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Netanyahu vows to annex West Bank Jordan Valley if reelected

Annexation bid 'destroys chances of peace': Palestinian official

Amir sends letter to Saudi king



JEDDAH: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah delivers a letter from HH the Amir to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz yesterday. — KUNA

JEDDAH: Representative of HH the Amir, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, delivered a letter to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz yesterday. During a meeting in Jeddah, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled handed the Saudi monarch the letter. During the talks, attended by a bevy of officials and diplomats from the two Gulf countries, the Kuwaiti foreign minister conveyed HH the Amir's warmest greetings to the Saudi king. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also met Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Mohammad bin Salman. During the meeting, held at Al-Salam Palace, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reassured the Saudi prince of the health of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The two reviewed fraternal relations between the two countries and discussed number of issues of common interest. — KUNA

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a deeply controversial pledge yesterday to annex the Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank if reelected in Sept 17 polls. "There is one place where we can apply Israeli sovereignty immediately after the elections," Netanyahu said in a televised speech. "If I receive from you, citizens of Israel, a clear mandate to do so ... today I announce my intention to apply with the formation of the next government Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea."

The prime minister also reiterated his intention to annex Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank if reelected, though in coordination with US President Donald Trump, whose long-awaited peace plan is expected to be unveiled sometime after the vote. Those moves could effectively kill any remaining hopes for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, long the focus of international diplomacy. Senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi said Netanyahu was "not only destroying the two-state solution, he is destroying all chances of peace". "This is a total game changer," she told AFP.

The Jordan Valley accounts for around one-third of the West Bank and Israeli rightwing politicians have long viewed the strategic area as a part of the territory they would never retreat from. Israeli settlements are located in what is known as Area C of the West Bank, which accounts for some 60 per-



RAMAT GAN: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu points at a map of the Jordan Valley as he gives a statement near Tel Aviv yesterday. — AFP

cent of the territory, including the vast majority of the Jordan Valley. Netanyahu said his annexation plans would not include Palestinian cities, such as the Jordan Valley's Jericho.

Netanyahu, who used a map of the Jordan Valley to illustrate his plans, said Trump's peace parameters "will place before us a great challenge and also a great opportunity". "This is a historic, onetime opportunity to apply Israeli sovereignty on our settlements... and other places of importance to our security, our heritage and our future."

Trump has thrown US support overwhelmingly in favor of Israel since taking office, including by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and cutting hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinians. Ahead of April elections, Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights, seized from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War. It is unclear if Trump, who made clear before April's vote that he would like to see Netanyahu win, will follow up with any further expressions of support before next week's election.

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News in brief

KD 8 airport tax mullied

KUWAIT: The ministry of services is reconsidering a decision that had been frozen by Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, to add KD 8 as service fees on every air ticket for flights departing from Kuwait, said informed sources. The sources added that in view of passenger traffic at Kuwait airport, where 7.38 million flight tickets were sold in 2018, the new fee will annually bring in around KD 60 million. "The new fee will most likely take effect next April with the beginning of the 2020-2021 fiscal year," the sources stressed. — A Saleh (See Page 5)

31 killed in Karbala stampede

BAGHDAD: More than 30 pilgrims died and dozens were injured yesterday in a stampede at a major shrine in the Iraqi city of Karbala on the Shiite holy day of Ashoura. As the massive crowds pressed forward on their way to Imam Hussein's gold-domed shrine, a stampede broke out that left at least 31 people dead and another 100 wounded, 10 critically, according to Iraq's health ministry. No Kuwaitis have been harmed in the stampede, Kuwait's Embassy in Baghdad confirmed. — Agencies

Diabetes risk higher for short people

PARIS: Shorter people are at greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes, according to a study published yesterday. Each additional 10 cm in height translates into a 41 percent smaller chance of contracting the disease in men and a 33 percent smaller chance in women, according to the research in medical journal Diabetologia. The greater health risk in shorter individuals is likely linked to higher liver fat content, and a larger number of risk factors for heart disease, stroke and diabetes, the authors speculated. It has also been reported that insulin sensitivity and the functioning of special cells in the pancreas that secrete the hormone are better in taller people. — AFP

India locates missing Moon lander

NEW DELHI: Indian space scientists were desperately trying yesterday to establish communication with their broken Moon lander, having located the probe that went silent moments before it was due to make a historic soft landing. The lander, called Vikram, was due to touch down on the Moon in the early hours of Saturday, but contact was lost around 2.1 km above the surface. "#VikramLander has been located by the orbiter of #Chandrayaan2, but no communication with it yet." The Indian Space Research Organization tweeted. — AFP

Kuwait Shiites mark Ashoura



KUWAIT: Mourners are seen at Bu Hamad Husseiniya in Daiya as Shiites mark Ashoura yesterday. The religious commemoration of Ashoura, which includes a 10-day mourning period starting on the first day of Muharram in the Islamic calendar, commemorates the seventh-century slaying of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) grandson Imam Hussein in Karbala. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Apple unveils iPhone 11, TV+, game service

CUPERTINO, California: Apple unveiled its iPhone 11 models yesterday, touting upgraded, ultra-wide cameras as it updated its popular smartphone lineup and cut its entry price to \$699. The newest handsets come as Apple seeks to spur new upgrades in a slumping global smartphone market. The new iPhones are "jam packed with new capabilities and an incredible new design," Apple chief executive Tim Cook told a launch event in Cupertino, California.

The surprise from Apple was the reduction in the entry-level price at \$699, down from the starting level of \$749 for the iPhone XR a year ago even as many premium devices are being priced around \$1,000. Apple additionally unveiled a more expensive "Pro" model of the iPhone 11. It also set launch dates for its original video offering, Apple TV+, and its game subscription service as part of efforts to reduce its dependence on the iPhone.

The TV+ service will launch Nov 1 in more than 100 countries at \$4.99 per month and will include a "powerful and inspiring lineup of original shows, movies and documentaries". Apple is featuring scripted dramas, comedies and movies as well as children's programs in



CUPERTINO, California: Apple CEO Tim Cook announces the new iPhone 11 Pro as he delivers the keynote address at the Steve Jobs Theater yesterday. — AFP

the service, which will compete against streaming giants like Netflix and Amazon.

The company's online gaming subscription service, Apple Arcade, will launch next week, offering exclusive titles for mobile and desktop users. The new service, which will also cost \$4.99 per month, will include more than 100 game titles made for Apple devices. Apple also unveiled updates to its iPad tablet and Apple Watch smartwatch. — AFP

Trump fires hawkish security chief Bolton

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump yesterday announced the firing of his hawkish national security advisor John Bolton, saying he disagreed "strongly" with his positions, in the latest upheaval for US foreign policy. "I asked John for his resignation, which was given to me this morning," Trump announced on Twitter, saying he would name a replacement next week. Bolton, who had been due to give a press conference at the White House less than two hours later, denied being fired and insisted instead that he'd resigned.

The news - coming days after Trump caused uproar by revealing he was canceling secret talks with Afghanistan's Taliban - stunned Washington. Bolton is a veteran and controversial figure close-



John Bolton

ly linked to the invasion of Iraq and other aggressive foreign policy decisions. He had been seen as one of the main driving forces in the White House's muscular approach to Iran, Venezuela and other trouble spots.

Famous for his moustache and ever-present yellow legal pad, the hardline former US ambassador to the United Nations had pushed back hard against Trump's dramatic, though so far stumbling attempts to negotiate with the Taliban and North Korea's Chairman Kim Jong Un.

Continued on Page 24

Iranian fan 'Blue Girl' dies after setting self on fire

TEHRAN: Iran is to probe the death of a woman football fan, state media said yesterday, after she reportedly set herself ablaze in fear of being jailed, triggering calls for an end to a ban on women attending matches. Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Masoumeh Ebtekar had asked the judiciary to look into the case in a letter, the state-run Iran newspaper reported.

Sahar Khodayari, 30, was arrested early last year when she tried to enter a stadium dressed as a man to watch her favorite team, Esteghlal FC, the Varzesh 3 sports news outlet said, citing her sister. Dubbed "Blue Girl" because of Esteghlal's colors, she set herself on fire outside the court last week after hearing someone there say she would be going to prison for six months, it said. The semi-official Shafaqa news agency said the woman died in hospital on Monday.

Iran has barred Iranian women spectators from football and other stadiums since 1981, with clerics arguing they must be protected from the masculine atmosphere and sight of semi-clad men.

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Audiences of Deputy Amir and Crown Prince



KUWAIT: His Highness Deputy Amir and Crown Prince receives His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammad.



KUWAIT: His Highness Deputy Amir, Crown Prince receives the Saudi Ambassador. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan as well as the Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al Saud. — KUNA

MOI to ensure the security worshippers in Husseniyas



KUWAIT: Minister Al-Saleh with the security services during the inspection tour. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh has stressed the need to overcome all obstacles and difficulties facing worshippers at various Husseniyas around Kuwait. A press statement issued by the Ministry's Public Relations and Security Media quoted him as stressing, during his tour on a number of Husseniyas last night, the necessity of increasing vigilance and presence of security personnel around these places.

The Ministry of Interior said that the Minister inspected security services and readiness of security personnel as well as making sure traffic was not affected. Al-Saleh also listened to briefings presented by security officials about preventive and inspection procedures established with the relevant security authorities and how to implement them at the level of security directorates throughout the country, according to the statement. Al-Saleh praised the efforts exerted by the security establishment's men and the level of their preparation and readiness. — KUNA



Oil minister hails UAE hosting of 24th WEC

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel has expressed pride of the UAE hosting of the 24th World Energy Congress, which kicked off in Abu Dhabi on Monday. "The UAE hosting of this important international event is a source of pride for the Arabian Gulf states," the minister told KUNA on the sidelines of his participation in the congress.

"I was honored to attend the congress as a representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and upon an invitation from Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan," said Al-Fadhel, also Minister of Electricity and Water. He described the

congress as one of the most prominent global events in the energy sector and the world's largest gathering of energy decision-makers to discuss using clean energy and cutting emissions.

The congress also brings together energy officials, investors and entrepreneurs to turn new ideas into successful projects, he added. The minister stated that Kuwait partakes in the event to get updated about the latest developments, innovations and international experiences in the field. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) have a pavilion at an exhibition held on the sidelines of the congress, he stated.

The triennial World Energy Congress is the World Energy Council's global flagship event offering a unique platform for global energy leaders to explore new energy futures, critical innovation areas, and new strategies. The 24th edition of the World Energy Congress is being held from 9-12 September 2019 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre. With over 15,000 participants, the Congress welcomes over 250 high-level speakers, 70 ministers, 500 CEOs, 600 media within a 40,000 sq/m exhibition space that will cover the entire energy spectrum. — KUNA



ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti Oil Minister at the World Energy Congress. — KUNA

Peacekeeping comprises a large number of partnership

NEW YORK: Kuwait has told the UN Security Council that peacekeeping is one of the tools that comprises a large number of partnerships, which could be an asset when well-handled and a burden when mismanaged. Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Mansour Al-Otaibi, speaking at a Security Council debate

on UN peacekeeping operations on Monday, said cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is a tool that has become increasingly relevant.

However, resolutions on women peacekeepers and the protection of civilians are critical in promoting such partnerships and ensuring the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, Al-Otaibi said. Al-Otaibi added that more work must be done in the area of promoting partnership. On policy, Member States must prioritize and focus more on political solutions. The Council should build on the consensus established in peacekeeping efforts and underscore the important role of its Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations chaired by Cote d'Ivoire, he said. — KUNA



The British Ambassador Michael Davenport and Canadian Ambassador Louis-Pierre Emond visited the Kuwait Times and discussed matter of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan.

Kuwait exerting great efforts to protect rights of disabled

GENEVA: Kuwait affirmed that presenting its first report on implementing the articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the UN, is part of its continuous support to disabled people. The remarks were made by Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim on Monday, at the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' (CRPD) meeting.

He noted that Kuwait had joined the agreement on 14 February 2013, to improve care provided for this category of society. He added that article 11 of the Kuwaiti constitution states that "the state shall guarantee assistance to citizens in their old age, in sickness or in disability. It shall also provide them with social insurance services, social help and medical care." Kuwait has had achievements in improving the lives of special needs people, including abiding by international laws and agreements on protecting the rights of disabled

people. It also involves closely working with the UN Development Program (UNDP) to enable them to engage in society and have proper education and job opportunities, Al-Ghunaim said.

Kuwait also issued law number 8/2010 on the rights of special needs people, stating that depriving them from their civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights due to their disability is prohibited, the ambassador said. He added that the country then established the Public Authority of The Disabled, tasked with ensuring that the rights of this category of society are not violated in anyway. Meanwhile, Al-Ghunaim noted that Kuwait signed partnerships with the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and UNDP to achieve "Kuwait Vision 2035 for the disabled." The vision focuses on boosting the authority's work to allow the disabled to engage in the telecommunication and information technology field and aiming to provide better education and health services.

Moreover, he welcomed the visit of the UN's Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility to Kuwait, which was a push forward to the rights of special needs people. Al-Ghunaim said that the government had reviewed standards on determining the type of disability an individual has. It also organized training courses on the matter, in cooperation with the UNDP. He also added that the authority formed a committee on facilitating the entry and movement of disabled people in different governmental bodies across the country. — AFP

Local

Zain kicks-off fifth edition of Zain Great Idea accelerator program

Company continues strategy in accelerating tech startups and pushing excellent talents



Al Khashti with Al Mana and Al Dehani during the launch of ZGI 5.



A number of ZGI alumni.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, launched the fifth edition of its Zain Great Idea (ZGI) tech startup accelerator program, through which the company offers Kuwait's entrepreneurial community the chance to take their startups to entire new levels.

Zain announced the official launch of ZGI 5 during the special event it held at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The event witnessed the presence of Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Ak Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability and Innovation Manager Haya Al Mana, Brilliant Lab founder Neda Al Dehani, ZGI alumni, as well as many prominent figures in Kuwait's entrepreneurial community.

Zain Great Idea has been one of the most successful initiatives Zain presented to the Kuwaiti market as part of its comprehensive innovation and entrepreneurship strategy. Throughout four successful editions, ZGI empowered, trained, and invested in hundreds of creative and driven Kuwaiti youth, of which many now own thriving and active Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to this day. Encouraging and providing the proper resources for the local entrepreneurial community is a top priority for Zain, as the company is keen on contributing to the further progress of Kuwait's economic and national development.

ZGI is established by Zain in association with Brilliant Lab, a startup Accelerator Service from Kuwait, and Mind The Bridge, a global organization bridging the world through entrepreneurship education for startups, enterprises and investors to succeed in global markets. Mind The Bridge is based in Silicon Valley with offices in San Francisco and London.

During his speech at the event, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Ak Khashti said: "First, I would like to welcome you all to ZINC, our dedicated platform for encouraging anyone with a fresh mind to pursue digital investments and think creatively outside of the norm. Our Innovation Center is an open, supportive environment that helps everyone - especially young, eager entrepreneurs - to generate new ideas and develop them into viable opportunities. Today is a special day as we proudly announce the official launch of the fifth edition of our beloved Zain Great Idea tech startup accelerator program".

Al Khashti explained: "When we first launched ZGI back in 2010, it was merely a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative we designed to support the youth into making their entrepreneurial dreams come true. Zain was the first in the region to launch such a comprehensive program of this kind. Then, throughout nearly 10 wonderful years, we embraced over 500 entrepreneurs, travelled to 4 countries, and helped nearly 70 of the brightest Kuwaiti minds accelerate their ideas into active and thriving SMEs in the market. We realized ZGI wasn't just about social responsibility, it was much more than that".

Al Khashti continued: "In fact, I am very proud to announce that today's event was fully catered for by four bright Kuwaiti SMEs that are ZGI success stories. Many more bright entrepreneurs who are ZGI alumni are with us today as well, and they are all live proof of what this program can achieve. We couldn't be more proud of them".

Al Khashti added: "We learned a lot from this journey, and as we waited for the Kuwaiti tech startup market to mature more, we think it's finally the right time to take ZGI to the next level. Our team worked hard on rebuilding the program from scratch, and with ZGI 5, we are planning to find - within the qualified startups - what meets our strategic plans in digital services in order to present them into the business market".

Al Khashti further explained: "We have



Al Khashti with Zain's team and ZGI alumni.

also added an all-new phase to the program: Co-developing. After Zain Great Idea is over, finalists will get full access to Zain's cross-functional team to help them get the most out of their newly-accelerated startup. ZGI's entrepreneurs will be able to get consultations, mentoring, deals, tactics/strategies, and more from Zain specialists in various areas that are essential to any business, including sales, marketing, communications, legal, networks, IT, and more. We think this will be the most thrilling part of ZGI 5, as we co-develop these home-grown talents together and see them flourish into fully functioning profitable businesses".

Al Khashti concluded: "Today's business world is witnessing fast-paced advancements in technology, and as a result of this, tech startups quickly became the top choice for

entrepreneurs. As the leading digital service provider in Kuwait and the region, Zain strongly believes in shouldering this crucial



Al Khashti speaking during the event.

field and help home-grown talents flourish in their journey to success. We cannot wait to see ZGI 5 help bring out the next game-changer in Kuwait".

Neda Al Dehani, founder of Brilliant lab, commented: "we are proud of this partnership with Zain, which extended throughout

seven years. During this time, we received and trained over 500 tech entrepreneurs in Kuwait who were looking for a way to develop their projects. We look forward to this new partnership this year, through which we aim to accelerate and establish innovative ideas. We hope to meet everyone's expectations".

Al Dehani added: "our role is to collect the most advanced experiences in the tech world and offer them as consultations and intensive workshops for the participants throughout nearly four weeks. The Bootcamp phase will witness the presence of many key players in technology from the top universities and academic institutions in the region and the

world". Al Dehani explained: "there are new services that Brilliant Lab will offer during the fifth edition of Zain Great Idea, including early funding services for projects that meet our policy. I invite anyone with a tech startup to apply for ZGI 5 and benefit from such services".

Zain is well aware of the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social responsibility, the company is committed to printing a positive print through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most influential issues in the community, including the support of youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

PARTICIPATION AND TERMS

The program is open for all Kuwaiti Nationals aged 21 and above, and the applicants must be the original owners of the idea. Team submissions are acceptable, but only one person (who is nominated by the team) may participate in the Zain Great Idea Bootcamp & Zain Great Idea Accelerator Program in collaboration with Brilliant Lab and Mind The Bridge in San Francisco, United States of America.

The tech business idea may be implemented in Kuwait or any other country, and may be implemented in any sector, including but not limited to apps, websites, online services, e-commerce services, Fintech, gaming, and tech products. The judging panel, which consists of a pool of candidates specializing in academia, entrepreneurship, and investments, will select the final applicants who will be taking part in the Bootcamp phase in Kuwait and the ZGI Accelerator Program in San Francisco.

PROGRAM PHASES

Phase one - Applying:

After agreeing to the terms and conditions, applicants should apply their tech startup idea by filling in the online form at ZAINGREATIDEA.com and attaching any supporting documents or videos.

Phase two - Bootcamp:

Eligible applicants will participate in the Bootcamp phase in Kuwait. Throughout three weeks, they will learn the essentials of accelerating their tech startup at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) led by instructors from Stanford University, IE Business School, Venture Capital firms, and entrepreneurs.

Phase three - International Acceleration program:

If the startup idea makes it through the judging panel, the participants will have a chance to attend the International Acceleration program in San Francisco with Mind The Bridge. Throughout two weeks, they will get to learn from the world's top tech companies by visiting their headquarters and meeting their teams at Silicon Valley.

Phase four - Zain Demo Day:

Upon their return to Kuwait, the participants will review their business in one-on-one sessions with Brilliant Lab in preparation for Zain Demo Day. During Demo Day, they will pitch their accelerated business to an audience of investors and potential business partners and get to transform their startup idea into a profitable business.

Phase five - Co-developing:

After Zain Great Idea is over, participants will get full access to Zain's cross-functional team to help them get the most out of their newly-accelerated startup. They'll be able to get consultations, mentoring, deals, tactics/strategies, and more from Zain specialists in various areas that are essential to any business, including sales, marketing, communications, legal, networks, IT, and more.



The crowd at the event.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The beautiful skyline of Kuwait City. —KUNA

Info Minister discusses cooperation with Jordan's Agriculture Minister



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs And Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Mohammad Al-Jabri met yesterday with Jordanian Minister of Agriculture and Environment Ibrahim Shahahdeh. The two ministers discussed joint cooperation and means of developing investment and trade exchange, exporting

agricultural products and food security for both countries. According to a statement by PAAAFR, Al-Jabri praised the historic and distinguished relations between Kuwait and Jordan under the patronage of the leaders of the two countries. He underlined the size of development in the agricultural sector in Jordan, praising the continuous partnership between the two countries it added. —KUNA

Kuwait keen to activate museum's role in society service

TOKYO: A Kuwaiti cultural official said yesterday that Kuwait is keen to activate the role of Kuwaiti museums in serving society and achieving its cultural and educational goals. This came in a statement to KUNA made by Advisor to Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Dr Waleed Al-Saif, following Kuwait's participation at the 25th General Conference of International Council of Museums (ICOM), held in the Japanese city of Kyoto from September 1-7 under the slogan Museums as cultural hubs: The Future of Tradition.

Al-Saif who is also a member of ICOM and Chairman and head of Kuwait National Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM-Kuwait), said that participation in such conferences contributes to the development of Kuwaiti museums, which is growing in numbers through the use of international organizations and experts specialized in museums. Kuwait's participation in the conference came upon the directives of the Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of NCCAL, Mohammad Al-Jabri, who stressed the importance of Kuwait's presence in this international forum.

Museums and heritage experts dis-



Dr Waleed Al-Saif

cussed several topics, including the challenges facing regional development, multiculturalism and disasters, in addition to searching for ways to enable museums to work towards the well-being of future generations while performing their work as cultural platforms, he said. ICOM Kyoto 2019 is the biggest and most important conference of museums in the world. More than 3,000 museum professionals and experts from all international backgrounds will participate in this tri-annual event, the 25th General Conference of ICOM. After 24 successful editions, ICOM's flagship conference has become a worldwide reputed hub for exchange about the topical issues museums tackle today, as well as the most innovative solutions.

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Local

MSAL urges Civil Services to exempt it from Kuwaitization

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) recently urged the Civil Services Commission (CSC) to exempt it from Kuwaitizing staff members at the social care sector due to the lack of citizens wanting to work in service-related jobs as they prefer administrative ones, said informed sources. The sources added that the ministry had been encouraging Kuwaitis to join the sector in order to work in geriatric homes, which requires taking care of children of unknown parents and senior citizens. "Kuwaiti staff members are not enough and hiring non-Kuwaitis is a must", stressed the sources pointing that MSAL is so keen on kuwaitizing its employees and that

it is expected to achieve up to 100 per cent Kuwaiti staffs within a few years.

Flight service fees

The Ministry of Services is currently reconsidering a decision that had been frozen by Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan to add KD 8 as services fees on each ticket for flights departing Kuwait, said informed sources. The sources added that the new fee was due by the beginning of last April; the beginning of the new fiscal year, but minister Al-Roudhan yielded to parliamentary pressure where lawmakers rejected the idea of overburdening citizens and suggested improving the services instead.

The sources added that, in view of passenger traffic through Kuwait airport where 7.38 million flight tickets were sold in 2018, the new fee would annually add around KD 60 million. "The suspension deprived the state treasury from this sum", added the sources noting that most countries, including GCC and Arab ones, do collect them as taxes in return for the services provided to passengers and airlines. Furthermore, the sources said that the civil aviation general directorate has been demanding the new fee and that Al-Roudhan had only suspended its implementation pending further studies. "The new fee will most likely take effect next April with the beginning of the 2020-2021 fiscal year", the sources stressed.

Sabah of Glory



By Abdullah Bowair

Talking or writing about such a unique great political figure, one feels speechless due to the humongous achievements and humane deeds of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Almighty Allah protect him. Since he was 25, HH the Amir has been taking up huge responsibilities. He has worked day and night to serve our country for over 64 years. He never complained. He tirelessly, continuously and creatively worked hard.

In parliament, he was named "The Fireman" because he used to let lawmakers say whatever they wanted before he intervened to kill any tense debates and resolve problems. With smile on his face, HH the Amir has never let anybody down. He is very benevolent, without waiting for rewards. He only does it for charity. Yes, indeed, His Highness the humanitarian leader is the best father, brother and friend.

HH the Amir's name has been associated with the ministry of foreign affairs, although he assumed other positions. HH the Amir managed to make Kuwait's foreign policy a role model in diplomacy and prioritizing public interests to local or regional ones. He is indeed a master of foreign diplomacy. His policy has been built on assisting Arab countries with all of Kuwait's political and financial potentials through loans and grants, which helped resolve many regional disputes.

Your Highness, you managed to turn Kuwait into a hub for aid for everyone. You are steadily leading our beloved Kuwait towards more prosperity and stability thanks to your wisdom and vision about surrounding threats and regional tensions. "Our diplomacy has been building bridges of peace amongst peoples" - these were the words you used in May to sum up the basis of Kuwait's diplomacy you founded.

Employees at Egyptian consulate beat Kuwaiti

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti youth filed a complaint against employees at the Egyptian consulate for insulting and beating him. The citizen went to Siddiq police station and told them that while at the consulate, he was surprised by some people he does not know who pulled him inside, tied him up and beat him, adding that he will be able to identify them. The prosecutor considered the incident a felony. The citizen will be questioned while detectives investigate.

The first call was about a fire in a shop containing lumber and flammable material. Ardhiya, Industrial Shuwaikh, Capital, Sulaibikhat and backup centers responded and put out the fire. The second fire was in a minibus on Airport Road. The fire was put out as smoke filled the area.

Dental safe stolen

A safe was stolen from a dental clinic in Hawally, according to the legal representative of the clinic. Security cameras showed a person entering the place, who took the safe which contained important documents, besides KD 3,000. Investigations are underway. — Al-Rai

Bus fire

Firemen battled two blazes, one in a Rai carpentry shop and another in a bus on Airport Road.



Ashar Shahza, the Charge d'Affaires of the Pakistan Embassy visited Kuwait Times and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan.

Flights 93.9% on-time in August

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Company (KAC) achieved an increase in punctual flight arrivals to Kuwait International Airport in August, reaching 93.9 percent compared with 88 percent in July, a statement by the company said yesterday. Kuwait Airways earned ninth place in punctuality out of 175 airlines in Europe, Africa and the Middle East and first place in the Middle East, according to a report by British aviation company

(OAG), the statement added. This ranking confirms the good time-bound policies adopted by the board of directors and implemented by the executive management efficiently and professionally, statement noted.

KAC will aspire more achievements for valued customers in various fields and to complete its leading role in the field of civil aviation at the Arab and international levels, the statement pointed out. Kuwait Airways was established in 1953 as a private company under the name of 'Kuwait National Airlines Limited. In 1962, the Kuwaiti government owned 100 percent ownership of company and has about 40 destinations worldwide. — KUNA



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Islamabad warns of genocide in Kashmir

Clean energy or food? Asian nations grapple with new demands on land

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TUNIS: An unpaved road in pictured in the Tunis district of Ettadhamen ahead of the September 15 presidential election. The Tunis suburb of Ettadhamen has a bad reputation but it is a must be stop on the campaign trail of candidates running in the presidential election who are keen on showing they are fighting against poverty and for social justice. — AFP

Will we eat democracy? Tunisians ask

Economic troubles undermine trust in politics

FERNANA: As he watched a campaign bus pull into town plastered with slogans and posters for one of the 26 candidates for president, Mondher Jawad slapped his hands with fury while the woman next to him shouted abuse at the candidate's staff. "Democracy means nothing to us," said Jawad, a 45-year-old with no job who has struggled to feed his three children in the dusty town of Fernana near the border with Algeria.

"Will we eat or drink democracy?" The birthplace of the "Arab Spring", Tunisia is the only country to achieve a peaceful transition to democracy following the 2011 popular revolts that swept autocrats from power across North Africa and the Middle East.

But as the time comes to choose a successor to the first democratically elected president, Beji Caid Essebsi, who died in office at 92 in July, many voters are in a dark mood, frustrated by the government's failure to improve the quality of life. There is still pride in democ-

cracy, and the country's first televised presidential debates, spread over three successive nights this past week, were widely watched. But turnout in elections for local government last year was only 34% and came on the heels of widespread protests over living standards. Politicians have warned that a failure to show real progress could jeopardize the democratic project itself. Economic opportunities must improve "if Tunisia is to join the club of strong democracy," Prime Minister Youssef Chahed, one of the presidential candidates, said in an interview with Reuters last month.

Strikes, unemployment

Tourism, a vital source of foreign currency, has only just recovered from militant attacks four years ago. Public spending has been cut sharply to tame the state finances, while economic growth has not risen fast enough to make a dent in unemployment. Many state

workers have gone on strike to demand more pay or better conditions, sometimes prompting counter protests. Outside a big post office shut by strikes in central Tunis last week, furious protesters tried to rip open the door to demand work resume so they could pick up pay cheques.

"I can't even withdraw 50 dinars (\$17)," said Sihem ben Salem, a woman crying outside the door. "The gangs, including politicians and unions, have taken over. They're only ones to benefit from the revolution," she added. In the countryside, the political tumult of the capital seems remote. Further out from Fernana towards the Algerian border, the people of Oued al-Berber had hoped the revolution might bring them running water. Instead, they still have to walk an hour each day to reach the well by donkey.

"I remember the president died but I don't know who's president now. Nobody important comes here.

Not before the revolution or afterwards," said Noura Mechergui, 38, next to the wells where she and other villagers filled casks of water from the same concrete troughs where their animals drank. Down the valley, in a homestead of five mud and stone buildings roofed with wicker and thatch, the three Ben Rabeh brothers and their families eek out a subsistence life far from the politics of the capital.

Each family sleeps, cooks and eats in a single room on a rough earthen floor under a bare lightbulb. The men are unemployed and spend their days hauling water from the spring and tending to their vegetable patch. There is no money for schoolbooks for the children. Still, Ahmed Ben Rabeh, 49, a father of four, said he was considering voting. He would ask somebody in a nearby village who to vote for, he said. "When I watch television sometimes, I understand that politicians do not talk about people like us," he said. — Reuters

Foreigners flee S Africa attacks

JOHANNESBURG: Beverly Nyamakwenje was fast asleep in her home in the east Johannesburg township of Katilehong when she was woken by gunshots. Instructed by her panicked father, the 19-year old Zimbabwean grabbed a few belongings and fled with him to a police station for safety. "We left our bags," Nyamakwenje said. "We only took two minutes."

Nyamakwenje is one of around 850 people who have taken refuge in halls set up for foreigners displaced by xenophobic violence in the Joburg region, a municipal spokesman said. The door and windows of her little home have been smashed and the rooms wrecked. Everything inside has been stolen or burnt. She and her father are holed up in Katilehong's Tsolo community hall, alongside 250 Zimbabweans and Malawians.

More than 500 Mozambicans have been placed in a hall nearby. "It happened so fast," said Nyamakwenje on Monday, her fourth day at the shelter. "I only got one pair of shoes and two of my jeans." At least 12 people have been killed by a surge of anti-foreigner violence in the country's financial capital last week. South Africa is a major destination for economic migrants from neighboring countries. They have often borne the brunt of anger from locals frustrated over jobs.

But the latest surge of attacks on businesses and homes has worried other African countries. Nigeria is flying hundreds of its citizens home. For now, Nyamakwenje sits on a plastic chair in the dimly-lit hallway, walls lined with blankets and hurriedly packed suitcases. Baby cries echoed around her. Outside, excited children clambered around municipal pick-up trucks. Women weaved each others hair. Boys kicked lazily at a football. Most live in the area, but they are too frightened to return home.

Violence flared up again on Sunday, breaking the tentative calm that returned to Johannesburg by the end of last week. "In the news they are saying that the fighting was finished but... they are fighting with us, even today," said Poronkie, a 47-year old plumber from Zimbabwe afraid to give his full name. Another



JOHANNESBURG: A partially destroyed shop is seen in Johannesburg's Malvern suburb after South Africa's financial capital was hit by a new wave of night violence. — AFP

two people were killed in the attacks on Sunday, with hundreds of shops and properties looted, and more than 600 people arrested. "I am homeless," Poronkie said. "They burnt everything that belonged to me. I thank God that I am still alive."

'We are not doing anything'

Millions of economic migrants live in South Africa - the continent's second largest economy - though official numbers are unclear as most are undocumented. In poor districts, many South Africans scapegoat foreigners for the limited progress made by the majority black population since apartheid ended in 1994.

"The South Africans don't want us anymore and they are executing us very brutally," said Joseph Mozorodze, 25, a Zimbabwean builder who has worked in Johannesburg for several years. "We are not doing anything, we are just looking for jobs to earn money." Xenophobic attacks are not uncommon, especially for migrants working in low-skilled labor. Municipal police spokesman William Ntadi told AFP he had dealt with similar situations during his career.

Anti-foreigner violence left 62 people dead in 2008, while seven were killed in attacks in Johannesburg and Durban in 2015. "The number we

have now is less than the previous one," said Ntadi. "(In 2015) we had to use many municipal facilities to accommodate them." Community leaders were working to ease tensions between groups and help reintegrate the displaced, he said. Aid organizations are providing meals and donations.

'Worried about my life'

John Chirwa did not have high hopes. Since the violence broke out, the 27-year-old Malawian security guard has been too nervous to leave his wife and newborn alone at night. They sleep at the shelter while he goes to work. "I was not feeling good, I couldn't work as usual," said Chirwa, picking at a plate of corn meal and chicken before his night shift. "This violence is not just violence. It's called xenophobia. People are getting killed."

He toyed with the possibility of returning to his country, like many displaced. "If I insist on staying maybe I'm going to lose my life," said Harry Mrevo, also from Malawi, whose home was destroyed by mobs. "So I'm waiting to go home if they provide transport." The embassies of Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique have liaised with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to carry out voluntary repatriations. — AFP

Lebanon Shiites mark Ashoura in show of anti-Israel defiance

BEIRUT: Anti-Israeli chants rang through the streets of a Hezbollah bastion in the Lebanese capital yesterday as thousands of black-clad Shiites commemorated the seventh-century killing of Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) grandson. "We have taught Israel that our people are not weak," the men cried, beating their chests in unison, during an Ashoura commemoration marking the killing of Imam Hussein in battle by Caliph Yazid's forces.

This year's ceremony comes shortly after a series of confrontations between Hezbollah and Israel, including an exchange of cross-border fire at the start of the month. Standing behind the crowd, a black banner tied around his head, Mohammad Ali praised the September 1 Hezbollah missile attack on Israel that triggered the border flare-up. "For years, our families and our children have slept in bunkers because of the Israelis," said the 49-year-old. "Now it is their turn to sleep in bunkers," he told AFP. "The era of defeat is over."

Message to Israel

From sunrise, thousands of men gathered in Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah bastion and target of an August 25 drone attack that the movement blamed on Israel. Some were crouched on the floor crying, tears streaming down their faces, as they listened to a recital of Hussein's death. Others sat in prayer as the recital blasted from speakers, interrupted only by the sporadic weeping of the narrator.

Some carried black flags at the ceremony which came one day after Hezbollah said it had downed and seized an Israeli drone as it flew across the Lebanese border. In the procession, thousands marched towards a main square, watched by Hezbollah forces deployed on rooftops and on sides of the road. In a televised speech broadcast live, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said his movement would respond to any Israeli attack on Lebanon. — AFP

International

Algerian PM to resign, paving way for vote after protracted protests

Protesters demand more changes before elections

ALGIERS: Algerian Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui will resign soon to pave the way for elections this year that the army sees as the only way to end a standoff over months of protests, two senior sources said yesterday. Bedoui's departure is a major demand of protesters, who in April forced president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to quit after 20 years in office, and who have rejected fresh elections until there is a more thorough change of the power structure.

Bedoui's departure is intended to "facilitate" the holding of elections said the two senior officials, speaking on condition they were not further identified. Powerful army chief Lieutenant General Ahmed Gaed Saleh said last week that the electoral commission should by Sept 15 call an election, a move that would trigger a 90-day countdown to the vote.

Students holding a weekly protest yesterday chanted that they would accept no elections "until the gang is removed", a reference to Bouteflika's power circle, an elite entrenched largely since independence from France in 1962. Sources close to prominent figures including former prime minister Mouloud Hamrouche and human rights lawyer Mustapha Bouchachi have said they are considering running for president if the election is called.

The mass demonstrations began in February and have continued since Bouteflika's departure, with the loose-knit "Herak" movement demanding that all figures associated with him also leave and that the army play a smaller role in state affairs. The election had been scheduled for July, but was postponed as a result of the crisis, leaving major oil- and gas-exporter Algeria in a constitutional deadlock.

Over the summer the authorities have made concessions by arresting more prominent figures linked to

Bouteflika on corruption charges, while increasing the pressure on protesters with a bigger police presence at demonstrations. However, Herak has no formal leaders, making it hard to negotiate with. "We will not stop protests, this is our chance to uproot the corrupt system," Khelifa Saad, 20, said at a protest yesterday in Algiers.

Candidates

Two sources familiar with former PM Hamrouche said he was expected to run for president, though he has made no formal announcement yet. Hamrouche, 76,



Vote only way out: Army chief

headed the government from 1989-91, departing months before the military cancelled a 1992 parliamentary election that a radical Islamist party was poised to win, plunging Algeria into a civil war that claimed 200,000 lives.

A candidate in the 1999 presidential election, he withdrew at the last minute after senior figures endorsed Bouteflika. Hamrouche presents himself as a reformer, seeking better governance and economic diversification,



ALGIERS: A protester raises up a sign reading in Arabic and English 'no to the Egyptian scenario in Algeria', during a demonstration against the ruling class in the capital Algiers. — AFP

and as a consensus choice, and would seek the support of the army, the formal opposition and protesters. Two sources from inside Bouchachi's circle said he would run if Bouteflika's close allies were removed from power and an independent body set up to oversee the vote.

Bouchachi, a 65-year-old former member of parliament, human rights activist and lawyer, has been prominent on social media after strongly backing pro-

testers since February. He was elected to parliament in 2012 as a member of Algeria's oldest opposition party Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS), but resigned within two years saying the government was not serious about reform. "Bouchachi can secure the voices of tens of thousands of protesters," said electronics student Ali Larbaoui, who has marched on most Fridays since the protests began. — Reuters

Druze woman aims for equality after breaking glass ceiling in Israel

DALIYAT AL-KARMEI: Before a row of women seated in traditional Druze robes and white veils, Gadeer Kamal Mreeh stands out with her black suit and high heels. "We are proud of you," a voice cries out from the audience of women who came to hear the candidate's political platform in her village of Daliyat al-Karmel, set in the hills of northern Israel.

The 35-year-old became the first Druze woman to be elected to Israel's parliament in April, but new polls were called shortly afterwards and she is hoping to win re-election in the September 17 vote. Mreeh is part of the centrist Blue and White alliance led by ex-military chief Benny Gantz, the main rival to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing Likud party. With this election, she hopes to win a real mandate, and her 25th place on Blue and White's electoral list gives her a strong chance to do so.

"It is the only way to change things," she told AFP in her village. "It is time to send Bibi home and let Israel return to a little common sense," she said, using Netanyahu's nickname. From Mreeh's

point of view, Israel is moving too far to the right. She points to a law passed in 2018 declaring the country the nation-state of the Jewish people, which Druze and other Arab Israelis say threatens to relegate them to second-class citizens.

Netanyahu pushed for the law, and Mreeh has made changing it her main issue. "I joined politics for that reason—to bring back equality," said Mreeh, who earlier in her career became the first non-Jewish Hebrew-language anchor on Israeli national television. Some 140,000 Druze, who follow an offshoot of Shiite Islam, live in Israel. They serve in Israel's military unlike other Arab Israelis who are descendants of Palestinians who remained on their land following the 1948 creation of Israel.

'It wasn't easy'

Mreeh was joined at the recent event by two other candidates from her party who are also women: retired army general Oma Barbivay and Penina Tamanu-Shata, the first woman of Ethiopian origin to be elected to Israel's parliament. Mreeh calls for diversity to be valued in Israel.



DALIYAT AL KARMEI: Gadeer Kamal Mreeh is pictured during a conference organized in the northern Israeli village of Daliyat Al-Karmel. — AFP

"I'm a woman and I'm a minority member," said the ex-journalist and mother of two. "I made it. It wasn't easy. Believe me when I tell you that you can do it." Nisreen Abu Asale, a 25-year-old law student, was convinced. "She repre-

sents me completely," she said. "It's the voice of a new generation." Yara Zahereldin, 21 and a political science student, said she was especially moved by her words on equal opportunity. "She inspires me," said Zahereldin. — AFP

What is dengue, and why is it so widespread?

HANOI: Dubbed "breakbone fever", dengue is one of the world's leading mosquito-borne illnesses and infects tens of millions across the globe annually. Around half of the planet's population live in at-risk areas, mainly in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Outbreaks have ravaged Southeast Asia this year, infecting hundreds of thousands, killing hundreds, and crippling health care systems as governments struggle to contain the untreatable virus. So what is dengue, how does it spread, and how can it be contained?

How does it spread?

Dengue is transmitted mainly by the Aedes Aegypti mosquito, which thrives in densely-populated tropical climates and breed in stagnant pools of water. The mosquitoes pick up the virus from infected humans - even asymptomatic ones - and pass it along to other people through bites. Infections have steadily climbed across the globe since the 1970s due to rising temperatures and irregular monsoon rains linked to climate change, which allow for ideal mosquito breeding conditions.

Dengue is mostly found in crowded areas, and breakneck urbanisation across the globe has helped the virus thrive, especially in fast-growing mega-cities like Manila, Rio de Janeiro, Ho Chi Minh City and Tegucigalpa. A massive boom in international travel and trade has also expanded dengue's footprint, allowing the virus to be carried across the globe in a matter of hours and unleashed in new communities.

Experts say the widespread adoption of plastic is also to blame - storage containers, discarded takeout boxes, backyard pools, plant pots and cooking urns all collect water - a problem made worse during dry spells. "When you have a drought, people collect water in containers. That is one place the dengue mosquito loves to breed," said Gawrie Loku Galappaththy, a dengue specialist with the World Health Organization in the Philippines.



NHA TRANG: Photo shows a laboratory assistant examining mosquito samples at the Pasteur Institute in the southern Vietnamese city of Nha Trang. — AFP

What does it feel like?

Its grim nickname comes from the disease's intense flu-like symptoms: severe headache, pain behind the eyes, full-body aches, high fever, nausea, vomiting, swollen glands or rash. It's most serious - and deadly - in children, especially young girls though scientists don't know why.

Contracting one of dengue's four strains gives immunity only to that particular one - which is why adults in endemic areas are often safe because they've likely had it before. But later picking up a different strain, called a serotype, usually causes a worse infection than the first time. With no known treatment for dengue, doctors can only help to ease the virus' brutal symptoms, which can last weeks and often renders patients completely immobile.

Why have cases spiked this year?

Once confined mostly to cities in tropical climates, dengue is now found in at least 125 countries across the world, with around 100 million infected every year and some four billion people living in dengue-prone areas, according to the journal Nature Microbiology. The disease is cyclical - dramatic outbreaks occur every few years - but climate change is believed to have contributed to a spike in cases in 2019, with July clocked as the warmest on record. — AFP

In Belgrade, a struggle to excavate an urban Nazi camp

BELGRADE: Moments after she was born in a wartime Nazi concentration camp in Belgrade, Estera Bajer was furtively smuggled out in a bag. Nearly eight decades on, she has one wish: to live to see a memorial built at the site where her mother and some 7,000 other Jewish women, children and elderly people were taken to their deaths during the Holocaust. "So the next generations can see and know what happened there," says the petite, bright-eyed 77-year-old, at her apartment in Belgrade's suburbs.

The former camp, known as Staro Sajmiste, sits on prime real estate in the Serbian capital, flanking the left bank of the Sava river across from the city's historic heart. Yet few visitors - or locals - would know it exists. Its central tower is crumbling, while the lawn beneath it is strewn with children's seesaws and washing lines. Surrounding buildings have been converted into homes and businesses, including a restaurant in what was the morgue.

The camp's former hospital, restored by a local businessman who bought the building from the government in the 1980s, has hosted a night-club, gym and restaurant over the years. Owner Miodrag Krsmanovic opened a kindergarten last year too, in what, he said, he hoped was a "new beginning for this entire area".

But he shuttered it a few months ago after it was decried in the local media as disrespectful to the dead. The only sign that this run-down corner of the city was the site of mass internment and death - initially of Jews and Roma, and later of thousands of mainly Serb prisoners - is a small plaque. A larger monument was erected in 1995 further out on the river bank. "You'd never know it was once a concentration camp," laments Bajer. — AFP

Japan parental leave case puts spotlight on workers' rights

TOKYO: A male employee is suing sportswear maker Asics Corp for alleged mistreatment after taking paternity leave, a case that has shone a spotlight on gender equality and workers' rights in Japan. The lawsuit filed by a 38-year-old man - who says he was harassed by his employer after taking parental leave in 2015 and 2018 that is legally available to all workers but rarely used by men - is scheduled to begin in a Tokyo court on Thursday. Asics denies the allegations.

The man requested anonymity because of a Twitter backlash from users who accuse him of being selfish for taking a year of leave for each of his two children. "I'd been thinking, I'm going to be a salaryman for something like 40 years, so what's a year or two of leave compared to that," he told Reuters in an interview. Japan's parental leave policies are among the world's most generous, providing men and women partial-paid leave of up to a year, or more if there is no public childcare. Few men take it.

The case highlights the challenge of bolstering the role of women in the workplace, championed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Womenomics" program, in a society where social norms discourage men from taking on child rearing or housework. "There are plenty of people who want to take childcare leave, as it's their right, but they cannot because their workplace makes it difficult. Someone had to speak up," the Asics employee said. The man says he was transferred to a warehouse operated by an Asics subsidiary after he returned from his first paternity leave.

It was not an official demotion or a pay cut, but the job involved carrying and unloading heavy boxes - a big change from his previous role in Asics' personnel department. He hired a lawyer and complained to his bosses. Asics allowed him to return to a desk job, but gave him what he said were meaningless tasks, such as translating company guidelines into English. That situation has continued since the end of his second parental leave earlier this year, he said.

Asics said it had tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with the worker's legal and union representatives, and "looks forward to making the truth clear" in court. A Gold Partner sponsor for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, the company bills itself as a socially progressive and inclusive company. "We put effort into fostering diversity, and we will continue to make greater efforts to ensure our work environment and policies allow people to remain active through pregnancy, birth and childcare," Asics said in a statement to Reuters.

'Patahara'

The Asics case follows other similar disputes. Glen Wood, a former equity sales manager at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley in Tokyo, is suing the brokerage for harassment after he returned from paternity leave. The company has denied the allegations. Chemical firm Kaneka Corp was criticized in June after an employee's wife said on social media her husband was told to move from Tokyo to the company's Osaka office after taking a month of parental leave and denied his request for a postponement. Kaneka has said the relocation was appropriate and not punishment for taking paternity leave. The worker has since quit. — Reuters

International

British PM vows to pursue Brexit deal after new blow

Johnson slams opposition for voting against a call for snap election

LONDON: Beleaguered British Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed to continue his attempts to strike a new Brexit deal with Brussels, after losing yet another vote yesterday during a chaotic parliamentary session. Johnson slammed the opposition for voting against his call for a snap election in the final minutes of a stormy late-night debate ahead of a controversial suspension of parliament called by the prime minister.

He said he would "strive to get an agreement" at a summit in Brussels next month - the alternative being a "no-deal" departure that critics warn would spark economic chaos. Johnson accused his opponents of shirking their duty by blocking an early election. He held a cabinet meeting later on to plot his next move after a series of defections and expulsions left him far short of a parliamentary majority and unable to garner enough votes from MPs to hold an early election.

He was also due to meet with Arlene Foster, leader of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), amid rumors that he may be softening his negotiating demands over the key issue of the Irish border and associated trade condi-

tions after Brexit. Foster, whose party wants Northern Ireland to remain part of Britain, warned Johnson that the province must not be sacrificed in talks. "What people are talking about is the break-up of the United Kingdom," she told Sky News. "That is not something that any prime minister in the United Kingdom is going to in any conscience go along with."

'Will not delay Brexit'

There were dramatic scenes in parliament as the current session drew to a close yesterday. Opposition Labor MPs waved signs reading "silenced" and shouted "Shame on you!" at government lawmakers during a ceremony for the suspension of parliament. The move is normally a simple formality but Johnson was accused of acting high-handedly by calling an extended suspension as the Brexit date looms.

House of Commons speaker John Bercow earlier in the debate announced he would be stepping down in a strongly-worded speech in which he warned the government against trying to "degrade" parliament. Johnson also lost a separate vote, calling on the government to publish

confidential papers about the potential impact of a no-deal Brexit.

The opposition has said it will not allow an early election, which under British law requires a two-thirds majority in parliament in favor, until Johnson has either struck a deal or delayed Brexit beyond October 31. But the prime minister insisted he would not delay, despite a bill being rushed through parliament in the past few days that could force him to do so if he fails to reach an agreement with the EU. "This government will not delay Brexit any further," he insisted.

'Significant gaps' remain

Britons voted in 2016 to leave the EU, but after three years of political wrangling, parliament still cannot decide how to implement that decision. Johnson took office in July promising to deliver on the 2016 referendum vote for Brexit, even if that means leaving without exit terms agreed with Brussels.

But many MPs have rejected a no deal divorce and supported new legislation forcing Johnson to request a three-month delay if he fails to strike a deal. His last chance to reach an agreement is at the



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson attends a year four history class with pupils during a visit to Pimlico Primary school in London yesterday. — AFP

two-day EU summit starting on October 17. Some commentators have said Johnson may be forced to resign if he does not want

to make the delay request. Ministers have also hinted at a potential legal challenge against the law. — AFP

After Dorian, US weather service rocked by storm

WASHINGTON: Dorian may have blown out to sea, but the US weather service now finds itself buffeted by strong political winds, with senior government meteorologists in open rebellion against Donald Trump. It all started on September 1, when the president tweeted that states including Alabama "will most likely be hit (much) harder than anticipated" a few days after the fierce Atlantic storm became a hurricane.

Exactly 20 minutes later, the National Weather Service in Birmingham, Alabama tweeted directly contradicting the president: "Alabama will NOT see any impacts from #Dorian. We repeat, no impacts from Hurricane #Dorian will be felt across Alabama." Trump hit back with eight more tweets in the following days, and a now infamous episode in which he presented a forecasting map that was doctored to include the southern state, apparently using a black Sharpie pen.

Dorian never touched Alabama, but by Friday, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the agency which oversees the NWS, backed Trump and chastised the authors of the tweet from NWS Birmingham for dealing in "absolute terms." The probability of relatively strong winds hitting Alabama ranged from zero to 20 percent at the time of the NWS tweet - but there was no prediction for hurricane force winds. That has not stopped commerce secretary Wilbur Ross from threatening to fire senior officials if they do not issue a public communique



MARSH HARBOUR: People push a shopping carts past debris in the "Mudd" neighborhood in Marsh Harbor, Great Abaco in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian. — AFP

defending the president, the New York Times reported Monday.

Standing ovation

Meteorologists were stunned by what they saw as political interference, and the head of the NWS, Louis Uccellini, publicly defended his employees at an annual conference held Monday - in Alabama. "When the phones and the social media lit up about 10:00 am Central Time on September 1st, they did what any office would do," he said.

"With an emphasis they deemed essential, they shut down what they thought were rumors." "The Birmingham office did this to stop public panic, to ensure public safety, the same goal as all the National Weather

Service offices were working toward at that time," he added, before asking the audience to join him in applauding those responsible. The hall responded with a standing ovation.

"This has become a political situation, and it shouldn't be, because we're trying to save lives," Bill Murray, the president of the Weather Factory private forecasting firm in Birmingham, who attended the meeting said. "We totally stand with the National Weather Service in Birmingham, all meteorologists do," he added. Crucial policy decisions depend on weather forecasts - and the stakes are even higher when it comes to hurricanes, which are tracked by the National Hurricane Center in Miami, a small operation based in Miami that falls under the NOAA. — AFP

'Racism, intolerance' escalating in Finland

HELSINKI: Racist and abusive language is "commonplace" online in Finland and is on the rise in political discourse, a report by the Council of Europe warned yesterday. Although the Nordic nation frequently tops international comparisons regarding happiness, gender equality and quality of life, the population has the lowest share of foreign-born residents in western Europe, at 6.6 percent, and anti-immigrant sentiment is widespread.

The hardline Finns Party, which campaigns on a platform of staunch opposition to asylum, has been the second-largest party in the past two general elections. "Racist and intolerant hate speech in public discourse is escalating; the main targets are asylum-seekers and Muslims," the council's Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) said in the report.

Meanwhile online "expressions of racism and xenophobia containing anti-immigrant rhetoric as well as targeting

persons of African descent, LGBT persons and the Jewish community are commonplace, as is abusive language when referring to Roma," the authors said. Last year, the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency found that people of African descent in Finland suffered the highest levels of perceived racial harassment and violence out of 12 member states studied.

Although ECRI welcomed recent measures to try and address the problems, it said that "the responses of the Finnish authorities to these incidents cannot be considered fully adequate". Finnish authorities recorded 1,165 hate crimes in 2017, but the report criticized the patchy collection of data which it said prevented accurate year-on-year comparisons. Nonetheless, it noted that civil society groups have marked an increase in hate incidents since 2015.

Ethnic profiling by the police appears to still be common practice, despite being outlawed in 2015, ECRI said, and criticized the lack of diversity in the police, which it says does not reflect the make-up of Finland's population. The report also singled out Finland's so-called "trans law", which requires people to undergo sterilization before they can be recognized as another gender. In June new prime minister Antti Rinne pledged to overturn the widely criticized sterilization requirement. — AFP

Rwanda agrees to take in refugees stuck in Libya

ADDIS ABABA: Rwanda agreed yesterday to take in hundreds and potentially thousands of African refugees and asylum-seekers stranded in Libya, a deal the African Union hopes to replicate with other member states. "We will be receiving the initial number of 500 in a few weeks," Hope Tumukunde Gasatura, Rwanda's ambassador to the AU, told a news conference after signing a memorandum of understanding alongside representatives of the AU and the UN refugee agency UNHCR.

The first group "is principally made up of people originating from the Horn of Africa," the AU and the UN said in a statement. They will be housed in a transit centre in Rwanda before being resettled elsewhere unless they agree to return to their home countries, if it is safe to do so. Germaine Kamayirese, the Rwandan minister for emergency management, told journalists in Kigali that "some may be given permission to remain in Rwanda". In the chaos that followed the fall and killing of former dictator Muammar Gaddafi in a 2011 uprising, Libya became a key transit point for sub-Saharan African migrants seeking to embark on dangerous journeys to Europe.

The UN says some 42,000 refugees are currently in Libya. "We have been desperately searching for solutions for those people," said Cosmas Chanda, UNHCR's representative to the AU at the news conference in Addis Ababa, the seat of the pan-African body. The Rwandan government is prepared to

take in as many as 30,000 Africans from Libya, though the plan is for the process to unfold in batches of 500 to prevent the country from becoming overwhelmed.

"Fewer countries around the world are more than prepared to admit refugees," Chanda said. Rwandan President Paul Kagame first offered to take in Africans stuck in Libya back in November 2017, the same month a CNN report showed what appeared to be a slave market there. The issue took on new urgency in July when more than 40 people were killed in an air strike on a migrant detention centre in the Libyan town of Tajoura.

Lessons from Niger

The UN has been criticised for its handling of a transit mechanism for evacuees from Libya established in 2017 on the other side of the continent, in Niger. The facilities there have struggled with overcrowding and the slow pace of resettlement. Rwandan and UN officials "have learned from the Niger experience and we have fine-tuned the procedure," Chanda said. But he said the process would still be "very lengthy". Tumukunde Gasatura, the Rwandan ambassador, said refugees and asylum-seekers would be housed in facilities that have previously been used for Burundian refugees fleeing that country's political crisis in 2015.

The AU hailed the deal with Rwanda as an example of African governments stepping up to solve the continent's problems. "It is a historical moment because Africans are extending their hands to other Africans," said Amira Elfadil, the AU's social affairs commissioner. "We kept on talking about finding durable solutions. My belief is this is part of the durable solutions." Officials hope that other African countries will offer similar assistance, though Elfadil said so far none have been forthcoming. — AFP

House steps up Trump impeachment probe

WASHINGTON: Democrats moved Monday to intensify their impeachment investigation of President Donald Trump as whiffs of new scandal surrounding the White House emerged related to Trump's business and his lawyer's involvement in Ukraine. While the Democrat leadership remains reluctant to go all-in on impeachment, given that the Republican-controlled Senate would vote down any effort to oust Trump, the stepped-up investigation could add further pressure on the embattled president 14 months before the next elections.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler moved to formalize an investigation that had up to now avoided officially declaring the aim to impeach Trump and put him on trial in the Senate. He laid out new procedures that he said would govern "the committee's investigation to determine whether to recommend articles of impeachment with respect to President Donald J. Trump."

He also defined the investigation along four specific lines: allegations that Trump illegally interfered with the Russia election meddling investigation, that he took part in hush payments to alleged former mistresses, that he has used his office to enrich himself, and that he offered pardons to government and campaign officials to protect him.

"No one is above the law," Nadler said in a statement. "The unprecedented corruption, coverup, and crimes by the president are



ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE: US President Donald Trump holds a meeting aboard Air Force One on Hurricane Dorian with North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper (left), House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (standing), among others. — AFP

under investigation by the committee as we determine whether to recommend articles of impeachment or other Article I remedies," he said, referring to the US Constitution's section on legislative powers.

In recent weeks more than half of the 235 Democrats in the House of Representatives have endorsed impeachment, even as senior party officials, especially House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, continue to resist it. Pelosi has made clear she believes the party needs to focus its energies on defeating Trump and the Republicans in the November 2020 election. Nadler's new rules, which are expected to be passed by the committee tomorrow, will govern how witnesses will be called and questioned and how Trump's lawyers will be involved.

They are also expected to provide the committee with a broader ability to subpoena witnesses and documents, in the face of resistance by the White House. "We will not

allow Trump's continued obstruction to stop us from delivering the truth to the American people," Nadler said. Meanwhile the Democratic heads of three other House committees announced an investigation into alleged efforts by Trump and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani to pressure the Ukrainian government for their own political ends, including by withholding US security assistance.

They allege that Trump and Giuliani have pressured Kiev to prosecute Ukrainians who provided evidence against Trump's former campaign manager Paul Manafort in the Russia meddling investigation. They also alleged that Kiev was pressured to provide damaging information on the son of former Democratic vice president Joe Biden, who could face Trump in next year's presidential election. Hunter Biden worked for a Ukrainian gas company beginning in 2014, while his father was vice president. — AFP

International

North Korea fires projectiles after offering talks with US

Pyongyang urged to stop escalating tensions in the region

SEOUL: North Korea yesterday fired projectiles into the sea, South Korea's military said, hours after Pyongyang said it was willing to hold working-level talks this month with the United States. Negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington have been gridlocked since a second summit between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump in February ended without a deal.

North Korea twice launched "unidentified projectiles" yesterday morning in an easterly direction. The objects flew approximately 330 kilometers from the Kaechon area in South Pyongan province, according to the South Korean military. "We urge the North to stop such acts that escalate tensions in the region," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

No further details were immediately available but it was the latest in a series of provocations. Previous launches have been identified as short-range missiles. "We are aware of reports of projectiles launched from North Korea," a senior US official said. "We are continuing to monitor the situation and consulting closely with our allies in the region."

Trump and Kim had agreed to restart working-level dialogue during an impromptu meeting at the Demilitarized Zone dividing the nuclear-armed North and South Korea in June, but those talks have yet to begin. "We have willingness to sit with the US side for comprehensive discussions of the issues we have so far taken up at the time and place to be agreed late in September," Choe Son Hui, the North's vice foreign minister, said in a statement carried on Monday by the official Korean Central News Agency.

Choe's comment followed her warning in late August that North Korea's "expectations of dialogue with the US are gradually disappearing", after Pyongyang conducted a series of weapons tests to protest joint US-

South Korean military exercises. Asked about the proposal for lower-level talks in September, Trump told reporters: "I have a very good relationship with Chairman Kim. I always say having meetings is a good thing. We'll see what happens."

The period suggested by North Korea would correspond with the United Nations General Assembly in New York. On Monday, Choe recalled Kim's comments that the North would wait until the end of the year for Washington to "quit its current calculation method" and urged the US to come up with an "acceptable" offer or risk jeopardizing the entire diplomatic process. When asked by AFP about the latest North Korean offer, a State Department official replied: "We don't have any meetings to announce at this time."

Nuclear warhead development

Kim and Trump adopted a vaguely-worded statement on the "complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula" at their first summit in Singapore in June last year, but little progress has since been made on dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear program. A report published by a United Nations panel of experts last week said North Korea's development of nuclear warheads has not stopped, despite the moratorium it declared on nuclear blasts and long-range missile launches.

US officials have called North Korea's recent short-range missile launches provocations, although Trump himself has avoided criticizing them. North Korea is under heavy US and UN sanctions over its weapons programs, and has criticized Washington's position that sanctions against the isolated regime will not be lifted until the country gives up its nuclear weapons.

Pyongyang's latest comments on talks come after the US special envoy to North Korea, Stephen Biegun,



SEOUL: A man watches a television news screen showing footage of a North Korean missile launch, at a railway station in Seoul yesterday. —AFP

said the North must stop blocking nuclear talks. "If we are to succeed, North Korea must set aside its search for obstacles to negotiations and instead seek the opportunities for engagement while that opportunity

lasts," he said on Friday. "We have made clear to North Korea that we are prepared to engage as soon as we hear from them," he said on Friday. "We are ready, but we cannot do this by ourselves." —AFP

Islamabad warns of genocide in Kashmir

GENEVA: Pakistan's foreign minister demanded yesterday that the UN launch an international investigation into the situation in Indian Kashmir, warning of the risk of "genocide" in the Muslim-majority region. "The people of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir are apprehending the worst," Shah Mehmood Qureshi told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, adding "I shudder to mention the word genocide here, but I must."

India imposed a military clampdown on Kashmir from August 5 to prevent unrest as New Delhi revoked the disputed region's autonomy. Mobile phone networks and the internet are still cut off in all but a few pockets. Kashmir, split between India and Pakistan since 1947, has been the spark for two major wars and countless clashes between the two nuclear-armed arch-rivals.

"For the last six weeks, India has transformed Occupied Jammu and Kashmir into the largest prison on this planet," Qureshi insisted. "The forlorn, traumatized towns, moun-

tains, plains and valleys of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir reverberate today, with the grim reminders of Rwanda, Srebrenica, the Rohingya, and the pogrom of Gujarat," he said. The minister accused India of having arrested more than 6,000 people without due process. Many had been "shipped to jails all over India", he said.

His comments came after Indian authorities tightened the security lockdown in Kashmir on Sunday after breaking up religious processions by Shiite Muslims who defied a ban.

'Red Herring'?

Qureshi yesterday slammed India's references to "cross-border terrorism" to justify its crackdown as a "red herring to divert international opinion", and said he feared India might "even attack Pakistan". He also insisted that India's labeling of the Kashmir situation as an "internal affair" was "patently false", pointing out that the matter had been on the UN agenda for seven decades. The minister urged the council to heed recommendations by UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet and her predecessor Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein to launch a so-called international Commission of Inquiry (COI) into the Kashmir situation. A COI is one of the UN's highest-level probes, generally reserved for major crises like the Syrian conflict.

The council must "take steps to

would launch an inquiry — if the boy filed a report.

'Vocal minority'

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since 1947. In the Indian-administered part, tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, have died in an insurgency since 1989.

However, and despite restrictions on movement that were reinforced this week, there have been hundreds of protests and stone-throwing incidents. According to multiple sources, several thousand people have been detained. They include almost all the region's top politicians - without charge. The internet and mobile phones also remain cut off in the Kashmir Valley, the main trouble area. UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said Monday she is "deeply concerned".

'Lies'

Last month AFP spoke to relatives of three people they alleged have died as a result of the actions of security forces, including a mother-of-two after a tear gas canister smashed through her window. On August 25 the governor of Jammu and Kashmir state, Satya Pal Malik, said there had not been a "single case of killing" in the previous 10 days.

The same day police said that a truck driver was killed on August 25 after being hit by a stone hurled by protesters. Last week Asrar Khan, 17, became the latest fatality when he died in hospital on September 3, a month after being seriously injured. Khan was



KASHMIR: Indian government forces stop Kashmiri civilians at a checkpoint during heavy restrictions on movements in Srinagar on the 10th day of the holy Islamic month of Muharram. —AFP

bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights violations of the innocent Kashmiri people, and in this context, constitute a Commission of Inquiry," Qureshi said. "If India has nothing to hide, it should allow unhindered access to the Commission of Inquiry," he insisted. Pakistan was willing to provide access to its side of the so-called Line of Control, he added. Pakistan is expected to present a resolution to the council for consideration by the end of the 42nd session on September 27.

At the opening of the council session on Monday, Bachelet also voiced alarm at the situation in Kashmir. She had "appealed particularly to India to ease the current lockdowns or curfews, to ensure people's access to basic services, and that all due process rights are respected for those who have been detained", she said. "It is important that the people of Kashmir are consulted and engaged in any decision-making processes that have an impact on their future," she added. —AFP

Kashmir families allege brutality

SRINAGAR: Burhan Nazir Parrey, 16, had a gaping wound in his shoulder the size of a cricket ball, the latest victim of what Kashmiris say is indiscriminate brutality by Indian forces. He is one of the lucky ones. Locals accuse Indian security forces of being responsible for four deaths since New Delhi stripped Kashmir of its autonomy and imposed a crippling lockdown on August 5.

Parrey told AFP that he went out for a walk with a friend on the evening of August 6 and turning a corner ran into members of the paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). One put the barrel of a pellet-firing shotgun gun to his upper body and "fired a shell right into my right shoulder", the teenager said. Then one of the soldiers "put his boot on my shoulder and pushed the shell further inside", he said. "Another tried to crush my neck. I thought they wanted to see me dead right there."

Only when some women started shouting did the soldiers leave and neighbors took Parrey to hospital. According to his father Nazir Ahmad, doctors located "more than 400 pellets" in his torso. Medical records seen by AFP showed that "multiple pellets and one plastic canister" were removed. CRPF Inspector General Zulfiqar Hassan said there was "no report or record of this incident" but

playing cricket near his home in Kashmir's main city Srinagar on August 6 when soldiers fired at him, his mother said.

"A CRPF vehicle stopped near the edge of the park and fired a tear gas shell straight at his head," Shaheena said as she cried in her home, supported by other women. "I saw him fall and then they (soldiers) fired pellets on him." Senior army officer Lieutenant General Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon told reporters on September 4 that Khan was hit by protesters throwing stones. Khan's hospital records, seen by AFP, showed he suffered "severe traumatic

brain injury" and cited "pellet injury with shell blast injury" as the cause of death.

On Saturday the Indian government appeared to row back on Dhillon's statement, saying the cause of death was a "hard and blunt object" - but without saying what. Khan's angry father Firdous Ahmad, showing a photo and X-ray of his son's face, said Dhillon was "lying" and there were no protests the day he was hurt. "My son will not come back, but I want the world to know the truth and see what is being done to our children in Kashmir," Ahmad said. —AFP



KASHMIR: Shaheena (2nd left), the mother of 17-year-old Asrar Khan cries with relatives as they look at picture of the youth, who she says died after being fired upon and seriously injured by Indian paramilitary soldiers in Srinagar. —AFP

Clean energy or food? Asian nations grapple with new demands

BANGKOK: Huge renewable energy projects planned in Asia, such as solar parks and hydropower dams, risk accelerating the conversion of farmland, uprooting communities and destroying livelihoods, energy experts and human rights activists warned yesterday. As they look to curb climate changing emissions, some of the most rapid transitions to renewable energy are taking place in countries such as China, India and across Southeast Asia.

But with many in the region still dependent on farming and fishing, there is a real risk that large-scale renewable energy projects will change land use and hurt poor communities, said Harjeet Singh, global climate change lead at charity ActionAid. "This shift and expansion will have significant implications for farmers, indigenous communities, ecosystems and water sources. The risks include land grabbing, destruction of forests and water bodies, and displacement," he said.

"There is a need to ensure that the new solutions don't create different injustices, inequalities, and cause more environmental destruction", including from mining for minerals such as copper, cobalt, lithium and rare earth metals, he said. More than three people were murdered each week last year while protecting their land from encroaching industries, with a four-fold increase in killings related to conflicts over water, according to Britain-based human rights group Global Witness. —Reuters

Schools shut as forest-fire haze blankets SE Asia

JAMBI: Huge fires are raging across vast swathes of Indonesia's rainforests - some of the world's biggest - with toxic smog shutting hundreds of schools in Southeast Asia, officials said yesterday. Massive jungle areas in Sumatra and Borneo islands are ablaze as thousands of personnel battle to quell the fires, frequently started to clear land for crop plantations. Burning forests to make way for farming is also thought to be behind the enormous fires currently ripping through the Amazon in South America, and experts believe they could have a serious impact on the global climate.

In Indonesia the number of hotspots - areas at risk of fires - has soared in parts, including on Borneo which the country shares with Malaysia and Brunei. Air quality has dropped to "unhealthy" levels in and around Kuala Lumpur, according to the government's air pollutant index, and the skyline has been shrouded in thick smog.

The smell of burning foliage filled the air, and residents were suffering respiratory problems and complained of itchy and sore eyes. "It makes your eyes hurt and causes breathing problems," Indonesian tourist Indah Sulistia told AFP in Kuala Lumpur. "The haze also creates problems for snapping photos," she added. Haze also hung over Singapore, while residents in parts of southern Thailand were advised to wear face masks this week.

Around 400 schools were closed yesterday in nine districts of Malaysia's Sarawak state on Borneo, with more than 150,000 students affected, according to the local education department. In neighboring Indonesia's Jambi province, on Sumatra, some kindergartens will be closed until Friday, while elementary and junior high schools are also temporarily shut, according to local authorities, who did not give exact numbers. Jambi mayor Syarif Fasha urged residents to wear face masks while Malaysia's national disaster management agency said it has secured half a million masks, which will be sent to the Sarawak state disaster committee. —AFP

Analysis

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80 years after 1939, Europe's far right scents power again

Last week, as Europe commemorated the eightieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two, the far-right Alternative for Germany became the most popular choice for young voters in the east German state of Saxony. Along with a strong performance in local elections the same day in Brandenburg, the results were a reminder of just how dramatically far right political parties have resurrected themselves in modern Europe. Trading off economic frustration and disquiet over migration, they are weaponizing technology and social media, international networks and widespread frustration with the political status quo.

Such parties do not necessarily need outright power to achieve their goals - as shown by Italian right-winger Matteo Salvini when he became interior minister, turning away migrant rescue ships and arresting one of the captains. Italy's example, however, also points to the challenges faced by such groups. After bringing down the government earlier this year, Salvini was widely expected to become prime minister. Instead, he has found himself kept out by an alliance of more moderate parties.

The lesson of the thirties, however - another era of dislocation, change and paranoia - remains stark. Adolf Hitler's Nazis never won more than a third of the votes in a democratic election, but that was enough to give them a stranglehold on power, given the proportional representation-based German constitution. Some far-right leaders continue to be plagued by scandal and ineptitude. Austria's Freedom Party was forced from government in May after its leader, Heinz-Christian Strache, was filmed in a video sting known as the Ibiza tapes, promising government contracts to a woman he believed to be a Russian oligarch's niece. Nevertheless, the party looks set for a strong showing in the resulting Sept. 29 election.

Rebranded

France's far right appears similarly resilient. Having lost to President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 presidential elections, Marine Le Pen's National Front rebranded itself last summer as the National Rally - and won European parliamentary elections this May with a ticket fronted by 23-year-old Jordan Bardella. Le Pen - whose father founded the party in 1972 and lost a presidential runoff against Jacques Chirac 30 years later - remains firmly in control, with another chance of seizing the Elysée Palace at the next opportunity in 2022.

"The point is that they are going mainstream," says Julia Ebner, a research fellow specialising in the far right at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue think-tank in London. "They are playing a very long game, and targeting the next generation." As in France, it's a strategy that has seen rightwing political parties in Spain, Denmark and elsewhere field candidates in their late twenties high on the slate, seeing young white male voters in particular as their path to greater power. Figures such as 26-year-old Belgian Dries Van Langenhove helped Belgium's right-wing Vlaams Belang to its best-ever showing in simultaneous May regional, national and European elections.

There are limits to the trend. Even amongst young men, far right parties still often struggle to get much more than a third of the vote. Geographical support remains patchy. As they become more radical, parties can shed moderate followers even as they gain new ones - Alternative for Germany may be rising in the country's more economically marginalized east, but it appears losing support in richer western areas. Female voters remain particularly sceptical - prompting growing discussion in right-wing circles over how to win them over.

Sophisticated

Van Langenhove, Bardella and others are part of an increasingly sophisticated continent-wide movement, tying together social media, real-world demonstrations and rallies and a single-minded determination to seize political office. Well-resourced campaigns include "Generation Identity", a largely youth-facing movement that began in France but has also seen its popularity grow in Austria, Germany, Italy and elsewhere. It's a sign of how increasingly coordinated such movements are - perhaps ironic, given their often nationalist agendas. Many take explicit encouragement from both US right-wingers and white supremacists as well as Russian President Vladimir Putin, seen by many on the right as what a national leader should be - ruthless, macho and untroubled by principles such as human rights or political correctness. Such groups and their leaders are also often the main beneficiaries of suspected Russian hacking, trolling and other online activity, supporting the suggestion that the Kremlin would like to see a more fragmented, right-wing dominated West.

Far-right messaging - which includes online videos - is widespread and varied, not all of it branded to associate with the far right. Behind talk of the need to confront Islamist fundamentalism and protect women's rights, however, is a wider message - that mass migration and multicultural liberalism are destroying Europe, and only the right can stop it.

Right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland shine a light on what the far right might look like in office - more state media control, rhetoric against not just migrants and foreigners but other minorities such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Many supporters, however, would like to go further - online discussion of "re-migration" includes not just repatriating new arrivals, but deporting families who have spent generations in Europe. —Reuters

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A visitor touches an interactive glass display showing a projection of Aziz Kaddan (second right), Israeli-Arab entrepreneur and CEO of Myndlift, a mobile app developed to treat ADHD, with others showing Israeli drip irrigation inventor Rafi Mehudat (left) and Israeli-Arab scientist and engineer Hossam Haick (right), inventor of "electronic nose" and "electronic skin" sensors, at the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv on Sept 3, 2019. —AFP

Israeli high-tech looks to future - whoever wins

Inside a sleek, gleaming building with views over the Mediterranean, the co-founder of the navigation app Waze appears on a life-sized screen with words of advice on his red T-shirt. "Fall in love with the problem not the solution," Uri Levine's shirt says in the exhibit at Tel Aviv's Peres Center for Peace and Innovation, which serves in part as a shrine to Israel's long list of technological accomplishments. With all due respect to Levine, his native Israel has done both when it comes to high-tech.

The success of Israel's high-tech industry is one of the few subjects not up for debate ahead of September 17 elections, and those involved are looking at ways to build on the achievements of the "start-up nation" no matter who wins. With the world's most start-ups per capita, Israel has carved a niche. It has served as an incubator for brands like Waze - now owned by Google - web-publishing firm Wix and Mobileye, an autonomous driving company bought by Intel in 2017.

Giants such as Intel, Facebook and Google also have operations in the country, helping form its "Silicon Wadi", or valley. But with those feats behind it, the industry is looking towards new challenges: increasing

employment in the sector, having more firms grow in Israel rather than being acquired abroad, and maintaining an edge as competition increases. "As a small country, you have to work extra hard to be on the radar screen," said Eugene Kandel, a professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University and CEO of Start-Up Nation Central, a non-profit that promotes Israeli innovation. "In some sense, we have no luxury of staying on a plateau, which a much bigger country could afford."

'We try to survive'

Beyond economic effects, the sector and innovation more generally have served as a calling card. It has allowed Israel to incorporate offers of technological cooperation to countries with which it is seeking to build relations. That technology has often come in the form of defense equipment and arms, while spy software developed in Israel has attracted deep controversy. Israel's more than 50-year occupation of Palestinian territory is also a major source of criticism from the international community.

But programs in such areas as agriculture and water recycling have served it well. As one example, Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu talks up Israel's advancements in tomato cultivation. The government has played a role with tax advantages and through its Innovation Authority. Mandatory military service for most Jewish Israelis contributes since many receive technological training there, particularly those in the elite Unit 8200 for signal intelligence.

But some also name two aspects of the Israeli ethos: the need to innovate in a country in the desert and chutzpah, or audacity. "In Israel, we try to survive," said Revital Hollander of Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya, an Israeli university that recently hosted business students from Canada's McGill University to collaborate and participate in a hackathon. "Basically we are always in a situation where we need to solve problems, and this is our state of mind."

Employment in high-tech rose in 2018 to 8.7 percent of Israel's total compared with 8.3 percent the previous year, according to figures from the government, which is seeking to increase that number. Those involved in the industry talk about encouraging start-ups to "scale-up" - grow their businesses - rather than cash in on lucrative acquisition offers from abroad. To spread the wealth,

Israel has been seeking to turn the city of Beersheba in the country's desert south into a major tech hub, including through the relocation of military tech units there.

'Our responsibility'

But reverence for what Israel has already created is plentiful. It could be seen recently in Herzliya near Tel Aviv, where the Canadian and Israeli students collaborated. Jiro Kondo, a professor at McGill's Desautels faculty of management, said the "ecosystem" Israel had created was unique considering its starting point. "The only example in the last 40 years where I can think of something that went from zero to something that's successful not just in dollars invested but value created... is in Israel," he said. At the Peres Center, founded by former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres, the story of the country's innovation begins even before its 1948 founding, told through virtual reality and interactive presentations. Its focus is less on its economic aspects than on how it can improve lives. "And innovation is a tool for that," deputy director general Yarden Leal said from Peres's former office, still housing his books and Nobel peace prize. —AFP

Mugabe polarises Zimbabwe in death as well as in life

Zimbabwe's founder Robert Mugabe is proving as polarizing in death as he was in life, with a fight over where he will be buried threatening to embarrass his successor and deepen divisions in the ruling ZANU-PF party. President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government wants Mugabe, who led Zimbabwe from independence in 1980 until the Nov 2017 coup that ousted him, buried at a national monument to heroes of the liberation war against the white minority Rhodesian regime.

But some of Mugabe's relatives have pushed back against that plan. They share Mugabe's bitterness at the way former allies including Mnangagwa conspired to topple him and want him buried in his home village. Mnangagwa has taken the threat to snub a burial at National Heroes Acre sufficiently seriously that he has dispatched a delegation to Singapore, where Mugabe died in a hospital on Friday, to negotiate with the family, government sources said.

The body is expected to arrive in Zimbabwe today, adding time pressure to Mnangagwa, who is under fire over an economic crisis and clampdown on dissent that has drawn parallels with the worst excesses of the Mugabe era. Both men have blamed Western sanctions and accused the United States and Britain of driving opposition protests. "Mugabe has always been a controversial figure, in life as it is now in death," said Eldred Masunungure, a politics professor at the University of Zimbabwe. "If the founding father of Zimbabwe wasn't buried at National Heroes Acre, it would set a very bad precedent and tarnish the image of the head of state."

In public, senior ZANU-PF officials express confidence that Mugabe will be buried at the monument on

Sunday, after a state funeral in a sports stadium a day earlier. In private they say the feud with Mugabe's family could have been handled better. One factor that could help Mnangagwa's delegation, which is led by Vice President Kembo Mohadi, is that Mugabe's family is divided over where the former president should be laid to rest.

Leo Mugabe, Mugabe's nephew, is leading a group of relatives who want the former president to be buried in his home village of Kutama, some 85 km from Harare, two relatives who have attended planning meetings for Mugabe's burial said. That group is also backed by some members of the faction within ZANU-PF that is closely aligned with Mugabe's wife Grace and wants to get back at Mnangagwa.

Other family members, including Mike Binha, who is from Grace's side of the family, think it would be best to mend ties with Mnangagwa by burying Mugabe at National Heroes Acre, the relatives said. Yesterday, a tour guide at the monument said he was sure Mugabe would be buried there. A place has been left next to his first wife Sally's grave within the grandiose structure, which North Korean architects helped design soon after independence.

Divided land

Mugabe left behind an economy wrecked by hyperinflation, dollarization and deeply entrenched corruption, and a raging political rivalry between the country's two largest political parties, ZANU-PF and the opposition MDC. But many Zimbabweans also remember Mugabe as their country's liberator from white minority rule and for broadening people's access to education and land. Mnangagwa, Mugabe's former deputy whose power base mainly lies in the military and security sectors, has tried to associate himself with the successes of the Mugabe era and distance himself from his ruinous economic legacy. —Reuters

In Zimbabwe, hospitals battle Mugabe legacy

For Zimbabwe's doctors, few institutions reflect their country's decay under Robert Mugabe than their public hospitals, once vaunted but now under-equipped and crumbling. Latex gloves serve as urine bags, operating rooms lack light bulbs and patients are often required to refuel their own ambulances, medics say. Mugabe, who died last week in Singapore at age 95, may have swept to power as a liberation hero, but his rule was marked by economic collapse that left his people scrambling to survive.

Zimbabwean doctors note the symbolism of Mugabe seeking treatment 8,000 km from home in Singapore's gleaming Gleneagles clinic, where the cheapest suite costs around US\$850 a day. "It is very symbolic that the former president who presided over all the system for three decades can't trust the health system," said Edgar Munatsi, a doctor at Chitungwiza, 30 km from the capital Harare. "It says a lot about the current state of our health system."

Mugabe's death has left many debating the legacy of a man who ended white minority rule and was initially lauded for advances in public health and education. In his nearly four-decade rule, Mugabe later brutally repressed opponents and oversaw a catastrophic mismanagement of economy that led to hyper-inflation, food shortages and misery. Mugabe was not alone in seeking overseas care. Current Vice President Constantino Chiwenga is away for several weeks of treatment in China.

It is not hard to see why. In Chitungwiza hospital, a glowing sign promising "Quality Health" welcomes patients, but conditions inside say otherwise: Operations are often cancelled for lack of anaesthetic. Munatsi says. The hospital recently issued an internal memo warning its poorly-paid staff against "eating food made for patients."

Two-decade crisis

The situation is equally dramatic in pediatrics at Harare Central Hospital, one of Zimbabwe's top clinics. Cleaning is done only twice a week, for lack of staff and detergents, doctors told AFP. The operations are often postponed for lack of running water and nursing staff, in a country mired for two decades in economic crisis. "In theatre, we have linen full of blood and feces and you

can't do the laundry," said one doctor. He requested anonymity, like many of his colleagues, for fear of reprisals from President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government.

Only one of three pediatric operating rooms at the central hospital is working. "We have a four-year waiting list for inguinal hernias, the most common condition in children," says one of the specialists. Without treatment, this hernia can cause male infertility. Drug shortages, obsolete equipment and lack of staff: the mix is sometimes deadly. "It is heart-breaking when you lose patients who are not supposed to die under normal circumstances," Munatsi said.

'Pathetic'

Since the early 1990s, the public health system has steadily deteriorated, whereas before, people came from overseas to be treated in Zimbabwe, recalls one senior doctor. That is a legacy of the Mugabe years as the country was tipped into endless economic crisis - three-digit inflation, currency devaluations, and shortages of commodities. In hospitals, patients and loved ones who experience the situation daily, are resigned.

"It's pathetic," says Saratiel Marandani, a 49-year-old street vendor who had to buy a dressing for his mother. Given her age, she should receive free healthcare. But the reality is starkly different. "Only the consultations are free (...) if you need paracetamol, you need to buy it yourself." His mother will have to do without the ultrasound she needs. At 1,000 Zimbabwean dollars or 100 euros, it's beyond his reach.

Doctors say they sometimes have to pay out of their own pocket for patients' medication, or even just their bus ticket home. At Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare, Lindiwe Banda lays prostrate on her bed. A diabetic, she was given the green light to go home. But on condition she paid her bill. "But I do not even have five Zimbabwean dollars (less than one euro) to pay for the transport," she said in tears. "I can't reach my relatives. I think they have dumped me. They don't have money, but they should show some love."

If hospitals and patients are penniless, doctors too cannot escape Zimbabwe's ruin. Medics have just begun their latest protest to demand a pay rise after salaries lost 15 times their value in a few months and consumer prices spiralled out of control. "We are incapacitated," says Peter Magombeyi, a doctor whose salary is the equivalent of \$115 a month - a pittance that requires him to do odd jobs to get by. "We are very aware" of the problems, says Prosper Chonzi, the director of health services in Harare. "The health system reflects the economy of the country." —AFP



Business

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ABU DHABI: Saudi state oil company Aramco's CEO Amin Nasser speaks during the 24th World Energy Congress (WEC) in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi yesterday. Saudi energy giant Aramco is ready for a two-stage IPO but the timing is up to the government, Nasser said, flagging a possible foreign listing as part of the offering. — AFP

Aramco says ready for two-stage IPO

Saudi giant eyes international listing 'very soon,' hopes to raise up to \$100bn

ABU DHABI: Saudi energy giant Aramco is ready for a two-stage stock market debut including an international listing "very soon" but the timing is up to the government, its CEO said yesterday. Aramco has said it plans to float around five percent of the state-owned company in 2020 or 2021 in what could potentially be the world's biggest stock sale. The mammoth Initial Public Offering (IPO) forms the cornerstone of a reform program envisaged by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to wean the Saudi economy off its reliance on oil.

It aims to raise up to \$100 billion based on a \$2 trillion valuation of the company, but investors have debated whether Aramco is worth that much and there have been repeated delays in the launch originally envisaged for 2018. "We have always said is that Aramco is ready for listing whenever the shareholders make a decision to list," Aramco CEO Amin Nasser told reporters on the sidelines of the World Energy Congress.

"And as you hear from His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz yesterday, it is going to be very soon. So we are ready—that is the bottom line," he said, referring to the newly appointed energy minister. With the low oil price

believed to be a factor weighing on their decision-making, he added however that the actual date would be a "government decision".

The government has not given any explanation for the delays, but apart from holding out for the big-ticket valuation they are also said to be concerned the IPO could bring intense legal scrutiny of the secretive company's finances and corporate inner workings.

Tokyo option

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that Aramco was considering a two-stage process with a domestic debut and a subsequent international listing—possibly in Tokyo. "One of the primary listings is going to be local but we are also ready for listing outside," Nasser confirmed.

A Tokyo listing would be a setback for London, New York and Hong Kong, which have all vied for a slice of the business. Political uncertainty in Britain over its plan to exit the European Union and mass protests in Hong Kong have diminished their prospects, the Journal cited Saudi officials as saying.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman was promoted Sunday to

the pivotal role of energy minister, replacing veteran official Khalid Al-Falih, as the top crude exporter accelerates preparations for the much-anticipated IPO. The appointment of Prince Abdulaziz, one of the sons of Saudi Arabia's King Salman, marks the first time a royal family member has been put in charge of the all-important ministry.

In his first comments since taking up the role, the minister on Monday endorsed oil supply cuts, saying in Abu Dhabi that they would benefit all producing nations amid an oversupplied market and sagging prices. Crude prices are currently moving around levels of \$60 a barrel, compared with more than \$75 a year ago, but were given a boost on Monday by the comments.

Prices in decline

The OPEC petroleum exporters' cartel and key independent producers are deliberating how to halt a slide in prices that has persisted despite previous cuts and US sanctions that have squeezed supply from Iran and Venezuela. Abu Dhabi is also hosting this week a meeting of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) of the OPEC+ alliance for a supply cut deal reached last year.

The ministers will consider fresh reductions, even though analysts are doubtful such a move would succeed in bolstering crude prices which have been badly dented by the US-China trade war. The Aramco listing is key to Saudi's economic future. Its GDP grew by 2.4 percent last year but the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said growth would fall to 1.9 percent in 2019 due to substantial oil output cuts. The IMF said Monday that fiscal reforms, including a consumption tax and higher energy prices, have started to yield results but that more is needed to plug a chronic budget deficit.

The prospect of falling short of the \$2 trillion valuation desired by Saudi rulers is widely considered the reason the IPO—previously scheduled for 2018 — has been delayed.

Earlier this month, Aramco said its first half net income for 2019 slipped nearly 12 percent to \$46.9 billion on lower crude prices. It was the first time the company has published half-year financial results and comes after Aramco opened its secretive accounts for the first time in April, revealing itself to be the world's most profitable company. — AFP

Technology hands startups key to \$5.1tn FX market

LONDON: More than five years since global foreign exchange (FX) trading was tainted by a rigging scandal, a handful of banks are more dominant than ever and show no sign of weakening their grip on the \$5.1 trillion-a-day electronic market. But below the radar a new breed of start-ups is seeking to break their hegemony by pursuing the smaller but higher-margin customer-facing FX business used by asset managers, pension funds and insurance companies.

Data analytics firm Coalition estimates the bulk of daily flows are between banks and the majority are likely to remain with the big lenders, notably Citi, JPMorgan, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, HSBC and UBS who together hold almost 45 percent of worldwide FX trading, up from around 35 percent in 2012.

The upstarts say banks can read trading patterns to obtain higher prices from asset managers, who should instead save millions of dollars a year, as much as 50 percent in FX trading costs, by trading directly with each other. The cost of trading depends on size, currency, liquidity and the time of day. For a \$25 million transaction in euro/dollar, a mid-sized asset manager can pay a spread of 1 to 2 "pips" for trading via a large bank, which

equates to \$5,000. Banks, who often use FX trading to win more lucrative business such as structured products, hedging solutions and treasury services, say that their dominance and creditworthiness allow them to offer clients the best prices in the safest way. "We can also match more liquidity internally, allowing us to secure better pricing for clients than if we always had to go out to the market as those smaller companies have to," said Richard Anthony, HSBC's Global Head of FX eRisk.

Nevertheless, there are now 80 or more venues trading FX, with one or two launching each year. Marketfactory, a firm that offers clients an interface to trade on them, says.

This is largely because technology costs, previously a major barrier to entry, have dropped, with the Bank of International Settlements estimating that developing a trading platform costs \$5-\$10 million, versus \$100-\$150 million in the early 2000s. One preparing to go live this year is New York-based FX HedgePool whose founder Jay Moore said banks include costs such as credit and market risk transfer, capital, technology, platform fees and staff salaries in their quotes. "We seek to significantly reduce these costs by allowing institutions to source liquidity from each other," said Moore, who will face competition from platforms like London-based 24 Exchange, which began operating in August.

Caught in the net

Investors betting on currencies or hedging stock and bond exposure do so mostly on bank platforms, where they choose from continuously streamed quotes.

Alternatively, they use multi-dealer platforms such as those from Refinitiv or CME, where banks compete on price. Although a breakdown of bank market shares for serving buy-side customers is not easily available, in London, the world's biggest forex trading hub, six dealers accounted for 74 percent of all spot transactions in October 2018, Bank of England data shows. And in New York four dealers corner three-quarters of spot trading, New York Federal Reserve data shows.

The start-ups argue that while transaction "spreads" on currency trading have plummeted in recent years, investors often pay significantly for "market impact", the degree to which large, staggered orders can skew market pricing. Claude Goulet, CEO of London-based Siegfried FX, another start-up set to launch in 2019, says his analysis shows the costs associated with market impact for a recent large euro/dollar transaction totalled 2.5 times the cost of the spread paid.

Siegfried is building a matching system to check when one asset manager's currency needs can be "netted" against another's, which would eliminate the need to trade through banks.

Goulet reckons large investors netting 20 percent of their forex flows through Siegfried would save millions of dollars a year. "If you are systematically trading with the same banks you can assume the bank knows what you are doing," he said. "That doesn't correspond with reducing your footprint."

Niche providers

The biggest challenges facing FX startups are settlement risk and operational differences, where an asset

manager's system is not compatible in matters such as legal documentation.

Because FX is traded bilaterally "over-the-counter" rather than on exchanges, there is a credit exposure for two days after the trade is executed before funds are exchanged.

While this is not a concern for a major fund manager trading with a big bank as its counterparty, it puts them off dealing with startups, said David Mercer, CEO of LMAX Exchange said.

"The large banks still dominate FX trading for this reason (operational issues such as legal documentation). That might change in the next 10 years but for now, the new providers are very much niche providers," Ugo Lancioni, managing director of currency management at Neuberger Berman, said.

Big banks dominant

None of the half a dozen funds canvassed by Reuters appeared concerned yet about market concentration, saying they were open to trading with startups but the credit issue needed solving.

If anything, the squeeze on forex trading profitability since the 2008 financial crisis has made it difficult for smaller banks to compete with the giants on price. Andreas Anschperger, European head of FX trading at Allianz Global Investors said he had not observed an adverse impact. His company has opted to receive FX quotes from 10-15 banks, down from as many as 20 some years ago. "(The big banks) have the ability to support us, we can select a full suite of services," he said. — Reuters

Business

In electrification race, VW bets billions at Frankfurt car show

ID.3 touted to catch up the shortfall in electric mobility

FRANKFURT: With a new electric car and range sporting a spruced-up logo, German car giant Volkswagen enters the Frankfurt IAA car show hoping bets worth tens of billions of euros will pay off. The new model, known as ID.3, is the highest-profile response from Germany to strict new European carbon emission limits and to battery-powered competition from the US and China. In an interview yesterday, chief executive Herbert Diess told AFP that VW is "very sure that it will work".

"It's the first electric car coming to customers that has characteristics that will make it very hard to turn down," he added, namechecking a roomy interior, fast charging and an "attractive" price at 29,900 euros (\$33,000) for the base model. Alongside the ID.3 is a new, more streamlined logo set for rollout across Europe and then the world, in VW's first brand update since 2012.

"The car for the new era is here," Diess said at the unveiling late Monday. With ID.3 and its attendant range, "they can catch up the shortfall in electric mobility," said industry expert Stefan Bratzel of the Center of Automotive Management—adding that "it has to be a success".

The moves mark a new stage in the Wolfsburg-based behemoth's efforts to regain respectability after years of scandal. In 2015, VW's admission to installing software to cheat regulatory emissions tests in 11 million vehicles worldwide inflicted massive reputational damage. It was the biggest industrial debacle in post-war German history.

Future platform

But while "dieselgate" has so far cost VW more than 30 billion euros (\$33 billion), it has also become a "catalyst for electric mobility" at the firm, Bratzel said. A slew of future cars will be based on the battery-powered platform known as "MEB" that underpins the ID.3.

VW is introducing the technology just as tougher European emissions regulations enter into force.

From 2020, manufacturers' fleets must produce on average less than 95 grams of carbon dioxide (CO2) per kilometer. Breaching the limit means fines of 95 euros per excess gram, multiplied by the number of cars sold in the European Union. VW hopes to sell one million so-called



FRANKFURT AM: The logo of German carmaker Volkswagen (VW) is seen on the company's new electric ID3 model at the International Auto Show (IAA) in Frankfurt am Main. — AFP

"zero emission" vehicles per year by 2025. More than 30,000 people have already pre-ordered a more expensive first edition of the ID.3.

But the broader German market is less encouraging. Battery-powered vehicles make up just two percent of sales, while only 16 percent of Germans planning a car purchase would choose an electric car, according to a poll for energy firm E.ON. "The years 2020 and 2021 will be an especially significant challenge" to meet emissions requirements, the chief executive of Mercedes-Benz parent Daimler Ola Kallenius told journalists at the IAA yesterday.

SUVs cover costs

For now, electric cars are more expensive to build, as numbers aren't yet large enough to achieve economies of scale. "In the medium term, there isn't any money to be made in electric cars," said Ferdinand Dudenhofer of the Center Automotive Research (CAR).

"By 2023-24, battery production capacity will be available in Europe and prices will fall," he predicted.

Kallenius said Daimler was "building battery factories



FRANKFURT AM: The Swedish CEO of Daimler AG Ola Kallenius (5th from left) poses with Mercedes workers next to a Mercedes Vision EQS car during a media presentation at the company's booth at the Frankfurt motor show IAA 2019, in Frankfurt am Main. — AFP

on all continents". And VW aims to scale up as quickly as possible by agreeing to license its MEB technology to Ford. Meanwhile many manufacturers are going through belt-tightening programs including job cuts to lift profitability.

And car sales are running out of steam, especially in the vital Chinese market. Those factors combined rule out stopping production and sales of large, popular SUV

models—highly profitable but also high on the hit list of environmentalists and city planners looking to slash space accorded to cars. VW has launched an "SUV offensive" that will bring its offer in the class to 30 models by 2025, from 11 at present—some of them battery-powered. "The money we'll earn from SUVs will allow us to face up to the future," Volkswagen brand chief Ralf Brandstatter forecast. — AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: A sign at the British Airways ticket counter shows two cancelled flights in the International terminal at San Francisco International Airport on Monday in San Francisco. — AFP

British Airways pilots' strike enters 2nd day

LONDON: A landmark strike by British Airways pilots entered its second day yesterday with more travel chaos—and no end in sight to the long-running dispute over pay. BA has decided to cancel almost all its flights for the second day in a row, it announced in a statement identical to the one issued Monday.

The carrier, which is owned by London-listed International Airlines Group, said it has cancelled nearly 100 percent of its 850 daily flights, affecting the travel plans of more than 100,000 passengers.

However, the pilots' trade union stood firm in its demands for greater salary and benefits. The industrial action by pilots, which is the first in BA's 100-year history, has seen flights axed for approximately 200,000 travellers, mostly from London

Gatwick and Heathrow airports. In advance of the strike, BA offered full refunds, or bookings on alternative dates or flights with a different airline. The walkout over pay by members of the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA) trade union follows around nine months of failed talks.

With no talks scheduled, pilots will also stage another one-day strike on September 27.

"Pilots are standing firm and have shown just how resolute they are," BALPA boss Brian Strutton said in a brief statement. "British Airways needs to start listening to its pilots and actually come up with ways of resolving this dispute."

BA has offered a salary increase of 11.5 percent over three years, which it argues would boost the annual pay of some captains to £200,000 (\$246,000 or 220,000 euros).

However, the union has rejected the proposal that was made in July, arguing that its members want a bigger share of the company's profits. BALPA estimates that the 48-hour strike is costing the airline a total of £80 million but BA has yet to give an estimate. — AFP

"Boris Johnson clearly believes that removing the threat of no-deal significantly weakens his negotiating position."

Equities struggle

Europe's main stock markets meanwhile struggled as investors mulled speculation that the European Central Bank could deliver economy-boosting measures tomorrow.

Asian equities also wobbled after last week's rally, with hopes building that the ECB could push eurozone interest rates deeper into negative territory. "Traders are playing the wait and see game in relation to the ECB meeting," noted CMC Markets analyst David Madden. "To a certain extent, some form of monetary easing from the ECB has been priced in."

The ECB announcement comes a week before the Federal Reserve's next meeting, where it is also tipped to announce a further reduction in borrowing costs. Oil prices meanwhile rose after Saudi Arabia's new energy minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, said output cuts would benefit all exporting nations. The remarks suggested he would support reductions to address an oversupplied market and sagging prices. — AFP



LONDON: In this file photo, a trader passes a customer their change in the form of a five pound sterling note and one and two pound coins at Whitechapel Market in east London. — AFP

Germany clings to no-debt policy in 2020 budget

BERLIN: German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz yesterday presented a 2020 budget that sticks to the country's longstanding no-new-debts "black zero" policy, defying speculation on financial markets that Berlin might borrow to fund investments.

"It's an expansionary budget" of around 350 billion euros (\$397.5 billion), Scholz told members of the Bundestag (lower house of parliament). For years, international organizations and partner nations have urged Germany to boost domestic spending, in part to balance out its massive trade surplus.

At home, where Scholz is running for co-leadership of the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), many economists and his party colleagues have pressed government to rejuvenate crumbling infrastructure and outdated schools with borrowed cash. "Germany will do what's needed without new debts," Scholz insisted to MPs.

At the height of the financial crisis in 2009, lawmakers changed Germany's constitution to strictly limit how much the government could borrow, with some allowances in case of weaker economic performance. But under Scholz and his conservative predecessor Wolfgang Schäuble, Berlin has stuck voluntarily to a still stricter no-deficit policy known as the "black zero" since 2014.

"At present, we are not in a crisis" that would justify abandoning it, Scholz said. But he called on Washington and Beijing to settle "urgently" the United States-China trade conflict that has slowed the world economy and especially harmed export-oriented Germany. Weighed down by protectionism, weaker emerging markets and the threat of Brexit, Germany's economy shrank 0.1 percent in the second quarter and may enter a recession in the third.

Scholz told an audience of bankers in Frankfurt last week that the federal government is "very ambitious" regarding investments, budgeting 40 billion euros per year. But critics on the left note that as the economy grows, that sum will represent an ever-smaller share of GDP with each passing year. Meanwhile items like a housing benefit for families are counted towards the total, a far cry from spending on school buildings, bridges or railways. — AFP

Pound runs out of steam amid UK parliament shutdown

LONDON: The pound faltered yesterday as dealers mulled Britain's parliamentary suspension and the outlook for a Brexit deal. Sterling, which had won ground this week on the fading prospect of a no-deal Brexit, retraced some of those gains versus the euro and dollar.

"The pound has pulled back a little... after the currency experienced a strong bounce in the past week due to fears of a no-deal Brexit receding as parliament successfully passed a bill intended to prohibit it," noted XTB analyst David Cheetham. "With no more parliamentary sessions due for five weeks the focus now turns to the prospects of a new deal being negotiated between the UK and the EU."

Dealers nevertheless digested upbeat official data showing that the UK's unemployment rate fell to a 45-year low of 3.8 percent in July.

Westminster chaos

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson failed again late on Monday to get MPs to back a snap election, handing a brief boost to sterling. The latest defeat on calling an election saw the pound briefly rally more than one percent against the dollar from as low as \$1.2234 to as much as \$1.2385, its highest level since the end of July. "Despite an encouraging UK jobs report, the pound is slipping away from earlier highs," said City Index analyst Fiona Cincotta added yesterday.

"The reality of the chaos at Westminster hits home," she added. "With no resolution to Brexit or any sense of control returning to UK politics the pound could struggle to keep its head above water in the coming sessions."

Just before Westminster lawmakers broke up for five weeks, lawmakers inflicted yet another defeat on the new premier, who has been thwarted in his attempts to call an early poll as he looks to win a majority in parliament and push through a no-deal Brexit. MPs had earlier also voted to demand the government publish confidential documents about Britain's readiness to leave the European Union on October 31 without a divorce deal.

Johnson insists he will not ask for a delay to the Brexit date. "With no more parliamentary sessions due for five weeks the focus now turns to the prospects of a new deal being negotiated between the UK and the EU," Cheetham added.

Nissan seeks clean slate with CEO exit

TOKYO: Crisis-hit Japanese automaker Nissan hopes the resignation of its embattled chief executive will help turn the page on the tumult unleashed by the arrest of former chief Carlos Ghosn.

But the firm still faces plenty of challenges, from naming a successor to Hiroto Saikawa and repairing its alliance with partner Renault, to turning around the firm's finances after a disastrous year.

The succession headache

Nissan CEO Saikawa announced Monday he would be stepping down, after an internal audit launched in the wake of the Ghosn scandal found he benefitted inappropriately from a bonus scheme. The firm's current chief operating officer Yasuhiro Yamauchi will serve as interim CEO while Nissan searches for a permanent replacement. They hope to name someone by the end of October.

Masakazu Toyoda, head of the firm's nomination committee, said they were looking for someone who could inspire employees at Nissan, which has been buffeted by scandal since Ghosn's shock arrest in November. The firm also wants a candidate with auto industry experience and a "deep understanding" of alliances, a necessary trait for a CEO who will have to navigate Nissan's tricky relationship with French partner Renault. Nissan says it has narrowed the field to 10 candidates, among them non-Japanese citizens and unusually for Japan's male boardrooms—women, but it is believed to favour hiring a Japanese citizen.

"There's not an obvious replacement," a source with knowledge of the matter told AFP. Yamauchi, 63, is not considered the "new blood" the firm needs and is not believed to be keen on keeping the post.

House-cleaning

Saikawa described his resignation as the result in part of the "milestone" of completing the firm's internal audit. The audit's conclusions focus largely on Ghosn and his former right-hand man Greg Kelly, accusing them of costing the firm at least 35 billion yen (\$326 million) — a figure that includes deferred payments that were never actually made.

Ghosn denies any wrongdoing and a statement from his lawyers Monday accused Nissan of an "inconsistent, contradictory and incoherent" position. In addition to Ghosn, Kelly and Saikawa, six other senior Nissan officials—some still working at the firm—were found to have improperly received bonuses. Their names have not been made public. Nissan says the scheme that Saikawa and the other unnamed officials participated in was not illegal, and that the issue is different from what it calls intentional misconduct by Ghosn and Kelly.

And it says Saikawa and the other executives will return the money involved.

It is unclear whether the audit would continue, with sources saying some board members want further investigation. A source told AFP that the American lawyer who led the probe, Christina Murray, opted to resign in frustration that the audit's conclusions focused only on directors at the firm.

Alliances to rebuild

The next CEO of Nissan faces the unenviable task of returning the firm to financial health after it reported its worst first-quarter results since the global financial crisis. The automaker has cited a global slowdown in the auto sector, but it is also suffering from a lack of innovation on its production line and reputational damage from the Ghosn scandal. Whoever succeeds Saikawa will inherit the harsh cost-cutting measures he proposed as a way out of the wilderness, including reducing dealer incentives and promotions but also cutting global production by 10 percent to 2023, a measure that means the loss of 12,500 jobs. — AFP

Business

EQUATE Group inaugurates its new MEGlobal Oyster Creek site in Texas

Site to build on company's global footprint and benefit Kuwait, US

OYSTER CREEK, US: The EQUATE Group announced the inauguration of its new MEGlobal Oyster Creek site in Oyster Creek, Texas, USA. The momentous occasion was celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony on site, attended by EQUATE shareholders and management.

The world-scale, 750,000 metric-tons-annually (mta) ethylene glycol (EG) manufacturing facility is part of EQUATE's wholly-owned subsidiary, MEGlobal Americas Inc. (MEGlobal.) It will produce monoethylene and diethylene glycol, products used in a number of market applications including polyester fibers, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles and packaging, antifreeze and coolants, paints, resins, deicing fluids, heat transfer fluids and construction materials.

"This is a major achievement for the EQUATE Group and will benefit both Kuwait and the US," said EQUATE President and CEO Dr Ramesh Ramachandran. "With a growing global market for EG products, it will provide us with greater flexibility to satisfy our customers' needs while capitalizing on the US shale gas opportunity. This site builds on our global footprint and is part of our strategy to grow our value-added business as a leading ethylene glycol producer and supplier."

Ramachandran noted the site builds on the long-

standing relationship between its Kuwaiti partner, Petrochemical Industries Company in Kuwait (PIC) and the US partner, Dow Inc, a relationship that was forged during the liberation of Kuwait. It led to the formation of the EQUATE Petrochemical Company, a joint venture between Dow and PIC (42.5 percent each ownership) as well as Boubyan Petrochemicals Co. K.S.C. (BPC) with 9 percent ownership and Qurain Petrochemical Industries Co. (QPIC) with 6 percent ownership.

"The EQUATE Group began with large investments in Kuwait and now comes full circle with the investment in Texas. Our ability to leverage the project execution and operational excellence expertise of Dow allowed us to deliver the project on time and on budget which is a remarkable accomplishment," Ramachandran said. The project achieved several milestones in its construction, including more than three million consecutive safe work hours.

EQUATE Executive Vice President Naser Al-Dousari added, "This is an important milestone in EQUATE history, adding manufacturing capacity on the US Gulf Coast to satisfy customer needs in the region. EQUATE's glycol footprint in the Americas is as large as that in Kuwait. The community in Texas has been very welcoming to this investment and we look forward



OYSTER CREEK, US: The EQUATE Group inaugurates its Oyster Creek site in Oyster Creek, Texas, USA.

to being a part of this region."

The site created 55 new full-time long-term jobs and 25-35 contract jobs. It employed almost 2,000 con-

struction workers at peak. Commercial quantities of finished product are expected to begin shipping by November 2019.

Boursa Kuwait holds workshop on Financial Derivatives Market

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to further contribute to the development of Kuwait's capital market, Boursa Kuwait organized a consultation workshop regarding derivatives, which was attended by representatives of listed and non-listed investment companies and brokerage firms. This consultation, where the specifications and conditions associated to derivatives was discussed, falls in line with Boursa Kuwait's strategy to diversify products and increase liquidity, the latter of which is a key pillar that supports the development of a more attractive investment platform.

Derivatives will be launched as part of phase four of the Market Developments plan, which was initiated by Boursa Kuwait in 2017 in collaboration with the Capital Markets Authority and the Kuwait Clearing Company. The launch will follow an integrated study of derivatives conducted by Boursa Kuwait, alongside investment companies and other strategic stakeholders. During the session, Boursa Kuwait conducted polls and held a Q&A session where those involved raised their comments and concerns.



Noura Al-Abdulkareem, Acting Head of Markets Sector at Boursa Kuwait, said: "There is no doubt that the trading of derivatives will play a pivotal role in the development of the Kuwaiti capital market. Over the past few years, we have made a substantial difference at Boursa Kuwait and we continue to pioneer this journey of growth and raise the profile of the stock market regionally and internationally. We are constantly expanding our portfolio of products and services, and offering more promising

investment opportunities to increase market liquidity. At Boursa Kuwait, we strive to contribute to the development of Kuwait's economy and participate in the achievement of the country's development goals." This workshop is one of a series of workshops held by Boursa Kuwait in an effort to reinforce the importance of transparency and communication with market participants and the provision of world-class products and services, by discussing market development plans with relevant stakeholders.

Infiniti Al-Babtain continues leasing offer on Infiniti QX50, QX80

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, continues to offer its loyal fans exclusive leasing deal that accompanies the purchase of Infiniti QX50 and QX80 at Al-Rai showroom.

Starting at a leasing price of KD 229 per month, The INFINITI QX50 is the world's first variable compression ratio engine in a production vehicle which was created to fully meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver on their desire to own the latest masterpiece of technology. The VC-Turbo engine delivers the strong and convincing performance of a V6 and the fuel economy of a 4-cylinder engine - transforming on demand and based on the input of the drivers. Instantly adapting to their needs, the VC-Turbo lets them harness the exhilarating performance of 268 hp and 380 nm at 4,400 rpm of torque. Developed on an entirely new platform, the QX50 features the sophisticated and assuring INFINITI Intelligent All-Wheel Drive.

Drive Assist technologies react instantaneously to critical driving situations, supporting the drivers with a range of empowering 'co-pilot' features, and enabling them to always be in total control. Driver-centric, yet passenger-minded, the QX50 offers a package of technologies to enhance the driving experience, while a calm, connected, and relaxing cabin features an asymmetric layout - designed to meet different needs of the driver and the passengers.

Now starting at a leasing price of KD 399 per month, the QX80 has a refined and spacious cabin that features high-quality materials, a hand-crafted finish and advanced drive-assist technologies. With a taut yet comfort-



oriented suspension, and ample performance from its 5.6-liter V8 engine, the QX80 gives drivers an assured feeling of control and confidence at the wheel. The rear entertainment system has also been upgraded. Higher-resolution screens provide the interface for

connectivity and entertainment devices. The system also now supports 31 languages, up from three in the outgoing QX80. Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to explore the advantage of the exclusive deal by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.

ABK customers receive special discounts from Emirates Holidays

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) customers are eligible for an exclusive 10 percent discount on holiday packages from Emirates Holidays when

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To qualify for the offer, bookings must be made by September 30, 2019 and travel is valid until November 30, 2019. Payment must be made with an ABK card. To book online please visit: https://www.emiratesholidays.com/kw_en/promotions/abk or the local retail store at Hamra Tower, 7th Floor or call Emirates Holidays. The discount is already applied to all pricing online.

Economists see ECB cornered into stimulus broadside

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is set to unveil fresh monetary easing at a meeting tomorrow, analysts agree, under pressure from markets to deliver support to a flagging eurozone economy. It could be a last major move by ECB chief Mario Draghi before handing the reins to outgoing International Monetary Fund chairwoman Christine Lagarde on October 31.

The single currency is not as fragile as when Draghi promised "whatever it takes" to save it in 2012 — peaking in a 2.6-trillion-euro bond-buying scheme from 2015-18 and negative rates on banks' deposits in Frankfurt. But central bankers have for years failed to hit their inflation target of just below 2.0 percent, despite unprecedented interventions.

And now growth is slowing as the eurozone confronts US-led trade wars, weakness in emerging markets and the risk of a no-deal Brexit. In the second quarter, economic activity in the bloc expanded by just 0.2 percent compared with January-March, while annual inflation fell to 1.0 percent in July. Its leading economy, Germany, is forecast to slide into recession in the third quarter.

Policymakers' insistence that their goal still holds-and Draghi's June declaration that the ECB could even aim to overshoot it, compensating for years of below-target price growth-have prompted high expectations for September action on financial markets.

"If the ECB were to disappoint in September, it would need to do more later, with lower chances of success," said Pictet Wealth Management strate-

gist Frederik Ducrozet. He pointed especially to the risk of markets' expectations for future inflation becoming "de-anchored" from the central bank's aim. The resultant bets on lower future inflation could turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. Ducrozet suggested Draghi could announce 600 billion euros (\$660 billion) worth of new bond purchases, as well as a cut in the deposit rate banks pay to park cash with the ECB, from -0.4 to -0.5 percent. But "dissensions within the governing council could lead to a sub-optimal decision" that leaves asset purchases for another day, he added.

Council divided?

Governors from the weightiest eurozone nations, including France, Germany and the Netherlands, are skeptical about new bond-buying. "Is it necessary to restart purchases immediately? That's a question we'll have to discuss," Bank of France head Francois Villeroy de Galhau said last week. Villeroy is normally seen as one of the council's "doves", more favorable to monetary easing than so-called "hawks", who mainly hail from northern and German-speaking Europe. The German and Dutch central bank chiefs have also spoken up in recent weeks. And ECB vice-president Luis de Guindos insisted in late August that the institution is "data-dependent".

"Indications from market expectations cannot replace our policy judgment," de Guindos said. For his part, Draghi has stoked confidence in a policy move at public appearances over the summer. In July he reiterated that governors were weighing the "possibility of actions in the future, if there is no improvement" in economic conditions. New ECB staff growth and inflation forecasts, expected to be lower than in June, will provide fodder for the doves' arguments at this week's meeting.

The June outlook already trimmed predictions for both measures, with prices expected to grow just 1.6 percent in 2021 — far short of the target. — AFP



This file photo shows the headquarters of the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

What's On

HORECA issues report on importance of food safety



Leaders Group for Consultancy and Development; the organizer of HORECA Kuwait, recently issued its periodic report about the growing importance of food safety. Commenting on the report, Leaders Group general manager and head of HORECA organizing committee Nabila Al-Anjeri stressed the need for full cooperation between the food authority and related private sector bodies. "We, at HORECA, have started to focus on this issue since 2012 and our exhibition has contributed to developing quality standards in food industries," she stressed.

Al-Anjeri added that recent international conferences showed that unsafe food items pose considerable threats to people's lives and economies adding that unsafe food has been annually causing 600 million food-based diseases. "The first such conference organized by FAO, WHO and AU in Addis Ababa was held in February 2019 and the International Forum for Food Safety and Trade was held in April 2019," she elaborated.

Further, Al-Anjeri stressed the need to address public opinions through daily food safety media to refute rumors about various products and subject them to proper technical tests. She also noted that establishing the food authority had been delayed



Nabila Al-Anjeri

for four years though its law had been published in the official gazette in 2013 noting that the private sector can greatly help the authorities carry out its tasks and duties, namely the mobile food testing labs that ought to be ready by 2020. "Unfortunately, only 9 percent of the \$0.9 million project has been so far accomplished," she said noting that more national labs need to be built with help from the private sector.

South African Business delegation visits Kuwait

The South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) will lead a business delegation from nine different provinces in South Africa to the State of Kuwait from September 14-17, 2019. The DTI and the South African Embassy in the State of Kuwait have been collaborating to promote all the nine provinces of South Africa given the diverse range of products each province provides.

The sectors included are agro-processing, metal beneficiation, energy, marine, ICT, construction and engineering and pharmaceuticals and healthcare. The purpose of the visit is to further strengthen the trade relations between the two countries and to explore potential busi-

ness opportunities between South African companies and their Kuwaiti counterparts.

The delegation's program will include a business seminar at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry on September 16, 2019. B2B meetings will be held at the chamber following the business seminar. The delegation will also hold bilateral meetings with relevant business stakeholders including the Kuwait Union of Consumer Cooperative Society (KUCCS), and other business stakeholders relevant to the identified sectors.

In 2005, South Africa and Kuwait signed a Trade Agreement and an Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement which affirmed the two countries' commitment to build strong and mutually beneficial economic and commercial relations. Kuwait (and the Middle East), is an important trade and economic partner for South Africa. Kuwait is the sixth largest export destination for South Africa in the Middle East. The forthcoming visit follows in the footsteps of previous successful DTI led business delegations in 2015, 2016 and 2018.

Greetings

Birthday Wishes

Many many happy returns of the day to M Ali Imran, who is celebrating his 11th birthday. May God bless you and may you have a prosperous future ahead. Best wishes and love from papa, mama, grand parents, aunties, uncles and cousin brothers Abdullah, Osama, Umar, Hassan, Mohsin, Talha, and sisters Fatima, Ayesha, Meeqat, Aamina.

ICSK Khaitan organizes Khoj 2019 Arts Fest

Encompassing values and ideas, helping children to enlighten with what the imagination is capable, without minimizing thought and the power of creation. The Indian Community School Kuwait-Khaitan conducts hundreds of competitions for students every year. Khoj-2019, the award ceremony of this year's Arts Fest competitions, was held on September 5, 2019.

The Chief Operating Officer of Oncost Cash and Carry and Gulfmart Supermarkets, Remesh A was the Special Guest of Honor. Media Convener Sankutty Thomas, Vice President Mukesh, and Treasurer Hassan Koya, all from Kala Art were present. Along with a galaxy of acclaimed persons including the School Board of Trustees Azharuddin Amer Mohammed, Honorary Secretary Vinukumar Nair, Vice Chairman Agnello A S Fernandes, Honorary Joint Secretary Dr V Binumon, Senior Administrator and Principal ICSK Senior Rajesh Nair, Principal ICSK Amman K Gangadhar Shirsath, Principal ICSK Khaitan Susan Rajesh, Deputy Vice Principal ICSK Senior, Guests from Kala Art Kuwait, parents and students graced the occasion.

The spectacular finale began with the recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran followed by the National Anthems of Kuwait and India. Remesh A ignited the ceremonial lamp along with other dignitaries. The guests were accorded a warm welcome by Principal K G Shirsath. He reiterated that the arts fest is to promote artistic sense while academics are for intellectual development. He emphasized that ICSK is the only school organizing such vibrant and balanced events for students, giving opportunities to every student.

As a token of gratitude and appreciation from ICSK Khaitan, a memento was presented to the Special Guest. The Principal felicitated the guests from Kala Art, Kuwait, the prestigious Socio Cultural Organization among the Indian Community Kuwait for their contribution in promoting Art and Cultural Heritage of India. Sankutty Thomas of KALA Art in his speech congratulated all the participants and Prize winners. A total of 2800 students participated in the Arts Fest, Khoj 2019 and 490 awards were given out in five categories. The Chief Guest Remesh conferred 'Kalathilakam' and 'Kalaprabha' titles for each category.

Two eminent Teachers of ICSK Khaitan were felicitated on this occasion; Saranya Devi, the First Indian woman who received Championship in the prestigious Al-Kandari

International Shooting Competition held in Kuwait and French Teacher Mehdi Ali Khan who acquired certificates from FLE and as examiner for DELF&DALF by CIEP. Arts Fest coordinators were felicitated too. Namaste India Festival's Mascot was officially released by the Principal and Azharuddin Amer Mohammed, Honorary Secretary to the BOT, ICSK the school also launched its new website 'ICSK Website'.

The highlight of the day was the mind boggling performances put up by students including storytelling, solo dance, cinematic dance and mime which dazzled everyone. Leaving long lasting memories the mesmerizing event came to an end with a vote of thanks proposed by Griffin George of Class XII B, the School Arts Club Secretary.



The Cambridge English School in Hawally and Al-Mangaf welcomed its students from kindergarten to the twelfth grade on the occasion of the start of the new scholastic year. The school's administration stressed its readiness to provide its students with the latest technological means according to international standards. The school administration also stated that it is very proud of the results achieved by its students in the British High School Examination (IGCSE).

PAS concludes open soccer competition

The Public Authority for Sports (PAS) recently concluded its male open soccer competition that had been organized by the 'Sports for All'

sector over the period of three days with participation of 48 teams playing knockout matches. The Soccer and Qaseer union team managed to win the title after beating Milan team, which came second while Al-Nojoon (Stars) team came third. The concluding ceremony was attended by manager Hamed Al-Hazeem, his deputy Waleed Al-Sultan and the head of the fields department Ahmed Al-Sayegh.



Health

Mosquito trials raise hopes of defeating dengue

Trial tested in nine countries, early results look promising

NHA TRANG, Vietnam: Hundreds dead in the Philippines; a threefold increase of cases in Vietnam; hospitals overrun in Malaysia, Myanmar and Cambodia—dengue is ravaging Southeast Asia this year due in part to rising temperatures and low immunity to new strains. But one group of scientists is rolling out trials to breed dengue-resistant bugs in a bid to tackle one of the world's leading mosquito-borne illnesses, raising hopes the untreatable disease can finally be beaten.

The World Mosquito Program (WMP) has pioneered a method where male and female *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes are infected with the disease-resistant bacteria called Wolbachia before being released into the wild. In a matter of weeks, baby mosquitoes are born carrying Wolbachia, which acts as a disease buffer for the bugs—making it harder for them to pass on not only dengue, but Zika, chikungunya and yellow fever.

First trialed in northern Australia, it's been tested in nine countries around the globe, including in Vietnam where early results are promising. "We have seen a remarkable reduction of dengue cases after the release," explained Nguyen Binh Nguyen, project coordinator for WMP in Nha Trang. His team set free around half a million Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes last year in Vinh Luong, a crowded dengue-prone district in southern Vietnam.

Since the trials, dengue cases are down 86 percent in Vinh Luong compared to nearby resort town Nha Trang. That's a major relief for Cong Thi Thu, an accountant who along with her two children suffered an intense bout of dengue in 2016, flooring the family for weeks. She worries

less after the trials but still makes her kids sleep under nets and no longer leaves stagnant water to collect in the pots around her garden, which offer ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. "I feel at ease now, 70 to 80 percent safe, but I still have to be careful," Thu said from her leafy compound.

No immunity

Today, mosquitoes still buzz about in the open-air shops, cafes and homes of Vinh Luong, but the majority in the test areas now carry Wolbachia compared to none before the trials, WMP said. Convincing wary residents like Thu, along with health officials and ethics boards, that the mosquitoes won't make them sick was not an easy task. Residents have long subscribed to the official motto "no mosquitoes, no larvae, no dengue" to avoid the virus, dubbed "breakbone fever" because of its severe flu-like symptoms.

Dengue is passed along to humans by infected mosquitoes, which thrive in crowded, hot and humid neighborhoods like Thu's. Cases have surged not only in Vietnam this year but across Southeast Asia, with around 670,000 infected and more than 1,800 people dead in the region, according to an AFP tally of national and World Health Organization data. Experts say it's the worst outbreak in years. Warmer weather is one factor—temperatures in July 2019 were the hottest ever recorded globally, and mosquitoes love hot weather—coupled with the introduction of new dengue strains that have spread among populations with no immunity. Long-term trends are also at play: breakneck urbanization in Asian megacities, a massive

increase in international travel and trade and the cyclical nature of outbreaks. "That creates the perfect ingredients for the dengue epidemic to happen," Rachel Lowe, assistant professor at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, told AFP. Even the widespread use of plastics has contributed—as things like garden pots and takeout containers collect water they create perfect breeding pools for mosquitoes.

Re-invasion

Wolbachia was first discovered by scientists in the 1920s in mosquitoes living in the drainage system beneath the Harvard University School of Public Health. Found in 60 percent of all insect species—including dragonflies, fruit flies and moths—the bacteria was mostly ignored until the 1970s when researchers discovered it could be used to prevent the spread of disease by bugs. Over the years scientists have conducted anti-dengue experiments with Wolbachia-laden mosquitoes with varied success, but now WMP hopes its approach will stick.

It is one of the only organizations in the world seeking to repopulate colonies with Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes to fight dengue, estimated to spread to as many as 100 million people globally every year. Other groups, including in Singapore and Malaysia, are using Wolbachia but only in male mosquitoes who render female eggs infertile—a method that aims to suppress the mosquito population, which rarely lasts. Many countries are also fogging neighborhoods with insecticides—effective in the short



NHA TRANG: This photo shows a laboratory assistant examining a mosquito sample at the Pasteur Institute in the southern Vietnamese city of Nha Trang. — AFP

term, though the mosquitoes often come back in just a few days, or develop resistance to the chemical killers. "No one has been able to get long-lasting suppression because the mosquitoes just keep re-invading," said WMP director Scott O'Neill. Results from WMP's Wolbachia trials in northern Australia and on the Vietnamese island Tri Nguyen have been positive—local dengue transmissions are almost non-existent—and outcomes from trials in Indonesia are expected in the next year. But experts say more long-term, and large-scale, studies are needed to see if the approach really works. Dr Raman Velayudhan, coordinator of WHO's global control program on dengue, said: "Our bottom line is to make sure that it leads to the reduction of the disease." — AFP

CLINIC

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- Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
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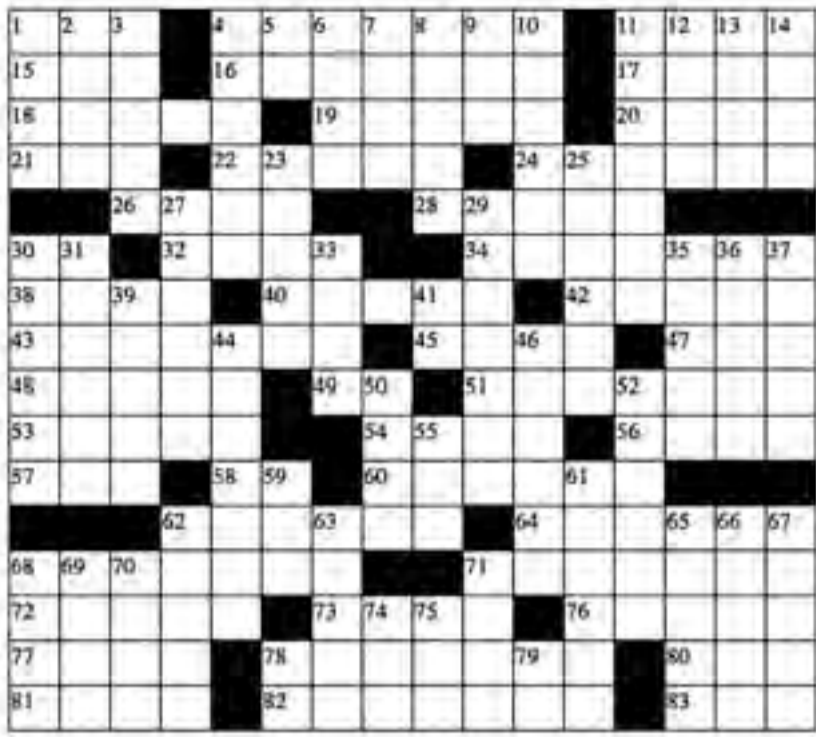
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Stars

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ACROSS

1. The sound made by corvine birds.
4. Herbs of temperate regions.
11. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
15. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
16. (Greek mythology) The son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.
17. Flat and uninspiring.
18. Cover with drops, as with dew.
19. (physics) A deformation of an object in which parallel planes remain parallel but are shifted in a direction parallel to themselves.
20. English essayist (1775-1834).
21. Come into the possession of something concrete or abstract.
22. A minor Hebrew prophet (8th century BC).
24. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade names Acular and Toradol) that is administered only intramuscularly.
26. A complex red organic pigment containing iron and other atoms to which oxygen binds.
28. A person of unquestioning obedience.
30. Not out.
32. No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
34. Of or relating to alleles.
38. Roman Emperor notorious for his monstrous vice and fantastic luxury (was said to have started a fire that destroyed much of Rome in 64) but the Empire remained prosperous during his rule (37-68).
40. Of or relating to or located near a hilum.
41. Any plant of the genus *Inula*.
43. A festival featuring African-American culture.
45. Mentally or physically infirm with age.
47. The month following January and preceding March.
48. Usually paved outdoor area adjoining a residence.
49. Being one more than fifty.
51. Having or showing a sense of what is fitting and considerate in dealing with others.
53. Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
54. Portuguese explorer who in 1488 was the first European to get round the Cape of Good Hope (thus establishing a sea route from the Atlantic to Asia) (1450-1500).
56. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
57. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
58. A substance produced by the hypothalamus that is capable of accelerating the secretion of a given hormone by the anterior pituitary gland.
60. (of stone especially) Not given a finished form by or as if by hewing.
64. United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
68. Poorly stored or described.
72. A singular metaphysical entity from which material properties are said to derive.
73. Beyond what is natural.
76. A device (trade name Aqua-Lung) that lets divers breathe under water.
77. A bachelor's degree in music.
80. A rapid escape (as by criminals).
81. Profane or obscene expression usually of surprise or anger.
82. Erect shrub with small if any spines having racemes of white to yellow flowers followed by curved pointed pods and black shiny seeds.
83. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. 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.
2. On or toward the lee.
3. The extent of something from side to side.
4. Any of numerous long-tailed American finches.
5. A period of time equal to 1/24th of a day.
6. (comparative of 'little' usually used with mass nouns) Quantifier meaning not as great in amount or degree.
7. United States tennis player who was the first Black to win United States and English singles championships (1943-1993).
8. The function or position properly or customarily occupied or served by another.
9. Seed of a pea plant.
10. Jewish republic in southwestern Asia at eastern end of Mediterranean.
11. American Revolutionary leader (born in Prussia) who trained the troops under George Washington (1730-1794).
12. A telephone connection.
13. Type genus of the Amidae.
14. Massive plantigrade carnivorous or omnivorous mammals with long shaggy coats and strong claws.
23. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
25. Belonging to or prescribed for celiac disease.
27. A verse line with a dactyl followed by a spondee or trochee.
29. Straggling shrub with narrow leaves and conspicuous red flowers in dense globular racemes.
31. The largest city in New Jersey.
33. The face of a limepeice.
35. The dried fibrous part of the fruit of a plant of the genus *Luffa*.
36. Blockage of the intestine (especially the ileum) that prevents the contents of the intestine from passing to the lower bowel.
37. A telegram sent abroad.
39. Nocturnal badger-like carnivore of wooded regions of Africa and southern Asia.
41. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
44. Type genus of the Zoarcidae.
46. A small roofed building affording shade and rest.
50. Goddess of spring and wife of Bragi.
52. Small often spiny insectivorous mammal of Madagascar.
55. A liquid used for printing or writing or drawing.
59. The federal agency that insures residential mortgages.
61. The capital and largest city of Poland.
62. A wound made by cutting.
63. Annual to perennial herbs of the Mediterranean region.
65. Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
66. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
67. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
69. Acute ulceration of the mucous membranes of the mouth or genitals.
70. King of Denmark and Norway who forced Edmund II to divide England with him.
71. Highly offensive.
74. A luminance unit equal to 1 candle per square meter measured perpendicular to the rays from the source.
75. Being one hundred more than two hundred.
78. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
79. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Take your time with a complicated situation in the workplace now—you will be glad you did. Any shortcuts you might be tempted to take may not be helpful at this time. You may find more than just thanks for your efforts by the afternoon. This is indeed a great time to work with others. Obtaining and exchanging information takes on more emotional significance. You value personal contact with your neighbors or friends, cutting through all the externals and getting to the heart of things. You may be thinking about the trials and tribulations of parenting this evening. If you have no children, you may be thinking about how you would fare as a parent in the future.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a meaningful day that you can use to your advantage. A day that is not too stressful—time for accomplishing tasks or setting things up to work in your favor. This is a great time to be with others and to work together. You may also be sought after as the person for a particular job. You are social by nature and a supervisor may find you are good at guiding or introducing new co-workers to the job as well as the gang in the office. Feeling successful is the first step toward being successful—and you certainly feel successful. People like being around you because of your good attitude. A friend may bring your attention to some needed changes around your neighborhood and you volunteer to help.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Expect the best and you will receive the best. This day may have a slow start but your attitude will bring things around to what you want to accomplish. Be prepared—this could be a stressful day—it is certainly a busy day. The positive results will depend on your actions. Support and recognition from the public, from family and from friends will be happening soon. You feel at home in the world—and it takes care of you. You could have deep insights into your own feelings and inner, spiritual nature. Enjoy the season! At home you might decide to decorate with splashes of color and the fun traditions of the season. You may be attending a social affair this evening. You may, in fact, find yourself all dressed up in the best costume of the party.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may be very forceful in what you say and think. With all of this emotional energy, you could speak or communicate very well. Everything comes together to value you, and you tend to exhibit your unique qualities. This is a very idealistic time when it comes to business concerns. You have imagination when it comes to reducing any excessive overhead—getting down to basics. This evening you could be entertaining. Your creative side is showing. You may have lots of fun decorating and preparing little specialties—there will be lots of good smells coming from the kitchen. Everything conspires to reveal you at your most elegant, particularly in social situations.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This just may be your lucky day as misunderstandings become understood, puzzles become solved and questions become answered. There are new opportunities to increase your pay or whatever else you may need. There is an increased confidence and a more outgoing manner in your life just now. You are very imaginative when it comes to other people and relationships of all kinds. You have a sense of the ideal, almost like an otherworldly feeling that you bring to your partnerships, social or private. You have an interest in real union—marriage or yoga—and may find yourself looking for a mate or improving a relationship. A splash of decor at your front door presents an intriguing invitation and welcomes all the little neighbors to your good



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You will prosper by pursuing your ideas of how life could be. Don't be afraid to project your thinking—make those dreams real. Ideas of group cooperation and communion could further your career. You could bring imagination and religious understanding to physical and scientific studies. Communications, computers and the whole electronic revolution are perfect career choices for you. You enjoy listening to some of the old radio shows and may create quite a following as you talk up your hobby during your break time today. Unusual ways of appreciating and loving may also be possible. You may discover something new about love or you may adopt a different and unconventional value system, temporarily. Enjoy the seasonal changes.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Challenging authority and rocking the boat will likely play a bigger role in your life today. The new broom sweeps clean: old patterns of organization and power are ripe for an innovative approach. Radical and inventive ideas hold the key to realizing your ambitions and advancing your standing—a shakeup is in the works but this time it is your turn to speak, so to speak. Real power is always hidden—finding it means delving into hidden places, and that's where you are bound to look now. The forbidden, the taboo areas, the great mysteries that no one speaks about in polite company seem to hold the answers and you seem compelled to deal with them now. You get plenty of compliments tonight on a creative seasonal centerpiece for the dinner table.



Scorpio (October 23-November 18)

This is a perfect time to be assertive and to move forward in your career decisions. You have all the energy you could want and it should be easy to channel it. You may find yourself lecturing, teaching or attending a class on organizing your goals. Perhaps this is the best time for productive, serious thinking—getting down to the important thoughts. Studies of all kinds are in order, perhaps some night classes. Events make it easy for you to find new solutions to old problems. You may find yourself able to put your ideas into practice. Your career direction gets some encouragement at this time. You have some great ideas for decorating your living area this fall.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

A project in the workplace seems to be proceeding at a positive pace. If there are any problems with the process of this project, you are able to correct things quickly. A complicated task is far easier to manage when you approach it calmly and positively. You are willing to take on challenges, no matter what the risks. You can be a little impatient. You will prosper through new insights, inventions and an independent point of view. Daring to implement new approaches or techniques may be the secret to your success at this time. Your friends are in a festive mood this evening and you may find the interaction with them quite enjoyable—take pictures.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You have a lot of energy to pour into practical and career decisions. Careful—you may appear commanding and assertive. In summary, from this time forward, expect a more confident, outgoing attitude, for you have brought to close some inward examination. A growing sense of direction and self-worth will find you reaching out and establishing yourself. You can be very communicative, flexible, mental and other-oriented. Perhaps you can be all things to all people, giving them what they require. Others will find you a smooth talker with a quick wit and ready tongue. You may have found a way to make a bit of extra money this fall.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

When obtaining a loan, be careful to ask for just what you need and not necessarily what you want—you will be granted the loan—but ask for a long enough grace period to recover before having to begin the payback. You could be seen by others as just the person to be put in charge of some project requiring a conservative mind. Blocks and all manner of hot spots may be discovered and have to be worked through. You will, however, work through these blocks quickly; your attitude is to keep things simple and to keep moving forward. Nothing seems to slow you down.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Professional advice may work in your best interest today. This could simply be the adjustment of chairs in a meeting room or the layout of an intricate display. A relentless getting down to essentials makes your sense of management and practical vision very useful. You have a sense of mass psychology: how to organize and manipulate sensitive areas of the public mind. Work and career may become a primary focus at this time. There are opportunities to make good decisions. You are at your most practical—what happens now may have a lasting effect on your professional direction—and it is all good. Don't be afraid to project that image—make those dreams real. Things are happening and your career is on an upswing. You and your co-workers celebrate.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Dogs

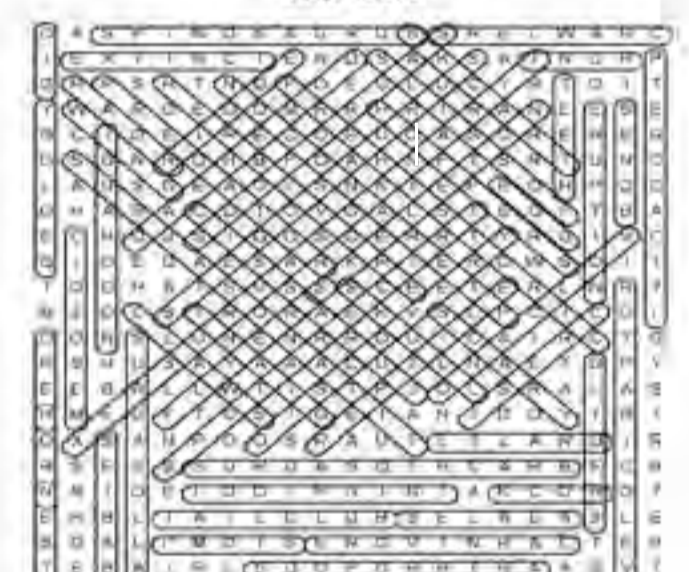
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 44 letters spell an Ogden Nash quotation.



- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| BASSET HOUND | DACHSHUND | MASTIFF | SAMOYED |
| BEAGLE | DALMATIAN | PEKINGESE | SCHNAUZER |
| BLOODHOUND | DESHOUND | FINSCHER | SETTER |
| BOXER | DINGO | POINTER | SHAR PEI |
| BULLDOG | GERMAN SHEPHERD | POMERANIAN | SHEEPSHOG |
| CHIHUAHUA | GREAT DANE | POODLE | SPITZ |
| CHOW CHOW | GREYHOUND | PUG | TERRIER |
| COCKER SPANIEL | HUSKY | RETRIEVER | WHIPPET |
| COLLIE | LABRADOR | ROTTWEILER | |
| CORGI | MALAMUTE | SAINT BERNARD | |

Yesterday's Solution

Dinosaurs



- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| ALLOSAURUS | TYRANNOSAURUS | TRICERATOPS | STEGOSAURUS |
| APATOSAURUS | SPINOZAURUS | VELOCIRAPTOR | SAUROLOPHUS |
| BRACHIOSAURUS | PARASAURONIAUS | DIABLOSAURUS | ANKYLOSAURUS |
| COELACANTHUS | SAUROPTERYGIAN | PTERODACTYL | TRICERATOPS |
| CLAYTONIA | TRICERATOPS | TRICERATOPS | TRICERATOPS |
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| CLAYTONIA | TRICERATOPS | TRICERATOPS | TRICERATOPS |

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019



Models pose during the alice + olivia by Stacey Bendet Spring 2020 Fashion Presentation at Root Studio during New York Fashion Week: The Shows on September 9, 2019 in New York City. — AFP

Russian rapper deletes pro-Moscow video with 1.5 million dislikes

A popular Russian rapper yesterday deleted a music video singing the praises of Moscow authorities ahead of contentious elections after it gathered almost 1.5 million dislikes on YouTube. Timati, a 36-year-old rapper known for his fervent support of President Vladimir Putin, posted the video, titled simply "Moscow", shortly before Muscovites were set to vote in elections for city parliament on Sunday that had caused mass protests. "I don't go to rallies, I don't bull****," the song goes, apparently referring to weeks of protests in Moscow after the authorities barred opposition candidates from running in the polls.

Lyrics in the clip praise the Russian capital as a wealthy city that has become "world standard" and "doesn't hold gay parades." "I will down a burger for Sobyenin," the song says, referring to Mayor Sergei Sobyenin, a Putin ally who has been in charge since 2010 and is detested by the opposition for refusing permission for rallies and cracking down on protesters. Timati, who is ranked the seventh wealthiest celebrity under 40 in Russia by Forbes magazine, made the video together with another rapper, Guf. The video had gained 1.48 million dislikes when Timati took it down on Tuesday, writing on Instagram that he did not intend any offence. "I'm deleting the video to stop this wave of negativity," he wrote. "I made a record. Only I didn't have such a goal."

In Instagram comments, Russians mocked Timati, accusing him of being a sellout and getting paid by the authorities to make propaganda. "The world's first government rapper. I'm sorry for his fans," one commentator wrote. "Did you also return the money to those who ordered (the video)?" asked another. Guf for his part posted an apologetic expletive-ridden video assuring his fans that he was "used" and "didn't get a penny for this, I swear." "I am proud of our young people who understand politics," he says. "I'm sorry that I don't follow the political situation in the country." —AFP

Russian rapper Timati



Margaret Atwood unveils sequel to 'The Handmaid's Tale'



Canadian author Margaret Atwood gives a press conference following the release of her new book "The Testaments".

Canadian writer Margaret Atwood in dates

Here are key dates in the life and career of award-winning Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood, whose long-awaited sequel to her hugely successful dystopian novel "The Handmaid's Tale" is officially released yesterday.

November 18, 1939: She is born in Ottawa, her father a forest entomologist and her mother a nutritionist.

1961: Graduates from the University of Toronto with a degree in English. The following year she completes a Masters at Harvard-linked Radcliffe College, in the eastern US city of Boston.

1969: Publishes her first novel "The Edible Woman", a satire about a young woman unable to eat after getting married.

1973: Atwood ends a five-year marriage to writer Jim Polk and begins a relationship with fellow novelist Graeme Gibson, with whom she will have her only child, Eleanor Jess Atwood Gibson (1976).

1985: Publishes "The Handmaid's Tale", which becomes a feminist classic, about a totalitarian society of the future. It is later adapted into a film, cult television series and opera.

1996: Release of her historical novel "Alias Grace", which is also adapted for television, airing on CBC and Netflix.

2000: Wins Britain's top literary award, the Booker Prize, for "The Blind Assassin" published the same year.

2017: US television streaming group Hulu airs the first "The Handmaid's Tale" series, which wins a host of top awards. In July 2019 a fourth series is announced.

September 10, 2019: Release of "The Testaments", the highly anticipated sequel to "The Handmaid's Tale". — AFP

Margaret Atwood released the much-anticipated sequel to her award-winning 1985 novel "The Handmaid's Tale" on Tuesday, with "The Testaments" set to become a similar smash. A terrifying, misogynistic dystopia set in the US northeast in the near-future, "The Handmaid's Tale" has been turned into a major television series and become a feminist rallying point for the #MeToo generation. "It's a question of things escaping from a book to the real world and the author has zero control," Canadian author Atwood told a press conference in London.

Fans flocked to Waterstones' flagship bookstore in Piccadilly, central London, where Atwood, 79, read from her new novel to around 400 avid followers who could get their hands on the book at midnight. "It's very accurate with what's going (on) at the moment, where the world is heading and that's kind of scary," said 27-year-old Melisa Kumas, from the Netherlands but living in London, who wore a red handmaid's outfit. "It may be a bit of a warning to the people." The sequel has already been nominated for the 2019 Booker Prize, one of the English-speaking world's most prestigious literary awards.

Its predecessor, which was nominated for the 1986 Booker Prize, was turned into a film in 1990, an opera in 2000, and an award-winning television drama series which first aired in 2017. The show has boosted sales of the novel, which has shifted eight million copies worldwide in English alone.

Novel set 15 years on

In the original novel, the United States has become the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian religious state where women are sexually subjugated. More than 15 years on from the events of "The Handmaid's Tale", the oppressive theocratic regime maintains its grip on power but there are signs that it is beginning to rot from within. "There are reasons with these kind of regimes to be optimistic because in fact they tend not to last," said Atwood. The lives of three radically different women converge in the novel.

Two, Agnes and Daisy, grew up in the first generation since the new order took over, while a third, Aunt Lydia, wields power through the ruthless accumulation and deployment of secrets. Aunt Lydia was a character in "The Handmaid's Tale", while Agnes and Daisy also cropped up. They are the daughters of the first novel's protagonist and narrator June, who goes under the handmaid name Offred. When the new story begins, Agnes lives in Gilead, while her sister lives in neighboring Canada and is appalled by the human rights abuses being perpetrated across the border.

But the third narrator in particular holds the reader in suspense: the Machiavellian leader of the Aunts—the group of women responsible for training and policing the handmaids. The reader discovers her past as a free

woman and her transformation into a monster through her survival instinct in the face of tyrannical men, and her aspiration for power to get her revenge.

Feminist symbolism

Atwood took more than three decades to create the sequel, inspired by questions asked by her readers about the characters in the first book. The twist of events this century also spurred her into penning a sequel. Atwood said society changed after the September 11, 2001 attacks, bringing in tighter domestic security measures, such as screening at airports. "Once upon a time there was no security. We became more fearful," she said. Atwood said she was also influenced by the 2008 global financial crisis and US President Donald Trump's election victory in 2016.

The TV adaptation has brought "The Handmaid's Tale" to a new audience. The handmaids' white hats and red dresses have become a symbol of feminist struggles such as abortion and women's rights campaigns in countries such as Argentina, Hungary, Ireland and Poland. In the US, they have become an emblem of the anti-Trump and #MeToo movements. "This wave started in Texas," said Atwood, "as a protest tactic" in the legislature. "You are not making a disturbance, you are sitting there modestly, you can not be kicked out for dressing up." — AFP



Canadian author Margaret Atwood poses during a photocall following the release of her new book "The Testaments" a sequel to the award-winning 1985 novel "The Handmaid's Tale" in London. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Gossip



Paul Young to support Cher on UK leg of Here We Go Again Tour

Paul Young has been announced as a special guest on Cher's 'Here We Go Again Tour'. The 'Everytime You Go Away' hitmaker will open for the US music legend on the UK leg of the run next month, for what will be her first dates on British soil in 14 years. Paul, 63, said: "I am truly honored and excited to be performing as special guest for the legendary Cher on her UK tour." The 'Believe' hitmaker kicks off the run at London's The O2 arena on October 20, before hitting Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Leeds for her first shows this side of the pond since the 'Living Proof: The Farewell Tour' in 2004. Speaking about the shows, which will see the music icon perform her biggest hits and ABBA covers, she said: "I'm very excited to bring this show to the UK. "It was the first country to

embrace Sonny & Cher, and it's where we created and had our first success with 'Believe'. It's really my second home." The 73-year-old singer-and-actress released 10 tracks by the Swedish superstars - including 'Fernando', 'Waterloo' and 'SOS' - for the album 'Dancing Queen' last September, after starring as Ruby Sheridan, the mother of Meryl Streep's character Donna, in 'Mamma Mia 2'. And the Hollywood legend took to Twitter earlier this year to tease her fans that a follow-up could be in the works, by sharing a list of potential songs she'd like to record for it. She wrote: "If I was going to do ABBBA 2... 'Take a Chance On Me, Super Trooper, Money Money Money, I do I do I do, Honey Honey, I Have a Dream, Voulez vous (sic), Does your mother Know, (and) Rock me (sic)' 'Dancing Queen' was recorded and produced

in London and Los Angeles with Cher's long-term collaborator Mark Taylor, who previously produced her hit 'Believe' which was number one in over 50 countries. Though Cher was a big fan of the 'Waterloo' hitmakers - whose music soundtracks the movie - before she started work on the film, she hadn't appreciated how "complicated" the tracks were until she started singing them herself. She previously told BANG Showbiz: "In America we knew the hit songs, but then when I heard Fernando I heard a different thing. I heard the acting of it and I didn't realize the songs were so complicated and I didn't realize how orchestrated and produced they were."

McFly are back after nine years for a one-off London show

McFly are reuniting for a one-off concert at London's The O2 arena on November 20. The 'Obviously' hitmakers - comprised of Tom Fletcher, Danny Jones, Dougie Poynter and Harry Judd - will play their debut headline show at the London venue and have also announced their plans to release new songs from the 'McFly: The Lost Songs' LP, which contains the tracks which were intended for their overdue "shelved" sixth studio LP, which will act as their first new music in nine years. The band - whose last album was 2010's 'Above the Noise' - admitted that when supergroup McBusted - which featured all of McFly and James Bourne and Matt Willis of rival band Busted - took off they ended up on an "unplanned hiatus" in 2016 and didn't really know what the future held for the band. Asked why they broke fans hearts during an Instagram Live announcement yesterday, Harry said: "The last time we were functioning as a band wasn't McFly it was McBusted. "We had a really amazing time and intense couple of years of touring. At the end of that it just kind of caught us off guard. "McFly didn't have any plans and didn't know what to do next. "We found that the McFly calendar was just empty and we found ourselves stumbling into his unplanned hiatus." The four-piece also admitted that starting families and their solo commitments didn't help and admitted their "unbreakable bond" showed some "cracks" after McBusted as their "personal relationship was in the worst place" ever. Harry explained: "McBusted was incredible, it was the most incredible experience for all six of us, but it was strange for the four of us. The dynamic did change. "Obviously we like being in a band and it's a bit like being married. "I think with us, we are never good at talking about stuff. Things just build and bubble and cracks start to appear. "After McBusted our personal relationship was in the worst place they had been in the entire 13 years we'd

known each other. "It's hard to explain it in a short amount of time... "We had a bond for one another that we thought was unbreakable. It was a weird time." Tom said it was like they went through marriage counseling and the comeback show is like them "renewing their vows". He added: "It's like a marriage and a bit like we had an affair and we didn't really know how to get through that. "We had some marriage counseling, saw some other people for a while - but ultimately we didn't get divorced. "We knew that McFly is who we are destined to be and The O2 show took us a while to realize that and The O2 show feels like renewing our vows." Tom also admitted that "the last three years" there had "been this huge void" in their lives. And drummer Harry quipped that Busted's James and Matt "ruined" McFly with McBusted. Asked about the new music, Harry said: "Good question, basically 2010 was our last studio album, so nearly 10 years since our last studio album, and then in 2011 we started writing our sixth album. "It was really exciting times and the music felt great and we really felt like the band was having an evolution and there was writing trips, then we did some more and ended up going to Texas and recorded a whole album. "We talked to the fans about this it was like album six, it wasn't titled at the time, it was like, 'Album six is coming, it's coming.' "We released the first single off that album, which was 'Love Is on the Radio' - which we performed at the Royal Albert Hall - and that's when Matt and James came out and ruined everything. "Matt and James came out and McBusted was born and that was an incredible phenomenon and we were like, 'Wow, this McBusted thing as way bigger than we ever anticipated. "So we had to just shelve that McFly album and say we will deal with that in a couple of years. "Then McBusted happened and here are today." Tickets for McFly's The O2 show go on sale on Friday at 9am.



Cudi and West to make follow-up to joint LP Kids See Ghosts

Rid Cudi says he and Kanye West are set to hit the studio to work on a follow-up to their joint LP 'Kids See Ghosts'. The pair teamed up on the "spiritual" record last year and the 'Day 'N' Nite' rapper has teased that there is more to come from the project. Cudi also admitted he finds it "kinda weird" because he didn't know whether the 'Flashing Lights' rapper was "serious" about collaborating at first. He told Complex magazine: "Kanye already told me he wants to start working on the second one. "It's kinda weird, 'cause with the first album, I didn't know how serious he was about making a collab album with me." But he soon realized the outspoken star was very into the project. Cudi continued: "He had mentioned it, but I thought it was just a good idea he had in the moment. "But then he kept bringing it up and kept having me come to his house, listen to music, and work on beats, so I was like, 'Wow, he's really into this.'" The record was one of five that came out of the 'Gold Digger' hitmaker's 'Wyoming sessions', which also saw him produce his LP 'ye', Pusha T's 'Daytona', Nas' 'Nasir' and Teyana Taylor's 'KTSE'. Cudi previously revealed that he made a conscious decision to adopt a more upbeat tone on 'Kids See Ghosts'. He shared: "I chose to write the light. "Me and Kanye both agreed that we wanted to create a spiritual album. "I know kids are used to hearing me talk about darkness, but I'm living in the light now." Meanwhile, the pair's live show in support of the record hit the headlines after Lorde accused Kanye of "stealing" her production ideas. The 'Royals' hitmaker commented on part of the duo's

collaborative show at Camp Flog Gnaw festival, which saw them performing in a suspended perspex box. Noting she did something very similar for her festival run last year, she wrote on Instagram: "I'm proud of the work I do, and it's flattering when other artists feel inspired by it, to the extent that they choose to try it on themselves. "But don't steal - not from women or anyone else - not in 2018 or ever." However, Es Devlin - who designed Lorde's floating box on her 'Melodrama World Tour' - insisted they did not pinch the idea as it's been around for some time. She said: "The idea of a floating glass box of course is not in any way new and the geometry precedes all of us. "The form finds another layer of resonance in each new context. "I did not design the recent Kids See Ghosts performance: I worked with Lorde on the design for her Coachella performance: I admire both and see no imitation at work here: I think the more interesting point is that both artists, responding to our disjointed times, are being drawn to this gesture of the fragile floating room: the world un-moored from gravity: where the rules of civilization and identity as we have known them may soon no longer apply. (sic)".



Lipa teases new music is coming 'very soon'



Dua Lipa has teased she will release new music "very soon". The 23-year-old pop star has been busy working on the follow-up to her 2017 self-titled debut LP and she can't wait to share what this is like album six, it wasn't titled at the time, it was like, 'Album six is coming, it's coming.' "We released the first single off that album, which was 'Love Is on the Radio' - which we performed at the Royal Albert Hall - and that's when Matt and James came out and ruined everything. "Matt and James came out and McBusted was born and that was an incredible phenomenon and we were like, 'Wow, this McBusted thing as way bigger than we ever anticipated. "So we had to just shelve that McFly album and say we will deal with that in a couple of years. "Then McBusted happened and here are today." Tickets for McFly's The O2 show go on sale on Friday at 9am.

she has been working on with her fans, who won't have much longer to wait. She told 'Entertainment Tonight': "I'm so excited for all the new music and I'm excited to bring something new very soon. "I've been eagerly waiting to finally get it out there." The 'New Rules' hitmaker recently teased that the album is "nostalgic" and "feels like a danceclass". Although she didn't want to give "too much away" about her upcoming record she did say she has stayed true to her pop roots. She told BANG Showbiz: "I don't want to give too much away. I was stressing out about coming back and doing interviews again because I was like, 'I'm just not ready to talk about it!' "But it still is a pop album, it changes and has some nostalgic vibes to it. But ultimately it really feel like a danceclass." The 'Electricity' hitmaker hit the studio with music legend Nile Rodgers to record some "live instrumentation" for the LP at the iconic Abbey Road Studios earlier this year, and admitted the surreal experience had her on the "brink of tears". The 'Hotter Than Hell' singer heaped praise on the 'Get Lucky' hitmaker - who has worked with the likes of Madonna, David Bowie, Diana Ross, Lady Gaga and Christina Aguilera during his illustrious career - for breathing "more life" into her new songs, which won't be "predominantly electronic" like her first. She told her fans: "I want to keep you all in and part of the process so, as I'm slowly going on and starting to finish songs for my next album, yesterday was truly one for the books. "After touring for so long, I realized after having such a predominately electronic album as my first, it needed a lot more live instrumentation. "This album I'm doing exactly that. "I was in the studio last night with the legend @nilerodgers and I was on the brink of tears as I saw more life being brought into these records! "Every day we're getting a little bit closer... I am so excited for you to hear this. (sic)".



Arthur switched up sound 'couldn't do another ballad'

James Arthur switched up his sound because he got tired of doing ballads. The 31-year-old singer rose to fame on 'The X Factor' in 2012 and is known for slow tempo hits such as 'Say You Won't Let Go', 'Impossible' and 'Naked', but he has admitted that's "not [him] at all" as he is more of a hip-hop lover, which is why he teamed up with rapper Ty Dolla Sign on new single 'Treehouse'. Asked why he's changed direction, James told OfficialCharts.com: "Because I couldn't do another ballad! [laughs] Over the last couple of years, I've put out a few slower tempo songs. "I've been in the album-making process and the stuff that was mixed and mastered was that radio friendly [sound]. "It's nice now that I've finished this particular project because there's so much to choose from. "I can show a bit more diversity. My hardcore fans know I'm a huge hip-hop fan and that's where my heart is." James insisted that he felt last year's single 'Falling Like The Stars' was more of a "risk" than 'Treehouse' is and admitted that he doesn't really care if the song is a hit. He said: "I feel like it's a good move at this point, for me. "I feel like 'Falling Like The Stars' was a risk more so than this. "Maybe the general public will be relieved not to hear me do something like that again. "I've been hard-positioned as this guy who just does ballads - that's not me at all. "I enjoy taking on a lot of styles. "It had to be something like this. "It might not have any impact at all but I'm sort of at a point where I don't give a s**t. I've got an album coming and it's sick." Meanwhile, James admitted earlier this year he was considering becoming an actor as he feels "overlooked" as a singer. The 'Empty Space' hitmaker feels like his music career is limited after being on 'The X Factor', and although he's proud of what he's achieved thanks to the show, he wants to explore other ways of expressing his creativity and thinks acting is in his future. He said: "Sometimes I feel like there's only so far I can go when you take into consideration where I came from, you know, I can only feel like I'm gonna be overlooked for so long in this field. It's amazing what I've been able to do since 'The X Factor' and sometimes I feel like I kind of used to make music for myself and to inspire other people and my competitive ego sometimes gets in the way. Acting is a good, pretending to be other people and exploring another avenue of creativity."

FKA Twigs to release new album next month

FKA Twigs is set to release her second album on October 25. The 31-year-old singer will release 'Magdalene' - the follow-up to her 2014 debut album 'LP1' - next month, and has said the new album will explore the tumultuous five-year period between her two records, which has seen her undergo high-profile heartbreak following her split from Robert Pattinson, as well as the effects of laparoscopic surgery. In a press release, she said: "I never thought heartbreak could be so all-encompassing. I never thought that my body could stop working to the point that I couldn't express myself physically in the ways that I have always loved and found so much solace. "I have always practiced my way into being the best I could be, but I couldn't do that this time, I was left with no option but to tear every process down. "But the process of making this album has allowed me for the first time, and in the most real way, to find compassion when I have been at my most ungraceful, confused and fractured. I stopped judging myself and at that moment found hope in 'Magdalene'. To her I am forever grateful". 'Cellophane', the lead single from the record, was released in April this year, and came as the first solo track she had released since 2016's stand-alone single 'Good to Love'. And in a recent interview, Twigs said the album was inspired by the "sad place" she had found herself in mentally. She explained: "I was in a sad place, mentally, and I didn't want to come out of it. I don't have many friends there, and wasn't communicating with my friends or family here. I just went and locked myself off."



Lifestyle | Movies

FROM MARVEL TO 'MOSUL': RUSSO BROTHERS EMBARK ON GLOBAL MISSION

When you have just directed the biggest blockbuster movie of all time, you earn the clout to dictate terms with even the highest executives in Hollywood. But for the Russo brothers, it also raised a question that would be familiar to the superheroes of "Avengers: Endgame"—what to do next with all that power? In an interview with AFP at the Toronto film festival, the Russos admitted the influence that comes with such uncharted global box office success is "an exceedingly powerful tool, more powerful than we understand."

"It can be used for positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement," said Joe Russo, who at 48 is marginally the younger of the affable duo from Cleveland, Ohio. The brothers did not spend their many Marvel promotional world tours just taking endless selfies with hysterical comic-book fans, but searching for new avenues to explore, they said. The result is a notably international and political slate of projects for their new studio AGBO—and barely a spandex-clad superhero in sight.

First up is "Mosul," which dramatizes the true story of Iraqi police's Nineveh SWAT team fighting to recapture their home city from the Islamic State group in 2017. The action thriller, inspired by a New Yorker article, is told entirely from Iraqis' per-

spective and shot in Arabic-radical ground for Hollywood. "It felt criminally overdue," said Anthony Russo, 49. "That's why we knew this movie had to get made—because this movie has never been made." Also in the works are "Dhaka," a film about the kidnapping of a Bangladeshi businessman shot mainly in India, and Japanese anime adaptation "Battle of the Planets."

But politics is a common thread to the brothers' next projects, which include a film about the opioid epidemic in their home state of Ohio. "We're living in a time where there's a lot of division-division is being promoted," said Joe. "You're either looking out for yourself right now, or you're looking out for the community." "And we choose to look out for the community."

Without naming any politicians directly, they say it would "be great" if the current White House watched "Mosul." "Clearly there is an incredible culpability on the part of the US in creating the problem in Iraq, and ISIS is a direct result of the war there," said Joe, using an acronym for the Islamic State group.

More Marvel?

It is all a marked departure from the Russos' previous projects. The brothers first gained broad

recognition for their work on cult hit TV shows such as "Arrested Development" and "Community."

But after successfully directing "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" in 2014, they quickly rose to the top of the lucrative Marvel Studios filmmakers' stable. The brothers are not committed to any future Marvel films, but their desire to import new perspectives to Hollywood filmmaking is already apparent in the Disney-owned franchise's next projects.

"Ms Marvel" will soon become Marvel's first on-screen Muslim superhero, with a TV series on Disney+ streaming service about a Pakistani-origin teenage girl living in New Jersey. China-born Simu Liu will become Marvel's first leading Asian superhero in 2021's "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings." According to Joe, Marvel Studios boss Kevin Feige is "expending a lot of energy to diversify the Marvel Universe because everyone has the right to see their stories on screen."

Of course, the profit motive is unavoidable—"Endgame" made more at Asian box offices than the whopping \$860 million managed at home. "Joe and I love big global storytelling," said Anthony. "Our Marvel movies are among our favorite work that we've ever done." "Cinema is uniquely positioned to help open up people to new experiences



and new ideas." Does that mean a return to the world of superheroes one day? "Perhaps more Marvel movies. We're not talking about anything right now." — AFP

(From left) Directors/producers Mohamed Al-Daradji, Joseph Russo and Anthony Russo pose during a photo session for AFP at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival Day in Toronto, Ontario. — AFP



(From left) Robert De Niro, Todd Phillips, Joaquin Phoenix, Zazie Beetz and Bradley Cooper attend the 'Joker' premiere during the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, Canada. — AFP photos

Phoenix hails 'greatest' role as 'Joker' hits Toronto

Joaquin Phoenix said his critically acclaimed role in "Joker" was "one of the greatest experiences of my career," as the dark and ambitious comic book adaptation sent Toronto's film festival into a frenzy Monday. Fresh from scooping Venice's prestigious Golden Lion prize for best film on Saturday, the "Joker" premiere was the hottest ticket in town at North America's biggest film festival. "It seemed limitless, in how you could interpret the character and what you could do with it—it didn't feel like there were any rules," said Phoenix of playing the diabolical super-villain.

The film—and Phoenix's performance—have already drawn breathless Oscar predictions and controversy in equal measure. Batman's traditional nemesis has been famously played by the likes of Jack Nicholson and Heath Ledger, but the "Gladiator" star's interpretation is arguably the most radical yet. Hailed as "sensational" and "unnerving" by some critics, it has raised concern for others that its depiction of mental illness and violence could prove "incendiary."

"There was something that was drawing me towards it, and it just evolved as we worked together," he told the gala audience in a discussion alongside director Todd Phillips. "It started becoming something more than I could have anticipated and it was one of the greatest experiences of my career." Phoenix also paid tribute to his late brother River Phoenix, telling a separate festival prize-giving gala how River had made him watch Robert De Niro's "Raging Bull" as a teenager and told him he was going to be an actor.

"He didn't ask me, he told me. And I am indebted to him for that because acting has given me such an incredible life," he said. River, who initially overshadowed his younger brother and played the young Indiana Jones in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade," died aged 23 of a drug overdose, with the recording of Joaquin's desperate call for an ambulance sold to the media. Phoenix was later joined on the red carpet for "Joker" by co-star De Niro. The film is set in the 1970s as a nod to the brooding cinematic character studies of the time, like De Niro's "Taxi Driver" and "The King of Comedy." De Niro said he "understood all the connections" but had signed up for the project because of director Phillips.

'Corrupt circus'

Phillips, previously known for frat house comedies including the "Hangover" trilogy and "Road Trip", bristled at suggestions the movie was a major departure for him. "I've never been a fan of pigeonholing people and I hate when it's been done to me—like 'Why does the guy in 'The Hangover' get to do this?'"

Earlier on Monday "The Laundromat"—Netflix's film about the "Panama Papers" global corruption scandal—arrived in Toronto. Meryl Streep was joined on the red carpet by Antonio Banderas and Gary Oldman, who play the heads of the shady Panama law firm at the heart of the scandal, after it was exposed in 2016 for aiding tax evasion among the wealthy elite. Banderas told AFP the story had to be presented as comedy "because otherwise we can cry," while Oldman said they wanted to portray a "corrupt circus." Elsewhere Christian Bale and Matt Damon attended the star-studded premiere for "Ford v Ferrari"—the racing film known outside North America as "Le Mans '66".

Bale, who plays Ken Miles, said the legendary racer was "a man who is a dad, who is a husband and who is not a megalomaniac, who is living life at 230 miles an hour, not knowing if he can stop at the end of it." The Toronto International Film Festival runs until September 15. — AFP

'IT Chapter Two' scares up \$91.1 million to top N America box office

Proving again the lure of a good scare, the Stephen King-inspired film "IT Chapter Two" took in \$91.1 million this weekend to top the North American box office, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Monday. That three-day total fell below the original "IT," with its frighteningly impressive \$123 million opening in 2017. But the two films now rank as the top two horror openings ever, according to Variety.

"IT Chapter Two" stars Jessica Chastain, James McAvoy, Isaiah Mustafa and Bill Hader as the grown-up versions of the kids who battled the terrifying, shape-shifting clown Pennywise 27 years earlier—and now must do it again. There were no other new releases in the top 10, and the box office lineup—in what has been a slow year for cinema—was little changed from last weekend.

Slipping one spot to second—and miles behind "IT Chapter Two"—was Lionsgate's political thriller "Angel Has Fallen," which earned \$6 million. Gerard Butler stars as a Secret Service agent wrongly accused of attempting to kill the US president (Morgan Freeman).

In third, also down one spot, was Universal's raunchy tween comedy "Good Boys," at \$5.5 million. Disney's updated "The Lion King" also slipped one spot, to fourth, at \$4.3 million. In fifth place was Universal's action film "Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw" starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and Jason Statham, taking in \$3.8 million on its sixth weekend.

Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were:

- "Overcomer" (\$3.7 million)
- "Dora & the City of Lost Gold" (\$2.3 million)
- "Ready or Not" (\$2.3 million)
- "Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark" (\$2.3 million)
- "Once Upon a Time in... Hollywood" (\$2.2 million). — AFP



Maggie Smith: Prickly yet endearing 'Downton Abbey' countess

Legendary actor Dame Maggie Smith is a British treasure in film and theatre but she is best known on the world's stage for her role in the TV series "Downton Abbey", whose film adaptation premiers in London on Monday. Smith, 84, has won global affection for her portrayal of the acid-tongued yet endearing Dowager Countess Lady Violet in the period drama, which has screened in over 100 countries. But for more than half a century, Smith has excelled in whatever she turned her hand to, winning a clutch of awards including two Oscars, and coming to personify a particular kind of English eccentricity.

She has played numerous characters from Mother Superior in "Sister Act" (1992) to a professor of metamorphosis in the Harry Potter films saga. However, since playing the Countess of Grantham, Lady Violet Crawley, in "Downton Abbey" she says she cannot go out without being recognized. "It's ridiculous—I led a perfectly normal life until Downton Abbey," she told the British Film Institute in April, 2017. "I would go to theatres, I would go to galleries and things like that on my own. And now I can't."

Smith has played the ruthless aristocrat in all six seasons of the show, created by screenwriter Julian Fellowes in 2010, winning a Golden Globe and three Emmy awards. After initially declining to act in the big screen adaptation of the series, Smith eventually agreed to appear in the film, which goes on general release in Britain on Friday and in US and European cinemas later this month.

Snooty schoolteacher

Born on December 28, 1934, the daughter of an Oxford professor of pathology, Smith made her stage debut in 1952 with the Oxford University Dramatic Society. After a string of stage successes in London's West End and on Broadway, she famously appeared opposite Laurence Olivier in an adaptation of Shakespeare's "Othello" in 1959. This led to her joining Olivier's celebrated 1960s National Theatre company where she earned critical acclaim alongside her husband, the actor Robert Stephens.

By the end of the decade Smith's film career had taken off, winning the best actress Academy Award in 1969 for her unforgettable portrayal of a snooty, unorthodox Edinburgh schoolteacher in "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie". She also picked up a best supporting actress award in 1978 for "California Suite" and in all has been Oscar-nominated six times. Smith's marriage to heavy-drinking Stephens, with whom she had two sons, collapsed in 1973 and they divorced two years later.

She remarried shortly after to the screenwriter Beverly Cross, who died in 1998. Smith was made a Dame of the British Empire in recognition of her work in 1990 and, besides receiving the top honors, has won many other stage and screen awards in both Britain and the United States.

'Energy and curiosity'

Smith is widely considered an actress with the rare ability to turn a cameo role into a central feature of a film. She "can capture in a single moment more than many actors can convey in an entire film", said the acclaimed director Nicholas Hytner after working with her on "The Lady in the Van" (2015). "She can be vulnerable, fierce, bleak and hilarious simultaneously, and she brings to the set each day the energy and curiosity of a young actor who's just started out." However, Smith can leave some feeling overawed.

"It's true I don't tolerate fools but then they don't tolerate me, so I am spiky," she told The Guardian newspaper in 2014. "Maybe that's why I'm quite good at playing spiky elderly ladies." Perhaps the best example was 2001's "Gosford Park"—also written by Fellowes—in which Smith played the snobbish and frightful Lady Constance, the Countess of Trentham, with aplomb. Smith is also credited for her tenacity to her craft. The actress has suffered from Graves' disease, a manageable thyroid condition causing tiredness, weight loss and heart flutter that affects a tiny proportion of individuals in the western world. She survived a breast cancer diagnosis in 2007 and filmed "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" two years later whilst enduring chemotherapy treatment. "I was hairless." — AFP

Silver spoon to silver screen: Downton Abbey makes cinematic debut

Everyone's favorite English aristocrats made their big screen debut on Monday, with the world cinematic premiere of global television hit "Downton Abbey" bringing old world charm to London's Leicester Square. The Crawley family make their comeback after the series drew to a close in 2015 following nine successful years. And they are back with a bang, awaiting the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Downton. "I didn't particularly want to see a movie when we finished the show... then there was this kind of

a groundswell asking for a movie and it became real," Julian Fellowes, creator and scriptwriter of the show and film, told AFP before the screening.

The entire cast of the series is reunited, including Maggie Smith as the acrimonious dowager countess, despite her initial refusal to slip back into the matriarch's starched dresses. Other actors have joined the team, including Imelda Staunton (Dolores Umbridge in "Harry Potter"), who plays Lady Bagshaw. She joins her husband Jim Carter, who plays retired butler Charles

Carson. Unfortunately, Staunton had little luck in getting her husband to wait on her, telling AFP in mock outrage: "I got nothing out of him! He was on the other side of the dining room." The series traced the ups and downs of the aristocratic family and their servants from 1912 to the end of 1925, mixing day-to-day gossip and intrigue with large historic themes. — AFP



(From left) British actor Hugh Bonneville, US actor Elizabeth McGovern, British actor Michelle Dockery, British actor Laura Carmichael and Irish actor Allen Leech pose on the red carpet upon arrival for the world premiere of the film 'Downton Abbey' in London. — AFP photos



Creator and writer Julian Fellowes poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the world premiere of the film 'Downton Abbey'.



Models walk the runway for Carolina Herrera during New York Fashion Week at Garden of the Battery in New York City. — AFP photos

FLEECES, FLOWERS AND FLUIDITY: NEW YORK FASHION WEEK DAY THREE



Models walk the runway for the Phillip Lim Spring Summer 20 collection show.

AFP takes a look at the highlights from day three of New York Fashion Week on Monday.

California dreamin'

Vibrant colors associated with California's blooming season inspired Wes Gordon's third collection as creative director of Carolina Herrera. The spring 2020 lineup showed that he is evolving the label since taking over from the eponymous founder in 2018 rather than revolutionizing it. Pink, yellow, blue and orange were all prominently featured as Gordon, 32, created shapes and prints inspired by nature. Lilies and roses bloomed on chiffon and cotton while Gordon also had fun creating sweeping polka dot gowns.

Sandy Liang's signature

New York native Sandy Liang's eponymous brand has come to embody an innate sense of cool since launching in 2014, and Monday's show enhanced that image even further. Liang, 28, has become synonymous with hip outerwear inspired by a childhood spent growing up in Manhattan's trendy Lower East Side, with frequent visits to nearby Chinatown.

Through her work, she has made fleece jackets-her signature piece-cool again thanks to her own nostalgia for the 1990s. She drew inspiration from "when you're a kid and you're running around and your mom throws a jacket on you. It was really fun to turn that into my own thing. And now it's its own thing in the collection every season," she said.

Barragan's idea of Mexico

Designer Victor Barragan has been challenging stereotypes about Mexico since his first collection in

2016, repeatedly breaking with American clichés related to its southern neighbor. His spring 2020 show again challenged the notion of the hypermasculine Mexican male, injecting a sense of femininity through torn t-shirts and low-cut tank tops that evoked female cleavage rather than male torso.

Phillip Lim elevates everyday fashion

Thailand-born Phillip Lim displayed a "utilitarian" collection stacked with outdoor clothing suitable for the active man and woman, including jumpsuits, baggy raincoats and leather scarves. "That's our DNA basically, clothes that we work in, clothes that we live in. It's about pushing what the uniform can be to make it more buoyant and more refined," he told AFP.

Prominent colors included a seaweed green, cobalt blue and mustard yellow. The 45-year-old American designer also praised the decision by Fashion Week organizers to reduce the length of the event from seven to five days. "It's nice. It makes everyone just sit up and take it more seriously instead of letting the energy dissipate," he said.

Cornejo and innocence

Chilean-born British designer Maria Cornejo wowed with a series of chic, comfortable clothes such as structured jackets and fluid dresses, including some in satin. She told AFP that her show was about "the age of possibility." "Now we take for granted travel, technology, industrialization and so it's really incredible to find again that age, that naivete and that innocence. I thought that was a nice way to try to feel fresh," said Cornejo. — AFP



Models walk the runway for Maria Pia Cornejo during New York Fashion Week.

Classifieds

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

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DAY: Tuesday 10/09/2019 Valid From 7 AM To 7 PM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 40 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Hot to relatively hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 32 km/h

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	44 °C	32 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	42 °C	30 °C
ABDALY	44 °C	27 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	44 °C	29 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	41 °C	32 °C
AHMADI	42 °C	33 °C
NUWAISIB	42 °C	28 °C
WAFRA	43 °C	25 °C
SALAHY	42 °C	26 °C

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX. MIN.		
Wednesday	09/11	Hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	43 °C 31 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Thursday	09/12	Hot with a chance for rising dust	43 °C 28 °C	NW	10 - 40 km/h
Friday	09/13	Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas	44 °C 29 °C	NW-NE	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	09/14	Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas	44 °C 29 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES		RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
Fajr	04:09	MAX. Temp	43 °C
Sunrise	05:29	MIN. Temp	26 °C
Zuhr	11:45	MAX. RH	36 %
Asr	15:17	MIN. RH	10 %
Sunset	18:02	MAX. Wind	N 46 km/h
Isha	19:19	TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, JOLLY PANACHAMOOTTIL ABRAHAM holder of Indian Passport No. J1334887 having permanent address KAN-NADICKAL HOUSE, MAKKA-PUZHA P.O., RANNY, KERALA (STATE), INDIA, PIN-689676 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name: JOLLY and Surname: PANACHAMOOTTIL ABRAHAM. 11-9-2019

I, GEORGE THOMAS KAN-NADICKAL holder of Indian Passport No. S9916023 having permanent address KAN-NADICKAL HOUSE, MAKKA-PUZHA P.O., RANNY, KERALA (STATE), INDIA, PIN-689676 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name: GEORGE and Surname: THOMAS KANNADICKAL.

I, Andriya Sebastian Sreeja holder of Indian Passport No. M8392114 having permanent address: Pallivilakom Veedu, R.C Street, Balaramapuram, Trivandrum, Kerala, India. Residing in Kuwait, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name: Andriya Surname: Sebastian (C 5669) 9-9-2019

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

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Arrival Flights on Wednesday 11/9/2019				Departure Flights on Wednesday 11/9/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	713	Sohag	00:10
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	JZR	707	Luxor	00:20
KAC	102	London	00:50	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:40
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	JZR	723	Alexandria	01:05
MEA	406	Beirut	01:20	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	JZR	409	Delhi	01:10
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	2703	Madinah	01:20
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
JZR	262	Beirut	02:05	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JZR	111	Doha	02:10
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	MEA	8916	Madinah	02:20
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	MSR	619	Alexandria	02:35
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
KAC	135	Istanbul	02:55	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
JZR	768	Istanbul	02:55	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	THY	769	Istanbul	03:50
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
NIA	1604	Luxor	03:10	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	NIA	1404	Doha	04:10
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	JZR	1735	Cairo	04:40
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
ETH	3424	Bahrain	04:15	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00
KAC	796	Madinah	04:25	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	NIA	1404	Mumbai	05:15
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	KAC	103	London	05:20
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	JZR	703	Asyut	05:30
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	ETH	3425	Addis Ababa	05:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	JZR	715	225	05:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	THY	1465	Istanbul	06:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	FDB	071	Dubai	06:30
RBG	215	Sohag	05:35	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	RJA	649	Amman	07:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	JZR	251	Amman	07:10
BAW	157	London	06:10	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15
JZR	708	Luxor	06:15	KAC	167	Paris	07:15
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	RBG	550	Alexandria	07:30
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	RBG	216	Sohag	07:30
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	JZR	113	Doha	07:30
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	BAW	156	London	08:00
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	165	Rome	08:00
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
KAC	2704	Madinah	07:15	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	JZR	151	Mashhad	08:15
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh	08:50
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KAC	545	Beirut	08:50
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	501	Beirut	08:50
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	793	Madinah	08:55
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	KAC	561	Amman	08:55
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	511	Mashhad	09:05
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	117	New York	09:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	QTR	1085	Doha	09:10
IRA	665	Sharjah	09:15	JZR	787	Istanbul	09:15
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	QTR	671	Dubai	09:15
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40
SAW	703	Damascus	10:00	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
SYR	175	Damascus	10:00	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
IAW	157B	Al Najaf	10:00	JZR	301	Istanbul	09:55
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KAC	642	Muscat	10:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	OMA	101	London	10:05
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	IRA	664	Shiraz	10:15
KIS	6032	Mashhad	11:00	QTR	1071	Doha	10:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	KAC	617	Doha	10:40
IGO	1755	CNN	11:30	SYR	342	Damascus	11:00
NIA	1405	Sohag	11:30	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	11:00
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	SAW	704	Damascus	11:00
TBZ	6605	Mashhad	11:55	IAW	158B	Damascus	11:00
JZR	704	Asyut	11:55	AXB	890	Mangalore	11:20
JZR	716	Sohag	11:55	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	JZR	305	Istanbul	11:45
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
				KIS	6033	Mashhad	12:00
				JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05

Taleban vow to fight on after Trump says talks are 'dead'

KABUL: The Taleban yesterday vowed to continue fighting against US forces in Afghanistan after President Donald Trump said talks with the insurgents were "dead", saying Washington would regret abandoning negotiations. The renewed war of words between the two sides raised the spectre of violence in Afghanistan as Trump and the Taleban pledged to take the fight to each other following the precipitous collapse in talks. "We had two ways to end occupation in Afghanistan, one was jihad and fighting, the other was talks and negotiations," Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP. "If Trump wants to stop talks, we will take the first way and they will soon regret it."

The Taleban's statement came hours after Trump told reporters that the US was walking away from negotiations after nearly a year of talks that aimed to pave the way for an American withdrawal from Afghanistan following 18 years of war. "They are dead. As far as I am con-

cerned, they are dead," Trump said at the White House.

The announcement followed Trump's dramatic cancellation of a top-secret plan to fly Taleban leaders in for direct talks at the Camp David presidential facility outside Washington. Driving another nail into the coffin of what had appeared to be nearly finalized negotiations, Trump said a US military onslaught on the guerrillas was at its fiercest level in a decade. "Over the last four days, we have been hitting our Enemy harder than at any time in the last ten years!" he wrote in a tweet. On Sunday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that "we've killed over a thousand Taleban in just the last 10 days". Trump angrily denied that the whiplash effect of his sudden shifts on Afghanistan was causing turmoil.

'My own advice'

Until this weekend, there had been steadily mounting expectations of a deal that would see the US draw down troop

levels in Afghanistan. In return, the Taleban would offer security guarantees to keep extremist groups out. But then on Saturday, Trump revealed that he had cancelled an unprecedented meeting between the Taleban and himself at storied Camp David. He said this was in retaliation for the killing of a US soldier by the Taleban in a huge Kabul bomb blast last week.

The cancellation - announced on Twitter - was the first time most Americans learned that such a dramatic meeting was even planned. Many in Washington were shocked and some were angry that the Taleban had been about to visit the presidential retreat on the eve of the anniversary of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks. There was also widespread consternation at the characteristically unpredictable manner of Trump's negotiating style.

But Trump denied any discord among government members including Vice President Mike Pence. In a tweet, he

accused journalists of trying "to create the look of turmoil in the White House, of which there is none". Trump added that he had no second thoughts about his actions. "In terms of advisers, I took my own advice," he later told reporters.

'Murdering too many people'

A big part of Trump's 2016 election victory and subsequent first term in office has been his determination to keep the US out of what he sees as unnecessary wars in Syria and other mostly Muslim countries. Despite a fiercely pro-Israeli foreign policy and the presence of hawks like national security adviser John Bolton in his cabinet, he has so far resisted escalating the military standoff with longtime foe Iran. Trump fired Bolton yesterday.

Getting out of Afghanistan, where US troops have fought a largely fruitless battle against the Taleban over nearly two decades, was a top priority. It is widely thought that Trump has been pushing for a

withdrawal of US troops in time for his 2020 reelection bid. Trump repeated on Monday that he wanted "to get out by the earliest possible time". However, whether because of last week's killing of a US soldier, as he says, or due to wider misgivings, that goal now appears in tatters. "They did a mistake," Trump said of the Taleban's deadly bomb attack.

Several Republican lawmakers concurred with the president's decision on the talks. "I've never believed that a deal with the Taleban is either easy or imminent," Senator Marco Rubio said. Senator Mitt Romney said that "it wouldn't have been my choice to have the Taleban at Camp David" - an opinion echoed by Senator Ron Johnson, who said he was "glad" the talks were not held there. "I don't see where those negotiations go. At some point in time if you want peace you have to talk to them, I don't deny that," said Johnson. "But right now they're murdering too many people." — AFP



An undated handout image released yesterday shows an artist's impression of a Cryodrakon boreas, a newly discovered species of pterosaur. — AFP

Largest flying animal in history identified

PARIS: Scientists yesterday unveiled a new species pterosaur, the plane-sized reptiles that lorded over primeval skies above T-rex, triceratops and other dinosaurs of the late Cretaceous. With a wingspan of 10 m and weighing 250 kilos, Cryodrakon boreas rivals another pterosaur as the largest flying animal of all time, researchers reported in the *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*. "This is a cool discovery," said David Hone, lead author of the study and a researcher at Queen Mary University in London.

"It is great that we can identify Cryodrakon as being distinct from Quetzalcoatlus," the other giant pterosaur for which it was initially mistaken, he said in a statement. *C. boreas* was hiding in plain sight. Its remains were first discovered more than 30 years ago in Alberta, Canada,

yet elicited scant excitement because of the misclassification. But a closer look at the fossil remains of a juvenile and the intact giant neck bone of a full-grown specimen left no doubt that a new species had been discovered.

Like other winged reptiles living at the same time, about 77 million years ago, *C. boreas* was carnivorous and probably fed on lizards, small mammals and even baby dinosaurs. Despite a likely capacity to cross large bodies of water, the location of fossil remains and the animal's features point to an inland habitat, Hone said. There are more than 100 known species of pterosaurs. Despite their large size and wide distribution - across North and South America, Asia, Africa and Europe - only fragmentary remains have been unearthed, making the new find especially important. — AFP

Shocking find: High-voltage eels revealed

TOKYO: Call it a shock discovery: DNA research has revealed two entirely new species of electric eel in the Amazon basin, including one capable of delivering a record-breaking jolt. The findings are evidence, researchers say, of the incredible diversity in the Amazon rainforest - much of it still unknown to science - and illustrate why it is so important to protect a habitat at risk from deforestation, logging and fires.

"In spite of all human impact on the Amazon rainforest in the last 50 years, we can still discover giant fishes like the two new species of electric eels," said lead researcher C. David de Santana, a zoologist working with the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. The research "indicates that an enormous amount of species are waiting to be discovered in the Amazon rainforest, many of which may harbor cures for diseases or inspire technological innovations," he told AFP.

The electric eel, in fact a kind of fish rather

than an eel, inspired the design of the first electric battery. For centuries, it was believed that a single species existed throughout the region known as Greater Amazonia, encompassing parts of countries including Brazil, Suriname and Guyana. But as part of a project to better understand electric eels and map wildlife in remote parts of South America, de Santana and his team decided to test that conventional wisdom.

At first glance, they found little visible difference between creatures collected from different parts of the Amazon basin, suggesting the fish were indeed part of a single species. But further analysis, including of DNA from 107 samples they collected, upended centuries of assumptions and revealed three different species: the previously known *Electrophorus electricus*, along with *Electrophorus voltai* and *Electrophorus varii*. And their research also uncovered another stunning result: *E. voltai* is capable of delivering a jolt of 860 volts - much more than the 650 volts previously recorded from electric eels - "making it the strongest bioelectricity generator known."

The findings, published yesterday in the *Nature Communications* journal, theorize that the three species evolved from a shared ancestor millions of years ago. The researchers found each of the three species



A picture released on Monday shows an electric eel (*Electrophorus voltai*). — AFP

has a clearly defined habitat, with *E. electricus* living in the Guiana Shield region, *E. voltai* in the Brazilian Shield, a highland further south, and *E. varii* inhabiting slow-flowing lowland Amazon basin waters.

And they suggest that the particularly strong electric shock that *E. voltai* can produce could be an adaptation to life in highland waters, where conductivity is less effective. Electric eels use their shock tactics for a variety of reasons, including hunting prey, self-defense, and navigation. They generate electricity from three specialized electric organs that can emit charges of varying strengths for different purposes. — AFP

Foot artists have finely tuned 'toe maps' in brains

WASHINGTON: Artists who paint with their feet because they were born without arms have individualized areas of the brain assigned to each of their toes, a trait not found in handed people, scientists have reported. Their paper, published in the *Journal Cell Reports* yesterday, raises intriguing questions about brain plasticity early in life: Are humans born with so-called toe-maps that most lose as a result of not using their feet for intricate tasks because they wear shoes? Or, are we born without this trait but develop it if the body is used in particularly

dexterous ways?

The researchers at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London, worked with Tom Yendell and Peter Longstaff, two of only three major foot artists in the United Kingdom. "We're trying to find the relationship between behavior and how that shapes representations in our brain," co-author Daan Wesselink told AFP, specifically the somatosensory cortex. Body parts are represented within this brain region in a way that roughly follows their position on the body, with the foot artists providing an illuminating boundary case of people who use their toes in ways that most others do not.

The team performed a series of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans on the two foot artists and on nine male volunteers who have arms. While the limbed volunteers were in the fMRI machine, the scientists touched each of their fingers and found individual spots of brain activity next to each

other - but when they touched the toes, they found no organized pattern. The artists, however, had individualized areas for each of the toes that corresponded to their position on the body - in other words, toe-maps, which are also present in non-human primates. "This was a fun experiment, but it has bigger implications," said Wesselink.

Scientists know there is a critical period of brain plasticity early in life when we are uniquely capable of learning, and it could be that the artists exploited this crucial window to rewire their gray matter. Or, "there could be some aspects related to brain changes that dramatically shift because they are born without upper limbs and hands," he added.

To try to resolve this question, the researchers plan to look at amputees and whether they too develop toe-maps. The team hopes to use the findings to investigate whether they can incorporate robotic prostheses onto adults' body maps. — AFP

Trump fires hawkish security...

Continued from Page 1

According to US media reports, the president's extraordinary bid - canceled at the last minute - to fly Taleban leaders into the presidential retreat at Camp David last weekend sparked a major row.

As so often in the Trump presidency, the abrupt reshuffle appeared to contain an element of chaos. Bolton was Trump's third national security advisor and joins a stack of senior officials who have come and gone during the Republican businessman's tumultuous first term in office. Trump, who has a habit of announcing major news on his personal Twitter account, revealed the sacking at around midday. He said that he'd informed Bolton of his decision Monday night.

The White House press office, however, seemed to have been unaware. It sent out a message announcing that Bolton would shortly be giving a press conference on terrorism

issues alongside Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Bolton himself disputed Trump's version of events, saying that the president had not fired him in person, as he claimed, late Monday. "I offered to resign last night and President Trump said, 'Let's talk about it tomorrow,'" Bolton tweeted. A Fox News television reporter said that he had received a text from Bolton in which he underlined: "Let's be clear, I resigned." Trump came into office promising to extricate the United States from military entanglements. Bolton was often seen as offering a hawkish counterbalance, which Trump would then take into consideration. "He has strong views on things but that's okay. I actually temper John, which is pretty amazing," Trump said in May.

Rob Malley, president of the International Crisis Group consultancy, said Bolton's departure could realign White House policy on Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea and Venezuela. Trump "has had two voices whispering in his ears: the one counseling diplomacy and warning against conflict, the other recommending belligerence," he said. "With Bolton gone, the second voice undeniably has lost its loudest proponent." Prominent Republican Senator Rand Paul agreed, tweeting: "The President has great instincts on foreign policy and ending our endless wars. He should be served by those who share those views." — AFP

Benny Gantz and his centrist Blue and White alliance. Rightwing nationalist votes will be key to Netanyahu's efforts to continue his reign as Israel's longest-serving prime minister. He is also facing a potential indictment for corruption pending a hearing scheduled for early October.

Israel occupied the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War in a move never recognized by the international community. Its settlements there are considered illegal under international law and major stumbling blocks to peace as they are built on land the Palestinian see as part of their future state. Israel says the Jordan Valley is vital to its security. — AFP

Iranian fan 'Blue Girl' dies after...

Continued from Page 1

The judiciary's Mizan Online website said a young woman had been arrested when she tried to enter a stadium and faced charges of offending "public chastity and insulting" law enforcement officers. Citing an informed judiciary official, it said no sentence had been issued since there had been no trial and the judge was away on leave.

The reported death sparked an outcry online, where many using the hashtag #blue_girl called on world football's governing body FIFA to ban Iran from competitions. Pictures said to be of her in hospital covered in heavy bandages have been shared widely on social media. Iranian football legend Ali Karimi urged his 4.5 million Instagram followers to boycott stadiums. "The women of our land are better than men," he wrote alongside an image of a woman with a football for a heart and flames over her head.

FIFA said it was "aware of that tragedy and deeply regret it". "FIFA... reiterate our calls on the Iranian authorities to ensure the freedom and safety of any women engaged in this legitimate fight to end the stadium ban," it added in a statement. Amnesty International called her death "shocking" and issued a similar call from London. "Khodayari would still be alive if it were not for this draconian ban and the subsequent trauma of her arrest, detention and prosecution for attempting to circumvent it," said Amnesty's Philip Luther. "Her death must not be in vain. It must spur change in Iran if further tragedies are to be avoided in the future."

Esteghlal expressed sorrow over her death. "The

tragic death of our beloved child, Ms Sahar Khodayari, has caused much sadness and regret for Esteghlal FC," the club said. "We offer condolences to you and your relatives, ask God for mercy and forgiveness and also patience and health for your family and all soccer fans." The judiciary's news website said Khodayari's body had been handed over to her family, who live in Qom, south of Tehran.

Italian club Roma spoke up in solidarity with Khodayari. "#ASRoma is yellow & red but today our heart bleeds blue for Sahar Khodayari. The beautiful game is meant to unite us, not divide us," it tweeted. "Now it's time for everyone in Iran to be allowed to enjoy football matches together. RIP #BlueGirl." Some called for FIFA to take a tougher line. "@FIFacom. Let's see if you have the guts just for once to stand against women's rights violation in Iran," wrote one person with the Twitter handle @IranLionness.

Iran has come under pressure from FIFA to allow women to attend qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup, and was reportedly given a deadline of Aug 31 to comply. The Iranian sports ministry said last month that women fans would be allowed into the stadium when Team Melli - as the national team are known - play their next home qualifier. "Women can go to the Azadi stadium on October 10" to watch the match against Cambodia, Jamshid Taghizadeh, the sports ministry's deputy for legal and provincial affairs, was quoted as saying at the time.

The ban on women in stadiums is not written into law or regulations, but is "ruthlessly enforced", said Human Rights Watch, calling it a "clear violation of the rules in FIFA". The authorities in Iran have allowed foreign women to go to matches in the country in the past. While a small number of Iranian women have attended select international matches on previous occasions, others have faced prosecution for entering stadiums at other times. — Agencies

Netanyahu vows to annex West...

Continued from Page 1

Netanyahu along with his rightwing and religious allies won a majority of seats in April polls, but he failed to form a coalition and opted for an unprecedented second election in five months. He is again facing a difficult challenge from ex-military chief

Sports

Pacific rugby: The great brawn drain that left poor nations behind

'They're very gifted athletes and have that warrior spirit'

WELLINGTON: Rugby aims to open up new frontiers this year when Japan host the first World Cup held in Asia, but the talent-rich Pacific island nations feel they are still being neglected by the game's powerbrokers.

The island nations of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga all boast a rich rugby heritage and a wealth of playing talent, but have battled to overcome financial hardships and geographic isolation.

Lobby group Pacific Rugby Players Welfare estimates about 20 percent of all professional players come from islander backgrounds, highlighting the region's contribution to the international game.

While the figure is open to interpretation, there is no doubt Pacific islanders have long bolstered the Test squads of New Zealand and Australia, and more recently England and France.

Fiji coach John McKee said there was an "X-factor" about Pacific rugby which could electrify the game. "They're very gifted athletes and have that warrior spirit, which goes back in their history. It's in their DNA and carries on into their rugby," he said.

But for all their on-field attributes, the Pacific nations face serious off-field issues that prevent them from consistently challenging the game's global superpowers. Some are beyond their control, including geographic isolation, lack of financial resources and the actions of player agents luring top talent overseas. Other problems such as poor governance and political interference in the game can be controlled and there are signs things are slowly improving.

'WILD WEST'

The islands, with a collective population of less than 1.5 million, lack financial clout and most promising players soon sign for foreign clubs, making it hard to forge a cohesive national team.

"Our top players are spread all around the world, particularly in Europe," McKee said. "So keeping an eye on their form, current fitness and injury status is a major task for us. It puts us at a disadvantage against our competitors, particularly tier one nations, who get a

lot more time together."

For years, some unscrupulous player agents exacerbated the problem, signing up budding teenage stars to one-sided European club contracts in a situation former Fiji sevens coach Ben Ryan likened to "the Wild West". McKee said tighter eligibility rules in Europe meant the problem had eased but young players still needed support when leaving their family networks to travel to a foreign culture where they often did not speak the local language.

"For some people, taking them over there was a numbers game — if they can get 10 players in France and one becomes a superstar that's great for the agent," he said.

"But who looks after the other nine who don't get contracts? They slip down the levels and end up playing federale (amateur) rugby. It's difficult to make a living." Further complicating matters, the governing rugby unions in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa have all faced questions in recent years about how they run the game.

Concerns have ranged from financial irregularities to incompetence and political interference. "A lot of (problems) have come from home, from the Fijian Rugby Union," said Englishman Ryan, who coached Fiji's sevens team to Olympic gold at the Rio 2016 Games. "There's serious things they need to get better at around governance and things like that." Again, there has been improvement. Fiji and Samoa were welcomed onto an expanded World Rugby Council late last year after meeting strict governance criteria laid down by the game's ruling body.

AFTERTHOUGHT

Fiji showed their potential with a historic Test win over France last November and McKee was confident they could spring more surprises in Japan.

But World Rugby's recently discarded plan for a cross-hemisphere Nations Championship highlights how the game's top brass often treat the Pacific islands as an afterthought.

Initial indications were that the islands would be

Launched in 2015, the ChildFund Pass It Back programme is aimed at teaching youngsters life skills, with lessons on health or planning for the future interspersed with rugby training sessions.

The players aged 11 to 16 meet regularly on weekends to play touch rugby, which has none of the full-contact version's heavy tackling. There are more than 6,100 players and coaches in the programme today, more than half of them female, in Vietnam, Laos, East Timor and the Philippines. Some players will go to Japan in March with ChildFund — travelling by plane for the first time — for rugby training and life-skills sessions.

Rugby wasn't the most obvious choice. Football, volleyball and sepak takraw (kick volleyball) were also floated as options when the programme was piloted in Laos, but rugby was considered the most gender-neutral. "The young girls in the commune wanted to try this new sport that they had never seen before, it wasn't considered a boys' sport," John Harris, regional operations officer for the scheme, told AFP. Still, some participants in Vietnam had to push back against entrenched sexism.

Coach Bui Thi Lan was told by her in-laws that she should give up rugby after marrying and having a baby — in line with expectations women should avoid playing rowdy sports. Lan would have none of it.

She came back to coaching four months after giving birth and now teaches 60 kids four times per week.

"Rugby brought me money so that I could take care of myself, working and studying at the same time," she told AFP at a recent training session, where she fed her baby between modules.

COLONIAL ROOTS

Battling inequality wasn't the only hurdle. There was no vocabulary in Vietnamese for the sport and some terms were coined on the fly. A scrum is "mai rua" which means 'turtle shell' in Vietnamese, while the name for rugby is simply "bong bau duc", which translates to 'oval ball'.



FUJIYOSHIDA: France's winger Damian Penaud (2nd L) breaks away during a training session at the Fuji Hokuoku Park in Fujiyoshida yesterday, where the French squad will train ahead of the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup which begins on September 20. —AFP

excluded from the competition's top division entirely, although World Rugby said after coming under intense pressure that Fiji would have a spot.

McKee said even then Fiji would be at a disadvantage because its players, mostly Europe-based, would be regularly pitted against the world's best teams without having enough time together to prepare properly.

"What we need is a professional team in a professional competition which allows us to keep our players," he said, citing the way the Buenos Aires-based

Jaguars Super Rugby team had lifted the Argentine national side.

A proposal for a Pacific islands Super Rugby team was scrapped late last year after organisers decided it was not commercially viable.

But McKee said if World Rugby was intent on global expansion and pursuing lucrative broadcast rights, then it needed to use some of the money to help the Pacific islands. "There's certainly no easy solutions but a solution needs to be found," he said. —AFP

Rice terraces and 'turtle shell' scrums: Barefoot rugby in Vietnam

HOA BINH: Barefoot and muddied, a group of youngsters sprint across a makeshift pitch in rural Vietnam, passing the ball in a game of touch rugby in a country where few people have ever heard of the sport. They belong to Vietnam's only rugby programme for locals, rolled out for kids in a remote commune where some players have to travel by boat to training sessions often held against a backdrop of rice terraces and curious onlookers.

Few knew anything about rugby when they joined the scheme, marvelling at the egg-shaped ball, but are now keen fans planning to closely follow the Rugby World Cup in Japan, which starts in September.

FIRST TIME ON A PLANE

"I haven't watched international rugby... but if possible I will surely watch the Rugby World Cup," said 14-year-old Bao Cham, a player on the Silver Fox team in Kim Boi district. With the first Rugby World Cup held in Asia, organisers are hoping to boost rugby's popularity in backwaters like Kim Boi, where most kids count Lionel Messi as a hero but have never heard of New Zealand great Dan Carter.

Vietnam is one of the few countries in Southeast Asia with no rugby federation, and international games are not regularly aired on cable television.

That means the sport remains on the margins, making the rugby clinic in Kim Boi something of an oddity.

HUAWEI sponsors Kuwait National team matches of WCup 2022 and Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers

KUWAIT: Almost half of the people around the world have breathed football in with the air of childhood and grew with a passion for football. These games fuel the global and local interest in football, articulate national pride, and stimulate national cohesion. HUAWEI Technologies Kuwait Co., WLL has had Kuwait National Team matches sponsorship for the World Cup 2022 and Asian Cup 2023 Qualifiers happening in Kuwait.

As one of the sponsors of the matches, and part of Huawei's ongoing and increased support for the local talents, Huawei has engaged with Kuwait National

Team players in a very unique way where they offered the team's best player the flagship Huawei P30 Pro, a phone with an excellent camera, enough storage and strong performance which will add to the football experience as a whole and allow the footballer to capture the successful moments. The HUAWEI P30 Pro is the latest premium flagship from Huawei and one of the most coveted devices from the brand.

Huawei has been a leader in providing advanced Information and communications technology (ICT) to the State of Kuwait for more than 10 years. It is actively



FUJIYOSHIDA: The official ball for the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup is seen at the Fuji Hokuoku Park in Fujiyoshida yesterday. — AFP

Rugby was not always so foreign to Vietnam, though it has never been widespread among locals.

The French are believed to be the first to bring rugby to the country, and an excerpt from a 1933 phone book describing the Saigon Sports Stadium notes a rugby pitch with stands for 3,000 spectators.

Today there are no professional Vietnamese-born players abroad — though France fly-half Francois Trinh-Duc is of Vietnamese origin — and just a small group of expatriates playing recreationally in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

But the game isn't totally unfamiliar in Vietnam, as it echoes aspects of the traditional "vat cau" new year festival that sees shirtless men wrestle for possession of a large wooden ball on a field. Now Vietnam's budding young rugby stars hope the sport will start to gain popularity.

"I really wish that Vietnam would participate in Rugby World Cup one day, and I hope to be a member of that team," coach Bui Van Nhan, 17, told. — AFP.

participating in the construction of 5G infrastructure around the world, helping telecom operators in various countries and regions to build 5G networks. Furthermore, Huawei is keen on maintaining its strong position in the digital market, targeting all segments around the world. And in the football world, the yelling, shouting, and overall atmosphere can form part of the team's success encouraging the players to achieve greater goals. Football is much more than just a game, and Huawei has made it even more exciting with its advanced solutions.



Orphan goes from sniffing 'Rugby' glue to playing for the Philippines

MANILA: Long before Lito Ramirez was one of the Philippines' first homegrown rugby stars he was a six-year-old orphan addicted to sniffing glue, who survived on trash and begging.

If there was any luck in his hellish world, it was that the brand of glue he and other street kids used to get high was called "Rugby".

The name still resonated with Ramirez years after he stopped using and was building his life in a Manila orphanage. Counsellors there had urged him to pick a sport, but he didn't like football or basketball, the national obsession. Then they asked him if he wanted to give rugby a try. "I didn't have any idea it was a sport," he told AFP. "I thought it was the glue. That's why I chose rugby for sports."

This fateful misunderstanding would redirect his life, giving the scrappy five-foot six-inch (1.7-metre) wing/fullback a way off the streets and into the sort of full-time career he can only have dreamt about. It culminated with him becoming, in 2015, one of the first born and bred Pinoys (Filipinos) to land a spot on the Philippines national squad, the Volcanoes. To this day, the team is composed mostly of foreign-born players whose primary tie to the nation is a Filipino parent.

'HE'S BEEN THROUGH IT ALL'

Jake Letts, general manager of the Philippine Rugby Football Union, has watched Ramirez develop from a raw talent to what he called a "dangerous" player on the pitch. "His strength is his speed and his agility. It's really hard for a big guy to catch him," Letts told AFP. "When they do catch him it can be painful." Letts said Ramirez's brutal upbringing is now a strength: "He's definitely got the grit. He's been through it all."

Ramirez says he has no memory of his parents and is not even sure of their full names. In fact, he has no birth certificate, so he's not sure of his true birthday. He uses March 17, 1994, which was assigned to him when he was taken in by an orphanage. That makes him 25 years old, on paper at least.

After his parents went missing, he and his older brother had ended up in the hands of a man he believes was an uncle. The man was an addict who sent the boys to beg on the streets of Manila, which is where they were introduced to glue-sniffing.

So-called "Rugby boys" have been a problem in the Philippines for decades, despite promises of reforms from solvent manufacturers, merchants and the government. A small bottle of solvent still costs less than \$1 in most shops.

'I MISS BEING A FAMILY'

Ramirez and his brother lived a perilous existence. They dug for food in the trash and were chased by the police, who arrested child addicts.

"We slept wherever the night caught up with us," he said. That changed when a woman, shocked by how the boys were living, led them to an orphanage. They bounced between facilities over the coming years. Ramirez says that during that time he broke his addiction to glue because he was cut off from it and the bad influences of the street. Eventually the brothers ended up at Tuloy sa Don Bosco, a home that shelters street children and aims to teach them a trade. —AFP

'Accidental' Australia captain Paine on verge of Ashes landmark

Paine contributed to victory in Manchester by ending a run of low scores with a valuable 58

LONDRES: Greg Chappell could not do it, while Ricky Ponting and Michael Clarke, who both had two attempts each, were unable to manage it either. But if his side avoid defeat in the fifth Test against England at The Oval starting tomorrow, Tim Paine will join the list of Australia captains who have led the team to an Ashes series win in England.

It is a feat no Australia captain has achieved since Steve Waugh oversaw a 4-1 success 18 years ago. Waugh, like Chappell, Ponting and Clarke, is one of Australia's greatest cricketers. No one, least of all wicketkeeper Paine himself, would suggest he is in that class and the way in which he inherited the captaincy was highly unusual.

Traditionally, Australia have picked their best 11 players first and then opted for one of them as captain, while in England, where there has long been an emphasis on 'leadership qualities', the tendency has been to select the skipper first and then find 10 others to join him.

Paine's case was different. Following the ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town in March 2018 that saw Steve Smith stripped of the captaincy and David Warner removed from the post of vice-captain — with both batsmen subsequently given 12-month bans by Cricket Australia — officials needed someone uncontaminated by the incident to lead the team and turned to Paine the morning after 'Sandpapergate'.

Paine, who had made his Australia debut in a Test against Pakistan at Lord's in 2010, had been on the brink of retiring from cricket in 2017 and taking up a job with an equipment manufacturer instead. But having forced his way back into the side, the

Tasmanian found himself thrust into the captaincy barely a year later.

Ever since becoming skipper, Paine has faced accusations that he is both an "accidental" skipper and not worth his place in the side. But having shown dignity after a dramatic one-wicket loss in the third Test at Headingley, Paine had the satisfaction of leading the team to an 185-run win at Old Trafford on Sunday that ensured they retained the Ashes at 2-1 up with just one to play.

'SCARY SMITH'

Much of the credit will go to Smith, who has so far scored 671 runs at 134.20 with three hundreds, including 211 at Old Trafford, in his first series since his ban. "He is just a genius and I never had any doubt he would come back and be the player he was," said Paine, who made his Test debut in the same match as Smith.

"The scary thing is he's getting better. I don't know where it is going to stop but we are enjoying being on the ride, that is for sure."

Just as Smith is the world's top-ranked Test batsman, Australia spearhead Pat Cummins is at the summit of the corresponding bowling rankings.

Most captains are only as good as their players, but Paine contributed to victory in Manchester by ending a run of low scores with a valuable first-innings 58.

"In terms of what we've been able to achieve as a group is pretty satisfying from where we've come from in the last 18 months," said Paine. "Great character, shows the great people we have got and shows we've also got some bloody good cricketers in our team."



MANCHESTER: Australia's captain Tim Paine (L) and Australia's Steve Smith (R) celebrate their victory on the field after the fourth Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at Old Trafford in Manchester. — AFP

"Also from where we've come from, even from last week (the defeat at Headingley). That was a loss that would break a lot of teams but we weren't."

As for personal satisfaction, the 34-year-old Paine

added: "My dream was to come here and win an Ashes. I certainly didn't want to be the captain winning the Ashes. "I am just happy to be a part of it. I could have been working at Kookaburra so this isn't bad." — AFP

England greets Boycott, Strauss given knighthoods

LONDRES: England cricket greats Geoffrey Boycott and Andrew Strauss have been given knighthoods by Theresa May in her resignation honours list.

Boycott and Strauss both received the honour for their services to sport after outstanding careers for England.

"We couldn't be more delighted that Sir Andrew Strauss joins other giants within the sport who have been knighted for their achievements," England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Tom Harrison said in a statement.

"Aside from his achievements on and off the pitch, Andrew is widely regarded as an exceptional person in our game and this wonderful accolade will be celebrated around the cricketing world."

"Our heartfelt congratulations also go to Sir Geoffrey Boycott, honoured for his long career and passionate dedication to the sport."

Boycott was one of May's sporting heroes and the former British Prime Minister spoke of her admiration for his bloody-minded style of play on several occasions.

During the painfully slow Brexit negotiations last year, May defended her stance by saying: "Can I just say that you might recall from previous comments I have made about cricket that one of my cricket heroes was always Geoffrey Boycott."

"And what did you know about Geoffrey Boycott? Geoffrey Boycott stuck to it and he got the runs in the end."

May, who stepped down as Prime Minister earlier this year, once said she had baked Boycott a batch of chocolate brownies and joked that the former Yorkshire batsman still had the Tupperware box she delivered them in. Boycott, 78, was a polarising figure for his conservative batting and acerbic personality, but that didn't stop him amassing 8,114 Test runs at an average of 47.72 in an England career that ran between 1964 and 1982.

He was forced to apologise in 2017 after joking that he would have to "black up" to receive a knighthood, pointing out that the honour



Geoffrey Boycott

had been bestowed on West Indian cricketers including Viv Richards, Garfield Sobers and Curtly Ambrose.

Boycott was also given a three-month suspended prison sentence in 1998 after being convicted of assault against former girlfriend Margaret Moore.

Former England and Middlesex batsman Strauss hit 7,037 runs in 100 Tests from 2004 to 2012.

Strauss captained England to Ashes triumphs against Australia in 2009 and 2010/2011, the latter campaign making him the first English skipper to win a Test series on Australian soil since Mike Gatting in 1986-87.

South Africa-born Strauss served as England's director of cricket between 2015 and 2018 before resigning when his wife suffered the lung cancer that would eventually lead to her death.

The 42-year-old's time in the England hierarchy was credited with laying the foundations for the team's first 50-over World Cup victory earlier this year. — AFP

Australia coach wants struggling batsmen to step up

LONDON: Australia coach Justin Langer has urged the struggling batsmen in his team to step up and deliver when the final Ashes test against England starts at The Oval tomorrow. Australia took an unassailable 2-1 lead in the five-test series following their 185-run win in the fourth test at Old Trafford and now have the chance to wrap up their first series win in England since 2001, when Steve Waugh's men won 4-1.

The performances of Steve Smith, with an astronomical average of 134.2, and Marnus Labuschagne, combined with a strong showing from the bowlers, have minimised the impact of failures from the other specialist batsmen during the series.

Travis Head, Matthew Wade, Usman Khawaja, Marcus Harris, Cameron Bancroft and David Warner have all been posted missing, with experienced opening batsman Warner the worst of the lot with an average of 9.87.

While safe in the knowledge that England cannot win the Ashes, Langer said Australia would not be easing off in the fifth Test. "You've still got to perform, as an Australian test cricketer," he told reporters.

"Whether or not winning the Ashes will make a difference, time will tell, but you've still got to perform whether you are young or a veteran."

Cricket 'heat rules' call in response to climate change

LONDRES: A joint report by sports researchers and environmental academics unveiled yesterday urges cricket authorities to introduce "heat rules" including postponing games in response to climate change.

The review, by the British Association for Sustainable Sport and two universities, also calls for extra care around youth players and for manufacturers to develop equipment that enhances air flow, as extreme heat becomes more common.

"This is a wake-up call not just for cricket, but for all sport," said Russell Seymour, sustainability manager at Lord's cricket ground in London — the spiritual home of the game — who wrote the foreword to the report.

"Sportspeople are not by nature bystanders and we can and must react to avoid the crises approaching us. "For every player suffering, there are many more fans having to work and go about their daily lives in these increasingly harsh conditions," he added.

With 671 runs from three tests, Smith has carried the Australian batting on his shoulders with some support from Labuschagne, who has an average of 58.2 in the series. Langer called for patience with the young batters in the side.

"He (Smith) has done a lot for Australian cricket for the last few years actually, and so has Dave Warner," Langer said. "But we've also got to remember, Travis Head is new to test cricket, Marnus (Labuschagne) is new to test cricket, Marcus Harris is new to test cricket, Cameron Bancroft is new to test cricket."

"You can't just give them that experience, they've got to earn that and we're very thankful to have Steve batting. We're lucky to have him but test cricket takes time. We've got to respect that, it takes a lot of time."

While his batsmen have been misfiring, Langer has no such problems with his fast bowling unit. Pat Cummins has played all four tests and is the pick of the fast bowlers with 24 wickets while Josh Hazlewood has taken 18 from three.

The touring side have James Pattinson and Peter Siddle with two tests each under their belt in the series, and the uncapped Michael Neser is also an option.

"We've James Pattinson literally jumping out of his skin to play the next test," Langer said. "Peter Siddle, in those first two tests, was probably the stand-out bowler, a great professional and a ripping person to have in the team."

"It'll be fascinating to see how they (Cummins and Hazlewood) pull up ... whatever happens we're lucky to have a couple of other guys who are raring to go if we need them." — Reuters

The "Hit for Six" report details how cricket-playing countries such as India and Australia are already being severely impacted by extreme weather events such as droughts, heatwaves and storms that experts say are being made more common by climate change.

It notes youth matches in Australia have been disrupted due to heat, while dire water shortages have hit a tour of South Africa and flooding has delayed cricket in England.

Its authors say they have combined climate science with heat physiology to show how batsmen and wicketkeepers are becoming increasingly susceptible to poorer performances due to the conditions.

They argue "safety-related heat stress guidelines" are now needed, and that more games may need to be postponed or rearranged to cooler times of the day.

"Above 35 degrees (Celsius) the body runs out of options to cool itself," said Mike Tipton, professor of human and applied physiology at the University of Portsmouth and one of the report's authors.

"For batsman and wicketkeepers even sweating has limited impact as the heavy protective cladding creates a highly humid microclimate next to their bodies."

He added: "Particular care must be given to young players and the grassroots of the sport where elite-level cooling facilities simply aren't available." — AFP

Bangladesh captain Shakib takes blame for Afghan loss

DHAKA: Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan has taken full responsibility for their shocking home defeat to Test rookies Afghanistan in the one-off match at Chattogram and says it would be best if someone else took over the captaincy.

The 32-year-old all-rounder, widely regarded as the best cricketer Bangladesh has ever produced, took the Test captaincy in 2017 from Mushfiqur Rahim for his second stint at the helm after leading them between 2009 and 2011.

War-torn Afghanistan, playing only their third match after being inducted as a test-playing nation two years ago, completed a famous victory by defeating Bangladesh by 224 runs with 3.2 overs left on the final day on Monday.

"It will be best if I didn't have to lead," Shakib told reporters after the match. "I personally believe it will be good for my game. "And if I have to continue leading, then obviously there is a lot to discuss about (with the board)."

Shakib was the lone shining light for Bangladesh during the 50-overs World Cup in England, finishing third on the run-getters' list with 606 from eight innings while also picking up 11 wickets with his left-arm



Shakib Al Hasan (left)

orthodox spin bowling.

Following the World Cup he took a break during Bangladesh's dismal tour of Sri Lanka, where they lost all three one-day internationals but his return failed to inspire the side to victory against Rashid Khan's Afghanistan.

Heavy showers allowed little play on the final day, leaving Afghanistan with a little more than 18 overs in the final session to take the remaining four wickets and force a result, while Bangladesh had high hopes of avoiding defeat with Shakib unbeaten on 44.

However, he edged spinner Zahir Khan off the first ball of the session while attempting a cut shot to allow Afghanistan their big breakthrough. "I am really disap-

pointed," Shakib said. "The whole blame goes on my shoulders."

"I was very nervous when I came out to bat, and got out the first ball and it was my fault. I should have taken more responsibility and could have avoided the cut shot."

"We had to play only one hour and 10 minutes, and I got out the first ball. So it became harder for the team. The dressing room would have felt more comfortable if I had stayed out."

Giving his team zero marks out of 100 for the match, Shakib said they had to produce better players if they were to become more consistent. "If we want to play well consistently, we need to improve our quality and need more quality players." — Reuters

Sports

Belgium, Netherlands hit four as Germany edge closer to Euros

Macedonia keep hopes alive with 2-0 win in Latvia

PARIS: Belgium and the Netherlands both cruised to 4-0 wins over Scotland and Estonia respectively in Euro 2020 qualifying on Monday, while Germany claimed a crucial victory over Northern Ireland in their bid to qualify for next year's finals.

Roberto Martinez's Belgium, the world-number-one ranked side, were not at their best but still swatted aside a poor Scotland outfit at Hampden Park to make it six wins from as many matches in Group I.

Inter Milan striker Romelu Lukaku gave the visitors the lead in Glasgow in only the ninth minute with his Belgian record-extending 49th international goal.

Defenders Thomas Vermaelen and Toby Alderweireld ended the game as a contest with less than 32 minutes on the clock.

Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne, who had assisted each of the first three goals, completed the scoring himself with eight minutes remaining.

"It was not a world-class performance, we just did what we had to do," said Belgium captain De Bruyne. "We had a tough start but after our first goal, we had more control and Scotland did not get many chances."

Belgium, who finished third at last year's World Cup, are now 11 points clear of third-placed Kazakhstan at the summit of their group with the top two automatically qualifying and only four games to play.

"We knew that with a win we would almost certainly qualify, and that is most important," added De Bruyne. Russia remain in pole position to progress from Group I with Belgium, after Mario Fernandes' 89th-minute winner sealed a 1-0 win over Kazakhstan which moved Stanislav Cherchesov's men eight points ahead of their beaten opponents.

DUTCH DOUBLE FOR BABEL

The Netherlands backed up their stunning 4-2 win

over Germany in Hamburg last Friday by thrashing Estonia in Tallinn, as Ryan Babel scored his maiden international double.

Memphis Depay, making his 50th Netherlands appearance, grabbed the third goal, with Liverpool's Georginio Wijnaldum also finding the net.

Ronald Koeman's side still have work to do to reach a first major finals since making the 2014 World Cup semi-finals, though, as they trail second-placed Northern Ireland by three points in Group C, albeit with a game in hand.

The Euro 1988 winners next host the Northern Irish on October 10 in a crucial encounter. "I'm no longer one of the younger players in the team, so I try to compensate for the loss of speed by using my experience," the 32-year-old Babel told NOS TV.

Germany lead the group standings after edging to a nervy 2-0 victory in Belfast. Marcel Halstenberg's brilliant volley broke the deadlock shortly after half-time in a tense encounter, and Serge Gnabry gave Joachim Loew's men breathing space in injury-time. "After the defeat against Holland, we were under pressure today and had to overcome some difficulties," said Germany boss Loew.

CROATIA STUMBLE

Earlier on Saturday, Croatia suffered a setback in their qualifying campaign as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Azerbaijan in Baku. The 2018 World Cup runners-up took an early lead through a Luka Modric penalty, but the hosts hit back with Tamim Khalilzade's brilliant 72nd-minute equaliser to claim their first point in Group E.

Leaders Croatia are only ahead of third-placed Hungary, who they host on October 10, by one point, with Slovakia second on head-to-head record after



GLASGOW: Belgium's striker Romelu Lukaku (L) is tackled by Scotland's defender Liam Cooper (C) during the Euro 2020 football qualification match between Scotland and Belgium at Hampden Park, Glasgow. —AFP

winning 2-1 in Budapest. Wales are three points further back, but having played a game fewer. "It wasn't a good match for us, especially the second half when we didn't take any chances," coach Zlatko Dalic told television channel HRT.

Azerbaijan, coached by Croatian Nikola Jurcevic, remain rooted to the foot of the table. Elsewhere, North

Macedonia kept their hopes of reaching a maiden major tournament alive with a 2-0 win in Latvia.

The Balkan nation sit fourth in Group G, but are only three points behind second-placed Slovenia after their dramatic 3-2 win over Israel, with Austria two points better off in third following a goalless stalemate at leaders Poland. —AFP

Australia beat Kuwait in FIFA WCup 2022 qualifier

JOHANNESBURG: Australia beat Kuwait 3-0 for the FIFA world cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian cup China 2023 preliminary joint qualification round 2 match, at the Kuwait Sports Club Stadium in Kuwait City.

Meanwhile, African football minnows Somalia were eliminated from 2022 World Cup qualifying yesterday after a dramatic 3-1 loss to Zimbabwe in Harare.

Zimbabwe qualified for the second round 3-2 on aggregate thanks to a stoppage-time goal from star forward Khama Billiat, who plays for South African club Kaizer Chiefs.

Somalia, who have to play home matches in fellow east African country Djibouti because of an unstable security situation in Mogadishu, took a 1-0 lead into the first round second leg. The victorious first leg team included Mohamud Ali, who combines playing sixth-tier football in England with working as a driving instructor in Manchester. Somalia, the equal lowest ranked national team in Africa with Eritrea, had looked set to win a World Cup tie for the first time when they equalised in Harare with seven minutes remaining.

The goal from Omar Abdullah Mohamed gave the Somalis a 2-1 aggregate advantage and left Zimbabwe needing at least two goals to avoid a shock elimination.

Knox Mutizwa got the first of the two direct from a free-kick with four minutes left and Billiat rifled a shot over the goalkeeper two minutes into stoppage time. Marshall Munetsi had set up the dramatic finish by putting Zimbabwe ahead on 77 minutes with a spectacular overhead kick when the Somalis failed to clear a corner.

Overall success was a massive relief for new Zimbabwe coach Joey Antipas, who last month inherited



KUWAIT: Australia's midfielder Jackson Irvine (C) vies for the ball with Kuwait's defender Fahad al-Hajri (R) during the FIFA world cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian cup China 2023 preliminary joint qualification round 2 match between Kuwait and Australia, at the Kuwait Sports Club Stadium in Kuwait City yesterday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ed a team that fared poorly at the recent Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt.

After losing narrowly to the host nation,

Zimbabwe drew with Uganda and were hammered by the Democratic Republic of Congo to make a first round exit. —AFP

Clubs call for more time for Champions League reform

GENEVA: European Club Association chairman Andrea Agnelli insisted yesterday that the "real deadline" to finalise controversial plans to reform the UEFA Champions League is not until 2022 as clubs struggle to reach agreement on a way forward.

Agnelli, the chairman of Italian champions Juventus as well as the ECA, has been at the forefront of plans to reshape Europe's elite club competition from 2024 which would turn it into a largely closed shop.

Those plans have been met with resistance from domestic leagues and from clubs below the very cream of the continental game, so the ECA's two-day General Assembly in Geneva ended without a consensus on how to move forward.

"We know we have to find an answer by 2022. That is when they (UEFA) go to market in terms of selling commercial rights of whatever competition there will be," Agnelli, who was earlier re-elected to the position of ECA chairman until 2023, said at a press conference yesterday.

"So the real deadline if you want is 2022, but hopefully you will not need all that time." The ECA, which represents more than 230 clubs from across Europe, has been at the heart of the plans for a new-look Champions League, which were presented by UEFA in May.

The proposed reforms include the introduction of weekend fixtures, four groups of eight, and a tiered system with relegation and promotion that would see the top six teams in each group automatically qualify for the following year's competition.

Fierce opposition from clubs and national leagues worried about the potential damage to their competitions led UEFA to cancel a meeting planned for September 11. —AFP

NFL: Way too early look at 2020 first round

DALLAS: The 2019 NFL season is barely underway and yet, for some — looking at you, Miami — the offseason cannot get here soon enough. Fans in Dallas and New England, among countless others, are already looking into travel accommodations for Super Bowl LIV.

Given the buildup to the season, over-reactions following the first real games of the year are understandable and mildly entertaining. So, let's make like the Minnesota Vikings and run with it, projecting the entire season and where the top 32 college players will wind up next spring with a waaaaay-too-early 2020 mock draft.

1. MIAMI DOLPHINS — Tua Tagovailoa, QB, Alabama: The only liferaft available to marooned Miami fans at this point may be the hope that with a legitimate franchise QB, a quick turnaround is possible.

2. TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Justin Herbert, QB, Oregon: GM Jason Licht had a chance at an Oregon superstar QB earlier but selected Jameis Winston over Marcus Mariota. Unless Winston improves dramatically, he'll be playing elsewhere next year.

3. NEW YORK GIANTS — Jerry Jeudy, WR, Alabama: Without more

dynamic weapons at receiver, it won't matter who is at quarterback for the Giants this year or next.

4. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Chase Young, DE, Ohio State: Perhaps adding a potential No. 1 overall candidate at this point in the draft can take some of the sting away from losing Nick Foles indefinitely to a broken clavicle.

5. ARIZONA CARDINALS — AJ Epenesa, DE, Iowa: As new-age as Kliff Kingbury may be on offense, Terrell Suggs and several other pass rushers on this squad are on the opposite side of the horizon.

6. WASHINGTON REDSKINS — Andrew Thomas, OT, Georgia: If there is no resolution with Trent Williams, Washington must move on at left tackle.

7. CINCINNATI BENGALS — Isaiah Simmons, OLB, Clemson: The Bengals lack of speed and reliable tackling at linebacker was apparent in the loss to Seattle.

8. CAROLINA PANTHERS — Grant Delpit, S, LSU: Journeyman Tre Boston led Carolina in tackles in a Week 1 loss, but if the Panthers are hoping to attack in 2020, they need fresher legs.

9. OAKLAND RAIDERS —Derrick Brown, DT, Auburn: Expect the Raiders to focus on character after the Antonio Brown disaster. They won't come much bigger, stronger or cleaner off the field than Brown.

10. NEW YORK JETS — Laviska Shenault, Jr., WR, Colorado: Pair the 6-foot-2, 225-pound Shenault, Jr. with Robby Anderson and Le'Veon Bell and

the Jets could finally get off the tarmac.

11. ATLANTA FALCONS — Leki Fotu, DT, Utah: A man child in the Haloti Ngata mold, Fotu would add much-needed size, strength and ferocity to the Falcons' front.

12. DETROIT LIONS — Jeffrey Okuda, CB, Ohio State: With Rashaan Melvin a pending free agent and Justin Coleman surrendering scores in his Detroit debut, the Lions shouldn't look past Okuda's upside.

13. DENVER BRONCOS — Tristan Wirfs, OT, Iowa: Whether it be for Joe Flacco or Drew Lock, the Broncos must protect their QBs... including in practice against their own pass rush.

14. BUFFALO BILLS — Raekwon Davis, DL, Alabama: Taking a F-150 approach to a league full of racecars, the Bills invest along the line of scrimmage... again.

15. INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Collin Johnson, WR, Texas: Johnson is a massive pass-catcher very much in the mold free agent addition Devin Funchess but with a better track record of dependability.

16. MIAMI DOLPHINS (from Houston Texans) — Henry Ruggs III, WR, Alabama: How better to guarantee that Tagovailoa likes his new digs than to supply him the Ruggs?

17. OAKLAND RAIDERS (from Chicago Bears) — Tyler Biadasz, C/OG, Wisconsin: Even with stud center Rodney Hudson locked up long-term, Biadasz helps Mike Mayoock and Jon Gruden build inside-out.

18. SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Paulson Adebode, CB, Stanford: Long, confident and a ballhawk, Adebode and Stanford graduate Richard Sherman would make quite the pair in Santa Clara.

19. CLEVELAND BROWNS — Walker Little, OT, Stanford: Protecting the investment made in 2018 No. 1 overall pick Baker Mayfield with a massive left tackle just makes too much cents.

20. GREEN BAY PACKERS — D'Andre Swift, RB, Georgia: Just once it would be fun to watch Aaron Rodgers with a legitimate franchise back.

21. PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Bryce Hall, CB, Virginia: It might take another aggressive trade up to get him but Hall's range, instincts and ball-skills would do wonders in the Steelers' secondary.

22. SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Bradlee Anae, DE, Utah: On paper, the Seahawks' rush is formidable but with Jadeveon Clowney and Ziggy Ansah both on one year deals, reinforcements will likely be needed.

23. TENNESSEE TITANS — Jake Fromm, QB, Georgia: Marcus Mariota (and Ryan Tannehill) will be given every chance to stay but Fromm would be an intriguing fit if things go south.

24. PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Brandon Jones, S, Texas: Heady, physical and battle-tested, Jones could help clean up a secondary caught napping at times, against Washington in Week One.

25. LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Travis Etienne, RB, Clemson: Can Austin

Ekeler keep it up? Will Melvin Gordon return? Chargers may want to keep the juice on at the position, just in case.

26. LOS ANGELES RAMS — Rashard Lawrence, DL, LSU: Rams could look at Lawrence as a cheaper option this offseason to another former LSU star, Michael Brockers.

27. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Albert Okwuegbunam, TE, Missouri: From a size, athleticism and style-perspective, Okwuegbunam is a near clone of former Saints' star Jimmy Graham.

28. BALTIMORE RAVENS — Trevon Diggs, CB, Alabama: The Tuscaloosa-Baltimore express just keeps making stops, especially with three CBs (including Jimmy Smith) pending free agents.

29. MINNESOTA VIKINGS — John Simpson, OG, Clemson: Kirk Cousin attempted passes on just 10/48 offensive snaps in a Week One drubbing of Atlanta. Simpson, a mauler, would fit in well.

30. KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Nick Coe, DL, Auburn: Coe would make sense should stud DL Chris Jones break the bank elsewhere.

31. DALLAS COWBOYS — Jalen Reagor, WR, TCU: Re-signing both Zeke and Dak could force the Cowboys to tighten the purse strings on others, including pending UFA Amari Cooper.

32. NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Colby Parkinson, TE, Stanford: The rich get richer with the 6-foot-7, 245 pound Parkinson a Gronk-like red zone specialist. —AFP

25 Pacific rugby: The great brawn drain that left poor nations behind



26 England greets Boycott, Strauss given knighthoods



27 Belgium, Netherlands hit four as Germany edge closer to Euros



DONGGUAN: Nico Laprovittola of Team Argentina drives to the basket against Team Serbia during the 2019 FIBA World Cup Quarter-Finals at the Dongguan Basketball Center yesterday in Dongguan, China. — AFP

Scola shines as Argentina oust Serbia

NBA banning 'ninja-style' headbands: Report

DONGGUAN: Argentina's grand old man Luis Scola knocked down a series of key buckets in a fourth quarter surge yesterday to crush Serbian hopes and propel the South Americans into the semi-finals of the FIBA Basketball World Cup.

Scola, 39 years old and the last remaining member of Argentina's "Golden Generation" that won the Olympics in 2004, finished with a team-high 20 points in the 97-87 win. The outcome leaves Argentina undefeated in the World Cup, hosted this year by China, and headed for a Friday match-up against the winner of USA-France, who tip off on Wednesday.

For the Serbs, shooting guard Bogdan Bogdanovic of the NBA's Sacramento Kings led all scorers with 21 points, while Denver Nuggets big man Nikola Jokic added 16.

The bigger Serbians, who had looked dominant in group play behind do-it-all centre Jokic, had to play catch-up against the quick Argentines throughout their

quarterfinal contest in Dongguan in southern China.

Serbia finally grabbed a 70-68 fourth quarter lead on a three-pointer by the Memphis Grizzlies' Marko Guduric and looked like they might make amends for a frustrating 81-69 second-round loss to Spain, the only blemish in their World Cup campaign to that point.

But that's when Scola stepped up, scoring eight rapid-fire points in a 21-6 Argentina run that dropped the curtain on Serbia's World Cup. "We believed it. It wasn't impossible. We have a great team and we have great energy," said Argentina forward Patricio Garino. Scola is by far the oldest player in the relatively young Argentine squad.

"The way we played today is an example of what we want to do over the years," Garino said.

Argentina were the more fluid of the two teams throughout the game, moving the ball well and spreading out the scoring. Serbia had looked like title contenders after demolishing their opponents in the group phases by

a average 40.8 points per game. But the subsequent loss to Spain rocked the Serbs and they never seemed able to find a consistent rhythm against a pesky Argentine defence. Jokic was valiant in defeat as his team relied heavily on him, but he got little support for most of the game from his team's long-range shooters, who had been among the most accurate from the three-point range throughout the tournament. "We should have played better defense and more concentrated. The toughest matches are the quarter-finals but now we have lost the chance to win a medal," said Bogdanovic. "The best thing we can do now is to fight to at least be the fifth." Meanwhile, the NBA will bar players from wearing "ninja-style" headbands next season amid safety concerns, ESPN reported on Monday.

Several players including All-Star Jimmy Butler sported the headgear last season, a band of fabric tied at the back of the head with the two ends flowing loose.

However the on-court fashion trend had never been

formally approved by the NBA, and now the league has moved to outlaw the accessory.

"The ninja-style headwear is not part of the NBA uniform and hasn't been through the league approval process," NBA spokesman Mike Bass told ESPN in a statement. "Teams have raised concerns regarding safety and consistency of size, length and how they are tied which requires a thorough review before consideration of any rule change. "When some players began wearing them last season, we didn't want to cause a disruption by intervening mid-season, but we notified our teams in May that they would not be part of this season's uniforms."

Philadelphia 76ers player Mike Scott was critical of the decision while other players were bemused by the ruling.

"I love that someone at the NBA had to type the words 'ninja-style (headwear)' and 'consistency of size and length' as their job today," wrote the Detroit Pistons' Blake Griffin. — AFP

Astros bash seven homers, hammer A's

HOUSTON: Houston battered Oakland pitching for 11 runs on 12 hits — six of them home runs — in the first two innings as the Astros hammered the visiting Athletics 15-0 to set a franchise record for home wins on Monday night. Robinson Chirinos went 3-for-4, crushed a pair of home runs and drove in a career-high-tying six runs to help the Astros match their club record with seven homers in a game. Yordan Alvarez belted a pair of solo homers, and Alex Bregman clouted a three-run homer as Houston won for the fifth in a row and for the 17th time in the past 21 games. Jose Altuve went 3-for-3 with a two-run homer and two runs, and Michael Brantley had a solo homer and two runs for Houston. Zack Greinke (15-5) tossed six scoreless innings to beat the A's for the second time since being acquired by the Astros at the trade deadline. Mike Fiers (14-4) allowed nine runs on nine hits in one-plus inning for Oakland, which mustered just three hits.

YANKEES 5, RED SOX 0

Austin Romine and Gio Urshela homered, James Paxton threw 6 2/3 shutout innings and New York blanked host Boston in the finale of a four-game series. Paxton (13-6) won his eighth straight start, giving up four hits and three walks and striking out seven. The victory was the Yankees' 14th in 19 meetings with the Red Sox this season, their most over Boston in a single year in the expansion era (since 1961). New York won for the 12th time in its last 16 games, while Boston lost its third straight. The defeat officially eliminated the Red Sox from American League East division title contention.

METS 3, DIAMONDBACKS 1

Pete Alonso hit two solo shots to as he continues his chase of baseball's single-season rookie home run record, and New York beat visiting Arizona in the opener of a pivotal four-game series. The Mets, who remained four games behind the Chicago Cubs in the race for the second National League wild card, snapped a two-game losing streak. The Diamondbacks, who fell to 2 1/2 games back of the Cubs, lost their second straight and fell for just the third time in 14 games. Alonso gave the Mets a quick lead with a

homer in the first and provided their final run in the fifth. The two homers give him a major-league-leading 47, five shy of the rookie record set by the Yankees' Aaron Judge in 2017.

BRAVES 7, PHILLIES 2

Ronald Acuna Jr. and Josh Donaldson homered to lift visiting Atlanta past Philadelphia in the opener of a four-game series. Acuna also walked twice and scored three runs while Dansby Swanson had a hit, a run and two walks for Atlanta. Freddie Freeman ripped three hits and Ozzie Albies had two hits for the Braves, who have won 10 of 11. Braves starter Mike Foltynewicz (6-5) allowed three hits and one run in seven innings. He struck out seven and walked none. Corey Dickerson and Cesar Hernandez homered for the Phillies, who slipped to three games behind the Cubs in the NL wild-card race.

BREWERS 8, MARLINS 3

Rookie Trent Grisham belted a career-high five hits, and hometown hero Yasmani Grandal smashed a two-run homer to lead Milwaukee over host Miami. The Marlins left the bases loaded four times, going 0-

for-5 in those situations as Milwaukee won its fourth straight game. The Brewers are trying to catch the division-rival Cubs, who remained two games ahead of Milwaukee in the chase for the NL's final wild-card spot. Grisham went 5-for-6 with three singles, a double, a triple and two RBIs. Grandal, a former Miami Hurricane star, went 2-for-5 with two runs, and Lorenzo Cain went 3-for-5 with one RBI to power a 12-hit Brewers attack.

CUBS 10, PADRES 2

Shortstop Nico Hoerner had three hits and four RBIs in his major league debut, and Nicholas Castellanos and Kyle Schwarber homered in support of Kyle Hendricks as visiting Chicago defeated San Diego. Hoerner, 22, the Cubs' first-round pick (24th overall) in the 2018 draft, was 3-for-5 with a triple and two runs. He was promoted Monday morning as Addison Russell underwent concussion tests after being beamed Sunday in Milwaukee. Castellanos, who also had three hits, gave the Cubs a quick lead with a two-run homer in the first off Padres starter Cal Quantrill. It was Castellanos' 25th homer of the season. Schwarber hit his 35th homer of the season leading off the Cubs' five-run fifth. — Reuters