukaku monkey chants are 'not racist'

MILAN: A group of hardcore Inter Milan supporters have written an open letter to Romelu Lukaku telling the Belgian striker that fans making monkey noises during a football match was not a sign of racism.

Lukaku — Inter Milan's new 65 million euros (\$73 million) recruit from Manchester United — was targeted by monkey chants from a section of the home crowd during Sunday's Serie A game at Cagliari. The abuse lasted for several seconds as the 26-year-old was preparing to take the winning penalty in Inter's 2-1 Serie A triumph at Cagliari.

But Inter's fan group 'L'Urlo della Nord' told the forward in an open letter published on their Facebook page that he was seeing racism where there was none. "Hi Romelu. We are really sorry you thought that what happened in Cagliari was racist," the fans wrote.

"You have to understand that Italy is not like many other north European countries where racism is a REAL problem. "We understand that it could have seemed racist to you, but it is not like that.

"In Italy we use some 'ways' only to 'help our teams' and to try to make our opponents nervous, not for racism but to mess them up." "We are a multi-ethnic fans organisation and we have always welcomed players from everywhere.

"However, we have always used that 'way' with other teams' players in the past and we probably will in the future. "We are not racist and so are not the Cagliari fans," continued the letter from the "Curva Nord" group — which has no official affiliation with Inter.

The group is a section of the club's hardcore support that sit in the north stand of Inter's San Siro stadium. On Sunday, monkey sounds could



Romelu Lukaku

be heard in the stadium as Lukaku was trying to take a penalty.

The Belgian international angrily looked towards the stands before confidently converting his second goal in as many games. Lukaku was quickly surrounded by his teammates as Inter won their second from two league matches to sit ahead of champions Juventus.

The Sardinian club on Monday moved to "strongly distance" themselves "from the isolated but nevertheless reprehensible events that took place in the Sardegna Arena".

On Monday, Lukaku called on players, clubs and federations to unite and take a stand. "Ladies and gentlemen it's 2019, instead of going forward we're going backwards and I think as players we need to unify and make a statement on this matter to keep this game clean and enjoyable for everyone." But Inter's hardcore fans said Lukaku was seeing racism where there was none. "Please consider this attitude of Italian fans as a form of respect for the fact they are afraid of you for the goals you might score against their teams and not because they hate

you or they are racist," the letter read.

"You have to understand that in all Italian stadiums people cheer for their teams but at the same time they cheer opponents not for racism but to 'help' their own team. "True racism is a completely different story and all Italian football fans know it very well.

"When you declare that racism is a problem to be fought in Italy you just help the repression against all football fans including us and you contribute to create a problem that is not really there, not in the way that is perceived in other countries.

"Please help us to clarify what racism really is and that Italian fans are not racist." Racist chanting has dogged Italian stadia in recent years, with Italy striker Moise Kean also the victim of similar abuse — alongside teammate Blaise Matuidi — at Cagliari after he scored a goal there for his former team Juventus last April.

Kalidou Koulibaly was showered with monkey chants last season by Lukaku's new fans at the San Siro, while several other black players have been targeted. — AFP

Bayern Munich report record profits

BERLIN: German champions Bayern Munich announced record turnover yesterday of 750.4 million euros (\$827m, 677m pounds) over the 2018-2019 season, with after-tax profits surging 78% to 52.5 million euros.

"Income from matches and TV rights has risen, and we have achieved record figures regarding sponsorship income," the club's deputy chairman Jan-Christian Dreesen said on Bayern's website.

Merchandising sales had stabilised, he added, despite declines in the sector across Europe. Turnover was up 14.12% from the previous year while profit before tax rose 63%. "These excellent results are all the more astonishing given Bayern, despite winning the German Cup, were eliminated at a very early stage of the lucrative Champions League," said economic daily Handelsblatt.

Turnover still trails Spanish giants Barcelona, with figures approaching one billion euros while turnover at Real Madrid stands at 757 million excluding transfers.

Top English clubs have yet to report their results for the last financial period by the Premier League's richest club, Manchester United, reported record turnover of 580 million pounds in 2018. — AFP

25 Nationals shock Mets with 7-run ninth inning in 11-10 thriller

26 Pakistan appoints Misbah head coach, chief selector

27 Love match: Romance powers Svitolina and Monfils at US Open



NEW YORK: Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria returns the ball against Roger Federer of Switzerland in their Men's Singles Quarter-finals tennis match during the 2019 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York. — AFP

Dimitrov stuns Federer to reach semi

Ruthless Serena grabs 100th US Open win as record title nears

NEW YORK: Grigor Dimitrov rallied for a shocking upset of 20-time Grand Slam champion Roger Federer at the US Open on Tuesday, the lowest-ranked New York semi-finalist in 28 years advancing to face Daniil Medvedev.

The 78th-ranked Bulgarian, who had dropped all seven prior meetings with Federer, made a dramatic fightback to defeat the Swiss third seed 3-6, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 at Arthur Ashe Stadium and will face Russian fifth seed Medvedev in Friday's semis.

"I'm just happy," Dimitrov said. "The only thing I was telling myself was to stay in the match. Physically I was feeling pretty good. I was hitting some shots against him that were hard to hit."

Dimitrov reached his first US Open semi-final to match the deepest Slam runs of his career from Wimbledon in 2014 and the 2017 Australian Open.

Not since 174th-ranked Jimmy Connors reached the 1991 quarter-finals had New York seen so lowly a figure on the ATP ratings list reach the last four.

Dimitrov is also the lowest-ranked Slam semi-finalist since 94th-rated Rainer Schuettler of Germany at Wimbledon in 2008. Federer, a five-time US Open champion who has not won at Flushing Meadows since 2008, breezed through the first set in 29 minutes and appeared to have withstood the danger until Dimitrov opened the fourth set with a break.

Federer was denied on five break points in the 10th

game of the fourth set and Dimitrov held to force a fifth set. "I was trying to stay in that game and make him stay on the court as much as possible. After that he started slowing down a little bit," Dimitrov said.

"It's a best of five sets. Anything can happen." Federer went off the court for a private medical timeout to treat his upper back near his neck.

"This is Grigor's moment, not my body's moment," Federer said.

Dimitrov broke Federer twice on the way to a 4-0 lead in the final set and the 38-year-old Swiss star had no effective reply, foiled by 61 unforced errors in falling after three hours and 12 minutes.

"It's OK. It's how it goes," Federer said. "I tried my best. I fought with what I had and that's it." Federer would have become the oldest Slam semi-finalist since Jimmy Connors at age 39 at the 1991 US Open.

Medvedev defeated three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 to reach his first major semi-final, shaking off a sore left quadriceps that made him contemplate quitting the match. Now he gets two days of rest.

"That's huge advantage regarding what happened to my leg," Medvedev said. "It should be OK."

Medvedev took a medical timeout, had the area taped and took a painkiller.

"In the fourth set, I started feeling the painkiller and started moving better," he said. "For sure I hope to be

ready for the semis." Medvedev, 23, is the youngest US Open semi-finalist since Novak Djokovic in 2010 and Russia's first Slam semi-finalist since Mikhail Youzhny at the 2010 US Open.

In today's quarter-finals, Spanish second seed Rafael Nadal, an 18-time Grand Slam champion, faces Argentine 20th seed Diego Schwartzman and French 13th seed Gael Monfils plays Italian 24th seed Matteo Berrettini.

Meanwhile, Serena Williams earned her 100th win at the US Open on Tuesday with a brutal 44-minute demolition of Wang Qiang, firing an ominous warning to rivals in her pursuit of a record-tying 24th Grand Slam title. Six-time US Open champion Williams dismantled Chinese 18th seed Wang 6-1, 6-0 in a complete mismatch that was the quickest at this year's tournament to set up a semi-final clash with Ukrainian trailblazer Elina Svitolina.

Williams brought up a century of US Open wins to move to within one of the all-time leader Chris Evert.

"It's really unbelievable, literally. From when I first started here, I think I was 16, I didn't think I would ever get to 100. I didn't think I would still be out here," Williams said.

The 37-year-old American is seeking a 24th major title to match Margaret Court's longstanding record, and smacked 25 winners against first-time Slam quarter-finalist Wang, who failed to hit a single one.

The 27-year-old Wang had not lost a set during her best Slam run that included a defeat of reigning French Open champion Ashleigh Barty in the last 16, but she was powerless to stop a Williams onslaught at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Fifth seed Svitolina defeated Britain's Johanna Konta 6-4, 6-4 to become the first Ukrainian to reach the US Open semi-finals, matching her run to the last four at Wimbledon in July. "It feels amazing. It was a very, very tough match. We were both striking the ball well. It was quite even," Svitolina said. "I'm very, very happy the way I handled the pressure."

Svitolina watched a pair of match points pass her by at 5-3 on her opponent's serve as Konta gamely fought to stay alive, but the Ukrainian closed out victory in the following game.

Svitolina had already knocked out two-time former champion Venus Williams and 2017 runner-up Madison Keys and is in a class of her own as the only Ukrainian woman to reach this stage at a major.

Konta, who took out third seed and 2016 runner-up Karolina Pliskova in the last 16, was denied in her bid to be the first British woman to make the US Open semis since Jo Durie in 1983.

"She played so well, to be honest. Actually, I didn't play badly at all," said Konta, reflecting on a season in which she reached the quarter-finals or better at three Slams. — AFP

Yao Ming powerless as hosts China flop at Basketball WCup

BEIJING: Yao Ming looked on helplessly and fans were left in tears as hosts China failed to progress to the second round of the Basketball World Cup with a 72-59 defeat to Venezuela yesterday.

In a do-or-die battle to reach the next stage, it was the South Americans who appeared to relish silencing a vocal, packed crowd at Wukesong Arena in Beijing. Basketball, along with football, is the most popular sport in China. But that has failed to result in a top-class team and there is no current successor to trail-

blazer Yao. The former Houston Rockets All-Star, now 38, took over as head of the Chinese Basketball Association in 2017 and set about reforming an entrenched state development system that he says badly needs an overhaul.

He might want to ramp up his development plan after this demoralising showing on home soil, with the Venezuela defeat giving China a record of one victory — over the Ivory Coast — against two losses.

Coach Li Nan said China never fully recovered from Monday's crushing 79-76 overtime defeat to Poland. "We tried to get our mentality right, to play with confidence, but something was left over from that game," he said, calling the Venezuela defeat "a very tough loss".

Even neutrals had expected the hosts to successfully negotiate a weak Group A, where Venezuela joined Poland in the last 16, while a public of 1.4 billion was as expectant as ever.

China, ranked 30th in the world, placed their hopes

largely on the shoulders of a towering front court of three seven-footers: Yi Jianlian, Zhou Qi and Wang Zhelin. But the hosts were never really in the game against the sharp-shooting Venezuelans, ranked 20th, and China trailed a daunting 33-22 at half-time.

They made inroads on that deficit at the start of the third quarter and late in the fourth, getting within seven points, but the comeback fell short in front of the watching Yao and thousands of deflated red-shirted spectators.

Because of the format of the World Cup, China's tournament is not over and they will now need to rally themselves to compete in a low-key classification round with Tokyo 2020 Olympic qualifying in play.

"Venezuela are a very experienced team but we don't have time to dwell on the loss because we still have games to play," said Chinese guard Fang Shuo.

Red-hot Serbia showed they — not reigning two-time champions the United States — are the team to

beat with a 92-77 victory over Italy to top their group.

Gregg Popovich's Team USA were pushed to the limit on Tuesday before finally swatting aside 17th-ranked Turkey in overtime to labour into the second round.

Just 24 hours later Serbia showed the Americans how to do it against the Italians, ranked 13th, in a battle for supremacy in Group D with both teams having already stormed through to the next stage.

In the next round Italy and Serbia, who are the current Olympic silver medalists, will be in a group with Puerto Rico and Spain, who won Olympic bronze in 2016. The Sacramento Kings pair of Nemanja Bjelica and Bogdan Bogdanovic roared to the fore for the Serbs.

Bogdanovic totted up a game-leading 31 points and five steals. Bjelica, a forward, had nine assists. "He's a tough rock, tough kid, one of the toughest," said coach Sasha Djordjevic of the guard Bogdanovic. — AFP