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Rocket blasts off with first Arab to International Space Station

Stars in its eyes, UAE celebrates its first astronaut in space

BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan: A Soyuz rocket blasted off yesterday from the Baikonur space center in Kazakhstan carrying an Emirati who is set to make history as the first Arab on the International Space Station. The Russian rocket carrying the three-member crew - including Hazzaa Al-Mansoori of the United Arab Emirates - took off as scheduled at 1357 GMT. Mansoori, 35, is accompanied by Russia's Oleg Skripochka and NASA astronaut Jessica Meir. They are expected to dock at the station just under six hours after launch.

"Everything continues to go smoothly for this ride," a commentator said on NASA television seven minutes after the launch. Russia's Roscosmos space agency said on Twitter that the spacecraft had successfully reached orbit. Mansoori received support from around the world before what he described as his "dream" mission. He was seen showing his fist in the air before the launch.

In Dubai, a crowd gathered at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre to watch the launch, erupting in cheers and dubbing Mansoori a national hero. Some carried UAE flags. Dubai's iconic Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest skyscraper, lit up the moment of blast-off.

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(Left) International Space Station (ISS) crewmember, UAE astronaut Hazzaa Al-Mansoori, waves as he boards the Soyuz MS-15 spacecraft at the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan yesterday. (Right) People wave Emirati flags as they watch screens showing the spacecraft lifting off at Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre in Dubai yesterday. — AFP

Iqama renewal to go online

KUWAIT: The interior ministry is planning to launch online residency renewals next month, starting with expats holding article 18 residency permits, whose number is over three million. The move allows the renewal of an expat's residency and that of his wife, children and maids online without the need to go to residency departments. Sources said with the support of the economic committee at the Council of Ministers, the electric link between the interior ministry, manpower authority, civil information and health ministry is complete. The new system will provide expats several online services, most notably residency renewal, while another service will be introduced later to issue visit visas for parents, spouses and children online. — Al-Qabas

Trump asked Ukraine to probe Biden

WASHINGTON: A White House transcript released yesterday confirmed that President Donald Trump asked his Ukrainian counterpart to probe political rival Joe Biden - a day after Democrats seized on the explosive allegation to launch an impeachment process. The official memorandum of a July 25 phone call with President Volodymyr Zelensky shows Trump saying US Attorney General Bill Barr and the president's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani would be in touch about probing Biden and his son's activities related to Ukraine.

"There's a lot of talk about Biden's

son, that Biden stopped the prosecution and a lot of people want to find out about that so whatever you can do with the attorney general would be great," Trump said. Democrats, who opened formal impeachment proceedings against the president on Tuesday, are investigating whether he pressured a foreign government to look into a political opponent, and if he used a delayed \$400 million aid package as leverage.

As Barack Obama's vice president, Biden and other Western leaders pressured Ukraine to get rid of the country's top prosecutor, Viktor Shokin, because he was seen as not tough enough on corruption. "Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution so if you can look into it... It sounds horrible to me," Trump told Zelensky in the call.

The transcript, which is a summary rather than a word-for-word record, did

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WASHINGTON: Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer holds a transcript of the phone call between US President Donald Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky, during a press conference at the US Capitol yesterday. — AFP

Mourides build biggest mosque in West Africa



DAKAR: Members of the Mouride Brotherhood clean the road in front of the Great Mosque of the Mourides yesterday before its inauguration. — AFP

DAKAR: Senegal's influential Mouride Brotherhood will inaugurate tomorrow a 30,000-capacity mosque in the capital Dakar, touted as the largest in West Africa and rivaling its opulent peers in Arab nations. Work on the Massalikul Jinaan ("The Paths to Paradise") mosque began a decade ago on a swampy six-hectare site in the poor area of Bopp, on land donated by the government of this 90-percent Muslim nation. The name is derived from the title of a poem by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke, the 19th-century founder of the Brotherhood, who is revered by followers as a Sufi saint.

Headquartered in the city of Touba,

where Bamba is entombed, the movement is a pillar of Senegal's reputation for religious tolerance. The Mouride philosophy - the name derives from the Arabic word for "one who desires to learn" - preaches service to humanity in addition to upholding the principles of Islam. The movement also wields considerable economic and political clout, in Senegal and in neighboring Gambia. With a Carrara marble exterior and boasting five minarets - the tallest 78 m high - the mosque has a capacity of 15,000 worshippers inside, and another 15,000 on an outside esplanade.

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Iran rules out talks; US ramps up sanctions

UNITED NATIONS: Iran's president yesterday closed the door on meeting Donald Trump despite last-minute European efforts to ease tensions as the United States again ramped up punishing sanctions. French President Emmanuel Macron had shuttled between his US and Iranian counterparts over two days at the United Nations, trying to arrange a historic encounter that he hoped could reduce the risk of all-out war in the Middle East.

But Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, addressing the UN General Assembly, said he would refuse talks so long as the United States maintains its economic pressure. "I would like to announce that our response to any negotiation under sanctions is negative," Rouhani said. He

dismissed the idea of a photo-op with Trump, who is fond of drama and held three made-for-television meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "Memento photos are the final stage of negotiations, not the first one," he said.

He doubted the sincerity of the Trump administration to negotiate, pointing to officials' boasts of applying "the harshest sanctions in history" against Iran. "How can someone believe them when the silent killing of a great nation, and pressure on the lives of 83 million Iranians, especially women and children, are welcomed by American government officials? The Iranian nation will never, ever forget and forgive these crimes and these criminals," he said.

Trump had already ruled out easing economic pressure and, hours before Rouhani's speech, his administration said it was stepping up sanctions. On Trump's last scheduled day at the annual UN summit of world leaders, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States would punish Chinese companies

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NEW YORK: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani addresses the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters yesterday. — AFP

Toilet row: Modi ignores protests to collect award

NEW YORK: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday brushed aside an outcry from human rights activists to receive an award from the Gates Foundation in New York for his efforts to end open defecation. The decision to honor the Indian leader provoked several withering op-eds and the ire of three Nobel prize winners, citing rising

attacks against minorities under Modi's tenure, while British-Asian actor Jameela Jamil and Riz Ahmed who had been due to attend dropped out.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation said it respected the critics' views but defended its decision, saying sanitation is a neglected issue and India's program can serve as a model for other countries. "I dedicate this award to all those Indians who transformed the 'Clean India Mission' into a people's movement and started giving cleanliness the highest priority in their daily lives," Modi said after collecting the award from billionaire philanthropist and Microsoft founder Bill Gates.

India's government says it has built more than 100 million toilets under a \$20 billion initiative begun in 2014 to address the issue of open defecation, particularly in rural areas, a major public health issue in the country. Under Modi's plan, tribal households get \$200 each for building latrines.

But ahead of the ceremony, Nobel Peace Prize winners Mairead Maguire, Tawakkol Abdel-Salam Karman and Shirin Ebadi said that under Modi's leadership, "India has descended into dangerous and deadly chaos that has consistently undermined human rights, democracy. "This is particularly troubling to us as the stated mission of your

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Local

Qatari Amir appreciates Kuwait Amir's mediation in Gulf crisis

Sheikh Sabah receives call from Turkish president

NEW YORK: Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani renewed gratitude to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his sincere efforts to resolve the Gulf crisis. In his address to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Sheikh Tamim reiterated that unconditional dialogue based on mutual respect is the only exit from the crisis between Qatar and other Gulf states. "Restoring stability in the Gulf region requires collective efforts on the regional and international scales," he said, stressing the need to lift the embargo slapped on his country. On the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, he said the Israeli occupation authorities persist in besieging Gaza Strip, and expanding the Jewish settlements in the

Palestinian West Bank and the Syrian Golan Heights "in blatant defiance of the UN."

"The State of Qatar will continue offering political and humanitarian support to the Palestinian people until they regain their legitimate rights," Sheikh Tamim underscored. Regarding Syria, he said it was high time to solve the Syrian crisis in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions in a way that could maintain the country's territorial integrity and end the grave crimes being committed against the Syrian people. Sheikh Tamim termed these crimes as "a big shame to humanity." Meanwhile, he called on the United States to lift Sudan from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism after the political changes in the country, expressing confi-

dence in the ability of the Sudanese people to overcome the challenges of the transitional stage.

On the conflict in Yemen, Sheikh Tamim renewed support to the UN-led humanitarian efforts and mediation to end the conflict, as well as the efforts to relaunch the political process, and protect the country's national unity and territorial integrity. On Libya, the Qatari Amir blasted the attacks being launching on the capital city of Tripoli by rebel militias, noting that such militias committed war crimes against Libyan civilians. He underlined the need to create a regional security system to protect the stability of Middle East and the Gulf region in particular.

Separately, His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call yesterday from the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Erdogan inquired about His Highness the Amir's health condition after recovering from a recent setback and undergoing regular medical checkups, wishing good health and wellness for His Highness. His Highness the Amir expressed deep gratitude and appreciation to the Turkish President's good sentiments. His Highness also appreciated such a brotherly gesture, which depicts depth of the good relationship between the two countries and people. His Highness the Amir wished Erdogan abundance in health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for Turkey and the Turkish people. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani speaks at the United Nations General Assembly yesterday in New York City. — AFP

Sheikh Nawaf receives Acting Premier, officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan palace yesterday Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received Deputy Prime Minister, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs, and Acting Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh, as well as Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Mahmoud Abdulsamad Bushehri. — KUNA

DGCA president elected to senior ICAO post

WASHINGTON: President of Kuwait's Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah has been elected as First Vice-President of the General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), during its meetings in Montreal, Canada. The election of Sheikh Salman took place as ICAO General Assembly members were discussing a host of issues like safe integration of drones into airspace management, establishing a globally consistent approach to passengers with disabilities, and implementing modern and convenient measures for passenger identification. Saad Al-Enezi, DGCA spokesman, said in a statement in Washington, DC. He added that General Assembly members would also dis-



WASHINGTON: The Kuwaiti delegation to the meeting, led by DGCA President Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah (center). — KUNA

cuss means of implementing an international legal framework to manage unruly passengers, and how to reduce vulnerability of Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) to harmful interference. Enezi said the meeting would touch upon implementation of a

global plan for aviation security as well as UN Security Council Resolution 2309 regarding terrorist threats against international peace and security. Kuwait has been chairing the Arab Organization of Civil Aviation since May 2018. — KUNA

Civil Defense ready for rainy season

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Civil Defense Committee stressed taking all necessary preparations and measures in cooperation with the relevant authorities in the country to cope with the expected rainy season. This came in a statement issued by the committee after a tour by officials from the Interior Ministry, National Guard, Fire Service Directorate, and the Ministry of Public Works to inspect areas that have been exposed to the accumulation of rainwater that fell in the country last year. The statement quoted the committee Deputy Chairman, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lt Gen Essam Al-Naham as saying that Civil Defense, on the instructions of Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, took all



needed measures and preparations. Naham noted that the committee stands equipped and ready and continues to communicate with various state bodies to face any emergency. The tour was attended by Undersecretary of

the National Guard Lt Gen Hashem Al-Rifai, Director General of the Fire Service Directorate Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Makrad and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works Ismail Ahmad. — KUNA

Palestine calls int'l community to bear responsibility towards Israel violations



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah meets with the Ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait Rami Ehsan Tahboub. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah met recently with the Ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait Rami Ehsan Tahboub. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry released a statement on the occasion of the beginning of the 74th meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, and the 42nd meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. It indicated that the meetings are held as Israeli occupation forces escalate their "ferocious campaign against our people all over the occupied Palestinian territories," including violent escalation against protestors in Gaza, and "widening the scope of night raids on many areas, while spreading horror and terror among citizens."

Israeli forces also launched arrest campaigns against Palestinians in Eisawiya, Silwan, Azzon, Aizariya, Ramallah, Beereh and many other Palestinian cities and towns, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said, noting that paramedics were also targeted in Aizariya. "[Israeli forces] shredded cities and towns with check points set up at entrances and exits," it said. "In addition, gangs of settlers use their bulldozers to scrap farm lands in the town of Terosayya North of Ramallah."

"The occupation continues its excavation near Bab-al-Amoud and the fences of the old city with an attempt to change the historical and legal reality there while giving Bab-al-Amoud Hebrew names," the statement further reads. "This continued dangerous escalation proves yet again the occupation's disregard of all international laws and resolutions, and flagrant disregard of the UN's ability, its departments and councils to stop its violations and grave crimes against the international law," the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said. "This compels the UN to bear its responsibilities and fulfill its commitments towards alleviating the suffering of our people."

"The ministry expresses its utter discontent towards the international community's inaction towards the implementation of international legitimacy, particularly resolution 2334, provide international protection to our people, and force Israel as an occupation force to end its occupation of the state of Palestine's territories including the occupied East Jerusalem," the statement indicates. "The ministry holds the international community fully responsible for its failure to end the occupation and settlements for being a continued crime against our people."



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of Nepal to Kuwait Durga Prasad Bhandari hosted a reception at Crowne Plaza Hotel recently on the occasion of his country's 'Constitution and National Day.' Senior officials, diplomats, a cross section of the Nepal community and media personalities attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Pompeo, GCC-Jordan-Iraq FMs focus on bolstering cooperation, facing challenges

Agreement on the need to counter Iran's destabilizing behavior in the region



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah takes part in the GCC-US-Jordan-Iraq meeting. — KUNA



Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attends a meeting on Syria.

NEW YORK: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, GCC counterparts from Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE as well as Iraq and Jordan held a meeting in New York, focusing on bolstering cooperation and facing challenges on regional and international scales. State Department Spokesperson Morgan Ortugus said in a statement that Pompeo emphasized, during a Ministerial meeting on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York, "the importance of regional coordination to confront the region's challenges, including through multilateral initiatives such as the International Maritime Security Construct and the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA)." Pompeo praised "the territorial defeat of (IS) in Iraq and Syria but warned that (IS) remains a threat and vigilance is still necessary."

Participants agreed on the need to bring peace and stability to Syria and Yemen and to ensure a secure and prosperous Iraq," the statement added. The statement affirmed that the "GCC and the United States stressed the need to counter Iran's destabilizing behavior in the region." Pompeo and the Foreign Ministers "had productive discussions on MESA - based on a united GCC - to advance prosperity, security, and stability in the region." Furthermore, the US top diplomat "thanked the foreign ministers for their partnership with the United States."

Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attended the meeting, accompanied by Ambassador of Kuwait to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The meeting was called upon by Pompeo and was held on the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled attended a meeting concerning the latest developments in Syria. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled was invited to the meeting by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and

Vice President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini. The meeting discussed international efforts to ease the humanitarian pains of the Syrian people and ways to overcome the conflict.

Furthermore, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met separately with his Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Senegalese counterparts — Gedu Andargachew, Osman Saleh Mohammed, and Amadou Ba respectively. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled discussed with the officials ways to bolster bilateral relations between Kuwait and the officials' respective countries and also touched on the latest developments within the regional and international arenas. Several officials, including head of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's office Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, and others, attended the meetings.

In the meantime, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met with Dr

Ghassan Salame, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to supporting the UN-led efforts to stabilize sisterly Libya. He applauded the strenuous efforts being made by Dr Salame in this regard, including the recently unveiled plan of action to restore peace and security across Libya. The UN envoy meanwhile thanked Kuwait for its support to the UN peacemaking efforts worldwide.

Separately, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met with Ralph Gonsalves, prime minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, to discuss the friendly ties and ways to promote cooperation in various fields. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled congratulated the Vincentian prime minister on the Caribbean country's winning of non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for 2020-2021. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh meets with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence R Silverman. — KUNA

Cabinet Affairs Minister meets US Ambassador

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh discussed yesterday with the Ambassador of the US to Kuwait Lawrence R Silverman means of enhancing cooperation and distin-

guished bilateral ties between both nations in various fields and at all levels. The meeting was held at Seif Palace, on the occasion of the ending of the diplomat's tenure in the country, as both parties tackled issues of common interest. — KUNA

WHO official lauds Kuwait's health support to Yemen

GENEVA: Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Yemen Altaf Musani lauded yesterday the role played by Kuwait in supporting healthcare in Yemen. Musani's statement came after his meeting with Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and International organizations headquarters in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim. Kuwait is committed to its humanitarian role and continues to provide vital aids to Yemenis, affirmed the WHO official, indicating that the new batch of support will be directed towards supporting hospitals and health clinics in Yemen. The Kuwaiti aid will also address the shortage of medi-

cine and the spread of contagious ailments such as Cholera, he revealed. Meanwhile, Ghunaim said that Kuwait, as a global center of humanitarian aid, would continue to provide much-needed aid to the people of Yemen in accordance to the directives of Kuwaiti leadership. The new batch of support comes in line with the pledge made by Kuwait in the UN donors' conference for Yemen this spring, he added. Ghunaim indicated that he was glad that the Kuwait hospital in Yemen was one of the major operational health facilities in the war-torn country, hoping that the Kuwaiti-funded hospitals will attend to the needs of Yemenis. — KUNA



GENEVA: Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim meets with WHO Representative in Yemen Altaf Musani. — KUNA



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Local



Flowers sent by Information Ministry Undersecretary Muneera Al-Huwaidi



Flowers sent by Zain.



Flowers sent by Asdaa BCW



Flowers sent by Ooredoo



Flowers sent by Wavemake

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times received more flowers from well-wishers yesterday as it marked the 58th anniversary of its establishment in 1961. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain offers free Internet coverage at Special Education schools' dormitories

As part of its special needs support strategy

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its collaboration with the Ministry of Education to offer free Internet coverage at the Special Education schools' dormitories in Hawally, which are used by over 100 students with special needs throughout the year.

The company received the representatives of the Ministry of Education at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, with the attendance of Zain Kuwait's Government and Large Segment Director Basima Al-Enezi, Zain Kuwait's Government and Large Segment Senior Manager Abdullatif Al-Kandari, and MoE's Deputy Department Manager of Special Education Schools Dr Salman Abdullah Al-Lafi.

Zain offered full coverage of all dormitories of the Special Education Schools in Hawally, which are used by over 100 students with special needs from various GCC countries. The company offered free Internet to give students the opportunity to easily stay in touch with their families overseas while completing their education in Kuwait. Students can also benefit from the enormous amount of academic information

available on the Internet to support their studies. In addition, school officials, teachers, and social workers who operate in the dormitories can also benefit from the free coverage Zain provides.

Zain is keen on reinforcing its partnerships with the many public entities - including the Ministry of Education - that cater to people with special needs and their families within the community all year round. The company is proud to have adopted this initiative that caters to the education of this valued segment of the society.

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

Zain dedicates a great part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards people with special needs. The company recently concluded its Strategic Partnership of the Ideal Mother Award, organized by Al-

Kharafi Activity Kids Center, to recognize distinguished mothers of children with special needs. The company also participated in a special event organized by the Public Authority of the Disabled on the occasion of the International and Arab Day of People with Special Needs. In addition, Zain sponsored the annual charity marathon organized by Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network (FSHN) and aimed at supporting children with special needs in Kuwait. Zain also regularly conducts visits to social care centers during multiple seasons all-year round in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

Al-Noor Institute's dormitories welcome GCC students with all auditory, visual, mental, and mobile needs, as part of the State of Kuwait's belief in the importance of strengthening relationships with Arabian Gulf countries. Students with special needs are welcomed every year to complete their education at the MoE's Special Education Schools. The students are well-cared for and receive a wide range of services, including social, mental, medical, and entertainment services, through a detailed plan put by the Student Care management.



Al-Enezi, Al-Kandari, and Al-Lafi at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC)

Dasman Institute initiates zebrafish research platform

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), which was founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), with the support of the Kuwait Ministry of Health and in partnership with Montreal Medical International and the University of Montreal, have successfully initiated a first-of-its-kind zebrafish research platform in the Gulf region. Under the vision of Professor Fahd Al-Mulla [Chief Scientific Officer], the DDI's Animal and Imaging Core Facility led by Dr Ashraf Al Madhoun [Senior Scientist and Head], Dr Sardar Sindhu [Scientist II and Manager] and their team are working closely with Professor Pierre Drapeau [Neuroscientist and Zebrafish model expert] to develop the DDI zebrafish research platform using cutting-edge molecular biology techniques and protocols.

Zebrafish are a small and robust fish who share nearly 70 percent of their genetic code with humans which makes them an ideal research model for genetic and disease studies. The fish have many special traits and with the right settings can produce hundreds of fast-growing offspring every week, which allows scientists many ways to study embryonic development, organ regeneration, and genetic-based diseases. Zebrafish have already been used to unlock some of the mysteries behind mus-



sular dystrophy, cardiomyopathy, embryonic developmental, and are in use to study the development of many diseases including diabetes and cancer.

As DDI seeks to establish itself as a leading research facility in Kuwait and the GCC region, the zebrafish laboratory will be pursuing research on genes and genetic

variation which will help answer some of the core questions behind some of the most pressing issues in diabetes, obesity and cancer. With this platform now established, DDI will soon invite the leading researchers from across the GCC region to pursue their own research with the support of DDI zebrafish laboratory and team.

Kuwait confirms necessity of unifying Arab action

CAIRO: Chairman of the General Secretaries of Arab Parliaments, Secretary General of Kuwait National Assembly Allam Al-Kandari affirmed yesterday the necessity of unifying working procedures of Arab parliaments' administrations. Standardization of procedures "helps create a working environment that leads to a distinguished parliamentary performance and support parliament members to play their role to the fullest," said Kandari in a speech he delivered before the Seventh Annual Conference of the General Secretariat of Arab Parliaments. He noted to a new unified practical guide for legislative drafting in Arab parliaments that was formed by a specialized committee after a year of discussions. In his speech, he called for providing modern and accurate information that can be relied upon in making good administrative decisions at the level of Arab parliaments. Kandari expressed hope that the conference's discussions would open new horizons for research and study and come up with important recommenda-

tions and suggestions that can be adopted in practice. He also hoped that "constructive" cooperation with the Arab Parliamentary Training Center will play an active role on this issue.

Meanwhile, Secretary General for Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Fayeze Al-Shawabkeh stressed in a similar speech on urgent need to develop parliamentary institutional performance through development of performance of the general secretariats of Arab parliaments. Shawabkeh pointed out importance of continuing to enhance political, economic and cultural cooperation between Arab countries in order to contribute to building a joint Arab work system. He stressed on the need to keep up with requirements of the current modern stage and meet aspirations of the Arab peoples and their national parliaments in the face of challenges and difficulties.

The General Secretaries of Arab Parliaments is expected to hold a workshop today to discuss a working paper on the executive rules for administrative affairs in Arab parliaments. — KUNA

Local

Disagreements on final solution could force delay of proposed bedoons' law

Court adjourns blogger's case to Oct 16; sentences teacher with fake degree

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A proposed law to end the plight of bedoons (stateless) might be delayed till after November and probably January, said parliamentary sources, justifying the possible delay to disagreement concerning the final solutions suggested for the problem. The sources added that the Central Agency of Illegal Residents insists that bedoons who deserve citizenship are less than 5,000 while most bedoons actually hold other countries' citizenships and only claim to be stateless just to stay in Kuwait and enjoy privileges. The sources added that, on the other hand, another team believes that proving that an uncle or cousin holds another country's nationality does not necessarily mean that a bedoon holds the same nationality. Moreover, the sources said lawmakers strongly reject a proposal to fund bedoons and help them get other countries' citizenships.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had announced last July that under directions from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a comprehensive and just solution will be struck to end the decades-old problem of thousands of stateless people or bedoons in a way that wouldn't "inhibit their national identity rights." Insisting that the solution will not undermine Kuwait's national identity

and will not be at the cost of Kuwaiti citizenship, Ghanem said that the parliament will be called to approve legislation either early next term starting in late October or could be invited to an emergency session during the summer recess.

In other news, the criminal court yesterday adjourned the case of a Kuwaiti blogger known as Ateej Al-Mesayyan for another hearing on Oct 16, 2019. Security sources said yesterday's hearing was limited to the defendants' attorneys and that the court refused

Homosexual jailed for entering ladies' salon

releasing the main suspect - a bedoon - and others accused with the same charges of instigating the murder of officials at the Central Agency of Illegal Residents and calling for an uprising against local security forces. The court also said that the suspect has several Twitter accounts that he uses in collaboration with others abroad.

In another case, the criminal court sentenced a female Kuwaiti teacher to prison for presenting a fake master's degree in psychology to the Ministry of Education. Meanwhile, the court of appeal yesterday sentenced a homosexual Kuwaiti to two years with labor for entering a ladies' salon disguised as a woman and kissing the owner, pretending to be a woman.

The court of appeals also fined MP Saadoun Hammad Al-Otaibi's nephew KD 5,000 for charging into his uncle's diwaniya and posting a video he



The National Assembly.

recorded there while insulting his uncle and other parliamentary election candidates. And in an attempt to escape punishment, a Kuwaiti who was arrested for planting cannabis at his house told the court yesterday that he had no intentions of trading in the drug. "I planted it for my own use," he told the judge.

Separately, General Customs Department's Director

Jamal Al-Jalawi announced that air cargo inspectors managed to foil an attempt to smuggle a number of Pharaonic items hidden in a 65-kg parcel. Jalawi added that the case was referred to relevant Kuwaiti authorities pending returning the items to Egypt after experts from the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters examine the five confiscated items.

Mainstream media's role essential amidst fake news: US envoy

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: US Ambassador Lawrence Silverman hosted a reception to welcome the US Embassy's new Press Attaché to Kuwait Stewart Beitz. "For me, it's also one last chance to see some of the friends and partners that I've had the privilege to get to know over the last three years," said Silverman, whose tenure is ending. "The US Embassy is very fortunate to enjoy a close relationship with you, the media professionals who educate and inform the Kuwaiti public on the issues that matter most to them," he added.

Silverman thanked local media partners for the last three years of media coverage, interviews and pull-asides. "I hope that your ratings and readership did not suffer too much whenever you covered one of our events," he quipped.

He said the role of the mainstream media cannot be compared to social media nowadays. "I know that the role of mainstream media did not diminish even a bit with the advent of social media - in fact, your role is more essential for verification. You are the ultimate source of truthfulness amidst fake news and mis-

representations and misinformation. You can interview both sides and present them to people in a more balanced and unbiased way," the envoy said. "Thanks to you, we have helped the Kuwaiti public better understand not only US government policies, but also American society and values," he pointed out.

Silverman added that both the American and Kuwaiti constitutions enshrine freedom of the press and expression. Kuwaitis should be proud of their free and active press, vibrant civil society and the most democratic parliament in the region. "Kuwait's diwaniya culture of frank and open discussion is truly unique, and you see its positive effects on the media environment. While it saddens me to leave, I will be departing with very fond memories of Kuwait and its people. Most of all, I am very proud of the things we achieved during my tenure," he said.

The ambassador pointed out that Kuwait and the US have strengthened their relationship in areas including defense cooperation, trade, investment, education and consular affairs. "We also signed agreements and implemented programs that will deliver practical ben-



Lawrence Silverman



Stewart Beitz

efits to the people of Kuwait, such as improving the teaching of English, strengthening counter-terrorism capabilities and making international travel safer," he said.

"With our Kuwaiti partners, we worked on initiatives to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. The recent passage by the National Assembly of a new intellectual property rights law should, if implemented properly, help incentivize and protect Kuwaiti artists and innovators who are working to diversify the economy and attract greater investment," Silverman said. He noted that the embassy's Public Affairs Section is expanding people-to-people exchanges that are the foundation of the US-Kuwait relationship.

He also introduced the new press

attache Beitz, who has spent the past two years studying Arabic. He's a veteran of the United States Navy and also worked for several years at General Electric as an engineer. Beitz also served at the US embassies in Honduras and Mexico and while serving in Honduras, Beitz was recalled to active duty naval service and was part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Djibouti and Uganda.

"After that, he served in the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and the Office of International Information Programs," Silverman said. Beitz thanked Silverman for the great words and warm welcome, saying he is looking forward to working with the local press during his stint as press attache.

Farwaniya residency department changes working hours

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior's relations and security information department said official working hours of the companies' department at Farwaniya residency affairs will be changed from evening to morning - from 7:00 am to 2:30 pm. All concerned parties should comply with the new times for speedy processing of transactions.

In other news, ASTM International organized a workshop in cooperation with Kuwait Municipality in the field of construction codes in the presence of president of the organization and several international organizations and GCC representatives at the Regency Hotel titled "sustainable standards and codes in construction." US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman thanked Kuwait Municipality, led by Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi for holding the event. He extended his greetings to the leaders as well as the speakers, who are experts in construction.

Silverman said the workshop is the result of coordination and cooperation since five years in the field of standards and sustainable codes in construction projects, adding that this project gives official status to coordination between trade departments in the US and the international trade management of ASTM International and the Word Codes Council.

Manfouhi welcomed the US ambassador and the participation of other officials. He said the establishment of a unified Gulf code became a reality due to the joint work and exchange of experiences between GCC countries. Manfouhi lauded ASTM for holding the workshop and allowing everyone to benefit from its experience by having model standards for construction rules, which reflects on the unified Gulf code.



Ahmad Al-Manfouhi

Ministry signs KD 88 million Abadly road development deal

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works has recently signed a KD 88 million (around \$280 million) deal to develop Al-Abadly road, which will service the northern region of Kuwait and the future Al-Mutla City, a ministry statement said yesterday. It said Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of Public Works Dr Jenan Boushehri signed the deal, adding that the road development project will be immensely important for Al-Mutla City. It will provide adequate entry and exit roads for Al-Mutla city and will better connect it with the rest of the country, indicated the ministerial statement.

Meanwhile, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) Suha Ashkanani said the contract - part of the second phase of Al-Abadly road development project - was signed with Italy's ITINERA S.P.A and a local representative contract. She revealed that the project would take around three years to complete, adding that it will link Al-Mutla City with the 26-kilometer-long regional Al-Salmi road. The project will expand outgoing and incoming lanes from three to five and it will include three interchanges, six bridges and developed infrastructure, Ashkanani said. — KUNA

Kuwait hosts Customer Engagement Technology Conference

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Customer Engagement Technology Conference was held yesterday at J W Marriot to bring together marketing, digital/IT and business heads to discover the latest solutions that enable greater customer experience in various industries.

On the sidelines of the conference, Kuwait Times spoke with Nayab Rafiq, CEO of Pinnacle Middle East, to learn more about the digital industry in MENA. "The Customer Engagement Technology Conference is a platform that connects major industry players of the region with key decision-makers to digital innovations that help shape the future of the business-customer relationship. The event successfully brought together over 300 participants to discover the latest solutions that enable greater customer experience in various industries," he said.

Speaking about Pinnacle Middle East, Rafiq said the company provides the platform for knowledge exchange and partnerships that help shape the future of business. "The company is helping business leaders to understand the greatest opportunities in their industry. We are in more than six countries. Our headquarters are in Dubai, but we have launched in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Egypt, and the UK."

Rafiq pointed out that business leaders must consider a digital switch and choose the best digital platform to use to promote their business and expand, noting that the e-commerce base enables businessmen at very low cost to be ready to sell and reach a high volume of people by tapping into the digital world. "You can be a Kuwaiti SME but you don't have to be selling only to the Kuwaiti market. The e-commerce base allows you to reach customers around the world and allows you to offer incentives to your potential customer base," he said.



KUWAIT: Nayab Rafiq, CEO Pinnacle Middle East, speaks during the conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

About Kuwait's digital innovation market, Rafiq said the Kuwaiti government is making excellent progress towards digitalization and innovation. "The New Kuwait 2035 vision seems to have digital at the core of the initiative. We had great support from the Kuwaiti government with the participation of Kuwait's Central Agency for Information Technology in today's conference," he said. "IT is a big part of this vision, with more than \$60 billion invested towards the 2035 strategy with a further \$100 billion still to be invested. I believe that this vision will make a big change to the future of Kuwait."

Rafiq added Kuwait is an interesting market because it has unique characteristics, as Internet penetration in Kuwait's households is among the highest in the world at 98 percent. "Also, we know that Kuwait is launching an initiative to create a \$200 million fund for investments in technology, which will drive the country's digital innovation market to nearly KD 300 million this year," he said.

Regarding social media, he said Kuwait has the highest percentage of social media users in proportion to the population in the Middle East, adding that Kuwait has made the most advances in adopting digital transformation and these numbers confirm that it is on track and adapting well to the digital era's demands.

Army lieutenant killed in crash

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A Kuwait army lieutenant was killed and another was seriously injured when their vehicle collided with another car along Sixth Ring Road yesterday, said security sources. An investigation was opened to reveal the circumstances behind the accident.

Economic guidebook

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) yesterday issued resolution number 385/2019 in which it added seven new activities to the unified GCC economic activities guidebook. A press release issued by MoCI explained that the new activities include child spas, e-payment systems, e-money and precious items' collection and delivery, electronic bill collection, cash and point of sale (POS) collection and manufacturing non-woven fabric medical products such as gloves, shoes and head covers.



Brexit chaos deepens as UK's Johnson faces hostile parliament

The Indian children who need to take a train to get water



MIRPUR: Pakistani residents look at a collapsed house in an earthquake-hit area on the outskirts of Mirpur in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir yesterday. — AFP

Pakistan quake death toll hits 38

Rescuers scramble to reach survivors

JATLAN: Rescuers battled along badly damaged roads and combed through toppled buildings yesterday to reach victims of an earthquake that killed at least 38 people and injured hundreds more in northeast Pakistan. Authorities were still assessing the quake's impact in villages around the city of Mirpur in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, but in some the immediate damage was evident.

After a night of heavy rain compounded the misery of survivors, hundreds gathered to attend the funerals of residents killed near Mirpur, about 130 kilometers southeast of the capital, Islamabad. "It was like doomsday for us. We lost a number of our near and dear ones," Muhammad Azam said at a funeral for a neighbor. "Our loved ones will never come back." The 5.2 magnitude quake was not as strong as several that have struck Pakistan over the years, but the epicenter was very shallow - which generally causes more damage.

Near Mirpur, a well-developed city known for its palatial residences, many roads were destroyed, while bridges, mobile phone towers and electricity poles were also badly damaged. The village of Jatlan on the outskirts of Mirpur appeared to be one of the worst affected. There, residents sifted through debris and assessed the damage,

with large cracks defacing walls in the houses that still stood, and brick fences reduced to rubble. "I lost everything," said Abdullah Khan, whose three-bedroom home was flattened.

The Pakistan military continued to lead search and rescue operations, and the death toll continued to rise as authorities reached more remote villages to assess the damage. Muhammad Tayyab Chaudhry, the top local official, said at least 37 people had been killed - 33 in Mirpur and four in the neighbouring district of Bhimber. Earlier, Lieutenant General Mohammad Afzal of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) said one person had also been killed in the nearby Punjabi city of Jhelum. "Some 350 people were wounded, 80 of them critically," he told a press conference.

'Under control'

Teams of doctors had arrived in the area, while the NDMA had also sent hundreds of tents, bottles of water and food rations. Afzal said hundreds of houses had been damaged - 136 of them "completely" - while 14 kilometers (nine miles) of road were "badly affected". Engineers were rushing to make repairs. He said the ambassadors of three countries had offered assistance,

but that Pakistani authorities had the matter under control. Information minister Firdous Ashiq Awan gave a higher injury toll of 500, and told reporters that survivors would be offered compensation.

Overnight showers turned already-damaged roads into muddy thoroughfares where livestock roamed freely. In Mirpur, however, life was quickly returning to normal and most of the well-built structures in the city showed little sign of damage. Mirpur owes its prosperity to thousands of former residents who migrated to Britain in the 1960s, but retained their links to the area - repatriating money to buy land and build plush homes. Many of its 450,000 residents are dual British-Pakistan nationals.

After the quake, local hospitals in the city swelled, however, with many patients suffering from multiple fractures. "I was going to see a friend when the entire area shook with a bang and a huge wall crumbled over me," Ali Badshah, a student said from a hospital in Mirpur where he was being treated for a broken leg. The quake sent people in Lahore and Islamabad running into the streets, while tremors were also felt as far away as New Delhi.

Pakistan straddles part of the boundary



MIRPUR: A news cameraman films a damaged road following an earthquake on the outskirts of Mirpur. — AFP

where the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates meet, making the country susceptible to earthquakes. Pakistani geologists faulted the "poor construction of shanty houses in Jatlan" for some of the damage, as well as its location near a fault line and the shallowness of the quake. "The build-

ing code is not followed in most areas," said Pakistan's chief meteorologist, Muhammad Riaz. The country was hit by a 7.6-magnitude quake in 2005 that killed more than 73,000 people and left about 3.5 million homeless, mainly in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. — AFP

Greta Thunberg: 'Miracle' climate savior or puppet?

STOCKHOLM: She's the icon of a young generation rising up against climate change. But Greta Thunberg also stirs up derision and scorn among those who see her as a mere puppet of eco-evangelism. At 16, the Swede has become the voice for millions of worried youths who sort their garbage, clean beaches, turn their noses up at meat and airplanes, and vote for green parties.

Just over a year ago, at the start of the school year, the then-ninth grade student left her books at home and began sitting outside the Swedish parliament to raise awareness about the climate emergency. Her "school strike" made the rounds of social media before gaining momentum in the international press - and the "Fridays for Future" movement was born. The Greta phenomenon went viral. Her Twitter and Instagram accounts now have more than six million followers.

As the unofficial spokesperson for her generation, Greta Thunberg wants to sound the alarm about global warming among the world's politicians, as witnessed in her rousing "How Dare You?" speech at the UN climate summit on Monday. "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words," she thundered, visibly angry and close to tears. The teen has spurred millions of youths to protest, drawn by her fragile intrepidity, her steely determination in sharp contrast to her young voice.

All of which drive her detractors crazy. For the most scornful, such as Australian columnist Andrew Bolt, Greta's a doomsayer, "the deeply disturbed messiah of the global

warming movement", with the neuroses of an autistic teenager (she has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome). It's all because "she's powerful," says Canadian biologist Severn Cullis-Suzuki who once found herself in Greta's position. At the age of 12, she addressed the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. "She's calling for a revolution so of course she's getting pushback. They try to silence her" by discrediting her, Cullis-Suzuki told AFP.

'Miracle' or 'cyborg'?

Extraordinary, almost mystical references abound when it comes to Greta, born in 2003 in the least "religious or spiritual" country on the planet. Famed French environmentalist and wildlife photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand has called her "a miracle". Barack Obama said she was "changing the world." French philosopher Michel Onfray described her as a "cyborg" while US conservative commentator Michael Knowles said she was a "mentally ill" teen responsible for "climate hysteria".

In April, Greta met Pope Francis in Rome as part of the second anniversary of "Laudato Si", the Catholic Church's encyclical on ecology and climate change, whose subtitle "On Care for Our Common Home" echoes Greta's own words of "Our house is on fire". Critics say that kind of language muddles the climate fight's scientific message, hurts technological innovation and masks other environmental challenges.

"The climate issue has eclipsed all other environmental issues like cruelty to animals, the meat industry and pesticides. And those who question (Greta's) positioning are quickly accused of being climate sceptics," political scientist Katarina Barrling said. Greta has also been accused of sowing anxiety rather than delivering a rational argument. "I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day," she told the World Economic Forum in Davos in January. Lately, she seems to have changed her tune. "I want you to listen to the scientists," she urged the US Congress last week. — AFP

The whistleblower, impeachment and Trump phone call

WASHINGTON: Growing numbers of Democrats are calling for the impeachment of US President Donald Trump over allegations that he sought political dirt on his potential 2020 presidential rival, Joe Biden. This is what we know about the affair launched by a complaint from a mysterious whistleblower in the US intelligence community.

The phone call

The political scandal stems from a July 25 telephone call between Trump and Ukraine's newly elected President Volodymyr Zelensky, a former comedian who ran for office as an anti-corruption crusader and reformer. Trump has acknowledged urging Zelensky during the call to investigate the business dealings in Ukraine of Hunter Biden, the son of Joe Biden, who is leading Trump in 2020 election polls. The Wall Street Journal said Trump urged Zelensky "about eight times" during the call to work with Rudy Giuliani, his personal attorney, on a probe into Hunter Biden.

Democrats in the House of Representatives accused Trump and Giuliani of trying to coerce Ukraine, in exchange for military assistance, into conducting a "politically motivated" investigation into Hunter Biden, a move they said would represent a "staggering abuse of power." Three

Democratic-controlled House committees demanded that the White House turn over a transcript of the call and Trump has indicated that he would be happy if it were made public.

US military aid for Ukraine

According to The Washington Post, about a week before the phone call with Zelensky, Trump told his acting White House chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, to hold up a package of nearly \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine, which is battling pro-Russian separatists. Trump has denied dangling the military aid in exchange for a probe into the son of his main political rival and the Journal said he did not specifically mention the assistance during the conversation. "I didn't do that at all," Trump told reporters. "I did not make a statement that you have to do this or I'm not going to give you 'A.'" "With that being said," the president continued, "you want to see a country that's going to be not corrupt."

Hunter Biden

Hunter Biden served from April 2014 to April 2019 on the board of Burisma Holdings, a Ukrainian gas firm accused of corrupt practices, but he has not been personally accused of any wrongdoing. As Barack Obama's vice president, Joe Biden and other Western leaders pressured Ukraine to get rid of the country's top prosecutor, Viktor Shokin, because he was seen as not tough enough on corruption. Trump has claimed that Biden, in seeking the removal of Shokin, was seeking to protect his son but that allegation has largely been debunked and there has been no evidence of illegal conduct in Ukraine by the Bidens. — AFP

International

Burnt, stabbed and beaten police detail Papua deaths

Most of the 33 people killed in riots died of stab wounds

JAYAPURA: Most of the 33 people killed in riots that paralyzed Indonesia's restive Papua region this week died of stab wounds, blunt force trauma or burns, police said yesterday, after one of the deadliest eruptions of violence in years. Thousands fled to shelters following the outburst of bloodshed that saw civilians burned alive in buildings set ablaze by protesters on Monday, and clashes between demonstrators and security forces.

Papua, on the western half of New Guinea island, has seen weeks of protests fuelled by anger over racism against indigenous Papuans by people who have migrated from other parts of Indonesia, as well as fresh calls for self-rule in the impoverished region. Weeks of protests broke out across Papua and in other parts of Indonesia after the mid-August arrest and tear-gassing of dozens of Papuan students, who were also racially abused, in the country's second-biggest city, Surabaya.

The fresh violence this week was reportedly sparked by racist comments made by a teacher towards students in unrest-hit Wamena city, but police have disputed that account. Yesterday, local police said the chaos had subsided in Wamena, leaving a trail of burnt-out buildings and charred cars in its wake. "The situation in Wamena is now under control," said Papua police spokesman Ahmad Mustofa Kamal. "Most victims had stab wounds, blunt object injuries and severe burns," he added.

Kamal said 29 people were known to have died in Wamena, where hundreds demonstrated and burned

down a government office and other buildings on Monday. Some 66 people were injured, police said. A soldier and three civilians also died in the provincial capital Jayapura, where security forces and stone-throwing protesters clashed Monday. The soldier was stabbed to death and three students died from rubber bullet wounds, authorities have said, without elaborating.

On Tuesday evening, the district head office in Yalimo, near Wamena, was set ablaze, police said. The United Liberation Movement for West Papua described this week's violence as a "massacre" and said that 17 Papuan high school students had been gunned down by Indonesian security forces. Neither the military nor the separatist movement's claims could be independently verified. Conflicting accounts are common in Papua and the government appears to have renewed a region-wide Internet service shutdown.

Jakarta has said the riots were meant to draw attention to Papuan independence at this week's UN General Assembly. A low-level separatist insurgency has simmered for decades in the former Dutch colony after Jakarta took over the mineral-rich region in the 1960s. A UN-sponsored vote to stay within the archipelago in 1969 was widely viewed as rigged, but Jakarta has long refused to consider another referendum. The majority of Papuans are Christian and ethnic Melanesian with few cultural ties to the rest of Muslim-majority Indonesia. — AFP



JAYAPURA: Indonesian riot police take positions at a university in provincial capital Jayapura as protests break out in the restive region. — AFP

Court sentences Bouteflika brother to 15 years in jail

ALGIERS: An Algerian military court yesterday sentenced the brother of deposed president Abdelaziz Bouteflika and three co-defendants to 15 years in prison in a swift verdict delivered out of sight of the media. Said Bouteflika, widely seen as the real power behind the presidency after his brother suffered a debilitating stroke in 2013, went on trial on Monday alongside two former intelligence chiefs and a political party head.

Their convictions are the most high-profile in a string of prosecutions of prominent politicians and businessmen over alleged graft launched since Bouteflika was pushed out in April after two decades in power. All four defendants were convicted of "undermining the authority of the army" and "conspiring" against the state, in the run-up to the ageing president's resignation in the face of mass protests earlier this year.

Prosecutors at the military court in Blida, south of Algiers, had asked for the maximum sentence of 20 years against all the defendants, defense lawyer Miloud Ibrahim said. Former defense minister Khaled Nezzar has said that as protests mounted against the veteran leader, Said Bouteflika proposed declaring a state of emergency and firing army chief General Ahmed Gaid Salah.

Lawyers for Workers' Party chief Louisa Hanoune have admitted she met the president's brother and General Mohamed Mediene on March 27, a day after Gaid Salah publicly called for the ailing president to step down.



ALGIERS: In this file photo, Said Bouteflika, brother of Algerian President, attends the funeral of at the El-Alia cemetery in Algiers. An Algerian military court sentenced Said Bouteflika, brother of deposed President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, to 15 years in prison. — AFP

Hanoune, Mediene - who headed the all-powerful secret service for 25 years - and fellow ex-spy chief General Athmane Tartag were all given 15 years alongside Said Bouteflika, state news agency APS reported.

Defense counsel expressed indignation at the trial's speed and lack of transparency. "I have absolutely nothing to say about this trial except that we will appeal," defense lawyer Miloud Ibrahim said. One of Mediene's lawyers, Farouk Ksentini, said he was "surprised by the severity of the verdict." One of the lawyers for Hanoune's Workers Party, Ramdan Tazibt, said the trial was "political" and an "attack on democracy". He said counsel for Hanoune had "showed there was no reason for her to be detained let alone convicted."

Cameroon anglophone region on tenterhooks ahead of peace talks

BUEA: The mood in English-speaking Cameroon is a mix of anxiety, resignation and fatigue as the clock ticks. On September 30, the government will start hosting a national "dialogue" on the future of the anglophone territories, where separatist violence and a government crackdown have cost thousands of lives and forced hundreds of thousands to flee.

The following day, October 1, marks the second anniversary of this spiral towards conflict - the declaration of the self-described "Republic of Ambazonia" for Cameroon's English-speaking minority. Traders in Buea, the capital of Cameroon's Southwest Region, say they are under relentless pressure to choose sides. The militants have staged "dead city" protests every Monday, aimed at bringing the English-speaking regions to a standstill.

If traders close their store, they risk being punished by the authorities. But if they keep it open, they face the wrath of separatists for ignoring strike calls. "If you're stubborn," said snack-bar owner Jeremie, the separatists "come back and burn down your property or they'll follow you and pay you a visit." "We're scared," said a man who asked not to be named. He kept his shop open on Monday but said he feared the arrival of the "Amba-boys" at any minute.

A member of a local NGO said the army had recently managed to secure a volatile part of Buea because it found informants among residents fed up with racketeering by separatists. "The Amba-boys who operate in town from time to time come from rather remote parts," he said, asking not to be identified. English-speakers account for about a fifth of Cameroon's population of 24 million, who are majority French-speaking.

Anglophones are mainly concentrated in two western areas, the Northwest Region and the Southwest Region, that were incorporated into the French-speaking state after the colonial era in Africa wound down six decades ago. Years of mounting resentment at perceived discrimination exploded in 2017, unleashing a conflict that has claimed more than 2,000 lives, according to International Crisis Group (ICG) thinktank, while the UN says at least half a million have fled their homes. All the people approached by AFP in Buea expressed weariness at the situation. None voiced much hope for the "Great National Dialogue" announced on September 10 on President Paul Biya, who has ruled Cameroon for 37 years. The five-day forum will take place in Yaounde under the aegis of Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute, who comes from the troubled territory. — AFP



DOHA: Women hold up protest signs during a demonstration calling for a stand against climate change at the Education City campus of the Qatar Foundation (QF) in the capital Doha yesterday. — AFP

Humanity must rescue oceans to rescue itself: UN

MONACO: Two days after a climate summit failed to deliver game-changing pledges to slash carbon emissions, the United Nations warned yesterday that global warming is devastating oceans and Earth's frozen spaces in ways that directly threaten a large slice of humanity. Crumbling ice sheets, rising seas, melting glaciers, ocean dead zones, toxic algae blooms - a raft of impacts on sea and ice are decimating fish stocks, destroying renewable sources of fresh water, and incubating superstorms that will ravage some megacities every year, according to a landmark assessment approved by the 195-nation Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Some of these impacts are irreversible. The report, a digest of 7,000 peer-reviewed studies, is a sobering reminder that record greenhouse gas emissions, mostly from burning fossil fuels, are driving the planet towards a hothouse climate our species could find intolerable. But it also raises more clearly than ever before a red flag on the need to confront changes that can no longer be averted. For some island nations and coastal cities, that will almost certainly mean finding new places to call home.

Crumbling ice sheets

"Even if we manage to limit global warming, we will continue to see major changes in the oceans," said Valerie Masson-Delmotte, a researcher at the Laboratory for Climate and Environmental Sciences and an IPCC co-

Fugitive in Spain

Nezzar, his son Lofti, and a former businessman Farid Benhamdine, were all sentenced to 20 years in absentia, APS said. The retired general has for weeks been on the run in Spain, where he has been joined by his son, according to Algerian media reports. Nezzar was at the head of the army in 1992 when it cancelled the electoral process, denying Islamist groups a victory at the polls and pitching the country into a devastating, decade-long civil war.

A Swiss court in mid-2018 cleared the way for Nezzar to face war crimes charges after he was arrested in Switzerland. In a complaint filed by rights group TRIAL International, a group of alleged victims accused him of torture and arbitrary arrests. Said Bouteflika's detention in May was part of a wave of arrests targeting the ousted president's inner circle.

But many fear they are little more than a high-level purge and a power struggle between still-powerful regime insiders, rather than a genuine effort to reform the state. The hearings were restricted to lawyers and defendants' families, with media kept out of the courtroom. Mediene, whose health has been deteriorating according to his family, arrived in court in a wheelchair and asked for an adjournment, according to defense lawyers. The judge consulted a doctor and turned down the request.

Known as Toufik, Mediene headed the all-powerful DRS intelligence agency from its foundation in 1990 up to his fall from grace in 2015. Tartag, his deputy, succeeded Mediene and when the DRS was dismantled in 2016 he served as Algeria's security coordinator under the supervision of the presidency. Presidential elections have now been set for December 12. But protesters have kept up demands for political reforms and the removal of the former president's loyalists, including army chief Gaid Salah, who has emerged as Algeria's strongman since Bouteflika's fall. — AFP

Masked men and murder: Vigilantes terrorize LGBT+ Russians

MOSCOW: Receiving photos of mutilated bodies with the warning "you're next" rattled gay rights activist Nikita Tomilov but when he saw surveillance men outside his home, he fled Russia for good. The threats via social media came from Pila - Russian for "saw" - a homophobic group which has said it was behind the fatal stabbing in July of an LGBT+ activist whose name was among a dozen on their widely-circulated assassination "blacklist".

"I went to the police when I saw two masked men lurking outside my apartment, but they said they couldn't do anything without proof that these men were there," Tomilov, 22 said via Skype from a European country. "What kind of proof could I bring them? And my family members started receiving threats as well. I realized it was too dangerous for me to stay in Russia." Elena Grigoryeva, 41, was stabbed eight times in the face and back in St Petersburg.

The Investigative Committee, which handles major crimes, said she was murdered by a local resident she had been drinking with and detained two suspects. Although the police did not treat the murder as a hate crime initially, they promised to investigate whether Pila had anything to do with Grigoryeva's death after complaints from lesbian gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) rights groups.

Pila - which takes its name from the "Saw" American horror movies - is the latest threat to shake the LGBT+ community in Russia, where homosexuality was deemed a criminal offence until 1993 and classed as a mental illness until 1999. Violence against gay people and hostility from the wider community has been on the rise since 2013 when the Kremlin adopted a gay "propaganda" law as part of a drive to defend what President Vladimir Putin called Russia's "traditional values". LGBT+ campaigners say the law has helped authorities crack down on activists and contributed to a rise in anti-LGBT+ hate crimes as well as police reluctance to investigate them. The Russian LGBT Network, which offers legal aid to gay people, said only eight out of 64 cases of physical violence against LGBT+ people that it received in 2018 were investigated by the police. Moscow police headquarters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov and human rights commissioner Tatyana Moskalova did not respond to requests for comment. In several public statements, Putin has said there is no discrimination against LGBT+ people in Russia.

Attacks

Pila has used its website, Instagram, Russia's biggest social network VK and messaging app Telegram to call for gay Russians to be deported, posted a list of LGBT+ activists to be assassinated, and offered cash rewards for attacks on them. Opinions differ on the danger it poses. The size of the vigilante group, which became active online in mid-2018, and the identities of its backers remain unclear. Tomilov believes it is a powerful organization capable of murder, while others see it merely an intimidation campaign, unlikely to go beyond online threats.

"We can't be certain it's a real group that can organize physical attacks on people," said Igor Kochetkov, head of the Russian LGBT Network. "There isn't a single confirmed fact of assaults, let alone murders, committed by the so-called Pila. What we're seeing is a website that comes and goes, emails and messages on social media." Pila's website and all of its online accounts were blocked last month after complaints from activists who fear its threats are fuelling homophobia and violence against LGBT+ people.

"They openly call for violence against certain people, but law enforcement has taken no action whatsoever," said Alexander Kondakov, a sociologist at Finland's University of Helsinki who authored a study on anti-gay hate crimes in Russia. "This terrible situation encourages not just Pila itself, but others like them, too - people see that these actions go unpunished. LGBT+ rights group Vykhod said the police promised to examine and analyze screenshots of Pila's website last week. Vitaly Bespalov, editor of the gay news site ParniPlus, received an email on Aug. 26 instructing him to kill Maxim Lapunov - a gay man who went public about being kidnapped and tortured in Chechnya - before Oct. — Reuters

International

Brexit chaos deepens; British PM faces hostile parliament

Johnson cuts short New York visit after shock ruling

LONDON: A defiant Boris Johnson faces parliament yesterday after a Supreme Court ruling that he had unlawfully shut it down, with opponents seeking new ways to block him from taking Britain out of the European Union on Oct 31 without a deal. After three years of Brexit crisis and Johnson's tumultuous two-month premiership, it remains unclear when, if or on what terms the United Kingdom will leave the bloc it joined in 1973.

Having lost his majority and a series of votes about Brexit in the House of Commons, Johnson had suspended the legislature for five weeks. But the country's top court said on Tuesday he had done so without justification and that the closure was void. Cutting short a visit to New York, Johnson arrived back in London yesterday morning and was due to address a reconvened Commons after flatly rejecting calls to resign and insisting that Brexit would take place on Oct 31 come what may.

Before the suspension, an alliance of opposition lawmakers backed by rebel members of Johnson's Conservative Party forced through a law requiring him to ask the EU to push back the deadline if no exit deal was agreed by Oct 19. "We simply cannot afford to wait until the 19th of October to see whether the prime minister will refuse to obey the law again," said Jo Swinson, leader of the anti-Brexit Liberal Democrats, adding that opponents did not trust Johnson to obey the legislation.

The leader of Britain's main opposition Labor Party, Jeremy Corbyn, said now was not the time for parliament to try to bring Johnson down because the priority was to rule out an EU exit without an agreement.

Parliament remains deadlocked over Brexit, with Johnson intent on leading Britain out of the EU with or without an exit agreement while most lawmakers are determined to block a no-deal scenario, which they fear will cause huge economic disruption.

Johnson has repeatedly said he can strike an exit deal with the EU's 27 other members at an EU summit on Oct. 17-18. However, EU negotiators say he has made no new proposals capable of breaking the deadlock over the issue of how to manage the border between Ireland, an EU member, and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, after Brexit.

This parliament is dead

While opponents demanded he resign after the court judgment, Johnson was in combative mood. He complained that opponents of Brexit were trying to thwart the will of the people and that an election should be called immediately. Speaking at the United Nations, Johnson even quipped that some in parliament were seeking to turn Brexit into torment - comparing himself to Greek mythological figure Prometheus whose liver was repeatedly eaten by an eagle.

Parliament has twice refused his demand for an election as opposition parties want first to ensure that a no-deal Brexit on Oct 31 is ruled out completely. Some lawmakers shouted and jeered at Johnson's top legal adviser, Attorney General Geoffrey Cox. Under questioning, Cox said the government would comply with a law forcing the prime minister to request a Brexit delay if no deal was struck.

But Cox provoked ire when he said the current par-



LONDON: Speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow (center) speaks in the House of Commons in London yesterday as Parliament resumes. —AFP

liament was a disgrace, casting Johnson's opponents as cowards for avoiding an election and trying to block Brexit. He argued that the lawmakers were preventing the government from governing while blocking any route out of the impasse. "This parliament is a dead parliament. It should no longer sit," Cox said. "This parliament should have the courage to face the electorate. But it won't."

Labor leader Corbyn told the BBC that Johnson should apologize to Queen Elizabeth - who formally suspended parliament at his request - and to the British people for acting unlawfully. Corbyn said that once a no-deal Brexit had been averted, it would be appropriate to move a motion of no-confidence to force out the government and then hold a national election. —Reuters



'This parliament is dead': Johnson's top legal adviser

Jeremy Corbyn: Britain revolutionary survivor

BRIGHTON: UK opposition Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn is a silver-haired vegetarian cyclist who believes in "revolution" but has frustrated with his ambiguity about the biggest issue of his generation: Brexit. The 70-year-old socialist has energized leftist supporters and polarized public opinion in equal measure since being elected, almost by accident, as the boss of the 119-year-old party in 2015.

His rejection of capitalism drives his scepticism of the European Union, and his belief in the "people's power" makes him the bogymen of London bankers. Corbyn's dogged commitment to social justice and underdog causes such as the Palestinian state have sparked an anti-Semitism row that has shadowed his inner circle. "To share wealth, we need to share power," Corbyn told his adoring supporters at the party's annual conference on Tuesday.

But he refused to call an immediate vote of no-confidence in Boris Johnson's government - or commit himself one way or another to Britain's future membership in the European Union. "As a Labor prime minister, I pledge to carry out whatever the people decide," he said, giving the impression of a revolutionary who wanted to wait this particular crisis out. This approach has drawn its share of critics and seen Labor's support in the polls drop. But it also reflects a calculating tenacity that has helped Corbyn survive past power struggles and repeatedly beat the odds.

'Never in awe'

Corbyn could hardly cut a more contrasting figure to the blue-blooded Eton and Oxford-educated Johnson. He did not attend university - noting in 2015 that he "never held in awe those who have" - and entered politics in the 1960s as a member of the Young Socialist youth wing of the Labor Party. His early causes included nuclear disarmament in the geopolitically tense Cold War era and the anti-apartheid movement.

He has backed Sinn Fein and Irish republicanism during the bloody Troubles. His support for striking miners who faced off with Conservative icon Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s was less controversial. But his commitment now to a sweeping redistribution of wealth that would hand 10 percent of big companies' shares to workers over the coming decade has sent chills through the UK investment community. The Financial Times called it "one of the biggest state expropriations of assets seen in a western democracy".

Rank outsider

Corbyn only stood for Labor leadership as a 100/1 outsider because few others appeared willing to lead the party after its general election loss to David Cameron's Conservatives. He benefited from his party's decision to change its leadership election rules so that rank-and-file members' votes counted — on aggregate — as much as those of labor union bosses and MPs. Corbyn's ability to mobilize the far-left and the youth drew immediate comparisons to the effect Bernie Sanders had on US election politics.

Yet his leadership style and policies proved to be just as divisive with his own shadow cabinet - the group of party officials who would become ministers were Corbyn to become premier. More than half of them quit after his lacklustre campaign against Brexit during the 2016 referendum. Cameron complained this month that Labor under Corbyn never truly backed his anti-Brexit campaign efforts. "They were AWOL," Cameron recalled in a television interview. Corbyn has since faced repeated questions about which way he voted in the referendum. He has always said that he ticked the "remain" box. —AFP

Limbless chickens and killer robots: UK PM bemuses in UN speech

UNITED NATIONS: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson delivered an unconventional speech at the UN General Assembly Tuesday that referenced "terrifying limbless chickens" and "pink-eyed terminators" but only mentioned Brexit once. During a late-night, 20-minute address that drew laughs and baffled looks from delegates, Johnson struck a light tone on a serious subject as he warned of technology's capacity to control citizens.

He made no mention of Britain's highest court ruling earlier in the day that his decision to suspend parliament amid a Brexit impasse was unlawful. The shock ruling plunged his plans to exit the European Union by October 31 into crisis and sparked calls by opposition MPs that he resign immediately. At the UN, Johnson painted the possibility of a future where devices in every household "monitor your nightmares, monitor your fridge," and where smart cities are "as

antiseptic as a Zurich pharmacy."

"'Alexa' will pretend to take orders but this Alexa will be watching you, clapping her tongue and stamping her foot," Johnson boomed, suggesting "there may be nowhere to hide." "As new technologies seem to race towards us from the far horizon we strain our eyes as they come, to make out whether they are for good or bad, friends or foes. 'AI, what will it mean?'" he asked of artificial intelligence.

"Helpful robots washing and caring for an ageing population or pink-eyed terminators sent back from the future to cull the human race?" Johnson pondered. He went on to wonder whether synthetic biology could restore tissues "like some fantastic hangover cure" or "bring terrifying limbless chickens to our tables." Johnson also referenced one of his favorite subjects, Greek mythology, by telling the story of Zeus punishing Prometheus by ensuring that an eagle ate his liver over and over again.

"This went on forever. A bit like the experience of Brexit in the UK if some of our parliamentarians had their way," he said, drawing laughs from the remaining delegates in the largely deserted hall. The Conservative leader made an impassioned plea for technology to be a force for good and said he was optimistic it could "serve as a liberator and to remake



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson arrives at 10 Downing Street in central London yesterday after travelling back from New York. —AFP

the world wondrously and benignly." He called on world leaders to agree to a set of guidelines to ensure that new technologies are designed ethically before inviting them to join him at a tech summit in London next year.

Whether Johnson is still prime minister then remains to be seen. Following his UN address he was due to fly back

to Britain where a political storm awaits him, cutting his New York trip short. He also poked fun at France during his speech, reminiscing about how when he was mayor of London the city had more Michelin stars than Paris. "The French somehow rapidly recovered - by a process that I wasn't quite sure was entirely fair," he joked. —AFP

Caribbean gets smart to cope with hurricanes

ST JOHN'S: After monster Hurricane Irma annihilated the farm sector of Barbuda in 2017, growers got smart: among other changes, they moved their crops to higher ground. There and elsewhere across the Caribbean, as tourism-dependent island nations cope with record-breaking storms and rising sea levels blamed on global warming, the region is devising savvy ways to diversify islands' economies and boost food security. Another taste of pain came this month as Hurricane Dorian devastated parts of the northern Bahamas. Indeed, the Caribbean and its 44 million people could be facing their biggest crisis to date as extreme weather delivers a double whammy to tourism and the region's ability to feed itself.

"Climate change has affected everything. How we eat, how we build, how we live our day-to-day lives," said Kendra Beazer of the Barbuda Council, which runs the internal

affairs of the island, part of Antigua and Barbuda.

The Category 5 storm in September 2017 was the worst ever recorded in Barbuda, crippling its infrastructure and damaging 90 percent of its buildings. Today, some islanders still live in tents. Besides moving crops to higher ground to escape storm surges, planters have switched to hardier root vegetables and fruits that are resilient to unpredictable rainfall. Smart greenhouses that are powered by clean energy and grow produce in a self-regulating, controlled micro-climate - rather than at the mercy of nature's whims - are also among methods tipped to boost food security, said Beazer.

In Jamaica, increasingly volatile weather patterns are manifested in erratic rainfall, higher temperatures and rampant wildfires, said Glenroy Brown of the island's Meteorological Service. Drought wiped out most of Joan Johnson's 18-acre plantain farm this year, and a bush fire took the rest. Where the crops that provided her income once thrived, little more than brittle, parched land remains.

'It's been rough'

"I've lost 2,000 plants since spring," she



ENFIELD, Jamaica: Farmer Joan Johnson plants a banana tree in Enfield, St Mary, Jamaica. After monster Hurricane Irma annihilated the farm sector of Barbuda in 2017, growers got smart: among other changes, they moved their crops to higher ground. —AFP

told AFP. "I live off this. It's been rough." Fellow farmer Conrad Williams knows how she feels. His holding a short drive away has also suffered from months without rain, wreaking havoc on his peppers and pump-

kins. Johnson and Williams are two of 5,000 Jamaican farmers taking part in a climate-smart agriculture program run by the Netherlands-based Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation. —AFP

Impeachment of a US president and how it works

WASHINGTON: The announcement Tuesday of a formal impeachment inquiry by the Democrats in the House of Representatives into President Donald Trump for abuse of power is a high-stakes gambit with uncertain consequences. Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic

speaker of the House, had shown little appetite for impeachment during the first three years of Trump's tumultuous presidency. But the political scandal over Trump's attempt to seek dirt from Ukraine on his potential 2020 Democratic presidential rival Joe Biden was the last straw for the top Democrat in the House.

Pelosi said the six House committees already investigating Trump on various grounds would proceed with their probes under the umbrella of an official impeachment inquiry. "The president must be held accountable," Pelosi said. "No one is above the law." More than 150 of the 235 Democratic members of the 435-seat House have shown support for impeachment or the

opening of an inquiry into removing the chief executive.

No House Republicans have come out in favor of impeachment and Republicans currently control the Senate, making conviction unlikely. Trump tweeted that impeachment was "presidential harassment" and "witch hunt garbage." No president has been ousted from office by impeachment, but even the threat can bring one down - Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 to avoid certain removal in the Watergate scandal. Two presidents beat the process: the House formally impeached Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998, but in both cases they were acquitted in the Senate. —AFP

International

30 years after the fall of Berlin Wall, East Germans feel inferior

Easterners still feel like second-class citizens

BERLIN: A majority of Germans in the former communist East feel like second-class citizens almost three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall even though they are catching up economically with western regions, a government report showed yesterday. As Germany gears up for a year of celebrations to mark the demise of the Wall, the Cold War's most potent symbol, in November 1989 and German reunification a year later, the report's findings help explain a surge in support for the far-right among eastern voters.

On the face of it, the East has come far. "Numerous indicators show that we have made a lot of progress in the convergence of living conditions between East and West since 1990," said Christian Hirte, the government's commissioner for the east. By 2018, East Germany's economic strength had risen to 75% of the west German level from 43% in 1990. Employment is at a high in the east and wages there are 84% of those in the west. However, people's attitudes tell a different story.

The annual report on 'the state of German unity' also cited a recent survey carried out for the government showing that 57% of east Germans felt like second-class citizens. Only 38% of those asked in the East see reunification as a success, including only 20% of people younger than 40 years. "This dissatisfaction is expressed in the election results in the east and west in recent years which show significant differences," said the report, saying one of the causes of the dissatisfaction

is painful and deep upheaval in the east. Hirte, acknowledging that the convergence process was not yet complete, cited depopulation - 2 million people, especially young people and women, have left the region in the last three decades and few big global firms have moved in. Voters in the east are deserting the traditional parties - Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and her coalition partners, the Social Democrats (SPD) - and embracing the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and radical Left Party.

Far-right riots

The AfD came second in elections in the eastern state of Saxony and Brandenburg earlier this month, winning roughly 27% and 23% of the vote respectively. Polls in the state of Thuringia, which goes to the polls next month, show the AfD on 25%, just behind the Left, which includes former Communists. Nationally, the AfD, which has capitalized on voter resentment over Merkel's open-door migrant policy, is polling at around 14%.

Outbreaks of violence, such as last year's far-right riots in the eastern city of Chemnitz - the worst such clashes Germany had seen in decades - have reinforced the picture of a disenchanted and radicalized east. Hirte acknowledged that xenophobic attitudes had to be overcome, while industry groups have warned that they could damage the prospects for investment in the region. — Reuters



MAGDEBURG: A disused east German 'Plattenbau' concrete panel building with broken windows is seen in Magdeburg. — AFP

Flowers and anger in the shadow of Franco's tomb

SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL: Like every day since Francisco Franco's 44 years ago, flowers were placed on his tomb on Tuesday, just behind the altar. And as usual, several dozen people came for daily mass at the basilica where the Spanish dictator is interred. It was after the service that the faithful learned of the Spanish Supreme Court's decision to allow the government to remove Franco's remains from the imposing building carved into a mountain in the Valley of the Fallen, 50 kilometers outside Madrid.

"This decision is shameful," 56-year-old Mariano Zafra said, adding that he came to the Catholic basilica specifically "to say farewell to Franco in case they take him away." Around an hour before the court's decision was announced, the basilica's sexton, Benedictine monk Julio Iglesias, expressed his wish that "they let the dead rest in peace". "This basilica is a consecrated church and they can't come in here and smash everything up like a bull in a China shop," said the monk who has been taking care of the site since 1981.

The court had rejected an appeal against the exhumation by Franco's descendants. But the sexton pointed out that the court still had to rule on three other appeals against transferring the dictator's remains to a more discreet site, including one lodged by his Benedictine community. Franco, who ruled with an iron fist following the end of Spain's 1936-39 civil war, had himself planned the monument and had it built, using the labor of republican political prisoners.

A huge 150-metre-high (500-foot) cross that can be seen from miles away towers over the site, which also holds the remains of more than 33,000 dead from both sides of the civil war. It is presented as a place of reconciliation for Spain, but many on the left compare Franco's huge memorial to a monument glorifying Adolf Hitler. Visitors are at pains to find the tombs of the dead fighters,



MADRID: People shout outside the Supreme Court in Madrid, as the court gave the green light for the government to remove the remains of Francisco Franco from a grandiose state mausoleum, rejecting an appeal against it by the late dictator's descendants. — AFP

carrying only the inscription "fallen for God and for Spain 1936-1939". A guide explains they are inaccessible behind the walls of eight chapels.

'No place of reconciliation'

The monument attracted nearly 379,000 visitors last year - a third more than in 2017. Inside the complex of the Valley of the Fallen is a monastic hostel where visitors Javier Gebrie and Aurea Buenosvinos, who call themselves Spanish "conservatives" but "not Catholics", stayed during a visit to the site. Gebrie, a 48-year-old computer engineer, was opposed to the exhumation, considering it an "electoral" manoeuvre by the socialists as Spain prepares

to go the polls on November 10. However, others like Mercedes Abril, 86, dislike the site even though her father's remains are buried there.

A station master in the village of Aragon and a socialist supporter, her father was shot in 1936 and thrown into a common grave. His remains were not transferred to the monument until decades later. "Removing Franco from there makes sense, he shouldn't be there, he wasn't killed during the civil war," said Abril, whom AFP contacted by phone in Valladolid. She added Franco was "a war criminal" and expressed her desire to also exhume her father's remains. "What matters to me is that we remove my father from that site, which is not at all a place of reconciliation." — AFP

Honey heals wounds of war in Colombia village

CHENGUE: Covered from head to toe in a protective suit, Yina Ortiz peers through a veil to check in on her beehive. It is one of hundreds that form a lifeline for her remote village, helping to heal the wounds of one of the Colombian conflict's most brutal atrocities. Rightwing paramilitaries stormed the village in the dead of night and used machetes to hack 27 people to death, accusing them of collaborating with leftist guerrillas. The attack 18 years ago was one of the conflict's worst atrocities.

Ortiz, a young girl then, survived the attack on her village of Chengue in the northern Montes de Maria region. But she lost several members of her family as well as close friends. Now 33, her memories are still clear, particularly of "the dead lying in the streets the next day." "It wasn't just the streams of blood, it was awful to see so many dead bodies, one of top of the other, there on the ground, and their loved ones picking them up," Ortiz told AFP. More than a hundred families fled in the wake of the atrocity, leaving behind a ghost village. But nearly two decades later, life has

slowly returned to the dusty village, in part because of the lure of bees. A program initiated by Ortiz and a group of industrious local women helped bring apiculture to Chengue and it hasn't looked back. "Thanks to beekeeping, people have united, returned, they enjoy taking care of the bees," she said, working the handle on a device called a bee smoker to fumigate and calm the swarming bees.

For the past year, the 159 families of Chengue alternate between agricultural work and caring for the 500 hives donated by the government and the United Nations, as part of a collective program for survivors of armed conflict. "We used to be all over the place, some people were in Ovejas, others in Sincelejo, but we need to heal wounds and now, thanks to the beekeeping, people have come back, they like to be with the bees, to study the life of the bees."

'The last widow'

For Ortiz, apiculture is a way of "trying to heal the wounds" left over from the war, but it also represents a hope of survival for farmers whose mixed crops of tobacco, yam and cassava are gradually drying up because of global warming. Julia Merino, a 49-year old school teacher who manages the project, expects the first harvest at the end of the year to yield 13 tons of honey.

For Merino it will be a sweet victory, a balm to salve the memories of the 2001 attack. Her uncles and cousins were multi-



CHENGUE: Beekeepers arrange a honeycomb at the community of Chengue, municipality of Ovejas, some 1,000 kms north of Bogota, Colombia. — AFP

lated and killed by the right wing paramilitaries. Two years later, her husband was abducted and murdered by the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) as local families were once again caught in the middle of Colombia's interminable conflict.

Merino is known here as "the last widow of Chengue" because she was the only one who returned to the village where she lost her husband. In front of his white-

washed grave, in the abandoned cemetery of nearby Ovejas commune, she recalled the healing process that has taken her to this point. Workshops allowed her to "turn these sources of pain" into "spaces of goodness, to heal wounds and recover the social fabric that had fragmented," she said. Merino says she shared her experience with other women, mounting the honey venture to spark "economic change" in the village. — AFP

The Indian children who need to take a train to get water

MUKUNDWADI: As their classmates set off to play after school each day, nine-year-old Sakshi Garud and her neighbor Siddharth Dhage, 10, are among a small group of children who take a 14 km return train journey from their village in India to fetch water. Their families are some of the poorest in the hamlet of Mukundwadi, in the western state of Maharashtra, a village that has suffered back-to-back droughts.

India's monsoons have brought abundant rain and even floods in many parts of the country, but rainfall in the region around Mukundwadi has been 14% below average this year and aquifers and borewells are dry. "I don't like to spend time bringing water, but I don't have a choice," Dhage said. "This is my daily routine," said Garud. Their cramped shanty homes are just 200 meters from the train station. "After coming from school, I don't get time to play. I need to get water first."

They are not alone. Millions of Indians do not have secure water supplies, according to the UK-based charity, WaterAid. It says 12% of Indians, or about 163 million people, do not have access to clean water near their homes - the biggest proportion of any country. Recognizing the issue, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised to spend more than 3.5 trillion rupees (\$49 billion) to bring piped water to every Indian household by 2024.

More than 100 families in Garud and Dhage's neighborhood do not have access to piped water and many depend on private water suppliers, who charge up to 3,000 rupees (\$42) for a 5,000-litre tanker during summer months. But private water supply is something Garud and Dhage's parents say they can not afford. "Nowadays, I don't get enough money to buy groceries. I can't buy water from private suppliers," said Dhage's father, Rahul, a construction worker. "I am not getting work every day."

Pipe dream

The children take the train daily to fetch water from the nearby city of Aurangabad. The train is often overcrowded, so a group of small children jostling to get on board with pitchers to fill with water is not always welcome. "Some people help me, sometimes they complain to railway officials for putting pitchers near the door. If we don't put them near the door, we can not take them out quickly when the train stops," Dhage said.

Garud's grandmother Sitabai Kamble and an elderly neighbor help occasionally by pushing them on board in the face of irritable passengers. "Sometimes they kick the pitchers away, they grumble," Kamble said. When the train pulls into Aurangabad thirty minutes later, they scramble to fill the pitchers at nearby water pipes. Garud can't reach the tap, so she relies on her taller sister, Aaysha, 14, and grandmother. Others, like Anjali Gaikwad, 14, and her sisters, also board the train every few days to collect water and wash clothes.

Their neighbor Prakash Nagre often tags along with soap and shampoo. "There's no water to bathe at home," he says. When the train returns them to Mukundwadi, they have just under a minute to disembark. At times, Dhage's mother, Jyoti, is waiting at the station to help. "I'm careful, but sometimes pitchers fall off the door in the melee and our work is wasted," she said, holding her infant in one arm and a pitcher in the other. "I can't leave my daughter at home alone so I have to take her along." — Reuters

Indonesian students rally again to protest major changes to laws

JAKARTA: An estimated 200 students clashed with riot police in Indonesia's capital as demonstrators hurled rocks and Molotov cocktails at authorities who shot tear gas into the crowds on the third day of protests. The demonstrations erupted in response to a proposed criminal-code overhaul that includes everything from

criminalizing pre-marital sex and restricting sales of contraceptives, to making it illegal to insult the president and toughening the Muslim majority country's blasphemy laws.

There has also been a public backlash against a separate bill that critics fear would dilute the investigative powers of Indonesia's corruption-fighting agency - known as the KPK - including its ability to wire-tap graft suspects. "This bill will obviously weaken the KPK and cause corruption to run rampant - and that's going to hurt people," Angga Prasetyo, a 22-year-old engineering student in protest-hit Makassar on Sulawesi island said yesterday.

The rallies are among the biggest anti-government demonstrations since 1998 when mass street protests

brought down the three-decade Suharto dictatorship.

Students have issued a list of demands including scrapping some of the criminal-code changes, withdrawing troops from Indonesia's unrest-hit Papua region, and halting forest fires in Sumatra and Borneo that have unleashed toxic haze across Southeast Asia.

Hundreds rallied in the capital Jakarta - as did scores in the second-biggest city Surabaya, and in Borneo on Tuesday - but the crowds were smaller than the thousands who took to the streets nationwide the previous day. On Tuesday, police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters in chaotic scenes that saw about 300 people - including dozens of officers - sent to hospital for treatment with hundreds arrested, according to police officials. Most had minor injuries, authorities

said. A vote on the criminal code bill was originally scheduled for Tuesday. But President Joko Widodo last week called for a delay in passing controversial changes that could affect millions of Indonesians, including gay and heterosexual couples who might face jail for having sex outside wedlock, or having an affair.

Updating Indonesia's criminal code, which dates back to the Dutch colonial era, has been debated for decades and appeared set to pass in 2018 before momentum fizzled out. A renewed push this year, backed by conservative Islamic groups, was met with a wave of criticism over what many saw as a draconian law that invaded the bedrooms of a nation with some 260 million people - the fourth most populous on Earth. — AFP

Analysis

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Trump impeachment inquiry poses risks for 2020 Democrats

The crowded field of Democratic presidential candidates were nearly unanimous in praising House Democrats' decision to begin an impeachment inquiry into Republican President Donald Trump over accusations he sought foreign help to smear a political rival. Now comes the hard part. With impeachment set to overshadow the Democratic presidential primary race, how will candidates draw attention to their key policy issues, ranging from universal healthcare to income inequality?

After months of resisting pressure from fellow Democrats, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced the launch of a formal impeachment effort on Tuesday, accusing Trump of seeking foreign help to damage Democratic presidential front-runner Joe Biden ahead of the Nov 2020 election. Trump had pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a July 25 phone call to investigate Biden and his son Hunter, who had worked for a company drilling for gas in Ukraine.

The impeachment inquiry ensures a partisan fight in Congress and on the presidential campaign trail in the coming months. Kurt Meyer, Democratic party chairman for three rural Iowa counties north of Des Moines, the state's most populous city, said he expects the impeachment proceedings to energize the Democratic base. "If a highly motivated person drags her mother and her husband and her second cousin twice removed to the polls, then it makes a difference," Meyer said.

But in a sign the probe could energize Trump's base as well, his re-election campaign raised a quarter of a million dollars in just 15 minutes on Tuesday in the immediate aftermath of Pelosi's announcement about the probe. Trump was quick to portray himself as the victim of partisan Democratic attacks, while his campaign sent repeated fundraising appeals to his supporters on Tuesday pegged to the impeachment launch.

There is also a risk that any substantive policy discussions among the 19 Democrats running for the party's nomination to take on Trump in the 2020 election will be drowned out in the growing battle between allies and foes of Trump, several Democratic strategists and experts said. "Trump has been the elephant in the room, but the democratic debates so far have been really policy centered. I think impeachment now takes center stage," said Erin O'Brien, associate professor of political science at University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Doug Heye, a Republican strategist who worked with congressional leaders, said Republican messaging just got simpler, if less positive. "For Democrats running for president, breaking through on healthcare or the economy just got a lot tougher," he said. "Impeachment will be the dominant topic for a long time."

'Subject of Trump's affection'

Biden, who leads polls in the Democratic race to pick a challenger to Trump, said on Tuesday he would back impeachment if the Republican president fails to comply with congressional requests for information on Ukraine and other matters. Trump has raised unsubstantiated charges that Biden improperly tried to halt a Ukrainian probe of a company with ties to his son, without providing any evidence of wrongdoing by either.

Later on Tuesday as he called into a fundraiser in Baltimore, Maryland, Biden said he "can take these attacks." "And the reason I am being attacked is that most polls show me beating him by 10 to 15 points. I am not at all surprised I have become the object of his affection and attention," he said. Biden leads Trump by about 5 percentage points in a hypothetical general election match-up against Trump, according to the Sept 23-24 Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll released on Tuesday.

In a sign that Biden's supporters are largely standing by their candidate so far, 20 percent of Democrats and independents said they would vote for him in statewide nominating contests that begin next year according to the latest poll, up 1 percentage point from a similar poll that ran last week. But the same poll also showed that Americans overall are less supportive of impeaching Trump than they were months ago, highlighting a risk of the move backfiring on Democrats if they are seen overreaching.

"On one level, this whole issue helps Biden, because it makes the president look afraid of Biden," said Kyle Kondik, a political analyst at the University of Virginia. "But the president has a great ability to drag people into the mud with him, and you wonder if that might happen to Biden." Biden's Democratic rivals, including US Senators Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders and Kamala Harris, are set to benefit if the frontrunner falls off. But most have so far refused to be drawn into specific questions about Biden and his family, and are likely to stay that way for now. "On the one hand they want to see Biden struggle, but it might undermine the party overall in a general election," Kondik said. Warren, who edged past Sanders for the first time to rank second behind Biden in the latest Reuters/Ipsos poll with 14 percent support, said on Twitter the impeachment inquiry was "an overdue but important step." — Reuters

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In this photo taken on July 25, 2019, an aerial view shows logs and spruce trees in a forest suffering from drought stress in Hoexter, western Germany.

Germany's trees face 'catastrophe' as bugs attack

Germany's forests have long been treasured by its people, so the country has reacted with alarm and dismay as a beetle infestation has turned climate-stressed woodlands into brown ecological graveyards. After two unusually hot summers in a row, vast patches of the forests mythologized by medieval fairytales, Goethe's writings and Romantic painters have turned into tinder-dry dead zones. Given the scale of the threat to the one third of German territory covered by trees, Chancellor Angela Merkel's government convened a "national forest summit" yesterday.

There Agriculture Minister Julia Klöckner pledged 800 million (about \$880 million) in federal and state funds over four years to restore the 180,000 hectares of forest destroyed by drought and pests as well as storms and fires - the equivalent of 250,000 football pitches. The chief culprit has been the tiny bark beetle, which has gone on a rampage as trees in water-starved habitats have lost their natural defenses.

Defoliated skeletons

In vast parts of Germany, like Welzow forest 100 km south of Berlin, once healthy trees have become defoliated skeletons, their trunks marked by tell-tale networks of tiny tunnels. "The insect eats the bark and lays eggs inside," said forest ranger Arne Barkhausen. "The larvae then start to eat the trunk and block the nutrient pathways of the tree, which dies in about four weeks." The die-off has been front-page news in Germany, where millions enjoy regular walks in the woods and forester Peter Wohlleben's book "The Hidden Life of Trees" became a runaway best-seller.

The worst forest crisis since the acid rain of the 1980s has come as climate change has shot to the top of the political agenda, highlighting the value of forests not just

as water filters and biodiversity hotspots but also as natural carbon sinks. Hectares of spruce and pine, beech and oak forest have fallen victim to the pest in Bavaria, Thuringia and other states. In Saxony, the German army was even called in this month to help overwhelmed foresters clear dead trees in what state authorities labelled an "unparalleled disaster".

'Catastrophe of century'

Germany boasts 90 billion trees, according to the latest survey from 2012. About 1.1 million people work in forestry and related sectors, more than in the automotive industry. But experts warn that there are no easy fixes to the bark beetles' onslaught, since the underlying cause is beyond the control of any single nation: global warming. "Beetles have always been there, they have been creating problems for 200 years," said Peter Biedermann of Wuerzburg University's Department of Animal Ecology and Tropical Biology.

He said the current crisis started with the severe winter storm Friederike in Jan 2018 and the prolonged droughts that followed. "Since 2018 the attacked trees have been under water stress and their roots are no longer deep enough," explained Biedermann. The beetles meanwhile benefit from global warming because more of them survive the milder winters and they emerge earlier in the year, breeding not one or two but up to four generations per year. Larissa Schulz-Trieglaff of the Forest Owners Association said all this had "caused the beetle population to explode" resulting in the "catastrophe of the century" for German forests.

End monocultures

Many drought-stressed trees, meanwhile, have been too weakened to produce enough of the sticky sap that



European spruce bark beetles (Ips typographus) dig into a spruce tree under water stress. — AFP photos

traps bugs or repels them with natural insecticidal compounds. And there are few effective ways to fight back, said Derk Ehlert, head of wildlife in the city-state of Berlin. "We have trouble coping with it, we can't use chemicals," he told AFP. "When the animal is already in the tree, it stays there," he said. "We therefore try to support the natural enemies of bark beetles, especially wasps, which like to eat their eggs and larvae." But Biedermann warned that the bigger problem was the vulnerability of Germany's vast forestry monocultures. Many forests resemble tree farms where a single species, planted in neat rows, covers hundreds of hectares, most commonly spruce planted since the lean post-war years. Environment Minister Svenja Schulze said the new funds should not be used to plant even more heat-susceptible spruce forests, but rather more resilient and natural mixed woodlands. — AFP

'Blue finance' hopes to put oceans on a sustainable path

The world's oceans are set to become an increasingly vital resource for helping the planet cope with soaring population growth, but officials are only beginning to craft regulatory frameworks that would ensure "blue financing" goes where it's needed most. From food production and marine biotechnology research to seabed mining and renewable energy production, investors are expecting a wave of initiatives in the waters that cover 70 percent of the Earth's surface.

But the ventures will also require stepped up efforts to keep oceans clean and viable - eight million tonnes of plastic are entering each year, according to the World Bank, and over-fishing has already severely depleted some stocks. "Much of what has to be done in the blue economy is regulation," said Sean Kidney, co-founder of the Climate Bonds Initiative. Without coordinated action among governments, he warned, "in 30 years' time we may not be catching fish but jellyfish." Kidney's nonprofit aims to steer the massive amounts of funds raised by debt issuance toward low-carbon and other climate-friendly projects. That could mobilize millions for off-

shore wave or wind energy ventures as pressure mounts on governments to tackle greenhouse gases and smog. The money could also finance coastal renewal projects that will become more urgent as cities grow, and as more retirees and as well as tourists flock to pristine beaches and resorts. "Because what we have done in the last 100 years is fundamentally destroy the coastal system," Kidney said.

Modernizing shipping fleets will also become a priority as trade surges with population growth - the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development expects an additional two billion people worldwide by 2050. A group of 11 multinational banks announced in June the "Poseidon Principles" which aim to help shipping firms cut their emissions in half within 30 years from the levels of 2008. "It's a massive effort that will muster a fourth of the global shipping finance portfolio, or some \$100 billion," said Alexandre Amedjian, head of maritime financing in Europe for French bank Societe Generale. Loan terms would be more advantageous for firms which show the most progress in cutting pollution, Amedjian said.

But as in other green investments, backers of "blue economy" projects will demand oversight to ensure the environmental claims are being met. "A growing number of investors want to be able to show the positive impact of their investments, and that feeds a virtuous circle," said Marine de Bazelaire, head of sustainable development for continental Europe at HSBC. She cited the example of using funds to create more protected marine

areas, "since oceans also capture and store 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions."

'Raising public awareness'

But "blue financing" will also encompass a range of smaller projects, such as fishery improvements or expansions that don't require the financial firepower offered by capital markets. "The blue economy is fragmented, and most of their requirements would be less than \$50 million," said Richard Mattison, chief executive of S&P Global's Trucost unit, which evaluates and advises on climate change risks. "If you are a supplier to a big food company or a supermarket, as a fisherman, you are unlikely to want a bond - you are more likely to want a loan," Mattison said. "There isn't a lack of capital," he added, but a set of common rules will have to be established to ensure the money goes where it's needed most. The European Commission has already made a start, laying out in Jan 2018 its "sustainable blue economy finance principles" after consulting with groups like the World Wildlife Fund and the European Investment Bank. However, experts say that to see the most productive blue financing boom, governments will have to step up and coordinate their ocean efforts as well. "Some challenges are really problems that can be solved with debt financing, like water management infrastructures," said Tanguy Clauquin, head of sustainable finance at the investment banking arm of Credit Agricole. "But others, like dealing with the proliferation of plastics, will depend more on public policies and raising public awareness worldwide," he said. — AFP

Tropical fish swim into Europe as common species head north

Cod, sole and plaice might be regulars on European dinner tables but as climate change heats the oceans common species are heading to cooler northern waters - with profound potential consequences for fish stocks and consumers. Experts say bluefin tuna, seahorse and the bright triggerfish from the tropics are swimming to Europe's warming seas while fish such as cod are migrating northwards. "We will see less of the fish we know, and we will see tropical fish arriving that we did not know (here) until now," said Clara Ulrich, a fisheries scientist and assistant director at the French Research Institute for Exploration of the Sea.

She said the bluefin tuna is returning to the North Sea and said seahorse and balistes, a tropical fish seen in hot areas, are arriving in European waters. Ulrich explained it

is not that species such as cod have disappeared from European waters but there will be less of them along the French and Spanish coasts and more of them in colder climates such as in Norway and Scotland. "It is not that fish migrate to the north as such, but it is that fish populations in the south are becoming less and less productive and therefore their density is decreasing," she said. "While fish from colder areas can benefit from an increase in temperature and become more productive themselves," she added.

"Fish resources are very dynamic. It's not physics, not everything happens as planned," said Manuel Barange, Director of Fisheries and Aquaculture Department at the FAO, the UN agency for agriculture and food. "There will be changes from year to year, but we do expect that there's (a) shift of species, of warmer water species towards the north," he added.

Fears over 'fish wars'

This may require adaptation on the part of consumers, who he said should make the most of the new species that become available. "Anchovies arrived in the UK and I've seen them in the UK markets, they are incredibly cheap, because nobody buys them, so we need to start educating

the public to start eating the fish that they have rather than just simply the fish that they used to have and they like to eat," Barange said. He said the same goes for red mullet, which is usually found in the Mediterranean but it is barely eaten in the UK even when it is sold cheaply.

Overfishing is also to blame for depleting fish numbers and the destruction of underwater habitat. In July, the European Commission announced a five month ban on fishing cod, the staple of Britain's fish and chips, in most of the Baltic sea in response to an impending stock collapse. "The main cause of the collapse of commercial populations is overfishing," said Francois Chartier who heads the Greenpeace oceans campaign in France.

He said it is urgent that ocean food chains are maintained so that their role as a "carbon pump" is not jeopardized. "Like forests, it absorbs CO2, it produces oxygen, it's photosynthesis, if you have a food chain in the ocean that is unstructured, you will have much more difficulty for the oceans to ensure that it functions in the climate system," he warned. The other issue for fisheries are quotas between countries as species migrate north. This was seen during the years-long "mackerel and herring wars" fought between the EU and Norway against Iceland and the Faroe Islands. — AFP

Business

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In this file photo taken on October 18, 2013 London Mayor Boris Johnson gestures after getting out of a double-decker bus during his visit in Hong Kong on October 18, 2013. Wrightbus, the manufacturers of London's iconic red "double-decker" buses, entered administration yesterday, a spokesman for the company confirmed. —AFP

London red bus maker enters administration

1,200 staff to lose jobs; Deloitte exploring options for business

BELFAST: Wrightbus, maker of London's red double-deckers and one of Northern Ireland's largest manufacturers, was placed into administration yesterday with almost all of its 1,250 staff losing their jobs, administrators Deloitte said.

Trade union Unite called on British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who as mayor of London bought a fleet of 600 so-called "Boris Buses" from Wrightbus in 2012, to intervene and nationalize the company. "Despite extensive efforts over recent months it has not been possible to find a buyer who wanted to maintain the business as a going concern," said Michael Magnay, joint administrator, who will oversee a form of creditor protection that often precedes bankruptcy.

Wrightbus is best known for supplying New Routemaster buses to Transport for London (TfL) under the mayorship of Boris Johnson, who is now Britain's prime minister. Based in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, the company is one of the province's largest

employers. The administrators will "explore all remaining options for the business and assets, and would encourage any parties with an interest to contact them," he said, adding that 1,200 of 1,250 staff had been made redundant. Management met with staff and unions yesterday morning to announce the decision.

The Unite trade union said staff were devastated by the move and it was now up to the British government to step in. "Prime Minister Boris Johnson has made great play about how he stands strong for British industry," Unite Regional Secretary Jackie Pollock said.

"We call on Boris Johnson to 'take back control' and nationalize to invest in securing UK bus manufacturing capacity." The British government's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Julian Smith said in a Twitter post he had been holding talks about Wrightbus' fate. "I ... continue to do all I can to support Wrightbus and its employees," he said.

Financial woes

Parent company the Cornerstone Group slipped from a profit of 10.9 million pounds in 2016 to a loss of 1.7 million in 2017, the last year it filed accounts for. In accounts published last year, it cited uncertainty in the UK market for new buses and the pressure of increased material prices due to a weaker pound.

It also disclosed a 4.1 million pound donation "to fund the group's commitment to Christian, evangelical and other charitable activities." In 2016 Wrightbus founder William Wright was the first major business leader in Northern Ireland to publicly back leaving the EU.

Local member of parliament Ian Paisley, whose Democratic Unionist Party campaigned for Brexit, yesterday denied that Britain's decision to leave the European Union had had an impact on Wrightbus, noting that its biggest customers were in the United Kingdom. Paisley described the decision to enter administration as "an absolutely tragic body blow." But he said he expected the administration process

would attract a buyer. Wrightbus launched a new-look Routemaster in London in 2012 to much fanfare, but the bus later attracted some complaints. In 2016, Johnson's successor as London mayor, Sadiq Khan, said in a written answer to public questions about the bus, "Londoners deserve a green, affordable and functional bus fleet, which is why I will not be purchasing any more New Routemasters." The London Assembly later cited problems with the batteries and bus capacity. But in May of this year Transport for London announced it had ordered 20 new zero-emission hydrogen-powered buses from Wrightbus. The company also had customers in Ireland, Singapore and Mexico.

As recently as 2016 the firm was awarded a £62 million (\$77 million, 70 million euro) contract to produce the vehicles for the streets of the capital. The iconic red "double-decker" vehicles with a sleek updated design were dubbed "Boris buses", becoming a flagship project for the capital's then-leader. — Agencies

India auto giant Maruti cuts car prices amid woes

MUMBAI: India's biggest maker of passenger vehicles Maruti Suzuki cut prices of some car models yesterday in a bid to boost sales as the auto sector struggles with weak demand amid a wider economic slowdown. The price reduction for 10 models comes ahead of two of India's biggest Hindu festivals, when automakers traditionally record their highest sales for the year.

The lead-up to the festive season has sent shudders through the sector, with passenger car sales in India recording their 10th-straight month of falls in August. The government has announced a raft of initiatives in recent weeks to encourage consumers to open their wallets, and last week slashed corporate taxes to among the lowest in Asia.

Welcoming the tax cut, Maruti Suzuki said it would "share the benefits... with its customers" by cutting prices by 5,000 rupees (\$70) immediately. One of the basic models of



Workers fit out Maruti-Suzuki Swift cars on an assembly line in Manesar in Haryana state. — AFP

the Swift Diesel usually retails for about 514,000 rupees.

The announcement came as Bloomberg reported that US auto giant Ford was set to transfer most of its Indian assets to a joint venture with local behemoth Mahindra & Mahindra. The move, expected to be announced as soon as next week, will see

Mahindra own 51 percent of the new entity, Bloomberg added. Ford, like other major foreign automakers, has sought to tap into India, the world's fourth biggest car market but has struggled to boost its low market share in the price-sensitive South Asian nation. A Mahindra spokesman declined to comment on the report. —AFP

US new home sales accelerate; lower mortgage rates a boost

WASHINGTON: Sales of new US single-family homes rebounded more than expected in August, the latest sign that the struggling housing market was starting to get a lift from lower mortgage rates.

The Commerce Department said yesterday new home sales increased 7.1 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 713,000 units last month, boosted by a surge in activity in the South and West. July's sales pace was revised up to 666,000 units from the previously reported 635,000 units.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast new home sales, which account for about 11.5 percent of housing market sales, increasing 3.5 percent to a pace of 660,000 units in August.

New home sales are drawn from per-

mits and tend to be volatile on a month-to-month basis. Sales surged 18.0 percent from a year ago. The median new home price rose 2.2 percent to \$328,400 in August from a year ago. The housing market, the most sensitive sector to interest rates, has perked up in recent months in response to a sharp drop in mortgage rates. Reports last week showed housing starts and building permits jumped to a more than 12-year high in August, and home resales rose to the highest level in 17 months.

The 30-year fixed mortgage rate has dropped about 120 basis points from last year's highs to an average of 3.73 percent, according to data from mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac. The Federal Reserve last week cut interest rates for the second time to offset the impact on the economy from a year-long trade war between the United States and China, and slowing global growth. The US central bank lowered rates in July for the first time since 2008. While other data from the Mortgage Bankers Association yesterday showed applications for loans to purchase a home fell last week, they were up solidly from a year ago. — Reuters

Business

Al Mulla Automobiles concludes 'GLE Week' at Mercedes-Benz Boutique at the Avenues

GLE week aimed to display full line of available GLE vehicles



KUWAIT: Al Mulla Automobiles Company concluded recently its 'GLE Week' that saw it feature the full fleet of the new GLE in the Mercedes-Benz Boutique in Grand Plaza - The Avenues. The GLE week aimed to display the full line of available GLE vehicles and highlight their key features and available options.

In line with Al Mulla Automobiles commitment to hosting bespoke events to its clients, it hosted two evening events, one dedicated to its Mercedes-Benz clients and an evening for Gulf Bank priority banking clients respectively. The guests were provided with a special evening where they were presented with a demonstrative walk-through of the brand-new GLE, while presenting guests with an opportunity to test-drive the vehicles at their convenience.

Commenting on this occasion, Michael Ruehle, General Manager of Mercedes-Benz Passenger Cars & Vans at Al Mulla Automobiles said: "We are always delighted to host special events for our guests and customers, highlighting the variety on offer from Mercedes-Benz. The new Mercedes-Benz GLE is an exceptional vehicle that offers a wealth of innovations." "We are committed to providing our clients with special hands on events where they can experience the exceptional caliber of vehicles on offer in a comfortable environment and get a hands on experience of our vehicles in our state of the art Mercedes-Benz Boutique in the Avenues," Ruehle added.

The new Mercedes-Benz GLE offers new innovations

such as the E-ACTIVE Body CONTROL active suspension system which is a world first, the interior is even more spacious and comfortable, with a third seat row available on request. The infotainment system has larger screens, a full color head up display and the MBUX Interior Assistant. The exterior design not only exudes presence and power but also sets a new standard for aerodynamics in the SUV segment while providing greater agility on the road and superior performance off the beaten track.

Exterior design: Powerful presence

Modern luxury both on and off the road: that is the design message of the new GLE. The vehicle's proportions with a long wheelbase, short overhangs and large, flush-fitted wheels already leave no doubt that it feels at home and cuts a good figure on any terrain.

The front section of the GLE exudes presence and power: this is ensured by the upright radiator grille in an octagonal SUV interpretation, the prominent, chrome-plated underguard and the bonnet with two powerdomes. This striking appearance is emphasized by the distinctive headlamp design by day and night. The ULTRA RANGE high beam of the optional MULTIBEAM LED headlamps produces the maximum light intensity permitted by law, i.e. the brightness of the main beam headlamps remains above the reference value of 1 lux over a distance of more than 650 metres.

Viewed from the side, the wide C-pillar typical of the GLE conveys self-assured stability. The large

wheels in sizes from 19 to 22 inches are housed in wheel arches with prominent liners. This underlines the GLE's robust SUV character, as do the pillared roof rails or the optional illuminated running boards.

Interior design

The interior of the new GLE derives its fascination from the contrast between the luxurious, elegant ambience of a Mercedes-Benz luxury saloon and the robust, progressive features of an SUV. The prominent, raised center console creates a robust contrast with the floating appearance of the dashboard. As a typical feature of off-roaders, there are two prominent grab handles on the center console. All the controls and displays are in a new design. The controls with haptic and audible feedback appear to have been milled from a solid metal block. Very fine chiselling and pyramid structures show the desire for perfection and craftsmanship. The new sport steering wheel with its striking, sculptured spoke design accentuates the impressive appearance of the SUV's interior.

Even more flexibility is possible with the optional, folding third seat row, which provides two extra seats. Thanks to the Easy Entry function of the fully electrically adjustable second seat row, the two rear-most passengers can conveniently reach their seats.

MBUX: now with Interior Assist

The GLE is equipped with the latest generation of

the multimedia system MBUX - Mercedes-Benz User Experience. Improvements versus the A-Class in which this revolutionary system had its debut include two large 12.3-inch/ 31.2 cm screens as standard, which are arranged next to each other for an impressive widescreen look. Showcasing elements in an emotively appealing manner underlines the comprehensibility of the intuitive control structure and impresses with brilliant graphics.

The optional MBUX Interior Assist also allows intuitive, natural operation of different comfort and MBUX functions by movement recognition. A camera in the overhead console registers movements of the driver's and front passenger's hands and arms. When a hand approaches the touchscreen or the touchpad on the center console, the media display changes and individual, elements are e.g. highlighted. The system is able to distinguish the driver's hand from that of the front passenger, and therefore knows for whose seat the message function is to be activated, for example.

In addition there are functions that can be controlled by simple hand gestures: the reading lamp can be switched on and off by extending a hand towards the rear-view mirror, for example. The driver and front passenger can both program a personal, favorite function. General MBUX operation has been improved in numerous respects. For example, the settings menus are in a new design and the initial setup assistant has been improved.

Thyssenkrupp seeks new CEO amid German boardroom woes

FRANKFURT: German industrial giant Thyssenkrupp sank into fresh turmoil as it announced plans late Tuesday to fire chief executive Guido Kerkhoff, in a new episode of the drama plaguing boardrooms of "corporate dinosaurs". The chaos on Thyssen's executive floor underlined the hefty challenge faced by the conglomerate, which has grown over more than two centuries into a behemoth making products from raw steel to submarines and car parts, to slim down and refocus.

Kerkhoff, who had only been in the job for 14 months, had been tasked with splitting the company in two, finding an alternative after a planned merger with India's Tata collapsed, and floating the highly-profitable elevators division, estimated to be worth around 15 billion euros (\$16.6 billion). But all the plans to trim the increasingly unwieldy outfit now stand incomplete.

Kerkhoff had stepped up as Thyssen's CEO after his predecessor Heinrich Hiesinger quit in July 2018, following months of backseat driving from activist investors like US-based Elliott and Sweden's Cevian. Then-supervisory board chairman Ulrich Lehner soon followed, complaining of "psychological terrorism" from shareholders of the manufacturer which for years has suffered from cut-price competition from Chinese steelmakers.

Its plans to slim down its complex structure by merging that arm of its steel operations with Indian firm Tata were frustrated earlier this year by the European Commission's competition watchdogs.

That in turn collapsed a scheme to split the company into two separate halves, "Materials" and "Industrials". Meanwhile, the flagging car industry and trade wars have undermined the broader German economy, eating into Thyssenkrupp's performance.

Now the supervisory board's personnel committee has suggested Kerkhoff should go, to be replaced by present supervisory board head Martina Merz for up to a year.

While it is still making profits, Thyssenkrupp last November reported its earnings have slumped in its 2017-18 financial year to just 60 million euros, down 78 percent on 2016-17. A day after the latest management chaos erupted, the company's

shares were trading at just 12.35 euros around 1 pm yesterday (1100 GMT), down from above 26 euros in early 2018.

It has also lost its blue-chip status as a member of the DAX index of leading German stocks. With its 18-percent stake, Cevian expects "that the new leadership will speed up the transformation process that Thyssenkrupp so urgently needs," founding partner Lars Forberg said in a statement.

Forberg urged a "crystal-clear strategy and a well-defined plan of action."

Dying-out of 'dinosaurs'

But across Germany's corporate landscape, Thyssen is not alone in its travails. Several other massive German groups have also in recent years embarked on such reorganization exercises-mainly spinning off business units and refocusing around "core" activities. If size was an advantage "the whole world today would be full of dinosaurs," Siemens chief executive Joe Kaeser told investors earlier this year. "Something must have been wrong with them, because, obviously, they don't exist," he added.

In recent years, Siemens has trimmed sail with moves like spinning off lightbulb division Osram and floating its Healthineers medical devices unit, a step also planned for its energy arm next year.

But even Kaeser appears on the way



In this file photo taken on November 21, 2018, the CEO of German industrial group Thyssenkrupp Guido Kerkhoff poses in front of the group's headquarters in Essen, western Germany. —AFP

out, as supervisors have named Roland Busch deputy CEO—a clear heir apparent. Slimming-down processes don't always run smoothly.

Bosses at once-sprawling chemical and pharma giant Bayer faced an unprecedented rebuke from shareholders at their annual general meeting this year, as they voted

against signing off on the board's 2018 actions. Investors were angered by billions in legal risks resulting from the group's takeover of US seeds and pesticides firm Monsanto-part of Bayer's years-long transition to a "life sciences" firm focused on pharmaceuticals, agrichemicals and over-the-counter medicines. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.		Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd		BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		Rate for Transfer		CURRENCY	BUY SELL
US Dollar Transfer	304.550	US Dollar	304.190	British Pound	0.372219 0.386119
Euro	336.530	Canadian Dollar	230.813	Czech Korune	0.004914 0.014214
Sterling Pound	381.140	Tunisian Dinar	110.750	Danish Krone	0.040757 0.045757
Canadian dollar	230.550	Jordanian Dinar	430.000	Euro	0.327205 0.340905
Turkish lira	54.090	Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203	Georgian Lari	0.101724 0.101724
Swiss Franc	310.130	Syrian Lira	0.000	Hungarian 0.000911	0.029659 0.034859
US Dollar Buying	297.200	Morocco Dirham	32.330	Norwegian Krone	0.053484 0.070334
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Selling Rate		Romanian Leu	0.004749 0.004749
Japanese Yen	2.837	US Dollar	304.190	Russian ruble	0.009106 0.019106
Indian Rupees	4.285	Canadian Dollar	230.813	Slovakia	0.027368 0.032368
Pakistani Rupees	1.961	Tunisian Dinar	110.750	Swedish Krona	0.301821 0.312821
SriLankan Rupees	1.675	Jordanian Dinar	430.000	Swiss Franc	0.301821 0.312821
Nepali Rupees	2.680	Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203	Australia	
Singapore Dollar	221.980	Syrian Lira	0.000	Australian Dollar	0.198223 0.210223
Hongkong Dollar	38.853	Morocco Dirham	32.330	New Zealand Dollar	0.186261 0.195761
Bangladesh Taka	3.593	ASIAN COUNTRIES		America	
Philippine Peso	5.828	Japanese Yen	2.837	Canadian Dollar	0.224165 0.233165
Thai Baht	9.980	Indian Rupees	4.285	US Dollars	0.300450 0.305750
Malaysian ringgit	77.890	Pakistani Rupees	1.961	US Dollars Mint	0.300950 0.305750
GCC COUNTRIES		Bangladesh Taka	3.593	Asia	
Saudi Riyal	81.268	Philippines Peso	5.861	Bangladesh Taka	0.002933 0.003734
Qatari Riyal	83.702	Cyprus pound	18.097	Arab	
Omani Riyal	791.553	Japanese Yen	3.850	Bahraini Dinar	0.801672 0.809732
Bahraini Dinar	809.220	Syrian Pound	1.590	Egyptian Pound	0.018646 0.022006
UAE Dirham	82.972	Nepalese Rupees	2.648	Iranian Riyal	0.000084 0.000086
ARAB COUNTRIES		Malaysian Ringgit	73.505	Iraqi Dinar	0.000211 0.000271
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.500	ASIAN COUNTRIES		Jordanian Dinar	0.424644 0.433644
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.110	Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000 1.000000
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Thai Bhat	10.935	Lebanese Pound	0.000151 0.000251
GCC COUNTRIES		Singapore dollars	218.554	Moroccan Dirhams	0.021575 0.045575
ARAB COUNTRIES		BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		Omani Riyal	0.785906 0.793809
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		CURRENCY	BUY SELL	Qatar Riyal	0.082996 0.083830
ASIAN COUNTRIES		British Pound	0.372219 0.386119	Saudi Riyal	0.080127 0.081427
GCC COUNTRIES		Czech Korune	0.004914 0.014214	Syrian Pound	0.001291 0.001511
ARAB COUNTRIES		Danish Krone	0.040757 0.045757	Tunisian Dinar	0.102178 0.110178
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		Euro	0.327205 0.340905	Turkish Lira	0.046495 0.056340
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Georgian Lari	0.101724 0.101724	UAE Dirhams	0.082284 0.08312
GCC COUNTRIES		Hungarian 0.000911	0.029659 0.034859	Yemeni Riyal	0.000990 0.001070
ARAB COUNTRIES		Norwegian Krone	0.053484 0.070334		
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		Romanian Leu	0.004749 0.004749		
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Russian ruble	0.009106 0.019106		
GCC COUNTRIES		Slovakia	0.027368 0.032368		
ARAB COUNTRIES		Swedish Krona	0.301821 0.312821		
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		Swiss Franc	0.301821 0.312821		
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Australia			
GCC COUNTRIES		Australian Dollar	0.198223 0.210223		
ARAB COUNTRIES		New Zealand Dollar	0.186261 0.195761		
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		America			
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Canadian Dollar	0.224165 0.233165		
GCC COUNTRIES		US Dollars	0.300450 0.305750		
ARAB COUNTRIES		US Dollars Mint	0.300950 0.305750		
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		Asia			
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Bangladesh Taka	0.002933 0.003734		

Business

After Thomas Cook fallout, Tunisia looks beyond seaside packages

UK firm's bankruptcy highlights need to diversify sector

TUNIS: British tour operator Thomas Cook going bankrupt may not spell the end of tourism in Tunisia, but it highlights the need to diversify the key sector beyond all-inclusive beach holidays. The demise of the package holiday giant comes as Tunisia recovers from a three-year tourism lull after devastating jihadist attacks in 2015 that killed dozens of tourists.

The attacks on a museum and beach resort killed 30 Britons among 38 foreign holiday makers, sending an industry that employed tens of thousands of people into a tailspin. But the sector has since rebounded on the back of improved security, with an expected record total of nine million visitors to the Mediterranean country for 2019. Thomas Cook returned in force to Tunisia last year, before collapsing on Monday.

The tour operator's fallout has left some \$66 million in hotel bills unpaid, according to initial estimates by the Tunisian federation of hoteliers. But federation head Khaled Fakhfakh said he did not think losses would severely impact a sector back on track eight years after an uprising toppled dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

"Nationwide, tourism receipts have exceeded those for 2010," a reference point in the industry, he said. "The losses won't affect this performance."

'We learnt to bounce back'

The bankruptcy is set to affect around 40 hotels, says Fakhfakh. But "I don't think there will be any bankruptcies", he said. An employee at a travel agency, who asked to remain anonymous, said tourism in Tunisia would recover. "It will be tough, but not insurmountable," the employee said. After the 2015 attacks, "for three years, Thomas Cook had more or less left the country but we learnt to bounce back."

This year, Thomas Cook had organized for 230,000

holidaymakers—around half from Britain—to visit Tunisia, the tourism ministry says. That represented around 3.5 percent of all tourists to the country, and 5 percent of the European market.

After the bankruptcy, some 10,000 holidaymakers—including 4,500 Britons—are slowly being flown home as their stays come to an end. Britain and Belgium are repatriating their nationals, Tunisian authorities have said. Beyond unpaid bills, up to 40,000 trips planned for the rest of the year have been cancelled, the ministry says.

The bankruptcy has thrown a Tunisian tourism agency that provided transport to Thomas Cook clients into turmoil.

'Tired' tourism model

But in a country where three quarters of tourists are brought in by tour operators, the crisis has also renewed calls for the tourism sector—which accounts for around 7 percent of the GDP—to broaden its horizons. Despite an increase in tourist arrivals, the sector remains fragile, with banking sources estimating its debt at \$1.5 billion last year.

"It's a model that has started to tire," tourism expert Hedi Hamdi said. "There needs to be a smooth transition" to a new model including attractive options for the younger generation, he said.

From booking a cheap flight and local transport to browsing accommodation and leisure options online, Tunisia is still struggling to provide for tourists who do not want to end up stuck in an organized holiday. Hoteliers have asked for an Open Sky accord to finally be signed with the European Union to allow low cost airlines to land in Tunisia. The deal, which has been in the works for several years, would reduce dependency



TUNIS: British tourists, flying with Thomas Cook, queue at the Enfidha International airport on the outskirts of Sousse south of the capital Tunis. —AFP

on flights chartered by tour operators. But it could also be a double-edged sword, warns Hamdi.

"It could result in a new hegemony of companies

such as Expedia or booking.com, who also have stringent demands," he said, referring to the online booking platforms. —AFP

WB's Georgieva to be first IMF chief from emerging economy

NEW YORK/SOFIA: Bulgarian economist Kristalina Georgieva was expected to be confirmed yesterday as managing director of the International Monetary Fund, which would make her the first person from an emerging economy to head the global lender.

A center-right politician who grew up in Bulgaria under communism, Georgieva has built a reputation during her time at the World Bank - where she has been on a leave of absence from her post as chief executive officer during the IMF nomination process - and the European Commission as a tenacious straight-shooter, champion of gender equality and leader in the global fight against climate change.

She will face a host of challenges as the head of the IMF, the world's crisis lender with \$1 trillion in firepower, including a global economic slowdown triggered by escalating trade tensions between the United States and China. In addition, the United States, which represents the largest voting bloc on the IMF board, has withdrawn from multilateral accords, and risks are growing in emerging markets like Argentina, which last

year received a \$57 billion bailout, the IMF's largest ever.

The IMF's executive board interviewed Georgieva, 65, the sole nominee for the job, on Tuesday, and was due to vote on her nomination yesterday.

The vote is largely ceremonial. Georgieva, backed by French President Emmanuel Macron, last month won support from the rest of the European Union, as well as tacit backing from the United States. An IMF board source told Reuters that Georgieva was ready for the job. "She has convinced the board that she is the leader that the institution needs and will be a strong advocate for the multilateral system," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the board's deliberations are not public. Her likely confirmation has spawned great pride in her home country, with some newspapers lauding it as evidence of both Georgieva's own qualities and as a diplomatic success.

"Only 20 years ago, Bulgaria was among the countries with an IMF rescue program," the leading financial newspaper Kapital said earlier this month. "The nomination of the former Bulgarian EU commissioner should be seen not only as her personal acknowledgement, but as a diplomatic success for the country."

Georgieva will replace Christine Lagarde, who became the first woman to head the IMF when she took the helm in 2011. Lagarde, 63, guided the lender through the European sovereign debt crisis, which began about a month after



Bulgarian economist Kristalina Georgieva

she took office. She is departing to head the European Central Bank.

Before her appointment at the World Bank, Georgieva held numerous senior European Commission posts, including budget commissioner, and has deep knowledge of emerging market countries served by the World Bank. Scott Morris, a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development, said Georgieva quickly made an impact after assuming the No. 2 role at the World Bank in early 2017. She pushed for consensus on a \$13 billion capital increase and reform package agreed last year. Under the reforms, lending to China and other wealthier developing countries will decrease with more resources going to needier coun-

tries. "She was able to bring together a diverse group of shareholders. That's her strength," said Morris, a former US Treasury official. "What's less clear is how she will handle the day to day business of the fund, that business being the crisis moments. It's harder to see how she will respond in a crisis." Morris said Lagarde was successful in that she was not viewed as representing European interests, which helped her navigate the Greek debt crisis. Georgieva will have to take a similar multilateral approach, keeping her focus on the interests of the institution and individual countries. "No one thought of Lagarde as a European chief executive," Morris said. "She rose above that." —Reuters

India's stuttering economy hits global oil demand: Expert

LONDON: India's oil consumption is growing well below its long-term trend as the country struggles with a widespread economic slowdown, including a slump in new vehicle sales. The slowdown is part of a worldwide economic deceleration, which is weighing heavily on the motor industry.

But because India has been so important for growth in oil demand over the last two decades, its downturn is materially shifting oil's global production-consumption balance and weighing on prices.

India's slowdown threatens to trim at least 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) from global consumption growth in 2019, helping push world growth down to 1 million bpd or less this year.

In the last two decades, India's consumption increased at an annual average

rate of around 5 percent compared with a worldwide average of 1.5 percent, making the country a major source of incremental demand. It accounted for almost 13 percent of worldwide consumption growth between 1998 and 2018, rising to 18 percent between 2013 and 2018 ("Statistical Review of World Energy", BP, 2019).

But the country's consumption was up by just 1.45 percent in the three months from June to August compared with the same period a year earlier, down from more than 8 percent year-on-year at the start of 2018. Gasoline, used by private motorists, is now growing less than 10 percent year-on-year, down from more than 13 percent in the first quarter of last year, according to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Diesel, used for moving road and rail freight, as well as on farms and in small-scale power generation, and the fuel most closely linked to economic activity, is increasing by just 1.3 percent, down from more than 9 percent in early 2018.

Economy stalls

India's economy has slowed sharply this year owing to a broad-based slowdown in business investment and household con-

sumption ("World economic outlook update", IMF, July 2019). Domestic passenger vehicle sales in the three months to August were down by nearly 27 percent compared with the same period last year, the sharpest fall for at least 16 years.

Falling sales have led to tens of thousands of layoffs by domestic motor manufacturers, parts makers and distributors, which are rippling through the rest of the economy and labor market. Lower sales



NEW DELHI: A woman vendor sorts green peas at a wholesale vegetable market in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP

will also translate into slower growth in the vehicle fleet and fuel consumption, especially gasoline, over the next year.

India's central bank has cut interest rates four times so far in 2019 and the union government has announced an ambitious package of corporate tax cuts to stimulate the economy. Until the economy recovers its momentum, however, it will remain a major drag on the global oil market and prices. —Agencies

according to Radio Slovenia.

Yesterday's newspapers reported Adria's end as almost inevitable with titles such as "Stalling with the unavoidable" and "The national flag carrier is flying no more". Slovenia sold the financially stricken carrier to German investment fund 4K in 2016 after having put over 50 million euros (\$55 million) into it. But under the new owner the airline, which employs about 500 people, continued to lose money, with some of its jets grounded since last week over unpaid bills. —AFP

Slovenian flag carrier gets week to solve cash crisis

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia: Slovenian civil aviation authority yesterday gave the EU member's struggling flag carrier a week

to present a financial restructuring plan or else lose its operating license.

Slovenian media have speculated that a bankruptcy procedure could be imminent for Adria Airways, which has suspended flights since Tuesday, affecting thousands of travellers. Five of Adria's planes were taken back by lenders over the last week, but the airlines can continue operating with its ten other planes for now. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) director Rok Marolt said.

"Adria must present an approved financial plan by October 2. Otherwise,

the CAA will revoke its license without new hearings," Marolt was quoted by the Finance daily as saying.

The CAA also warned the company it has to report to the agency if it decides to declare bankruptcy. Adria, which operates regional flights between the Western Balkans and other parts of Europe, has suspended all but one flight since Tuesday over liquidity problems, saying it was "in intensive talks to find a solution with potential investors".

More than 3,000 passengers were affected by the cancelled flights so far,

UK retailers report weak sales in Sept

LONDON: British retail sales fell for a fifth straight month in September, the Confederation of British Industry said yesterday, and credit card lending data also pointed to a possible softening in consumer demand ahead of Brexit.

Britain's economy unexpectedly shrank in the second quarter and economists forecast it will only achieve modest growth during the three months to September, as exporters face pressure from the trade conflict between the United States and China.

So far consumer demand has stayed solid according to official data, contrasting with business investment which has ground to a halt ahead of the risk of a disruptive no-deal departure from the European Union on Oct 31. The CBI said the headline sales number of its monthly distributive trades survey rose to -16 in September from a 10-year low of -49 in August, a somewhat bigger rebound than economists had forecast in a Reuters poll. The gauge of orders placed with suppliers rose to -9 from -59, but stores still judged that sales were poor for the time of year, with this measure dropping to -11 from -6.

"Add to this the pressures of sterling depreciation and the need to plan for potential tariffs and supply issues in the event of a no-deal Brexit and you get a gloomy picture for the sector," CBI chief economist Rain Newton-Smith said. In recent months, the CBI data has been more downbeat than official figures and data from the British Retail Consortium.

August data from the Office for National Statistics - which includes a wider range of retailers than the CBI survey - showed that sales volumes were up 2.7 percent on a year earlier.

"The CBI's survey repeatedly has pointed to a retail apocalypse this year that has not occurred," Pantheon Macroeconomics's Samuel Tombs said. The weak survey data probably reflected high-street stores' difficulty adapting to online competition, he added.

Nonetheless, there have been some recent signs that consumers' mood may be darkening. A monthly survey by IHS Markit showed on Monday that households were the most downbeat about the outlook for their finances in nearly six years - though a strong job market boosted overall sentiment.

And earlier on Wednesday figures from trade body UK Finance showed credit card lending growth slowed in August to its weakest since February 2015. "Consumer caution may be increasing," economist Howard Archer of consultants EY Item Club said, adding that households could be less keen on borrowing more now given political and economic uncertainty ahead, and reduced credit availability.

Sainsbury's to slash costs

Meanwhile, British supermarket Sainsbury's, which failed to merge with Walmart-owned Asda earlier this year, unveiled yesterday a major cost-cutting plan.

Sainsbury's will seek to axe £500 million (\$623 million, 566 million euros) in costs over the next five years, it announced in a trading update, which also revealed sliding quarterly sales amid fierce competition. The company will shutter up to 70 standalone branches of catalogue division Argos-but will also open another 80 Argos units inside its existing Sainsbury's stores. —Agencies

Business

Burgan Bank wins excellence award in recruitment of national labor

Bank honored at the meeting of the Ministers of Social Affairs in Oman

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the progressive financial powerhouse in Kuwait and the region, announced its latest award from the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States. Burgan Bank was nominated for achieving one of the highest nationalization in the field of job placement and localization in the GCC in 2018. This recognition was presented during the meeting of the GCC Ministers of Social Affairs in Oman. The award was received recently on behalf of Burgan Bank by Maali Al-Rushaid, Head of Human Resources and Development at Burgan Bank in the Oman capital.

Burgan Bank has recruited over 500 nationals into its workforce since 2015 and rewarded them with best-in-class benefit programs to aid their career development and growth opportunities in the Bank. As a valuable contributor to Kuwait's long-term economic growth, the staff have been employed under our various divisions that range from Retail, Operations, Investments and Risk departments.

Group Chief Human Resources & Development Officer at Burgan Bank - Halah El Sherbini said, "This is an honorable accomplishment for all of us at Burgan Bank, and an addition to our achievements towards

localization. We strive to promote the advancement of the nation's human capital as well as invest in their future by hiring and recruiting ambitious employees. This commitment comes as part of our aggressive strategy to support our youth's capabilities and Kuwait's vision 2035 to grow the country into a leading financial hub and sustaining national development. We now have a significant 73 percent of Kuwaitis as part of the Burgan family." Burgan Bank currently holds 736 employees across its wide local network. With a growing workforce, the bank remains a successful model of a private sector firm's ability to attract talented youth, and accommodate their promising careers with core skills through modern training and development programs in preparation for leadership positions in the future.



Halah El Sherbini



The award was received on behalf of Burgan Bank by Maali Al-Rushaid, Head of Human Resources and Development at Burgan Bank in the Oman capital

VIVA sponsors Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Cultural Centre event

KUWAIT: VIVA, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and a subsidiary of STC Group, exclusively sponsored the event held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Cultural Centre, organized by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in the presence of the governor of CBK Dr Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel, VIVA's CEO Eng. Maziad Bin Naser Al-Harbi, and VIP figures from the banking and financial sectors, from inside and outside Kuwait.

VIVA seeks to support diverse cultural activities that yield a positive impact on social and economic goals in the State of Kuwait, as well as technological functions and conferences, with the most recent being the International Banking Conference "Shaping the Future" where VIVA participated through a special booth in the exhibition along with STC Pay, showcasing innovative fintech services and business solutions in line with the technological rise in the finance and banking arena.

VIVA's strategic objectives include investment in financial technology and offering a pool of services and solutions that cater to the market demand and international standards. These plans tie in closely to incorporate and support the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for "Kuwait 2035", in positioning Kuwait as a major financial and commercial hub in the region.



Trade tensions dim Asia growth outlook: ADB

MANILA: Escalating trade tensions between the United States and China have darkened the outlook for developing Asia, with the region expected to grow slower than previously predicted this year and next, the Asian Development Bank said yesterday.

Developing Asia, a group of 45 countries across Asia and the Pacific, will likely grow 5.4 percent this year and 5.5 percent next year, down from the 5.7 percent and 5.6 percent growth forecast in July, the ADB said in an update to its Asian Development Outlook report. Growth in the region was 5.9 percent in 2018.

Along with weakening trade momentum, the Manila-based lender also sees declining investment as a major risk to the region's growth prospects. By sub-regions, South Asia will remain the fastest growing in Asia Pacific, even after the ADB trimmed its 2019 outlook to 6.2 percent from 6.6 percent as it also slashed its growth estimate for India to 6.5 percent from 7.0 percent. ADB maintained India's 7.2 percent growth projection for next year. Southeast Asia is also expected to end 2019 on a weaker note, with growth likely to slow to 4.5 percent compared with a previous forecast of 4.8 percent and from last year's 5.1 percent pace. —Reuters

Gulf Bank announces winners of summer cards campaign

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank recently announced the five winners of its 2019 Summer Cards Campaign "Spend & Win Cash," whereby cardholders were offered the chance to win cash prizes of up to KD 20,000 when using their credit, debit or prepaid cards locally and abroad. The draw was held on Sunday, 22 September 2019 in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Gulf Bank extends its congratulations to all five winners of its 2019 Summer Cards Campaign, which included Dalal Fadhel Ebrahim, who won the grand prize of KD 20,000, and Shaikha A Al-Nassar, who won the second prize of KD 10,000. Gulf Bank would also like to congratulate the three lucky winners who took home KD 5,000 each, which included Dalal Ghanim Thejeel Al-Shammari, Maha Atef Saleh AlShareef, and Iman Mohammed Noury Abdulqader.

Holistic Development & Consulting collaborates with Boubyan Bank

KUWAIT: Holistic Development and Consulting and Boubyan Bank announced their collaboration on serving Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by offering essential services any entrepreneur needs. This grants the chance to build a strong foundation for entrepreneurs starting out in Kuwait's market as well as supplement existing SMEs through the services provided.

The initiative aims to build a thriving system for the startup community in Kuwait. Through this collaboration, aspiring entrepreneurs will be able to receive all the support and fundamentals they need in order to make their businesses succeed. Abdulrahman Al-Duaij, Managing Partner of Holistic stated, "The aim is to help entrepreneurs succeed in their business endeavors and support them through our services in terms of financial control and bookkeeping. Through a strong collaboration with Boubyan Bank we will be able to help empow-

AUB participates in International Banking Conference 'Shaping the Future'

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank expressed pride to have participated in the International Banking Conference "Shaping the Future" organized by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The conference hosted a wide range of prominent economic figures, including central bank governors, heads of regulatory and supervisory bodies, high-level banking executives, global credit rating agencies, as well as a number of international standards organizations and bodies, banking experts and fintech bodies from across the globe.

The conference was attended by a number of senior executives of AUB, including Tareq Muhmood, Acting Chief Executive Officer, who highly commended this conference which brought together several banking industry experts to discuss and exchange ideas regarding the best possible means to develop the banking industry and address the various arising challenges.

Muhmood also commended the solid efforts made by the CBK to organize this International Banking Conference "Shaping the Future", highlighting the importance of development in the banking

The prizes will be credited in the accounts by 31st October 2019.

Commenting on the campaign, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "In addition to providing our clients with the best financial solutions, products and services, Gulf Bank is also committed to offering exciting promotions year-round, and the Summer Cards Campaign was no exception. The campaign, which was exclusive to Gulf Bank, offered our customers the chance to earn even more rewards during one of the most exciting and enjoyable times of the year. No matter where or how our customers chose to spend this summer, they were bound to take advantage of a multitude of benefits available to them as Gulf Bank cardholders."

During the course of the campaign, customers who used their Gulf Bank debit, credit or prepaid cards were automatically entered into the final draw. For every KD 10 spent locally on a Gulf Bank credit or prepaid card, customers received one entry into the draw. For every KD 10 spent internationally using a credit, debit or prepaid card, customers received three entries into the draw.

Gulf Bank credit cards

are packed with powerful travel benefits and features for added convenience, which customers can avail throughout the year. Gulf Bank credit cardholders can also receive free travel insurance for themselves and their families, which can be used for the Schengen Visa application. In addition, Gulf Bank credit cards provide customers with a variety of travel offers and benefits such as discounts on hotel bookings, flights, and car rentals, including Avis, Hertz, and more. Gulf Bank credit cardholders can also take advantage of complimentary airport lounge access at over 600 airports across the world. Moreover, Gulf Bank credit card customers also earn Gulf Points, which can be redeemed for free flights, hotel bookings or travel packages.



Ahmad Al-Amir

er more young entrepreneurs in achieving their business goals. SMEs have become a changing point in Kuwait's market and are an important factor to the growth of our economy, with that being said we feel it is our duty to help build a generation of successful entrepreneurs."

"It was a pleasure to sign such an agreement with Holistic. This agreement will play a major role in the success of SMEs by assisting them in managing their businesses successfully", Zaid Al-Sadoun, the Executive Manager of the Business Banking Department for SMEs at Boubyan Bank, said. He pointed out that the agreement would also contribute to raising awareness among private business owners and SME projects of Kuwaiti youth through the provision of modern tools to activate the best ways for financial control. To promote this collaboration, Boubyan Bank clients will be receiving a 25 percent discount on the services provided by Holistic Development & Consulting.

Since financial management is critical in any



Zaid Al-Sadoun



Abdulrahman Al-Duaij and Abdulaziz Al-Houqal

business, therefore any decision an entrepreneur makes has an impact of the company's financial. Holistic will be offering Boubyan Bank's clients with a discount of up to 25 percent on Financial Control and Bookkeeping services.

"This also brings us the opportunity to contribute on a larger scale to Kuwait's Vision 2035, develop young entrepreneurs, and give back to Kuwaiti society. Our collaboration offers us an opportunity to support innovative ideas and empower aspiring entrepreneurs," added Abdulaziz Al Houqal, Managing Partner of Holistic.



KUWAIT: Tareq Muhmood with AUB representatives receive visitors at the bank's booth during the conference.

sector through the use of various technological solutions and digital transformation, in which AUB has launched a number of related initiatives for the benefit of both customers and banks.

In its booth in the fintech exhibition held on the sidelines of the International Banking Conference

"Shaping the Future", AUB showcased its latest digital products and services as part of its success towards digital transformation and proactivity in addressing customer expectations amidst the challenges imposed by fintech developments on the banking sector.

What's On

ACK organizes seminar about entrepreneurship for students

The Teaching and Learning Center at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) organized a speaking event delivered by Khalid Al-Zanki, founder of the first LAUNCH Agency in the Middle East. Al-Zanki is an entrepreneur who is a leading advisor in the region on launching products and services. He is also a talented speaker and coach who has worked with high profile brands and experts for more than 12 years.

The event, titled "Get Inspired, Know the Do's and Don'ts of Doing a Business," focused on the different aspects of business and entrepreneurship. The objective was to provide students with an opportunity to learn about varied innovation and entrepreneurship activities which would help them succeed in business, and to also motivate and inspire them to explore and develop their vision in the field of entrepreneurship.

Al-Zanki stressed the importance of hard work and perseverance for success. "The best way to invest is to invest in yourself," said Mr. Al-Zanki. Rola Mourdaa, Senior Instructor at the ACK School of Business and Manager of the Teaching and Learning Center commented on the seminar, noting the positive reception of the students along with the importance and positive effects of entrepreneurship on the entrepreneur and on society as a whole. "The seminar was very interactive and audience were engaged and had very positive feedback," said Mourdaa. "An entrepreneur is a dreamer, thinker and doer, he sees opportunities that others don't and build upon to help society solve a problem, overcome a gap and generate profits out of that."



Sheikh Mubarak sponsors 'Sharia' and 'Britain' ceremonies



Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah

Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah is sponsoring the annual ceremony held by the Sharia Society to honor the outstanding students and graduates for the academic year 2018-2019, on Saturday 28th September. He is also sponsoring the annual ceremony held by the National Union of Kuwait Students - the UK branch for high and graduate students and graduates with degrees 2018-2019, on Sunday, as it is customary to honor the students of Sharia, and students of Kuwait scholarship in Britain every year.

Ooredoo to launch iPhone 11 devices tonight with Shamel



Continuing its annual Apple launch event since 2014, Ooredoo will welcome its customers at its headquarters in Kuwait City's Soor Street at 11 pm tonight, Thursday September 26 for the launch of the iPhone 11, 11 Pro, and 11 Pro Max devices with the most exclusive offer available to all Ooredoo cus-

tomers with Shamel for a limited time only, and is considered the strongest offer that a telecommunications company launches in Kuwait.

During the launch, Cavaryat, in collaboration with Ooredoo will provide gifts and discounts to customers such as phone covers and screen protectors. A large

number of cafes and restaurants will also be present at the launch event such as Crave Too, Texture, TNT, Zoom Pizza, FACE/OFF, Cafe Supreme, Mashawi, Burger Bus, and Caribou. The iPhone 11, 11 Pro and 11 Pro Max are the most advanced and innovative smart phones available and beside its revolutionary design, it

comes packed with new and innovative capabilities seamlessly integrated with Apple's revolutionary operating system the iOS 13, bringing an unparalleled experience. The new devices come in an array of colors including purple, green, yellow, black, white and Product Red as well as the new midnight green.

Oncost opens its 21st store in Aswaq Al-Qurain

Oncost, Kuwait's leading family grocer, opened its 21st store in Kuwait and its first store in Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate in Aswaq Al-Qurain on September 18th, 2019. The store was inaugurated by the Governor of Mubarak Al Kabeer, HE Mohammed Boushehri, and the Ambassador of India K Jeeva Sagar, along with several other diplomats and the senior management of Oncost.

The 21st store of Oncost in Kuwait is also its largest, with more than 4,000sqm of retail space, providing a wide range of retail products for individuals, families and businesses at wholesale prices. Oncost celebrated the special occasion of opening its 21st store by extending special price offers along with a mega promotional draw on \$20,000 exclusive to the customers of its newly opened store.

Ambassadors and representatives from, India, Canada, Netherlands, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal, Guyana, Kenya, Botswana, South Africa, Ukraine, Romania, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, and Taiwan expressed their congratulations and best wishes after touring Oncost's largest store. Oncost, which has consistently focused on satisfying the needs of its diverse customer base in the country, now hopes to bring its unique model of retailing to shoppers and businesses in and around Aswaq Al-Qurain.

Saleh Al-Tunai, Oncost's Chief Executive Officer, expressed his thanks to Oncost's loyal customers for their support to the brand over the years, and added, "By opening our 21st store, we will be taking a major step towards our main objective, which is to become the leading grocery retailer in the country with a presence in all governorates of Kuwait. We believe that Oncost would thrive in a market like Qurain because of the strong presence of large family households, restaurants, catering companies and retail offices. I would also like to extend my warm regards to the Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer for his continuous support."

Speaking after the inauguration of their newest store, Oncost's Chief Operating



Officer, Dr Remesh TA said, "We would like to thank K Jeeva Sagar for gracing our new store and for his moral support to our company, from the management to all our staff." Oncost has built on its strength of providing a shopping experience that is fully customer-oriented and pivots around offering shoppers with wholesale prices in a retail environment. The company focuses on satisfying the food and beverage needs of shoppers while also providing them with a pleasant and enjoyable shopping experience.

Oncost also aims to satisfy the needs of all the restaurants and cafes in Aswaq Al-Qurain

and its surrounding areas as the company's foodservices division is geared to provide them with a one-stop shop supply chain management for all their food and non-food needs. Oncost is also confident that the new store will help enhance the Oncost Family Program, which offers up to 4 percent cash-back. Currently, the program has more than 110,000 members who enjoy the many benefits and privileges offered by Oncost and its affiliates, which includes exclusive discounts from Careem, Red Tag, Twenty4, National Exchange Company, Shifa Al-Jazeera Hospital, and GAC Motor.



ICSK Amman's Young budding quizzers Caleb Kurian George of class VIII, Issam Thalath of class VII and Alvin Jerry of class VI won the Bhavans Middle East Inter School Quiz Competition. Now they march forward to represent Kuwait at the GCC finals of 'BISQ 2019'. Congratulations to our budding quizzers!

Health & Science

Humanity must rescue oceans to rescue humanity itself: UN

MONACO: Two days after a climate summit failed to deliver game-changing pledges to slash carbon emissions, the United Nations warned yesterday that global warming is devastating oceans and Earth's frozen spaces in ways that directly threaten a large slice of humanity. Crumbling ice sheets, rising seas, melting glaciers, ocean dead zones, toxic algae blooms — a raft of impacts on sea and ice are decimating fish stocks, destroying renewable sources of fresh water, and incubating superstorms that will ravage some megacities every year, according to a landmark assessment approved by the 195-nation Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Some of these impacts are irreversible.

The report, a digest of 7,000 peer-reviewed studies, is a sobering reminder that record greenhouse gas emissions, mostly from burning fossil fuels, are driving the planet towards a hothouse climate our species could find intolerable. But it also raises more clearly than ever before a red flag on the need to confront changes that can no longer be averted. For some island nations and coastal cities, that will almost certainly mean finding new places to call home.

Crumbling ice sheets

"Even if we manage to limit global warming, we will continue to see major changes in the oceans," said Valerie Masson-Delmotte, a

researcher at the Laboratory for Climate and Environmental Sciences and an IPCC co-chair. "But it will at least buy us some time, both for future impacts and to adapt." The underlying 900-page scientific report is the fourth such UN tome in less than a year, with others focused on a 1.5-Celsius cap on global warming, the decline of biodiversity, as well as land use and the global food system.

All four conclude that humanity must overhaul how it produces, distributes and consumes almost everything to avoid the worst ravages of global warming and environmental degradation. By absorbing a quarter of man-made CO2 and soaking up more than 90 percent of the heat generated by greenhouse gases, oceans have kept the planet livable — but at a terrible cost, the report finds. Seas have grown acidic, potentially undermining their capacity to draw down CO2; warmer surface water has expanded the force and range of deadly tropical storms; marine heatwaves are wiping out coral reefs, which are unlikely to survive the century. Most threatening of all, accelerating melt-off from glaciers and especially Earth's ice sheets atop Greenland and Antarctica are driving sea level rise.

'A world of higher seas'

Since 2005, the ocean has risen 2.5 times faster than during the 20th century. The rate at which the waterline rises will quadruple again

by 2100 if carbon emissions continue unabated, the report found. "Regardless of emissions scenarios, we face a world of higher sea levels," said co-author Bruce Glavovic, a professor at Massey University, New Zealand, noting that humanity is concentrated on the world's shorelines. "It doesn't take a big rise in sea level to lead to catastrophic problems," he added. "Sea level rise is not a slow onset problem — it's a crisis of extreme weather events."

By 2050, many coastal megacities and small island nations will experience what were formerly once-a-century weather disasters every year — even with an aggressive drawdown of greenhouse gas emissions. And by mid-century, more than a billion people will be living in low-lying areas vulnerable to cyclones, large-scale flooding and other extreme weather events amplified by rising seas.

Hefty price tag

Some cities, such as New York, are planning to spend tens of billions of dollars — and probably far more — to shore up their defenses. Indeed, building dikes and levees along with other measures would reduce the risk of flooding caused by sea level rise and storm surges over the next 80 years 100- to 1,000-fold, according to the IPCC report's 42-page Summary for Policy Makers. But with a hefty price tag: up to hundreds of billions of dollars a year. For many megacities and sprawling



MUMBAI: In this photograph taken on September 14, 2019 a volunteer collects plastic waste during a clean-up drive on Versova beach. — AFP

delta cities in the developing world, however, an engineered solution will be impractical or prohibitively expensive. Under the IPCC's consensus rules, all countries must sign off on the language of the report's executive summary, designed to provide leaders with objective, science-based information. The five-day meeting in Monaco went deep into overtime when Saudi Arabia objected what might have been a routine reference to the October 2018 IPCC report on the feasibility of capping global

warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius. The 2015 Paris Agreement calls for capping global warming at "well below" 2 C, and 1.5 C if possible. As a result, passages in the final draft were scrubbed, including one estimate that humanity's "carbon budget" — the amount of CO2 we can emit without breaching a temperature barrier — for a 1.5 C world could be as short as eight years, according to a copy seen by AFP. Earth's temperature has so far risen 1 C above pre-industrial levels. — AFP

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Stars

CROSSWORD 2317



ACROSS

1. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
5. A shrub of the genus Carissa having fragrant white flowers and plumlike red to purple-black fruits.
12. A gradual decline (in size or strength or power or number).
15. (especially of promises or contracts) Not violated or disregarded.
16. Not capable of being swayed or diverted from a course.
17. Canadian hockey player (born 1948).
18. A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
19. Small creatures resembling pieces of fuzzy rope.
20. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
21. The cry made by sheep.
23. An irritating cutaneous sensation that produces a desire to scratch.
25. Loss of the ability to swallow.
27. Of or relating to or obtained from milk (especially sour milk or whey).
28. Tag the base runner to get him out.
30. The virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).
33. On or toward the lee.
36. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
40. Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
42. Scottish author noted for his biography of Samuel Johnson (1740-1795).
43. (informal) Roused to anger.
45. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
46. An affirmative.
47. Occupy in an agreeable, entertaining or pleasant fashion.
48. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
49. In an affectionate or loving manner.
53. In the shape of a coil.
56. Mint plants.
58. English scholar remembered for his chronology of Shakespeare's plays and his editions of Shakespeare and Dryden (1741-1812).
59. Indian statesman and leader with Gandhi in the struggle for home rule.
61. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
62. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
65. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
68. A city of central China.
72. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
73. Web spinners.
77. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
78. A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
79. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
80. The bill in a restaurant.
81. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
82. City in central Iran.
83. (Babylonian) The sky god.

DOWN

1. Jordan's port.
2. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.

3. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
4. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
5. A person who eats human flesh.
6. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
7. Type genus of the Ranidae.
8. The United Nations agency concerned with international maritime activities.
9. Silkworm moths.
10. Someone acting as an informer or decoy for the police.
11. Lacking motor coordination.
12. The dialect of Ancient Greek spoken in Thessaly and Boeotia and Aeolis.
13. A submachine gun operated by gas pressure.
14. (informal) Exceptionally good.
22. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
24. An itchy skin eruption characterized by weals with pale interiors and well-defined red margins.
26. Again but in a new or different way.
29. A colorless explosive liquid that is volatile and poisonous and foul-smelling.
31. A port city in southwestern Iran.
32. Twist or braid together; interlace.
34. United States composer (born in Austria) who collaborated with Lerner on several musicals (1901-1987).
35. A city in western Germany.
37. Soil that is plastic when moist but hard when fired.
38. Any of various systems of units for measuring electricity and magnetism.
39. Distinctive and stylish elegance.
41. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
44. Keep in mind or convey as a conviction or view.
50. An inactive volcano in Sicily.
51. Indian nun and missionary (born in Albania) dedicated to helping the poor in India (1910-1997).
52. The syllable naming the sixth (submedian) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
54. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
55. A large genus of dicotyledonous trees and shrubs of the family Aquifoliaceae that have small flowers and berries (including hollies).
57. A great waterfall on the border between Brazil and Paraguay.
60. A genus of Pyralidae.
63. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
64. (computer science) A data transmission rate (bits/second) for modems.
66. Having a toe or toes of a specified kind.
67. One of a pair of long straps (usually connected to the bit or the headpiece) used to control a horse.
69. A tiny or scarcely detectable amount.
70. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
71. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
74. A widely distributed system of free and fixed macrophages derived from bone marrow.
75. (Scotland) A small loaf or roll of soft bread.
76. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

An important relationship, perhaps with a young person or someone in your near environment, may come into focus today. There could be an emotional overtone to all of this that may require understanding and flexibility on your part. You have a lot of energy to pour into practical decisions, but take care that you do not come across too strong—others may not be so willing to accommodate your needs. High-level differences of opinion or outlook represent an important area of change in your life at this time. This extends to fundamental religious or philosophical beliefs, which cry out for reexamination in the light of new information and influences.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today and tomorrow are the best times to start a diet or exercise program. This is a significant day, which you can use to your best advantage. This is a day that is not too stressful; there is time for accomplishing tasks or setting things up to work in your favor. Everything may be pouring in at once and it's all good news. Keep your calendar updated and include any family member's activities as well. This is a busy time of year—you do not want to miss anything. Neighbors or brothers and sisters will likely bring all kinds of good experiences your way this afternoon. You may benefit from an older person this evening. You are in a mood of self-enjoyment.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It is possible to overdo the exercise program—careful this morning. Keep an ever-watchful eye on balance in your life now. This means a reasonable amount of exercise, balanced nutrition, play, work, rest and time to volunteer your services or talents. You may find yourself turning away from the emotional and working with the facts. You see the positive side of life and like to have a clear understanding with the people you teach or with whom you work. A very strong time, but do not drive yourself or others too hard. Your support system—family, home, those who give you nourishment—becomes more secure at this time. You enjoy doing nice things for the people you love. You encourage better support.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your best path to notability, if that is what you seek, is through your social contacts. You may be in competition for a particular position in the workplace at this time. Whether you get the position or not is less important. Now is the time to express yourself and do your job, just like you know how. Science, philosophy and religion are likely to seem as if they hold the ultimate answers at this time. You may find yourself in ongoing conversations with several co-workers that like to talk about world affairs. Intelligent communication helps to open up ideas in your own mind—enlarge your scope of thinking.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You will be reaping the rewards of your efforts the next few days. This could be in sales, volunteer service, budgeting or any of the other projects that improve as you take the time to pay attention to them. You make a positive difference and you know you have done your best when the day is done. There is a greater than usual interest in relationships, social connections and the arts. Seeing both sides of an issue and figuring out resolutions to opposing views. You may find yourself guiding someone younger than you in matters of importance this afternoon. Marriage and other close relationships give rise to great expectations; a most positive time gets underway now. You can enjoy and appreciate yourself and life in general.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You spend far too long inside a building this day. During your lunch break, take a little time to move around out-of-doors for a while. You may want to try something new or different this afternoon. This is a great time to be with others in team situations, whether in a work or play environment. You may be asked to coordinate events. A group gathering may need your guidance. This could mean a teaching or tutoring session. There are fun, new ways to communicate and your easy manner will make interactions with others go well. You may find yourself more talkative and adaptable than usual.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You will be pleased at the progress you have made this whole year—just take a look! This is a rewarding day. Financial savvy and a practical turn of mind are qualities that take on greater importance in your life. You have a natural way of knowing how to put people, ideas and things together to work profitably. Playing the role of a mediator can be rewarding. The energies this day are toward getting rid of what does not serve you well and moving on to better and greater possibilities. Today you may decide to sell that piece of antique furniture you worked so hard to refurbish—this sort of thing brings you a great deal of money. You are unusually motivated or driven in new and unexpected directions. Don't stay awake too long this evening.



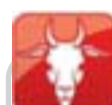
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There is a yearning to broaden your horizons through travel, education or both. You may feel restricted in some way. Perhaps, survival training or photography in seldom-traveled places would satisfy the need to know, to learn, to experience life to the fullest. You make a successful effort to end one project and allow new ideas to flood your mind. Perhaps you are a designer of some sort and it is time to do a little free-flow thinking—keep notes. Travel for business or pleasure can be planned at this time—there are choices in direction. A conference with close family members may be very important just now.



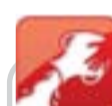
Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Every thought you have makes up some segment of the world you see. Work on keeping your thoughts positive and constructive—you will encourage others to do the same. This month has given you the opportunity to begin your work on a better focus. You are beginning to form some ideas of goals and successes that you want to see happen in your life. Scattered energies may make it difficult for you to choose a direction at this time. The best activity for now is to stick with a routine and keep planning those goals—this frustrating time will pass. Short trips or a vacation may be planned and talked about between yourself and your loved ones.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Your emotional drive and sense of things may be a bit off in your timing and in numbers. This might not be a good time for large, expensive purchases. However, this is a good time to complete unfinished projects and perform the routine jobs that others might not enjoy. This is a wonderful time to volunteer your services to other co-workers. This type of activity will put you in a position to hear or gain inside information; store for later use. You keep busy and you are always ready to lend a listening ear. Any frustrations of the morning should clear by the afternoon. Everything seems to be rearranging itself at this time. Accept new conditions philosophically.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

This is a period that is heightened with new ways to communicate. Interaction with others and an exchange of ideas show off your quick mind—you are smart as a fox. If you are working, you will find yourself wanting to really buckle down and take advantage of some quiet time this morning. Your organizational abilities and a sense of responsibility will be what guides you and proves successful. You may be working on a new invention... Keep notes. General good feelings and a sense of support and harmony make this a happy time.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You probably do not have to worry about your weight, but still you might be interested in the new trends and what everyone else is doing to stay healthy. Stress is much easier to wade through if your body is up to the climb. Check out the large health food stores that have fresh food and watch what those healthy-looking customers are ordering. Check out the heart-healthy diet and the new cancer diet. This is a nice day that should just flow along. In particular, you will do well in activities that include teaching, lecturing or guiding others. There is support all around you today. You can demonstrate great understanding of the needs of others and you are in a good position to help others as well. This evening your positive attitude rubs off on others.

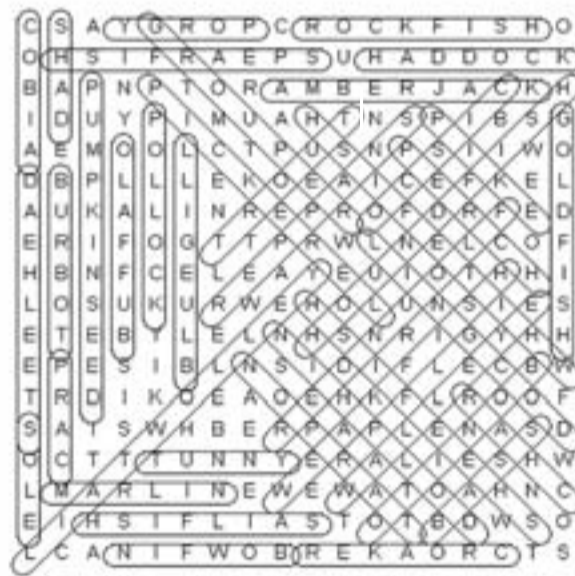
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Find and circle all of the fishing words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a quote by Henry David Thoreau.



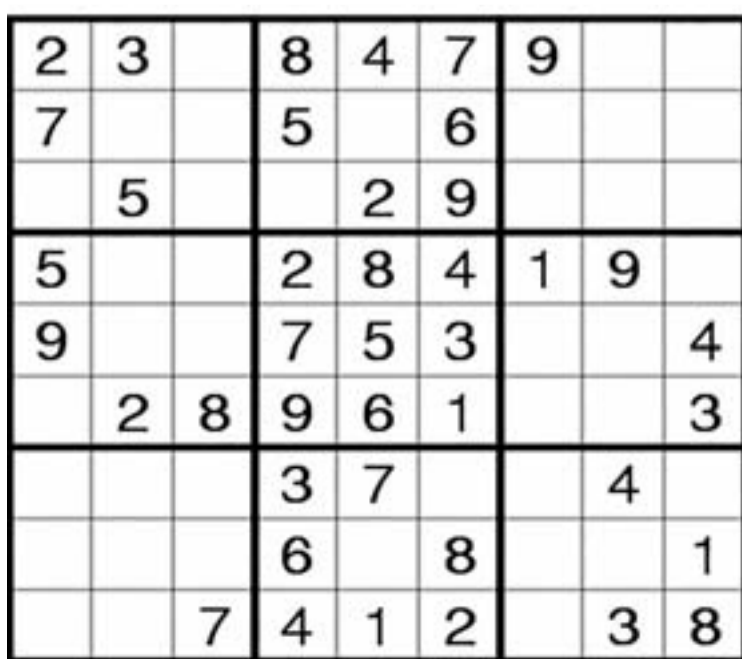
Fish 2



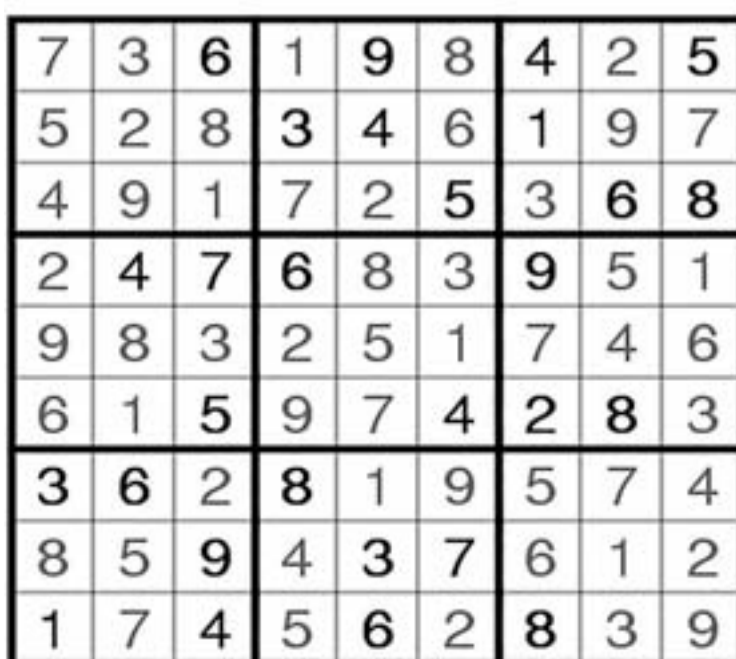
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Hidden sentence: A COUNTRYMAN BETWEEN TWO LAWYERS IS LIKE A FISH BETWEEN TWO CATS

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2019



The tomb (center background) of French postman Ferdinand Cheval, better known as Facteur Cheval, is pictured in Hauterives. — AFP

OPERA STAR **PLACIDO DOMINGO** WITHDRAWS FROM ALL FUTURE MET PERFORMANCES

Placido Domingo, the legendary opera singer facing myriad sexual harassment accusations, is withdrawing from all future performances at New York's Metropolitan Opera, both he and the institution announced Tuesday. The 11th-hour decision comes just one night before the 78-year-old Spaniard dubbed the "King of Opera" was scheduled to perform the title role in the Met's sold-out first production of "Macbeth."

"Placido Domingo has agreed to withdraw from all future performances at the Met, effective immediately," the opera said in a statement obtained by AFP, saying that the bankable star agreed "that he needed to step down." Domingo—who has been a conductor and director of some of the world's most prestigious opera houses, and debuted at the Met at age 27 — said in a separate statement that he had in fact "asked to withdraw."



In this file photo Spanish tenor Placido Domingo performs during his concert in the newly inaugurated sports and culture centre 'St Gellert Forum' in Szeged, southern Hungary. — AFP

"I strongly dispute recent allegations made about me, and I am concerned about a climate in which people are condemned without due process," the singer currently accused of harassment by 20 women said. But "upon reflection, I believe that my appearance in this production of Macbeth would distract from the hard work of my colleagues both on stage and behind the scenes," he said. "As a result, I have asked to withdraw and I thank the leadership of the Met for graciously granting my request," he continued, saying he considered his final dress rehearsal his "last performance on the Met stage."

Ladies man

In August eight singers and a dancer told the Associated Press about incidents going back to the 1980s, including one in which a woman said Domingo put his

hand down her skirt while three others said he forcibly kissed them. A subsequent report by the US news agency cited 11 more women, including one who said he reached down her robe to grab her bare breast. The reports painted a portrait of a man who acted with impunity, shielded by his power as one of opera's foremost stars, as a whisper network formed warning women of his alleged reputation.

Some classical music companies were quick to err on the side of caution, notably the Philadelphia Orchestra and the San Francisco Opera, which immediately canceled his upcoming performances. The Dallas Opera then canceled a March 2020 gala concert featuring Domingo. The Los Angeles Opera—where he has served as general director since 2003 — hired outside counsel to investigate allegations a probe still ongoing.

The Met previously had said it would wait for those results, and Domingo's split with the Manhattan house comes after reports of internal strife over Domingo's continued association there. The American Guild of Musical Artists has also launched an independent investigation into accusations against Domingo, "given the uncertainty surrounding the investigations of our signatory companies," its national executive director Len Egert announced earlier this month.

Many fans and fellow performers leapt to Domingo's defense when the accusations broke, with many calling him an innocent "ladies man" who women adored. An NPR report said the Met Opera's general manager, Peter Gelb, had held a closed door meeting over the weekend to tell employees he had not suspended Domingo because the AP accounts lacked "corroboration."

According to the report many employees at the Met had confided anger and fear over Domingo's continued work there, with one person even calling in sick to avoid work with the artist. The growing #MeToo scandal comes not long after the Met ended its decades long relationship with James Levine, the house's former music director who was fired in 2018 after nine men publicly accused him of sexual abuse.

Domingo now has a string of European dates on the calendar, including Zurich on October 13 and Moscow October 17. European houses have thus far taken more of a wait-and-see stance, and he's received standing ovations at shows in Salzburg and Hungary that took place weeks after the accusations dropped. Domingo's next performances stateside are set to begin February 22 at the Los Angeles Opera, which did not respond to a request for comment on the star's break with the Met.—AFP

Artist displays high heels for women murdered in Turkey

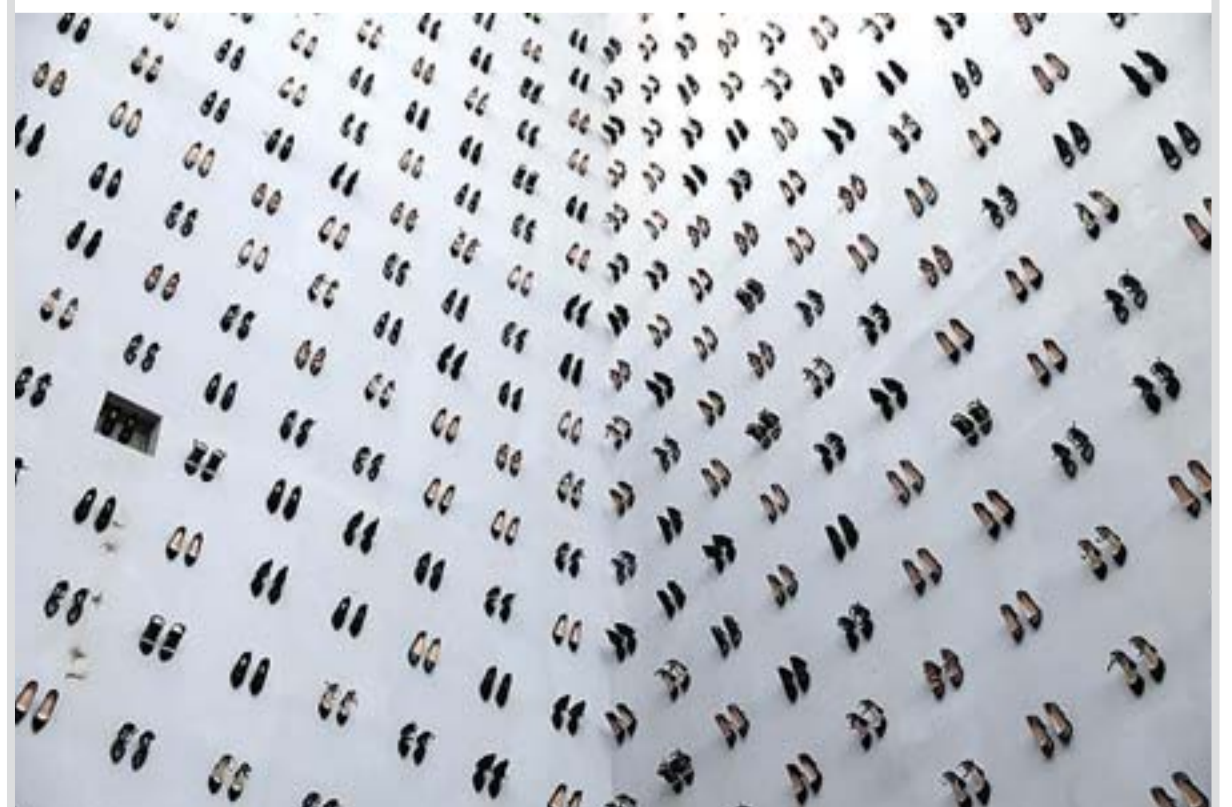
Turkish artist Vahit Tuna has mounted 440 pairs of high heels on the facade of a building on a busy Istanbul street, to symbolize the number of women murdered in domestic or sexual violence in Turkey in 2018. "We are standing in a street now and maybe people are faced with a work of art for the first time, an open and bleeding wound for the very first time. I believe this has an impact," said Tuna. "I think this (installation) creates awareness and is something that influences people and makes them think," he added.

In Turkey, there is a tradition of placing the shoes of someone who passed away outside an entrance. The artwork covers an area of 260 square meters. "Frankly, I do not feel safe on the streets and this view is really awful. There are 440 pairs of shoes here and it means that many lives have been lost in 2018. This is very upsetting," said Turkish banker Serap Kilic.

Another banker, Hilal Koseoglu, said: "As long as everybody remains silent, violence against women will increase and this violence is not just about murdering



women but also suppressing and silencing them." Around 440 women were killed in 2018 in Turkey, according to a report published by Kadin Cinayetlerini Durduracagiz Platformu (We Will Stop Femicide Platform) which keeps records on murders. The platform reported that 49 women were killed by men in the month of August 2019 alone. — Reuters





Models present creations by Maison Dior during the Women's Spring-Summer 2020 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show at the Hippodrome de Longchamps in Paris. — AFP photos



DIOR SAYS IT WITH WILDFLOWERS AND GRETA THUNBERG PLAITS



Dior went back to nature in its Paris fashion week show Tuesday with Greta Thunberg plaits and a garden-inspired collection that seemed to spring straight from the earth. With climate change biting at the heels of the fashion industry, and the London shows hit by environmental protests, designer Maria Grazia Chiuri said she wanted to create clothes that “were not just about image but action”.

To do that, she embraced the wild, with hemp gardening jackets and a series of stunning diaphanous dresses embroidered with wildflowers. These were not the dainty pink roses of Dior yore but sinuous survivors, thistles and other prickly customers flowering on stony ground. Most of her models also wore their hair in plaits not dissimilar to those of the teenage Swedish environmental activist Thunberg.

Three of the most striking looks bore the ghostly prints of real wildflowers, gathered and applied by an artist who has mastered the natural technique. The Italian designer also pushed the couture boundaries by using hemp and raffia in eye-catchingly unusual ways, with a layered raffia ball gown and flower-embroidered raffia waistcoats.

All was set in what Chiuri called an “inclusive garden” of 160 trees, their roots wrapped in hemp, which will all be replanted in urban gardens being designed around the French capital by environmental architects. Coloco, Chiuri told AFP that her inspiration had come from Christian Dior’s sister Catherine, a French Resistance hero who



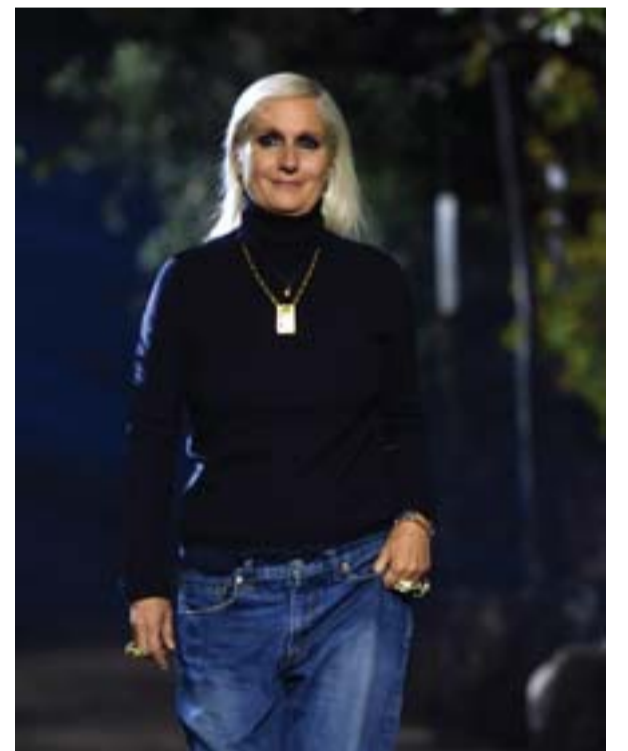
became the first female flower wholesaler in Paris—and who farmed her own roses in the Luberon in the south of France.

Resistance hero

The couturier’s first perfume, Miss Dior, was named after her, and Chiuri felt her legacy had been a little forgotten. Catherine ran a Resistance intelligence gathering network from Dior’s Paris apartment during the German Nazi Occupation of France. When she was arrested, she refused to betray her comrades despite being tortured by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp.

Chiuri said she was struck by a phrase of Christian Dior’s after the war, “Fortunately there are the flowers”—which she took as a sign of hope after the dark days of World War II. “Flowers and humans need to live together if humanity is to survive,” she told AFP. “The important issue for everybody, not just in fashion, is to be more responsible about what we do,” she said.

“It is not just about image but action... the important issue for everybody, not just fashion, is to be more responsible about what we do,” she added. Fashion being fashion, however, the biggest headlines at the show may be Italian actress Monica Bellucci’s new short haircut, or the appearance of Hollywood star Kristen Stewart on the front row with French singer Chris (former Christine and the Queens) and the Italian super-influencer Chiara Ferragni.—AFP



Italian designer Maria Grazia Chiuri for Maison Dior acknowledges the audience following the Women's Spring-Summer 2020 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show at the Hippodrome de Longchamps in Paris.



Saint Laurent brings elegance to dazzling show in front of Eiffel Tower

Saint Laurent's models on Tuesday paraded down a runway filled with dozens of projector lights against the backdrop of the Eiffel Tower to showcase the French label's collection for Paris Fashion Week. Long, fluid dresses and burnished gold embroideries from the 70s, chosen by creative director Anthony Vaccarello for the 2020 summer collection, sparkled along with the Paris landmark.

Ushering in Vaccarello's fourth year in the job, the women's collection unveiled at the show heavily featured short and knee-length shorts, high boots, dazzling cigarette pants and jumpsuits. See-through tops with deep necklines also set the tone for the looks. Kaia Gerber, the daughter of top model Cindy Crawford, was one of the models, while Naomi Campbell closed the show.

"A sharp take on Saint Laurent classics devised to

strengthen individuality," Saint Laurent said in a statement, describing the show. The crowd included French icon Catherine Deneuve, Mexican actress Salma Hayek, who is married to Francois-Henri Pinault, chief executive of the Kering SA conglomerate that owns Saint Laurent, and actor Rami Malek, who played Queen frontman Freddie Mercury in the rock film drama "Bohemian Rhapsody."

In addition to Saint Laurent, the Kering luxury goods conglomerate owns the Gucci and Balenciaga labels. Saint Laurent accounts for around 13 percent of the group's revenue. Kering is scheduled to present its third-quarter sales results on Oct 24. — Reuters



US model Kaia Gerber



British super model Naomi Campbell



Pregnant models show they have stomach for Paris catwalk

Spring summer fashion is about the race—often in vain—to get a flat tummy. But that was not the case on the Paris fashion week catwalk Tuesday, where two pregnant models walked the runways. The French designer Marine Serre sent her mum-to-be out cradling her tummy in the drizzle at her outdoor show, while the Chinese brand Dawei had another heavily-pregnant model in a vertically striped sweater dress to accentuate her bump.

While Serre's choice was also to add a touch of hope to her apocalyptic-themed show "Black Tide", which warned of the environmental catastrophe, pregnant models are becoming something of a thing these days. Though the trend is not without its risks. While model Lily Aldridge batted away the worries about walking at New York fashion week last year, Slick Woods will never forget doing Rihanna's Savage X Fenty lingerie fashion show in the city last September.

She began to go into labor just before the lights went up but she soldiered on. The 22-year-old model was already 2 cm dilated when she tottered offstage. "My last memory before going into the hospital is of Rihanna spanking me with a whip," she later wrote in an article for Vogue. Such was the initial rush, that the American songwriter Erykah Badu had to act as her doula over FaceTime. But in the end her son Saphir was born after an 18-hour labor. Woods' due date was two days after the show.—AFP

A pregnant model presents a creation by Marine Serre during the Women's Spring-Summer 2020 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP



Lifestyle | Features



Japanese animator and character designer Yoichi Kotabe poses next to cartoon boards from the Japanese animated series 'Heidi, daughter of the Alps' during his visit to an exhibition titled 'Heidi in Japan' at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich. — AFP photos



Japanese animator and character designer Yoichi Kotabe, left, speaks with Japanese producer Junzo Nakajima.



Visitors walk through the exhibition titled 'Heidi in Japan.'

How 'Heidi' conquered Japan, sparking an anime revolution

Heidi and Super Mario may not seem to have much in common but anime and video game aficionados will detect the signature style of Japanese character designer Yoichi Kotabe in both. Far from the Swiss Alps, the cherished 19th-century storybook character Heidi has played an unlikely role in the creation of Japan's now booming anime industry. The story of the little orphan girl who goes to live with her gruff grandfather in the mountains took Japan by storm in the 1970s with the animation series "Alps no Shojo Heidi" ("Heidi: A Girl of the Alps").

The 52-part TV show, which became a worldwide hit, marked a turning point in the careers of its creators, including Kotabe. He was subsequently recruited by video game pioneer Nintendo to redesign a host of characters in Mario. Heidi also boosted the standing of director Isao Takahata, best known for the animated war film "Grave of the Fireflies", and Hayao Miyazaki, creator of films "Spirited Away" and "My Neighbor Totoro".

The two joined forces to set up the celebrated anime Studio Ghibli. Heidi's Japanese adventure is explored in an exhibition at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich,

running until October 13. Kotabe has been invited to take part in the event to explain the genesis of the character he first began sketching nearly four decades ago.

Kawaii

"The goal was to have a little girl who was 'kawaii', as cute as possible," he told AFP, describing how he had first drawn her with large eyes, a big smile, but also "little braids". But he said that when he presented his first sketches, a specialist on the 1880 novel by Johanna Spyri pointed out that "Heidi is a five year-old girl who lives in the mountains with her grandfather, who is not very friendly". "He is not going to do her braids every morning."

Kotabe was prompted to rethink her image and gave Heidi the ruffled, short, dark locks that fans of the series saw from the first episode in 1974. Although many adaptations of Heidi have been made for film and TV over the decades, Kotabe's version has thoroughly seeped into the public perception of the character. And yet, the animated version of Heidi who would go on to be dubbed into 20 languages almost never came about.

Sketching the Swiss Alp

Takahata had initially wanted to adapt the story of Pippi Longstocking to the screen. But Swedish author Astrid Lindgrén turned down the offer, saying she feared the Japanese director was interested "only in money", Kotabe said. So the director turned his attention to another classic of children's literature, and the team of Japanese animation artists headed to Switzerland to study Alpine cabins and pastures around the small eastern village of Maienfeld.

"This was entirely new for us," Kotabe said, pointing out that he had never been outside of Japan before. "The time was very short, so we were aware that we had to gather as much material as possible," he said, describing how the team had spent a month furiously sketching their surroundings. Takahata, who died last year at the age of 82, was known for the realism of his animations and attention to detail in depicting ordinary life and nature.

Piece of art

"People see (Heidi) as children's entertainment," Hans Thomsen, an art history professor at Zurich University and

curator of the exhibit, told AFP. But the series is in fact "a piece of art", he insisted, pointing to its "creativity, visual impact and ability to move people". The exhibition consists of a large number of animation panels, aquarelles and sketches of baby goats observed by the artists during their Alpine excursion.

Objects hinting at the series' success in Japan are also on display, including Heidi-adorned bento boxes, origami kits and packs of fondue cheese. "The images of Heidi and her adventures in the mountains have had a strong impact on the Japanese, both young and old," Veronique Kanel, of Swiss Tourism, told AFP. But she added that the series had also allowed "this image of Switzerland as a paradise of Alpine nature" to be spread around the world, drawing huge numbers of tourists to Heidi's remote valley.

Kotabe recalled how surprised he had been in the 1970s to see "no visible traces of Heidi" in Maienfeld. The TV series he helped create has changed that, with its success reflected in a dedicated Heidi museum, special hiking trail and souvenir shops. "Today, everything in Maienfeld has to do with Heidi," Kotabe said. —AFP



Joaquin Phoenix poses at the premiere of 'Joker' at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — Reuters

'Joker' not a hero, says studio, as Aurora families voice concern

Warner Bros. on Tuesday denied its controversial film "Joker" portrays its murderous outcast villain as a hero, after families affected by the Aurora theater mass shooting penned an open letter expressing concern. The much-hyped new Joaquin Phoenix film, billed as a "character study" of Batman's nemesis, has been hailed as an Oscar contender but has raised concerns that its depiction of mental illness and violence could prove incendiary.

Its release next month comes seven years after a man opened fire in a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado showing a late-night premiere of a Batman film, killing 12 and wounding 70. Five members of victims' families wrote an open letter in Hollywood trade publications Tuesday. "When we learned that Warner Bros. was releasing a movie called 'Joker' that presents the character as a protagonist with a sympathetic origin story, it gave us pause," it said.

The film depicts the Joker as a severely depressed young man trying to build a career as a stand-up comic, but who is constantly rejected and beaten by society until taking matters into his own-extremely violent-hands. In their letter, the Aurora families noted that their real-life tragedy had been "perpetrated by a socially isolated individual who felt 'wronged' by society."

While the open letter did not condemn the film, and expressed support for "free speech and free expression," it urged the Hollywood studio to use its platform to lobby for gun reform and support victims. In response, Warner said "neither the fictional character Joker, nor the film, is an endorsement of real-world violence of any kind. It is not the intention of the film, the filmmakers or the studio to hold this character up as a hero."

Warner described gun violence as a "critical issue" and said it had donated to victims and supported gun control legislation. "At the same time, Warner Bros. believes that one of the functions of storytelling is to provoke difficult conversations around complex issues," it added.

'Not good enough'

The US gun control debate reignited last month after the massacres of 22 people at a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas, nine by a gunman in Dayton, Ohio, and a further seven in a shooting rampage in Odessa, Texas. Most presidential candidates, including Democratic frontrunner Joe Biden, are calling for a new assault weapons ban. Candidate Beto O'Rourke has gone further, calling for a mandatory buyback program for assault weapons.

The Aurora shooting was carried out during a packed screening of "The Dark Knight Rises," in a meticulously-planned attack during which shooter James Holmes wore body armor and used tear gas to prevent victims from escaping. Reports at the time said Holmes told authorities he was "The Joker," Batman's sworn enemy in the comic book series. Aurora police now say there is no evidence Holmes—who appeared in court with brightly dyed hair similar to the character—said that. Holmes is serving life in prison. Sandy Phillips, whose daughter Jessica Ghawi was among those killed, wrote on Twitter that Warner's response was "not good enough." "Joker" is released in theaters October 4. —AFP

Emmys winner Waller-Bridge pens major Amazon deal

Newly crowned multiple-E Emmy-winner Phoebe Waller-Bridge has signed a major new deal with Amazon after her creation "Fleabag" dominated the comedy awards at television's answer to the Oscars. British actress and writer Waller-Bridge, who also co-wrote spy thriller "Killing Eve" and upcoming James Bond film "No Time To Die," confirmed her status as one of comedy's hottest properties at Sunday's awards.

"Fleabag," a joint production between Amazon and the BBC, won six Emmys including best comedy series, as well as best actress and comedy writing for Waller-Bridge herself. Waller-Bridge said in a statement Tuesday she was "insanely excited" to pen the new deal with Amazon, which Hollywood media reported was worth

around \$20 million per year over three years. "Working with the team on Fleabag was the creative partnership dreams are made of. It really feels like home. I can't wait to get going!" she said.

Jennifer Salke, head of Amazon Studios, described Waller-Bridge as "clever, brilliant, generous and a virtuoso on multiple fronts including writing, acting and producing." The statement said Waller-Bridge would create and produce new television content exclusively for its Amazon Prime platform, without giving details or confirming the size of the deal. She will continue to executive produce HBO's romantic comedy thriller "Run," it added. —AFP



Phoebe Waller-Bridge poses with awards for Outstanding Comedy Series, Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series, and Outstanding Directing for a Comedy Series in the press room during the 71st Emmy Awards at Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



French director Ladj Ly arrives for the US premiere of 'Les Misérables' during Colcoa French Film Festival Opening Night at the DGA theatre in Los Angeles. — AFP

France Oscars pick 'Les Misérables' a 'universal' warning cry

"Les Misérables" is France's official candidate for the Oscars—but the film's stark portrayal of police violence and brutalized youths is a "universal" warning cry about poverty and racism, its director told AFP. Ladj Ly's film follows the consequences of a violent police blunder in a tense and racially divided suburb of Paris, through the eyes of a cop who has just joined its anti-crime unit. Speaking to AFP Monday on the red carpet of Los Angeles' French cinema festival COLCOA, Ly said the film "is universal and should speak to as many people as possible."

"Poverty is found in the four corners of the world—we can be in the United States, Brazil in the favelas or South Africa." "This film is a warning cry from me to the politicians," he told the US premiere audience later. "And I tell them that the situation is complicated, this has been going on for 30 years, but there are always solutions."

Ly told AFP he was "super proud" but surprised by Friday's announcement that the film had been selected to represent France at February's Academy Awards, beating competition such as Eva Green-starring astronaut drama "Proxima." "It's a huge source of pride. We're all very happy," he said, adding: "We didn't really expect it—we thought that we had very little chance with the films we were up against." "Les Misérables" begins with jubilant scenes of an apparently united Paris as France lifts the 2018 World Cup. But the deep rifts in society are quickly laid bare as violent police officers, drug dealers and Islamists pull the children of Montfermeil's housing projects in different directions. Montfermeil is famous as the setting of Victor Hugo's 19th-century novel, from which the film takes its name. Ly said he drew on his own experiences in the Paris suburb—including watching France's previous World Cup win in 1998, which was credited with temporarily bringing down racial divisions. "Unfortunately today, we have the impression that only football can unite us all, can tell us that we are all together and we are all French," he said. —AFP

Record-breaking Malaysian water chute unveiled

One of the world's longest water slides was unveiled in Malaysia yesterday, a kilometer-long chute that starts on a hilltop before twisting and turning through dense jungle and splashing into a pool. The blue and yellow chute at the ESCAPE theme park runs for 1,111 meters and has been awarded the Guinness World Record for the longest water slide where riders use an inflatable tube. It is three times longer than the previous record-holding slide in Germany.

The watercourse in northern Penang state starts on a hill, at a height of some 70 meters, with riders transported to the top by a specially constructed chairlift. It takes four minutes to slide down the chute, which passes through a rainforest inhabited by exotic creatures, from birds to monkeys, before passing over a road and ending in the park.

"The idea of this water slide came about over frustration that most fun rides and water slides last merely a few seconds, and having the water slide start on a hilltop at a 70 meter elevation would make this ride last a good few minutes," said Sim Choo Kheng, boss of park operator Sim Leisure Group. It is expected to open to the public next month.

Building the 488 piece slide was mostly done manually, without using heavy machinery, to avoid damaging the natural environment, the operator said. China is home to an even bigger water slide, a 2,720 meter ride that winds down a hillside in Lishui. Guinness this month named it the world's longest mountain water slide. —AFP



Sim Choo Kheng, center, Chief Executive Officer of Sim Leisure Group slide down on a floater on the world's longest water slide at Escape theme park in Teluk Bahang, Malaysia.



This aerial handout picture shows the world's longest water slide at Escape theme park in Teluk Bahang, Malaysia. — AFP photos

Russian 'advisers' training new Syrian army battalion

YAFOUR, Syria: Wearing clean bullet-proof vests and knee pads, fighters from a new Syrian army battalion showcase the skills they have learned from Russia's military advisers. In the countryside west of Damascus, the soldiers carry out a mock assault, fire mortar rounds and rockets, perform mine-clearing and first aid exercises. Large clouds of dust rise over the training camp as troops in camouflage fatigue open fire.

In the afternoon sun, top brass from both countries and dozens of journalists, including an AFP team invited from Moscow, are looking on. "We sacrifice our blood for you Bashar," the soldiers chant in unison, throwing their fists in the air, in praise of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. With military backing from Russia, Assad's forces have retaken large parts of Syria from rebels and militants since 2015, and now control around 60 percent of the country.

Russia often refers to troops it deployed in Syria as military "advisers" even though its forces and warplanes are also directly involved in battles against militants and other rebels. On Tuesday, Russian advisers appeared in front of cameras, wearing green face masks and sunglasses, in a rare display of Moscow's military operations in war-torn Syria. With the help of an Arabic translator, an adviser instructed troops on how to detect and defuse mines, while another trained them on treating war injuries. "The battalion was created on August 10 and started

training that same day," said Omar Mohamed, who heads this new elite force. "Thanks to the Russian advisers, the level of preparation among soldiers has increased and they know how to use all types of weapons," he told AFP. After undergoing two months of individual military training, members of the force will now learn to operate in large groups.

The commanders do not rule out the possibility that troops could deploy to the last major opposition redoubt, Idlib in the northwest. A deal Russia and rebel-backer Turkey reached last year was meant to prevent a bloodbath in the militant-run region, but bombardment re-started in late April. Since August 31, a separate Russian-backed ceasefire has largely held, despite sporadic strikes.

But Damascus has repeatedly vowed to take back all of Syrian territory, including the Idlib region. "We pin our hopes on a political solution, but if we do not see results, we will then resort to the military option," one commander told reporters. General Hassan Hassan, head of the Syrian army's political administration division, is more definitive. "Idlib will be liberated in all cases" he said. "We will see each other there soon," he told reporters. The Syrian conflict has killed more than 370,000 people and driven millions from their homes since it started with the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011. — AFP



YAFOUR, Syria: A picture taken during a tour with the Russian army shows Syrian elite soldiers taking part in an instruction session with Russian military trainers on Tuesday at an army base. — AFP

France's oldest mosque, in Indian Ocean, gets facelift

TSINGONI, France: At France's oldest mosque, a five-century-old edifice on the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte, the sound of jackhammers is broken intermittently by recitals by the faithful hunched over in prayer. The white-and-blue prayer hall at the mosque in Tsingoni, used five times a day, is plagued by crumbling ceilings, leaks, giant cracks and damp. "The humidity, the dust, the lack of ventilation, I can't stand it. I've developed allergies," complained Badirou Abdou, a local council representative who has prayed at the mosque since he can remember.

Abdou now worships in a temporary prayer

hall one floor above the original, which is getting a much-needed facelift along with the rest of the mosque at a cost of some two million euros (\$2.2 million) to the city of Tsingoni and the French state. The building, perched on an island whose population is 95 percent Muslim, is the oldest working mosque in France and classified as a French Historic Monument since 2016.

"The inscriptions on the side of the mihrab (a niche in the wall that shows the direction in which Muslims should pray) say that the mosque was built in 1538 by the sultan Insa," said Ambassador Ridjali, cultural director of the Tsingoni commune, formerly the island's royal capital. "The architecture of the western part (of the mosque) has remained unchanged since that time."

Excavations by France's INRAP national archaeological research institute have revealed that the spot hosted a place of worship already in the 14th century, "which makes it a contemporary of the Notre-Dame in Paris," Ridjali said. Outside, workers' footsteps echo on the steel

scaffolding erected around the much-newer minaret, built in 1994 and a historic monument in its own right. It is being repainted, and a new copper dome topped with a star and crescent has just been installed to replace its shattered concrete predecessor, which had been in danger of collapsing.

The work is expected to be completed by the end of 2020. The design of the mosque shows a strong Swahili influence from the East African coast, said Violaine Bressand, an engineer with Mayotte's cultural affairs agency. The holy place, in the meantime, is starting to attract visitors - and cash - to Tsingoni. "This contributes to the economic development of our territory while also safeguarding the historical aspect of the mosque", Ridjali said.

Despite the noise, dust and workmen, worshipper Abdillahi Salim continues to use the original prayer hall. "This is where my father and my grandfather prayed. I do not see myself praying anywhere else," he said. — AFP



TSINGONI, France: A picture taken on Sept 14, 2019 shows the under renovation minaret and mosque on the French island of Mayotte. — AFP

Iran rules out talks; US ramps...

Continued from Page 1

and their chief executives for buying Iranian oil. "We're telling China, and all nations - know that we will sanction every violation of sanctions of all activity," Pompeo told a pressure group opposed to Iran's clerical regime on the sidelines of the United Nations.

China, which is embroiled in a trade war as well as myriad other disputes with the United States, is believed to be the biggest foreign buyer of Iranian oil. The Trump administration in May said it would unilaterally force all countries to stop buying Iran's oil, its major export, sending tensions soaring. The United States blamed Iran for an attack earlier this month on the oil infrastructure of rival Saudi Arabia, which is also waging a devastating offensive in Yemen.

France, Britain and Germany this week said they agreed with the US findings. "Some have said that they've joined the United States; I think they have joined reality," Pompeo said of the Europeans. But the European powers, while criticizing Iran, believe that

diplomacy is the best way forward. The Europeans remain part of a nuclear accord negotiated by former US president Barack Obama, under which Iran drastically reduced its nuclear program in return for unmet promises of sanctions relief.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini acknowledged struggles to preserve the pact, from which Iran has stopped strict compliance as it presses for economic benefits. "I will not hide that it is increasingly difficult to do it," she told reporters after talks among European powers. We will try and continue keeping the agreement in place and overcome the difficulties we are facing," she said.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that there had at least been progress in moving toward diplomacy. "The fact that all sides are basically willing to hold talks - the Iranian side as well as the American side - is a positive signal," he said. "Now it's about the conditions," he said. "And this will not be easy." After weeks of speculation over a possible meeting, Trump's attention was likely elsewhere yesterday. Leaders of the rival Democratic Party on Tuesday announced that they were opening an impeachment inquiry against him over allegations he pressured Ukraine's president to investigate the son of Joe Biden, the Democratic front-runner seeking to challenge him in next year's election. — AFP

make the UAE one of only a handful of states in the Middle East to have sent a person into space, as it looks to make good on a pledge to become a global leader in space exploration.

Mansoori plans to conduct experiments and said he would take Emirati food with him to share with the crew. Skripochka, first-time flyer Meir and Mansoori will join a six-member crew on the ISS and for a brief period of time the ISS will be home to nine astronauts. At a pre-flight conference, Meir, 42, said the crew communicated by using "Runglish" - a mixture of Russian and English. "We still need to work on our Arabic," she joked.

Russian Orthodox priests blessed the spacecraft ahead of the launch, in a traditional prayer service often held before Russian rocket launches. The spacecraft was the last to blast off from the launch pad where Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin went off into space onboard the Vostok 1, becoming the first man in space in 1961. Mansoori is set to return to Earth with NASA's Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinnikov on Oct 3. Skripochka and Meir are set to remain on the ISS until the spring of 2020.

The first Arab in outer space was Saudi Arabia's Sultan bin Salman Al-Saud, who flew on a US shuttle mission in 1985. Two years later, Syrian air force pilot Muhammad Faris spent a week aboard the Soviet Union's Mir space station. As part of its space plans, the UAE has also announced its aim to become the first Arab country to send an unmanned probe to orbit Mars by 2021, naming it "Hope". In the long-term, it says it is planning to build a "Science City" to replicate life on Mars and aims to create the first human settlement on the red planet by 2117.

But already, Emiratis believe they have shown the world what they can do. "We have talent here in the UAE, and now the world will see that," said Fatima Al-Ghurair at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Centre. The International Space Station - a rare example of cooperation between Russia and the West - has been orbiting Earth at about 28,000 km per hour since 1998. Russia is resolved to keep its position as a leader of the space industry, particularly for manned space flights. — Agencies

Toilet row: Modi ignores protests...

Continued from Page 1

foundation is to preserve life and fight inequity," they wrote, urging the Gates Foundation to change its decision.

In addition to a rise in mob lynchings of Muslims, Christians, and Dalits, they noted the decision by Genocide Watch to issue warnings for the state of Assam and Indian-administered Kashmir. The disputed territory is under a communications blackout that has

lasted 50 days after Modi rescinded its autonomy. The award was also protested in an online petition that garnered 100,000 signatures as well as a comment piece co-authored by feminist leader Gloria Steinem.

Modi won a second term in a huge election victory in May and drew tens of thousands of diaspora fans on Sunday in an unusual joint rally in Houston with President Donald Trump. He did not respond to the criticism over the award. The Gates Foundation told AFP in a statement: "Before the Swachh Bharat mission, over 500 million people in India did not have access to safe sanitation, and now, the majority do. "The Swachh Bharat Mission can serve as a model for other countries around the world that urgently need to improve access to sanitation for the world's poorest!" — AFP

Mourides build biggest mosque...

Continued from Page 1

Yesterday, spectators were already gathering for the opening, some sleeping on the floor, while on scaffolding, painters worked on the oriental-style decorations of the main door. Uniformed police were also already visible. Today and tomorrow, around 1,600 officers will be posted around the mosque site as tens of thousands of visitors are expected to clog up the streets.

The massive building embodies the Brotherhood's rise, said researcher Cheikh Gueye. The Mourides "dominate trade, import-export, agriculture and even the media," he said. The mosque is a "symbol of this economic power, which will help reinforce their political and cultural influence". The lavish interiors include a gold-leaf dome, giant chandeliers and decorations hand drawn by Moroccan workmen.

"With this jewel, we are on a par with what we see in Arab countries and other places in Africa," said Mbackiou Faye, who coordinated the construction work. The cost

exceeded \$30 million (\$33 million), all of which came from donations, he said. The government has additionally provided \$10.5 million for lighting, sanitation and road works, according to Infrastructure Minister Oumar Youm.

The mosque is smaller than Casablanca's Hassan II - which is spread over nine hectares, can accommodate 105,000 worshippers and has a minaret spiralling 210 m. Another mosque being built in Algiers is sprawled over nine hectares with a 265-m minaret. It will be able to accommodate 120,000 people.

The Mourides are one of four important Sufi brotherhoods followed by Senegal's Muslims, who overwhelmingly practice a moderate version of Islam while following the teachings of local spiritual guides. Bamba, a peaceful opponent of French colonialism, was exiled by the French authorities to Gabon (1895-1902) and then to Mauritania from 1903 to 1907 before being allowed to return to Senegal, where he was placed under house arrest at his home in the north of the country. He died in 1927.

The holy city of Touba, founded by Bamba in 1888, has grown to be Senegal's second-largest after Dakar, with some 1.5 million inhabitants. The mosque will be inaugurated at 1400 pm (local and GMT) in the presence of President Macky Sall. An Islamic institute, residence and museum are scheduled to be added to the complex in the future. — AFP

Rocket blasts off with first Arab...

Continued from Page 1

Mansoori will spend eight days on the ISS and will be the first Emirati and the first Arab on the orbiting laboratory, but not the first Muslim.

Writing on Twitter before the launch, the former pilot in the UAE armed forces said he was "filled with this indescribable feeling of glory and awe". "Today I carry the dreams and ambition of my country to a whole new dimension. May Allah grant me success in this mission," he said. The day before the launch, he said he would record his prayer routine on the ISS and broadcast it to people on Earth. "As a fighter pilot I already prayed in my aircraft," he said, explaining that he had experience of prayers at high speed.

Some people gathered at the Dubai center carried UAE flags, while others were dressed in blue jumpsuits spelling out: "Future astronaut". Badriya Al-Hamadi, 38, said she was so proud of the historical moment, adding: "I feel like I am the one going to space." According to Amer Al-Ghafri, of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre, Mansoori's launch is only just the beginning of the UAE's dreams of space exploration. "There are a lot of ambitions and a lot more work," he said.

A Holy Quran, a UAE flag, pictures of his family, and a book by Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum were among the few things he was allowed to pack for his space adventure. Dubai's iconic Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest skyscraper, lit up the moment of blast-off at 5:57 pm local time.

Sheikh Mohammed, also the UAE's vice president and prime minister, vowed in 2017 to send four Emirati astronauts to the space station within five years. "The arrival of Hazzaa Al-Mansoori to space is a message to the Arab youth... that we can progress and move forward," Sheikh Mohammed said on Twitter yesterday. "Our next stop is Mars." The astronaut program would

Trump asked Ukraine to...

Continued from Page 1

not show Trump explicitly tying aid to Ukraine to Zelensky probing Biden, which has fed the calls to impeach the US leader. But the two did discuss aid, which had been frozen by Trump at the time and was only released in recent weeks. The memo also shows Trump asking Zelensky for a "favor" on an issue unconnected to Biden - just after noting that the US had been "very, very good to Ukraine".

Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi announced the launch of impeachment proceedings Tuesday, alleging that Trump had betrayed his country in seeking Ukraine's help to find dirt on Biden, the leading Democratic candidate for the November 2020 presidential election. The White House was scrambling though to defend Trump, who faces the possibility of becoming the third US president in history to be impeached. In New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly, Trump branded the impeachment probe the "single greatest witch hunt in American history... a disgraceful thing".

The White House was stunned when Pelosi, the powerful speaker of the House of Representatives, suddenly abandoned months of resistance and announced the impeach-

ment investigation. Only two presidents in US history have been impeached, Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998, deeply tarring both of their legacies.

Pelosi declared the formal investigation 11 days after the news that an anonymous US intelligence official had filed a formal whistleblower complaint on Trump's alleged double-dealing with Ukraine, tying aid to the country for dirt on Biden. "The actions of the Trump presidency revealed the dishonorable facts of the president's betrayal of his oath of office, betrayal of our national security, and betrayal of the integrity of our elections," she said.

With the call transcript not a verbatim record, Democrats made clear its release would not satisfy their investigation into whether the US leader broke the law. They demanded the full release of the whistleblower complaint, even as the Justice Department declared that it showed no wrongdoing and said "no further action was warranted". Pelosi had resisted pressure from the party rank-and-file for impeachment, preferring to focus their energies on the presidential and congressional elections next year as the public has shown little taste for a full-blown congressional probe into Trump.

A Quinnipiac poll released yesterday said that only 37 percent of voters support impeaching Trump while 57 percent oppose, even if more than half disapprove of the US leader's performance. But Pelosi said there was now strong evidence of Trump's wrongdoing. "No. You don't ask foreign governments for help in our elections. That is not right," she tweeted yesterday. — AFP

Sports

Nationals clinch playoff berth with doubleheader sweep

Blackmon homers in 16th to lift Rockies past Giants

WASHINGTON: Trea Turner hit a sixth-inning grand slam, and the Washington Nationals rallied past the Philadelphia Phillies 6-5 on Tuesday night, sweeping a doubleheader and clinching a National League playoff berth. Washington entered the nightcap with its magic number at two. When Daniel Hudson retired the Phillies in the ninth for his second save of the day, the Nationals stayed on the field. Minutes later, the Pittsburgh Pirates defeated the Chicago Cubs 9-2, and Washington was celebrating being back in the playoffs after a one-year absence. Yan Gomes also homered for the Nationals, who lead the Milwaukee Brewers by one game for home-field advantage in the wild-card game. Turner had three hits in the first game, a 4-1 Washington win. The Phillies were eliminated from playoff contention with the defeat in the opener.

DIAMONDBACKS 3, CARDINALS 2 (19 INNINGS)

Ildemaro Vargas lined a walk-off single with two outs in the 19th inning to give Arizona a victory over St. Louis in Phoenix, breaking the Cardinals' six-game winning streak in the longest game in Arizona franchise history. Kevin Ginkel (3-0) pitched the top of the 19th for the victory in a game that lasted 6 hours, 53 minutes, the longest in Chase Field history. The Diamondbacks used 30 players and 13 pitchers, both franchise records. The Cardinals employed 24 players, including 11 pitchers, as their lead over Milwaukee in the National League Central was trimmed to 2 1/2 games with four to play. Dexter Fowler led off the game with a homer, and Paul Goldschmidt also went deep for St. Louis.

ASTROS 3, MARINERS 0

Gerrit Cole pitched seven shutout innings on a historic night as Houston continued its mastery of host Seattle and moved 1 1/2 games ahead of the New York Yankees in the race for the best record in the majors and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs. Cole (19-5) allowed only two hits and struck out 14 without issuing a walk. He matched his career high for victories set in 2015 with Pittsburgh and surpassed the Astros' franchise record for single-season strikeouts (313), set by J.R. Richard in 1978. Cole now has a major-league-leading 316 strikeouts. Alex Bregman hit his 40th home run of the season for the Astros, who are 17-1 against Seattle this season. Ryan Pressly struck out three in the eighth inning, and Roberto Osuna pitched the ninth for his 37th save.

DODGERS 6, PADRES 3

Max Muncy hit the first grand slam of his career, and eight Los Angeles pitchers — starting with Rich Hill — yielded just three runs on five hits as the visiting Dodgers defeated San Diego. With the victory, the Dodgers are now assured of finishing the regular season with the best overall record in the National League. Los

Angeles took a 5-0 lead before San Diego scored three times in the fifth. Hill, who was wearing a brace to protect his left knee, worked two innings, as expected. He allowed no runs and no hits while compiling five strikeouts against two walks. Kenley Jansen pitched a scoreless ninth to pick up his 31st save.

RAYS 2, YANKEES 1 (12 INNINGS)

Ji-Man Choi homered to lead off the 12th inning and Tampa Bay defeated New York in St. Petersburg, Fla., to remain a half-game ahead of Cleveland for the second wild-card spot. The Rays earned their 18th win in 24 games when Choi lifted a 2-2 slider from Cory Gearrin (1-3) over the right-field fence. It was Choi's 18th homer and second career walk-off homer. Yankees third baseman Gio Urshela exited in the seventh after being hit in the left hand an inning earlier. He remained in the game to run the bases after being hit, and then played a half-inning on defense at third before being substituted.

ROCKIES 8, GIANTS 5 (16 INNINGS)

Colorado belted five home runs, including a tiebreaking, three-run shot by Charlie Blackmon in the 16th inning, to earn a win at San Francisco. The teams set a major league record by using a combined 25 pitchers, 13 of them Giants. Garrett Hampson homered twice for the Rockies, who also got long balls from Ian Desmond and Trevor Story. Pitcher Madison Bumgarner, Buster Posey and Evan Longoria hit home runs for San Francisco.

ANGELS 3, A'S 2

Albert Pujols' fifth-inning sacrifice fly snapped a tie and helped lift Los Angeles to a win over Oakland in Anaheim, Calif. Dillon Peters (4-3) tossed five innings of two-run ball, getting help from four relievers who combined to shut out the A's over the final four innings. Hansel Robles pitched the ninth for his 23rd save. Oakland has lost two in a row for the first time since Aug. 31-Sept. 1. The Athletics' lead in the three-team race for the two American League wild cards was reduced to just a half-game over the Rays and one game over the Indians.

BREWERS 4, REDS 2

Ryan Braun belted a solo homer among his two hits as visiting Milwaukee inched closer to a postseason berth with a victory over Cincinnati. Yasmani Grandal ripped an RBI double and rookie Keston Hiura added a sacrifice fly in a two-run third inning for the Brewers, who won for the 16th time in their past 18 contests and moved five games ahead of the Chicago Cubs for the final National League wild-card spot. Josh Hader struck out Kyle Farmer with runners on second and third base in the ninth to secure his 36th save of the season. The Brewers posted their fifth consecutive victory.

TWINS 4, TIGERS 2

Williams Astudillo and Eddie Rosario each had two-run hits in a four-run seventh inning, and Minnesota inched closer to its first American League Central title in nine years with a victory at Detroit. The Twins, who improved to 12-5 against Detroit this season, lowered their magic number for clinching the division to two. Jake Odorizzi (15-7) held the Tigers to one run on two hits and a walk while striking out seven in six innings. He was removed after 93 pitches due to hamstring tightness. Taylor Rogers got the last three outs for his 29th save.

INDIANS 11, WHITE SOX 0

Jose Ramirez belted a grand slam and a three-run home run in his return to the lineup from injury and Mike Clevinger pitched seven shutout innings for visiting Cleveland. The Indians remained one-half game behind the Tampa Bay Rays for the second American League wild-card spot. Ramirez went 2-for-3 with seven RBIs as Cleveland outlasted Chicago 12-6. Yasiel Puig had three hits, while Roberto Perez and Mike Freeman had two apiece. Clevinger improved to 13-3 while earning his first win against the White Sox this season, scattering five hits, one walk and 10 strikeouts in seven innings. In three starts versus Chicago in 2019, Clevinger has yielded two

earned runs in 21 innings, a 0.86 ERA.

ROYALS 9, BRAVES 6

Bubba Starling's two-run double capped a five-run third inning Tuesday night that lifted host Kansas City past Atlanta. Not only did the Braves lose for the third time in as many meetings with the 100-loss Royals, but they also saw 41-homer man Ronald Acuna Jr. leave due to right hip tightness. Danny Duffy (7-6) got the win for Kansas City after allowing three runs and five hits over five innings, walking two and striking out five. Julio Teheran (10-11) lasted just 2 1/3 innings, allowing six hits and six runs with one walk and one strikeout for Atlanta.

METS 5, MARLINS 4 (11 INNINGS)

Brandon Nimmo drew a bases-loaded walk in the 11th inning as New York mounted a late comeback and stayed alive in the National League wild-card race with a win over visiting Miami. Had the Mets lost, they would have been eliminated by virtue of their defeat and wins earlier in the day by Washington and Milwaukee. New York will be eliminated from contention with one more loss or one more win by the Brewers. The Mets trailed 4-0 entering the seventh inning, when J.D. Davis hit a leadoff double and Michael Conforto followed with a two-run homer. — Reuters



WASHINGTON: Anthony Rendon #6 of the Washington Nationals slides safely past the tag of Edgar Garcia #66 of the Philadelphia Phillies after a wild pitch during the eighth inning of game one of a doubleheader at Nationals Park in Washington. — AFP

Dennis hits back to retain world time-trial title

HARROGATE: Australia's Rohan Dennis retained his title at the cycling world championship time-trial yesterday by blowing away the competition in Yorkshire. Dennis was last man out on the 54km route to Harrogate and was far too good as he stormed to the finish line 1min 08sec ahead of Belgian teenager Remco Evenepoel with Italy's Filippo Ganna claiming bronze.

"It was an absolutely perfect day," Dennis told the BBC. "I have a lot of people to thank and it's just good to repay them on the day when it really matters." Victory was even sweeter for Dennis this year after a difficult season.

The 29-year-old controversially threw in the towel at the start of a classic climb on the Tour de France's 12th stage in July, missing out on the time-trial at the Tour the next day. Dennis was reportedly unhappy with his bike for the time-trial at the Tour, but his behaviour stunned his team, Bahrain Merida, who then left him out of their squad for the Vuelta a Espana.

However, Dennis appeared fresh rather than rusty having not ridden since the Tour as he steadily increased his lead across the course. "It's been a tough year, a lot of talk since Tour de France about what I'm doing, so it's really special to back up this year," added Dennis.



HARROGATE: Silver medalist Belgium's Remco Evenepoel (L), gold medalist Australia's Rohan Dennis (C) and bronze medalist Italy's Filippo Ganna (R) celebrate on the podium after the Elite Men Individual Time Trial, over 54 kms from Northallerton to Harrogate, at the 2019 UCI Road World Championships in Harrogate, northern England yesterday. — AFP

"To come here in the best possible shape and defend this title to show I'm still here to race, still here to win, and I've still got more to give in this sport." Injuries to Chris Froome and Tom Dumoulin, along with the absence of Geraint Thomas, opened the door for 19-year-old Evenepoel to back up his European time-trial title earlier in the year.

Evenepoel was comfortably the best of the rest as he finished 46 seconds ahead of Ganna. Four-time world champion Tony Martin could only manage ninth, while Vuelta winner Primoz Roglic was caught on the finish line by Dennis despite starting three minutes ahead of the winner as the Slovenian finished down in 12th. — AFP

Coleman battling sceptics in Doha after testing controversy

DOHA: Christian Coleman arrives at the World Championships as the heavy favourite for 100m gold after an impressive season that has seen him clock a world-leading 9.81sec.

But while the 23-year-old has left most of his rivals trailing firmly in his slipstream this year, he may find sceptics harder to shake off. In the eyes of many, Coleman, the 2017 World Championships silver medallist over 100m, is extremely fortunate to even be competing in Doha.

In August, the athletics world was rocked by news that Coleman had registered three drug-testing

"whereabouts" failures in a 12-month period — an offence usually regarded as equivalent to a failed drug test and followed by a ban of up to two years.

Yet with Coleman facing the very real possibility of a suspension that would have barred him from competing at the World Championships and next year's Olympics, the case collapsed this month because of a technicality.

At first glance, it appeared to be an open and shut case. Coleman had recorded his first whereabouts failure on June 6 last year, before two more offences in January 16 and April 26 this year.

However the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) abruptly withdrew the charges against Coleman on September 2 after a review of the rules regarding how the 12-month window should be calculated.

'NOBODY'S PERFECT'

Under an obscure regulation in the International Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI) guidelines, Coleman's first missed case in June last year should have been backdated to the first day of that

quarter, making the formal date of the first offence April 1, 2018. That meant the dates of the three offences fell outside the required 12-month time frame for a doping offence to have occurred — leaving Coleman in the clear and free to compete in Doha.

Coleman responded to the news by demanding an apology from USADA, accusing the anti-doping body of smearing his reputation and insisting he had always been a clean athlete.

"I have never failed a drug test and never will," Coleman said. "It's a shame on USADA that this was public knowledge, that they didn't know their own rules — that they expect athletes to know the rules but they can't follow their own."

Coleman explained away the three whereabouts failures as simply innocent mistakes, blaming his anxiety and last-minute schedule changes for his failure to update his location information.

"People don't realise how easy it is to miss tests," Coleman said. "People out there calling me an idiot, or I've gotta be stupid to miss tests. I don't know what people look at athletes at, but nobody's perfect. People make mistakes." — AFP

Battered Bellamy soon back to the water but in a boat

BRIDGETOWN: Endurance athlete Cameron Bellamy, still recovering from the exertions of the longest open ocean swim in history, is keen to get back in the water but will return to his rowing roots for his next adventure.

The 37-year-old South African spent days in hospital after enduring severe sleep deprivation, acute overheating, "salt mouth" and extreme fatigue. He is still battling with his tongue and lips after 56 hours and 26 minutes in the water as he swam from Barbados to St Lucia from Sept 13-15.

At 151.7 km (94 miles) it was the longest distance for an open ocean swim. However, Bellamy says he cannot claim to have beaten Chloe McCardell's world record of 124.4km set in the Bahamas five years ago because of the currents that assisted him towards the end of the race and for the fact he wore a protective suit for three hours after being stung by a jellyfish.

"The toughest aspect of this swim was the heat, both water and air. On the second day leading up to the middle part of the swim there was absolutely no wind, the air temperature must have been in the mid 30 degrees Celsius and water temp around the same," he told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"I was incredibly dizzy and weak and if it wasn't for the encouragement of my support crew, who instantly noticed my plight and acted by handing me a lot more ice in my drinks and shortening my time between feeds, I think I might not have made it further."

"Once I had St Lucia in my sights, after swimming through a relatively cooler second night, it was a different story. I knew I could make it and pushed myself further than I could ever have imagined."

"With about one kilometre to go, the tide was against us and it meant an agonising push to a rocky outcrop attached to the shore beneath a majestic cliff. An amazing place to complete the swim."

He was hospitalised straight away, treated for severe muscle breakdown and toxicity of his blood, swelling of mouth area, and sunburn. He was discharged after 48 hours and has spent the last week relaxing in Barbados before heading to his home in San Francisco on Wednesday. Bellamy will submit his achievement to the Barbados Amateur Swimming Association and Marathon Swimmers' Federation for ratification but now has another feat on his mind - something he will start working on straight away.

"It's something that is in the advanced planning stages but I'll be going back to my rowing roots," he said, hoping to finalise details in the coming months. — Reuters

Sports

Canada inspired by Uruguay's shock win at Rugby World Cup

Uruguay cling to their early lead to beat Fiji 30-27

OITA: Uruguay's shock win over Fiji has inspired Canada who are looking for a similar upset when they open their World Cup campaign against Six Nations wooden-spooners Italy in Fukuoka today. Canada came within a whisker of shocking Italy at the 2015 World Cup when they raced to a 10-0 lead before being overhauled 23-18.

After Uruguay clung to their early lead to beat Fiji 30-27 yesterday, Canada reflected on their disappointment of four years ago. "We don't want to go through that heartbreak again," Canada captain Tyler Ardron said, adding there were positives in waiting for nearly a week to have their first game.

"It was quite nice to have that time to watch the other teams and see Italy play a game already. You've got an idea of how they're going to play, but just to make sure your ideas are right and to see what they've changed coming into a World Cup is pretty helpful," he said.

Canada only scraped into the World Cup via the repechage and with a world ranking of 22 they are eight places behind Italy. But the mood in their camp was upbeat with centre Nick Blevins saying an upset "can be done" while fullback Peter Paffrey said they wanted to be "identified as a team that is a nightmare

to play against".

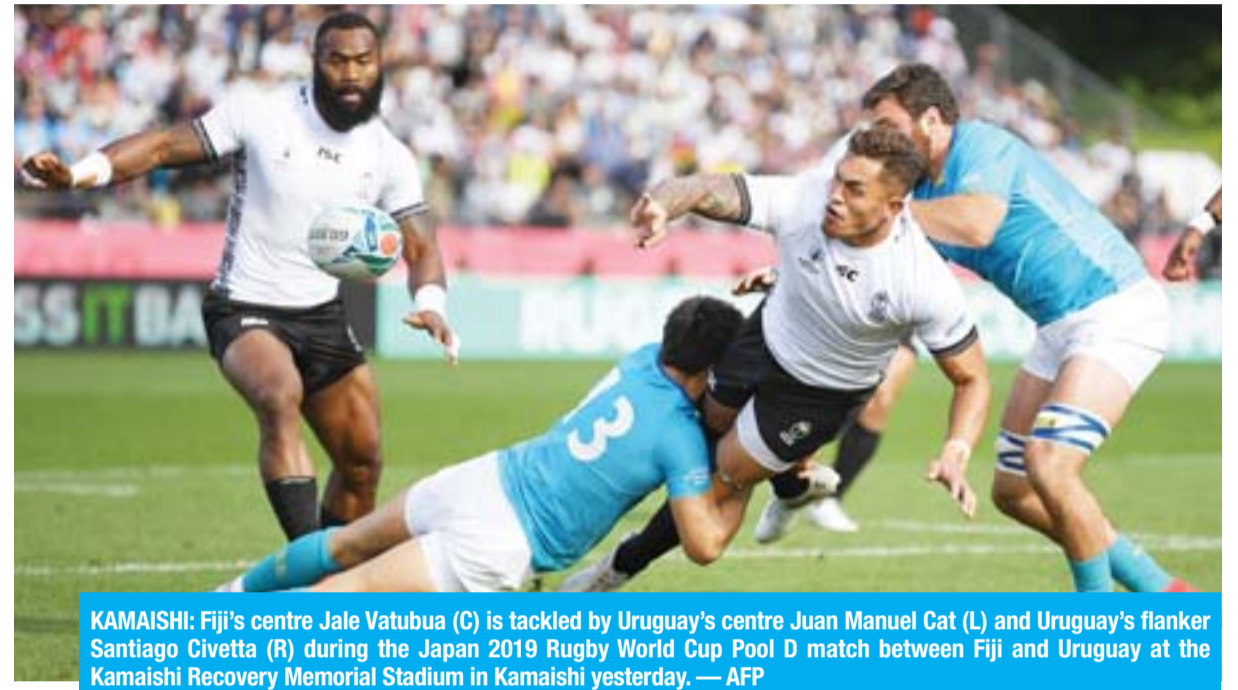
Italy go into the match as Pool B leaders courtesy of their seven-try, bonus-point win over Namibia, putting the Italians a point ahead of tournament favourites New Zealand who only touched down twice in overcoming a much tougher opponent in South Africa.

But the 47-22 scoreline flattered Italy and it was Namibia who finished strongest, although the were too far behind on the scoreboard for their late try to have any serious impact.

With a short turnaround between matches, and against a fresh Canada, coach Conor O'Shea has made 10 changes to the starting line-up, including resting influential captain Sergio Parisse.

"It was a choice we made before the first match to balance out the teams over the two matches. I have confidence in all our players and all our players are worth a place in the team. This is the best team for the match," O'Shea said.

"Sergio wanted to play and that is the same for all the players. Two matches in four days meant we had to use all our squad. He would be ready to play and was magnificent for us against Namibia but I want him at 100 per cent for every match." — AFP



KAMAISHI: Fiji's centre Jale Vatubua (C) is tackled by Uruguay's centre Juan Manuel Cat (L) and Uruguay's flanker Santiago Civetta (R) during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup Pool D match between Fiji and Uruguay at the Kamaishi Recovery Memorial Stadium in Kamaishi yesterday. — AFP

'Miracle of Brighton' inspires USA in World Cup clash with England

KOBE: United States coach Gary Gold yesterday said his "severe underdogs" would take heart from Japan's stunning 2015 Rugby World Cup victory over South Africa as they prepare to take on heavyweights England.

Gold said all the pressure would be on the 2003 champions, who have made 10 changes from the team that beat Tonga 35-3 on Sunday, with only a four-day turnaround between games in Pool C. Japan beat South Africa 34-32 in 2015 in the biggest upset seen at the Rugby World Cup, while other major surprises include Tonga's 19-14 win over France.

"It certainly has changed the mindset," Gold told reporters at the Kobe Misaki Stadium yesterday. "Japan v South Africa and Tonga v France is one that comes to mind, from 2011."

Gold added: "We don't really have anything to lose. Expectation is quite low, nobody will give us a chance. Conversely, that puts pressure on a team like England."

"The England players — that'll be going through their mind, maybe not for very long, but it'll be going through their mind — 'What if, what if, what if?' "The pressure's really on them not us."

Gold said a rare opportunity for the USA to test themselves against three top-flight teams in quick succession — France and Argentina are also in Pool C — was a chance to show they belonged on the world stage.

"What it does, from our point of view, is that it allows us an opportunity to show that we have improved and that we hopefully can go toe-to-toe, even in the form of large periods of the game against a team like England," he said.

"We've put the pressure on ourselves in terms of performance. We want to come out of this game with credibility. We believe in our-



KOBE: England's rugby team captain George Ford takes part in the team's Captain Run at Kobe Misaki Stadium in Kobe yesterday, a day before their Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup match against the US. — AFP

selves, we think we're a good rugby team and we're certainly improving. We want to give England a good run for their money."

Gold, whose coaching CV includes stints in charge of Premiership clubs Bath and Worcester, said that even a much-changed England would be formidable opponents.

"I genuinely don't think there are any weaknesses in this England team. They defend particularly well, their set piece is outstanding, they've got good ball-in-hand play. "George (Ford) runs the show brilliantly from 10 (fly-

half). Their nines (scrum-halves) kick very well. Believe me, we've tried to find it."

Meanwhile Gold, a former coach of the Kobe-based Kolbeo Steelers, said Jones's influence on Japan had been considerable. "The work that Eddie has done has helped put rugby on the map (in Japan). I think the Rugby World Cup is just going to accelerate that even further," he said.

"I'll really be surprised if they don't qualify for the quarter-finals of this Rugby World Cup," added Gold. — AFP

Athletics World Championships a key test for Qatar

DOHA: Qatar is preparing to welcome thousands of fans and competitors for the World Athletics Championships starting tomorrow, an event seen as a staging post towards the 2022 football World Cup.

The 10-day event in the capital Doha will be a key test ahead of the football extravaganza in the gas-rich Gulf monarchy, although the track and field showcase will play out on a far smaller scale.

World Cup organisers and football fans will be anxious to see if Qatar can overcome problems encountered at a recent World Cup qualifying fixture, stubborn Doha traffic and unfinished public transport to deliver a smooth championships.

An ongoing diplomatic spat between Qatar and several neighbours could threaten to overshadow the competition, as well as possibly dent the numbers of spectators and competitors.

This is how Qatar has prepared for the tournament in key areas:

SECURITY

Qatari pro-government media has heavily publicised recent training exercises staged by the US FBI in Doha to equip Qatari officers with "crisis and disaster management" skills. The city was ranked the world's second safest by CEOWORLD magazine last month behind Abu Dhabi, capital of regional rival the United Arab Emirates.

VENUES

Ahead of the opening ceremony, hundreds of volunteers were marshalled around Doha's Khalifa stadium by police while technicians hoisted vast lighting rigs into place in the venue's intricate lattice-work roof.

Chief organiser Dahlan al-Hamad said at a recent sports integrity event in Doha that "Qatar is 100 percent ready for the championship — we are very excited". The stadium, which will host most events, was first opened in 1976 but totally overhauled ahead of a relaunch in 2017 and has since successfully hosted Diamond League events.

The city's Corniche waterfront will be used for the marathon, being staged for the first time at midnight when the temperature will be lower. The route will also host the men's and women's 20 kilometre race walks and the mixed 50 kilometre race walk.

Construction teams worked around the clock to finish assembling the elaborate scaffold towers that line the route's central reservation and will support floodlights for the midnight marathon.

TRANSPORT

Qatar has invested heavily in transport infrastructure since being named 2022 World Cup hosts in 2010. It now boasts one of the world's

largest hub airports and Qatar Airways is currently rated the best by an industry body.

But it is unclear if the multi-billion-dollar metro system's yellow line will be ready in time to shuttle spectators to the two new stations near the Khalifa stadium, al-Aziziyah and Sports City, both of which are shaped like Bedouin tents.

In the absence of a rail option, fans will access the stadium by road. The area is already popular with motorists and home to a mall, raising the prospect of traffic jams ahead of popular events.

Officials were pushing to overhaul several key bottlenecks and junctions across the city ahead of the high-point of the athletics calendar.

FANS

While the Khalifa stadium can hold 46,000 people, it will be configured for fewer fans during the World Championships with organisers hoping to attract around 14,000 spectators to the highest-profile events.

Tickets are "selling well" according to an official, and members of Qatar's expatriate work force — Kenyans and Americans in particular — are expected to turn out. It remains to be seen though how many fans from neighbouring Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will make it to Doha for the event.

The three countries, along with Egypt, have enforced a boycott of Qatar since June 2017 and their citizens are technically banned from travelling to the peninsula state. The Riyadh-led coalition accuses Qatar of backing extremist groups and Iran, charges it denies — raising the spectre that politics could partially overshadow the athletics. Nonetheless Saudi will send three athletes, Egypt five, the UAE one, and Bahrain 21 competitors in total. — AFP

India should withdraw from Commonwealth Games: Olympic boss

NEW DELHI: India should withdraw from the Commonwealth Games due to the "low level of competition" in the tournament, the president of the country's Olympic body told AFP yesterday.

Indian Olympic Association president Narinder Batra's comments come after the South Asian nation threatened to boycott the next edition of the multi-sport event in Birmingham in 2022 over shooting being scrapped from the programme.

"I don't use the word boycott in sports. What I am trying to say is that India as a country, in sports, should withdraw out of Commonwealth totally," Batra told AFP. He said regardless of whether shooting is included in the final programme, India should end its association with the competition played among mostly former British colonies. "I feel there is not sufficient level of competition, leaving aside two or three sports. It doesn't leave anyone anywhere with this low level of competition," Batra added. "India should be participating in world events and world championships, which earn Olympic ranking points."

India topped the table for shooting at last year's edition in Australia, taking home 16 medals including seven gold for a total tally of 66 medals — the third-best performing nation in the Games.

In contrast, the nation of 1.3 billion people came back with two just medals, including one silver and one bronze, from the 2016 Rio Olympics. Batra said he was open to talks with Commonwealth Games officials on including shooting.

Batra reiterated India's interest in bidding for the 2032 Olympics and 2026 Youth Olympics. "We are serious about the 2032 Olympics and 2026 Youth Olympics but then you have to follow a process," said Batra. "And to get these events into India you need to win in the Olympics." — AFP

Wallaby Hodge to miss W Cup pool stage after three-match ban

TOKYO: Australia were dealt a blow ahead of their Rugby World Cup Pool D showdown against Wales when long-range goal-kicking winger Reece Hodge was banned yesterday for three matches for a high tackle in the Wallabies' opening game against Fiji.

Fiji were leading 11-7 when Hodge charged into Peceli Yato, leaving the Fiji flanker concussed. The Wallabies wing went on to score a try and kick a penalty as Australia won 39-21. Hodge was cited after the match and went before an independent disciplinary committee in Tokyo yesterday.

The ban means the 25-year-old Melbourne Rebels player, capable of slotting in anywhere in the backline, will miss Australia's remaining three Pool D games against Wales on Sunday, Uruguay in Oita on October 5 and Georgia in Shizuoka six days later.

The disciplinary committee "deemed that the incident was an act of foul play and warranted a red card in line with the high tackle sanction framework", World Rugby said in a statement. It added that the tackle was "reckless, rather than deliberate", but contact with the head meant a high degree of danger.

Given Hodge's "exemplary disciplinary record, good character and conduct at the hearing, the committee reduced the six-match entry point by three matches".

Fiji's shock 30-27 defeat by Uruguay on Wednesday has now shaped Pool D into a straight contest between Australia and Wales to seal the winner and runners-up spots to reach the quarter-finals, for which Hodge would be eligible. Assistant coach Nathan Grey said earlier Wednesday that the Australian management were "pretty confident the judicial system will look after itself".

"We'll have to deal with that whatever the outcome is," Grey added. "You'd be crazy as a management not to manage both ways, so whether he's there or not, we'll be ready to go." Full-back Kurtley Beale said he was "confident Reece will have a fair hearing", adding that the players had not discussed it.

"As a player, you want your teammate to play. I think Reece has done a fantastic job on the wing. To his credit, he really threw himself into those tackles. He's got no malice in trying to go out there and do wrongdoing." Hodge's potential absence, Beale said, would be more than made up for by Dane Haylett-Petty, who enjoyed an eye-catching cameo against Fiji off the bench. "We're confident as a back three, whoever's in those positions, we will get the job done," Beale said. — AFP

Sports

Messi injured but Barca seal much-needed win over Villarreal

Barcelona visit Getafe in La Liga on Saturday

MADRID: Lionel Messi endured yet more injury frustration on Tuesday after going off at half-time against Villarreal but Barcelona gave their coach Ernesto Valverde some much-needed relief with a comfortable 2-1 victory.

Messi received treatment in the first half for what looked like a problem with his left thigh and was then unable to continue after the interval, replaced by Ousmane Dembele. His withdrawal will be a major concern for Barca, particularly given this was Messi's first start of the season after just recovering from a niggling calf injury sustained at the start of August.

After the match, Valverde struck a note of calm. "When something happens to Messi, everyone stops, not only on the field, but in the stands as well," he said. "It is a small problem in the adductor and as a precaution we have decided not to risk it. In theory, it is nothing more but we will see tomorrow how it is."

Barcelona visit Getafe in La Liga on Saturday before playing Inter Milan at home in the Champions League four days later. Certainly, they would have been eager to see Messi back in their line-up, having suffered a humbling 2-0 loss at newly-promoted Granada last weekend, a result that left them with seven points from five games, their worst start to a season since 1995.

They arrived at Camp Nou with doubts hovering, particularly over Valverde, but delivered a far more convincing win than the scoreline suggested, thanks to early goals from Antoine Griezmann, his third of the season, and Arthur Melo. "We are still far from our best but with matches everything will improve," said Griezmann.

On his own adaptation at Barcelona, he added: "It's different. A different style of football, a different posi-

tion. I knew it was going to be a challenge and it would take time. "But I'm not too bad, right? Three goals. I can do better, yes, but I have to keep working."

Santi Cazorla put Villarreal in touch on the stroke of half-time but in truth the visitors barely threatened thereafter, with Barcelona impressively composed when nerves might easily have taken over.

It means Valverde's side climb to fourth in the table, one point behind Real Madrid and level on points with Atletico Madrid, who both play later. Villarreal's encouraging start stalls a little as they drop to eighth.

Granada, who backed up their shock win over Barca with a 1-1 draw at Real Valladolid, top the table, although both Athletic Bilbao and Real Madrid can move three points above them when they play their games.

Barcelona started well, with Griezmann heading in after just six minutes, darting to the near post to flick home Messi's floated corner. The pair shared a celebratory hug too. Seven minutes later, there was a second and another goal almost from nothing. Arthur collected the ball 30 yards out and harpooned a shot straight past Sergio Asenjo and into the top right-hand corner.

Messi, who won FIFA's Men's Player of the Year award on Monday, took treatment on the sideline just after the half-hour mark and Cazorla pulled one back soon after with a swerving effort from distance.

The ball straightened as it flew, which fooled goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, on his way left towards the corner. Dembele replaced Messi and the 16-year-old Ansu Fati came on for Luis Suarez with 12 minutes left. Fati twice went close but shot over and then wide. A third for Barca looked more likely than an equaliser for Villarreal. — AFP



BARCELONA: Villarreal's Spanish defender Pau Torres (L) vies with Barcelona's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Villarreal CF at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

Salah, Egypt fall out again after vote in FIFA awards goes astray

CAIRO: Egypt's football association has asked FIFA for clarification after its vote for national icon Mohamed Salah was dropped from the final tally for the world's best player award.

The results are based on the votes of national coaches, team captains and members of the press in selecting their top three players of the year. When FIFA released its results, Egypt was curiously absent from the final vote count.

In comments online blame was aimed at Egypt's football federation for failing to ensure Salah would be given the maximum chance in all votes, although he eventually finished fourth, 20 votes behind winner Lionel Messi.

Salah hinted at his disappointment through his social media activity, changing his Twitter bio to say he only plays for Liverpool and removing any mention of his affiliation to Egypt. To add insult to injury, Hany Daniel, the Egyptian journalist in the voting, picked Senegalese forward Sadio Mane. Salah's Liverpool team-mate, ahead of the Egyptian striker who he relegated to third place behind Cristiano Ronaldo.

Messi won with 46 votes while Salah scored only 26 in fourth. Salah posted a conciliatory tweet after saying "no matter how much they try to change my love for you and your people", referring to Egypt, "they won't be able to".

Hours after the controversy, the Egyptian Football Association said it had asked FIFA for an explanation about why its vote "was not approved". The statement released late Tuesday said the association had sent its votes officially to FIFA on August 15 and they were registered on August 19. "National team captain Ahmed al-Mohamedi voted while the Olympic team's manager Shawki Ghareeb voted after the resignation of the coaching staff," it added. Egypt's coach Javier Aguirre and the entire board of the association resigned after the country's abysmal showing in this year's Africa Cup of Nations that it hosted.

The Pharaohs were knocked out in the second round by South Africa after being dogged by a lack of preparation and a sexual harassment scandal involving player Amr Warda. Salah and the EFA have butted heads before several times, most prominently when a photo of him was plastered on the squad's plane ahead of the 2018 World Cup, causing sponsorship problems for the star. The EFA has been beset with governance issues and was vehemently pilloried by fans for Egypt's early exit from the Africa Cup of Nations. It was most recently headed by Hani Abou Rida, a powerful FIFA Council member, who was investigated for a massive corruption case that embroiled senior FIFA officials in 2015. — AFP



BRESCIA: Juventus' Argentinian forward Gonzalo Higuain (C) and Brescia's Italian defender Andrea Cistana (C-R) go for a header as Juventus' German midfielder Sami Khedira (R) looks on during the Italian Serie A football match Brescia vs Juventus at the Mario-Rigamonti stadium in Brescia. — AFP

Juventus beat Balotelli's Brescia, go top of Serie A

MILAN: Mario Balotelli made his first start for Brescia but the promoted northerners still fell to a 2-1 defeat which sent champions Juventus top of Serie A on Tuesday. Former Manchester City and Inter Milan striker Balotelli has returned to Italy to play for his hometown club, but his debut had been delayed as he sat out a four-game suspension for previous club Marseille.

Juventus were without Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo, rested with a slight thigh problem, but the champions recovered from going behind after less than four minutes to an Alfredo Donnarumma goal — his fourth in five games.

Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny got two hands to Donnarumma's powerful strike, but could only push the ball into the net. Brescia defender Jhon Chancellor let the champions off the hook five minutes before the break, diverting the ball into his own goal, with Bosnian midfielder Miralem Pjanic completing the comeback, volleying in on 63 minutes.

Juventus overtake Inter Milan at the top of the Serie A table with 13 points from five games. Antonio Conte's side are one point behind before they host Lazio at the San Siro later. "It wasn't easy after going behind within four minutes, but we showed personality," Juventus coach

Maurizio Sarri told DAZN.

Balotelli, back in Italy for the first time since 2016, was denied after half an hour with Polish keeper Szczesny tipping his 30-yard free-kick over the bar. "Mario is working hard and is an extraordinary player. I'm sure he'll give us a big hand this season," said Brescia coach Eugenio Corini.

"Being at home, close to his mother, family and friends is helping him to focus on his life more. His abilities are unlimited." French midfielder Adrien Rabiot also made his first start for Juventus, who lost full-back Danilo to injury early on, since his move from Paris Saint-Germain.

Reeling after going behind, Juventus pushed forward with Gonzalo Higuain threatening for the visitors and Aaron Ramsey nodding over. The equaliser came when Brescia goalkeeper Jesse Joronen shoved a Paulo Dybala corner into Chancellor's path.

Paulo Dybala also forced Joronen into action, with Rabiot pouncing on the rebound which was cleared off the line. Pjanic drilled in the winner after Dybala struck his free-kick into the wall and the Bosnian met the loose ball with a rasping volley.

Federico Bernardeschi came on for Ramsey in the 70th minute, with Dybala making way for Blaise Matuidi ten minutes later with the visitors holding on for all three points. Juventus next play SPAL in Serie A on Saturday before hosting Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League next Tuesday, having been held to a 2-2 draw against Atletico Madrid in their opener.

Brescia were promoted to Serie A this year, after being relegated in 2011, and sit 12th with six points. Elsewhere, Verona were held to a goalless draw at home against Udinese, with both teams settled in the bottom half of the table with just one win each from five games. — AFP

Palestinians cancel soccer final after Israel denies Gaza team travel

GAZA: The Palestinian national soccer club championship was called off yesterday after Israel denied travel permits to Gaza players who had hoped to face off with their opponents in the occupied West Bank.

Israel refused to let players from Gaza's Khadamat Rafah club travel several dozen kilometres through its territory to play Nablus's FC Balata in the central West Bank. Israeli officials have not given a public explanation of the reasons. Some media reports have quoted Israeli security sources saying team members were believed to have links to terrorism.

Only 12 of the Gaza club's 35 members were granted permits, just five of whom were players, the team said. Yesterday's FIFA-recognised Palestine Cup in the West Bank city of Nablus had already been postponed from July, when 31 of the Gaza club's 35 players were denied permits, the team said.

The winner of yesterday's game between the Gaza and West Bank Cup holders would have represented Palestinians in the Asian Champions League, a qualifier for the FIFA Club World Cup.

"It's a terrible feeling after training so hard," said Ahmad Abu Thuhair, a Gaza footballer whose application was rejected. An Israeli court on Monday upheld a decision from COGAT, Israel's military liaison to the Palestinians, to deny the Gaza players permits.

"Each permit application received by COGAT is individually and thoroughly evaluated, pursuant to the criteria that are published on COGAT's website and subject to security checks," COGAT said in an email, without providing further details. It referred additional questions to the Shin Bet Israeli domestic intelligence service, which did not respond to a request for comment. — Reuters

FIFA agrees limits to player loans and agent commissions

ZURICH: FIFA has agreed steps that will limit the number of players clubs can send out on loan from next season and will also limit the amount of money paid to agents in commissions, world football's governing body announced yesterday.

In a statement, FIFA said it had taken "a series of key steps to protect the integrity of the system and prevent abuses" following a meeting of its Stakeholders Committee. From next season, the number of international loans out and in permitted per club will be limited to eight, with that figure dropping progressively to six by the 2022/23 season. The number of players that can be loaned between the same two clubs will be capped at three.

However, the cap will only be applied to players aged over 21, or "non club-trained" players aged 21 and under. The measures are aimed at curtailing "abusive and excessive practices", with FIFA citing the hoarding of players by clubs and the distortion of competition when teams bring in several players on loan from a bigger club with whom they have a close relationship.

"Players' development is suffering as they are moved from one club to another with no clear career plan. The current loan system has facilitated player hoarding with clubs putting numerous players on their books and then loaning them out to other clubs," FIFA said in a confidential document seen by AFP.

The measures appear to be aimed at clubs such as Chelsea, who have habitually had vast numbers of players out on loan in recent seasons. Monaco have as many as 18 players currently loaned out, including seven at Belgian side Cercle Brugge.

The recommendations will be endorsed at the upcoming FIFA Council meeting in Shanghai, scheduled for October 24. However, they will not immediately apply to domestic loans, with the document stating that member associations will have three years in order to implement rules on a loan system "in line with FIFA principles".

Meanwhile, in an effort to curb the amount of money going out of the game and into the pockets of agents, FIFA stakeholders also agreed to limit commissions as "conflicts of interest plague football's transfer system".

As a result, a selling club will not have to pay more than 10 percent of a transfer fee received to an agent acting on their behalf. Agents representing a player will be entitled to a maximum of three percent of that player's total remuneration and another three percent for representing the buying club.

In 2016, Mino Raiola was paid 27 million euros for his role in Paul Pogba's transfer from Juventus to Manchester United for a then world-record fee of over 100 million euros.

The new measures are designed to limit "financial incentive of agents to engineer a possible transfer" and to create "more transparent and objective forms of remuneration", the document stated.

"Certain measures will certainly not please some agents, but there has been a consensus on these measures and there have been discussions going back more than a year," a FIFA official told journalists at the organisation's Zurich headquarters. "This is an important step towards making transfers more moral." The measures will also be endorsed at the FIFA Council in Shanghai. — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE

SD Eibar v Sevilla FC 20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3
Celta de Vigo v RCD Espanyol 21:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3
Real Sociedad v Deportivo Alaves 22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Torino FC v AC Milan 22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4

25 Dennis hits back to retain world time-trial title



26 Canada inspired by Uruguay's shock win at Rugby World Cup



27 Messi injured but Barca seal much-needed win over Villarreal



Barty downs Kenin to reach Wuhan quarters

Kyrgios blames 'clicking shoulder' for first-round exit



WUHAN: Ashleigh Barty of Australia hits a return against Sofia Kenin of the US during their third round women's singles match at the Wuhan Open tennis tournament in Wuhan yesterday. —AFP

WUHAN: World number one Ash Barty fended off a late comeback attempt by American Sofia Kenin to reach the Wuhan Open quarter-finals yesterday, while second seed Karolina Pliskova was knocked out in straight sets by Ukrainian teenager Dayana Yastremska.

After cruising through the first set without any trouble, Barty fought back from a break down in the next, saving two set points to overcome Kenin 6-3 7-5 for her third win over the 20-year-old Guangzhou champion in four meetings this season.

Next up for the Australian top seed will be Croatia's Petra Martić who defeated qualifier Veronika Kudermetova 6-3 6-1. World number two Pliskova's hopes of dethroning Barty as world number one by the end of the week ended with a 6-1 6-4 defeat by Yastremska.

The unseeded 19-year-old did not drop serve and smashed 26 winners past her Czech opponent for the

first top 10 victory of her career. Yastremska next faces another Czech top 10 opponent in Petra Kvitová, who advanced to the quarter-finals with a 6-3 6-3 victory over Sloane Stephens — her first win over the former US Open champion.

Wimbledon champion Simona Halep was forced to retire from her match against wildcard Elena Rybakina while trailing 5-4 in the first set after feeling sharp pain in her back. The Romanian had suffered a herniated disk late last year which ruled her out of the season-ending WTA Finals.

"It's a lower back (injury). I think it's more muscle, but I don't know yet because I didn't check it properly," the fourth seed told reporters. "At four-all, 0-30, with the backhand... I had a sharp pain. I don't know yet (if it is the same as the previous injury). It looks a little bit different but it's still the same zone."

Rybakina will next face Belarusian ninth seed Aryna

Sabalenko who dispatched sixth-seeded Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens 6-1 7-6(9). Ukraine's Elina Svitolina beat Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-4 6-2 to stay on course to qualify for the season-ending WTA Finals in Shenzhen where she will bid to retain her title.

Meanwhile, Nick Kyrgios fears he could face several weeks out after struggling with what he said was a "clicking" shoulder in a limp first-round exit at the Zhuhai Championships yesterday. The 24-year-old Australian, who has been accused of tanking matches in the past, served underarm on one occasion and led the veteran Italian Andreas Seppi 4-1 in the first set.

But the unpredictable firebrand went down 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 in southern China after his game spectacularly fell apart. Kyrgios, who has had numerous run-ins with tennis authorities down the years, said that he was "struggling a lot" — but he still played doubles soon after. "I was battling with a bit of a shoulder/collar

bone injury," said the 27th-ranked Kyrgios, a colourful but controversial figure. "At this rate I'm not thinking about playing until my shoulder's — or I don't even know what it is — but until my front of my shoulder feels better and I can serve," he added, saying his right shoulder had been "clicking".

"I mean the reason I lost today was because I couldn't serve. "If I could serve, it would have been a pretty routine win for me, to be honest." Asked if he could sit out the next few weeks or even the rest of the season, Kyrgios replied: "For sure, I mean at this rate I wouldn't be surprised. "I wasn't able to even serve at a reasonable pace. "I'm probably not going to bother playing until I can get it right again," he added. Kyrgios elicited a few giggles from a sparse crowd in Zhuhai with an underarm serve in the first set. Coasting 3-1 and 40-0 up, Kyrgios served weakly into the net, before surging into a 4-1 lead. — Agencies

Coe gets new term as IAAF chief

DOHA: Britain's Sebastian Coe was re-elected unopposed yesterday as president of the IAAF for a second term following four years dominated by doping and the issue of gender. The former Olympic and world champion middle-distance runner became head of world athletics' governing body in 2015 and receives his second mandate just two days before the World Athletics Championships open in Doha.

"I genuinely am very pleased and proud of the way the sport has come together," said Coe, 62, following his re-election. "Two-hundred changes, the Athletics Integrity Unit — no sport has a unit in the same space, it's about malpractice, corruption. "In making those achievements, I recognise we have had to detour from being able to really focus as hard as I would have liked in the early years around the field of play. We're now in the position to really genuinely do that."

Coe, who took over the reins during a period

of turmoil in world athletics, was re-elected by unanimous vote of the 203 delegates attending the International Association of Athletics Federations' Congress in Doha.

Four years ago the IAAF was in chaos as a result of far-reaching corruption allegations. They included damaging charges of links between outgoing president Lamine Diack, his influential son Papa Massata, and a Russian cover-up of a state-sponsored doping conspiracy.

During his first term, Coe set up the independent Athletics Integrity Unit which serves as watchdog dedicated to cleaning up corruption in the sport. "It's been a tough four years, the first two were the reforms — the second two years were really making sure they were implemented," he said.

"(We) got here pretty much implementing everything we said we'd do. "I want the next four years to be the fun bit... I want the sport to grow." Coe is notably credited with tackling the issue of state-sponsored Russian doping, with the IAAF maintaining a tough stance and banning Russia from competition since November 2015. Gender has also been a complex issue, with South African runner Caster Semenya spearheading the fight

against IAAF rules on "hyperandrogenic" competitors whose significance goes beyond the boundaries of the sport.

The new regulations came into force on May 8 and oblige women with higher than normal male hormone levels to artificially lower their testosterone to run at some distances. Semenya, the best-known athlete to fall foul of the rules, has refused to take the medication and consequently will not take part in Doha.

Semenya initially won a legal battle, enabling her to compete in 800m races, before a Swiss court overruled the decision. Coe said "the issue of transgender more generally is going to be dominating, not just athletics, but all sports".

Two female Kenyan middle-distance runners have been dropped from the team for Doha due to high levels of testosterone. Ximena Restrepo, a former sprinter from Colombia, was elected as an IAAF vice-president at the congress, the first time the body has elevated a woman to the position. "It's a great moment for me and my country," she said. "I would like to thank you Seb. Because of the changes you've done to the constitution, women are having more opportunities than before." —AFP



DOHA: IAAF's first female vice president, former Colombian sprinter Ximena Restrepo, poses next to IAAF's president Britain's Sebastian Coe following his re-election for a second term in the Qatari capital Doha yesterday. — AFP