

6 Foreign leaders, supporters bid farewell to Mugabe



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Houthi drones spark fires at two Saudi oil facilities

Kuwait condemns attacks • 6 UAE troops killed in 'military collision'; Amir sends condolences

Amir thanks all well-wishers



HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets well-wishers after undergoing successful checkups in the US. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed gratitude to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah after conducting medical examinations. HH the Amir left a US hospital on Thursday evening after undergoing successful checkups. Thankfully, the checkups showed reassuring results, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah said, praying to God to keep HH the Amir in good health.

HH the Amir also thanked National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Chief of the Kuwait National Guard HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Commander of the National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH

Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The Amir also thanked Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and Cassation Court and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa and First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in addition to ministers and members of the National Assembly and all citizens and residents of Kuwait and those in charge of various media. HH the Amir expressed his sincere gratitude to Arab leaders as well as various political figures from different countries. He asked the Almighty to grant everyone good health and for Kuwait to sustain security and prosperity. —KUNA

RIYADH: Drone attacks sparked fires at two Saudi Aramco oil facilities yesterday, the interior ministry said, the latest such assault claimed by Yemeni rebels following a spike in regional tensions with Iran. Huge palls of smoke rose into the sky after the pre-dawn attacks on Abqaiq and Khurais, two major Aramco facilities in eastern Saudi Arabia as the state-owned giant prepares for a much-anticipated stock listing.

The attacks highlight how the increasingly advanced weaponry of the Iran-linked Houthi rebels - from ballistic missiles to unmanned drones - poses a serious threat to oil installations in Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude exporter. "At 4:00 am (0100 GMT) the industrial security teams of Aramco started dealing with fires at two of its facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais as a result of... drones," the interior ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. "The two fires have been controlled."

The statement added that an investigation had been launched after the attack in the kingdom's Eastern Province, but did not specify whether operations at the two facilities had been affected. Interior ministry spokesman Mansour Al-Turki told AFP there were no casualties. But the full extent of the damage was not immediately clear as reporters were not allowed near the plants where Saudi authorities appeared to have beefed up security.

The latest strikes drew swift condemnation from Riyadh's Gulf allies, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait. An official source at the Kuwaiti ministry of foreign affairs yesterday



ABQAIQ, Saudi Arabia: Smoke billows from an Aramco oil facility about 60 km southwest of Dhahran in Saudi Arabia's eastern province yesterday. — AFP

expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of the attacks. The source condemned in the strongest terms the sabotage attack that targeted the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the global energy supply. The source confirmed Kuwait's call on the international community to redouble efforts to curb such attacks and prevent their recurrence. It also stressed Kuwait's full support to Saudi Arabia in all measures it has taken to preserve its security and territorial integrity. The source concluded the statement by asking Allah Almighty to preserve Saudi Arabia and its brotherly people from all harm.

Three sources close to the matter said

oil production and exports had been affected. One source said 5 million barrels per day of crude production had been impacted - close to half the kingdom's output - but did not elaborate. "A successful attack on Abqaiq would be akin to a massive heart attack for the oil market and global economy," said Bob McNally, who runs Rapidan Energy Group and served in the US National Security Council during the second Gulf War in 2003.

Many Western employees of Aramco live in Abqaiq. The US Embassy in Riyadh said it was unaware of any injuries to Americans from the attacks.

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News in brief

MoH responds to NDMA reports

KUWAIT: Responding to FDA and EMA warnings that some ranitidine antacid and antihistamine drugs, including Zantac, include the carcinogenic impurity N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), the health ministry's assistant undersecretary for food and medical control Dr Abdullah Al-Bader said special preventive measures will be taken including withdrawing samples of these medications for further analysis in collaboration with international organizations until a final decision is made. But Bader stressed that no international organization had so far requested withdrawing the medicines from markets around the world. — A Saleh

Two Haftar commanders killed

TRIPOLI: Two commanders of the eastern Libyan forces trying to take the capital Tripoli from the internationally-recognized government were killed late on Friday in a drone strike, officials said. The strike is a blow to Khalifa Haftar's eastern-based Libya National Army (LNA). Two Tarhouna-based commanders - Mohsen Al-Kani, head of the Kaniyat armed group, and Abdelwahab Al-Magri, head of the 9th brigade - died in the strike. A brother of Kani was also killed. Yesterday, the Government of National Accord accused forces loyal to Haftar of attacking Mitiga airport. — Agencies

Iran: 'Blue Girl' admitted 'mistake'

TEHRAN: An Iranian football fan who set herself ablaze and died after being arrested for trying to enter a stadium had "confessed her mistake" when she was questioned, the judiciary said yesterday. Sahar Khodayari was dubbed "Blue Girl" because of the colors of the team she supported, Esteghlal FC. Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said Khodayari "had clearly confessed her mistake during questioning, accepted it and expressed regret". The spokesman also dismissed reports she had been told she would be jailed for six months as "fabricated rumors and hearsay". —AFP

Trump confirms death of Qaeda heir Hamza bin Laden

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump yesterday confirmed that Hamza bin Laden, the son and designated heir of Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, was killed in a counter-terrorism operation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. US media reported more than a month ago, citing intelligence officials, that the younger bin Laden had been killed sometime in the last two years in an operation that involved the United States. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said last month that it was "his understanding" that bin Laden was dead.

But Trump had not publicly confirmed the news until yesterday - three days after the anniversary of the 9/11

Iran inks \$440m deal to develop Gulf gas field

TEHRAN: Two Iranian companies signed a \$440 million agreement yesterday to develop a gas field in the sensitive Gulf, with the oil ministry saying it showed arch-foe the United States could not stop the country with sanctions. Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh

Solid gold toilet stolen from British palace

LONDON: A gang of thieves yesterday stole an 18-carat gold toilet from Britain's Blenheim Palace, police said, causing flooding that damaged the world-famous stately home. The fully-functioning toilet, dubbed "America", was created by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan and estimated to be worth around \$5 million. A 66-year-old man was arrested following the burglary,

terror attacks by Al-Qaeda, and a week after Trump's surprise announcement that a planned secret meeting with Taliban leaders at the Camp David presidential retreat had fallen through. "Hamza bin Laden, the high-ranking Al-Qaeda member and son of Osama bin Laden, was killed in a United States counterterrorism operation in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region," Trump said in a brief statement issued by the White House.

"The loss of Hamza bin Laden not only deprives Al-Qaeda of important leadership skills and the symbolic connection to his father, but undermines important operational activities of the group." The statement did not specify the timing of the operation, or how his death had been confirmed. Considerable uncertainty surrounded the details, with the White House only vaguely specifying the location of bin Laden's long-rumored death.

The 15th of Osama bin Laden's 20 children and a son of his third wife, Hamza - thought to be about 30 years old - was "emerging as a leader in the Al-Qaeda franchise," the State Department said in announcing a \$1

said the deal reached between two government-owned firms, Pars Oil and Gas Company and PetroPars, to develop the Belal field would be the first of many.

Tensions have soared in the Gulf since last year when the US began reimposing sanctions on Iran after unilaterally withdrawing from a 2015 deal that put curbs on its nuclear program. "Signing this contract is ... the beginning of a process," Zanganeh said, quoted by the oil ministry's Shana website. "This is a sign that we are still functioning with sanctions at their peak ... We are alive, we are active and working for Iran's oil industry," the Iranian minister said.

which took place before dawn at the 18th-century estate near Oxford, southern England.

The toilet was one of the star attractions in an exhibition of Cattelan's works that opened on Thursday at the palace, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visitors were able to book time slots to use it - but only for three minutes each, to limit the queues. More than 100,000 people used the loo during the year it was on display at New York's Guggenheim Museum. "The offenders broke into the palace overnight and left the scene at about 4.50 am (0350 GMT). No-one was injured during the burglary," police said in a statement.

Detective Inspector Jess Milne of Thames Valley Police said she believed "a group of offenders used at least two vehicles" - and left a mess behind them.

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million bounty on his head in Feb 2019. The State Department said Hamza was married to a daughter of Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, a senior Al-Qaeda leader indicted by a US federal grand jury in 1998 for his role in the bombings that year of US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya - attacks overseen by the senior bin Laden.

Sometimes dubbed the "crown prince of jihad", Hamza had issued calls for attacks on the United States and other countries, especially to avenge his father's killing by US forces in Pakistan in May 2011, the department said. That work made him important in attracting a new generation of followers to the extremist group that carried out the Sept 11 attacks, which left nearly 3,000 dead.

Continued on Page 24

The sanctions, he added, "have not been able to stop the progress of Iranian oil industry and its development". "We don't want to boast, but the United States cannot stop Iranian oil exports." The Belal gas field, shared with Qatar, is located 90 km south of Lavan island in the Gulf. The deal aims to reach a production rate of 500 million cubic feet of gas per day over a 34-month period. Zanganeh said Iran will adopt a policy of maximum crude production if the US lifts sanctions on the country's oil industry. "Maximum production would be the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum's policy in case (US) sanctions are eased on Iran's oil industry," he said. —Agencies



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on Sept 15, 2016, a fully functioning solid gold toilet goes into public use at the Guggenheim Museum. —AFP

Kuwait's humanitarian aid efforts extend to Arab, African nations

Recapping the work of Kuwait's institutions and humanitarian agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait's institutions and humanitarian agencies continued to provide relief assistance to Arab and African countries over the past week. In this regard, Kuwait inaugurated schools in Tunisia's inner provinces of Qairawan, Mahdia and Siliana that had been rebuilt with Kuwaiti funding as part of a restoration project. Upon the occasion, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tunisia Ali Al-Dhafiri said the project included the restoration and maintenance of schools, and equipping the buildings with the latest technology, which will have a positive effect to the educational process.

The first phase of the venture was funded by the Foreign Assistance Committee in the Kuwaiti Cabinet, in coordination with the Tunisian Ministry of Education, while other Kuwaiti donors would co-finance the second stage, he explained. In Kenya, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Thursday launched a project to restore water supply systems and wells in Garissa town, in cooperation with Kenya Red Cross. In a statement, KRCS's envoy to Kenya, Dr Musaed Al-Enezi, said the project aims at supporting more than 17,000 people in areas affected by drought.

As part of the project, two wells, one of a 55-meter depth and the other of a 150-m depth, were drilled. The wells were equipped with pumps powered by solar energy, he noted. The project also included rehabilitation of a flood-damaged water supply system in Qarashi. Kuwait's donation aims to provide sustainable sources of safe water to people in the region and neighboring areas who suffer from recurrent natural disasters, Al-Enezi added.

Rights of the disabled

Meanwhile, Kuwait's efforts to support people with disabilities have won experts' approval of the International Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as declared by Jamal Al-Ghunaim, Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN in Geneva, in remarks to KUNA at conclusion of meetings of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The committee members also reviewed Kuwait's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The experts presented a positive evaluation of Kuwait's report, which confirmed Kuwait's keenness on rights of people with disabilities, he noted. Al-Ghunaim also says Kuwait spares no efforts to grant full

rights for the disabled people in diverse fields including education, health and services.

Mohammad Al-Awash, the assistant undersecretary for press affairs at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, met with members of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Speaking to KUNA after Kuwait presented the first report on conditions of the handicapped to the committee, Al-Awash affirmed that the country ranks among states advanced devoting care to this segment.

Experts, during the session, presented recommendations, he said, indicating that the Kuwaiti authorities would examine the proposals and adopt those that conform with Kuwait Constitution, Kuwaitis' traditions and customs. UN Secretary General Representative and Resident Coordinator to Kuwait Dr Tareq Al-Sheikh lauded Kuwait' continuous efforts for global peace, development and human rights.

Amir's honors

Speaking at a news conference marking the fifth anniversary of the UN designation of His Highness the Amir as "Leader of Humanitarian Action," Dr Al-Sheikh hailed Kuwait's continuous efforts to realize international peace and security as well as its role in promoting development and human rights. Kuwait's contributions in the field have manifested some of the eminent characteristics of Kuwait's foreign policy since becoming the 111th member of the UN on May 14, 1963, he said.

Kuwait's humanitarian and development march had been launched a long time ago and the international honoring of His Highness the Amir came as a fruit of the humanitarian-development diplomacy spanning throughout a decade, he said. This Gulf State has affirmed its effectiveness through its presence at international quarters as member of many international organizations, such as the Universal Postal Union, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Devoting special attention to the UN, Kuwait inaugurated the UN House in 2009, with participation of the former secretary general, Ban Ki-moon. It houses



offices of all UN agencies operating in Kuwait, he said, noting its presence depicted the deep-rooted UN-Kuwait relations. Kuwait has increased contributions to international humanitarian and development activities by more than 3.1 percent of its gross domestic product, exceeding the internationally set level of 7.0 percent. It also allocated 10 percent of its voluntary contributions to back up the UN and its agencies.

Diverse challenges

Moreover, Kuwait has established the fund of dignified life at USD 100 million to overhaul agriculture in developing countries and donated USD 150 million for a fund that was established during the 2007 OPEC summit for research in energy, environment and climatic change. Lauding Kuwait's prompt reaction to help nations cope with disasters and diverse challenges, Dr El-Sheikh eyed with high value efforts of the Kuwaiti mission at the UN Security Council, namely when Kuwait as a non-permanent member of the council took part in drafting resolution 2474 for resolving plights of missing persons in armed struggles.

Furthermore, Kuwait along with 79 others states adopted the resolution 2427, stipulating explicit condemnation of attacks on schools and hospitals and urging parties of armed struggles to abstain from hindering children's access to education and health services.

Elsewhere, the Kuwaiti General Consul in Irbil, Dr Omar Al-Kanderi, declared in a statement to KUNA launch of a new phase on a project for treating eye diseases among relocated Iraqis at a hospital in the northern city. Dr Safin Al-Jassem, director of a local ophthalmology surgical center, says in remarks to KUNA that the center has recently treated 40 patients.

In Sudan, volunteers of Kuwaiti associations worked throughout the week, delivering humanitarian aid to victims of floods. Three Kuwait-dispatched aircraft boarding 110 tons of food and housing materials arrived, as part of Kuwait's "relief bridge." Volunteers of the Kuwaiti Direct Aid Association delivered relief supplies to flood victims in the southern region of Sennar. The local governor, Ahmad Saleh Abboud, commended in remarks to KUNA Kuwait's aid for the victims, thanking donors namely the association. — KUNA

Power grid hookup spared GCC \$2.8bn

ABU DHABI: Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity and Water Mohammad Bushehri said Thursday the GCC power grid hookup project, launched in 2009, spared the partners USD 2.8 billion so far. "This is one of the successful project in the field of energy sharing among the GCC states," he said while presenting in a paper to a parallel session during the 24th edition of World Energy Congress.

Bushehri, a board member of the GCC power grid hookup authority, said through this power transition project, the GCC states were able to save nearly USD 300 million last year. In addition to power transition, the project helps the GCC states to innovate their national



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Water Mohammad Bushehri

power grids, power-generating stations and provide the necessary investments, thus becoming move able to address any shortfall in production in the future, he added. The 24th World Energy Congress, which concluded today, featured 80 parallel discussions and nearly 300 speakers, including dozens of ministers, senior officials, CEOs and experts from around the world. — KUNA

EU delegation congratulates Amir on honoring anniversary

KUWAIT: The EU Delegation to the State of Kuwait has the honor to convey its heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the United Nations honoring His Highness with the title "Leader of Humanitarian Action" and bestowing on the State of Kuwait the title of "Humanitarian Center". This gesture recognizes the outstanding effort in the field of humanitarian aid made by the State of Kuwait under the wise leadership of His Highness and the great extent of his personal commitment to this notable cause. The EU delegation to the State of Kuwait expresses its best wishes to the people of Kuwait and stands ready to develop further cooperation.

DGCA stresses meteorology role in facing severe weather

KUWAIT: Director General of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Yusuf Al-Fawzan yesterday stressed on the importance of highlighting the role of meteorology in facing severe weather hazards such as heat waves, droughts, heavy rains, dust storms and climatic fluctuations. In a statement to KUNA on the occasion of the Arab Meteorological Day to be observed today, Al-Fawzan pointed to the increase in the frequency and intensity of the weather in recent years as it constitutes the largest percentage of natural disasters and their direct and indirect repercussions on life, property and the environment in all its forms.

He pointed out that the Arab countries, represented by the meteorological centers, are celebrating the occasion

under the slogan "Meteorology and Protection of Lives and Properties" came with a proposal submitted by Kuwait at the meeting of the Permanent Arab Commission for Meteorology and Climate at its 34th meeting at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, which was widely welcomed and unanimously approved on 15 September 2018.

He said that the 15th of September was also commemorating the anniversary of the establishment of the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology in 1970, which was approved by the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level. He noted the importance of the celebration to promote and disseminate community awareness of the role of meteorology and its importance, adding that 90 percent of natural disasters are the result of fluctuations in weather and climate, which is not bounded by geographical boundaries and do not exclude any human gatherings and no country will be immune from them.

He pointed to the need to develop national plans and programs in cooperation between all state and community institutions to face the fluctuations of weather and climate to reduce the negative effects on lives, property and the environment. — KUNA

Kuwait DM condoles with UAE VP over death of soldiers

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable of condolences to Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed Al Maktoum over the death of six soldiers.

Sheikh Nasser Sabah also sent another cable to UAE's Minister of State for Defense Mohammad bin Ahmad Al-Bowardi on the same incident. In the two cables, Sheikh Nasser Sabah expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy over the martyrdom of these soldiers who were on a national duty, Kuwait's Ministry of Defense said in a statement. Sheikh Nasser Sabah prayed to Allah the Almighty to bless the souls of the dead with mercy in Paradise and bring solace to their families, it noted. He also wished everlasting security, safety and stability to the UAE.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Friday to King

Felipe VI of Spain to express sincere condolences for the victims of the torrential rains that hit the eastern parts of the country recently. His Highness the Amir expressed sympathy with the families of the victims and wished the many wounded people a quick recovery. He also expressed hope that the authorities in friendly Spain will be able to overcome the impacts of this natural disaster soon. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to King Felipe VI.

The Kuwait Embassy to Madrid appealed to its nationals in Alicante and Calencia to be vigilant of the heavy rains in these areas. In a statement issued on Friday, the embassy urged Kuwaitis in these cities to follow up on the instructions posted by the Spanish authorities and contact the embassy in case of emergency. Spain's interior ministry has said at least five people were killed and many others have been wounded by the rains. It added that over 3,500 people were evacuated from the affected provinces. The rain storms have caused great material losses to homes, farms and infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the Amiri Diwan on Friday mourned for the passing away of Sheikh Youssef Al-Ghanem, widow of Sheikh Nasser Mohammed Al Salman Al Sabah, at the age of 71. She was laid to rest after the Asr prayer yesterday. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The National Guards Supply and Transport directorate recently celebrated concluding training courses on storing ammunition, intensive ammo and sustenance corporal duties. Speaking on the occasion, the administrative support manager, brigadier, Talal Abdul Razzaq Qadeer said that the training courses target boosting personnel technical skills.

Local

Shuaiba Port Sea Fire Center rescues ship, saves 9 people



By Hanan Al-Saadoun, Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Shuaiba Port Sea Fire Center responded to a call about a sinking 55-foot boat being sunk and managed to save nine people onboard. No injuries were reported.

Factory accident

The body of an Arab laborer was removed from a concrete mixer after he fell inside it by accident. The incident took

place in a concrete plant in Sulaihiya and the body was handed to forensics.

Shuaiba inspections

Deputy Director General of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate for Prevention Sector Maj Gen Khalid Fahad inspected several national factories in South Shuaiba area in cooperation with Kuwait Industries Union. The inspection came as a show of support to the national industry.

Physiotherapy bill

Kuwait Physiotherapy Society Chairperson, Hana Al-Khamees said a bill was currently being made in collaboration with KIFAS on practicing physiotherapy pending referring it to relevant bodies for further approvals. Speaking on the sidelines of celebrating 'World Physical Therapy Day 2019' at Hamra Mall under the title of 'Chronic Pain', Al-Khamees said that the celebration theme is annually set by the World

Physical Therapy Union, which includes Kuwait as an effective member. She added that this year's theme focuses on the role of physiotherapy in dealing with chronic pain, maintaining agility, improving cardiac health, maintain muscle masses, improving mood and other general health practices.

Court orders

MSAL assistant undersecretary for legal affairs, Musallam Al-Subai'e said that court

orders issued in favor of the ministry against others had increased to 86 percent since the beginning of 2019. Al-Subai'e justified the increasing percentage on the ministry's keenness to protect public funds adding that orders related to the cooperative societies had increased to 90 percent. This indicates how MISAL resolution laws and regulations and are not issued randomly. Al-Subai'e also noted that co-ops' sales had increased from KD 875,546,540 in 2017 to 891,201,368 in 2018.



KUWAIT: India's Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V Muraleedharan (center) is being received at the Kuwait International Airport by Indian Ambassador Jeeva Sagar yesterday.

India's minister Muraleedharan arrives in Kuwait

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: India's Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V Muraleedharan arrived in Kuwait yesterday on an official two-day visit. He was received at the Kuwait International Airport by Indian Ambassador Jeeva Sagar along with protocol officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait. Muraleedharan is making his maiden visit to Kuwait since he assumed office as the Minister of State for External Affairs in the second NDA government headed by Narendra Modi.

On the second day today, the minister is expected to meet His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime

Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel. The minister visited NBTC Group premises and the workshop in Mina Abdullah and interacted with around 300 Indian workers. He also visited the female shelter of the Indian embassy and interacted with laborers.

Later in the evening, the minister attended a dinner reception that was hosted by the Indian Ambassador in honor of the visiting dignitary at Millennium Hotel, Salmiya. The minister also interacted with Indian community members during the reception. The minister's visit is expected to further boost the deep-rooted bilateral relations between Kuwait and India.

The Indian expatriate community is the largest in Kuwait, numbering over 900,000 currently. The minister is accompanied by Dr Nagendra Prasad, Joint Secretary (Gulf region), Ministry of External Affairs and his private secretary Nandakumar. The minister is set to wrap up his two-day visit today afternoon.

Gov of Eastern Region meets Chairman of Kuwait Air Show 2020



KUWAIT: Eastern Region Governor receives Chairman of Organizing Committee, of Kuwait Air Show 2020. — KUNA

RIYADH: Prince Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz, Governor of the Eastern Region yesterday noted the importance of the aviation sector in the national development, job creation and facilitation of trade exchange. This came during the reception of Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Kuwait Air

Show 2020 Ahmad Behbehani. He was also briefed on the Kuwait Air Show which will kick off next January 15. On his part, Behbehani stressed the committee's bid to attract influential companies in the field of aviation including those working in the eastern region in the Kingdom. — KUNA

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A beautiful night time view of the Souq marina at Souq Sharq. — KUNA

NBK dedicated to honoring children of staff for their effort and academic excellence

local spotlight

Is vaping safe?

By Muna Al-Fuzai

Muna@kuwaittimes.net



In the last few days, there has been an intensive debate about vaping after six people died in the US, apparently from smoking e-cigarettes, while hundreds of others have contracted lung diseases. There is a new theory now about vaping - that people should quit. The question remains - is vaping worse than smoking? Can people be forced to quit?

It seems this topic is between those who smoke and those who don't or hate smoking for their own reasons. While we may witness new measures and rules about selling e-cigarettes, I think a total ban may not be easy to impose because it is a big profitable trade, and as long as money is being made, misuse by the public is not the fault of merchants. I am not defending the product or the merchants here, but this is the reality. Here is why. On Sept 11, the US administration said it intends to ban non-tobacco flavored vaping fluid, with some politicians demanding a ban on all e-cigarettes. US health authorities are alarmed by the rise in popularity of e-cigarettes that enable users to inhale addictive nicotine liquids that are often fruit flavored. I think it is a normal situation of concern due to health scares.

An e-cigarette is a handheld battery-powered vaporizer that simulates smoking without burning tobacco. A global controversy over the safety of vapes is ongoing, as some believe they have similar effects as regular cigarettes when used for a long period. Some reports said the recent vaping deaths in America did not come from products bought in a shop, but from badly-made items sold on the street or mixing vape fluid with oil, which should not enter the lungs. If inhaled, oil causes the type of symptoms that smokers display.

E-cigarettes are new to the market and need further studies to fully determine their health risks for the public to believe such statements and stop using it by their own free will. Some specialists are arguing that e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is found in tobacco, and causes addiction. Some say that a total ban may lead former smokers to conventional cigarettes.

I believe one of the best ways to handle this issue is to regulate an age for buying e-cigarettes, to make it hard for kids and teenagers. But this is only one way, as misuse by people and where they buy it are personal factors. I think advertising is also leading teenagers to the use of e-cigarettes, especially when introducing flavors like mint and vanilla. So, manufacturing companies should never present this product as a safe alternative to regular smoking, because there is no proof.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said with US President Donald Trump's approval, the FDA is working on a "guidance document" that would prohibit all flavors barring tobacco. I think we may soon witness new rules in this regard.



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) honored the children of staff who achieved excellence in the academic year 2018/19, in recognition of their hard work and efforts, in a customized ceremony held in their honor. Students and their families joined the event which was attended by Sulaiman Al Marzouq, NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO and Emad Al Ablani, NBK General Manager- Group Human

Resources along with a group of NBK Officials.

Al Marzouq congratulated the students and urged them to continue working hard to achieve their goals. "This event is an integral part of our CSR initiatives aimed at supporting the education sector," said Al Marzouq. "We at NBK firmly believe in students' capabilities and their great potentials. We are proud of our children and what

they have achieved and will achieve in the long run," Al Marzouq explained. "I wish them success in their future studies and strive for them to excel to build the right foundation as they are the future of our country."

"NBK is dedicated to honoring the outstanding children of staff in recognition of their academic excellence and effort each year, and also in recognition of the parents who constantly

grant all the necessities of their children to ensure their success," Al Marzouq added. NBK has successfully maintained its commitment to educational purposes and student support for more than 6 decades. NBK supports education and excellence for the youth of Kuwait in a variety of ways, including holding such honoring ceremonies to recognize and reward students striving toward excellence.

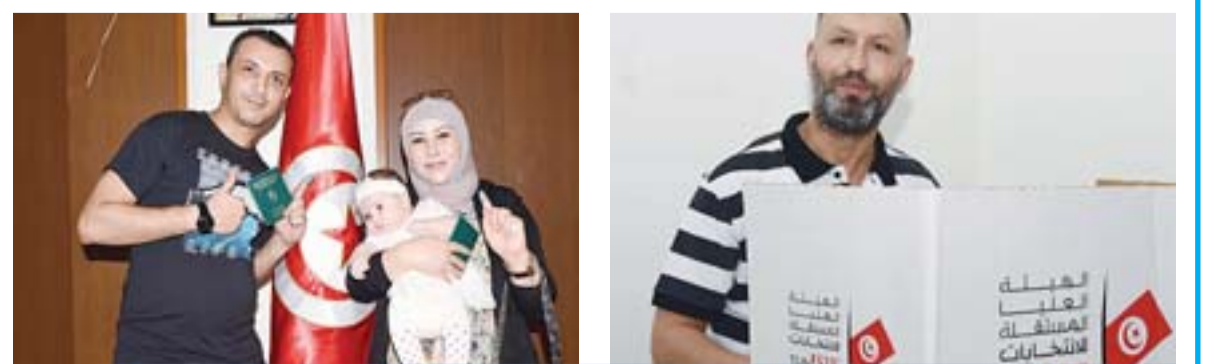
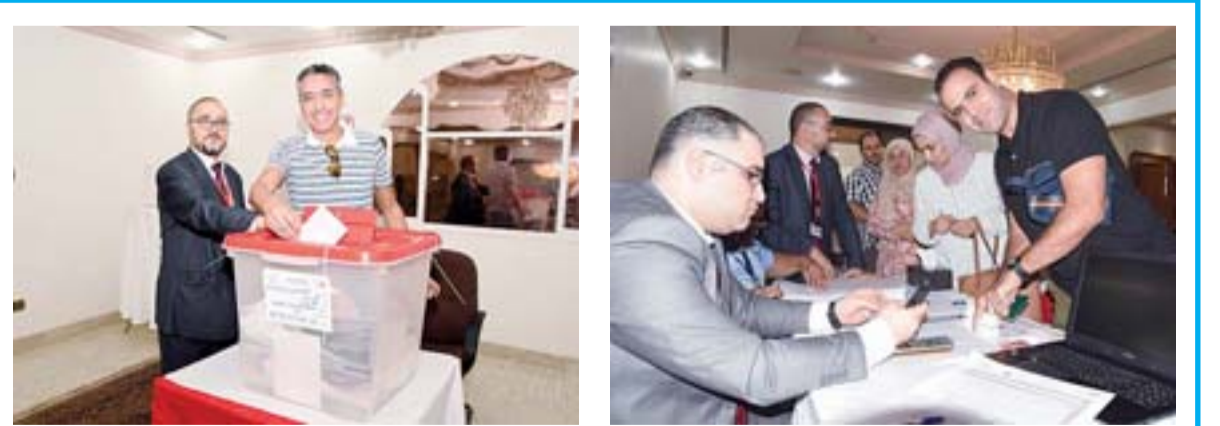
Parliament to reevaluate manpower authority's current procedures

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said that a parliamentary request would be made before commencing the next term by the end of October. This will be to allocate a session to discuss the manpower authority's current procedures and conditions on issuing work permits. The sources added that lawmakers believe the process is much too lenient and that it led to multiplying the numbers of unnecessary expats within the labor market. Furthermore, the sources said that lawmakers relying on Egyptian statistics, had already been refuted by the minister of state for economic affairs, Mariam Al-Aqeel. This comes despite Egyptian confirmation that over 8,000 Egyptians head to Kuwait with official work permits monthly.

Pupil count

Recent Ministry of Education statistics showed that the total number of pupils registered in private primary schools is 3,699 compared to 126,362 in public primary ones. Meanwhile, informed sources said that a special report would be submitted to the minister of education and higher education by the end of September about the required preparations for the 2019-2020 school year.

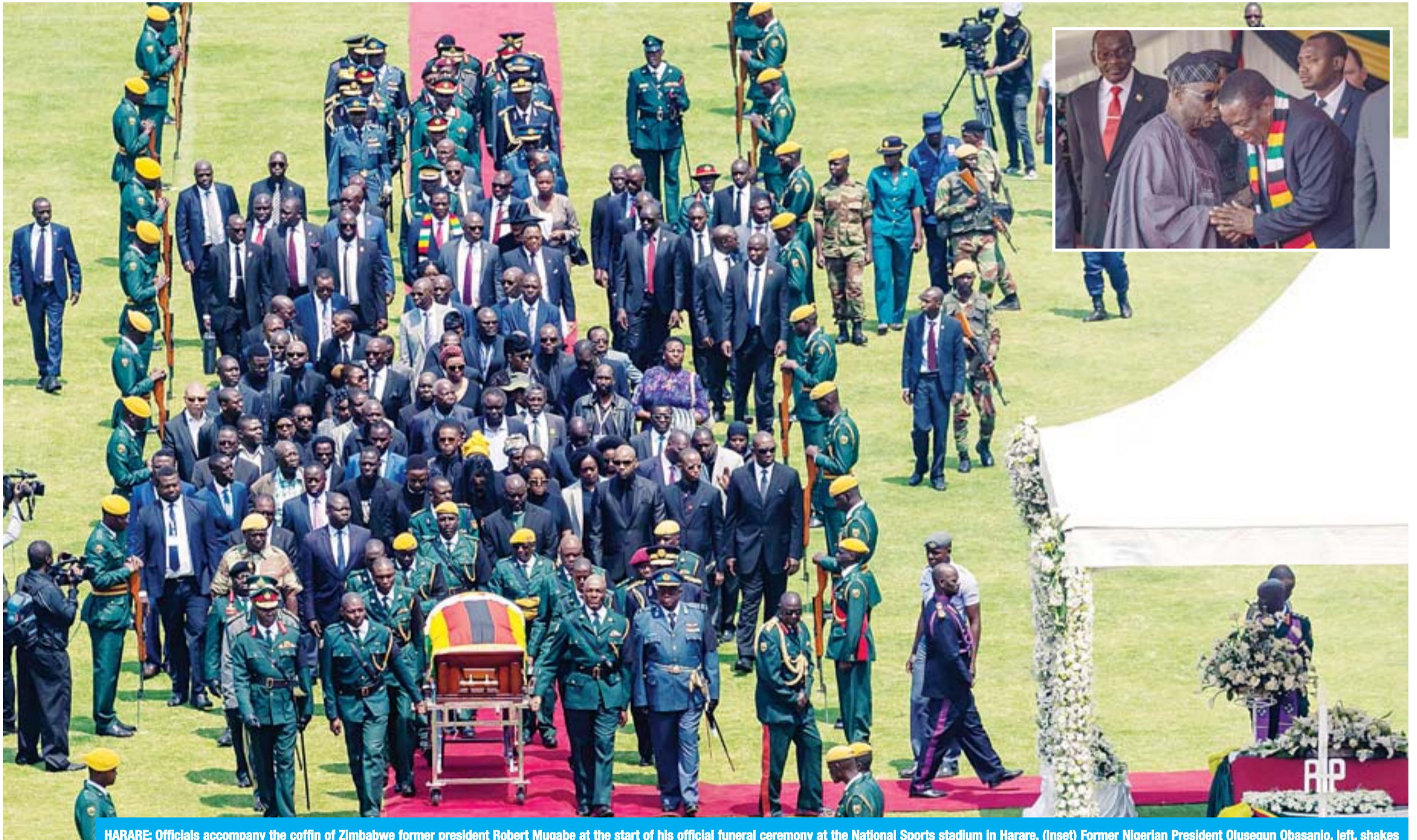


KUWAIT: Tunisian expats in Kuwait take part in their country's presidential elections at the Tunisian Embassy. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shalkh



Biden weathers Democratic debate; uncertainty persists

Indonesia locked in epic battle against jungle blazes



HARARE: Officials accompany the coffin of Zimbabwe former president Robert Mugabe at the start of his official funeral ceremony at the National Sports stadium in Harare. (Inset) Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, left, shakes hands with Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa upon his arrival to attend a farewell ceremony for late Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. —AFP

Divided Zimbabwe bids farewell to Mugabe

Jeered over attacks, South Africa's president apologizes

HARARE: Zimbabwe gave former leader Robert Mugabe a state funeral yesterday with African leaders paying tribute to a man lauded as a liberation hero but whose 37-year rule was defined by repression and economic turmoil. Mugabe, who died in Singapore aged 95, left Zimbabwe deeply divided over his legacy with the southern African country still struggling with high inflation and shortages of goods after decades of mismanagement.

Mugabe died last week on an overseas medical trip almost two years after former army loyalists forced him out in 2017, following a power struggle over what was widely perceived as his bid to position his wife Grace to succeed him. Former and current African leaders, including South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa and Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta, arrived to crowds chanting and drumming liberation songs at the 60,000-capacity national stadium in Harare for Saturday's ceremony.

Mugabe's casket draped in the green, black, gold and red Zimbabwe flag was marched slowly into the stadium, accompanied by a military band and an escort of officers. His wife Grace, in a black veil, and family followed behind. "Let us put aside our differences and come together as we remember the past and look to the future as one proud, independent and free nation," Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa said in a tweet.

Mugabe's body was returned from Singapore on Wednesday to a country he helped found as an anti-colonial guerrilla and pan-African leader who ended white-minority rule and helped bring more education and healthcare to the poor black majority. Later, Mugabe turned to repression and fear to crush dissidents and rule for nearly four decades during which he became an international pariah for his takeover of white-owned farms.

"You can't talk about Zimbabwe without Bob. Zimbabwe is

Bob. It took a man like Bob, his bravery, to get independence," said Norman Gombera, 57, a school principal in Harare. "Bob did his best under the circumstances. There is no country without a problem."

Bitter legacy

His final burial at a national monument will only happen after a new mausoleum is built in about 30 days. That decision was taken after his family ended a dispute with Mnangagwa, a former ally who turned against his rule in 2017. Though lauded as an African icon, at home many Zimbabweans will remember Mugabe more for the economic mismanagement that forced millions to flee the country during decades of crisis. Many are struggling to survive despite Mnangagwa's vows of more investment and jobs in the post-Mugabe era.

"The fruits of his tenure are the shortages. That is what we remember him for," said Steven, a consultant shopping nearby the stadium. "He has made sure there is no opposition and he succeeded. There is no reason to go to his funeral." Always divisive in life, Mugabe's funeral arrangements were also caught up in a dispute between Mnangagwa and the family over where and when the former leader should be buried.

The two parties on Friday finally agreed he should lie at National Heroes Acre. But the final ceremony would take place in about 30 days, once the new mausoleum was built for him there. His family are still bitter over the role Mnangagwa played in his ouster and had pushed for Mugabe to be buried in his homestead of Zvimba, northwest of Harare. A former guerrilla who fought alongside Mugabe against colonial forces, Mnangagwa was fired as first vice president by Mugabe in 2017. Mugabe had branded him a "traitor".

Soon after, protesters took to the streets and military officers pressured Mugabe to step down in what was widely seen as a struggle between Mnangagwa's faction and loyalists to Mugabe's wife Grace inside the ruling ZANU-PF party. The "heroes" monument, where more than 130 national figures are buried in black marble tombs, sits on a hilltop overlooking Harare. Mugabe's first wife, Sally, is also buried there.

Jeered over attacks

Meanwhile, South Africa's President was jeered and whistled at yesterday during his speech at Zimbabwe ex-leader Robert Mugabe's funeral before he apologized for recent xenophobic attacks. At least 12 people have been killed this month in a surge in violence and mob attacks against foreign-owned businesses in and around Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city.

A wave of jeers, boos and whistles interrupted Ramaphosa at the Harare national stadium as he started his eulogy at the state funeral for Mugabe, who died age 95 last week. "I stand before you as a fellow African to express my regret and apologize for what has happened in our country," Ramaphosa said after one of the organizers tried to calm the crowd. His comments were met with cheers and blasts of sound horns from the crowd.

South Africa, the continent's second largest economy, is a major destination for other African migrants. But they are often targeted by some locals who blame them for a lack of jobs. But with shops and homes burned and looted and clashes between armed mobs of looters and police, hundreds of migrants from Mozambique and Zimbabwe have fled to shelters. Nigeria's government has flown around 600 of its citizens home from Johannesburg after some of them were targeted in the violence. —Agencies

Row over police raids in bohemian Athens district

ATHENS: Greece's new conservative government has stirred controversy by mounting police operations in the bohemian Athens district of Exarchia, considered by officials a "lawless" haven for drug smugglers. Residents, however, note that the recent crackdown, officially targeting abandoned building squats and narcotics dealers, could be linked to a gentrification trend in an area that is full of hidden architectural gems.

In August, at the height of the tourist season when many of the capital's residents leave town, police evacuated four squats and removed 143 migrants, prompting an outcry by locals. The Greek human rights league later labeled the move a "rather pointless show of force" and "contrary to...the respect of human dignity" after a police unionist called the anti-establishment squatters "trash". Conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who campaigned on a ticket of jobs creation and public safety, earlier this month called the central Athens district a "den of lawlessness." "We want to turn Exarchia into what it once was: a neighborhood with its own particular character instead of a den of lawlessness, vandalism and drug trade," the PM said. The new Athens Mayor Kostas Bakoyannis—who is the PM's nephew—was similarly elected on a law and order ticket and has promised an "imminent" initiative "to improve daily life". "Organized crime is having a party in the area," Bakoyannis said before his election in June.

Bakoyannis argues that order must be restored before sidelined landmarks such as the National Archaeological Museum and the Athens Polytechnic—in the middle of drug-trading areas—can become tourist draws. But to longtime locals such as Dimitra Konidari, the district's identity as "a place of solidarity and diversity" is under threat. She fears that authorities will seek to stifle "socio-political groups in the area, anarchist or otherwise" that have been instrumental in creating solidarity initiatives for migrants and poor Greeks during the crisis. "We're in favour of the police being present to combat crime and delinquency but against all kinds of repression," says Thodoris Kokkinakis, member of a local citizens' committee. Under the previous government, a deputy police minister had labelled Exarchia the 'Montmartre' of Athens in reference to the historic Parisian district, an artist's haven in the early 20th century. Nikos Vatopoulos, an urban architecture writer for Kathimerini daily, points out that the district offers neoclassical buildings as well as samples of early 20th century avant-garde middle class homes. Dimitris Dimopoulos, who opened a bookstore here in the late 1970s, recalls that Exarchia was then "full of writers and artists." Democracy had only just been reestablished after a brutal seven-year dictatorship, brought down in 1974 months after a student uprising at the nearby Athens Polytechnic. Even though university faculties were moved to the suburbs of the capital in the 1980s, the area continued to attract youths espousing left-wing, far-left and anarchist views. —AFP

Humberto targets ravaged Bahamas

MIAMI: The devastated northern Bahama islands were facing a fresh tropical storm yesterday, potentially complicating desperately needed relief efforts to the shattered archipelago in the wake of Hurricane Dorian. The announcement from the National Hurricane Centre (NHC) came after it had warned early Friday that a strengthening tropical depression was heading for the same islands hit by Dorian last week.

The storm, dubbed Humberto, is expected to strengthen into a hurricane, moving very near the northwestern Bahamas yesterday, before shifting to offshore Florida after the weekend, the Miami-based forecaster said. Grand Bahama and Abaco—in the path of the strengthening weather system, according to Bahamian forecasters—were among the worst-hit by Dorian.

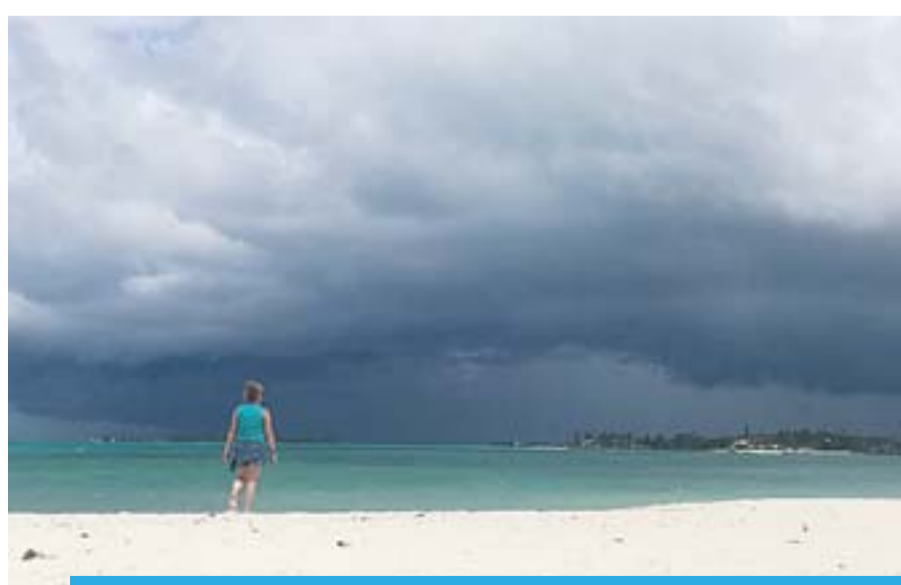
Carl Smith, a spokesman for the Bahamian National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), warned the storm could have an impact on relief and recovery efforts on the islands. "The weather system will slow down logistics," Smith told a press conference in Nassau, the cap-

ital. "Fuel and water remain the biggest needs in Abaco." Humberto was generating 40 mile (64 kilometer) per hour winds, the NHC said, and was expected to become a hurricane in two or three days.

Winds of up to 60 miles per hour were expected and heavy rainfall could bring some flooding to the already saturated islands, said the Department of Meteorology's director Trevor Basden. The announcement that yet another storm would lash the Bahamas came as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned of the dangers of climate change during a visit to the hurricane-battered archipelago.

Guterres said in a tweet he had come to the Bahamas "to express my solidarity with the Bahamian people" and "ways we can continue supporting them." He said 75 percent of all buildings had been destroyed in some areas by Dorian, a Category 5 storm. "Hospitals are either in ruins, or overwhelmed," Guterres said. "Schools have been turned into rubble. Thousands of people will continue to need help with food, water and shelter."

He said the hurricane demonstrated the need to address climate change. "In our new era of climate crisis, hurricanes and storms are turbo-charged," Guterres said. "They happen with greater intensity and



NASSAU: A woman walks on the beach as a storm approaches in Nassau, Bahamas.

frequency—a direct result of warmer oceans. "Science is telling us: this is just the start. Without urgent action, climate disruption is only going to get worse. Every week brings news of climate-related devastation."

Meanwhile, NEMA raised the death toll from 50 to 52 — although officials have said they expect it to rise significantly. Former

prime minister Hubert Ingraham said earlier this week he feared the final death toll could be in the hundreds. NEMA spokesman Smith said some 1,300 people remain unaccounted for. He said 71 people were staying in shelters on Grand Bahama island and 2,037 in shelters in New Providence, where Nassau is located. —AFP

International

Regime, Russian fire kills six in northwest Syria despite truce

UN setting up group to investigate hospital bombings

BEIRUT: Regime and Russian fire has killed at least six civilians in northwestern Syria's Idlib province, a war monitor said yesterday, two weeks after Moscow declared a ceasefire in the jihadist-dominated region. The truce, which brought a halt to four months of devastating bombardment on Idlib province by the government and its ally Russia, had largely held apart from sporadic artillery fire and air strikes. But on Tuesday, Russia carried out its first air strikes in the area since the ceasefire began, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

On Friday, regime rocket fire on the towns of Maaret Al-Numan and Kafranbel in southern Idlib province killed five civilians including a child, the Observatory said. A sixth civilian was killed in a Russian air strike in the rural west of the province, it added. That brought to 11 the number killed since the ceasefire came into effect, according to the Britain-based monitor, which has a network of contacts across the war-torn country.

The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance led by Al-Qaeda's former Syria affiliate controls most of Idlib as well as parts of neighboring Aleppo and Latakia provinces. The region of around three million people, many of them displaced by fighting in other areas, is one of the last holdouts of opposition to forces backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Observatory on Saturday reported regime fire in various parts of southern Idlib, including close to a Turkish military observation post.

Russian air raids have also targeted hardline jihadists in Idlib's western countryside and nearby parts of Latakia, it said. The ceasefire is the second since Damascus escalated its operations in the area in April, which have since left at least 980 civilians dead, according to Observatory figures, and which the UN

says have forced more than 400,000 people to flee.

Hospital bombings

Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres announced Friday he is setting up an internal investigation into the bombing of hospitals in Syria which had previously flagged their coordinates to avoid air strikes. Guterres said in a statement the board would look at "a series of incidents that have occurred in northwest Syria" since the establishment of the so-called "Idlib de-escalation zone" in September last year by Russia and Turkey.

The committee is not a "criminal investigation" but aimed to "establish the facts for the secretary general," his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. The board, headed by Nigerian General Chikadibia Obiakor, will start its work on September 30 but no deadline was given for it to submit its findings.

Several dozen medical facilities with links to the UN have been damaged or destroyed by bombs this year. Russian has denied deliberately targeting civilian installations. Human Rights Watch urged the new board to "work quickly to attribute attacks on medical facilities and other humanitarian sites in Syria to the forces who committed them" and called on Guterres to publish the findings.

Ten members of the UN Security Council called on Guterres in July to establish an investigative body, angering Russia, diplomatic sources said. The British ambassador to the UN, Karen Pierce, hailed the establishment of the investigative committee. "Developments in Hama and Idlib governorates in northwest Syria show a repeat of the military tactics deployed by Syrian forces in the taking of Aleppo city and eastern Ghouta," she warned, adding her support



ALEPPO: Syrian Turkish-backed fighters from Al-Mutasim Brigade react after finishing their training at a camp near the town of Marea in Syria's northern Aleppo district. —AFP

to a resolution being thrashed out since August for a ceasefire in the northwest.

Diplomatic sources said that while Russia is taking part in the discussions on a ceasefire resolution, it deems such a move unnecessary since a ceasefire was

declared last year by Moscow and Damascus. Russia is also seeking to insert clauses in the text excluding "anti-terrorist" operations from any ceasefire deal, something western countries oppose, the same sources said. —Agencies

Netanyahu: Israel's longest-serving PM fights for his future

JERUSALEM: Benjamin Netanyahu has become Israel's longest-serving prime minister with right-wing leadership and by repeatedly besting rivals with deft political moves, but he will have to pull another rabbit out of his hat in Tuesday's elections. The 69-year-old is fighting his second election in five months with a potential corruption indictment looming. After April polls, he suffered one of the biggest defeats in his political career when his Likud party along with its right-wing and religious allies won a majority, but he failed to form a coalition.

Rather than risk allowing another candidate to have a shot at doing so, he opted for a second election. He is again locked in a tough race against his main rivals from the Blue and White centrist alliance, led by former military chief Benny Gantz. The attorney general has announced his intention to indict Netanyahu on fraud, bribery and breach of trust charges pending a hearing, expected to be held soon after the election in early October.

He is not legally required to resign if indicted, only if convicted with all appeals exhausted, but political pressure would likely be intense. Many expect him to seek immunity from parliament if re-elected. He has spent years outlasting opponents and he could well do so again. "He is fighting for his life," said Gideon Rahat of

Jerusalem's Hebrew University and the Israel Democracy Institute think tank. "He is fighting for not having to face the court. It is his personal war."

He has campaigned with a combination of divisive populism and attempts to portray himself as a world statesman by talking up his relationships with foreign leaders, including US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. True to form, he issued a last-minute pledge on Tuesday to annex the Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank if re-elected, which many saw as a play for vital right-wing nationalist votes. That accompanied by his stated intention to annex Israeli settlements in the wider West Bank could effectively end any remaining hopes for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

'Mr Security'

The burly son of a historian with his familiar grey comb-over has entrenched himself at the top so firmly he has been labelled "King Bibi", using his nickname dating to childhood. Few doubt his political effectiveness. Much of his popularity has to do with another nickname - "Mr. Security" - in a country where such issues are always on voters' minds.

Netanyahu frequently talks openly about Israel's air war in Syria against Israel's archfoe Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah. He generally avoids talking about the Palestinians apart from security operations. Netanyahu was born in Tel Aviv in 1949 less than 18 months after Israel's creation. He and his wife Sara have two sons, and he has a daughter from a



TEL AVIV: Supporters of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (portrait) push Likud's party mobile studio at the Carmel market in Tel Aviv. —AFP

previous marriage. The son of a history professor active in Israeli right-wing politics, Netanyahu grew up partly in the United States.

He attended the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and with his fluent, American-accented English would appear on television speaking forcefully in defense of Israel. He performed his Israeli military service with an elite unit and was wounded in combat, but another family member's service may have affected him more deeply. In 1976, his brother Yonatan died in an Israeli commando raid to rescue hostages at Entebbe airport in Uganda. Netanyahu has called the operation "a very dramatic national

experience" and "one of great personal consequence".

'Too pragmatic'

Israeli politics in its early years was dominated by the Labor party, but the first victory by the Likud, then led by Menachem Begin, in 1977 helped lay the groundwork for Netanyahu's political future. His career took off when he was posted to the Israeli embassy in Washington and later served as ambassador to the United Nations. He became Israel's youngest prime minister in 1996, at 46, but was defeated three years later. Netanyahu would return to power in 2009 and has remained in office ever since. —AFP

Russia's world-first floating nuke plant arrives in port

MOSCOW: Russia's world first floating nuclear power station yesterday completed a 5,000-kilometre Arctic transfer to the country's far east, the Rosatom nuclear agency said. "The Akademik Lomonosov floating nuclear plant arrived ... at Pevek, in the autonomous district of Chukotka," where it is to start operating by year end once connected to the local electricity grid, Rosatom said.

What will be the world's northernmost nuclear power plant left Murmansk in Russia's far north on August 23 after being loaded with combustible nuclear fuel. The 21-ton, 144-metre long and 30-metre wide platform, which is designed to meet the energy needs of remote communities, was towed into Pevek by a clutch of vessels.

The station houses two 35-megawatt reactors, more in line with the power of nuclear-powered ice breakers than typi-

cal new generation nuclear plants boasting nearer 1,000 MW capacity. The Akademik Lomonosov is to provide energy for around 100,000 people and also power oil platforms as Russia develops extraction of natural resources in a mineral-rich area whose eastern tip is a few dozen kilometers from Alaska.

"It is perhaps a small step towards sustainable development in the Arctic-but it's a giant step towards decarbonization of remote, off-grid zones and a turning point in the global development of small modular nuclear plants," Rosatom head Alexei Likhachev said in a statement. Environmental groups led by Greenpeace Russia have, however, long criticized the project warning it will have "serious consequences" for a fragile ecosystem in case of storms or accidents.

Greenpeace has warned of the risk of a "nuclear Titanic" and "Chernobyl on ice" and environmental fears were heightened following an August explosion at a nuclear research facility in Russia's far north which saw local radiation levels briefly spike. The nuclear industry generally has been looking to



MURMANSK: Photo shows the floating power unit (FNU) Akademik Lomonosov being towed from the Arctic port of Murmansk, northwestern Russia. —AFP

reinvent itself in a depressed market, notably by producing small-scale, modular reactors with attractive price tags to win over potential new clients. The industry has been cheered by strong

demand notably for nuclear-powered submarines as well as ice-breakers and aircraft carriers, increasingly destined for isolated and infrastructure-poor regions. —AFP

Family releases name of Australian woman detained in Iran

SYDNEY: One of three Australians recently revealed to be detained in Iran was identified by her family yesterday as a Melbourne University lecturer. Academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who specializes in Middle Eastern poli-

tics with a focus on Gulf states, has been held for a "number of months" in Iran on charges that remain unclear. "Our family thanks the Government and the University of Melbourne for their ongoing support at this distressing and sensitive time," a statement released by Australia's foreign affairs department on behalf of the family said. "We believe that the best chance of securing Kylie's safe return is through diplomatic channels."

Canberra first confirmed last week that three of its citizens had been seized by authorities in Tehran. Perth-based travel-blogging couple Jolie King and Mark

Firkin, who has been documenting their journey from home to Britain on social media, were revealed as two of those arrested. Moore-Gilbert is the last of the three to be named.

Her arrest is unrelated to that of the couple, whose charges also remain unclear. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne last week said Moore-Gilbert has been held for "a number of months", while King and Firkin for "a number of weeks". "The government has been making efforts to ensure they are being treated fairly, humanely and in custom to international norms," she told parliament last week. Payne said diplomacy

presented the "best chance" for their release, with the foreign affairs department in talks with Iranian counterparts about both cases.

News of the arrests came after Canberra announced it would contribute a frigate and surveillance aircraft to a US-led mission to protect shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, with tensions high in the Gulf region. Payne said the cases of those detained were not related to diplomatic tensions. The Australian government last week updated its travel advice for Iran to "reconsider your need to travel" and "do not travel" to areas near the border with Iraq and Afghanistan. —AFP

Teen climate activist Thunberg protests at White House

WASHINGTON: Teen climate champion Greta Thunberg brought her global environmental message to the heart of the US government on Friday, telling her legion of supporters outside the White House: "Never give up." The 16-year-old Swede, who has inspired youngsters across the world with her urgent call to arms, demanded action from the world's number one economy and its notoriously climate change skeptical president as part of a demonstration kicking off two weeks of protest.

Thunberg joined a few hundred people who shouted slogans and sang, but was careful to stay near the back, avoiding the limelight and questions from the media before finally addressing her supporters. "Never give up—we will continue," she said in a speech thanking the crowd and rallying the wider teen environment movement to keep up pressure on polluters. "I'm just going to say I'm so incredibly grateful for every single one of you, I'm so proud of you to have come here," she said.

Thunberg isn't as well known in the United States as in Europe, but her six-day stay in the capital Washington will nonetheless be marked by high profile honors. On Monday, Amnesty International will present her its highest honor for human rights work and she will testify before Congress on September 18 on the invitation of House Democrats. On Wednesday she was a guest on The Daily Show in New York, where she called again on young people to mobilize and to stop man-made global warming, since older generations have failed to act.

"We in a way feel like it is a direct threat, others feel like, 'I won't be alive then anyway, so screw it,'" she said. Thunberg, who was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome at the age of 12, arrived in the US on August 28 on a zero-emissions yacht. She rose to fame after she began sitting outside the Swedish parliament in August last year to get members to act on climate change.

She was quickly joined by other students around the world, as word of her strike spread through the media, and the "Fridays for future" movement was born. New York authorities have given their blessing for the next strike on September 20, in which students from the city's 1,700 schools will participate. "New York City stands with our young people. They're our conscience. We support the 9/20 #ClimateStrike," Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio wrote on Twitter.

UN summits

Thunberg was clearly an inspiring figure at Monday protest, with fellow teens expressing feelings of protectiveness when a media scrum tried to mob her. "I think she's an amazing leader and I'm happy to have her in our midst," said 15-year-old Kallan Benson. "But it's sad that we have to celebrate a person, and to put this much pressure on a teenager just like me." A growing number of Americans are describing climate change as a "crisis," and two-thirds believe the president is doing too little to tackle the problem, a new poll published by the Washington Post said Friday. —AFP

International

Biden weathers Democratic debate; uncertainty persists

Former vice president often in the limelight

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden did what he needed to avoid major blunders in the latest debate featuring the top Democrats in the 2020 race for the White House, but the frontrunner faced lingering doubts Friday about his ability to take on President Donald Trump. The centrist former vice president weathered sustained criticism from his rivals on Thursday, far-left Senator Bernie Sanders in particular, on issues from health care and immigration to foreign policy.

In extended exchanges that highlighted the party's ideological schism over health care and the cost of shifting to government-run universal coverage, Biden was often in the limelight, occasionally going on the offensive against rivals. "Last night I thought was a good night," Biden told donors Friday at a Houston fundraiser. "I think I could have done better," he added. "I will do better, God willing."

The 10 candidates agreed on the need to defeat Trump, yet the president's record was not a mainstay of the event. There was no mention of a potential impeachment, something Democratic lawmakers are grappling with. Next to Biden, progressive Senator Elizabeth Warren, who has risen to joint-second alongside Sanders in polling, breezed through largely unscathed, avoiding personal attacks and crisply outlining policy proposals.

Analysts saw Biden's first half hour, when he defended his health plans against Warren and Sanders and challenged them on the costs of their proposals, as among his most engaging debate performances. But by the second half of the nearly three-hour marathon the frontrunner appeared less steady and Julian Castro, a former cabinet colleague under Barack Obama, launched an unwarranted attack on the 76-year-old over a memory lapse that hadn't happened.

BIDEN'S SHAKINESS

Biden survived the jab, and it was a low point of the three

debates for Castro, who was immediately upbraided by commentators pointing out that it was he, and not Biden, who had his facts wrong. The exchange nevertheless exposed what many have wondered behind closed doors: whether Biden has the stamina and mental acuity to prosecute an exhausting campaign over the next 14 months.

"There's a lot of people who are concerned about Joe Biden's ability to carry the ball across the end line without fumbling," Senator Cory Booker, who departed from his normal position as courteous unifier, told CNN after the showdown. "And I think that Castro has some really legitimate concerns about, can (Biden) be someone in a long, grueling campaign that can get the ball over the line?"

Biden has maintained a solid grip atop the polls throughout the campaign, despite slippage in the past week as Warren has gained ground. He is widely seen as the most electable against Trump-but being the top contender brings more scrutiny. Straightforward questions were answered with incoherent word salads and Twitter collectively raised its eyebrows as Biden referred to Sanders as "the president."

Memes were plastered across social media and heads scratched as he made an outdated reference to record players while answering a question about slavery. Five months before the first nomination voting in Iowa, the evening may not have moved the needle dramatically, but Biden's rocky moments could chip away at voters, said University of Virginia politics expert Kyle Kondik.

"I do wonder if Biden's shakiness, displayed persistently over time, may eventually erode the advantage he currently enjoys as the candidate perceived by most as the best option against Trump," Kondik told AFP.

Several lower-tier candidates fared well Thursday including ex-congressman Beto O'Rourke, whose passionate appeal for an end to gun violence after two mass shootings in his native Texas-and his controversial call for manda-



TEXAS: Democratic 2020 presidential hopeful Former Vice President Joe Biden poses for selfies while visiting with students at Texas Southern University Student Life Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

tory buybacks of military-style assault weapons-drew headlines. Senator Amy Klobuchar, positioned in the same moderate lane as Biden, had a solid performance, rising

above the fray during heated personal bickering. "A house divided cannot stand," she declared, silencing the cross-talk. — AFP

Republican threatens Democratic hopefuls over US gun control

WASHINGTON: A Republican lawmaker from Texas issued a barely veiled threat against Beto O'Rourke after the Democrat presidential hopeful said he would seize assault rifles behind many mass shootings in the country. "My AR is ready for you, Robert Francis," Texas state legislator Briscoe Cain tweeted after O'Rourke's pledge in the Democratic presidential debate late Thursday, using O'Rourke's given name.

O'Rourke had been asked if he favored confiscating assault weapons, one of which was used to kill 22 people at a Walmart store in his home town of El Paso, Texas on August 3. "I am, if it's a weapon that was designed to kill people on the battlefield," O'Rourke replied. "When we see that being used against children... Hell yes, we're going to take your AR-15, your AK-47. We're not going to allow it to be used against our fellow Americans anymore."

O'Rourke won plaudits for his strident response-and some unwanted attention on social media. "This is a death threat, Representative. Clearly, you shouldn't own an AR-15-and neither should anyone else," he replied to Cain's tweet, which his campaign said had been reported to the FBI. Cain's tweet was later removed by Twitter as a violation of its rules on making threats, while O'Rourke began selling t-shirts saying "Hell yes, we're going to take your AR-15."

Fight over gun control

The exchange lit up the US gun debate online, as Democrats generally call for more controls but only O'Rourke has gone so far as to back taking away the millions of assault rifles in private hands. Gun owners say the Constitution's Second Amendment absolutely protects their right to possess firearms, but O'Rourke and others want to limit that right to certain categories. Congress is expected to consider new controls in the wake of a series of mass shootings in the last two months, two of them in Texas, that stunned the nation.

Democrats want tougher background checks on all gun buyers, and is backed by the public, opinion polls show. But Republicans and the White House-and some Democrats in conservative states-clearly fear the pressure of the powerful National Rifle Association, which opposes any regulation. The NRA said after the debate that O'Rourke's policy would leave "law-abiding Americans defenseless." Democratic Senator Chris Coons criticized O'Rourke as likely making it harder to pass new regulations by scaring gun owners. He said the clip from the debate of O'Rourke calling for assault rifle confiscation, "will be played for years at Second Amendment rallies with organizations that try to scare people by saying Democrats are coming for your guns." —AFP

Blast rocks Swedish city

STOCKHOLM: A young woman was "seriously injured" by an explosion in the city of Lund, southern Sweden, yesterday, police said. Police received several calls about a blast in the centre of Lund shortly after 2.30 am. A woman in her twenties, who was passing by when the explosion occurred, was found injured at the scene and taken to hospital. "She is supposed to have serious but not life-threatening injuries," police spokeswoman Evelina Olsson said. The blast was described as severe and believed to be intentional.

"We have reports that windows as far as 100 meters away have been damaged," Olsson said, adding that they had started an investigation for "causing bodily injury" and "destruction causing public endangerment". No arrests had been made by noon Saturday but police had been in contact with the owners of the small convenience store which was the apparent target. About 90,000 residents live in Lund, which is near Malmo. It is also the seat of Lund University, one of the oldest and largest universities in Sweden, with 40,000 students. — AFP

At least 11 dead in Rio hospital blaze

RIO DE JANEIRO: At least 11 people, many of them elderly, were killed when a fire swept through a hospital in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro as staff and desperate visitors battled to rescue patients from smoke-filled wards. Hospital authorities said the blaze late on Thursday was thought to have been caused by a short circuit in a generator, although the city mayor said sabotage could not be ruled out.

Firefighters tackled the fire at the private Badim hospital, near Rio's Maracanã World Cup football stadium, for several hours before finally managing to extinguish it. The city's forensic institute said most of the dead were aged 66 or over, many of whom were in the intensive care unit. "The majority were due to suffocation and other causes related to the accident... the devices keeping them alive stopped working because of the fire," Gabriela Graca, director of the forensic institute, told local media.

Emergency personnel searched through the burned-out building until the early hours of Friday to recover bodies. The hospital said there had been 103 patients in the building when the fire broke out and that "more than 100 doctors were mobilized to bring help to the victims." Seventy-seven of them had been moved to other hospitals while 14 had been cleared to return home.

During the evacuation, patients on gurneys and stretchers were carried into surrounding streets as ambulances struggled through crowds of curious onlookers to transport patients to other medical facilities. "The doctor arrived in the room and told us that there was a fire and that we had to evacuate as quickly as possible," 58-year-old Teresa Dias, who was visiting her father, told AFP.

"They put him on a wheelchair and tied him up to prevent him from falling out. There were a lot of other sick people on stretchers on the stairs." Staff wheeled medical equipment outside, and the most seriously ill patients were taken at first to a nearby children's nursery. Sheets tied together were seen hanging from hospital windows.

Smoke spread quickly

"I was able to take my mother out of her room and

Spanish PM visits flood-hit areas as death toll hits six

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez yesterday visited the country's flood-stricken southeastern regions as the death toll rose to six and train and air services were disrupted for a third day. Since Wednesday, areas here suffered some of the heaviest daily rainfall on record, causing chaos on the roads, cutting public transport and prompting rivers to burst their banks. Flash floods swept away cars and swamped homes in the regions of Valencia, Murcia and eastern Andalusia.

The latest fatality was a middle-aged man whose body was found by police in a field at a hamlet near the city of Orihuela in Valencia, a spokeswoman for the central government's office in the region said, without giving details. Five people died in separate accidents in the previous two days as they tried to cross flooded roads in cars, including a man whose vehicle got stuck in a tunnel on Friday in the centre of the coastal city of Almeria.

After observing the damage from a helicopter flying over the city of Orihuela in the region of Valencia, Sanchez visited a command centre for emergency operations. Later he offered his condolences to the families of the dead and said the government would do everything it could to help the survivors. "All those who have been affected need to know that the Spanish government will help so that at least they can repair many of the material damages caused by this extraordinary meteorological phenomenon," he told reporters as he arrived in Murcia.

The prime minister said water levels need to lower before the government can make an estimate of the total cost of the damage. In addition to some 1,500 people who were evacuated earlier, officials on Friday removed another 2,000 residents of the town of Santomera in the



RIO DE JANEIRO: A picture shows damage caused by fire at a neighboring house of the Badim private Hospital at the Tijuca neighborhood, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

when we got to the fire escape, there were a lot of people running around," lawyer Carlos Otonero, whose 93-year-old mother was being treated for pneumonia, told the UOL news website. "It was terrible because the smoke spread very quickly." Other relatives were forced to wait outside for word on their loved ones as dense black fumes filled the sky.

"I heard the loud noise of glass breaking and thought it was shooting or a robbery when I heard screaming. I went downstairs to see what was happening and I saw a lot of smoke," said one resident, Terezinha Machado, 76. Hospital authorities said smoke spread to all floors of the building and pointed to a generator in the oldest part of the complex as the probable cause of the fire. Mayor

Marcelo Crivella said investigators would probe whether the fire was an accident.

"Experts will have to find whether anyone was responsible. I hope I am wrong, but we have to check there was no sabotage, we have to investigate," he told reporters when visiting the hospital Friday. The fire service said the premises had safety certificates. Rio has been hit by two major fires in the past year, including when the National Museum was gutted by flames last September, destroying most of its priceless collections. In February, 10 teenage members of the Flamengo football club were killed in the prefabricated building where they were staying. Faulty air conditioning systems were the cause of both fires. —AFP



ALMORADI, Spain: A man stands next to the overflowed Segura river in Almoradi as torrential rains hit southeastern Spain sparking major flooding in the Valencia region. — AFP

region of Murcia as a precaution due to a controlled release from a local dam to avoid overflowing, the interior ministry said.

Spain's King Felipe VI also lamented the loss of life and the damage. "May we all, with the help of all, be able to overcome the despair that now weighs on so many homes and families," he tweeted late on Friday. The storm moved further west yesterday, causing a flash flood in the village of Alhaurin el Grande in the province of Malaga that washed away about a dozen cars, local officials said. The southwestern city of Seville closed all public parks

yesterday due to the risk of heavy rainfall, city hall said in a tweet.

The airport in Murcia, which was closed on Friday due to the flooding, re-opened yesterday. However two flights that were due to land on the holiday island of Ibiza were diverted to another airport and two other flights were cancelled due to the bad weather, Spanish airports operator AENA said. Rail services across southeastern Spain remained disrupted yesterday, with several routes in Valencia and Murcia suspended, the state-owned train operator said in a statement. — AFP

International

Khan brands Modi 'cowardly', vows to raise Kashmir at UN

Islamabad will respond to any hostility, Pakistan warns

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan branded his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi "cowardly" on Friday and promised to raise New Delhi's decision to strip Indian Kashmir of its autonomy at next week's UN General Assembly session. Khan, speaking to a crowd of around three thousand supporters at a rally in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, warned that Modi's move on August 5 would have repercussions beyond the disputed Himalayan territory.

"When you give a message to 200 million Indian Muslims that India is only for Hindus, you will push them to violence," he warned. "I particularly want to give a message from here to you, Narendra Modi, that only a cowardly man would suppress people" as India has done in Kashmir, he told the flag-waving, chanting crowd. "I will attend the UN General Assembly next week and God willing will not disappoint the Kashmiri people. I will take a stand there that no one has ever taken."

He also insisted that Pakistan does not want to go to war with India again-but said Islamabad will respond to any hostility. The nuclear-armed neighbors have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two of them over Kashmir, which they both administer in part. Tensions have spiralled since New Delhi's move on its side of the de facto border-the Line of Control-to

change the status of the territory, with Pakistan repeatedly likening Modi to Hitler and calling for international intervention.

For weeks on the Indian side, security forces severely restricted movement and cut mobile phone services and the internet, severing communication with millions under lockdown in Kashmir. Thousands of people are believed to have been arrested in recent weeks by Indian authorities, while extra troops have been deployed to reinforce the 500,000 soldiers already stationed in one of the most militarized places on the planet.

The crackdown has also spread fear among Pakistani Kashmiris with families on the Indian side. Earlier this week, Pakistani Kashmiris who had been visiting family members in the Indian-administered part when the clampdown began told AFP how they had been stranded, caught in Delhi's security dragnet for weeks until authorities allowed them to go home.

They were distraught at leaving their relatives behind to face an uncertain future. "Nobody knows what will happen to them next... There is desperation among the people," Muhammad Sadiq, who went to Indian Kashmir to mourn the death of his brother said recently. "Our relatives are angry... They believe that India is becoming anti-Muslim. It wants to become a Hindu state." — AFP



MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistani Kashmiri listen to Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan (not pictured) during a rally in Muzaffarabad. — AFP

Thailand's NE inundated after tropical storm

BANGKOK: Floods in northeastern Thailand have submerged homes, roads and bridges, leaving more than 23,000 people in evacuation shelters as anger grows over the government's "slow" emergency response. Torrential rain has lashed the country for the last two weeks, causing flash floods and mudslides in almost half its provinces, with families evacuated from their homes in boats or makeshift rafts. Since August 29, 32 people have been killed in the deluge, said a statement from the disaster department yesterday that also gave the number of people staying in emergency shelters.

Two weather events are behind the widespread floods, the department said—Storm Podul and a tropical depression that formed over the South China Sea called Kajiki. Local media reports from the worst-hit province of Ubon Ratchathani showed people wading through chest-deep water and rescuers in boats trying to steer buffalo to higher ground. Flooding in the province, which borders Laos and Cambodia, has been exacerbated by rising water levels in the Moon and Chi rivers.

"It will take three weeks to drain the floodwater" from up to 90 percent of inundated households, said provincial governor Sarit Witoon. "The water has slightly receded about four centimeters today and I think it will keep going down," he added. But the sit-



UBON RATCHATHANI, Thailand: This aerial picture shows a flooded area in Thailand's northeastern province of Ubon Ratchathani. — AFP

uation is already "unlivable" for families in one-storey homes, said Pongsak Saiwan, local director of opposition party Future Forward. Access to an entire district is currently cut off due to flood waters, which are about two meters deep in the main town, while three major bridges are "impassable", he said.

"The government has been very slow in responding to the situation since the floods started in the beginning of September," Pongsak told AFP. Ubon Ratchathani's plight started trending on Twitter this week with the hashtag #SaveUbon. Aerial shots of the flood-hit plains blanketed with muddy river water were widely shared, as well

as photos of stray dogs being rescued by passing boats.

One Twitter user compared the flood response to how quickly the government had mobilized and saved 12 young boys and their football coach from a waterlogged cave last year—an incident that catapulted Thailand to international attention. "Only 13 lives stuck in the cave and it was still very high-profile, but this is hundreds of thousands of lives," tweeted Yosita8051. "It's not okay." Thailand's junta leader-turned-premier Prayut Chan O-Cha tweeted yesterday that he has told agencies to "expedite assistance" to those in the affected areas. — AFP

Indonesia locked in epic battle against jungle blazes

PEKANBARU: Working around the clock, thousands of firefighters are struggling to contain smog-belching blazes raging across rainforests and farmland in Indonesia, one of the frontlines against fires blamed for aggravating global warming. Those leading the response are short on equipment, with some wearing just flimsy masks and rubber boots as they blast streams of water at flames consuming the jungle—and enveloping wide swathes of Southeast Asia in toxic haze.

"I'm supposed to wear proper protective gear but we've only got limited equipment," said Darmadi, a soldier deployed to Kampar district on hard-hit Sumatra island. "Still, I have to be ready when duty calls." AFP images from the worst-affected areas show the dark silhouette of firefighters set against the orange glow of jungle blazes, endless stretches of scorched earth and charred trees, deserted schools and suffering residents.

The culprit is usually illegal fires set to clear land for farming on Sumatra and Borneo islands. The most serious fires occur in peatlands, which are highly combustible when drained of water to be converted into plantations. But Indonesia is only part of a bigger problem. Huge fires tearing through the Amazon are also compounding concerns about the long-term impact of such blazes—rainforests play a key role in protecting the planet against global warming.

The situation this year has been worsened by drier weather in Indonesia, with air pollution drifting over to neighboring Malaysia



RIAU, Indonesia: A general view shows burnt land in Kampar, Riau province. — AFP

and Singapore and stoking diplomatic tensions. Thousands of personnel and water-bombing helicopters are only keeping the flames at bay and the rainy season—which usually starts in October—could be the only thing able to douse them. That respite cannot come soon enough for people who live in and around Pekanbaru, a provincial capital on Sumatra blanketed with dense smoke that leaves the sky dark even at midday.

One Pekanbaru clinic has been treating as many as 75 smog patients daily, including a pale and fatigued Hasan Abdullah. "I'm dizzy and had a fever since yesterday so my dad brought me here," said the 10-year-old who had oxygen tubes in his nose. In some com-

munities a mix of fear and anger has set in, with many pointing the finger at those who burn land to make way for crops.

"To the people who started these fires, I say please don't be so selfish," said Sri Wahyuni, a 31-year-old mother of three, as thick smoke floated into the backyard of her home outside Pekanbaru. "Stop putting other people at risk just for your benefit." Some worried parents have fled haze-choked areas with their children, although that is not an option for many with community ties and few resources. "I'm constantly scared, but we've got nowhere to go," said father-of-two Muhammad Ilham Fajriansyah. "It's not easy just to get up and leave." — AFP

Malaysia opposition groups join forces to win Muslim votes

KUALA LUMPUR: Two leading Malaysian opposition parties formed an alliance Saturday aiming to win major support from the country's Muslim majority and threaten the young reformist government. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad led an alliance to a historic victory at the polls last year, ousting a corruption-plagued coalition which had been in power over six decades. The main party in the former ruling coalition, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), has since sought to bolster its position by forging closer ties with one-time rival, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS).

On Saturday the parties signed a pact to cooperate in what analysts said is a bid to win backing from the ethnic Malay Muslim majority ahead of the next election, due by 2023. UMNO president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi insisted

the move would not deepen racial and religious divides. "UMNO and PAS will ensure that this cooperation will not separate, distance or make enemies of any race or religion in this beloved nation," he was quoted as saying by news portal Malaysiakini.

About 60 percent of Malaysia's population of 32 million are Malay, but the country is also home to substantial ethnic Indian and ethnic Chinese communities who do not usually follow Islam. But James Chin, a Malaysia expert from the University of Tasmania, said it was a "sad day for those who wish to see a progressive, modern, multi-racial Malaysia." UMNO and PAS are telling all Malaysians this country belongs to Malays and Muslims. "He said the pact was a significant threat to Mahathir's coalition, which has a more multi-racial make-up, as UMNO and PAS command strong support in rural areas." — AFP

Militant attacks kill 4 soldiers in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Four Pakistani soldiers were killed in two different militant attacks in northwestern tribal regions near the Afghan border, the military said yesterday. The incidents happened late Friday night in North Waziristan and Dir, where several military operations have been launched in recent years against homegrown and foreign militants.

"Miscreants opened fire on a routine

patrolling party of security forces near the Abba Khel area of North Waziristan, killing a soldier. In an exchange of fire, two miscreants were also killed," the military said in a statement. Separately, it said three soldiers guarding a fence on the border with Afghanistan were killed and another was injured "when terrorists from across the border opened fire on them in Dir town".

Pakistan's army launched a massive operation in 2014 to wipe out militant bases in North Waziristan and end a near decade-long insurgency that has cost thousands of lives. Violence in Pakistan has declined following the military offensives in the region, but militant groups are still able to carry out deadly attacks. — AFP

EU citizens uneasy at Britain's Brexit 'settlement scheme'

LONDON: After days attempting to apply online to remain in the UK after Brexit, EU citizen Bina Gayadien was faced with the same message: her information was "insufficient". The Dutch lawyer, a UK resident for 20 years, is one of thousands discovering that the British government's system to process their cases is not as fast or easy as promised. After the married mother-of-two had uploaded 600 pages of bank statements and five years worth of local authority tax bills, she faced the same issue.

The system repeatedly said she had provided "insufficient" evidence of having lived in Britain long enough. "It seems unbelievable that the computer and all the checks that the government could make, would come back to say that people like me don't exist," Gayadien told AFP. It's a situation all too familiar for European Union citizens applying to remain in the country after its divorce from Brussels.

After making multiple submissions and calling a support centre in northern England to argue through her case, Gayadien was eventually able to get the necessary approval. But the experience has not left her feeling wanted in Brexit Britain. "I feel kind of picked on," she said.

Minister 'delighted' with scheme

The British government—which has vowed that EU nationals living in the UK

can stay—is adamant its so-called EU settlement policy is working as intended. Brandon Lewis, an interior minister, said he was "delighted" with the scheme and pointed out his department was now processing over 20,000 applications a day. He added that complete applications were typically being processed within a few days, while those with more complicated cases in just weeks, as Britain gears up for Brexit which is scheduled to happen at the end of next month. "I'm not going to concede there are issues," Lewis told AFP, noting problem cases publicised in the media had often "not been as straightforward as people have said". "Sometimes people have made a mistake... in other situations people haven't been able to evidence they've been here for a long time, so our resolution team will work with them to get that evidence."

Settled status

The three-step process involves applicants uploading documents to prove their identity, how long they have been in Britain and any criminal convictions. EU citizens able to show they have lived in the country for more than five years will be granted "settled status", letting them remain indefinitely. Those in the UK for less time will be given "pre-settled status", allowing them to apply for the permanent status once they have clocked up the requisite five years. — AFP

Analysis

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Washington Watch

Israeli election that will decide nothing

By Dr James J Zogby

Before a single vote is cast in Israel's second national election this year, two disturbing facts are clear: The outcome will be as muddled as it was after the April contest and whoever wins, despite the permanent state of denial in which Western liberals find themselves, Israel/Palestine has become one state - an Apartheid state. Following April's election, unable to form a governing coalition of 61 Knesset members, Netanyahu called for a new election, hoping to improve his prospects. During the past five months, he pulled out all the stops.

He bombed three countries - Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. He announced that if he wins this new contest, he will annex the Jordan Valley in addition to settlements and outposts spread throughout the West Bank. He accelerated his incitement against the Palestinian citizens of Israel including a statement that "the Arabs are trying to steal the election" and an incendiary Facebook post claiming that "The Arabs want to annihilate us all - women, children, and men" (while Netanyahu denied personal responsibility for the post, most commentators dismissed the denial). And he coerced members of his own party to pledge support for his immunity from prosecution for the multiple corruption charges he is currently facing.

Even with all of this, polls are showing that Netanyahu and his coalition partners will fare no better than they did in April. In fact, it appears that neither Netanyahu's coalition nor the main opposition to his continued rule have moved beyond the numbers they had in April. The only significant growth appears to be among the ultra-religious and the right-wing secular nationalists. While Netanyahu might like to bring them both into his government, thus giving him in excess of a majority, the secular nationalists are ideologically opposed to the ultra-religious and will not join a government that includes them.

At the same time, some of the opposition might be inclined to join a government with Netanyahu's Likud Party, but at a steep price - namely, that he step down as head of the coalition. Since he is desperate to remain in power to avoid prosecution and humiliation, it is unlikely he will accept. This is precisely why he insisted that his party members pledge loyalty before the election.

Pre-election polls demonstrate that the main opposition coalition, Blue and White, will also have difficulty assembling 61 Knesset seats. An additional problem facing Blue and White's chances of forming a government is that even the most optimistic tallies of their Knesset counts include the 10-11 seats that will go to the Joint List of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. The leaders of Blue and White have said that they will not form a government dependent on Joint List members and, for their part, the Joint List leaders have said they will only join a governing coalition that agrees to guarantee equality for the Arab citizens of Israel and agrees to end the occupation of Palestinian lands - demands the Blue and White leaders have rejected.

As a result, we are back to where we started with an election yielding no outcome other than confusion and rancor. What's also clear, is that regardless of who wins - if, in fact, anyone does - there will be no change in the reality faced by Palestinians. There will be no end of the occupation and no two-state solution. Israeli politics have moved so far to the right, that it is hard to understand how or why the US media continues to refer to Netanyahu's opposition - as a "center-left" coalition. Whatever the "left" means in this formulation, it most certainly doesn't mean anything related to Palestinians, peace, and human rights.

Like Netanyahu, Blue and White maintains that the annexation of Jerusalem and the other Palestinian lands around the city will remain. They have claimed that they too support extending Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and the settlements in the West Bank. Maybe the one area where they differ from Netanyahu is in their charge that he has coddled Hamas in Gaza. The Blue and White leader has called, instead, for a major military operation to end the Islamist's rule in the Strip. Blue and White has also rejected the Palestinian citizens of Israel's demands to cancel the notorious "Jewish Nation State" law - which maintains that Jews have exclusive rights to national self-determination in "the Land of Israel" and denies full rights to Arab citizens of the state.

This being the case, the hope to which liberals have clung that in the post-Netanyahu era Israel will be different is, at best, an illusion. The only change one might see in a Blue and White-led Israel is an easing of the hold the Orthodox Rabbinate have over aspects of social and religious life in the country. But as far as ending the occupation and meeting the minimum Palestinian requirements for an independent state - neither Netanyahu nor the Blue and White have any interest in moving forward toward that goal. This is the Israel that Netanyahu and the Likud have built. Since the late 1970s when they first came to power, the Likud embarked on a settlement program that, in their words would make a Palestinian state an impossibility. After Oslo, they incited against the agreement, the Labor Party that signed it, and the Palestinians. Their efforts led to anti-peace legislation passed by the Republican-led US Congress, the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, and the 1996 election of Netanyahu on a platform of ending the peace process.

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

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Ecuadorian indigenous people and environmental activists cross a fence with a sign placed by a mining company reading "Private Property, trespassing forbidden" in Quimsacocha, Azuay province, Ecuador, on Sept 2, 2019. —AFP

Water or Gold? Eternal question nags Ecuador tribes

The indigenous people of Ecuador's wind-whipped alpine tundra of Quimsacocha face a stark choice, according to their leader, Yaku Perez. "We have to decide between gold and water," he tells activists at a meeting held to oppose a landmark mining project. "What do we prefer, compañeros?" demands Perez, his voice rising. He knows there's only one answer, and they shout back in unison: "Water!"

Ecuador's government has put its weight behind a giant gold-silver-copper mining project in the wild, high grasslands of Quimsacocha. Quito has conceded half Quimsacocha's 20,000 hectares to Canadian miner INV Metals to develop a near billion dollar mine deep underground. The Loma Larga project is due to begin production in 2021 and would mean thousands of jobs. For local indigenous communities however, the sweeping, cloud-scrap-

ing grasslands of Quimsacocha are a sacred, vital source of water.

'We can live without gold'

Perez, his Canari Quechua people and other indigenous communities are fighting the Loma Larga mine every step of the way. In an unprecedented popular consultation held in March, local municipalities rejected mining in the southern Andes. Perez sees local referenda "as the way for Ecuador to be declared a territory free of metal mining and its water sources and fragile ecosystems."

Just 3,200 hectares of the Quimsacocha is under protection, forming part of a biosphere reserve. The government, anxious to develop its mineral resources, is hoping the Constitutional Court will block further popular consultations and demonstrate the legal protections necessary to attract mining sector investment. "Mining, wherever it goes,

generates dispossession of territories, violence in the community, destabilises democracy, generates institutional corruption, pollutes the waters and poisons the rivers," says Perez. "It takes the meat, and leave the bone, but the contaminated bone."

Perez says this standing on the grassy bank of the Tarqui river, which hurries down from here to the city of Cuenca and into the Amazon. Squatting, he scoops a palmful of cold clear water to his lips. "We can live without gold, but without water, never."

'Defending the water'

A lawyer, Perez sees himself as a defender of the Quimsacocha and says he has been jailed on four occasions for "defending the water". High on the tundra, he vaults a fence surrounding the mining concession. Others with him cut through chains blocking a narrow road, a symbolic gesture in a constant war of attrition with the mining company.

"We are not going to allow the miners here," said Maria Dorila Fajardo, a 60-year-old indigenous woman wearing a traditional large red skirt, her head covered with a wool hat.

A large blue sign with white lettering says: "Private Property. No Entry." "This is not official property," Perez fumes. "This is communal property. We have deeds dating back to 1893, our grandparents bought all this land. "We don't want to cultivate it, but keep it as the natural reservoir it is."

The government in Quito expects GDP to grow from 1.6 percent to 4.0 percent by 2021, boosted by mineral exploration. Resource-rich Ecuador will receive about \$554 million from Loma Larga, according to official figures. "Mining is like a mirage. They give us money for a little while and later that money evaporates," says Perez. "It goes up in smoke. It's bread today, but hunger and desolation tomorrow." —AFP

Bahamas drowning in flood of donations after hurricane

In the hurricane-battered Bahamas, the government and charitable organizations are struggling to cope with the incoming flood of donations, a global surge of solidarity that is often excessive and sometimes useless. At the Christ Episcopal Church in Coconut Grove, the center of Miami's Bahamian community, the first round of donations was organized on Sept 2. Since then, shipments have gone out daily to Abaco and Grand Bahama islands, in the northwest of the archipelago that were hit worst by Dorian.

But some of the donations "were not usable," said Father Jonathan Archer, explaining that they received "clothing that was stained or soiled, canned food that was expired". "We have a few items that we won't send right now, like electrical (appliances)," he added. The two islands have been largely without power since the storm. In addition to donations, a massive influx of volunteers from international aid or charitable organizations - not to mention international media - has caused congestion at the airport in Nassau.

Trips to the two islands, made by rotations of light aircraft and helicopters, are extremely difficult due to debris on the runways, resulting in aerial traffic jams. On Sept 5, aviation authorities were forced to stop all takeoffs for several

hours in order to regulate air traffic. "The three Bahamian airports are so congested by private flights that the resulting bottleneck is slowing the pace of delivering relief to those who desperately need it," the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) said in a statement two days later. The aviation advocacy group urged would-be volunteers not to fly to the Bahamas but to "donate to relief organizations instead."

'Money is the best'

Celebrity Spanish-American chef Jose Andres, whose non-profit group World Central Kitchen distributes hot meals to hurricane victims, echoed the message. "A lot of people want to help, they should, but money is the best way, through the right NGOs," Andres told AFP. He recalled going to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Irma in 2017. When he arrived at the port, he saw "containers after containers full of Advil," enough for "the next 100 years." "Those containers take space, on the ships, in the ports, a space that could be used to bring more important things like generators or life-saving medicine," the chef said.

In order to avoid more useless or inappropriate donations, the Bahamas National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) published a list of 36 of the most-needed products: noodles, rice, peanut butter, diapers, baby formula, nutrition drinks, feminine pads, insect repellent... The Bahamas consulate in Washington said most people have followed the guidelines. "We are receiving a lot of things that are necessary, but we are pushing for less clothes," said Bahamian consul general Theo Neilly. "But we accept them if someone donates. We are very thankful for the support"

the Ivorian population live below the poverty line, according to the World Bank's latest estimate in 2017. And the minimum monthly wage - not always respected - is only around \$100.

Heart disease surging

The pioneer behind the scheme is cardiologist Florent Diby, who set up an association called Wake Up Africa. In Ivory Coast, heart disease, diabetes and other "lifestyle" ailments are surging, Diby explained. "Urbanization is making people more sedentary, and there's the rise in tobacco consumption, changes in diet, stress," Diby said. Three decades ago, only around one in eight of the Ivorian population had high blood pressure - now the figure is one in four, on a par with parts of Western Europe. But in Ivory Coast - and across Africa - well-equipped cardiology units are rare. "Ninety percent of heart attacks can be diagnosed by telemedicine, so for us cardiologists it's a revolutionary technology," said Diby. The beauty of the telemedicine scheme is that neither the doctor nor the patient has to travel far. The cardiac patient is hooked up to the electrocardiogram (ECG) and other diagnostic machines with the help of a technician in a local health centre, which is connected to a computer in Bouake's University Hospital. The cardiologist there can then see the results in real time, provide a diagnosis and prescribe treatment.

The five-year-old project has already linked 10 health centres to the seven cardiologists at Bouake, enabling 4,800 patients in other towns to receive consultations by telemedicine each year. The goal is to expand this to 20 sites, doubling the intake. Expertise France, the French public agency for international technical assistance, substi-



Hurricane relief items pile up inside the Embassy Consular Annex of the Bahamas in Washington on Sept 12, 2019 as the consulate keeps receiving emergency supplies. —AFP

Neilly said the authorities were discouraging private GoFundMe initiatives in favor of donations to the government's disaster relief fund or to reliable NGOs. Christian Lampin, the Bahamas mission chief for French NGO Secours Populaire, said monetary donations were more efficient than supplying goods which need to be transported to the islands. "Everything is going to need to be rebuilt and the best thing to do for that is to collect as much money as possible," Lampin told AFP from Nassau, the Bahamian capital. Secours Populaire would rely on local partners for reconstruction projects, he said, and "donors will know what we do with their money." —AFP



An Ivorian doctor uses a tablet computer in Bouake hospital's trailblazer telemedicine department for heart diseases in Bouake on June 20, 2019. —AFP

dizes up to 185,000 euros of the network, which pays for equipment such as computers, artificial intelligence software and internet connections.

Diby is now calling for telemedicine to be expanded in other medical fields such as neurology and psychiatry, not just in the Ivory Coast, but across West Africa too. That opinion is shared by other experts. Sixty percent of Africans live in rural areas, where shortages of doctors are usually acute. But numerous hurdles need to be overcome, especially investment in computers and access to the internet, according to a 2013 analysis published by the US National Library of Medicine. —AFP

Business

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HELSINKI: Participants pose for a family photo during the informal meeting of Ministers for Economic and Financial Affairs (Ecofin) and Eurogroup in Helsinki, Finland, on Friday. — AFP

Gloves come off as ECB stimulus draws flak

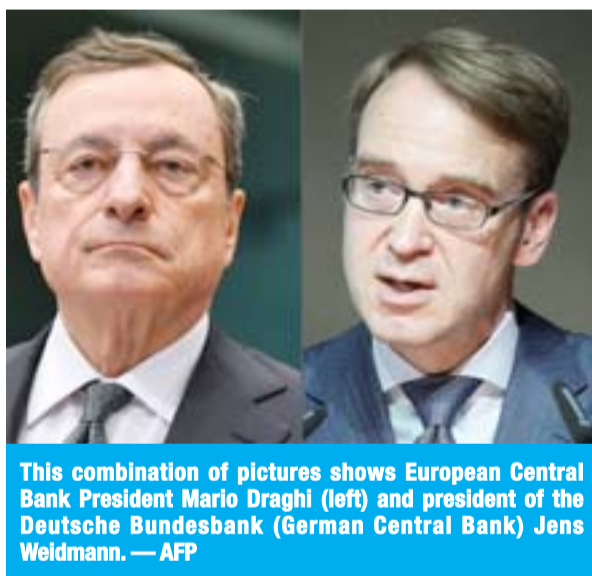
EU finance ministers push for simpler fiscal rules

BERLIN/HELSINKI: Central bank chiefs of Germany and the Netherlands hit out on Friday at ECB chief Mario Draghi for unleashing a huge stimulus package aimed at propping up the flagging eurozone economy, calling the action unnecessary and disproportionate. Slamming Draghi for "overshooting the mark", Bundesbank chief Jens Weidmann told Bild daily that "such a far-reaching package was not necessary".

ECB governors on Thursday pushed the deposit interest rate further into negative territory and relaunched net purchases of government and corporate debt. But the deep split among the central bankers burst into the open a day after Thursday's monetary policy meeting.

Around 10 of the 25 members of the ECB governors were against relaunching the quantitative easing program of purchasing 20 billion euros (\$22 billion) worth of debt monthly from November, sources said. Ahead of the meeting, several eurozone central bankers, including Weidmann, had openly warned against unleashing a new round of stimulus so swiftly.

"This decision to buy more public debt will make it harder for the ECB to exit from this policy. The longer (such policies) last, the more the side effects and financial stability risks of the very expansive monetary policy will grow," warned the German central banker. He also noted that at the losing end of the expansionary policy are millions of savers, who will see the value of their holdings dwindle in banks. Separately, the head of the Dutch central bank, Klaas Knot, issued a statement saying the "broad package of measures... is disproportionate to the present economic conditions, and there are sound reasons to doubt its effectiveness".



This combination of pictures shows European Central Bank President Mario Draghi (left) and president of the Deutsche Bundesbank (German Central Bank) Jens Weidmann. — AFP

Knot, like Weidmann a hawkish member of the ECB's governing council, said there was no need for the measures when the "euro area economy is running at full capacity". "Neither is there a risk of deflation, nor are there any signs pointing to a euro area-wide recession. The only observation is currently that the inflation outlook lags behind the ECB's aim," he said.

The highly unusual open criticism was noted by the analysts, who pointed out that while it was not uncommon for central bankers to give interviews after a monetary

policy meeting to air their views, Knot's decision to issue a full-blown statement was "a clear first".

'Count Draghila'

Draghi had pointed to three reasons for the ECB's heavy hand in September: data and surveys showing the eurozone economy already slowing, looming threats such as protectionism and Brexit, and downward revisions to the bank's economic forecasts. The ECB's "big bang" blast of measures has touched a nerve particularly in Europe's biggest economy—a nation of savers and a fast-ageing society where the government's mantra has been to keep its budget balanced in preparation for rising pension and health outlays in the coming decades.

Publishing a doctored photo of Draghi with sharp teeth, Bild daily had headlined their story: "That's how Count Draghila is sucking our accounts dry." The outrage also cut across to centre-left media, with the Tagesspiegel broadsheet slamming Draghi's latest salvo as "horror policy", warning that it served neither savers and pension funds nor life insurers. Rather, it warned that the cheap money was keeping afloat "zombie firms" that should have gone bust under normal circumstances. Likewise, Sueddeutsche newspaper said that while Draghi had in his eight years in office saved the eurozone with his bold action, "Thursday's decisions show that he has now lost his way".

Meanwhile, European Union finance ministers were holding a first discussion yesterday about how to simplify the EU's complex fiscal rules to help make public finances more sustainable and stabilise economies throughout business cycles. Originally designed in 1997, the EU rules, called the Stability and Growth Pact, put limits on borrow-

ing in the economic union of countries that share the euro currency, but left members sovereign over government debt and deficits. After modifications in 2005, 2011 and 2013, the rules have become so complex that the European Commission, which is the guardian of EU laws, each year publishes an almost 100-page handbook to explain how they work, along with many exemptions and exceptions.

The two key elements of the rules are a limit on the nominal budget deficit of 3 percent of GDP and a ceiling on public debt of 60 percent. "When we talk about simplification, it does not mean revising the key fiscal targets, just how they are measured and what parameters we use," European Commission vice president Valdis Dombrovskis told reporters on entering the talks.

"We now heavily use directly unobservable parameters like the output gap, or structural balance, so the discussion is if we should use more directly observable parameters like nominal debt and expenditure increases," he said. Officials said, however, that changing the rules could take more than a year of discussions and legal process that would be driven by the new European Commission starting on Nov 1. Dombrovskis will retain his post in the new EU executive. The ministerial discussion at the informal talks in Helsinki will be based on a report by the independent European Fiscal Board (EFB), requested by the Commission, which argues the elaborate rules should be boiled down to a medium-term cap on public debt. Countries that have debt above 60 percent would have to keep net government primary spending, which is expenditure less interest payments on public debt, at or below the rate of the economy's potential GDP growth, which is the rate of growth that does not trigger higher inflation. — AFP

Stormclouds gather for Facebook's Libra currency

LONDON: International outcry is mounting over Facebook's Libra—with central banks, governments and regulators railing against the social media giant's upstart cryptocurrency. Facebook unveiled plans in June for Libra—which will roll out in 2020 — to be backed by a basket of currency assets to avoid the wild swings of Bitcoin and other virtual units. Facing staunch opposition in Europe, Libra's boss admitted to AFP late on Thursday that it could yet decide not to operate in the region. "We do not want to play at being pirates," said Bertrand Perez, managing director of the Libra Association, on the sidelines of a cryptocurrency event in Paris.

"If the European Central Bank refuses us permission to operate in Europe, then we will not operate there," Perez said, describing regulatory concerns as "legitimate"

but not insurmountable. The Libra Association, a non-profit organization based in Geneva, has been formed to oversee the digital currency's network.

France takes aim

France has become the latest vocal opponent, warning it would block Libra's development in Europe because the proposed currency threatens the "monetary sovereignty" of governments. "I want to be absolutely clear: in these conditions, we cannot authorize the development of Libra on European soil," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Thursday. The Silicon Valley giant wants to tap into its two billion Facebook users around the world, which it hopes will use Libra for online shopping, financial services and payments.

Yet Le Maire fired back: "The monetary sovereignty of countries is at stake" from a "possible privatisation of money ... by a sole actor with more than two billion users on the planet." A top ECB official recently warned that Libra could harm both the institution and the euro.

"I sincerely hope that the people of Europe will not be tempted to leave behind the safety and soundness of established payment solutions and channels in favour of the beguiling but treacherous promises of Facebook's siren call," said ECB board member Yves Mersch.

Nevertheless, Emilien Bernard-Alzias, a London-

based lawyer who specializes in financial markets and cryptomoney, talked down the impact of growing global opposition to Libra. He told AFP that such "political statements have no real legal meaning" and their "alarmist" arguments were unlikely to stop the birth of Libra—even if the possibility of an outright ban cannot be completely ruled out.

Facebook's sheer scale means the proposed Libra currency could potentially roil the global financial system and make the job harder for the world's central banks. Bloomberg uncovered internal documents last month showing that European Union antitrust regulators are "currently investigating potential anti-competitive behaviour" linked to the Libra project. But Bernard-Alzias added that there are "many countries in which (Libra) would already be compliant" with national regulations. And he noted that it could likely be classified as electronic money under existing European Union laws.

Growing unease

European officials, already wary of the US dollar's dominance in foreign exchange, appear reluctant for a US company to gain such a strong foothold. Bernard-Alzias cautioned. In response to growing unease, Bank of England governor Mark Carney called for tough worldwide regulation of Libra—and floated the idea of a global



cryptocurrency that could be backed by public institutions like central banks.

The US Federal Reserve also sounded the alarm and declared that Libra raises serious concerns regarding privacy, money laundering, consumer protection and financial stability. President Donald Trump has already slammed virtual currencies for their alleged shadowy nature and argues that Libra has no standing nor dependability—unlike the greenback. Elsewhere, China has accelerated plans to develop its own yuan-based virtual unit. —AFP

Business

Protests against German car industry rev up in Frankfurt

German car industry comes under increasing pressure to go green

FRANKFURT: Environmental campaigners plan to disrupt the Frankfurt motor show this weekend as Germany's car industry comes under increasing pressure to go green and abandon internal combustion engines. "The car industry has cheated on diesel and is contributing to the worsening climate crisis," said Gerald Neubauer, a spokesman for the campaign group Campact, which is co-organizing a demonstration Saturday at Frankfurt's biennial International Motor Show (IAA).

Police say thousands of demonstrators are expected to walk or cycle to Frankfurt's Exhibition Centre and activists want to disrupt the car show by blocking the surrounding streets today. "We want a revolution in modes of transport," said a spokeswoman for the climate action group Sand in the Gearbox. The combination of protests and civil disobedience aimed at Germany's car industry shows the sector no longer enjoys the untouchable status it once held as a key driver in Europe's biggest economy.

Diesel-fuelled cars have remained at low levels of popularity in Germany following Volkswagen's massive "dieselgate" emissions cheating scandal of 2015. The 10-day long IAA show, where the latest automobile trends are being showcased until September 22, is crystallising tensions over the car industry in Germany, where climate change is shaking up the public discourse.

'Climate killers'

There are already calls to ban gas-guzzling SUVs from German city centers after four pedestrians, including a three-year-old boy, were killed this month when one mounted the pavement in Berlin. "Such tank-like cars do not belong in cities," tweeted Stephan von Dassel, a Greens politician and mayor of Berlin's Mitte district, where the fatal accident happened. "They are 'climate killers', even

without accidents—every driving error becomes a life-threatening danger for innocent (pedestrians)." When the Frankfurt car show opened to the press on Tuesday, Greenpeace activists inflated a giant black balloon outside, bearing the inscription CO2. Then on Thursday at the Volkswagen and BMW stands, protesters climbed on SUVs with signs bearing the slogan "Climate Killers" during a visit by German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"The automotive industry has still not understood the climate crisis," Greenpeace activist Benjamin Stephan said. "Instead of celebrating fuel-guzzling SUVs, manufacturers must put an end to these urban tanks and shut down combustion engines." Manufacturers must "get out of petrol and diesel, get out of the combustion engine and reduce the number of cars", added Campact's Neubauer. The vision for many environmental activists is seeing German cities free of cars.

'Under pressure'

"The IAA is a symbolic place, where politicians meet carmakers to congratulate themselves" on an outdated mode of transport, said the Sand in the Gearbox spokeswoman, using the pseudonym Tina "Velo" - bike in French. "We have to abandon cars, we want car-free cities."

Sand in the Gearbox is representative of a more radical faction of Germany's environmental movement which is prepared to engage in civil disobedience to attract attention. Movements such as the Extinction Rebellion network, which use non-violent resistance to protest climate change, are spreading across Europe. In Germany, the similar group Ende Gelände succeeded in occupying and temporarily shutting down a large brown coal mine in June, which has galvanized the anti-car movement. "The automotive industry is under pressure—it no longer has the



FRANKFURT: Visitors crowd around cars at the booth of German car maker Volkswagen during the Frankfurt motor show IAA 2019, in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, yesterday. — AFP

support of society as it did a few years ago, because it has missed out on developments and has no concepts for the future," added Tina Velo. Having long been regarded as an essential cog in Europe's biggest economy, Germany's auto industry has reached a crossroads as it struggles to

adapt to the trend of electric cars. On Thursday, Merkel said she would support the sector through "revolutions" in climate protection and digitalization, but warned firms must develop new technologies and win back lost trust among the public. — AFP

Cuba's acute fuel shortage begins to bite

HAVANA: Cubans queued for hours for public transport on Friday at peak times in Havana, sweating in the heavy heat, while queues at gas stations snaked several blocks long, as a fuel shortage that the government blames on US sanctions began to bite. Inspectors flagged down workers with state cars or trucks to get them to pick others up after President Miguel Diaz-Canel's exhortation for Cubans to show solidarity in these times of crisis and everyone do their bit to improve fuel efficiency.

He warned Cubans on Wednesday on state television of difficult times ahead as US attempts to block fuel shipments to Communist-run Cuba meant there would be less diesel than usual available this month. The government has agreed a series of measures to ensure basic services, he said. Some energy-intensive investments would be postponed, some train and bus services would be suspended and those who could work from home should. The crisis should only be temporary though, he assured, with shipments for October guar-



HAVANA: The Cuban government started rationing energy several years ago due to a decline in subsidized oil shipments from leftist ally Venezuela, cutting street lighting and the use of electricity in state-run institutions.

anteed. "The transport situation is getting ugly, even if the state says it is only temporary," said Alexei Perez Recio, 55, who was fixing up a bicycle he had not used since the economic depression in Cuba following the fall of former benefactor the Soviet Union when public transport collapsed.

"I have to have (my bike) ready." The Communist government has assured Cubans this is not a return to those dark

days as the economy is more diversified now, having opened up to tourism and foreign investment, and developed its own oil industry. Still, this is a sign of the worsening of Cuba's economic situation. The government started rationing energy several years ago due to a decline in subsidized oil shipments from leftist ally Venezuela, cutting street lighting and the use of electricity in state-run institutions.

The Trump administration's tightening of the decades-old embargo on Cuba's already inefficient state-run economy has only worsened its economic situation and ability to pay for energy from elsewhere. New US sanctions imposed on Venezuela's state-run oil firm PDVSA in January have also made it harder for it to send oil shipments to Cuba. Cuba and Venezuela's joint company, Transalpa, for leasing and operating vessels covering the route between the two nations, has struggled to find enough tankers, captains and crew willing to work with two sanctioned countries, according to shipping sources involved in the trade.

Some PDVSA ships, including the Manuela Saenz, Icaro, Terapaima and Yare, have had to complement the fleet. As such the flow of Venezuelan crude and fuel to Cuba has remained mostly stable this year, averaging 55,300 barrels per day (bpd) from February through August, according to Reuters calculations based in Refinitiv Eikon vessel tracking data and PDVSA's export programs. But Diaz-Canel said some of the negotiations to secure enough ships for September - without referring explicitly to shipments from Venezuela - had fallen through. "I waited around three hours to catch a bus home yesterday," said Eloisa Alvarez, 72, waiting with dozens of others at a bus stop where policemen and inspectors organized buses, state cars and even trucks to pick up people. — Reuters

Italy's economy minister urges caution over privatizations

HELSINKI: Italy's economy minister Roberto Gualtieri said yesterday that privatization targets set by the previous Italian government were "unrealistic", and warned the sale of government shares in public companies should be handled with caution. The government of the anti-establishment 5-Star and the far-right League, which quit the coalition in August, had set a target of raising 18 billion euros (\$19.93 billion) this year from the sale of public assets.

Gualtieri, who last week took office as finance minister in a new executive supported by 5-Star and the centre-left Partito Democratico, said privatizations were not a tool he wanted to use to meet immediate financial needs. He said the sale of public assets could be a way of reducing Italy's large debt, but should be used with caution because it could harm public companies which are "strategic" to the Italian economy and industrial policy.

Gualtieri, speaking after his first meeting with EU finance ministers since the new Italian government took office last week, also said it would be "counterproductive" if Italy adopted an austerity budget this year. He instead urged the eurozone to adopt an expansionary fiscal stance to revive growth. — Reuters

Wall St Week Ahead

With rate cut likely, market wonders how low Fed will go

NEW YORK: With US-China trade tensions roiling markets, investors are counting on support for stocks coming from a Federal Reserve willing to keep cutting interest rates to help the US economy avoid a severe downturn.

A quarter-point rate reduction is widely expected when the Fed issues its next policy statement on Wednesday, which would be the central bank's second such cut after lowering rates in July for the first time since 2008. That puts the greater focus on clues about how much further the Fed will go.

"If the Fed gives forward guidance that suggests less than what the market is thinking, then you will probably see markets sell off," said Jamie Cox, managing partner of Harris Financial Group in Richmond, Virginia. "So long as the Fed plays along with what markets are pricing in...I think markets will be very stable."

The Fed's 180-degree pivot from tightening monetary policy last year to easing it has helped drive the stock market's overall strong performance in 2019. The benchmark S&P 500 has climbed 20% this year and is near all-time highs.

The central bank in July cited signs of a global slowdown, simmering US-China trade tensions and a desire to boost too-low inflation as it lowered borrowing costs. Markets are pricing in a near 90 percent probability that the Fed will shave another quarter point from its current overnight lending rate of 2.00 percent to 2.25 percent, according to the CME Group's FedWatch tool. There is a roughly 65 percent probability that the Fed makes at least one more quarter-point cut by the end of the year, according to FedWatch.

"The market is going to want to see a focus that we have a cut and there is likely more coming," said Keith Lerner, chief market strategist at SunTrust Advisory Services in Atlanta. "They want to know that the Fed is vigilant and will act aggressively if needed." That raises the importance of the newest set of policymakers' rate-path projections - the so-called dot plot - that will be released along with the rate decision. UBS economists said in a note they expect that will shift lower overall for 2019, but project only two cuts total for the year, which could irk both investors and a U.S. president eager for a



NEW YORK: Wall Street investors are counting on support for stocks coming from a Federal Reserve willing to keep cutting interest rates to help the US economy avoid a severe downturn. — AFP

more aggressive posture. President Donald Trump has frequently criticized the Fed for not cutting rates more swiftly and significantly, with the Fed chair he appointed, Jerome Powell, the primary target of his ire. The European Central Bank's decision on Thursday to cut interest rates and restart a larger stimulus program could further pressure the Fed to cut rates, as the ECB's move stands to weaken the euro against the dollar and thereby drive up the price of U.S. exports - an issue that especially vexes Trump.

Powell, who will give a news conference after the central bank issues its statement, has made comments in the past that have shaken the market, including in July, when he said the bank's rate cut might not be the start of a lengthy easing campaign to shore up the economy. "Every meeting has the ability for Jay Powell to say something that upsets markets a little bit," said Arthur Hogan, chief market strategist at National Securities Corp.

Powell "has had enough practice to know that he does not want to move markets or make news," he added.

Of the past eight easing cycles since 1981, four have been "insurance" cycles, when economic problems loom but the economy is not in a recession, while four were pre-recession cycles, according to research from Allianz Global Investors. One year into an easing cycle, the S&P 500 rose an average of 20.4 percent during insurance cycles, while the index fell an average of 10.2 percent during pre-recession cycles, according to Allianz.

"Historically, what they're doing now, which is cutting rates in an economy that is not in a recession and not really in any imminent risk of a recession, has been positive for the stock market," said Mona Mahajan, US investment strategist at Allianz. The stock market overall has typically responded well to a second rate cut, which Wednesday's

would be, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average rising an average of 20.3 percent one year later, according to Ned Davis Research. The weakest performance has come when the Fed tried and failed to prevent a recession.

The probability of a recession in the next 12 months is nearly 38 percent, its highest in about a decade, according to the New York Fed's recession indicator, which is based on the U.S. Treasury yield curve. Last month, yields on two-year US bonds exceeded those on 10-year notes, an inversion of the yield curve that is seen as an omen of recession.

An escalation in the US-China tariff war is contributing to economic uncertainty and is top among concerns for stock investors. Late last month, a key speech from Powell was upstaged when Trump issued tweets that heightened trade tensions.

"I do think it's important that the Fed helps ease financial conditions and helps reduce the probability of recession," SunTrust's Lerner said. "If the tariff fight ratchets up more, then what the Fed does, the effect will be less." — Reuters

Strike-hit BA axes all UK flights for September 27

LONDON: British Airways has cancelled all its scheduled UK flights for September 27, when company pilots will again strike in a long-running row over pay. It comes after the carrier cancelled all flights departing and arriving in the UK on Monday and Tuesday owing to BA's first strike by pilots in the company's 100-year history.

In a statement released late Thursday, BA called on the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA) union "to call off their strike and return to negotiations". The airline added: "We are very sorry that BALPA's actions will affect thousands more travel plans." This week's strike sparked travel chaos for about 200,000 passengers, mostly using London's Gatwick and Heathrow airports. BALPA estimates that the 48-hour strike cost the airline £80 million (\$99 million, 89 million euros), but BA has yet to provide a figure. — AFP

Global economy is 'far' from recession: IMF

WASHINGTON: Trade tensions are weighing on growth across the world, but the International Monetary Fund is "far" from forecasting a global recession, an IMF official told Reuters on Friday, as the fund prepares to release a new economic outlook next month. The IMF on Thursday said tariffs imposed or threatened by the United States and China could shave 0.8 percent off global economic output in 2020 and trigger losses in future years.

"The trade tensions are weighing on growth. But we really don't see recession in the current baseline. I think we're far from that," said the IMF official, who is familiar with the preparation of the outlook.

"While manufacturing activity has been weak, we also see resilience in the services sector and consumer confidence is holding up. The question is how long that resilience can last, and we are monitoring carefully all indicators," said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly. The fund issues an economic outlook twice a year to coincide with its spring and fall meetings, forecasting global gross domestic product for the current year and the following year. — Reuters



BARI: This file photo shows then Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde (right) and the President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Mario Draghi before a family photo on the second day of a G7 summit of Finance Ministers in Bari. — AFP

Business

NBK gives customers chance to win a car from GAC Motor

Bank launches campaign in partnership with Mutawa Alkazi

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait launched a new campaign in partnership with Mutawa Alkazi, the sole dealer of GAC Motor in Kuwait, to offer customers the chance to enter the draw and win a GS3 or GA4 car when downloading and using the NBK Mobile Banking App.

The campaign comes as part of NBK's commitment to reward its customers by offering them the chance to win through draws and exclusive promotions as well as by encouraging them to manage their accounts seamlessly on the NBK Mobile Banking App.

Customers who transfer their salaries to NBK or non-salaried customers having the required amount of deposit in their account and active users of the NBK Mobile Banking App are eligible to enter the draw.

Salaried customers get two chances to enter the draw, for every financial transaction made using the NBK Mobile Banking App or when updating the mobile number or email address through the app. While non-salaried customers will get one chance to enter the draw for every financial transaction made using the NBK Mobile Banking App or when updating the mobile number or email address through the app. Speaking of the campaign, Al-Qanaie, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said, "We are pleased to be partnering with the dealer of GAC Motor, Mutawa Alkazi, to reward our customers as part of our com-

mitment to constantly rewarding them with valuable prizes and ongoing exclusive offers."

Al-Qanaie added: "The campaign aims to encourage NBK Customers to complete their transactions through the NBK Mobile Banking App and to introduce them to the advantages provided by its services and latest updates. These updates and new services are constantly introduced to offer a fast and convenient experience when making transactions without the need to visit their nearest branch."

Al-Qanaie reaffirmed the bank's focus on advancing its NBK Mobile Banking App to provide a seamless and integrated banking experience through easy and fast features that enable customers to complete transactions, anytime, anywhere, even when traveling. The app is also a tool to easily manage expenses, especially following the new services and updates that have been added and which have received great responses from customers.

The bank is continuously updating its NBK Mobile Banking to allow customers to manage their finances at the click of a button with ease and convenience, offering a safe and secure way to conduct transactions anywhere and anytime such as managing their cards when traveling, increasing their monthly limit of money transfers, opening a new account, viewing their transaction history and account balance on their debit card, checking their NBK Miles Points

and NBK Rewards Program points, making payments to their NBK Credit Cards, telephone bills, finding the nearest branch, ATM or CDM in Kuwait, in addition to requesting an account statement or new checkbook, and many more services that make NBK Mobile Banking an indispensable tool in Kuwait and when traveling.

The bank also offers many services through NBK Online Banking, enabling customers to also complete their transaction at the click of a button, to open a new account, open a fixed or flexible deposit account by using the transfer service in and out of Kuwait, make monthly payments for credit cards, pay bills from other parties through the e-Payments service, request a prepaid card, notify theft or loss of cards, increase the transfer limit, update the email and mobile number, check the NBK Reward Points and miles redeemed.

It is worth mentioning that NBK recently was awarded



Al-Qanaie



"Best Consumer Digital Bank" and the "Best in Mobile Banking" in Kuwait by Global Finance magazine for 2019.

Huawei P30 Pro: A unique pearl white color with a stunning case

KUWAIT: The Huawei P30 Pro has been collecting awards and accolades since its launch and praised as one of the most coveted smartphones in the market. While new editions have been launched with solid storage options or color choices, the new Huawei P30 Pro Limited Edition Pearl White is sure to make heads turn. But what makes this new color a must-have for fashionistas? The stunning design and premium features that make it a smartphone experience like no other.

An all-new look

The Huawei P30 series drew inspiration for its design from salt flats, which is then put through a strenuous engineering process with several hundred coating tests and color experiments, resulting in stunning designs. Now looking to the skies, the limited edition Pearl White color, is inspired by the flowing movement and the clear essence of the clouds as they float across the salt flats.

This new Limited Edition Pearl White color is an epitome of luxury, subtly expressing an essence of class and elegance. Its unique shades of white and pink gradient make it the perfect choice for a fashionista or even someone who simply wants to make a statement with their smartphone.

A premium experience with power-packed features

Awarded the Best Smartphone at European Hardware Award 2019 and MWC Shanghai, the Huawei P30 Pro packs powerful hardware and premium features aimed at delivering exactly what users want. It comes with the award-winning Leica Quad Camera setup, the first of its kind, with 50x zoom and on-board AI for perfect shots no matter what the light conditions.

At its heart lies the Kirin 980 chipset, Huawei's fastest chipset yet for efficient performance and 128GB of storage, paired with a massive 4200 mAh battery with the 40W Huawei Supercharge and support for 15W Huawei Wireless Quick Charge.

The Huawei P30 Pro also packs a massive 6.47 inch display with In-screen fingerprint and Huawei Acoustic Display Technology, allowing for a better viewing experience. Gaming is boosted as well with the help of GPU Turbo 3.0, which enhances graphics for a more immersive gaming experience.

A stylish companion

While the Huawei P30 Pro Limited Edition Pearl White already complements your style statement, take it up a notch with the Huawei P30 Pro Glamorous case, which comes with Swarovski crystals embedded for a stylish and elegant look. For a price of KD 209,900, you can get the limited Special Edition Gift Box, with both the Huawei P30 Limited Edition Pearl White and the Glamorous Case, making it the perfect gift to for your loved one, or even something to treat yourself to. Alternatively, you can buy both the phone and the case separately as well.

Gulf Bank congratulates winner of monthly salary draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the winner of its eighth monthly Salary Account draw of the year. This month's lucky winner, Amani Waheed Ismaeil Abdulla, an employee at the Ministry of Education, will take home a cash prize of 12 times her salary.

The draw is this year's eighth Salary Account draw, and took place live on air on FM 88.8 'Q8 Pulse' (Nabd Al-Kuwait) in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce. To date, Amani Abdulla is one of eight Salary Account winners, each of whom took home cash prizes.

Commenting on the grand prize she

won, Amani said: "I feel so happy to be this month's lucky winner and it is an honor to be a Gulf Bank customer. I would like to thank the Gulf Bank employees for congratulating me and for their generous hospitality."

With the new 2019 Kuwaiti Salary Offer, new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary. Customers are also enrolled in a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize, a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary.

Gulf Bank's Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a



The winner with the Gulf Bank team

Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year. They can also apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.

VIVA launches new 5G service offer at KD 35 plan

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launches a new offer for the 5G service with VIVA postpaid plan at KD 35, available at VIVA's official website www.viva.com.kw, VIVA stores and on the VIVA App. This offer is part of VIVA's 5G umbrella which consists of a variety of 5G bundles customized specifically to satisfy our customers' expectations.

This offer allows postpaid customers to enjoy fast internet service and receive a free router upon subscription, 500 GB internet capacity, and different choices of devices.

Haneen Al-Fulaj, Chief Consumer Officer at VIVA said: "We are always eager at VIVA to launch unique and new offers to cater to our customers' needs and meet their aspirations, hence we have tailored this 5G package to let them enjoy this significant service which enables more

quota, live streaming, gaming, for multiple users at the same time, in addition to a device of their choice."

5G is the coming fifth-generation wireless broadband technology in the telecom world after the 4th generation (LTE). 5G aims at higher capacity and better latency than current 4G (LTE) which will allow a higher density of mobile broadband users. 5G will be providing speeds that reach up to 1 gigabit/second in cityscape areas which will allow smart devices' users to step into a new era of information technology and help better in implementing the internet of things (IoT).

VIVA has invested in building the most advanced 5G network, and now VIVA is the only company that has more than 1100 sites covered by the 5G service in Kuwait and the Middle East.



Haneen Al-Fulaj



Warba Bank sponsors inaugural edition of CBK's int'l banking conference Sept 23

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) holds the inaugural session of the international banking conference on September 23rd entitled: Shaping the Future.

"Shaping the Future", gathers key policymakers, chief executives level at the banking industry, banking experts and FinTech entrepreneurs from across the globe in addition to top-level delegates actively involved in the global financial services sector such as government ministers, regulatory chiefs, banking CEOs, and academics.

The conference, which will be held at the Four

Seasons Hotel in Kuwait City, will examine the economic and social challenges facing the banking sector and the opportunities and threats posed by technological innovation, laying out a vision for how the industry can thrive and better support sustainable economic development. On the other hand, during the conference, an exhibition area will be dedicated for more than 40 exhibitors representing the local and international banking sectors as well as major telecommunications companies in the region in addition to companies specialized in financial technologies.

Speaking about the event, Shaheen Hamad Alghanim - Warba Bank CEO - said: "We are delighted to take part in the inaugural edition of CBK's conference as we strongly believe that it is an excellent platform to address and discuss vital topics in the banking industry while seeking to answer how the banking sector can prosper, delivering returns to both the financial sector and customers as well and also supporting sustainable economic development at a time of rapid change within the industry itself.

Alghanim added: "Warba Bank has been and continues to be a pioneer in the development of its digital

infrastructure, while strategically catering for risks, whether through smart phone applications or by innovating digital banking services and custom-made solutions to cater to the needs of our customers. Recently, the Bank has launched the first of its kind digital factory "Al-Wateen" where a team of professionals work restlessly to innovate exclusive digital banking solutions and services. Through Al-Wateen, we have succeeded to establish a solid platform paving the way for a new revolutionary era in the digital banking sector and to fulfill the prime objective in our development strategy which aims at increasing the Bank's market share at a time of a rapid competition in the sector itself.



Shaheen Hamad Alghanim

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on the 11th of September 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al-Hassad has

have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period. The weekly draw announced the grand prize winner of KD 10,000 as Rama Mohammad Abdulhameed.

20 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000. They are: Zakareya Abdullah Alruwayeh, Merfat A Mustafa, Hasan J Ghuloum, Faisal Redah Mohammad, Mohammad Hussaini Kawthari, Awadh Said Hemed, Ahmed Assem Mohamed, Faisal Ibrahim Alawadhi, Ahmad Ruwaished Alazmi, Veronica Patrick Mills, Ameer Saheb Sayed Salar, Ahmed Yusuf Alhawaj, Isam Mohamed Ahmed, Abdulghani Abdulnabi Abdulla, Manoj Navin Meghchani, Aqeel Jaffar Mansoor, Kawthar Baikam Mohammed, Mohamed Abdulla Mohamed, Fathi Mohsen Habib, Latifa Khalifa Mubarak.

On the occasion, Ahli United Bank congratulates its winning customers, and commented that there are many chances to win waiting for our customers. Draws are held every Wednesday at AUB Kuwait or AUB Bahrain depending on the draw plan. On public holidays, the draw is postponed to the next business day.

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

Pound jumps on Brexit hopes as global stocks firm

NEW YORK: The British pound hit a seven-week high against the dollar Friday amid easing fears of a no-deal Brexit. Stock markets meanwhile won support after China said some US agricultural products including pork and soybeans would be exempt from added tariffs, ahead of trade talks between Beijing and Washington scheduled for October.

After flirting with new records, US stocks treaded water as investors awaited the outcome of next week's monetary policy meeting of the Federal Reserve, which is widely expected to deliver the second interest rate cut of the year. Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments told AFP the day's subdued trading was a "normal and healthy action after a big rally." "This is the perfect area for the market to pause before it tries to reach new highs," he said. Beijing's trade announcement was the latest in a new series of conciliatory measures between the world's two biggest economies, who for the past year have been locked in a bitter trade war resulting in tit-for-tat tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars in bilateral trade. —AFP

What's On

Noor Boubyan Initiative named 'Best Humanitarian Initiative'



The Noor Boubyan Initiative for eyesight-restoration operations in Africa has made a great achievement by earning the award for the Best Social Humanitarian Initiative at the GCC level. The bank was honored during the ceremony held recently on this occasion in the Sultanate of Oman, and the award has been received on behalf of the bank by Abdullah Al-Mehri, the Acting Chief Operations Officer.

Al-Mehri stated: "Noor Boubyan succeeded over the past three years in restoring the eyesight of more than 8,000 persons in a number of African countries through the launched campaigns in cooperation with a number of Kuwaiti doctors along with some of the bank's volunteers and some of the entities that cooperated with the bank."

"The initiative, which is organized annually by the bank in cooperation with the International Islamic Charitable Organization and Al-Darayn Volunteer Team, succeeded, thanks to Almighty Allah, in giving hope back to thousands of those who lost their eyesight. It also supported them in their lives as by restoring their eyesight, they managed to continue their lives normally," Al-Mehri Added.

Boubyan Bank was recognized in a grand ceremony during the fifth meeting's celebration of the GCC Council of Ministers of Labor hosted by the Sultanate of Oman last week in the presence of the representatives of the State of Kuwait, HE Mariam Al-Aqeel, Minister of State for Economic Affairs, HE Saad Al-Kharaz, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, and Abdulaziz Al-Shuaib, the Undersecretary of the Ministry

of Social Affairs and Labor.

Bringing back hope

The Noor Boubyan Initiative was launched for the first time in 2016 as an idea by Adel Al-Majed, the Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the bank, who urged the Corporate Communications Division to look for an initiative that could enable the bank to undertake its humanitarian role outside the State of Kuwait.

In this context, Al-Mehri elaborated: "This initiative does not only represent mere surgeries performed by physicians, rather, it is about bringing hope back to many people whose lives were fully changed after they had restored their eyesight as they became capable of helping their families; many of those lost their jobs after they had become visually-impaired due to cataracts, the very thing whose cure is targeted by the campaign."

He added: "The most painful truth about this initiative is that each operation costs no more than USD 100; in other words, millions of lives around the world are reliant on the availability of this amount which is, unfortunately, an obstacle in light of the poverty of those people."

Noor Boubyan IV

On the other hand, Al-Mehri added: "The 4th Noor Boubyan campaign will be launched in the Niger next December and will extend over one week where we will be performing eyesight restoration operations along with making check-ups in some villages and dispensing medicines which will be donated ahead of the campaign to protect others from cataracts."

Six specialist Kuwaiti doctors will be participating in the campaign along with a number of volunteers from the bank's staff and the International Islamic Charitable Organization and Al-Darayn Volunteer Team.

Nature of Kuwaiti people

Al-Mehri explained that this initiative could not be separated from an established truth known for everyone, namely, the good nature of the Kuwaiti people, who have been known over the years for their charitable activities and donations that reached many corners of the world, acting as an ambassador to the world that has always been recognizing Kuwait as a giving nation.

He added: "It is worth-mentioning here that this could be the first initiative of its kind to be fully undertaken by a Kuwaiti bank hand in hand with the competent entities. At Boubyan, we take pride in this fact. The goal of this initiative is not merely performing this number of operations which is - by the way - a small part of the number of operations needed to treat cataracts around the world, however, our goal is to highlight the importance of people's cooperation around the world to put an end to cataracts since millions of people suffer from cataracts in Africa and Asia," he stated.

Al-Mehri thanked all those involved in this initiative over the past years including the International Islamic Charitable Organization, Al-Darayn Volunteer Team, and the Kuwaiti doctors who dedicated their time to the service of humanity side by side with the young volunteers from the bank, and social media influencers who volunteered in the campaign.



CBK receives team from New Mowasat hospital



The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently received a medical team from the New Mowasat hospital to examine its employees on CBK's headquarters. The team was received by board chairman Sheikh Ahmed Al-Duaij Al-Sabah and CEO Elham Mahfouz. Speaking on the occasion CBK's Deputy Director for Communication Amani Al-Wer'a said that the visit came to provide quick medical services to the bank employees - mainly checking their blood pressure, diabetes and other health consultancies.

GUST student assists professor in publishing top-tier journal article

Gulf University for Science and Technology student, Sarah Al-Sabah, assisted visiting Professor of Economics and Finance, Dr Talat S Genc, in researching and publishing a paper entitled: "Who Should Own a Renewable Technology: Ownership Theory and an Application", in the top-tier journal: International Journal of Industrial Organization. The research investigates market implications for the ownership of new, low-cost production technology.

In the article, theoretical findings are used to evaluate the impact of renewable energy penetration into

electricity markets, and examine how the ownership of renewable capacity can change market outcomes (prices, outputs and emissions). As current public policies influence renewable energy ownership, their research provides useful insights for policymakers and governments. It shows how and why the ownership of renewable capacity matters when there is market power in energy industries. Findings are then applied to the wholesale electricity market in Ontario, Canada to analyze the impact of different ownership structures for wind capacity expansions.

Al-Sabah, expected to graduate in Fall 2019, played an integral part in the process in which she studied the research questions, carried out a literature review, and contributed to the findings under the tutelage of Dr Genc, a visiting professor from University of Guelph, Canada. A key takeaway from the paper is that small firms should be permitted by governments to operate and produce green energy an implication that when the time comes for Kuwait to implement alternative energy, should favor small and independent solar energy firms over big ones in order to expand power

capacity and reduce prices.

Dr Genc said, "There are some high-caliber undergraduate students at GUST who are capable of doing research. They should be encouraged to take part in knowledge creation. I have chosen Sarah to work with me on the project because she has great potential to contribute to science." The International Journal of Industrial Organization (IJIO) is a premier journal published by Elsevier in the field of Industrial Economics. IJIO is ranked as Q1 and A-level journal by many ranking institutions. It aims at full coverage of theoretical and empirical questions in industrial organization including classic questions of strategic behavior and market structure.

GUST Marketing student, Sarah Al-Sabah, said "Working on this project has taught me how to research professionally. I learned how to efficiently capture valuable information through careful reading, and now appreciate the hard work and creativity needed to address significant research questions that ultimately contribute value to society." GUST has always stressed the importance of hands-on, practical



training, partly dictated by the mandatory Internship Course each student must undertake before graduation. This exercise between Dr Genc and Al-Sabah is another example of how to creatively engage students to reach their potential through practical application of their knowledge and skills.

Health & Science

Legal respite only temporary as Amazon indigenous battle miners

Amahuaca face threat as gold mines, oil wells encircle jungle home

BOCA PARIAMANU, Peru: The Amazon's Amahuaca people braved marauding rubber tappers a century ago, and now face a new threat to their survival as gold mines and oil wells increasingly encircle their jungle home. They and other indigenous communities have gone to court to protect their rainforest habitat and keep mining and oil projects off their lands. But activists here fear legal constraints will only delay defeat in their long conflict with miners.

In June, Amahuaca villagers in Boca Pariamanu, in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon basin region, celebrated a rare legal victory. A court recognized their claim to more than 4,000 hectares of the rainforest, after years of conflict with chesnut producers. Title deeds to the land are key in a wider battle over Amazon resources, said community leader Julio Rolin. "We need to be able to monitor the land and not be invaded by mining, by illegal logging or invasions by settlers," Rolin told AFP.

The Amahuaca is one of 38 indigenous communities scattered throughout the Madre de Dios river basin, seen as the epicenter of illegal mining in Peru—the world's fifth-largest gold producer. Indigenous umbrella organization Fenamed warns of a wider threat. Despite

the Amahuaca's landmark legal victory, the state has altogether granted mining concessions on land occupied by 11 of the 38 local communities.

Under Peruvian law, the state retains the rights to the subsoil of indigenous land, so the government retains the right to grant exploration licenses. "We demand that rights not be granted to third parties in the territories of indigenous peoples," Fenamed president Julio Cusurichi said. Boca Pariamanu is accessible only by dugout canoe, two hours from regional capital Puerto Maldonado, and much of the illegal mining here takes place without fear of censure. "Mines contaminate the water, there are no more fish. And it destroys the forest," says Adela Ajahuana, a 23-year old indigenous Azaire woman. She fears it is only a matter of time before the mines destroy her own community.

Mud craters

Across the brown Pariamanu river, deforestation has gouged out vast areas of rainforest, with mud craters left behind by prospecting miners. Mechanical diggers and gold dredgers rumble constantly in the distance. The government has cracked down on illegal mining high up in the Andes, sending troops to

dismantle the wildcat mining town of La Pampa—a mountain outpost that mushroomed in 2008 at the height of the global economic crisis when the demand for gold was at its highest. But the move failed to reassure local Amazon communities. "There were 30,000 people living there. Where will they go? They will go to other parts of the indigenous territories," said Cusurichi.

State pressure in Bolivia

Across the border in the Bolivian Amazon area of Tacana II, a surge of state-supported oil exploration has alarmed locals. "Our fear is that this is going to destroy our forest," said Juana Ramirez, a young woman from Las Mercedes, one of Tacana II's four scattered villages that are only accessible by boat. President Evo Morales, who is seeking a fourth term next month, is supporting a mining project that will extract 50 million barrels of oil, as well as large quantities of natural gas.

"We could have said no to it, but there is very strong pressure from the state, very strong threats," said Ronaldo Justiniano, head of the territory. Prospecting began in 2018, after three years of tough negotiations between the Tacanas and the national oil company YPFB. Tacana II got nearly 500,000



PERU: View of a damaged area of the Amazon rainforest after illegal mining took place near Puerto Maldonado, Tambopata province, Madre de Dios region, in southeastern Peru. — AFP

dollars to compensate for environmental damage caused by the prospecting, or \$500 per thousand inhabitants.

But the money "is no compensation for the wealth we have on our territory," said Justiniano, visibly concerned over what may

unfold here. For now, he says his community is relieved to have managed to protect its chesnut trees, which reach a height of 50 meters. Chesnut gathering is an important source of income for the tribe between January and April.—AFP

CLINIC

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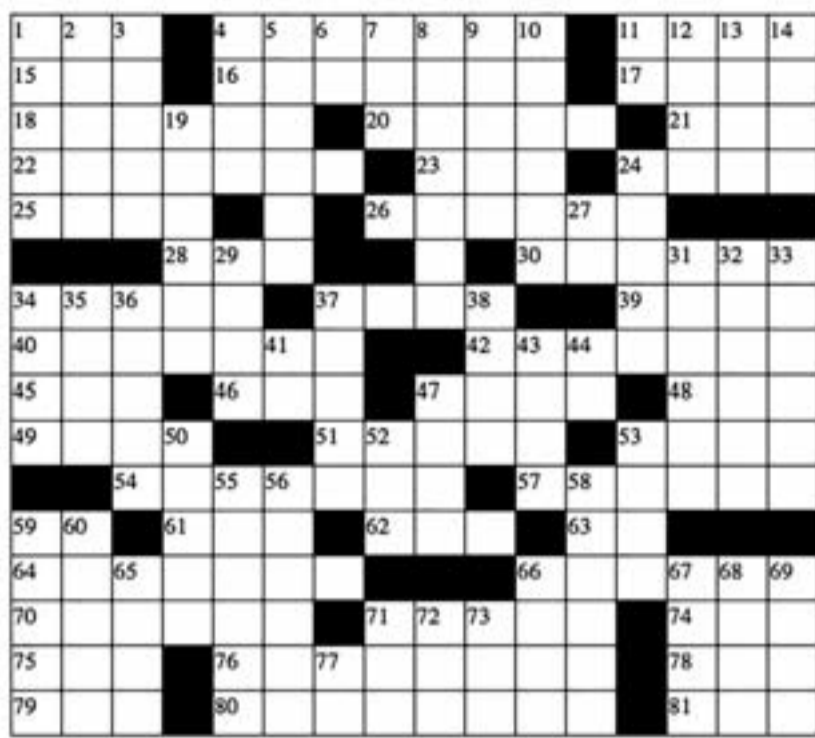
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ACROSS

1. The ratio of the distance traveled (in miles) to the time spent traveling (in hours).
4. Of or relating to Carl Jung or his psychological theories.
11. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
15. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
16. Connect closely and often incriminatingly.
17. A strip of land projecting into a body of water.
18. Steady recurrent ticking sound as made by a clock.
20. Righteousness by virtue of being pious.
21. (Irish) The sea personified.
22. A small foothold used in climbing.
23. The products of human creativity.
25. (Sumerian) Water god and god of wisdom.
26. Innumerable but many.
28. The branch of information science that deals with natural language information.
30. One of the evil spirits of traditional Jewish and Christian belief.
34. Short and fat.
39. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
40. A happening that is distinctive in a series of related events.
42. Used in some especially older classifications.
45. An emotional response that has been acquired by conditioning.
46. Tag the base runner to get him out.
48. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
49. Singing jazz.
51. An island consisting of a circular coral reef surrounding a lagoon.
54. Water buffalo of the Philippines.
57. English novelist.
59. A public promotion of some product or service.
61. A sharp hand gesture (resembling a blow).
62. 10 grams.
63. Before noon.
64. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
70. Somewhat ill or prone to illness.
74. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
75. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
76. Sauce for pasta.
78. A Spanish title of respect for a gentleman or nobleman.
79. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
80. Eruption on a mucous membrane (as the inside of the mouth) occurring as a symptom of a disease.
81. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

1. Not reflecting light.
2. (microbiology) An infectious protein particle similar to a virus but lacking nucleic acid.
3. A diacritical mark (an inverted circumflex) placed above certain letters (such as c) to indicate pronunciation.
4. 10 jiao equal 1 yuan.
5. Remove the clip from.
6. A state in the western United States.
7. The younger of two major political parties in the United States.
8. Small genus of perennial herbs or shrubs.
9. Prevent the occurrence of.
10. Having open interstices or resembling a web.
11. Being nine more than ninety.
12. A telephone connection.
13. A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
14. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.
19. Any movable possession (especially articles of clothing).
24. Administer an oil or ointment to.
27. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
29. A city in east-central France on the Rhone River.
31. Dark brownish to purplish red.
32. Beaten eggs or an egg mixture cooked until just set.
33. Speak in a nasal voice.
35. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
36. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
37. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
38. Horny plate covering and protecting part of the dorsal surface of the digits.
41. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
43. Agency of the United States government charged with mediating disputes between management and labor.
44. A state in north central United States.
47. A copy of a written work or composition that has been published (printed on pages bound together).
50. A landlocked mountainous republic in southeast central Asia north of Afghanistan.
52. A slight amount or degree of difference.
53. Acute ulceration of the mucous membranes of the mouth or genitals.
55. Usually elongate cluster of flowers along the main stem in which the flowers at the base open first.
56. A port city in southwestern Iran.
58. Desert shrub of Syria and Arabia having small white flowers.
60. United States industrialist who manufactured plows suitable for working the prairie soil (1804-1886).
65. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
66. Denuded of leaves.
67. An informal term for a father.
68. Very dark black.
69. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
71. Estrangement from god.
72. (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
73. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
77. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may appear very relaxed this morning. Everything seems to be working together and you may find yourself expressive and able to communicate well. You could be most persuasive with others and eloquent in speech and communication. The situation is a natural for self-expression and lends itself to your particular way of thinking. A good conversation with those you love is possible. You have a real appreciation for the creative mind and you are encouraged to study. You may find yourself enjoying long conversations, writing a letter or making a special phone call. Decide what you want with regard to change in your living situation and then go for it.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You will be pleased at what you can accomplish today. Few interruptions benefit you in any research time. This opportunity can be wisely used to your advantage. A day that is not too lazy or too stressful—time for accomplishing tasks or setting up a plan works successfully. Regular work or home chores move along swiftly. There is time for a luncheon, a meeting and perhaps a conference to talk of ways in which your ideas can develop. Productive conversations will bring positive results. Your instinctive direction at this time is toward getting down to business.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

The work you do, the way you take care of health and other mundane obligations are important keys to your progress now. There is a need for focus and careful analysis in this area of your life. Set up systems and schedules and stick to them! A new job offer from last week may call for new clothing: a suit, a coat, etc. This is a good time to shop for those things but do not go overboard as you may decide you like where you are working just fine. A comfortable get-together this afternoon gives you an opportunity to laugh with friends and relax. Your brilliant imagination and enchanting manner transport all who meet you beyond the dull and into the extraordinary regions where you enjoy your life. You would have fun writing short stories.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Opportunities open up in a very natural way. Situations are almost tailor-made and it is easy to see how the day ahead will unfold. Plans have been made and a short trip or campout is at hand and you are ready to go; in fact, you were probably ready hours ago. The energies today speak of travel and friends and fun. Circumstances should work together to help bring out your ideas. There are future plans you want to talk about and there are friends that are interested in your thinking. You may find yourself more than a little curious about their goals as well. You certainly would enjoy setting up time for more adventures like today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are much too busy at this time. It could be hard for you to balance all the demands that come to your attention. Look for ways to strike a balance, even if you have to step away for a bit—create a diversion or hire someone to help you. A young teenager might enjoy a little extra spending money if you are interested in packing a few boxes away in storage, or perhaps getting a few boxes unpacked from storage for the holidays ahead. A personal improvement of yours is visible. Changes you want to make regarding a habit or life-pattern of activity are a positive now and will have a good foundation. This evening you will benefit from a little time with your feet propped up and some relaxing music—of course a massage might be nice!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Ideas and interaction with authority figures or respected elders may be in the forecast. It may be time to coerce a senior relative into moving to new living quarters. This might not be too hard, depending on where the new digs might be located. Moving with the flow of energies today you will make some beneficial discoveries. The home front may be in need of a little work and you are magical in how you talk someone into helping you with a ladder as well as heavy work. You may be exhausted by the day's end, your goals seem crowded into a small time element. The person helping you today will help you again, so you could spread the work out over a few days instead of all in one day.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a day where you could continue to be emotionally tested. You may need to keep or adjust your thoughts or opinions into more positive directions. Challenges just seem to follow you around today—challenges, however, bring opportunities to grow and expand your knowledge. All this challenge type of stress will pass because you help to make any adjustment positive. You may decide to dive in and coordinate some project so that it will move quickly and be successful. A sudden inspiration helps you find a useful shortcut where a complicated project is concerned. Stop early and move to the rhythm of music, dance, love, laugh and be happy. A lover enriches your life and today you think about how great it is to have this person in your life—tell him or her.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Everything may be pouring in at once and it's all good news. Your friends are in town or a homecoming football game party is shaping up nicely; whatever the case, there are lots of errands and chores and people to help before some celebration can be enjoyed. You may benefit from an older person or one in authority this afternoon. This authority figure will help you understand some law or teach some law. There is time to relax this afternoon, really! Talk about something other than the ongoing preparations you are involved with now. When you go back to your errands, you will find something special that will help complement the dance or the dinner or the party in general.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Circumstances are working in your favor to help you and raise you up—push you forward. You have a stick-to-itiveness that always finds you in the thick of things. Creative ideas and a feeling of accomplishment with your progress are easily yours. You could be in the limelight in relation to your work today. You may be thinking of improving your wardrobe. You will find a good buy if you compare prices. Think along the lines of more color this fall—get rid of some of those all black outfits. You may be looking over your finances today and making decisions along the line of investing. If a loan is needed, today is a good time to organize your request.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Someone needs your support this Sunday and you are able to provide help by simply being nearby. You should, however, wait until you are asked to become involved—he or she may not need what you think. Later this afternoon there is a chance to join in some team sports. The neighborhood or the community group for which you belong may be having some competition meet at a nearby gym. Being more involved with neighbors or siblings satisfies a deep emotional need. You should work hard during this time to keep the family close. Communicating feelings becomes more important. Food for thought: the images you see reflect your thoughts—think positive.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

A nutritional change is in order and now is the most productive time to make that change. Put your mind to work and take care of any details that you may have, for mental discipline should come easily. Problems and obstacles that have previously been confounding should find easy explanations under your keen examination. Now could be the time to move forward in any projects you want to undertake. Don't worry about what you have to do; focus on the here and now and it will all work. Saying and writing things with style counts for a lot now and this tends to bring out the social butterfly in all of us.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There are optimism, faith and a tendency to take chances at the deepest emotional levels today. You could find that you are appreciated for your ability to act and get things done. Someone understands your point of view and is willing to listen to some changes you may want to make in the home. Gathering and exchanging information becomes an important part of your presentation and can be an example for the young people in the home. Neighbors or siblings have a big impact on your goals and make a big impression. This whole weekend could prove to be a mentally and socially active period. You have a clear vision into your own inner sense of values and how you appreciate and love. This is a good time to examine and create new goals.

Wordsearch Puzzle

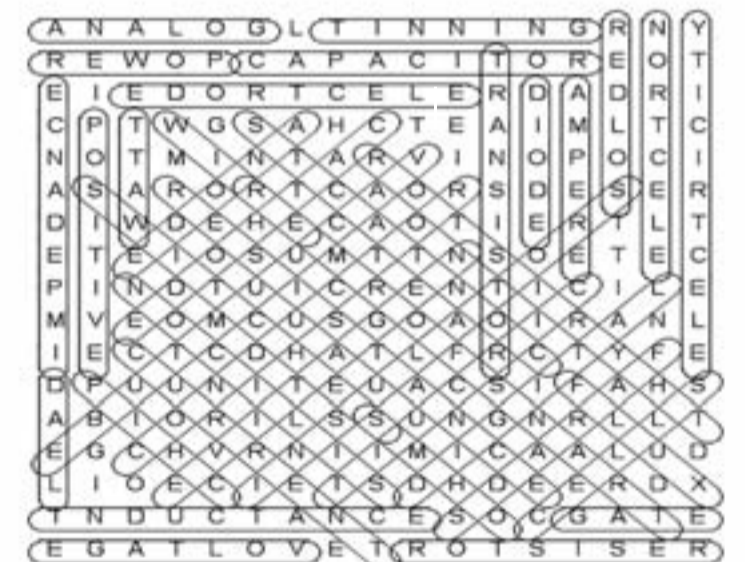
Elvis

Find and circle all of the words, names, songs, and movies that have to do with Elvis. The remaining letters spell a line from an Elvis song.



- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| AARON | GOOD LUCK CHARM | LITTLE SISTER | STUCK ON YOU |
| ALL SHOOK UP | GOSPEL | LOVE ME TENDER | SUN RECORDS |
| BLUE HAWAII | GRACELAND | MEMPHIS | SURRENDER |
| BURNING LOVE | GYRATING | ONE NIGHT | SUSPICIOUS MINDS |
| CLAMBAKE | HEARTBREAK HOTEL | PRISCILLA | THE KING |
| COLONEL PARKER | HOUND DOG | RCA | TOO MUCH |
| DON'T BE CRUEL | IN THE GHETTO | RETURN TO SENDER | TUPELO |
| GRAFTED | JAILHOUSE ROCK | ROCKABILLY | U.S. ARMY |
| G.I. BLUES | KENTUCKY RAHN | ROUSTABOUT | VERNON |
| GIRL HAPPY | KING CREOLE | SHE'S NOT YOU | VIVA LAS VEGAS |
| GLADYS | LISA MARIE | | |

Electronics



- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| AMPERE | CURRENT | INDUCTANCE | SOLDER |
| ANALOG | DIGITAL | INSULATORS | SWITCHES |
| ANODE | DIODE | LEAD | THYRISTOR |
| CAPACITOR | ELECTRICITY | NEGATIVE | TINNING |
| CATHODE | ELECTRODE | OHMS | TRANSFORMER |
| CELLS | ELECTRON | POSITIVE | TRANSISTOR |
| CHIP | FARADS | POWER | VACUUM TUBE |
| CIRCUIT | FLUX | RESISTANCE | VOLTAGE |
| CONDUCTOR | GATE | RESISTOR | WATT |
| CONTACTS | IMPEDANCE | SILICON | WIRE |

The hidden item is: LIGHT EMITTING DIODE

Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2019



A model presents creations from British designer Matty Bovan during a catwalk show for the Spring/Summer 2020 collection on the first day of London Fashion Week in London. — AFP

Hong Kong festival mooncakes get a protest makeover

At the back of her tiny shop, Hong Kong baker Naomi Suen pulls out a fresh tray of mooncakes—each one sporting popular slogans from recent pro-democracy protests. The cakes are a contemporary political twist on a gift traditionally given during the annual mid-autumn festival at a time when Hong Kong is convulsing with unprecedented unrest. Bakeries at this time of year are packed with boxes of the dense pastries, commonly filled with a heavy sweet concoction of lotus seed and egg yolks. The tops often have intricate Chinese character designs detailing the brand or the filling inside.

But Suen's mooncakes have different kinds of messages printed on them such as "Hong Kong People", "No withdrawal, no dispersal" and "Be Water". All are chants heard on Hong Kong's streets in the last three months, as huge crowds come out to protest eroding freedoms after two decades of rule by Beijing. The last phrase—"Be Water"—is a reference to local kung fu legend Bruce Lee's philosophy of being unpredictable, a style the leaderless protest has adopted with relish during its frequent street battles with the police. Suen, who used to be a fashion designer, inherited the bakery from her grandfather.

Over the years she has gained a reputation for producing eye-catching and often gently subversive mooncakes that particularly appeal to younger customers. The cakes are often given



This picture shows mooncakes, adorned with a popular slogan from recent pro-democracy protests, being prepared for the annual mid-autumn festival at a bakery in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

to family members during the festival and Suen said she hoped the protest messages would "spread happiness" and encourage understanding between different generations. "These mooncakes might bind the younger and older generations into something larger and give strength for the movement," she told AFP.

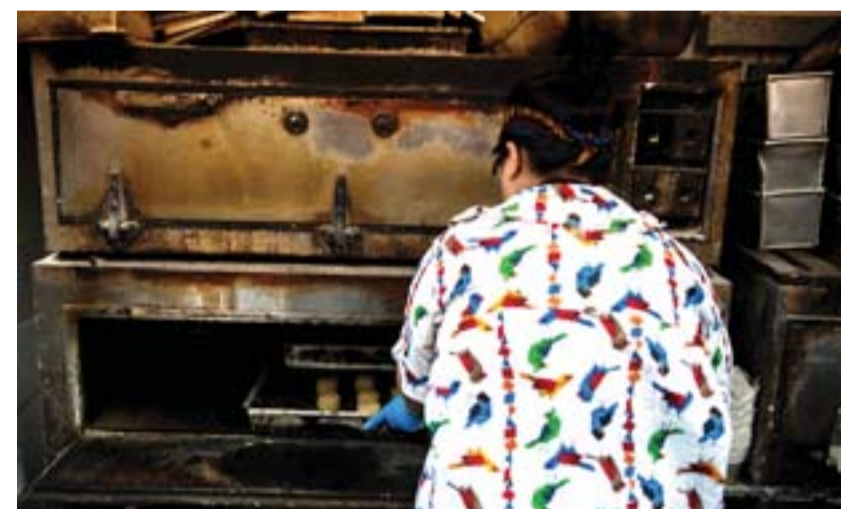
Festival themed protests

The mid-autumn festival, which begins Friday night, is one of the most important celebrations

in the Chinese calendar. The legend behind it revolves around a beautiful woman called Chang E, who drank an elixir of immortal life to keep it out of the hands of a rival of her husband. It caused her to ascend to the moon, leaving her distraught husband on earth. He took her favorite foods to an altar and offered them as a sacrifice to her, a ritual then adopted by local people. Mooncakes are a must-give item because they symbolize the full moon.

But they also have a semi-political history. According to a 13th century folk tale, the treats were used by Chinese people to smuggle messages as they resisted the Mongol Empire. Adopting the revolutionary past of mooncakes, Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters are planning a variety of mid-autumn festival themed protests on Friday evening, including a rally on two of the city's most famous hills—the Peak and Lion's Rock—where they will shine lights, hold lanterns and sing protest songs. Back at Naomi Suen's bakery, locals were queuing in the summer heat to get their hands on the political mooncakes. "I'm buying dozens so I can share them with my friends and family," customer Joyce Lam told AFP. But wading into Hong Kong's now deeply polarized political debate is risky for any business.

Suen says she has received pushback, especially via Facebook, from supporters of the gov-



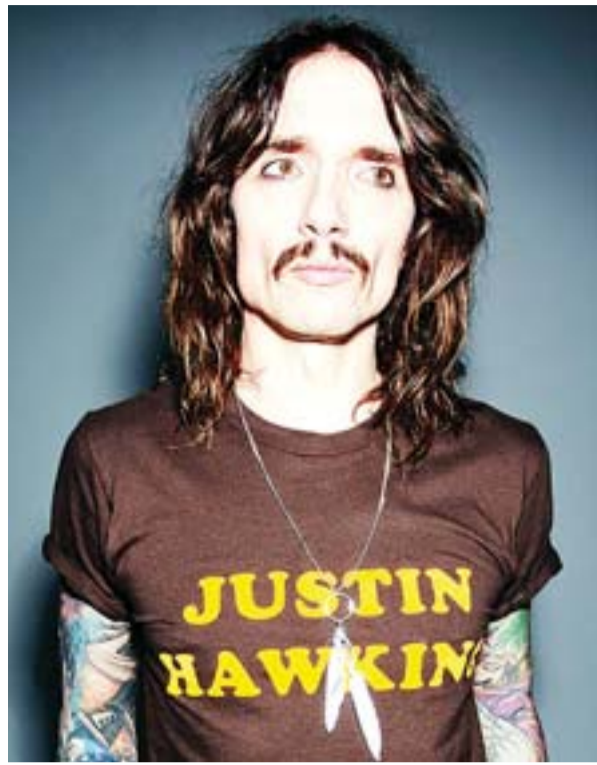
ernment and those opposed to the protests. But she shrugged off the criticism. "It's only for now," she said. "Hong Kong has always been a free place. I'm not committing a crime so I don't understand why I should be afraid". — AFP

A baker preparing mooncakes.



Photos show mooncakes, adorned with a popular slogan from recent pro-democracy protests, being prepared for the annual mid-autumn festival at a bakery in Hong Kong.

Lifestyle | Gossip



Hawkins will 'blackmail' Sheeran with football shirt swap snap

Justin Hawkins jokes he'll "blackmail" Ed Sheeran with a photo taken after their football match. The Darkness teamed up against the 'Shape of You' hitmaker and members of his crew as they supported him during his run of hometown shows in Ipswich last month, and the 'I Believe In A Thing Called Love' singer admitted the pair "swapped shirts" at the end and posed for a snap in their rival team's colors. Reflecting on the shows, he exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "It started off as a lovely kickabout and then when the whistle went, it became quite a stern test! I think everybody was taking it very seriously! 'But I was grateful for the chance to play, because how many times do you get to play to tens of thousands of people in your home county, and have a good kickabout on the day as well? It was great day, I really enjoyed it.' 'And the funny thing was me and Ed swapped shirts at the end too. There is a photo that's not been published - nor will ever be published - of

me in an Ipswich shirt and him in a Norwich shirt. 'You'll never see that picture, it will never surface... I'm using it, I might use it to blackmail him!' Justin and his bandmates - brother Dan Hawkins, Frankie Poullain and Rufus 'Tiger' Taylor - are just three weeks away from releasing new album 'Easter Is Cancelled' on October 4, and the 44-year-old rocker relished in the freedom of writing a more diverse record than ever. He said: "It's kind of like a concept album. The only thread necessary is my voice and the guitar, the recognizable voice of our guitar playing. 'Beyond that, anything goes - so every time you get a song in keeping with the themes we wanted to explore on the album, you just take it to its natural conclusion.' The collection also features a lot of Justin's trademark world-play, and he admitted he spends a lot of time obsessing over single words - such as new single 'Heart Explodes' which features the phrase "standing in the weather". He added: "You can keep it vague, I think 'weather' is a good

one because we're all subjected to it everyday. You're either observing it from the inside, or you're marking on it, or you're standing in it. The point of saying 'weather' and not saying 'rain' or 'a blizzard' or whatever is it doesn't matter what it is. 'The fact is, you're enduring it and the reason you're there rather than the thing itself. The focus has to be on why you're there, and not what's happening there - you know what I mean?' The next challenge for The Darkness will be finding out how the new tracks fit into their live show, but Justin has reassured fans that some parts of their performance are here to stay. He said: "We've got to provide the classic Darkness experience while finding a way to accommodate this new material so it doesn't stick out like a sore thumb. 'We're having to decide how we'll present it - it definitely won't look the way it used to. Having said that, I will be wearing jumpsuits - there are some things that must remain."

Middleton auditioned against friends

Tuppence Middleton went head-to-head with some of her friends to land her role in 'Downton Abbey'. The 32-year-old actress has joined the cast of the big screen spin-off of the period drama as Lady Bagshaw (Imelda Staunton)'s servant Lucy and though she liked seeing familiar faces in the audition room, she also knew it would be a little bit harder to win the part. She said: "It's quite a small world. You check in when you arrive for an audition and sometimes you can see five of your friends there too. 'You think, 'Oh they're brilliant, they're going to get it.' 'It's lovely to be going through the same thing, but also it means you rarely think it's in the bag.'" Tuppence admitted it was daunting joining such a well-known cast - so she was grateful for the fact she doesn't have perfect vision when she attended the first script read. She explained in an interview with Grazia magazine: "It didn't really hit me until we had the read-through. 'We did it in a warehouse space, at some kind of studio, and they needed it to be so big because there were just so many people. 'I'm quite short-sighted, I could barely see across the table. I would have been quite intimidated otherwise, with all of these faces that I've grown up watching and loving.'" But the actress had nothing to worry about as she was quickly put at ease by the returning cast members. She said: "They made all of us newbies feel like part of the family. 'I didn't feel at all isolated or that it was cliquy."



Charli XCX: Charli is my most personal album yet

Charli XCX says her new album 'Charli' is her "most personal album" so far. The 27-year-old singer released her third studio album on Friday and has said the record - which comes after two mixtapes, 'Number 1 Angel' and 'Pop 2', were released in 2017 - explores her "insecurities" in a way that none of her previous work has done. She said: "[The record is] my most personal album yet. It's [a record] where I talk a lot more about my insecurities and my thoughts that go on in my head every day about the position I'm in as a person and as an artist." And whilst Charli originally planned to put out a third mixtape, she felt as though 'Charli' was more like a full-length project. She added: "With 'Pop 2', I felt the solidifying of my fan base and was more connected to my fans than ever before. I thought that they might want an album from me. So I didn't want to deprive them of it. I just felt confident enough to put one out." But the 'Flash Pose' singer admits there isn't much difference between an album and a mixtape, except for the "pressure" that comes with releasing a full album. Charli - who last released an album in the form of 2014's 'Sucker' - said: "When you're signed to a major label and you want to release an album, there's a lot of pressure that's attached with the word 'album' including sales, streams, expectations, and goals. I just wanted to put stuff out without this expectation attached to it." The 'Boom Clap' hitmaker no longer "cares" about commercial success, and would rather just have the "creative freedom" to do her own thing. She told Entertainment Weekly magazine: "I used to think of [commercial success] all the time once I had the taste of what a big successful hit could feel like, but I feel like there's a lot of creative freedom in not caring."



Eilish to donate part of her festival fee to Planned Parenthood

Billie Eilish will donate part of her Music Midtown festival fee to Planned Parenthood. The 17-year-old singer is set to perform at the star-studded festival in Atlanta, Georgia, this weekend, and has said she will be giving part of her guarantee to Planned Parenthood Southeast, after the state of Georgia imposed new laws which restricted the circumstances in which women are legally able to have an abortion. Taking to her Instagram Story, the 'Bad Guy' hitmaker wrote: "ATLANTA. one of my favorite places in the world, to be in, and play shows, but i do not love the state's lawmaker's decision to take away women's rights. i still cannot believe we are even having this conversation in 2019. i'm dedicating my performance and donating a portion of my guarantee tomorrow to @plannedparenthood. we need this organization more than ever. swipe up to learn more and join me to sign the petition, and if you have any spare change, donate. (sic)" Last month, Billie was among 136 artists who joined Planned Parenthood to protest laws in states across the US restricting access to abortion, as part of the Bans Off My Body campaign. Back in May, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed one of the country's most restrictive abortion laws, banning abortion after six weeks of pregnancy, the time when doctors can usually start detecting a heartbeat. Meanwhile, Billie recently said being "strong-willed" has helped her to avoid being "used and manipulated" in the music industry. She explained: "There has been a whole world of young, especially female artists, and every artist (not just young) being used and manipulated by the stereotypical label or industry. 'There's kind of this weird name on everything now where it's like, people expect that. 'I remember the first time I had any sort of meeting with a label or management, I was 13. I think the only people that didn't look at me like I was going to have a horrible career were the people that I ended up working with. Everyone was just like, 'Oh, you're 13, yikes, you're going to be used,' and this and that. 'And I am like, 'Yo, y'all are the people that would use me in the situation you are talking about.' So, I don't know what that is supposed to mean. The only people who didn't say that s**t were the people that I felt an energy and connection with."

Seyfried to star in Things Heard and Seen



Amanda Seyfried is set to star in "Things Heard & Seen". The 33-year-old actress is reportedly in negotiations to star in the upcoming supernatural thriller, which is being set up at Netflix, according to The Hollywood Reporter. If Amanda bags the role, she will play one half of a young couple who move to a farm near a small town in upstate New York. Their new home is cursed by the murder of its former owners and as haunted secrets reveal themselves, the husband and wife's own marriage reveals itself to have a darkness of its own. Amanda's character is also said to be struggling to adjust to the small-town life when she comes to believe her house is haunted. "Things Heard & Seen" is an adaptation of a book named 'All Things Cease to Appear' by Elizabeth Brundage, and sources tell The Hollywood Reporter that the tone of the movie will be similar to Netflix's acclaimed series 'The Haunting of Hill House'. Production is set to begin later this fall, and the project will be co-directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini - who were nominated for an Oscar for 'American Splendor' - who also wrote the script. Anthony Bregman is set to produce, alongside Stefania Azpiazu, Peter Cron and Julie Cohen. For Amanda, the role comes as she was recently announced to have also picked up a role in feature drama 'A Mouthful of Air', which also stars Finn Wittrock, Amy Irving, Jennifer Carpenter, and Paul Giamatti. The movie is based on Amy Koppelman's 2003 book of the same name, and the author will also direct the feature. The script examines the relationship between the creative process and mental illness, and Amanda will star as Julie, a new mother and children's book author, who escapes into the bright Crayola colored world of her creation in order to leave behind the darkness caused by her post partum depression.

Michael Fassbender to star in Next Goal Wins

Michael Fassbender is set to star in 'Next Goal Wins'. The 42-year-old actor is in negotiations for a lead role in the upcoming soccer themed sports comedy drama, which is being directed by Taika Waititi. According to The Hollywood Reporter, 'Next Goal Wins' is based on a 2014 British documentary of the same name from Mike Brett and Steve Jamison, and tells the story of the national football team of American Samoa and their coach, Thomas Rongen, as they try to transform perennial losers into a FIFA World Cup-qualifying outfit. Michael is being lined up to star as the coach, while casting calls have been sent out to Samoans to play the team members. Filmmaker Taika co-wrote the script for the project alongside Iain Morris, and will work on the project before embarking on Marvel's fourth 'Thor' movie, 'Love & Thunder'. Original documentary makers Mike and Steve will produce the movie, with the help of Jonathan Cavendish, as well as Garrett Basch and Andy Serkis, whose Imaginarium Productions originally optioned the rights to the documentary. For Michael, the casting opportunity comes after it was recently revealed he's working on his own spy franchise, after previously being one of the names rumored to take over the role of James Bond when Daniel Craig departs the 007 franchise after next year's 'No Time To Die'. The actor is set to star in and produce the spy thriller 'Malko', where he will take on the titular role of spy Malko Linge in the upcoming film based on Gerard de Villiers' action novel series 'S.A.S.', which has been acquired by Lionsgate. Michael was last in theatres to reprise his role of Magneto in X-Men movie 'Dark Phoenix', and will next appear in comedic action thriller 'Kung Fury 2'.



Phoebe Waller-Bridge brings 'spice' to Bond

Phoebe Waller-Bridge wants to bring "spice" to 'No Time To Die'. The 'Fleabag' creator has been brought on board to help with the script on Cary Fukunaga's 'Bond 25' and hopes she's helped craft some strong female characters in the upcoming film. Asked about working on the film, she told Britain's OK! magazine: "[It's been] fantastic. I'm really excited to be a part of it. 'I can't say a huge amount, but in Daniel Craig's tenure as Bond, there have been some amazing female characters and I hope to continue that. 'I hope to bring whatever spice I can to it.' Phoebe admitted current Bond, Daniel Craig, has always been one of her favorites. She said: "Growing up, it was Sean Connery. But the actor I really focused on was Daniel Craig, especially when 'Casino Royale' first hit. There was a romance at the heart of it. He does terrible things, but for the right reasons". The 34-year-old star recently compared Bond with another of her creations, 'Killing Eve' assassin Villanelle. She said: "There's something about James Bond that always intrigued me in a similar way that Villanelle did. They live a fantasy! But it's a life none of us would ever want, if we're honest. We don't want to go put a bullet in someone's head to sleep with people and have martinis. It's a kind of fantasy nightmare. 'A lot has been made of me coming on board because I'm a woman, and that's wonderful. But also I can't take credit for the movie that was written. It's Cary's movie." When asked about reports that actress Lashana Lynch will become the new 007, she answered: "The whole thing has potential to birth new iconic characters all the time." — Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Features



Mexican engineer Asuncion Diaz shows a "Poblano" chili pepper -used to make the traditional "Chile en Nogada" - at his plantation in San Andres Calpan, Puebla state, Mexico. — AFP photos



A chef cooks "Chile en Nogada" ("Poblano" Chili Pepper with Walnut Sauce) in San Andres Calpan, Puebla state, Mexico.



View of a "Poblano" chili pepper -used to make the traditional "Chile en Nogada".

Farmers, chefs fight to save classic ingredients in Mexican cuisine

Speaking against a backdrop of two soaring, snow-capped volcanoes, Asuncion Diaz explains his fight to save the original poblano chile, one of the most important ingredients in Mexican cuisine, from climate change and other threats. The pristine panorama notwithstanding, Diaz and other producers in Puebla say climate change is stalking this mountainous region in central Mexico and threatening the dark green chile pepper for which it is famous. "The chiles get burned by the sun, and if it rains they go bad," says Diaz, a 55-year-old agricultural engineer, taking a break from work on his plantation outside San Andres Calpan, a village nestled in the skirts of the region's twin volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl.

Looking up at the first volcano, which locals affectionately call "Popo," fellow farmer Hilda Cruz concurs that the region is heating up. "When I was a little girl, Popocatepetl had snow year-round. I was 35 when I saw it without snow for the first time. It made me cry," says Cruz, now 64. The disappearing snow has been caused in part by increased volcanic activity inside Popo's crater. But Mexico's environment ministry says climate change is also wreaking havoc on the region, causing droughts, frost and heavy precipitation. Cruz runs a cooperative that helps local farmers sell their produce directly to some of Mexico's most

famous restaurants.

She says her mission is to save the "saberes y sabores"-the knowledge and flavors-of traditional Mexican food. Climate change is just one of the threats facing the ingredients of Mexico's renowned cuisine, which was named an essential part of the world's cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2010. Hybrid seeds, globalization and consumers' demand for immaculate produce are also taking their toll on ingredients like the poblano, which is used in Puebla's luscious "mole"-a spicy, chocolatey sauce-and in "chiles en nogada," an iconic dish associated with Mexican Independence Day, September 16.

Fighting back

Diaz says the poblano has also taken a hit because of the arrival of hybrid seeds imported from China that grow year-round and are more weather-resistant-but also yield less-tasty, less-crunchy peppers. "We're losing the tradition of the original chile, the one our ancestors ate," he told AFP. Biting into a classic chile poblano at a family dinner in Mexico City, Enrique Garcia closes his eyes in bliss. He agrees. "I haven't eaten one like this since I was a boy. They're like my grandmother's-the texture, the thickness, the crunchiness," says Garcia, 49.

According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF),

which launched a campaign last month to save Mexico's classic ingredients, six out of every 10 chiles consumed in the country today come from Chinese seeds. But now some farmers and chefs are fighting back to save Mexico's indigenous chiles, beans, tomatoes, gourds, maize and more. They include star chef Ricardo Munoz Zurita, the man behind "Azul," one of Mexico City's top restaurants.

Every year in August and September-chile en nogada season-he regales customers with his lavish take on the traditional dish. It is a symbol of Mexico with its green peppers bathed in creamy white sauce and topped with red pomegranate seeds-the colors of the Mexican flag. Munoz buys his chiles from Diaz's plantation, which meticulously protects its crop from hybrid seeds. "They are saving the chile poblano," says the chef.

But he is worried about many of the other 31 ingredients in the traditional chile en nogada, which is stuffed with a mixture of ground meat and fruits. "The fruits in the stuffing are in serious trouble: panchera apples, San Juan pears, creole peaches, pink pine nuts and fresh walnuts," he says. Original versions of those ingredients are increasingly scarce, in part because consumers have come to prefer imported hybrids. Munoz illustrates the point clutching two small, funny-looking apples in his hand. "One



of the reasons they're in decline is their size. They're tiny. These days everyone's looking for the 'ideal' of big, shiny fruit," he says. But they are fooling themselves, he adds: the native version is sweeter and tastier. — AFP

Mexican engineer Asuncion Diaz speaks at his plantation of "Poblano" chili pepper -used to make the traditional "Chile en Nogada".



Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Farhan Akhtar attend "The Sky is Pink" premiere during the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, Canada. — AFP photos

'My quest': Priyanka Chopra brings Bollywood to Toronto

No Indian star has made a bigger splash in Hollywood than Priyanka Chopra-and the "Baywatch" actress told AFP she is on a quest to shatter myths about Bollywood, including its approach to sex. Chopra was the first Indian actress to lead a primetime US series with FBI thriller "Quantico," and cemented her global celebrity status by marrying pop singer Nick Jonas last December. That star power secured a glitzy, red-carpet slot at Toronto's film festival for "The Sky is Pink," Chopra's first Hindi-language film in three years. It is the only Asian film on the prestigious gala lineup at North America's biggest movie festival. "People get surprised when they see 'The Sky is Pink' and they're like, 'this is not a Bollywood movie.' Bollywood is not a genre!" Chopra told AFP ahead of the premiere Friday.

"It really is my quest to educate people in that." Directed by Shonali Bose, "The Sky is Pink" tells the tragic true story of Aisha Chaudhary, an inspirational Delhi teenager whose life was cut short by a rare genetic disorder. Chaudhary delivered a TED talk and wrote a book on her battle before her death in 2015 at the age of 18. But the film focuses on her parents, exploring how their marriage and love-and even their sex life-survived the loss of two children. Until recently kissing was rarely shown in films made by conservative Bollywood, better known abroad for its colorful musical numbers and fairytale romantic plots.



(From left) Farhan Akhtar, Shonali Bose, and Priyanka Chopra attend "The Sky is Pink" premiere during the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival.

'Dying wish'

"I don't think we haven't spoken about sexuality in Indian films-we do," said Chopra, 37. "I think sexuality is spoken about in many different ways in Indian cinema." "It's culturally sensitive, yes," she added. "India is an amalgamation of modernity and tradition. And this film is made by a modern Indian. So hence, you see what her language is. This is true to who she is." Bose, whose own marriage ended after she lost her son, was approached by Chaudhary's parents to make the film.

Chaudhary had been a fervent fan of the director's work, and never fulfilled her "dying wish" to see Bose's previous film "Margarita With A Straw." Bose told AFP she was moved by the request but chose to focus on the parents after learning of their "amazing" love story and care for their child. "They wanted the film to be about their heroic dying teenage girl, and I don't feel she would've wanted to be on a pedestal-actually she was really cool and humble," she said.

Chopra, who does not have children, said she drew on others' experiences, including Bose's, to play Chaudhary's mother Aditi. But there is plenty of Chopra in the role too. At one point her character is described as "the 'almost' Miss India." Chopra herself was crowned Miss World in 2000.

Global outlook

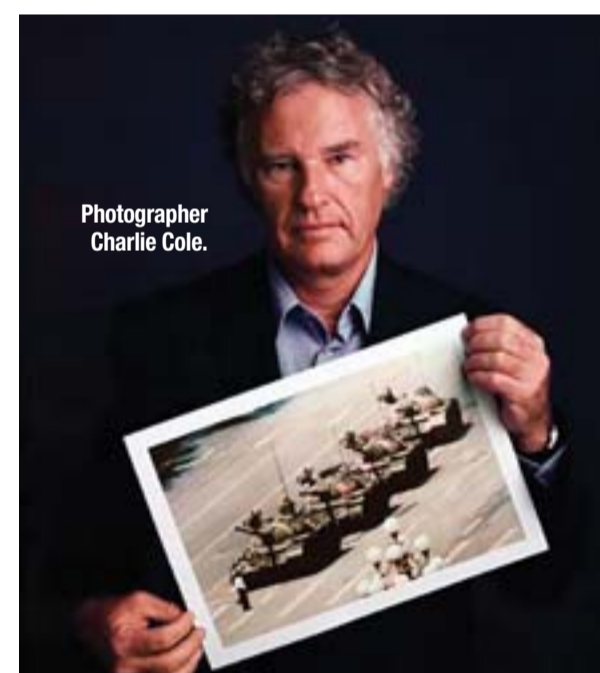
As beauty pageants led to acting, Chopra, who attended school in the US, said she held onto her global outlook. Also a singer, Chopra has released songs with US chart-toppers including Pitbull and The Chainsmokers. "It's a genuine quest of mine to be able to cross-pollinate cultures, and to be able to take Indian cinema to the globe as much as I can," she said, adding: "It's not the language that's the barrier-it is the fear of the unknown."

Movie-mad India has the largest film industry in the world in terms of the number produced-up to 2,000 every year in more than 20 languages, according to industry data. Bollywood star Akshay Kumar regularly appears in Forbes' annual list of the world's top 10 highest-paid actors. In recent years Bollywood's influence has spread in North America, thanks to a growing, affluent South Asian diaspora-and a smattering of Western converts. But while other Bollywood actors and actresses have landed high-profile roles in the US, such as Deepika Padukone in 2017's "XXX: Return of Xander Cage," none are as recognizable as Chopra. "I really hope that there's so many more entertainers from India that get the opportunity and push themselves towards global entertainment," said Chopra. "The world of entertainment is so global now," she added. "With streaming coming in everyone from anywhere can watch anything." — AFP

Tiananmen Square 'Tank Man' photographer dies

The photographer who snapped the defining image of China's Tiananmen Square crackdown-a solitary man defiantly blocking the path of a column of tanks-has died in Indonesia, according to US officials. American authorities confirmed the death of 64-year-old Charlie Cole in Bali, where the Texan had been a long-time resident. "We offer our sincerest condolences to the family on their loss," a state department official told AFP. Cole won the 1990 World Press Photo award for his picture of a man in a white shirt, carrying a shopping bag in each hand, striding out into the road the day after troops killed hundreds of pro-democracy protesters in the heart of Beijing.

The man, whose identity remains unknown, stopped in front of a column of tanks and armored vehicles stretching far down the road, later climbing onto the vehicle to engage in a conversation with one of the tank crew as gunshots crackled in the air. "Tank Man" has become one of the defining images of the 20th century, but the image remains largely unrecognized in China due to censorship of the image and the wider crackdown. His mystique has been reinforced by his subsequent disappearance, probably at the hands of Chinese security forces. Several photographers captured Tank Man's lone figure on film that



day. A picture of the scene by Jeff Widener of the Associated Press, snapped from the balcony of the Beijing Hotel, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. — AFP



Knife attack badly damages work by top French modern artist

An attacker wielding a utility knife has badly damaged a work by the celebrated French conceptual artist Daniel Buren at the Pompidou Centre in central Paris, the museum said on Friday. The work, "Peinture [Manifestation 3]", suffered "serious deliberate damage" in Thursday afternoon's attack by the man, the museum said in a statement. It said that a museum attendant alerted security, and video cameras allowed the rapid finding of the suspect. "He made no claim (over the attack) and was handed over to the police," it said. An investigation has

been opened by the judicial authorities after the museum filed a complaint to police.

The artist, 81, has been informed of the incident and the work itself transferred to the stores of the Pompidou Centre to estimate the damage and restoration needed. It will be replaced on public display by another work from the artist. The Pompidou Centre said it understood the suspect was no longer in detention and had been transferred to a psychiatric unit.

"Peinture [Manifestation 3]" was created by Buren in 1967 and shows red and white stripes. It was purchased for the museum's collection in 1986. Buren is perhaps best known for the succession of black-and-white columns he inlaid into the inner courtyard of the Palais Royal complex in central Paris in a hugely controversial installation that opened in 1986.—AFP



Models present creations from Molly Goddard during a catwalk show for the Spring/Summer 2020 collection on the second day of London Fashion Week in London yesterday. — AFP photos

LONDON FASHION WEEK OPENS UNDER BREXIT CLOUD



London Fashion Week got under way on Friday, launching spring/summer 2020 collections under a Brexit cloud and in the face of opposition from environmental activists. The collections on show are set to come out after Brexit—a divorce bitterly opposed by the UK fashion industry. A survey by the Fashion Roundtable consultancy found 96 percent of British fashion sector professionals backed Britain staying in the European Union in the 2016 referendum, fearing customs bureaucracy and restrictions on the movement of workers.

“The fashion industry is extremely global. We need talent from all over the world to come,” British Fashion Council chair Stephanie Phair told AFP. The BFC, which promotes the industry and organizes the five-day London Fashion Week (LFW), is against a no-deal Brexit on October 31 — something Prime Minister Boris Johnson says must happen if a new deal cannot be struck with Brussels.

If business between Britain and the EU were to come under World Trade Organization rules on November 1, it would cost the fashion industry £850-900 million, according to a 2018 study by the UK Fashion and Textile Association. The British fashion industry contributes £32 billion to the British economy and employs nearly 900,000 people, according to the BFC, claiming it was nearly as many workers as the financial sector. In September, it urged the government to strike a divorce deal with the EU “that would guarantee the healthy and steady growth of the fashion industry”.

Blood-stained robes

Besides Brexit, the British fashion community is being challenged to do more on the environment. Extinction Rebellion had called for LFW to be cancelled. The environmentalist movement is planning acts of civil disobedience in protest at what it calls one of the world's most polluting industries. They gathered on Friday in blood-stained white robes near the entrance of the main LFW venue in central London.

Their activities are due to culminate on Tuesday with a “funeral procession” to “commemorate the loss of life due to climate and ecological breakdown”—in front of the main LFW venue in central London. Against that background, the design duo VIN + OMI are due to show off a collection on Tuesday including textile pieces made with recycled plastic—and even nettles from the garden of Prince Charles, the heir to the throne.

The BFC is also trying to highlight industry best practices in sustainable development and ethics with a dedicated exhibition. First up to present his handiwork on Friday was knitwear ace Mark Fast, with some green, pink and neon yellow creations inspired by the colors of the



Amazon rainforest. Bora Aksu's collection meanwhile paid homage to the Persian princess Taj Saltaneh, a feminist and women's rights activist in the early 20th century. “A princess but a strong one,” the London-based Turkish designer told AFP after his show. On Brexit he added: “I am optimistic but the direction it is taking is not looking very nice.” He said a no-deal Brexit would mean “a lot of obstacles” in sending garments to Europe.

Beckham and Burberry

Despite the sombre backdrop, designer Molly Goddard sprinkled a little magic over the proceedings yesterday. The Londoner graduated from the city's prestigious Central Saint Martins arts and design school and made a name for herself by creating the pink dress worn by the murderer Villanelle in the British spy thriller television series “Killing Eve”. Other headline shows include those of Spice Girls singer-turned-designer Victoria Beckham.

Last year, the British star of the New York catwalks presented a collection in London for the first time to celebrate her label's 10th anniversary. This year, she is launching a beauty products range. British fashion heavyweight Burberry is set to be another highlight. The label is under the direction of chief creative officer Riccardo Tisci, formerly of Givenchy, who is known for celebrating diversity in his shows. — AFP

Tissot Carson Automatic Urban vitality

Juggling work and friends. A sense of both duty and freedom. A career on the rise yet a limited budget. With the Carson collection, Tissot reconciles the inherent contradictions of urban life. Designed to be the very first automatic watch that one buys, the Tissot Carson Lady and the Tissot Carson Gent represent an important step in the life of every young professional — a purchase that is significant, long lasting, and representative of its holder and their status. With its sleek design, self-assured taste and flattering finishings, the Carson collection is perfect for every occasion. Innovators by tradition, Tissot also brings the reputation of its name and the worldwide recognition of the quality of its Swiss Made products.

The Tissot Carson Gent is presented in a rose gold PVD-coated steel case, offering all the advantages of gold — its durability, warmth and precious shine — without impacting the price. This timepiece, with a well-balanced 40-mm diameter, is equipped with a mechanical self-winding movement. The Powermatic 80 is a crown jewel of Tissot's calibres. Noble and reliable, it is a reflection of Carson itself. It boasts finishings of superior quality, including an engraved oscillating weight, visible through a transparent sapphire crystal case back. It offers 80 hours of running time, meaning the watch can,

if necessary, be laid down during the weekend and picked back up in perfect working order on Monday morning.

The Tissot Carson Lady is bound to seduce with its soft, classic curves, which make it an essential accessory. It fits perfectly with all styles, occasions and stages of life. Its 30-mm case is polished and mounted on a five-link steel strap that is as bright as it is comfortable. Its dial is composed of a satin-finished outer ring and a central medallion, whose pattern of fine circular lines is guaranteed to catch the light. The dial shines with the eight diamond hour markers, all of Top Wesselton-quality, the highest used in the watchmaking industry. Its self-winding movement was selected for its reliability and its high quality, and can be forgotten as easily as it can be viewed through the transparent sapphire crystal case back.

All of the models in the Carson collection are imbued with the energy of the city. They are presented in the same variety and diversity of choice as that which makes city life so thrilling. Carson Gent's and Carson Lady's many finishing options include a dial in silver or black, a strap in leather or five-chain steel, and yellow gold PVD steel versions. Because one's first watch can never be ordinary, Tissot has invested the best of its long-established expertise into the Carson collection.

Features

Carson Gent Automatic

- Case in rose gold PVD steel with burnished details
- Diameter 40 mm, thickness 10.25 mm
- See-through sapphire crystal and case back with anti-reflective coating
- Water-resistant 50 m (5 ATM)

- Mechanical self-winding movement
- Powermatic 80 calibre (C07.111)
- Hours, minutes, seconds, date
- Engraved oscillating weight
- 21,600 VPH (3Hz)
- Power reserve of 80 hours
- Light grey dial
- Rose gold PVD applique hour markers
- Applique PVD date aperture
- Brown calfskin leather strap, embossed with tone-on-tone overstitching
- Rose gold PVD steel pin buckle

Carson Automatic Lady

- Steel case, burnished details
- Diameter 30 mm, thickness 9.48 mm
- Transparent sapphire crystal and case back with anti-reflective coating
- Water-resistant 50 m (5 ATM)
- Mechanical self-winding movement
- 2671 calibre
- Hours, minutes, seconds, date
- Engraved oscillating weight
- 28,800 VPH (4Hz)
- Power reserve of 44 hours
- Light grey dial
- Nickel-plated applique hour markers and eight Top Wesselton diamonds, 0.04 ct
- Nickel-plated applique date aperture
- Five-chain steel strap, polished with satin finish
- Triple-blade folding steel clasp with safety pushers

Style icons slam throwaway fashion culture

British style icons including designer Vivienne Westwood and model Lily Cole condemned throw-away fashion culture as London Fashion Week got under way on Friday. They have joined the Oxfam charity's Second Hand September campaign to encourage people to re-use, re-wear and recycle clothes. “We can't ignore the fashion industry's enormous impact on the environment so it's heartening to see that the London fashion world is getting behind Oxfam's drive to encourage people to buy second-hand,” said Oxfam GB director Danny Sriskandarajah.

Several stars have donated items to the resale clothing site Vestiaire Collective, with the proceeds going to Oxfam. The initiative has more than eight million members in 50 countries. Westwood donated a handbag, while designer Henry Holland gave some shoes. “Buy less, choose well, make it last,” said punk designer Westwood. Actress Rachel Weisz, models Daisy Lowe and Stella Tennant have also raided their wardrobes. “Peace of mind and a new wardrobe without the environmental damage is the dream!” said singer Paloma Faith.

Oxfam claimed that the carbon footprint of new clothes bought in Britain every minute was greater than driving a car around the world six times. “Fashion doesn't need to cost the earth: buying second-hand not only stops clothing from ending up in landfill, but can also be the first step on the path towards more sustainable consumption,” said Sriskandarajah. — AFP



A man fishes along with his family as they stand on floating bamboo logs in the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati in the northeastern state of Assam yesterday. — AFP

Trump floats defense treaty days ahead of Israeli polls

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said yesterday he had spoken with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about a possible mutual defense treaty between the two nations, a move that could bolster Netanyahu's re-election bid just days before Israelis go to the polls.

"I had a call today with Prime Minister Netanyahu to discuss the possibility of moving forward with a Mutual Defense Treaty, between the United States and Israel, that would further anchor the tremendous alliance between our two countries," Trump said on Twitter. He added that he looked forward to continuing those discussions later this month on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly session in New York.

Netanyahu thanked Trump, saying in a tweet that Israel "has never had a greater friend in the White House," and adding that he looked forward to meeting at the UN "to advance a historic Defense Treaty between the United States and Israel". The timing of Trump's tweet, just days before Israel's election on Tuesday, appeared aimed at buttressing Netanyahu's bid to remain in power by showcasing his close ties to Trump.

Opinion polls predict a close race, five months after an inconclusive election in which Netanyahu declared himself the winner but

failed to put together a coalition government. Netanyahu's Likud party is running neck-and-neck with the centrist Blue and White party led by former armed forces chief Benny Gantz, who has focused heavily on looming corruption charges Netanyahu faces.

In a televised interview with Israel's Channel 12 later yesterday, Netanyahu made a direct appeal to voters based on the treaty. "I'm going to get us a defense pact that will provide us with security for centuries but for that I need your votes," he said. Trump previously bolstered Netanyahu's candidacy when he recognized Israel's claim of sovereignty over the Golan Heights ahead of the elections earlier this year.

Some Israeli officials have promoted the idea of building on Netanyahu's strong ties to the Trump administration by forging a new defense treaty with the United States, focused especially on guarantees of assistance in any conflict with Iran. Trump provided no details, but a mutual defense treaty could obligate the United States to come to Israel's defense if it is attacked.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said earlier this month that a pact should apply to "defined issues - nuclear threats and the matter of long-range missiles aimed by Iran at Israel". "We have means of offense and

defense, but this would spare us the need to earmark enormous resources on a permanent basis and for the long-term in the face of such threats," Katz told Israel's Ynet TV.

Netanyahu's chief rival Gantz assailed the idea as a "grave mistake", arguing it would strip Israel of military autonomy. "This is not what we want," the centrist candidate told a conference in Jerusalem. "We have never asked anyone to get killed for us. We have never asked anyone to fight for us. And we have never asked anyone anyone's permission to defend the State of Israel."

Trump's comments come as the international community awaits the release of Washington's long-delayed Middle East peace plan, which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently said could come within weeks. Its publication was pushed back after Israel scheduled new elections. Then last week, one of the key architects of the US plan, Jason Greenblatt, announced his resignation.

Trump has repeatedly boasted that he is the most pro-Israeli US president in history. He has slashed aid to the Palestinians, while making big concessions to the Israelis, including formalizing US recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state. As a result, the Palestinian Authority has cut off formal contact with the Trump administration, saying it is



JERUSALEM: An Israeli man walks yesterday beneath a defaced election billboard for the Likud party showing US President Donald Trump (left) shaking hands with Likud chairman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. — AFP

not an honest broker.

So far, Trump has not commented on Netanyahu's controversial pledge to annex Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank

as well as the Jordan Valley if re-elected - which would seem to go beyond US proposals for land swaps between Israel and the Palestinians. — Agencies

Houthi drones spark fires...

Continued from Page 1

"These attacks against critical infrastructure endanger civilians, are unacceptable, and sooner or later will result in innocent lives being lost," the embassy quoted Ambassador John Abizaid as saying in a Twitter post. The three sources said Aramco had raised emergency levels and was holding a crisis meeting after the assault.

"This is a relatively new situation for the Saudis. For the longest time they have never had any real fears that their oil facilities would be struck from the air," Kamran Bokhari, founding director of the Washington-based Center for Global Policy, told Reuters. He said Riyadh had in the past largely protected oil assets against vehicle-borne explosive attacks by militant groups.

In recent months, the Houthi rebels have carried out a spate of cross-border missile and drone attacks targeting Saudi air bases and other facilities. The rebels launched "a large-scale operation involving 10 drones that targeted refineries in Abqaiq and Khurais in eastern Saudi Arabia", the group's Al-Masirah television reported.

Last month, an attack claimed by Houthi rebels sparked a fire at Aramco's Shaybah natural gas liquefaction facility - close to the Emirati border - but no casualties were reported by the company. Rebel drones also targeted two oil pumping stations on Saudi Arabia's key east-west pipeline in May, shutting it down for several days.

Growing Houthi attacks underscore how Saudi infrastructure, including oil installations, are increasingly vulnerable to rebel attacks four years after a Saudi-led coalition launched a military intervention in Yemen. The Abqaiq facility, 60 km southwest of Aramco's Dhahran headquarters, is home to the company's largest oil processing plant. Khurais, 250 km from Dhahran, hosts a major Aramco oil field.

"Depending on the extent of the damage and any outages, Aramco will use its contingency plans by tapping into its storage if necessary," Samir Madani, co-founder

of shipping monitoring website Tanker Trackers, told AFP. "The Saudis are using language in their statements to assure customers that the fires are under control. But there could be supply disruptions if the damage at Abqaiq is extensive."

The Abqaiq plant, which Aramco says plays a "pivotal role" in its operations, has been targeted by militants in the past. In an attack claimed by Al-Qaeda in Feb 2006, suicide bombers with explosive-laden vehicles attempted to penetrate the processing plant, killing two security guards. The two bombers also died in the attack, which failed to breach the compound, authorities reported at the time.

The latest attacks come as Saudi Arabia accelerates preparations for a much-anticipated initial public offering of Aramco, the world's most profitable company. The mammoth IPO forms the cornerstone of a reform program envisaged by the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, a son of King Salman, to wean the Saudi economy off its reliance on oil. Aramco is ready for a two-stage stock market debut including an international listing "very soon", its CEO Amin Nasser told reporters on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the UAE, a key member of the Saudi-led coalition fighting Houthi rebels, said Friday six of its soldiers were killed in a "collision of military vehicles" while on duty. It did not specify if the men died in Yemen. The armed forces announced "the martyrdom of six of its valiant soldiers as a result of a collision of military vehicles while carrying out their national duty in an operations field", state news agency WAM reported. In July, Abu Dhabi announced a troop drawdown in Yemen, a move that many saw as an attempt to limit its losses amid escalating regional tensions with Tehran.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable of condolences to UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. The Amir expressed his sincere condolences and sorrow over the martyrdom of six Emirati soldiers while performing their national duty in the operations field. He prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow His mercy upon them, place them in His heavens, and bless them with martyrs' status. HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Emirati president. — Agencies

Solid gold toilet stolen from...

Continued from Page 1

"The piece of art that has been stolen is a high-value toilet made out of gold that was on display at the palace," she said. "Due to the toilet being plumbed into the building, this has caused significant damage and flooding." Blenheim Palace said it was "saddened by this extraordinary event, but also relieved no-one was hurt". It closed yesterday but said it would reopen today.

The palace is home to the 12th duke of Marlborough and his family, and was also the birthplace of British wartime leader Winston Churchill. The duke's brother, Edward Spencer-Churchill, who founded the Blenheim Art Foundation, said last month he was relaxed about

Trump confirms death of Qaeda...

Continued from Page 1

But Colin Clarke, an analyst with the Rand Corporation and the Soufan Center think tanks, said he was "still skeptical he had a major role operationally". "But obviously he's got the DNA - the bin Laden name," he told AFP.

Clarke said he thought that with Al-Qaeda still active, "I think the administration is looking for some kind of momentum or victory." Al-Qaeda had yet to confirm or comment on the US announcement. Osama bin Laden's death and the rise of the more virulent Islamic State group saw Al-Qaeda lose currency with younger jihadists. But the proliferation of

security around the golden toilet. "It's not going to be the easiest thing to nick," he told The Times newspaper. "Firstly, it's plumbed in and secondly, a potential thief will have no idea who last used the toilet or what they ate. So no, I don't plan to be guarding it." He added: "Despite being born with a silver spoon in my mouth I have never had a s**t on a golden toilet, so I look forward to it."

Cattelan, who is known for his provocative art, has previously described the golden toilet as "one-percent art for the 99 percent". The Guggenheim had offered the loo on loan to US President Donald Trump, but he declined. The Italian artist's exhibition at Blenheim runs until Oct 27 and includes a taxidermed horse hoisted onto the ceiling of an ornate reception room. Blenheim has previously hosted exhibitions of work by Ai Weiwei, Yves Klein, Jenny Holzer, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Lawrence Weiner. Police said they were looking at CCTV footage to help them in the search for the gold toilet, adding that nothing else was believed to have been stolen. — AFP

branches and associated jihadist groups in Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere have underscored its continuing potency.

Documents seized in the raid on his father's house in Abbottabad, Pakistan suggested Hamza was being groomed as his heir. In 2017, Hamza was placed on the US terror blacklist, seen as a potent future figurehead for the group then led by Ayman Al-Zawahiri. But when reports of his death surfaced over the summer, some terrorism experts questioned his real importance.

Bruce Hoffman, an expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, told AFP at the time that Al-Qaeda had been slowly rebuilding under Zawahiri, aiming to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of the Islamic State. "Al-Qaeda survived the death of his father," he said. "I am sure that it can manage adequately and survive the death of his son." Clarke said the younger bin Laden's death might open the way for the rise in Al-Qaeda of younger and even more radical leaders. "The unknown actually is what's more dangerous," he said. — AFP

Sports

Goldschmidt's grand slam powers Cardinals past visiting Brewers

Story hits two of Rockies' four HRs in win over Padres

ST LOUIS: Paul Goldschmidt hit two homers, including a grand slam, and drove in a career-high seven runs as the St. Louis Cardinals rolled past the visiting Milwaukee Brewers 10-0 Friday night. The victory kept the National League Central-leading Cardinals four games ahead of the second-place Chicago Cubs. The Cardinals have gone 39-19 since July 12 and 25-9 since Aug. 7. The injury-depleted Brewers snapped their seven-game winning streak and fell to third place in the division, five games off the pace. They also slipped a game behind the Cubs for the NL's second wild-card spot. Cardinals starter Adam Wainwright (12-9) allowed just two hits and struck out seven in six scoreless innings. He also contributed to the offense, hitting a double and scoring a run.

CUBS 17, PIRATES 8

Anthony Rizzo hit a grand slam, Willson Contreras homered twice, and Chicago overcame an early four-run deficit to defeat Pittsburgh for the eighth time in the past nine home meetings. Nicholas Castellanos and rookie Nico Hoerner hit two-run homers as Chicago capitalized on friendly wind conditions and produced its highest run total of the season. The wind was blowing out to center field at 20 mph at first pitch. Pittsburgh first baseman Josh Bell exited the game after the top of the fifth inning with an undisclosed injury.

BRAVES 5, NATIONALS 0

Nick Markakis celebrated his return to the roster with a pair of hits, and rookie Mike Soroka threw six shutout innings to help Atlanta earn a win at Washington. Markakis was activated before the game after missing 44 games with a left wrist fracture. He went 2-for-4 with a double, scored a run, drove in a run with a sacrifice fly and made three nice catches in left field in his return. Soroka (12-4), who had battled a stomach virus the last two days, gave up only one hit and earned his first career win against Washington. He gave up three walks and struck out four. Soroka lowered his ERA to 2.57, second in the major leagues.

GIANTS 1, MARLINS 0

Tyler Beede made a second consecutive scoreless start, and Buster Posey drove in the game's only run with a sixth-inning single as host San Francisco blanked Miami. Beede (5-9), Tyler Rogers and Shaun Anderson combined on a four-hitter, helping the Giants win for just the second time in five tries on their seven-game homestand. Sandy Alcántara (5-13) was the hard-luck loser for the Marlins. He completed seven innings, allowing just one run on nine hits. He struck out six and did not walk a batter.

DODGERS 9, METS 2

Clayton Kershaw snapped a three-start losing streak by tossing 6 1/3 solid innings, and Gavin Lux gave Los

Angeles the lead for good with a three-run homer in the fourth inning as the Dodgers won in New York. The NL West-champion Dodgers have won eight of 11. The loss damaged the playoff hopes for the Mets, who had their four-game winning streak snapped and fell three games behind the Chicago Cubs in the race for the second NL wild card. Kershaw (14-5) ensured he would not lose four straight starts — or four straight decisions — in the regular season for the first time in his career. He allowed two runs on four hits and three walks with five strikeouts.

BLUE JAYS 6, YANKEES 5 (12 INNINGS)

Bo Bichette led off the bottom of the 12th inning with a home run as Toronto defeated visiting New York. Bichette's 11th homer of the season came against Tyler Lyons (1-2). Toronto's Wilmer Font (3-2) pitched two perfect innings to earn the win. Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka allowed four runs on eight hits with six strikeouts and no walks in five innings. Toronto left-hander Anthony Kay, making his second career major league start, allowed five runs, seven hits and one walk while striking out two in 4 1/3 innings.

RAYS 11, ANGELS 4

Tampa Bay blasted four home runs — including three in one inning — to roll past Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. The Rays remained in the second American League wild-card spot, one game ahead of the Indians and a half-game behind the Athletics. Willy Adames, Austin Meadows and Jesus Aguilar homered in the third inning, and Guillermo Heredia went deep to lead off the sixth for the Rays, who have won seven of nine. Angels center fielder Mike Trout was not in the starting lineup for the sixth consecutive game because of a nerve issue in his right foot. He is day-to-day.

ATHLETICS 14, RANGERS 9

Khristian Davis hit two home runs and drove in four runs, Ramon Laureano homered and had four RBIs, and Matt Olson and Marcus Semien also went deep as Oakland extended its winning streak to four games with a victory in Arlington, Texas. Sean Murphy doubled three times and scored four runs, and Sheldon Neuse went 4-for-5 with three RBIs for Oakland. Davis has 19 career homers at Globe Life Park, tying David Ortiz, Carlos Delgado and Tino Martinez for second most in stadium history by a visiting player, one behind Jason Giambi. Shin-Soo Choo and Danny Santana hit three-run homers for Texas.

ASTROS 4, ROYALS 1

Gerrit Cole struck out 11 over eight solid innings, and George Springer hit a three-run home run in the ninth as Houston won at Kansas City. Cole (17-5) allowed one unearned run on four hits and two walks. It was the 18th time he's reached double figures in strikeouts this year, and he leads the major leagues with 292 K's. He



ST LOUIS: Paul Goldschmidt #46 of the St. Louis Cardinals hits his second home run of the game, for three RBIs against the Milwaukee Brewers in the sixth inning at Busch Stadium in St Louis, Missouri. — AFP

has won 13 straight decisions dating back to March, sporting a 1.85 ERA in that stretch. With the game tied at 1-1 in the top of the ninth, Kyle Tucker singled with one out, and pinch hitter Michael Brantley walked. After Josh Reddick struck out, Springer bashed his 35th homer of the season to left-center.

ROCKIES 10, PADRES 8

Trevor Story homered twice among his three hits, and Colorado beat San Diego in Denver. Garrett Hampson also went deep and had three hits, and Nolan Arenado had a home run, his 40th of the season, and a double for Colorado (63-85). Daniel Murphy, Pat Valaika and Drew Butera had two hits each to help Jeff Hoffman (2-6) win for the first time since May 29. Austin Hedges homered and Wil Myers, Josh Naylor and Luis Urias had two hits each for San Diego.

REDS 4, DIAMONDBACKS 3

Joey Votto and Josh VanMeter hit two-run homers, and Luis Castillo went five innings for his 15th victory as visiting Cincinnati won in Phoenix, handing Arizona its sixth straight defeat. Votto had two hits, his fifth multiple-hit game in the last nine. Castillo (15-6) gave up two runs on four hits and three walks while striking out three. He extended his career highs in wins and strike-

outs (21). Eduardo Escobar had two hits and an RBI, and Wilmer Flores had two hits but made a crucial error for the Diamondbacks, who fell 4 1/2 games behind the Cubs for the second NL wild-card spot.

WHITE SOX 9, MARINERS 7

Yoan Moncada went 3-for-5 with a double, a triple and four RBIs as Chicago won at Seattle. Jose Abreu, Adam Engel and Eloy Jimenez homered for the White Sox, who snapped a two-game losing streak. Josh Osich (3-0) got the victory with 2 1/3 scoreless innings of relief. Alex Colome recorded the last four outs for his 27th save. Mariners starter Yusei Kikuchi (6-10) lasted only 2 1/3 innings, giving up five runs on 10 hits with a walk and a strikeout.

ORIOLES 6, TIGERS 2

Trey Mancini homered and drove in three runs, DJ Stewart added a two-run blast, and Baltimore defeated host Detroit. Aaron Brooks (5-8) earned the victory while giving up two runs on seven hits in 5 1/3 innings. Jonathan Villar added two hits, a run and a stolen base for the Orioles. The Orioles' Mason Williams walked twice, scored a run and drove in another in the opener of a four-game series between the teams with the majors' worst records. — Reuters

England 'spurred' by 2015 World Cup flop: Farrell

MIYAZAKI: England captain Owen Farrell said yesterday that memories of the team's horror World Cup four years ago will be a driving force as they seek redemption in Japan. Farrell, part of the Stuart Lancaster-coached England side that became the first host nation to fail to reach the knockout stage, warned they were a different animal this time, and the players could not wait for the tournament to start after settling at their base in Miyazaki, southern Japan.

"It's obviously different — it's four years ago," said the Saracens flyhalf. "A lot of work has been done since then but it will spur people on. What I can say is that we're in a very good place now. We're continuing to build and we're looking forward to this tournament — the lads can't wait to get going."

Prop Ellis Genge, who was not involved in the last World Cup, insisted this England team would not be paralysed by fear, revealing that coach Eddie Jones wants his players to try and play expansive rugby.

"He's definitely told us to just be ourselves," said Genge. "Obviously we didn't have a great tournament last time, but he told us to express ourselves and keep playing the way we've been playing." England, who have completed the Grand Slam and won another Six Nations title since Jones took over after their shambolic 2015 World Cup campaign, arrive in Japan in fine fettle after smashing title rivals Ireland 57-15 and thumping Italy 37-0 in their final two warm-up games. They face Tonga in their opening match in Sapporo on September 22, before further Group C fixtures against the United States, Argentina and France as they look to emulate the England side that won the World Cup in 2003.

HONEYMOON RESORT

Mako Unipola (hamstring) and Jack Nowell (appendix) are not expected to return to the side until the third or fourth game, but Jones looked relaxed at his first official press conference in Japan. "Obviously we had a rigorous travel schedule," said the Australian, referring to the transport chaos triggered by a typhoon that marooned England's squad at Tokyo's Narita airport for five hours after their long-haul flight earlier in the week.

"But we've settled in well and got used to the conditions. We've deliberately only done light training up until now but we will have a more vigorous workout this afternoon," added Jones, who famously led Japan to three victories at the last World Cup. "There's a good feeling in the



MIYAZAKI: England's head coach Eddie Jones (L) and captain Owen Farrell (R) attend a press conference in Miyazaki yesterday, ahead of the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup. — AFP

camp. Now we can begin the serious preparation for the World Cup."

England, among several title contenders including treble-chasing New Zealand, South Africa and northern hemisphere rivals Wales and Ireland, are staying at a sun-kissed honeymoon resort in Miyazaki, where Jones used to subject the Japan team to brutal training sessions that left many of them seeing stars. "I can still see

some of the sweat of the players on the ground," smiled Jones, who created the blueprint for Japan's astonishing 34-32 World Cup upset over South Africa among the palm trees and hibiscus of the luxury retreat. "It's nice to come back, it's a great place to train. The players can play golf, they went to the beach yesterday. It's a place where you can prepare to win and that's why we came here." — AFP

DOJ investigating US Olympic systems handling of sex abuse claims

LOS ANGELES: The US Department of Justice has launched an investigation into sexual abuse in US Olympic sports, becoming the latest federal agency to probe failures in the country's Olympic organizations, the Wall Street Journal reported. The investigations, which focus mainly on USA gymnastics, stems from the Larry Nassar scandal.

Nassar, the longtime USA gymnastics doctor, has been accused of abuse by more than 350 girls and young women, including Olympic champions Gabby Douglas, Aly Raisman and Simone Biles.

Nassar was arrested and charged with federal child pornography and state sexual abuse, and is serving an effective life sentence after a guilty plea. The Journal did not say when the investigation started or when it is expected to wrap up.

But quoting a source, the newspaper said the Department of Justice is looking into, "failures in the Olympic system, writ large, to respond to signs of widespread child abuse."

The Journal said prosecutors have already interviewed some witnesses and have collected documents from the US Center for SafeSport — a body set up two years ago to handle reports of abuse in American sports.

In a news conference with reporters on Friday afternoon, USOPC chief executive Sarah Hirsland and chairperson Susanne Lyons both refused to answer questions about the Journal story.

"Every instance related to potential or actual abuse of athletes warrants thorough investigation. We have cooperated with all government inquiries and will continue to do so," USOPC spokesman Mark Jones said in a prepared statement. Jones then led off the news conference with a warning that any questions about alleged widespread child abuse would be followed by the same answer.

The US Olympic organizations have been rocked by a series of sex abuse scandals for more than a decade. —AFP

Wallabies coach Cheika reveals threats over Folau stance

SYDNEY: Wallabies coach Michael Cheika has said he was personally threatened by fans after vowing not to select Israel Folau over his "disrespectful" anti-gay comments. The deeply Christian player was sacked by Rugby Australia in May for posting on Instagram that "hell awaits" gay people and others he considers sinners.

His firing proved hugely divisive and the star fullback, who played 73 times for the Wallabies, is pursuing court action for unfair dismissal and restraint of trade with a hearing set for next February.

"People were saying all sorts of stuff," Cheika told the Sydney Morning Herald from the Wallabies' training base in Japan ahead of the World Cup, in an interview published Saturday.

"Just threats I was getting; people on the street, some to my face, a couple at some games. It was just crazy stuff." Folau's offending comment followed a similar row last year, when Cheika was reportedly instrumental in fighting to give him a second chance.

But when he aired his controversial views against Cheika was less conciliatory,

ruling out picking him for the Wallabies because "the team is king" and when playing for Australia "we represent everyone".

The coach's stance did not go down well with some fans. While many were outraged by Folau's views, others, including the Christian lobby, defended his right to free speech. Cheika said his dispute with Folau was not personal and he holds nothing against him. "I'm not disappointed in the individual because if that's what he believes, and that's where his passion is, I will never tell someone to hide it," he said.

"I wouldn't say I'm responsible for what's happened. It's just life. But I had to do what was needed for the team." There were reports when the row exploded that it had split the Wallabies dressing room, with some unwilling to take the field with Folau while others — fellow Polynesians who are equally religious — believing their faith was under attack. But Cheika denied any division within the squad. "We had to make some hard decisions. But (claims of a split) was the opposite of the truth. And that's the fundamental thing about great teams: they trust each other, they're united when it's really tough.

"And I think it's shown to be a total untruth with the way this team has played this season. It's been disproved by the spirit and team camaraderie that's been shown." Australia, who lost the 2015 final to New Zealand, open their World Cup campaign against Fiji on September 21. — AFP



TOKYO: Australia's headcoach Michael Cheika poses for a selfie with Wallabies fans after his arrival at the Haneda Airport in Tokyo, ahead of the 2019 Rugby World Cup. — AFP

Sports

Spain's Gasol on verge of rare NBA-World Cup double

Calls for Bogut ban after Australia's crushing World Cup loss

BEIJING: Spain's Marc Gasol is one victory away from a rare feat — winning the NBA crown and a Basketball World Cup in the same year. Only Lamar Odom, a double winner in 2010 with the United States and the Los Angeles Lakers, has ever managed that, according to basketball's governing body FIBA.

Now the centre Gasol, who played a key role in the Toronto Raptors' run to the NBA title, is on the verge of joining him in the history books. The 34-year-old proved his enduring quality by saving Spain in Friday's double overtime victory over Australia to set up a World Cup final against Argentina today in Beijing.

He had 33 points, six rebounds and four assists after stepping up when his country needed him most. Gasol, who also lifted the world crown with Spain in 2006, said he was less interested in his personal landmark and more motivated by what it means for his country.

"I just cherish every moment for what it is," the three-time NBA All-Star told FIBA. "I don't try to double up. I want to give the maximum for every occasion. "It is two completely different situations. I'm going to give my best to win a World Cup for Spain."

Gasol admitted that playing matches every other day in China soon after a long NBA season was tough. "I knew that committing to the national team this summer would not be easy physically because we were so lucky to stretch our (NBA) season and get away with a championship," he said. "But it's completely worth it."

MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

Few predicted a Spain-Argentina final. But quarter-final defeats for reigning two-time champions the United States and title favourites Serbia left the door open for the remainder of the field.

Argentina were convincing 80-66 winners over France in their semi-final with their 39-year-old talisman Luis

Scola propelling them into the showdown with Spain.

Scola finished with 28 points, 13 rebounds and two assists, and was given a huge ovation when he stepped off the court near the end. Argentine coach Sergio Hernandez said there was no secret ingredient to Scola's success, even as middle age approaches.

"He works so hard," said Hernandez, explaining how Scola had locked himself away in his own training camp at the start of the summer. "He was in his house, in the middle of nowhere, for 14 weeks in a row," said Hernandez.

"He made a basketball court and was there was a basketball trainer and a physical trainer." Argentina's only previous World Cup success came as hosts in the inaugural edition in 1950. Also on Sunday.

Meanwhile, outspoken Andrew Bogut faces possible punishment from basketball's governing body FIBA after Australia's acrimonious exit from the World Cup semi-finals in Beijing. Video footage showed Bogut — who was booed by Chinese fans throughout the tournament — swearing several times as he trudged off court after Friday's defeat to Spain.

Bogut, 34, who riled the hosts with a tweet about Chinese champion swimmer Sun Yang in July, appeared to suggest that FIBA and its referees had favoured the Spanish team. Spain won a thrilling semi-final 95-88 after double overtime and will play Argentina, winners over France, in Sunday's final.

Australia and Bogut — if he plays — will face the wrath of much of the Beijing arena when they take on France for the bronze medal. The footage of Bogut swearing repeatedly and making accusations of favouritism was widely featured in Chinese media. Many reports called for FIBA to ban him.

"There's a lot of the guys in the locker room who gave their hearts and souls tonight," said forward Nick Kay. "We definitely left it all out on the court."

best cricket and win," Kohli said at the pre-match news conference in the Himalayan city.

The South African side is looking to regroup after a disastrous World Cup where they were knocked out in the league stage. The two teams will lock horns in a three-Test series following three T20 internationals.

Kohli, 30, also had to take a barrage of questions on the future of senior batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni who has been left out of the T20 squad.

Young Rishabh Pant was picked instead with the selectors looking to groom him as the team's first-choice wicketkeeper.

Kohli had himself triggered fresh rumours on Dhoni's future on Thursday by tweeting a photo of them which many on social media interpreted as a tribute to the senior player. But on Saturday Kohli said he had uploaded the photo casually and denied any hidden meaning.

"I had nothing on my mind. I was sitting at home and I



BEIJING: Aron Baynes (C) of Australia fights for a rebound with Marc Gasol (L) Spain during the Basketball World Cup semi-final game between Australia and Spain in Beijing. — AFP

Australia will need to recover quickly from the crushing disappointment as they chase their first World Cup medal — albeit of the bronze variety — against France.

"There's still a chance to win our first medal and it's going to be great to see how the group responds to a little

bit of adversity," said Kay. "We have a lot of guys who have been through this a lot."

"We are going to come out for this next game and fight and do everything we can to make sure we come home with that medal." — AFP

No mercies as dominant India take on S Africa

DHARAMSALA: India will be ruthless when they take on a new-look South Africa in their den, skipper Virat Kohli warned yesterday as the two sides squared up for the first T20 in Dharamsala.

Fresh from a dominating show against the West Indies in the Caribbean, India are playing their first home series after the World Cup in England earlier this year.

"We want to win every game, whether it's home or away, any format — we just want to go out there, play our

Australia's Ashes hopes fade as England dominate

LONDON: Ben Stokes and Joe Denly batted England into a potentially match-winning position in the fifth and final Ashes Test at the Oval yesterday as Australia's hopes of a series win faded. At tea the home side — desperate to finish their World Cup-winning season on a high by levelling the series at 2-2 — were 193-2, leading by 262 runs.

England captain Joe Root will be wary of declaring too soon though as India last year made 345 batting fourth at the Oval chasing 464. Denly was unbeaten on a Test-best score of 82 while Stokes, playing as a specialist batsman, was 57 not out after passing 400 runs for the series.

England enjoyed two slices of good fortune on a pitch offering little in the way of help for the bowlers as the September sun beat down from a clear London sky. Steve Smith dropped Stokes in the slips when the batsman was on seven and Denly should have been out lbw on 54 but Australia failed to review.

Stokes started his innings slowly but accelerated, reaching his fifty off 89 balls with a huge six off leg-spinner Marcus Labuschagne over wide long-on. The left-handed batsman is second only to Smith in the combined run-scoring charts over the series, albeit more than 300 runs adrift of the Australian's total of 751.

Denly looked increasingly confident as his innings progressed, finding the boundary regularly as the tourists' spirits drooped. Off-spinner Nathan Lyon struck twice in the morning session, removing Rory Burns and Root but Australia failed to make a much-needed breakthrough after lunch.

England are aiming to restore pride even though Australia have already retained the Ashes urn. The tourists came into the match hungry to wrap up their first series victory in England since 2001 after winning last week's fourth Test to take a 2-1 lead but that looks increasingly



LONDON: England's Joe Denly hits a four during play on the third day of the fifth Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at The Oval in London yesterday. — AFP

unlikely. Burns and Denly put on 54 for the first wicket — the highest opening stand of the series for either side — after surviving a torrid four over on Friday evening during which they scratched nine without loss and had Denly dropped by Marcus Harris.

The Australian opener split the webbing in his left hand in the drop and did not take the field on Saturday. He required stitches but is expected to bat. Off-spinner Lyon struck in his third over when Burns bottom-edged a short

normally put out a photograph and it became a news item," Kohli said.

"There was nothing in farthest stretch of my imagination while putting that picture out on social media."

Asked if Dhoni, 38, would be considered for next year's World T20 in Australia, Kohli did not give a direct reply.

"As long as he is available and continues to play, he is going to be very valuable," he said.

South African batsman David Miller said the revamped team under Quinton de Kock had quite a few new faces but they were up for the Indian challenge.

"We've got a lot of energy amongst the squad," said Miller. "There are actually a lot of guys who have played a lot of cricket, in the A side and domestically. So, all of us are really, really experienced in each department and it's just a great stepping stone."

South Africa are ranked third in T20s, one rung ahead of India. — AFP

Chappell fires rare 59 in return to PGA Tour

WASHINGTON: Kevin Chappell made a scintillating return to the US PGA Tour on Friday, joining one of golf's most exclusive clubs by firing an 11-under-par 59 in the second round of The Greenbrier.

Chappell, who had back surgery 10 months ago and is playing his first tour event since last November, posted just the 11th sub-60 round on the US PGA Tour. He had a chance to join Jim Furyk as the only players to card a 58 on tour, but his 11-foot birdie putt at the ninth, his last hole of the day, curled left at the hole.

"All in all couldn't be happier with where I'm at and more proud of myself to do what I did today," said Chappell, who finished the day on 10 under after 36 holes. He was three off the lead shared by Joaquin Niemann, Scottie Scheffler and Robby Shelton.

"Ten months ago I was on the couch and couldn't walk," Chappell said, his voice breaking. "So many people had a lot to do with getting me back out here and getting me competitive."

"I haven't accomplished the goal yet," added the 2017 Texas Open winner. "There's a long weekend to go and win the golf tournament, but it's a step in the right direction."

Chappell's 11 birdies included a record-equalling nine in a row — matching the mark set by Mark Calcavecchia at the 2009 Canadian Open at Glen Abbey.

He teed off on 10 on the par-70 Old White TPC in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, and birdied holes 11 through one. That included a 17-footer to get things going at the 11th and a near 30-footer at 18 before he recovered after finding the rough off the tee at the first — where he drained a 13-footer.

After a birdie at the fifth, he rolled in a 12-footer from the fringe at the seventh — his 16th hole of the day. At that point, Chappell said, "I told my caddy I wanted to shoot 57, just trying to keep the mindset, keep the foot on the gas."

"I hit a poor shot there into eight. Last hole I had a great look at 58, maybe under-read the putt a little bit." Chappell's 59 wasn't the first at The Greenbrier, where Australian Stuart Appleby hit the magic number in the final round to win the inaugural edition in 2010.

It was the first sub-60 round on the PGA Tour since Brandt Snedeker's 59 at the 2018 Wyndham Championship and stole the spotlight on a day when plenty of players were going low.

Chile's Niemann and American Scheffler both posted bogey-free 62s to top the leaderboard on 13-under 127. They were joined by Shelton, who followed up his first-round 62 with a 65.

American Adam Long was alone in fourth after a bogey-free 62 for 128 — two shots in front of Chappell. Scheffler had eight birdies while Niemann had six birdies and an eagle at the par-five 12th.

"I just need to keep playing the way I have been playing," said 20-year-old Niemann, who has yet to make a bogey this week. "I've hit wedges close to the pin, hit my driver well and I'm really happy with the way I've been playing. Just need to keep it that way for the weekend."

The two highest-ranked players in the field for the first event of the 2019-2020 season won't be around for the weekend. World number 10 Bryson DeChambeau fired an even par 70 to miss the cut by two strokes at two-under. Australia's 24th-ranked Marc Leishman withdrew with back trouble after carding a first-round 76. — AFP



BRISTOL: File photo shows Bangladesh batting consultant Neil McKenzie speaking to opener Tamim Iqbal during today's practice session at Bristol.

McKenzie defends Bangladesh batsmen

DHAKA: Bangladesh batting coach Neil McKenzie yesterday defended their under-fire batsmen after yet another sub-par performance. The South Asian side managed to beat Zimbabwe by three wickets in the opening match of the tri-nation Twenty20 series on Friday to end a six-match losing streak in all formats, but needed to be rescued by the unheralded Afif Hossain while precariously positioned at 60-6, chasing 144.

The teenager hit 52 off 26 balls after more experienced players like Shakib Al Hasan, Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das failed on home turf against an inexperienced Zimbabwe attack.

Shakib scored just one run, after conceding 30 runs in an over earlier that allowed Zimbabwe to post a competitive score. "I think international cricket is hard cricket. You can't always score. And

you can see Shakib. He was magnificent in the World Cup," said McKenzie.

"There are lot of guys who played really well in the last six months in international cricket. As soon as they don't score in one or two games... everybody gets excited and upset."

McKenzie also backed Liton and Soumya, who made 19 and four respectively after failing to shine earlier during an embarrassing 224-run Test defeat at home to Afghanistan.

"We have so many good players at the moment and we just need guys to jump out the box and be a lot more consistent," said the former South African opener. "There's no doubt about their ability. It's all about consistency."

Bangladesh will face Afghanistan in their second match of the tournament today. "They are not machines. They are humans. We just get behind our team and back our team and even if we lose tomorrow, we will win the next game," said McKenzie. "We don't come out to lose. Bangladesh come out to play 100 percent positive cricket with no fear." — AFP

Sports

Real Madrid hang on for win after Benzema brilliance

Sergio Ramos unable to play because of a European ban

MADRID: Karim Benzema scored twice yesterday in an outstanding performance for Real Madrid against Levante, although his side were left hanging on for a 3-2 win on the day Eden Hazard made his La Liga debut.

Benzema's goals came just six minutes apart in the first half at a wet Santiago Bernabeu, before Casemiro put Real 3-0 up. However Levante, who had won their previous two outings, made a fight of it in the second half as they pulled goals back through Borja Mayoral and Gonzalo Melero.

"The second half was more difficult for us, but the overall feeling was positive," said coach Zinedine Zidane, whose team had drawn their previous two games. "We have got the three points and we were incredible in the first half, the way we played, the goals, the commitment. We just need to stay focused for the full 90 minutes."

Hazard also came off the bench for the final half-hour to make his first La Liga appearance after a thigh injury had interrupted the start of his Real career following his 100 million-euro (\$110 million) move from Chelsea. The Belgian could now start when Real go to Paris Saint-Germain for their opening Champions League game on Wednesday. "I am happy for him," said Zidane. "He will do us good. He is not ready yet though — he has only trained four times with the team. But when everyone is fit, when we have our rhythm, we will hurt teams."

Gareth Bale will also be available to face PSG after suspension kept him out here, but Sergio Ramos will be unable to play because of a European ban. Zidane was also without the injured Luka Modric here. However, as well as Hazard, fellow summer signing Eder Militao came off the bench in the second half and the former

Porto defender could start in Paris. Real would have won by a greater margin here had it not been for some inspired goalkeeping from Aitor Fernandez, who produced a stunning one-handed stop to keep out a Benzema shot midway through the first half.

However, the hosts went ahead shortly after that when Dani Carvajal crossed from the right for Benzema to bullet home a header. The Frenchman struck again in the 31st minute, with James Rodriguez pouncing when Sergio Postigo headed the ball down into his path, and teeing up Benzema to score his fourth of the campaign.

"I have been hearing for ages after matches that Karim put in his best performance," said Zidane. "That's enough of that! It means that he has been playing well for a while." Benzema was also involved in the build-up to the third goal five minutes before the interval, which concluded with Vinicius Junior squaring for Casemiro to finish.

Levante pulled one back in the 49th minute as Carlos Clerc crossed from the left to the near post where Mayoral — on loan from Real — converted. Benzema then curled a shot against the post, while Vinicius had a goal disallowed and Hazard tested Fernandez, but it was Levante who scored again.

Substitute Melero proved too strong for Carvajal at the far post as he headed in a marvellous cross by Jose Campana, yet Madrid held out. Leaders Atletico Madrid will seek their fourth win in as many La Liga games when they play later at Real Sociedad in the first game at the Basque club's newly refurbished stadium.

Barcelona are also in action at home to Valencia, who this week sacked coach Marcelino Garcia Toral, replacing him with the former Real Madrid assistant coach Albert Celades. — AFP



MADRID: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (L) kicks the ball during the Spanish league football match Real Madrid CF against Levante UD at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday. — AFP

Michael Owen says father was driving force and reveals son's blindness

LONDON: Former European player of the year Michael Owen says he owes his success to his father, who insisted he was given steak for dinner as a child while his four siblings made do with baked beans on toast.

The 39-year-old former Liverpool and England striker told The Times he even climbed into the boxing ring because his father Terry said he needed to "toughen up". Despite this Owen, who won both his bouts, tweeted on Wednesday on his father's 70th birthday he was "the kindest man I ever met".

"I was the only one allowed a steak on a Tuesday," said Owen. "My dad said, 'You're all having beans on toast, Michael's got to have steak because we need to build him up for when he's going

to be a footballer."

"I did feel special, definitely. He was planting the seed constantly," Owen says Terry, who was also a professional footballer with lower league clubs including Chester with whom he reached the League Cup semi-finals — struggled to adjust to life after football so devoted as much of his time as possible to his son.

"He got jobs that would be perfect so he could come and watch me, even in a PE session, a poxy cross-country training run, or playing rugby," said Owen. "My dad would be on the other side of the bush watching me. Unbelievable."

"If he wasn't there I'd still push through the pain barrier, because of my inner will to win, but, Jeez, my dad being there, I can't have him see me coming second. 'I'd prefer to die than my dad to think I'm second best.'"

Owen, who won the Ballon D'Or after Liverpool won the UEFA Cup, FA Cup and League Cup in the 2000/01 campaign, admitted he hated boxing but he did not want to deny his father. "When my dad said, 'You're going boxing, because you need to toughen up' do you think I liked getting punched in the face?," said Owen, who is now a successful thoroughbred racehorse breeder.

"I went to boxing for three years. I bloody hated it. I fought in front of



Michael Owen with his son, has revealed his son suffers from a rare degenerative eye disease.

2,000 people in Anglesey and 2,000 people in Deeside.

"It was the most scary thing in the world, knowing I was going to fight. But I knew I was making dad proud." Owen, who burst onto the international scene when he scored a solo goal in the 1998 World Cup finals against Argentina, said his son James will never grace a football pitch.

"My son's got an eye condition," says

Owen, whose eldest daughter Gemma represents Britain at equestrianism.

"I've never said this. I don't want a big headline. "Clinically, he's blind. He's got Stargardt disease, a degeneration of his retina. "I used to go and watch him and bollock him about his positioning."

"He can't see the ball until it's five yards away. "As much as every father wants their son to play, it is almost a relief to me." — AFP

Solskjaer keen to resolve De Gea contract delay

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer remains confident that goalkeeper David de Gea will commit his future to the club despite entering the final year of his contract.

United hoped the Spanish international would sign a new deal before the season began, but are still waiting for De Gea to put pen to paper.

As it stands, the 28-year-old would be free to speak to any European clubs from January 1 and leave next summer on a free transfer. United have reportedly offered a deal worth around £290,000-a-week (\$363,000) to make De Gea the joint highest earner still at the club, alongside Paul Pogba, but still short of the £400,000-a-week Alexis Sanchez was earning at Old Trafford prior to his loan move to Inter Milan.

"I've obviously not been involved in all the discussions, but I'm pretty confident we'll get this sorted," said the Norwegian. "David has never said anything else to me, other than that he loves this club, he wants to stay here and he's had a fantastic time. "So let's hope we just get it over the line."

Protracted negotiations over De Gea's future were offered as a reason for his poor form towards the end of last season. He was also at fault for Patrick van Aanholt's late winner as Crystal Palace won 2-1 at Old Trafford last month.

But the man crowned United's Player of the Year on four occasions during his eight years in Manchester retains the backing of Solskjaer. "He has had a fantastic time here but of course whenever he concedes a goal, it's headlines, that he should have saved it."

"You have to be resilient and you need to have robust confidence and he's fine. I don't worry about David at all." De Gea was part of the last United team to win the Premier League title in Alex Ferguson's final season in 2013.

Now Solskjaer wants the goalkeeper to be part of his plans as he tries to restore United to their former glory. "My focus and the club's focus is to convince him to stay," he added. "He can see what we are doing and he knows what we're doing."

"We want the best players here and most of the time the ones we want, stay. "There are not many that we want to keep that we don't manage to keep." Solskjaer needs all the help he can get at the moment as United have won only one of their last nine league games stretching back to last season.

They are eighth after taking five points from the first four games and face unbeaten Leicester at Old Trafford. With West Ham and Arsenal to come this month, it is a tricky run of league fixtures for United, but the manager is convinced the team are on the right track.

"There is always pressure here but of course I'm confident in what we are doing," said Solskjaer. "We have a plan and the performances have not told me that we need to change direction. Results, now that is a different matter."

"We can control how we play, how we practice and how we prepare. But there is not a lot we can control when you concede four goals in six chances against us in the last three games. "They are games we should have won and we know that. But we need to score the goals." — AFP

Lyon miss out on top spot after Amiens draw

PARIS: Lyon missed the chance to take top spot in the early Ligue 1 table on Friday, slipping to a 2-2 draw at Amiens despite Moussa Dembele's double as Mathieu Bodmer grabbed a late equaliser for the hosts.

Sylvinho's side have now managed just two points in their last three games and remain a point behind leaders Paris Saint-Germain before the reigning champions' match against Strasbourg on Saturday.

Lyon, who were considered PSG's likeliest challengers for the title at the start of the season, host Thomas Tuchel's men next weekend.

"When you don't play for 90 minutes, you pay the price," Sylvinho, whose team host Zenit Saint Petersburg in the Champions League on Tuesday, told Canal+ Sport. They fell behind in only the seventh minute on Friday, as veteran former Lyon defender Christophe Jallet's left-wing free-kick found its way into the far corner of the net to put Amiens ahead.

But Dembele continued his excellent start to the season by volleying in an equaliser only two minutes later. The 23-year-old former Celtic striker then produced an acrobatic effort to divert home Bertrand Traore's cross in the 34th minute and make it five goals in as many league matches this term.

Martin Terrier was denied a third Lyon goal early in the second period by a fine save from Regis Gurnter, and Lyon were made to pay as Amiens struck in injury time. Substitute Bodmer, 36, diverted the ball into the bottom corner to snatch the home side a point.

"In the second half, simply, we stopped playing... The goal that we conceded at the end was deserved," said Lyon captain Leo Dubois.

Earlier on Friday, Nigerian youngster Victor Osimhen also scored his fifth Ligue 1 goal of the season as Lille claimed a 2-1 win over Angers. The 20-year-old Osimhen netted the opener six minutes before half-time and is now level at the top of the early goalscoring charts in France with Dembele.

Luiz Araujo's fine individual strike in the 53rd minute

doubled the lead for last season's runners-up, who held on to take their third victory of the new campaign despite a late goal from Angers forward Stephane Bahoken.

Osimhen, who scored doubles in previous home victories over Saint-Etienne and Nantes, took advantage of a dreadful error by visiting goalkeeper Ludovic Butelle to grab his goal. Lille next travel to Amsterdam to face Ajax in their Champions League opener on Tuesday.

"If we play the same way at the end of the game when we were leading 2-0 against Ajax on Tuesday, then we will lose the match," said coach Christophe Galtier. "No (heads weren't turning to Amsterdam). Now, yes... It will take a great determination, a great desire to do something because it will be very difficult." Lille are now third in the fledgling table, level on points with leaders PSG and second-placed Rennes. — AFP

EPL STANDINGS

English Premier League table after yesterday's kick-offs (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Liverpool	5	5	0	0	15	4	15
Man City	4	3	1	0	14	3	10
Tottenham	5	2	2	1	11	6	8
Man Utd	5	2	2	1	8	4	8
Leicester	5	2	2	1	6	4	8
Chelsea	5	2	2	1	11	11	8
Arsenal	4	2	1	1	6	6	7
Everton	4	2	1	1	4	4	7
West Ham	4	2	1	1	6	7	7
Southampton	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Crystal Palace	5	2	1	2	3	6	7
Burnley	5	1	2	2	6	7	5
Sheff Utd	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Brighton	5	1	2	2	5	8	5
Bournemouth	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Newcastle	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Aston Villa	4	1	0	3	4	6	3
Norwich	4	1	0	3	6	10	3
Wolves	5	0	3	2	6	10	3
Watford	4	0	1	3	2	8	1

Live		Matches on TV
(Local Timings)		
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Bournemouth FC v Everton FC	16:00	
Watford v Arsenal FC	18:30	
SPANISH LEAGUE		
SD Eibar v RCD Espanyol	13:00	
Deportivo Alaves v Sevilla FC	15:00	
Celta de Vigo v Granada CF	17:00	
Real Valladolid v Osasuna	19:30	
Real Betis v Getafe FC	22:00	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
Genoa CFC v Atalanta	13:30	
Brescia v Bologna FC	16:00	
Parma Calcio 1913 v Cagliari Calcio	16:00	
spal v SS Lazio	16:00	
AS Roma v US Sassuolo Calcio	19:00	
Hellas Verona FC v AC Milan	21:45	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA		
TSG 1899 Hoffenheim v SC Freiburg	16:30	
SC Paderborn 07 v Schalke 04	19:00	
FRENCH LEAGUE		
FC Nantes v Stade Reims	16:00	
Saint Etienne v Toulouse FC	18:00	
AS Monaco FC v Olympique Marseille	22:00	

25 Goldschmidt's grand slam powers Cardinals past visiting Brewers



26 Spain's Gasol on verge of rare NBA-World Cup double



27 Michael Owen says father was driving force and reveals son's blindness



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Senegalese striker Sadio Mane (2L) scores the team's first goal during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Newcastle at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. —AFP

Liverpool stretch Premier League lead

Rashford penalty gives United edge over Leicester as Chelsea, Tottenham hit form

LONDON: Liverpool recovered from a shock Newcastle opener to open up a five-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a 3-1 win at Anfield, as Tottenham and Chelsea bounced back to form with big wins yesterday.

Tammy Abraham's sensational form continued as the English forward scored a hat-trick as Chelsea romped to a 5-2 win at Wolves. Spurs were 4-0 up by half-time against Crystal Palace to record just their second win of the season as Son Heung-min scored twice, while Erik Lamela and an own goal from Patrick van Aanholt rounded off the scoring on a miserable day for the Eagles.

An injury-hit Manchester United coped without Paul Pogba to inflict Leicester's first defeat of the season as Marcus Rashford scored the only goal from the penalty spot in a 1-0 win at Old Trafford. United join Tottenham and Chelsea on eight points from five games, but Liverpool protected the only 100 percent record in the league by reacting to a slow start in style.

Manchester City can close the gap at the top to two points with victory later at Norwich. Jetro Willems fired Newcastle in front on seven minutes to leave the European champions trailing at Anfield for the first time since March.

However, any lasting rift between Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah from Liverpool's last outing away to Burnley — when Mane was upset at the Egyptian for his greediness in front of goal — was forgotten as they combined to score all three goals for the hosts.

Mane fired into the top corner to start the revival, but it was the introduction of Roberto Firmino off the bench for the injured Divock Origi that truly turned the tide in Liverpool's favour. The Brazilian's through ball was spilled by Martin Dubravka to allow Mane a simple task for his second just before half-time, and another brilliant Firmino flick teed up Salah to seal the points 18 minutes from time.

"I started enjoying after 25 minutes, around about when we arrived finally in the game," said Liverpool

manager Jurgen Klopp. "Second half we scored only one goal, but we played really good football and I liked it a lot. There were a few moments I enjoyed, not a lot but a few and enough to be the deserved winner today."

Frank Lampard has endured a difficult start on his return to Stamford Bridge as manager, but he enjoyed his finest day so far in charge of the Blues with his faith in youth again fully vindicated.

Fikayo Tomori, 21, fired the visitors in front at Molineux with his first goal for the club before Abraham took over to take his tally to seven in his last three games with three brilliant finishes from close range.

Abraham's busy afternoon was not over as he then turned into his own net and Patrick Cutrone cut Wolves' deficit to two before Mason Mount rounded off the scoring for Chelsea late on.

Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino hoped that the end of the European transfer window would

settle his squad and the Champions League finalists looked more like their old selves by tearing apart Palace from the off.

Son was the star of the show as the South Korean opened the scoring then finished off a fine team move by volleying home Serge Aurier's cross after Van Aanholt deflected a cross into his own net.

Harry Kane was unable to build on his goalscoring form for England, but did play a part in the fourth as his cross was turned home by Lamela. United had to suffer far more for just a second win in 10 league matches at home to the Foxes as Rashford shrugged off his recent miss from the spot against Palace to convert a penalty on eight minutes after he had been brought down by Caglar Soyuncu.

Brighton edged out Burnley 1-0 at the Amex thanks to Neil Maupay's winner early in the second-half. Southampton were also 1-0 victors at Sheffield United courtesy of a brilliant strike from Moussa Djenepo. — AFP

World's top 10 commit to new ATP Cup in Australia

SYDNEY: Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer are among the global top 10 who will play for their countries at the new ATP Cup in Australia in January, organisers said yesterday. Andy Murray, returning from hip surgery, will also compete, with his protected world ranking of two giving Britain entry to the tournament even though they are outside of the 24-team qualifying cut-out.

In total, 27 of the world's top 30 male tennis players have committed to the event. "We're delighted to see such a star-studded player field lining up," said ATP president Chris Kermode. "Our

belief was that week one in the calendar, together with Tennis Australia, would work best for player scheduling, and today's announcement is a confirmation of that," he added.

"Having the top players competing in this new global event is critical, and the ATP Cup looks set to kick off the ATP Tour season in a big way in 2020." The innovative championship, from January 3-12 in the lead-up to the Australian Open Grand Slam, offers Aus\$22 million (\$15 million) in prize money and a maximum of 750 singles and 250 doubles ATP rankings points.

It will see nations split into six groups, with eight teams emerging from the round-robin stage to compete in the knockout phase until one team is left standing.

Sydney will host the finals, along with group games which will also be held in Brisbane and Perth. The top 18 countries in the ATP Cup standings will all take part, including the United States, France, Spain, Japan, Germany and South Africa.

Host Australia has been handed a wildcard, with the remaining five nations yet to be finalised. Each team will have up to five players, with ties comprising two singles matches and one doubles. The top two players in the world rankings for each country have qualified, with the remaining three decided by November 13.

The draw, which will determine where the sport's top stars start their 2020 season, takes place at the Sydney Opera House tomorrow. The season-opening tournament will be held on the back of a revamped Davis Cup, run by the International Tennis Federation, which will take place in November, bringing together 18 nations in one place for a week at the end of the 2019 season.

ATP Cup qualified teams (based on the ranking of their top singles player, and commitment to play, as of September 9): Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Russia, Austria, Germany, Greece, Japan, Italy, France, Belgium, Croatia, Argentina, Georgia, South Africa, USA, Canada, Britain, Australia (wildcard). — AFP

Neymar scores on return for PSG

PARIS: Neymar scored a spectacular last-gasp goal for Paris St Germain that was greeted with more cheers than boos in a 1-0 Ligue 1 win over Racing Strasbourg yesterday on his first appearance of the season following a failed transfer to Barcelona.

The Brazil forward found the back of the net with a bicycle kick two minutes into stoppage time, drawing mostly applause but a few boos from the Parc des Princes faithful as he appeared to have put the transfer saga behind him. PSG lead the standings with 12 points from five games ahead of their Champions League match against Real Madrid on Wednesday, for which Neymar will be suspended. The result left Strasbourg in 18th place on three points. — AFP