The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision





BUSINESS | 13

Global trade war: Top central banks see growing gloom

SPORT | 20

Argentina rally behind Messi ahead of key Croatia clash





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QSE to launch investment incentives to boost market

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) is poised to launch new investment incentives after a series of steps that have been taken during the current year to confirm its intention to develop its systems, making it a platform for attracting local and international investments.

These steps have contributed to the increasing demand of local and international investment portfolios to invest in the world's largest emerging market listed in the global indices in the region, and the second largest exchange market in the Middle East in terms of its capital.

The latest steps that have been taken in this regard is Qatar Exchange's launch of two investment funds for the first time in its history, at a time it plans to launch a market for trading shares of small and medium enterprises during the second half of this year.

Rashid Ali Al Mansoori, CEO of QSE, said in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that QSE is currently seeking to launch more ETFs as it is one of the most popular products among investors both domestically and abroad.

Qatar, he said, is one of the most qualified regions to achieve high growth rates in the ETF sector, considering that the nature of these funds suits the thinking of investors in the region. The QSE, in its quest to establish a market for emerging small and medium-sized companies, is working to create an incubator to achieve sustainability and growth of family businesses, the QE CEO said, stressing the readiness of the stock exchange to provide all the capabilities available to family businesses.

The latest steps that have been taken in this regard is QSE's launch of two investment funds for the first time in its history, at a time it plans to launch a market for trading shares of small and medium enterprises during the second half of this year.

QSE is working in general to develop services and laws, activate the single window mechanism for listing, develop the licensing mechanism for intermediaries in cooperation with the Qatar Financial Markets Authority, and also try to develop the services so that there is one venue that the investor reaches and gets his service in seconds or delivered through modern technological media, as well as seeking to provide all services online, Al Mansoori revealed.

On March 4, Qatar Exchange announced details of exchange traded funds (ETFs), a group of securities in an investment fund. It is Qatar's first listed exchange traded funds (ETF) on the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) and the largest in the Gulf.

The ETF designed to track the Qatar Exchange index which screens for the top 20 listed companies in Qatar by market cap and liquidity.

At the end of the same month, the QSE witnessed the listing of Al Rayan Qatar ETF (QATR). The Fund tracks the QSE Al Rayan Islamic Index (Price), which consists of Shariah-compliant companies listed on QSE.

Al Rayan Qatar ETF is one of the largest Islamic funds traded in the Middle East and emerging countries and the second largest Islamic fund in the world. It is also the largest Islamic investment fund listed in one country, with an initial asset of $120m.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Minister of Energy and Industry, H E Dr Mohammed bin Saleh Al Sada (centre), President of Kahramaa, Eng Essa bin Hilal Al Kuwari (left) at the conference on International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028" in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, yesterday.

Qatar achieved goal to provide water, sanitation services to all

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar has succeeded in achieving the sixth goal of sustainable development by ensuring the availability of water and sanitation services for all the residents in the country, said Minister of Energy and Industry, H E Dr Mohammed bin Saleh Al Sada.

He stressed on the importance of intelligent water management as a basis for sustainable development, as water plays an essential role in adapting the social, economic and environmental systems with accelerating changes while speaking at a high-level conference on International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028".

The conference which started yesterday in Dushanbe, Tajikistan will run until June 22. Dr Al Sada also referred to the launch of the Permanent Water Resources Strategy Committee and Qatar's National Water Act, which aims to secure water for future generations.

The President of Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa), Eng Essa bin Hilal Al Kuwari, reviewed the efforts of achieving the sixth goal of sustainable development in light of the rapid population growth witnessed by Qatar and Kahramaa's efforts to ensure water quality according to the highest international standards.

Al Kuwari praised the success of Kahramaa through the National Program for Conservation and Energy Efficiency (Tarsheed) in reducing the per capita consumption of water, despite the increase in demand in Qatar.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Retail accommodation supply jumps by 200% since 2010

MOHAMMAD SHOEB
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The supply of organised retail accommodation increased by more than 200 percent since 2010, with the total supply of organised retail surpassing 1.39 million square metres (sqm) following the recent opening of Tawar Mall in Umm Lekhba, noted a latest report released by Cityscape Qatar.

With the completion of the upcoming commercial projects and new malls, such as Doha Mall, Katara Mall, Northgate Mall, and La Gallaria, will be adding more retail space to the existing supply to meet the growing demand.

The Cityscape Qatar exhibition, which is to be held from April 1–3, 2019. Cityscape is the world's leading real estate event portfolio for emerging markets, debuted in Qatar in 2012. The annual event features an exhibition and numerous learning and networking features designed to stimulate the development of Qatar's real estate.

The previous edition of the exhibition was represented by 55 countries which witnessed over 8,000 visitors.

Cityscape Qatar's June newsletter has looked at real estate consultant DTZ's analysis of the Qatar retail segment. "There is currently a total of 21 purpose built retail malls in Doha, excluding local neighbourhood shopping arcades and standalone hypermarkets. Between them, Doha Festival City, Mall of Qatar and Villaggio Mall account for more than 40 percent of retail accommodation in purpose built malls, providing a total of 565,000 sqm gross leasable area," said the report.

The DTZ report also noted that the supply of organised retail accommodation has increased by more than 200 percent since 2010. "While retail supply struggled to meet the demand of the growing population between 2010 and 2015, the completion of more than 600,000 sqm since 2015, coupled with the downturn in consumer confidence has resulted in a changing market dynamic," said DTZ.

"The quantity of new supply has increased competition between new retail destinations to secure premium brands in the past year, with incentives such as rent-free periods, fit-out contributions, and lower headline rents increasingly prevalent."

Outside of the 'Organised Retail' sector, the market in Qatar comprises largely of community mini-malls, 'Al Furjan' markets, high street showrooms, and traditional souqs. The increasingly challenging market has seen the emergence of turnover rent agreements in some locations, most notably in destinations that concentrate on the F&B sector.



Spain beat Iran 1-0 to close in on World Cup last 16

Spain's forward David Silva (centre) attempts a shot during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group B match against Iran at the Kazan Arena in Kazan, yesterday. Spain won 1-0.

Qatar Fan Zone becomes big hit

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The magic of football continues to charm fans in Qatar. Over 18,000 fans from across the country have visited Qatar Fan Zone at Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah Arena to cheer for their favourite World Cup teams.

Organised by the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), the Ministry of Culture and Sports and Qatar Tourism Authority, Qatar Fan Zone is welcoming fans across the country. In addition to screening live matches from the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, the fan zone features entertainment, a designated zone for children and families, and more than 40 food and beverage carts.

Visiting fans have praised the family-friendly atmosphere and abundance of activities for people of all ages. Thousands of more fans are expected to attend this weekend's matches. Egyptian fan Ramy Ghanem said: "It's great to be able to bring my children to a place that brings together Egyptians and other Arabs to cheer for our national team. The atmosphere, the hospitality and the fun activities for children all make this a complete experience for the whole family".

Jihan, a Tunisian mother of two, added: "I brought my two daughters and even though they are not football fans they have been caught up in the excitement and enjoying the fun activities that cater to children. The whole event is fantastic and we're grateful to the organisers".

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



TODAY'S MATCH

DENMARK VS AUSTRALIA
3.00PM
FRANCE VS PERU
6.00PM
ARGENTINA VS CROATIA
9.00PM

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

PORTUGAL 1-0 MOROCCO
URUGUAY 1-0 SAUDI ARABIA
IRAN 0-1 SPAIN

Qatar Airways warns public of fake offer

DOHA: Qatar Airways has asked public to be cautious of fake anniversary offer and has termed it as phishing scam.

"It has come to our attention that member of the public are receiving a link that appears to be from Qatar Airways or any of the subsidiary of Qatar Airways Group where it falsely state that they can book travel tickets as part of an anniversary promotion," tweeted the airline yesterday.

These false offers request that one should share it before unlocking the offer. The airline said that any Qatar Airways Group related offers will always be sent from an official domain. People should report such fraudulent attempts with details to report fraud@qatarairways.qa

Call for better vehicle care to ward off fire accidents

SIDI MOHAMED
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The General Directorate of Traffic has advised people not to leave their children in the vehicles even for a short time and to take more care of vehicles to avoid fire incidents as it occurs increasingly in the summer due to high temperature.

"The Department's awareness efforts focus more on the vehicles body especially the tyres, because high temperatures can become a serious problem for tyres, especially if they are not properly maintained," said Major Jaber Mohamed Rashid Odaiba, Assistant Director of Media & Traffic Awareness Department.

All tyres — including the spare — should be checked regularly. One should look for any visible signs of wear or damage. It is important also to check the pressure of the tyres at least once a month. The air pressure in the tyre drops naturally and high temperatures can increase the drop, according to an expert in this field.

Motorists have to respond immediately in case they smell burning rubber or plastic in the vehicles.

Regarding a question about cases of stunt-driving and drifting which see a rise in summer, Odaiba pointed out that the police patrols are deployed more in the evening until late at night and such violators will get the proper punishment.

The punishment includes hefty fines which might reach QR3,000 or more and impounding of the vehicles for a maximum of three months. Cases of repeat violation will be transferred to public prosecution.

The Department is also tight monitoring on some violations like overtaking from right and in addition its fine which is QR1000 fine, the vehicles will be seized one week, adding that the traffic laws is subject to study from time to time and there is a Legislative Committee decides an increase of fines or not.

He also added that the opening of new roads doesn't mean to allow to people to over speed. The aim is to avoid traffic congestion.

To ensure speeding and related accidents do not occur, the Department has placed mobile radars at locations with high risk of speeding which has helped reduce the number of accidents.

Brigadier Mohammed Saad Al Kharji, Director of the General Directorate of Traffic, said, in an earlier interview with this daily that the Department is working to increase the number of radars and distances between two radars will become 2.5km from existing 5km after the execution of plan because it is more effective in reducing speed violations.



Qatar-India defence ties reviewed

Chief of Staff of Qatari Armed Forces Lieutenant General (Pilot) H E Ghanim bin Shaheen Al Ghanim met yesterday with Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of Staff of the Army and Commander of the Indian Navy. They discussed relations between the two friendly countries in the defence, and means of enhancing and developing them. The meeting was attended by Ambassador of Qatar to India, Mohammed bin Khater Al Khater, and a number of senior officers of the Qatari armed forces.

Goal achieved to provide sanitation services to all

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Al Kuwari pointed to the efforts of the State of Qatar in achieving water and food security through the strategy of integrated water management, water recycling and use in a number of purposes such as central cooling of the areas as an alternative to drinking water in accordance with the decisions of the Permanent Water Resources Strategy Committee.

The conference, organised by the Government of Tajikistan in cooperation with the United Nations (UN) and a number of partners, aims to continue and enrich the debate on the high-level launch event of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028" held on March 22 in New York. It discusses ways in which the Member States, relevant UN bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations of the UN system, as well as relevant partners, including the private sector, can contribute to support the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan.

The conference also discusses the importance of monitoring, financing, capacity development, innovation, technology, knowledge, information, and data, as well as best practices and promoting partnership to implement those objectives.

More than 1,000 participants from 100 countries, including heads of state, government, ministers, senior officials, UN agencies representatives, international and regional organisations, international financial institutions, business communities, non-governmental organizations and civil society, and selected scientists and experts in this field are participating in the conference, which seeks to implement water goals and targets.

The conference will deepen the understanding of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028", promote integrated water resources management and stimulate actions to support the implementation of sustainable water-related sustainable development goals.

It also aims to mobilise the efforts of governments, UN agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as other parties at all levels, to implement the Decade for Action to achieve internationally agreed water goals to ensure greater emphasis on integrated water resources management to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan and create a solid platform for coordinated and integrated actions aimed at promoting sustainable water resource management.

Qatar backs role of youth in humanitarian work at UN

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar and Denmark, in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office on Youth, organised a special session at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to launch the report of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action under the title "Igniting Hope" which documents some innovative programming that puts the rights and needs of young people in front and centre stage and provides testimony on the ongoing transformation within member organisations of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action.

In a speech at the session, which was organised at the initiative of the Permanent Delegation of Qatar to the United Nations and the Permanent Delegation of Denmark, Executive Director of Reach Out To Asia (ROTA), Essa Al Mannai, said that Qatar strongly believes in the importance of engaging young people in humanitarian work and in their pivotal role in drawing up prospects for their future, QNA reported.

He said that Qatar's commitment to communicating with young people and enabling them to become agents of positive change is back to the International Summit hosted by the State of Qatar in 2015, which resulted in the Doha declaration on the formation of youth participation in Humanitarian Action, and was adopted by the Istanbul Summit in 2016.

Al Mannai also stressed that addressing the many challenges faced by young people is one of the priorities of Qatar's national, regional and international policy.

In this context, he referred to the State of Qatar's participation in sponsoring the first international conference on youth participation in peace operations to be held at the beginning of 2019 in Helsinki. Executive Director of ROTA, as a member of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, also reviewed ROTA initiatives launched to enhance the capacities and skills of young people in volunteer humanitarian work in the Middle East and Asia.



QFC aims social welfare from its charity treasure hunt



THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC), one of the world's leading and fastest-growing onshore business and financial centres, is to organise Qatar's first charity treasure hunt 'Hand in Hand Treasure Hunt' at Aspire Dome, Aspire Zone on June 28 from 4pm to 8pm.

The treasure hunt event is open to all members of the community, and families of all ages are invited to join, as they work in teams to follow clues in search of gifts hidden throughout Aspire Dome. Participants will also have the chance to leave their hand-print on a communal white board to signify the endless possibilities that result from working hand in hand.

Tickets can be purchased from any Virgin Megastore branch or from their website, and all ticket proceeds will contribute toward purchasing schools supplies and gifts for children at the Qatar Orphan Foundation 'Dreama'.

The initiative comes as a continuation of the wonderful spirit of giving fostered throughout the holy month of Ramadan, and encourages all members of the community to come together to engage in an entertaining treasure hunt that serves a great cause.

The 'Hand in Hand' initiative comes as part of QFC's CSR and Social Investment strategy 'United for Good', which focuses on two main pillars, youth & education and community development. 'Hand in Hand' is a partnership between the Qatar Financial Centre, Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre, Qatar Finance and Business Academy, Aspire Zone, Adventure Rooms, Build-a-Bear Workshop and Virgin Megastores.

Sarah Al Dorani **(pictured)**, Acting Chief Marketing & Corporate Communications Officer, QFC Authority, stated: "The QFC's Ramadan initiatives encourage us all to stand together as one family and one community, and this spirit motivates us as individuals and as a society." Al-Dorani continued: "We are excited and honoured to organise this inspirational treasure hunt initiative, which will bring us together as a community, and encourage us all to contribute to the welfare of our society while spending a joyous time with our family and friends".

The Qatar Financial Centre Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Investment strategy underscores its commitment to its ethical, social and environmental responsibilities. One of the CSR's main pillars at QFC is community development that entails focusing on the inclusion of all members of society. QFC's CSR and social investment strategy also focuses on youth and education to help build a new generation of leaders.



The staff of Radio Olive 106.3 FM & Radio Suno 91.7 FM with HMC officials during the campaign.

Blood donation drive by Radio Olive, Radio Suno & HMC

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: During the holy month of Ramadan, Radio Olive 106.3 FM & Radio Suno 91.7 FM, under their corporate social responsibility, worked with Blood Donor Centre — Hamad Medical Corporation, for Blood Donation Campaign 2018.

Both the radio stations raised awareness regarding the importance of blood donation and how it can save lives of others. Hundreds of Radio Olive & Radio Suno fans responded positively towards the campaign and registered as donors.

Radio Olive & Radio Suno Director, Ameer Ali, handed over the list of the blood donors to the Blood Donor Centre team of Hamad Medical Corporation on the occasion of World Blood Donor Day alongside Radio Olive Station Head, Aniruddha Pawade and the Radio hosts RJ Priyanka and RJ Harsha.

Listeners can tune in to Radio Olive 106.3 FM for Hindi music and Radio Suno 91.7 FM for the South Indian languages. Or log on to www.olive.qa and www.suno.qa for live streaming. Radio is visual now through Ooredoo TV and Ooredoo App on channel numbers 911 and 910.

Hyatt Plaza delights families with several activities during Eid

THE PENINSULA



Artistes perform during the Eid celebrations at Hyatt Plaza.

DOHA: As part of Eid Al Fitr celebrations and Qatar Summer Festival 2018, Hyatt Plaza in collaboration with Qatar Tourism Authority organised a wide range of activities and programmes including stage shows and roaming acts which were aimed to draw joy and smile on the faces of Qatar residents as well as tourists through the five days of Eid Al Fitr.

The Eid exclusive stage show "The Jungle Man" at Hyatt Plaza attracted children and their families by interacting with its shows and activities through attending it daily. It was apparent from the number of audience of about 5,000 persons daily attending during Eid days to watch this show.

The Jungle Man show was held from 1st to 5th of Eid days, between 5pm and 10pm daily. Moreover, it included not only the shows, but also games, and meet & greet sessions which is presented by professional team of actors. Kids and parents expressed their consent and admiration in Eid celebrations in general and especially in "The Jungle Man" shows. Noor Abdullah, a school student said, "I am happy to attend The Jungle Man shows and I feel really excited while watching this kind of stories live on stage. Moreover, I have participated in the games and I got the chance to take some pictures with the jungle man and his friends".

In addition, Hyatt Plaza hosted daily international roaming shows during the five days of Eid such as Qatar Traditional Dance, Disney Princesses, Beauty & The Beast Adventure, Madagascar and The Fluffy Bears.



QIB's 2018 World Cup winners to leave for Russia next month

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The 2018 FIFA World Cup package winners, who were selected by Qatar Islamic Bank, Qatar's leading Islamic Bank, courtesy of Visa, will leave for Russia next month to experience the thrills and excitement of the FIFA World Cup semi-finals on July 10.

The five lucky winners received their prizes last week at QIB's headquarters at Banks Street in the presence of Bank's representatives.

The campaign, which lasted over three months, resulted in a total of five winners who have all received a fully paid package to fly to Russia and attend the 2018 FIFA World Cup semi-final match, along with one companion of their choice. These 10 fully paid packages include the airfare cost, deluxe accommodation, tickets for a 2018 FIFA World Cup semi-final match with pre-match hospitality, and a guided tour to the beautiful city of Saint Petersburg, courtesy of Visa.

D Anand, QIB's General Manager, Personal Banking Group, said, "We are pleased to have five QIB customers participate in 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia. This year's World Cup is very special as it marks the last stop before landing in Qatar in 2022." He added, "Football has always been a passion for people in Qatar and this region, and there is no doubt that the FIFA World Cup is the biggest, most anticipated football event in the world".



The winners of QIB's 2018 FIFA World Cup package receive prizes from officials at QIB's headquarters in Bank Street.



The Ambassador of Portugal, António Tânger; Stuart Elder, CEO of Mall of Qatar; and other officials during the inauguration of the Portugal Week.

Unique live performances to mark Portugal Week at MoQ

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Embassy of Portugal in Doha, in partnership with Mall of Qatar and Al Tawfeeq Travel, brings for the first time in Doha, the Portugal Week that began yesterday and will continue until June 25 with a series of activities including unique live performances.

Inaugurated by Ambassador of Portugal, António Tânger, the Portugal Week will delight Mall of Qatar's visitors with one of the most famous Portuguese bands: 7 Saias. From June 20 until 24 7 Saias will perform 3 times a day at 2:30pm, 5:30pm and 8:30pm on the Ooredoo stage.

Throughout their 8 years of existence and after having released six albums they have enchanted Portugal and international audiences with their traditional instruments and joy, promising a taste of Portugal at each show.

Packed with activities and surprises for all the family to enjoy, the cultural booth located East Gate 3 will give visitors an array of information about the country's best destinations, tours and visas procedures.

"We look forward to see you there to celebrate together a world of culture and entertainment!" said the Ambassador of Portugal, António Tânger.

Also, football fans will be able to get in the spirit by watching the Portugal matches with Morocco and Iran from Mall of Qatar's very own fan zone, sponsored by QNB and QIC, live on the giant LED screens at the Ooredoo Oasis Stage.

"We are delighted to be working with The Embassy of Portugal and Al Tawfeeq travel on this new and unique event. We can't wait for our shoppers to enjoy these authentic Portuguese experiences and visit on this occasion our Portuguese retailers: Sacoor Brothers, Nando's, Parfois and Salsa," added Stuart Elder, CEO of Mall of Qatar.



A performance during the event.

QSE to launch incentives for investors

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Al Mansoori said Qatar has a strong and diversified investment climate supported by a package of financial and regulatory laws that make in the forefront of these markets. he added that the Qatari market is qualified to achieve significant growth rates in this sector, especially after the entry of international investors.

Al Mansoori pointed out that the launch of the first ETF in the Qatar Exchange was aimed at following up the investment results of the prices of Qatar Exchange index by investing in the basic components based on individual weights in the index, which benefit the investor.

He added that the other index listed on QSE, Al Rayan Qatar ETF (QATR), aims to track the investment results of QSE Al Rayan Islamic price index.

In order to boost the attractiveness of investment in the stock market, the QE urged listed companies to raise foreign ownership limits in their shares to 49 percent instead of 25 percent, to which many of the largest companies responded, led by the subsidiaries of Qatar Petroleum which announced at the end of March that it approved raising the non-Qatari ownership limit in the energy sector companies and in its subsidiaries listed on the Qatar stock Exchange to 49 percent, and raising the shareholder ownership limits in these companies to no more than 2 percent.

Qatar Electricity and Water Company, Qatar Fuel Company (WOQOD), Gulf International Services Company and Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding Company, all listed companies, have taken the necessary measures in accordance with the applicable regulations and procedures to approve the increase in the non-Qatari ownership limit to 49 percent. The latest of which was WOQOD's approval at its extraordinary general assembly meeting to increase foreign ownership limit to 49 percent.

Al Mansouri said that recent decisions by the listed companies to raise foreign ownership limits have had a positive impact on the performance of the market, especially with the expectation of attracting new foreign liquidity in view of the important role of these shares in term of financial performance, growth and profitability as well as targeting the foreign portfolios of those shares because of their advantages.

He pointed out that these decisions represented a positive step as they enhanced the presence of foreign capital in the Qatari stock exchange and increased the inflows of foreign investment in the stock exchange. They also raised the level of liquidity and revived the level of trading, he said.

They also showed that raising foreign ownership limit to 49 percent comes within the context of promoting and developing the Qatari stock market and broadening the base of economic openness, which will positively affect listed companies, the market and investors, he said, pointing out that he increase in ownership has been a long-standing demand for investors and foreign portfolios, and its implementation has enhanced the presence of foreign investment.

Commenting on the outcomes of this step, he said as energy companies are considered to be well-positioned, the decision to raise the non-Qatari ownership limit in the energy firms listed on Qatar Exchange has been timely in terms of economic growth in Qatar as well as in terms of expanded economic activities in the fields of agriculture, industry and others.

He stressed that this step came in light of the growing strength and soundness of the national economy in which the Qatari energy industry plays a key role, pointing out that these decisions support the openness of the Qatari economy and make it more competitive and fastest growing in the region.

Qatar Exchange's efforts went beyond trying to introduce new investment products and developing the existing ones to support and develop a number of family businesses to become public shareholding companies to ensure the continuity of these companies and to open new horizons for them.

For this purpose, the Qatar Exchange held several seminars to raise awareness about the importance of transforming family businesses into joint stock companies in the interest of these companies and the national economy, at the same time the QE is also seeking to launch a trading platform for small and medium enterprises, which will provide a good opportunity to list those types of companies and work to inject new capital into the stock exchange by trading their shares.

The importance of listing private and family companies in the stock exchange, he added, stems from the economic influence of these companies in large number of vital sectors in Qatar, pointing that the transformation of family companies into public shareholding companies boost the effectiveness of the economy in general, which reflect positively on the local economy through the establishment of standards and regulations for family businesses that represent a real addition to the national economy.



THE PENINSULA

Wellcare Group offers better service with 'Purple Rewards'

DOHA: Wellcare Group recently celebrated their 18th anniversary as Wellcare Day 2018, at Regency Halls, Al Hilal.

During the event "Purple Rewards", was launched by Wellcare Group. Purple rewards, which would be a first in Qatar, comprehensively allows the customers and pharmacists in Wellcare Pharmacies to keep track of medicines, interactions, refills, SMS reminders, loyalty points and many more benefits.

In this new pharma-technology feature in Qatar, the customers will get advance messages on their mobile phones or email, about the chronic medication refilling, product information, medication management follow-up and on special offers for loyal customers. SMS reminders will be very useful for those who are taking chronic medication (eg: for diabetes, high blood pressure), as they will receive an alert message in mobile and email three days ahead of finishing their medication and Wellcare pharamcies could initiate insurance coverage procedure.

The chief guest of the function was Ambassador of India to Qatar, P Kumaran (pictured), who inaugurated the function. The other guest of honour present was Ambassador of Canada to Qatar, Adrian Norfolk. The "Wellcare Day" is an annual event celebrating the culmination of sports and cultural activities within the employees and their family, which would also had respectable invitees from friendly business groups, Ministry of Public Health, Qatar University, ICBF and Academic Institutions.

The invitees were welcomed by S K Vyas, Manager-Pharmacy Academics, Wellcare Group.

The Chairman of Wellcare Group, Mukthar, in his speech attributed the success of the organisation to the people of Qatar, President of Wellcare Group, Shiekh Abdullah A A Al Thani, then to the employees of Wellcare and ultimately to the blessings of the Almighty. Mukthar also welcomed the presence of Sheikh Abdullah A A Al Thani on the occasion. Mukthar, Ashraf and Dr. Sameer, CEO of Aster-Qatar launched the "Purple rewards" for the benefit of all the Qatar residents.

In the Managing Directors' address, Ashraf K P, emphasised the importance of social service and commitments above business models. In the presentation on the evolution of Wellcare,

The Ambassador of Canada to Qatar, Adrian Norfolk, and Audra Renyi, CEO of earAccess, spoke at the event.

The felicitation speeches were made by Dr Izzam Eldin, Dr. Mohammed Izham, Professor-College of Pharmacy Qatar University, Norman Wong, Lead Instructor, Pharmacy Program-College of North Atlantic Qatar, Niveditha, Indian community Benevolent Fund, Fahim of Topnotch Division, who all lauded the contribution Wellcare in their area of professional activity.

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Qatar Fan Zone welcomes more than 18,000 fans

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Qatar Fan Zone has been giving passionate fans the chance to sample a World Cup atmosphere four years before Qatar hosts the biggest show on earth, while celebrating the rich culture of sports in Qatar, as the country gets ever closer to hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. It is one of three fan zones being organised by the SC during the 2018 FIFA World Cup, with others being held at Katara and Hamad International Airport.

While Qatar Fan Zone and all its entertainment offerings – including live music, family-friendly activities and football freestyler shows – are available for free, visitors have the option to upgrade their experience by booking a hospitality suite through qtickets.com. The suites are located on the second floor of the arena and offer private service courtesy of The W Doha Hotel, an exceptional view, plush furniture, board games and PlayStation.

Qatar Fan Zone is also part of this year's Qatar Summer Festival, which kicked off on the first day of Eid Al-Fitr. Organised by QTA, the 11-week festival is a nationwide celebration of the country's diverse retail and hospitality offerings, complemented by a host of entertainment and sports activities.

The fan zone is open daily from 2PM until midnight until June 28, and will be open from 4PM until midnight between June 30 and July 15. Operating on match days only, it is powered by Vodafone Qatar as the official telecommunications partner and supported by The W Doha Hotel & Residences, the official hospitality partner. Follow us on SC (@roadto2022) and Qatar Calendar (@QatarCalendar) on social media.

Abuses rampant in prisons controlled by UAE in Yemen

AP

CAIRO: The torturers followed a schedule. Beatings on Saturdays, torture on Sundays, and Monday was a break. The next three days were the same routine. On Fridays, it was time for solitary confinement.

From inside a Yemeni prison controlled by the United Arab Emirates — a Yemeni detainee held without charges chronicled torture and physical abuses through drawings. Smuggled to The Associated Press from the Beir Ahmed prison in the southern city of Aden, the drawings offer a grim glimpse into a hidden world of flagrant human rights abuses by UAE officers acting with impunity.

Sexual violence is a primary tool aimed at brutalizing the detainees and extracting "confessions," the artist and six other detainees said.

The drawings — made on plastic plates — show a man hanging naked from chains while he is being subjected to electric shocks, another inmate on the floor surrounded by snarling dogs as several people kick him, and other graphic depictions.

"The worst thing about it is that I wish for death every day and I can't find it," the artist said, summing up nearly two years in detention that started last year after he spoke against the Emiratis in public.

The UAE's secret prisons and widespread torture were exposed by an investigation last June. The AP has since identified at least five prisons where security forces use sexual torture to brutalise and break inmates.

From inside a Yemeni prison controlled by the United Arab Emirates — a Yemeni detainee held without charges chronicled torture and physical abuses through drawings.

Emiratis have swept up hundreds of Yemeni men on suspicion of being Al-Qaida or Islamic State militants. The prisoners are held in at least 18 hidden prisons without charges or trials.

Witnesses said Yemeni guards working under the direction of Emirati officers use various methods of torture and humiliation. They rape detainees while filming the assaults. They subject prisoners to electric shocks. "They strip you naked, then tie your hands to a steel pole from the right and the left so you are spread open in front of them," said one father of four who has been in detention for more than two years and who, like other detainees, spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

A former security chief who was involved in torturing to extract confessions said that abuse is used as a way to force detainees to cooperate with the Emiratis in spying.

American officials confirmed last year that the US has interrogated some detainees at the secret prisons run by the UAE. The Pentagon has insisted that it had no knowledge of human rights abuses. Obtaining intelligence extracted by torture would violate international law.

The AP first asked the Pentagon about grave rights abuses committed by the UAE, its partner, one year ago. But despite well-documented reports of UAE involvement in torture by the AP, human rights groups and even the United Nations, Marine Maj. Adrian Rankine-Galloway, a Pentagon spokesman, said that the US has seen no evidence of detainee abuse in Yemen.

"US forces are required to report credible allegations of detainee abuse," he said. "We have received no credible allegations that would substantiate the allegations put forth in your line of question/story." On May 24, the House of Representatives voted to require Defence Secretary Jim Mattis to investigate the scope of US involvement in UAE black sites. The language, which would still need to pass the Senate, would require the Defense Department to submit a report within 120 days to Congress.

Californian Democratic Rep. Ro Khanna, who co-sponsored the language, called the report "a shocking revelation of the ongoing human rights abuses happening in Yemen." "Now, with greater urgency than ever before, we need the Pentagon to launch an investigation and determine whether our nation has been involved in torturing prisoners in Yemen," he said.



Remains of damaged plane are seen near the airport on the outskirts of Hodeidah, yesterday.

Yemen pro-govt forces seize Hodeida airport from rebels

AFP

KHOKHA: Yemeni forces seized Hodeida airport yesterday in a major step towards retaking the rebel-held port city after a week of fighting that has left nearly 350 people dead.

Fresh clashes later erupted between UAE-backed government forces and the rebels on a road linking the airport to Hodeida port on the Red Sea coast, a Yemeni army source said. The city, a crucial entry-point for imports and humanitarian aid, is the target of a massive operation launched last week by a Saudi-led coalition fighting on the side of the government. Pro-government forces announced the capture of Hodeida airport in the morning, a day after breaking through the perimeter fence.

"The airport was completely cleared, Thank God, and is under control," the coalition commander for the Red Sea coast, Abdul Salaam Al Shehi, said.

At least 156 Huthis and 28 soldiers were killed in the fight for the airport, according to Hodeida hospital sources.

That raised the death toll in the week-old battle for the city to 348. No civilian casualties have yet been confirmed.

On June 13, Yemen's army and its allies launched their offensive to clear Hodeida of rebel fighters who have held it since 2014, raising UN concerns for vital aid shipments and food imports through the city's docks.

It lies 8km from the city's port, through which three-quarters of Yemen's imports pass, providing a lifeline for some 22 million people dependent on aid.

UN envoy Martin Griffiths held four days of talks in the rebel-held capital Sana'a in a bid to avert an all-out battle for the city but flew out on Tuesday without announcing any breakthrough.

The United Nations has warned any attack on Hodeida port could cripple shipments of desperately needed aid to the 8.4 million Yemenis facing imminent starvation.

The Norwegian Refugee Council said the fighting had already disrupted water supplies, putting people at high risk of contamination. "As of 19 June, the water supply has been disrupted in several areas and people are reportedly relying on water from mosque wells," it said in a statement.

Turkey to set up university in Syria's Al Bab

SANLIURFA: Turkey will establish an applied sciences university in liberated northern Syrian city of Al Bab, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday.

Erdogan's remarks came during his ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party's election rallies in the south-eastern province of Sanliurfa. He said an applied sciences faculty would be established in coordination with Turkey's Maarif Foundation and Harran University.

"Classes will start in September 2018," Erdogan said.

"Nearly 200,000 Syrians returned to these areas, to Jarablus and now to Afrin. And now we have made a deal with America and are making Manbij a safer area. My Arab brothers in Manbij are returning and will return to their lands," Erdogan said yesterday.



Efforts to end a five-year civil war

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir walks towards a plane at Juba Internaional Airport in Juba, South Sudan, yesterday, before travelling to Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa for meeting with the South Sudan's rebel leader Riek Machar for the first time in almost two years on efforts to end a five-year civil war.

Tunisia proposes liberal reforms

AFP

TUNIS: A Tunisian presidential commission yesterday unveiled a raft of proposed liberal reforms, including equal inheritance rights for women and decriminalising homosexuality, set to face fierce opposition from conservative Muslims.

The proposals from the commission — set up by President Beji Caid Essebsi to bring the legal code in line with a 2014 constitution — come as the North African country tries to make good on reforms promised by its revolution seven years ago.

The constitution was praised as a key achievement following the 2011 revolt that toppled longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and sparked the Arab Spring uprisings.

But the latest reforms put forward are set to face heated debate ahead of legislative and presidential elections next year, with one religious leader slamming them as "intellectual terrorism".

Among the 230 pages of proposals are suggestions to rewrite the current legislation, inspired by Islamic law, that women should inherit only half of what men get.

The commission's preference is to introduce equality between male and female relatives, but leave room for individuals to divide up what they leave behind as they see fit.

The "total abolition" of the death penalty has been put forward, as have changes to a law forcing widows to wait before remarrying.

The head of the commission Bochra Belhaj Hmida said the reforms are aimed at boosting the "well-being of every individual", insisting that "freedom is as important of bread".

Eritrea warms up to Ethiopia's move

REUTERS

ADDIS ABABA: Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki raised hopes of a breakthrough in one of Africa's most intractable military stand-offs yesterday by describing recent peace overtures from arch-enemy Ethiopia as "positive signals".

Speaking at a Martyrs' Day event in the capital, Asmara, the 72-year-old Isaias said he was sending a delegation to Addis Ababa to understand the position of Ethiopia's new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, and "chart out a plan".

It was the first response from Eritrea, one of Africa's most closed and authoritarian states, to Abiy's surprising pledge this month to honour all the terms of a peace deal that ended a 1998-2000 war between the Horn of Africa neighbours.



The main street is seen in Badme, a disputed town on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Adding to the positive mood music, Abiy's chief of staff said the prime minister welcomed Isaias's statement and promised the Eritrean delegation would be welcomed "warmly and with considerable goodwill".

The border war nearly two decades ago drew comparisons to the First World War, with waves of soldiers forced to march through minefields towards Eritrean trenches, where they were cut down by machinegun fire. As many as 80,000 are believed to have been killed in total.

Disputes over the still-militarised frontier, in particular the town of Badme, have kept the two sides at loggerheads. Asmara had used the Ethiopian threat to justify hefty military spending and the long-term conscription that has caused hundreds of thousands of young men to flee, mostly to Europe.

However, Abiy, a 41-year-old ex-soldier who has outlined a series of radical reforms since taking over in March, stunned Ethiopians this month by saying he was prepared to honour international rulings that put Badme, which Ethiopia has refused to cede, in Eritrea.

قطر للبترول
Qatar Petroleum

The Limited and General Tenders Committee requests Tenders for the following works / services:

Important Notice: Suppliers and Contractors who are already registered with QP via e-Registration system and are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QP can "Buy Tender Online and download Tender Document" from QP website.Effective 1st February 2016, payment of Tender Fee by Cash and Manual collection of Tender Document is discontinued.

SL. NO.	TENDER NO.	TENDER SALE PERIOD		TENDER CLOSING DATE	TENDER BOND	BOND CURR.	TENDER FEE	FEE CURR.
		START DATE	END DATE					
1	GT18103800	24.06.2018	28.06.2018	05.08.2018	1800,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR

Title of Work: PAINTING, INSULATION, VINYL ESTER WRAPPING SERVICES ON CALL-OFF BASIS

Mid-Tender Meeting Location : Contracts Department, Room# 2115-C, Block-C, Jinnan Conf. Room

Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : 05.07.2018 at 10:00:00

- Tender documents can be purchased and downloaded from QP Website (https://www.eservices.qp.qa/iVtenders) during the Tender Sale Period mentioned above against each Tender. Request for issuance of Tender after the specified Tender Sale Period will not be entertained.
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- Changes to Tender Sale Period and Bid Closing Date will be updated in QP website only.
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- QP invites all prospective Contractors interested to participate in QP Tenders to register online (**vereg.qp.qa/ereg/Welcome.do**) and obtain a QP SAP Vendor Code, a mandatory requirement for the issue of Tender Documents by QP. Suppliers and Contractors who are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QP but not registered via QP e-Registration system are instructed to complete the e-Registration on urgent basis.
- No queries will be entertained, or bids received, from entities who have not purchased tender documents in compliance with the above provisions.

Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir

AP

SRINAGAR: India's federal government took direct control of Kashmir state yesterday after the ruling Hindu nationalist party ended its long-troubled alliance there with a Kashmiri political party.

The shift to direct rule in the disputed region was approved after the Bharatiya Janata Party withdrew its support on Tuesday for the People's Democratic Party, following years of feuding and a deteriorating security situation. The BJP also heads the central government, and officials say Prime Minister Narendra Modi was involved in the decision to withdraw from the coalition.

Political decisions will now be made by the government in New Delhi, though day-to-day life is unlikely to change significantly for the people of Kashmir.

State elections are scheduled for 2020, but a vote could be called before then.

The coalition government was formed in 2015 after extended and difficult negotiations, since the two parties hold diametrically opposed views on many major issues, including the law that exempts Indian military personnel from criminal prosecution in the violence-wracked Himalayan region. The People's Democratic Party wants the draconian law scrapped. The BJP supports it. The BJP has consistently advocated a tough government approach in Kashmir while the People's Democratic Party favors reconciliation and dialogue.

The coalition marked the first time that the Hindu nationalist BJP held a leadership position in the Muslim-majority region.

Mehbooba Mufti, the president of the People's Democratic Party and the state's top official, resigned after the BJP withdrew its support, paving the way for direct rule.

She told reporters that the alliance had been cobbled together "although this was against the sentiments of the people."

"Our aim was reconciliation and dialogue," she said, adding that politicians had hoped the alliance with Modi's party would "help in bringing out the state from its situation of turmoil."

Other pro-India political parties said the alliance was bound to collapse, given the two parties' different political ideologies.

"And so it has come to pass," former chief minister and opposition leader Omar Abdullah said in a tweet, blaming both parties for the security situation.

Separatists who challenge India's sovereignty over Kashmir did not immediately comment on the political developments, though in the past their leaders have consistently ridiculed pro-India politicians as collaborators.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over Kashmir, which is divided between the neighbors but claimed by both in its entirety.

Governor's rule not to affect anti-terror operations: Army chief

IANS

NEW DELHI: The imposition of Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir will not affect anti-terror operations, Army chief General Bipin Rawat said yesterday and noted that there was no political interference.

"We only stopped our operations during Ramadan. But we saw what happened. The terrorists continued with their actions," General Rawat said on the sidelines of an event here.

"The imposition of Governor's rule will not affect our operations. Our operations will go on like they used to. We don't face any political interference," he said.

Governor's rule has been imposed in Jammu and Kashmir following recommendation of Governor N N Vohra. The BJP had on Tuesday pulled out of the alliance government in the state with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The Centre had earlier this month decided not to extend its unilateral initiative, declared on May 16, to coincide with the holy month as terrorist activities continued in the Kashmir Valley.

BJP's withdrawal from the alliance came two days after the government decided against extending the ceasefire.

The party had cited citing growing terror activities and radicalisation in the Kashmir Valley as among reasons for its decision.



Indian President in Suriname

India's President Ram Nath Kovind (left) and Suriname President Desi Bouterse participate in a ceremony at the Baba & Mai monument which represents the first arrival of Indian indentured labours 145 years ago, in Paramaribo, Suriname, yesterday.

Red Corner Notice against Nirav Modi soon: CBI

IANS

NEW DELHI: The Interpol will soon issue a Red Corner Notice (RCN) against diamond jeweller Nirav Modi, who is one of the accused in the Rs135bn Punjab National Bank fraud, officials said yesterday.

A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) official said that "we have expedited the process to issue a RCN against Nirav Modi" as it has been known that he travelled to multiple countries between February 10 and March 31 on revoked Indian passport. The official said that the Interpol is likely to issue the RCN within a week.

The CBI officials said that a June 5 letter, shared by Britain, revealed that the fugitive businessman travelled from US' John F. Kennedy International Airport to Britain's Heathrow Airport on February 10, from Frank Pais Airport in Cuba to Heathrow on February 15, from Heathrow to Hong Kong International Airport on March 15, from there back to Heathrow on March 28 and from Heathrow to Charles de Gaulle Airport in France on March 31.

On June 11, the CBI approached the Interpol to issue a RCN against Nirav Modi. On June 13, it again approached the Interpol to issue a RCN against Nirav Modi's brother Nishal, who is a Belgian national, and his executive Subhash Parab.

The CBI sent the request to the Interpol after it filed the first chargesheet naming Nirav Modi, Nishal and Parab beside 18 others in a special court in Mumbai on May 14.

The CBI filed three FIRs between January and March to probe the PNB fraud. Most of the accused are common to these cases. The fraud was committed during 2011-17 by illegally issuing Letters of Undertaking (LoUs) and Foreign Letters of Credit (FLCs).

In its first chargesheet, the CBI alleged that Nirav Modi, through his companies, siphoned off funds to the tune of Rs 6,498.20 crore using fraudulent LoUs issued from PNB's Brady House branch in Mumbai. Meanwhile, his uncle Mehul Choksi allegedly swindled Rs 7,080.86 crore.

Nirav Modi left the country along with his family in the first week of January.

A R Rahman is Sikkim's brand ambassador

GANGTOK: Famed Indian composer and singer-songwriter A R Rahman has been appointed the brand ambassador of the Sikkim government, a senior minister said.

"We have appointed Rahman as the state government's brand ambassador for a year," Sikkim Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation and Commerce and Industries Ugen T Gyatso, said.

As the government's brand ambassador, Rahman would keep coming to the Himalayan state from time to time and promote it, said the Minister.

The 51-year-old music producer, who has in his kitty two Academy and two Grammy Awards, is now in Sikkim. "He will leave today," the Minister said.



UN's Myanmar envoy visits border town

UN Special Envoy to Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener (Centre, in grey shirt), accompanied by local officials, visiting Maungdaw district on the border of Bangladesh. The UN inked a deal with Myanmar on June 6, which would give it access to the epicentre of the Rohingya crisis, but provided few details on how the agreement would jumpstart stalled repatriation plans on the 700,000 people who fled over the border from Myanmar to Bangladesh after military launched crackdown on Rohingyas.

No alliance in Andhra: Congress

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: The Congress yesterday said it will not tie up with any party in Andhra Pradesh for the state assembly polls and general elections next year. People of the state were not happy with the ruling dispensation (Telegu Desam Party) on the issue of special status, said Congress in charge for Andhra Pradesh Oommen Chandy after meeting party President Rahul Gandhi.

"The BJP and the TDP cheated the people of Andhra Pradesh on the issue of special status to the state. We have no intention to have alliance with any of the parties. Our alliance is only with the people of the state," Chandy told reporters.

Rahul Gandhi met Congress leaders from the state and discussed ways to strengthen the party in the state where it currently has no legislator. Chandy later said Gandhi interacted with 25 party leaders from Andhra Pradesh and also had one to one meetings with all leaders and got their views.

"We discussed the problems of the state. Congress party in Andhra Pradesh has already started the process to strengthen the party in the state. The party leaders also gave their suggestions to strengthen the party in the state. We prepared an action plan for next four months to strengthen the party i.e., from PCC level to the booth level re-organisation. We have finalised the programme," he told reporters later. The former Kerala chief minister said he will go to every district and spend a day. He said in the first phase he will visit eight districts and spend another five days in the second phase.

In prison-like tents, Rohingya girls dream of school

REUTERS

NEW DELHI: Trapped inside "prison-like" tents in Bangladesh's refugee camps because of fears they will be trafficked or sexually harassed, teenage Rohingya girls dream of going to school and playing outside, aid agencies said yesterday.

Adolescent girls are confined to one-room bamboo and tarpaulin tents so as to avoid men, only venturing out in the early hours to relieve themselves, the children's charity Plan International said on World Refugee Day.

"They spend almost every hour of every day inside their sweltering tents, where the only activities they have to keep themselves occupied are cooking and cleaning," said Orla Murphy, Plan International's bangladesh director.

"There is a real hunger for social interaction, the feeling of normality," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The number of Rohingya in camps in Cox's Bazar has swelled to almost 1 million since last August, when an army operation in Myanmar following Rohingya insurgents' attacks on security forces prompted an exodus to bangladesh.

With the start of the monsoon season, the government is working to relocate tens of thousands of people amid fears of landslides and waterborne diseases.

Plan International interviewed 300 girls aged between 10 and 19, many of whom said they have little or no freedom to go outside and they only spend time with their families, reminiscing about happier times back home in Myanmar.

"In Myanmar if I wanted to play, I could, but I cannot play here," 11-year-old Noor told Plan International in a report that described adolescent girls' lives as 'prison-like'.

"I had friends and went to school. I was really interested to learn English and tailoring. But there is no school here."

Children's charities only run temporary "learning centres" for some refugee children up to the age of 14 because bangladesh does not allow formal schooling in the camps.

With a growing number of Rohinyga refugees being sold to older men as child brides by human traffickers, and widespread domestic abuse, rights groups called for more services to protect girls, from education and security to toilets.

"They become susceptible - sex tourism thrives here," said Nafeesa Shamsuddin, a spokeswoman for bangladesh's BRAC charity. "Pimps target these vulnerable girls."

While younger girls can be seen hauling bags of grains and firewood, fetching water or looking after babies, they are forced into isolation when they reach puberty, said Daphnee Cook, a spokeswoman for the British charity Save the Children.

"Many childhoods end around this age," she said.

"The perception is that these girls are now women and will face more risks."

Delhi CM Kejriwal unwell, to go to Bengaluru

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who ended his nine-day long sit-in at Lt. Governor Anil Baijal's office on Tuesday, cancelled all his scheduled meetings yesterday as he was not feeling well.

Kejriwal, a diabetic, was suffering from high sugar levels for the past few days.

The Aam Aadmi Party leader will leave for Bengaluru today to undergo a 10-day naturopathy treatment for diabetes, party sources said.

Kim leaves China as S Korea urges concrete nukes plan

AP

BEIJING: South Korea urged North Korea yesterday to present a plan with concrete steps toward denuclearization, raising the pressure on its leader Kim Jong-Un as he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in a visit designed to convey the countries' growing closeness.

Kim and Xi held a second day of talks at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, whose grounds China's official *Xinhua* described in unusually lyrical terms as being full of "verdant greenery and splendid flowers," adding to what the propaganda outlet said was the "close and friendly atmosphere" of the talks.

The pomp and circumstance looked geared toward showing off the major improvement in relations between the communist neighbors, along with China's important role in keeping North Korea on track. But it cast no new light on the main question that hangs over the previously reclusive North Korean leader's surge in diplomatic activity in recent months: What next steps, if any, will Kim take to dismantle his country's nuclear program?

At his summit with US President Donald Trump last week in Singapore, Kim pledged to work toward denuclearization in exchange for US security guarantees. The US and South Korea also suspended a major joint military exercise that was planned for August in what was seen as a major victory for North Korea and its chief allies, China and Russia.

Chinese state media quoted Xi as hailing the warming friendship with Kim but included no mention of any specific discussions on making progress on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Xi said China is pleased that "the momentum for dialogue and easing of situation on the Korean Peninsula has been effectively strengthened," according to *Xinhua*.

In Seoul, South Korean President Moon Jae-in urged North Korea to present actionable plans on how it will scrap its nuclear program, and for the United States to swiftly take unspecified corresponding measures.

"It's necessary for North Korea to present far more concrete denuclearization plans, and I think it's necessary for the United States to swiftly reciprocate by coming up with comprehensive measures," Moon said. Moon's office said he made the remarks to Russian media ahead of his trip to Moscow later this week.

Moon, who has met with Kim twice in recent months, said the North Korean leader is willing to give up his nuclear program and focus on economic development if he's provided with a reliable security guarantee. Moon described Kim as "forthright," "careful" and "polite."

China backs the North's call for a "phased and synchronous" approach to denuclearization, as opposed to Washington's demand for an instant, total and irreversible end to the North's nuclear programs.

Accompanied by an elaborate escort of motorcycles and black sedans, Kim left for Pyongyang later in the day, ending his third visit to China this year. State television showed Kim visiting an agricultural technology park and rail traffic control center in Beijing, accompanied by Beijing's top official, Cai Qi. Kim's motorcade had earlier been seen leaving the North Korean Embassy on Wednesday afternoon as police closed off major roads and intersections in central Beijing. Gawking pedestrians watched the passing motorcade that included Kim's limousine – a black Mercedes-Benz Maybach with gold emblems on the rear doors.

A report by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim told Xi at a welcoming banquet on Tuesday that North Korea-China ties are developing into "unprecedentedly special relations."

China has touted the prospects of more trade and investment if North Korea makes progress in talks on abandoning its nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju walk upon arrival in Beijing, China.

N Korea scraps anti-American souvenirs

REUTERS

SEOUL: In the wake of Kim Jong Un's summit with U.S. President Donald Trump, anti-American souvenirs once sold on the North Korean side of the Demilitarized Zone have disappeared from gift shop shelves, Western tour operators say.

Among more generic gifts like ginseng, a North Korean shop on the tourist route to the fortified border between the two Koreas usually sold stamps, postcards and other souvenirs attacking the United States.

"They're always very popular, not very subtle, and, as of now, have all been removed," said Simon Cockerell, general manager at Koryo Tours. Staff were unlikely to remove the items unless instructed, he said, and the removal follows Kim's declaration of an end to testing of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles while focusing on developing North Korea's economy.

It's the latest sign of a change in tone by Pyongyang, where tour operators said in May anti-American posters had mostly given way to less political messages.

Kim met Trump in Singapore on June 12, amid a flurry of diplomatic activity by the reclusive North Korean leader.

They signed a statement that was light on details, but agreed to work to establish "new" ties with each other. The two nations' enmity dates from the 1950-1953 Korean War that killed hundreds of thousands and devastated the Korean peninsula.

As one of the most visible legacies of the war, the DMZ has become a tourist attraction in both North and South Korea.

"We had a group go down to the DMZ from Pyongyang three days after the summit held in Singapore where we noticed the change in what was being sold to tourists at the gift shop," said Rowan Beard, a tour manager at Young Pioneer Tours.

"They've shifted the focus from anti-Americanism to improving agriculture, sports and boosting the local economy."

30 Afghan security forces dead in Taliban attacks

HERAT, AFGHANISTAN: Taliban fighters killed around 30 Afghan security forces in multiple attacks in western Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, in the deadliest clashes since the militant group ended its ceasefire.

Militants stormed at least two bases belonging to government forces in Badghis province overnight and ambushed a convoy of reinforcements. Officials said the group may have used the three-day truce, that ended Sunday, to plan the attacks.

"More than half of the fatalities came from the ambush and roadside bomb blasts that hit a reinforcement convoy," provincial governor Abdul Qhafoor Malikzai told AFP.

The other soldiers and police were killed when militants raided their bases, Qhafoor added. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attacks in a WhatsApp message to journalists.

Provincial council chief Abdul Aziz Bek confirmed the death toll and accused the Taliban of taking advantage of the suspension in fighting to do reconnaissance in the area.

"During the ceasefire the Taliban had sent informants to collect information about the bases and plan the attack," he said. Badghis governor spokesman Jamshid Shahabi said that 15 Taliban fighters were also killed and 21 wounded in the attacks on two bases in Bala Murghab district. The defence ministry issued a statement saying fighting in the area continued as the Taliban faced "stiff resistance" from Afghan security forces.

Further reinforcements had been deployed, the statement said.

It appeared to be the deadliest fighting since the Taliban returned to the battlefield on Monday after refusing a government request to extend their unprecedented three-day ceasefire. President Ashraf Ghani announced over the weekend that the government's eight-day ceasefire, which had been scheduled to expire on Tuesday, would be prolonged for another 10 days.

The first formal nationwide ceasefire since the 2001 US-led invasion had sparked extraordinary scenes of Taliban fighters, security forces and civilians happily celebrating the Eid al-Fitr holiday together.



Afghan refugees seen at a refugee camp in a slum dwelling neighbourhood on the outskirts of Islamabad yesterday. About 1.4 million refugees escaping from Afghanistan due to terror and occupation, are taking shelter in Pakistan.

Zardari owns six bullet-proof vehicles

INTERNEWS

ISLAMABAD: In what is ample testimony of the lavish lifestyle of the country's politicians, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP-P) chief Asif Ali Zardari uses six bullet-proof luxury vehicles, owns thousands of acres of agricultural land and property in Dubai and has spent millions of rupees on his passion for arms, horses and livestock.

According to details of his assets submitted with his nomination papers, he has a United Arab Emirates Iqama and owns over a dozen properties in Pakistan, besides his share in five properties inherited from his slain spouse Benazir Bhutto.

But contrary to the claims of his political opponents and media reports that he owns palaces in France and Dubai and properties in other countries, including the United Kingdom, he has declared that he owns just a single property outside Pakistan an open plot in the Al-Safa Second area of Dubai, purchased at some unspecified time for an amount equivalent to around Rs100 million.

The total value of his assets comes to around Rs758.66m – almost half of that owned by his son Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari.

Asif Zardari owns three Toyota Land Cruisers, two BMWs and one Toyota Lexus – all bullet-proof. The cost of the unspecified number of horses and cattle belonging to him has been put at Rs9.9m and he possesses arms and ammunition worth Rs16.60m.

He has shown an investment of Rs12.9m in 'Land Marks' apparently a real estate business venture and Rs890,000 in Asif apartment (Huma Heights). He has stated that he does not have any business capital outside Pakistan. While the former president has mere Rs1.07m investment in the Zardari Group (pvt) Limited and the Park Lane Estate (pvt) Limited, he has given a loan of Rs4.50m to the Zardari Group.

He holds Rs209m cash in hand, Rs89.76m deposited in the Silk Bank and Rs1,000 in the Sindh Bank's Larkana Branch.

Zardari has two properties in Clifton valued at Rs111.51m, a 2,000 square yards plot in the Defence Housing Authority, Karachi, purchased for Rs850,000 and a house in Nawabshah worth Rs22.56m.

He has numerous agricultural properties in Nawabshah, Larkana and Tando Allahyar areas apart from around 7,400 acres of farmland obtained on lease in Tando Allahyar, Matli, Badin and Nawabshah.

Unlike his father, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, chairman of the PPP, is a billionaire who owns about two dozen properties in and outside Pakistan as well as investments and bank accounts in Dubai and the UK. The young Zardari has around Rs50m cash in hand and his bank accounts hold merely Rs13.86m, including Rs1,000 in Sindh Bank's Larkana branch. He does not own any vehicle.

He too possesses a UAE Iqama, and the details provided at the time of filing nomination papers for NA-200 Larkana show the value of Bilawal House in Clifton, Karachi, at Rs3m.

Bhutto-Zardari has two villas in Dubai, one gifted and the other inherited. He has 20 residential, commercial and agricultural properties across Pakistan, mostly inherited or gifted by parents, grandfather and others.

Pakistan polls: Most candidates pass first electoral hurdle

INTERNEWS

ISLAMABAD: Returning officers yesterday completed the scrutiny process of nomination papers filed by the candidates to contest the upcoming general elections from the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

In the capital, there were three constituencies including NA-52, NA-53 and NA-54 of the federal capital.

NA-54 Returning Officer Abdul Ghafoor Kakar accepted nomination papers of 34 candidates while nomination papers of five candidates were rejected.

Similarly, NA-53 Returning Officer Muhammad Adnan rejected nomination papers of four candidates for submitting incomplete affidavits.

These candidates can file their appeals against rejection of nomination papers with the appellate tribunal.

In Rawalpindi, nomination papers of candidates of different political parties, including Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA) and Awami Muslim League (AML) were accepted.

The nomination papers of former interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, PTI's Ghulam Sarwar Khan, PML-N's Engineer Qamarul Islam and independent candidate Col (retd) Ajmal Sabir were accepted from NA-59.

From NA-60, the nomination forms of AML President Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, PML-N's Hanif Abbasi and MMA's Raza Ahmed Shah were accepted.

Similarly, the nomination papers of 28 candidates including PML-N candidate Malik Abrar Ahmed, PTI's Amir Kiyani and Qasim Khan of PPP were accepted from NA-61.

The returning officers have also accepted the nomination forms of PML-N candidate Barrister Danial Chaudhry, AML Chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed and Sheikh Nadim Ahmed PPP from NA-62. In the provincial assembly constituency, nomination papers filed for PP-10 by 29 candidates including Nisar, Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Engineer Qamarul Islam, and Raja Kamran of PPP were accepted by the returning officers.

The nomination papers of PTI's Haji Amjad, Qayyum Abbasi, PML-N's Chaudhry Sarfraz Afzal and 19 other candidates were accepted from PP-13. The nomination papers of 32 candidates including PML-N's Usama Chaudhry were accepted from PP-14.

The election officials accepted the nomination papers of some 27 candidates including PML-N's Malik Iftikhar Ahmed and Babu Sheryar Riaz of PTI from PP-15. From PP-17, the nomination papers of a total of 32 candidates including PML-N leader Raja Hanif Advocate, PTI's Fayyazul Hassan Chohan and Azhar Iqbal Satti were accepted.

Police officer's son, uncle shot dead

QUETTA: Police in Pakistan say gunmen have opened fire on a police officer's car in the northwestern city of Quetta, killing his minor son and uncle and injuring the officer critically. Officer Abdul Qayum says fellow officer Abdul Samad came under attack in the suburban area of Nawa Kili when returning home after purchasing food for breakfast.

15 dead in two road accidents

MANSEHRA, PAKISTAN : Police in Pakistan say 15 people have died in two road accidents. Officer Mohammad Javed Khan says a vehicle drove off a road in a mountainous area in northwestern Pakistan on Wednesday, killing nine people and injuring another four. Hours earlier, a vehicle carrying tourists in the scenic Swat Valley drove into a river, killing six people and injuring three.

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CHAIRMAN
SHEIKH THANI BIN ABDULLAH AL THANI

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DR. KHALID BIN MUBARAK AL-SHAFI
editorinchief@pen.com.qa

ACTING MANAGING EDITOR
MOHAMMED SALIM MOHAMED
m.salim@pen.com.qa

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
MOHAMMED OSMAN ALI
osman@pen.com.qa

EDITORIAL

Qatar's helping hand

Qatar has always been at the forefront in proving urgent humanitarian assistance to the needy, in particular Gaza Strip, and other countries in the region. With this in mind, the Qatari National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, under the directives of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, plans to embark on the second phase of the emergency humanitarian relief programme for the residents of the Gaza Strip after it completed the $15m first phase which began mid-February last year.

Palestinians are facing huge difficulties due to the continued siege and the aggression of the Israeli occupation, as well as punitive measures imposed on the Gaza Strip. The directives of H H the Amir to provide assistance came in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the UN appeals in this regard to address the difficult conditions facing the residents due to the severe shortage of medicines and fuel for operating hospitals as well as shortage of other basic materials as a result of the blockade.

H H the Amir, addressing the opening session of the Emergency Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Palestine, in Istanbul last month, had said that without a just solution to the cause of Palestine and redressing its people, this 70 year old bloodshed cannot be stopped. H H the Amir said the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories needs sincere positions and political will to take meaningful steps to eliminate the occupation. H H the Amir further said that as a result of the blockade, the Gaza Strip has been transformed into a large concentration camp for millions of people who are deprived of their most basic rights to travel, education, work and medical treatment.

The directives of H H the Amir to provide assistance came in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Mohammed Al Emadi, said the second phase of the programme includes 'decent housing' project that aims to renovate the homes of poor families at a cost of $3m, provision of medicines and medical supplies and a grant for poor students to pay tuition fees. Over the past three years, he added, the committee spent nearly $3m for the decent housing project which renovated and constructed more than 400 apartments and houses in a phased manner.

Qatar provided another grant of QR50m in early May that was allocated to health, education and housing sectors. Qatar has also contributed a lot to the redevelopment of Gaza. Hamad City, which houses thousands of people, is a very fine example of this benevolence. It is necessary to respond to the demands of Gaza people, which is to stop the aggression, lift the siege, and ensure the right to live in dignity. The Palestinians will find all forms of support from Qatar and the emergency humanitarian relief programme stem from a moral duty to support the Palestinian cause.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



We are standing at a crossroads and we have decided to go down a well-paved street called the European Union.

Olaf Scholz
German Finance Minister

Gazans have survived years of war. Now depression is killing them.



ERIN CUNNINGHAM
THE WASHINGTON POST



Fathi Harb wanted to commit suicide by soldier. So he went to a protest this spring along Gaza's border, hoping Israeli snipers would shoot him, his grandfather recalled. When they didn't, Harb, 22, tried again, returning to another protest soon after and again he survived.

Then, last month, he set himself on fire on a busy street in Gaza City, later succumbing to his wounds.

"He called his father right before he did it and told him of his plans," his grandfather Saeed said.

A mental health crisis is gripping the Gaza Strip, experts say, born of repeated wars and the stress of meeting daily needs in this besieged and impoverished Palestinian enclave.

Mental health experts say they have seen a significant increase in symptoms of psychological distress in recent years. In 2017, the number of psychiatric patients visiting government-affiliated mental health clinics rose by 69 percent compared to previous years, according to Gaza's Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights. The Gaza Community Mental Health Program (GCMHP) says it has tracked an increase over the past year in anxiety, depression and suicide.

In Gaza, "we are talking about a situation where the majority of people have feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and powerlessness," said Hasan Ziyada, director of the GCMHP.

And in a recent report, the World Health Organization said that the constraints imposed on the lives of Palestinians, including in Gaza, have had a "huge effect" on the mental health of the population, amounting to "much more than simple psychological disturbances."

Nearly 2 million Palestinians are trapped in the Gaza Strip, hemmed in by restrictions on travel and commerce imposed by Israel, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority to pressure the militant Hamas group, which rules the territory.

The closure has crippled Gaza's economy and sent unemployment soaring. Gaza's residents get only a few hours of electricity each day, and most drinking water is contaminated. The specter of a new conflict with Israel hangs over the territory.

Harb had been chronically jobless. He shared a single apartment with 12 family members, including his pregnant wife. It was too hard, he told his father, explaining his wish to die.

"He said, 'It will be better than this terrible life we are living,' " Saeed recalled.

In Gaza, "we are talking about a situation where the majority of people have feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and powerlessness," said Hasan Ziyada, director of the GCMHP. "They feel trapped. They feel paralyzed and like they cannot do anything to change their reality." The result, he said, is high levels of stress and psychological trauma.

Gaza has long been synonymous with violence and insecurity. But the worst period of conflict has been the past decade, when more than 4,000 Palestinians were killed in three wars between Hamas and Israel, according to the Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2014 war, WHO estimated up to 20 percent of the population may have developed mental health conditions. According to UNICEF, more than 300,000 children in Gaza required some sort of psychosocial care.

By the time Israeli forces killed 14-year-old Mohammad Ayyoub at a protest in Gaza this April, the sprightly but troubled youth had lived through three wars. They had left him deeply traumatized. He was treated for anxiety and a violent temper, his parents said.

The boy's family gathered recently at their sparsely furnished home in Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp to pore over his school notebooks, where he liked to scribble hearts during class, and to watch videos of him dancing the Palestinian folk dance known as dabke. His parents recounted his decline.

After the 2014 war, Ayyoub became nervous, clingy and afraid of the dark. He lashed out at his brothers and sisters, hitting them at home.

In trauma counseling at his U.N.-run school, Ayyoub learned stress management exercises, including controlled breathing, and the treatment appeared to work. But he relapsed, becoming more serious, angry and withdrawn.

"He stopped smiling. He stopped playing with other kids," said his mother, 39-year-old Raeda, wearing a floral headscarf and surrounded by her five other children. "His father was telling him, 'You have to calm down.' "

Upset over the US decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem, which Israelis and Palestinians both claim as their capital, Mohammad Ayyoub told his mother he would be willing to give his life for the city. On April 20, he slipped away to a demonstration on the Israel-Gaza border, where an Israeli sniper shot him through the head. At least 127 Palestinians have been killed at weekly protests like the one Ayyoub attended.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which assists Palestinian refugees, also treated Ayyoub at its counseling program in local schools. The group says it mapped a "psychological deterioration" among schoolchildren in Gaza during the months before and after the border protests started. It also traced an increase in the percentage of students suffering nightmares. School principals reported seeing more violent incidents on school grounds.

Failure to notice cancer unacceptable

YOMIURI SHIMBUN

In recent cases of malpractice, important focuses of disease were overlooked as physicians were preoccupied with the details of images of affected body parts. The case appears to show that the principle of checking patients' entire bodies was neglected.

A series of cancer-related diagnostic errors have been discovered at Chiba University Hospital. According to an investigation by the hospital, cancer in nine patients that was visible in images of their affected parts taken via computerized tomography (CT) was overlooked from 2013. This affected the nature of the treatment given to four of the nine patients.

The oversight is said to have stemmed from the fact that the physicians in charge of the patients only paid attention to affected parts related to patients' cardinal symptoms when they looked at the images. If they had looked more closely at internal organs adjacent to the affected parts, in cooperation with radiation diagnostic doctors, these physicians could have detected the patients' cancer at an earlier stage.

A typical example of this was the case of a woman in her 60s who died last December. The woman underwent a CT test in June 2013 as part of a follow-up examination of developments in her inflammatory bowel disease. In a report on an image-based diagnosis of her condition, a radiation diagnostic doctor said she could be suspected of having kidney cancer, but the physician in charge of her case missed it.

In October, another CT inspection found she had kidney cancer, but her condition was already too serious to be treated through surgery.

Advancements in diagnostic technology are not being effectively utilized. The situation is too serious for patients to overlook.

Utilize outsourcing exams

Chiba University Hospital is a facility for specific functions approved by the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry. Although the hospital is supposed to possess the capability to provide advanced medical care, it must be said that there are many problems with physicians' awareness and the facility's system for medical treatment.

In June, an external investigative committee said there was a lack of sufficient cooperation between medical departments and radiation diagnostic doctors. The committee had every reason to criticize the hospital's lack of rules requiring its medical departments to confirm reports from radiation diagnostic doctors.

Chiba University Hospital will shore up preventive measures from July. It will establish a diagnostic imaging center and increase the number of doctors specializing in that field. The hospital will also launch a system under which each doctor in charge of a patient and the patient confirm a report on image-based diagnosis together. Efforts should be made to steadily carry out these measures.

US, Europe missing a chance to solve migration



LEONID BERSHIDSKY
BLOOMBERG

According to a new European Union report on the asylum situation, 954,000 asylum applicants were awaiting decisions in Europe at the end of 2017, 16 percent fewer than a year earlier. Fewer new applications were lodged, and more of them were rejected as the share of people arriving from war zones and genuinely violent countries has gone down.

As the global number of asylum seekers continues to increase, migration is now a political lightning rod on both sides of the Atlantic. And yet politicians don't seem interested in solving the problem so much as wielding it against opponents.

According to a new European Union report on the asylum situation, 954,000 asylum applicants were awaiting decisions in Europe at the end of 2017, 16 percent fewer than a year earlier. Fewer new applications were lodged, and more of them were rejected as the share of people arriving from war zones and genuinely violent countries has gone down.

That's not the whole story, though. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Global Trends report, published on Tuesday, the total number of asylum seekers awaiting a decision hit 3.1 million last year, compared with 2.8 million in 2016. About half of the claims had been filed in developing regions, not the rich countries of Europe and North America.

Right-wing politicians in the rich world want to keep it that way: Let the people go elsewhere, as long as they don't come here. This stance underlies the recently intensified conflict between Bavaria's Christian Social Union and its national-level ally, Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union. It won recent elections for Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kern. And Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban wants it to become the mainstream policy for all European center-right.

"We believe that the time has come for a Christian democratic renaissance, not an anti-populist people's front," Orban said in a June 16 speech. According to Orban, fighting off new anti-immigrant parties only throws a lifeline to the declining left; adopting some of their ideas, on the other hand, would strengthen the center-right.

Orban made that speech immediately after a conversation with US President Donald Trump, in which, according to the Hungarian leader, the two discussed "the difference between a 'beautiful wall' and a 'beautiful fence.'" Trump is doing to the Republican Party what the European opportunists are doing to their center-right forces: giving those fleeing hardship a good reason to think twice.

Of course, focusing on deterrence means nobody is searching for practical, technical solutions to the displacement and migration problem, which isn't going away no matter how high the walls. Developing economies soon won't be able to process the increasing migrant flows as the rich world battens down the hatches. There potentially will be more crises like the 2015-2016 one in Europe, which overwhelmed one transit nation after another.



Obviously, letting in pretty much everyone on humanitarian grounds, as activist groups such as Amnesty International suggest, isn't a viable solution – for practical reasons as well as political ones. Societies don't need more permanent welfare recipients, and they can't just throw open their borders to all comers, giving up all attempts at predicting the economic effect.

Nor will well-intentioned half-measures achieve much. The Obama-era practice of detaining and kicking out families together looks better than Trump's family separation policy, but it, too, just returned them to violence and extreme hardship.

In 2017, Germany spent $24 billion on refugee-related issues, 6.75 billion euros of it on "fighting the causes of flight" – essentially, aid to countries of origin or nations willing to keep the refugees from trying to come to Europe. That aid, however, doesn't solve the problem either, because quite a few nations in Africa and the Middle East are more interested in taking the money than in helping the potential migrants. Essentially, these are pay-offs to less than democratic and not particularly humanitarian-minded governments for doing Germany's (and Europe's) dirty work.

Any viable solution would require a change in rich countries' approach to migration. Many migrants can't prove that they're escaping violent situations or that they are unable to live elsewhere within their countries of origin – conditions necessary to be entitled to protected status under the 1951 Refugee Convention. This has created a whole legal industry around asylum appeals and rendered countries unable to deport hundreds of thousands of failed asylum seekers using the courts to stall as they try to find a way to stay.

The dishonesty built into the system is a major cause of the political backlash: Immigrants are often blamed for trying to obtain benefits to which they have no right or overstaying their welcome.

Ideally, the EU and the US should sort people who show up at their doorsteps into two streams: Those who really want refugee status and its benefits, and those who realize their chances of being recognized as refugees are low, but who will agree to be trained and directed toward the huge backlogs of job vacancies many rich countries can't fill.

The US has 6.7 million of such jobs and about 6.1 million people looking for work who, for some reason, don't want these jobs or cannot be matched to them. The unfilled vacancies include 235,000 in construction, 421,000 in manufacturing and 844,000 in accommodation and food services. Many of them don't require a college education or much professional training; setting up mandatory training programs for immigrants who want to take this route rather than the asylum one wouldn't be cheap, but it would ultimately boost the economy. People whose asylum claims are rejected could also be given a choice between going into these programs and deportation. Anyone who fails exams, refuses a vacancy to which he or she has been matched or commits a crime would have to leave the country.

European countries, too, have to deal with millions of unfilled vacancies. Germany had 1.2 million at the end of the first quarter. They couldn't be matched to the 2.5 million locals officially looking for work. Training programs available both to immigrants and to locals, if they want them, would help resolve an issue that some researchers have estimated may cost the German economy 630 billion euros in lost revenue by 2030.

Matching immigrant flows with the vacancies and the training programs that lead to them is not a trivial task – even basic language skills required for simple jobs take time to learn – but it's made possible by modern data technology. All that's needed to start the process is political will. That, unfortunately, is increasingly lacking as the knee-jerk reaction of pushing newcomers back grows more politically lucrative.

No 'Brexit dividend' for cash-strapped UK



JITENDRA JOSHI
AFP

That assertion — in essence, vote for withdrawal to save the beleaguered NHS — was the notorious selling point emblazoned on the pro-Brexit camp's campaign bus prior to Britain's June 2016 EU referendum.

Derided as economically illiterate, government claims that Britain's withdrawal from the EU will unleash a "Brexit dividend" are nevertheless enjoying a revival as the politically combustible process plays out.

Promising a shot in the arm for Britain's much-loved National Health Service, Prime Minister Theresa May this week said the extra spending would be financed in part by savings once Britain exits the European Union.

That assertion — in essence, vote for withdrawal to save the beleaguered NHS — was the notorious selling point emblazoned on the pro-Brexit camp's campaign bus prior to Britain's June 2016 EU referendum.

Neutral observers and opponents to Brexit said the claim was divorced from financial reality. They have reiterated the point in response to May's promise of an extra £20 billion ($26 billion, 23 billion euros) for the NHS, made Monday at the start of a crunch week of votes that will dictate parliament's role in determining the final shape of Brexit.

"Her figures are so dodgy, they belong on the side of a bus," opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said during a robust exchange in parliament with May on Wednesday.

The prime minister, however, doubled down in riposte to Corbyn, promising about £600 million a week extra for the NHS as a result of her policies.

"That will partly be funded by the money we no longer spend on the European Union," she stated.

Yet the government's own forecasts predict an economic slowdown, lower tax receipts and higher inflation linked to Brexit, and a shortfall in spending coming from Brussels on areas like farming will need to be plugged by London. So any savings would be wiped out, analysts argue.

"In the long run, lower growth just trumps whatever accounting gains you get from stopping EU contributions," Fabrice Montagne, chief UK and senior European economist at Barclays, said.

Since the referendum, according to official data, economic growth has slowed to a snail's pace, inflation is high and hitting household incomes, while many businesses are holding back on investment.

That amounts to a major dent in the government's tax take, one that is set to endure for years.

"There is no Brexit dividend," Paul Johnson, director of the respected Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), tweeted.

Speaking on the BBC, he added: "There is literally, arithmetically, no money."

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), the government's official economic forecaster, says the Brexit vote will hit public finances to the tune of £15 billion in 2020-21.

"This outweighs the UK's net contribution to the EU by a substantial margin, and means less, rather than more money for the NHS and other services," IFS economists said in a report.

They noted also that the government has promised to maintain its current contributions to the EU budget as part of a divorce settlement -- calculated by the OBR at £37.1 billion -- for the coming years.

Britain could remain in hock to the EU budget until at least 2023 under longer transitional arrangements floated by the government to avoid an abrupt departure from the bloc's customs union. Such a "hard Brexit" would require the politically unpalatable re-imposition of a border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland which is part of the UK. So, if there is little or no Brexit dividend, the extra money will have to come from higher taxes or borrowing, undermining the politics of the case for withdrawal.

In parliament, May declined on Wednesday to spell out how the additional funding would be raised if the experts are right and Brexit fails to deliver significant savings.

But Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, one of the architects of the successful Brexit campaign, said May's announcement was a "down payment on the cash we will soon get back from our EU payments" as he tweeted the hashtags #BrexitDividend and #TakeBackControl.

The Peninsula

D-RING ROAD
POST BOX: 3488
DOHA - QATAR
editor@pen.com.qa

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OFFICE
TEL: 4455 7741 / 767
FAX: +974 4455 7758

MANAGING EDITOR
TEL: 4462 7505

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
TEL: 4455 7769

LOCAL NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4455 7743

BUSINESS NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4462 7535

SPORT NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4455 7745

ONLINE SECTION
TEL: 4462 7501
info@pen.com.qa

PUBLIC RELATIONS
TEL: 4455 7613
pr@pen.com.qa

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT
TEL: 4455 7837 / 780
FAX: 4455 7870
adv@pen.com.qa

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT
TEL: 4455 7857
adv@pen.com.qa

SUBSCRIPTION & DISTRIBUTION
TEL: 4455 7809 / 839
FAX: 44557819
info@tawseelqatar.com

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Duterte approves $5.6bn plan to boost military

REUTERS

A senior general said Duterte had approved 33 modernisation projects, with a focus on domestic security and protecting the vast maritime borders of the archipelago nation.

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has approved a five-year plan to spend 300bn pesos ($5.6bn) to modernise the outdated military, defence officials said yesterday.

A previous 15-year upgrade plan failed to take off in the mid-1990s, leaving the Philippines with outdated hardware, including warships from World War Two and helicopters used by the United States in the Vietnam War.

"We have the go signal now to buy brand-new equipment, like fighters, drones, light tanks, radar, an additional frigate and a submarine to boost our defence capability," said a defence official, who declined to be named because he is not authorised to speak to media.

The previous administration of Benigno Aquino spent about $1.7bn on the military during its 2010-2016 term in office, mostly on secondhand ships and planes. Duterte approved the $5.6bn modernisation plan at a meeting with top defence and military officials last month.

A senior general said Duterte had approved 33 modernisation projects, with a focus on domestic security and protecting the vast maritime borders of the archipelago nation. "We're putting a premium on unmanned aerial vehicles, long-range patrol aircraft, offshore patrol ships and an electric-diesel submarine," he said. The military is bent on preventing another Islamic State-inspired insurgency after rebels seized Marawi, the country's only Islamic city, for five months last year.

The Philippines also faces a challenge in South China Sea, a strategic waterway most of which is claimed by China, which has built military outposts there. Besides the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam also have rival claims on the area, through which $3 trillion worth of sea-borne goods pass every year. Duterte had set aside $1bn for new helicopters and light tanks, but no purchases have been made yet.



Rescue team members preparing diving equipment during an operation to find missing passengers from a ferry accident at the Lake Toba at Tigaras port in Simalungun, North Sumatra, Indonesia, yesterday.

Divers search Indonesian lake for 192 missing after sinking

AP

INDONESIA: Distraught relatives slammed Indonesia's government for not enforcing basic safety measures on passenger boats and pleaded yesterday for a bigger search effort for more than 190 people presumed drowned after a ferry sank on a picturesque Sumatran lake early this week.

The wooden vessel, overcrowded with passengers as well as dozens of motorbikes, didn't have a manifest and disaster officials have several times raised the number of people it was carrying as family members who rushed to Lake Toba in northern Sumatra provided information.

The boat was five times over its passenger capacity of 43 and equipped with only 45 life jackets, Transport Minister Budi Karya Sumadi and National Search and Rescue Agency chief Muhammad Syaugi told a news conference. The latest information is that 192 people are missing, Syaugi said.

Only 18 survivors have been found — in bad weather within hours of the sinking Monday evening, which according to Syaugi occurred in waters at least 300metres (984 feet) deep but only half a kilometre (0.3 mile) from an island that's popular with visitors to the lake.

It's possible many of the victims were still inside the sunken ferry, said North Sumatra province police chief Paulus Waterpau. "Many survivors told authorities that less than half of them had jumped into the water before the boat sank," he said. Suwarni, whose 20-year-old son and his girlfriend were on the ferry, criticised the search and rescue operation as slow.

Cambodian oppn figure faces royal insult charge

AFP

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's former opposition leader faces royal insult charges punishable by a jail term, according to a court summons, the first prominent figure to be accused under the new law.

The adoption of the law in February triggered alarm from rights groups who warned it would become another tool for Prime Minister Hun Sen to stifle dissent.

The strongman premier is seeking to prolong his 33-year grip on power in a general election next month and has used the courts to cripple his opponents.

Tymoshenko will run for president

KIEV: Ukrainian opposition leader and political veteran Yulia Tymoshenko said yesterday she would run for president in elections due next year.

"I will run for the presidency of Ukraine," she said during a question-and-answer video posted on her official Facebook page.

Tymoshenko led an opinion poll conducted in May by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kiev-based Razumkov think-tank, with support among likely voters of 13 percent. Incumbent President Petro Poroshenko came fourth in the poll.

Small explosion at Vietnam police station

HANOI: A small explosion outside a police station in Vietnam's southern Ho Chi Minh City injured an officer yesterday.

The cause of the explosion, near the scene of major protests earlier this month, was not immediately clear. Images on state media showed the station's charred walls with debris from a destroyed motorbike strewn across the pavement. State-run VNExpress news site reported that a policewoman was injured in the incident.

Najib talks about 1MDB scandal, seized assets

REUTERS

MALAYSIA: Former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak sat down with reporters for his first sit-down interview since his shock May 9 election defeat, and talked extensively about the 1MDB scandal, the hundreds of luxury handbags and other assets seized from him by the Malaysian authorities, and how he is coping with the investigation.

"I didn't benefit from 1MDB, because I believe that the 1MDB was created to do something good for the country."

"If I knew there was going to be misappropriation of funds, if that was my knowledge, I would have acted." On whether he blames the 1MDB board for the fund's troubles: "No. I am saying as a general principle, if they are in the know that something is not right, then it is incumbent upon them to tell me... It is the fiduciary duty of the board and the management to do the right thing. I expect them to do the right and to follow the law."



Malaysia's former prime minister Najib Razak speaks in Langkawi, Malaysia, yesterday.

On Malaysian financier Jho Low: "We have no control over what he does. I cannot pass judgement. But there are certain things which he may or may not have done. But I am alright to say that investigations should proceed and if anyone is found to be on the wrong side of the law, let the legal process take its course.

"No, he was not working on my behalf. All those items he never invoked my name, but he did say he was acting for someone else." When asked who Low was acting for, Najib said: "You have to ask him that."

On jewellery, including a pink diamond set for his wife: "I do not know exactly the source of funding for these things. All I know is when I asked my wife, she said that there was one instance it was supposed to be a gift for her. But she never received it." On $681 million moved to Najib's personal account in 2013: "With election coming, I did not want to get funding from companies because they would expect something in return eventually. If I have a source of funding I could fund the elections and I could also do a lot CSR (corporate social responsibility) work without being obligated to anyone. That was my real intention you see. And I assumed everything was fine." On elections: "I saw part of it coming. I didn't expect it to be this catastrophic. I though we could possibly lose some seats but I didn't expect this sort of dramatic result, this calamitous result.

Hungarian Parliament adopts law penalising migrant aid groups

AFP

BUDAPEST: Hungary's Parliament adopted yesterday a controversial package of laws penalising NGOs that help migrants, a key proposal of the firebrand nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Dubbed the "Stop Soros" laws after liberal US billionaire George Soros, accused by the government of orchestrating migration to Europe, the package of legislation was voted through by 160 votes to 18.

The laws will bring in a punishment of up to a year in prison for anyone convicted of helping a person who entered Hungary illegally from outside the Schengen zone, and whose life wasn't in immediate danger.

MPs also approved a change to the constitution stipulating that no authority is allowed to affect "the make-up of the Hungarian population", a clause designed to prevent Hungary participating in any EU scheme for mandatory refugee resettlement.

The measures passed yesterday include a constitutional obligation for all state institutions to "defend Christian culture", as well as a ban on homeless people spending the night in public spaces. The latest changes come in addition to a measure passed with a finance bill on Tuesday slapping a 25-percent tax on NGOs suspected of helping migrants. The Hungarian chapter of rights pressure group Amnesty International, which could find itself targeted under the laws passed on Wednesday, called them "a brazen attack on people seeking safe haven from persecution and those who carry out admirable work to help them".

"It is a new low point in an intensifying crackdown on civil society," Amnesty said.



The members of the Hungarian government vote on the 'Stop Soros' package of bills that criminalises some help given to illegal immigrants, at the Parliament in Budapest, Hungary, yesterday.

Macedonian Parliament passes bill for new name

AP

Macedonia: A deal to end a decades-long dispute over whether Greece can lay sole claim to Macedonia as a place name easily passed a ratification vote yesterday in the Parliament of neighbouring nation Macedonia.

Lawmakers approved a bill to rename their country North Macedonia, with 69 votes in favour in the 120-member parliament. The main opposition VMRO-DPMNE party boycotted the session.

The deal — which requires several more steps in the coming months to be implemented — has angered opposition parties and hardliners in both Greece and Macedonia, who claim their respective prime ministers conceded too much in reaching the agreement.

Prime Minister Zoran Zaev told lawmakers that Skopje and Athens have reached a "dignified and acceptable" agreement for both countries.

"We have not made a gift to anyone," Zaev said during yesterday's debate. "Our language and identity is macedonian." The dispute dates from shortly after Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. Greece argued the name "Macedonia" implied territorial aspirations on its own northern province of the same name, birthplace of the ancient warrior king Alexander the Great, and on ancient Greek heritage.

Zaev told lawmakers the agreement gains Macedonia "one more strategic partner" in its southern neighbour, and boosts his country's security and stability. It will also allow Macedonia to pursue its dream of joining Nato and the European Union. Until now, Greece, which is a member of both organizations, had been blocking that prospect pending a deal on the name-change.

But the deal has also caused a major rift between Zaev's left-led government and the country's conservative president, Gjorge Ivanov, who has said he will not sign off on the parliamentary ratification which he strongly opposes.

Alleged Russian gang boss accused of 60 murders extradited

AFP

MOSCOW: An alleged Russian crime boss wanted over a string of contract killings was extradited to Moscow from Austria yesterday after losing a long-running legal battle, Russia's Interior Ministry said.

Aslan Gagiyev, nicknamed Dzhako, was flown to Russia escorted by police and prison officers, Interior Ministry spokeswoman, Irina Volk, said, after Austria's highest court last year rejected his appeal against extradition. Kommersant business daily reported that Gagiyev was flown out on a regular Aeroflot flight. The 47-year-old, who fled abroad in 2013, is accused of organising a criminal gang, banditry, murder, weapons trafficking and embezzlement, Volk said. He will be held in custody in Moscow. Interpol posted a wanted picture of a heavy-set unsmiling man with receding hair and dark eyes. Russia has accused Gagiyev's gang of murdering 60 people including the mayor of the city of Vladikavkaz in the region of North Ossetia, as well as the region's former deputy premier. Both men were shot in their cars in 2008.

EU leaders to hold crisis talks on migration

AFP

BRUSSELS: The leaders of ten EU countries including Germany and France will hold crisis talks on migration in Brussels on Sunday to try to find answers ahead of a major summit next week.

European Commission Chief Jean-Claude Juncker called the meeting at the last minute as the issue causes fresh divisions in Europe, three years after the bloc faced its biggest migration crisis since World War II.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's government coalition is under threat from the issue and there has also been a row over a boatload of migrants rescued from the Mediterranean who were turned away by Italy's new right-wing government. "I am convening an informal working meeting on migration and asylum issues in Brussels on Sunday, in order to work with a group of Heads of State or Government of Member States interested in finding European solutions ahead of the upcoming #EUCO (European Council)," Juncker said on Twitter testerday.

Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Belgian premier Charles Michel have all confirmed their attendance, officials said.

European Commission Chief Jean-Claude Juncker called the meeting at the last minute as the issue causes fresh divisions in Europe, three years after the bloc faced its biggest migration crisis since World War II.

The leaders of frontline states Italy and Greece will also be involved, as well as Austria and Bulgaria, who are the incoming and outgoing holders of the EU's rotating six-month presidency, European sources said.

All 28 European Union leaders are due at their full summit on next Thursday to discuss plans to overhaul the bloc's asylum system, which has been under severe pressure since the migration crisis exploded in 2015. Among new ideas, the EU is considering setting up "disembarkation platforms" outside the bloc to process migrants, according to draft summit conclusions. But even as numbers crossing the Mediterranean have dropped since then, efforts to reach a consensus have been thrown into turmoil by fresh developments in Europe as countries disagree over who should host new arrivals.

Meanwhile, Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz yesterday raised the spectre of a "catastrophe" similar to the events of 2015 if Europe does not agree a common response.

Kurz's comments came as he and his ministers held a special joint session in the Austrian city of Linz with their Bavarian counterparts from the German CSU party, including Seehofer.

Kurz has said he intends to make migration a key theme when Austria takes up the EU's rotating presidency at the beginning of July and will meet four central European leaders in Budapest.



EU Commissioner of Competition Margrethe Vestager (right) welcomes France's Prime Minister Edouard Philippe prior to their meeting at the EU headquarters in Brussels, yesterday.

At least 60 dead after migrant boat sinks

ROME: At least 60 migrants died in the Mediterranean Sea when their rubber dinghy sank last week, according to survivor testimonies gathered by a rights group in Sicily.

The Diciotti, an Italian coast-guard ship carrying more than 500 migrants, docked on Tuesday night at the Sicilian port of Pozzallo.

Among those on board were around 40 survivors of an accident last Tuesday which saw a US Navy boat come to the aid of drowning migrants after their dinghy sank off the coast of Libya.

The survivors interviewed by volunteers from the human rights association Medu in Sicily said that their dinghy had been carrying 117 people, which would put the death toll at over 70. The NGO Doctors Without Borders (MSF) put the toll slightly lower at 60 dead also on the basis of accounts from survivors, who reported 100 people aboard the vessel.

Slovakia delays decision to replace Russian fighter jets

BRATISLAVA: Slovakia will postpone a decision on whether to buy US-made F-16s or Swedish Gripen fighter jets to replace its ageing Russian-made MiG-29s, Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini said.

The defence ministry was originally expected to submit an analysis of the two options by June 29 for government approval, but Pellegrini said it was too big a decision to be made under pressure. "I want to see comparable offers to eliminate any doubts. This is a serious decision worth billions of euros," he said. Slovakia, a member of Nato has a maintenance contract with Russia for its 12 MiG-29s until autumn 2019. The contract worth $25m to $80m a year, under which dozens of Russian technicians are based at a Slovak military air base, will need to be extended even after the government signs a deal to buy new jets, while it awaits delivery.

Twin brothers reunited 74 years after WWII death

COLLEVILLE-SUR-MER: For decades, he was known only as Unknown X-9352 at a World War II American cemetery in Belgium where he was interred. On Tuesday, Julius Heinrich Otto "Henry" Pieper, his identity recovered, was laid to rest beside his twin brother in Normandy, 74 years after the two Navy men died together when their ship shattered while trying to reach the blood-soaked D-Day beaches.

Six Navy officers in crisp white uniforms carried the flag-draped metal coffin bearing the remains of Julius to its final resting place, at the side of Ludwig Julius Wilhelm "Louie" Pieper at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. The two 19-year-olds from Esmond, South Dakota, died together on June 19, 1944, when their huge flat-bottom ship hit an underwater mine as it tried to approach Utah Beach, 13 days after the D-Day landings. While Louie's body was soon found, identified and laid to rest, his brother's remains were only recovered in 1961 by French salvage divers and not identified until 2017.

May defeats Brexit rebels, but divisions continue

AP

LONDON: The British government won a key vote in Parliament on its flagship Brexit legislation, but remains locked in a tussle with lawmakers over the direction of the country's departure from the European Union. The House of Commons rejected by a vote of 319-303 a proposal to make the government get Parliament's approval before agreeing to a final divorce deal with the EU — or before walking away from the bloc without an agreement.

Since a majority of lawmakers favour retaining close ties with the bloc, that would have reduced the chances of a "no deal" Brexit, a scenario that is feared by UK businesses but favoured by some Eurosceptic members of Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative minority government, who want a clean break with the bloc.

May faced rebellion last week from pro-EU Conservative legislators, but avoided defeat by promising Parliament would get a "meaningful vote" on the UK-EU divorce agreement before Brexit occurs next March.

Pro-EU lawmakers later accused the government of going back on its word by offering only a symbolic "take it or leave it" vote on the final deal and not the ability to take control of the negotiations.

Labour Party Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer accused May of telling Parliament: "Tough luck. If you don't like my proposed deal, you can have something much worse."



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May coming out 10 Downing Street at central London, yesterday.

The rebels sought to amend the flagship EU Withdrawal Bill so they could send the government back to the negotiating table if they don't like the deal, or if talks with the EU break down.

The government claimed that would undermine its negotiating hand with the EU.

"You cannot enter a negotiation without the right to walk away," Brexit Secretary David Davis told lawmakers. "If you do, it rapidly ceases to be a negotiation." But Davis also told lawmakers it would be for the Commons speaker to decide whether lawmakers could amend any motion on a Brexit deal that was put to the House of Commons.

The concession was enough to get Conservative lawmaker Dominic Grieve, a leader of the pro-EU rebel faction, to back down and say he would support the government.

Grieve said the government had acknowledged "the sovereignty of this place (Parliament) over the executive." The vote means the EU Withdrawal Bill - intended to replace thousands of EU rules and regulations with UK statute on the day Britain leaves the bloc — has cleared one of its last major hurdles to becoming law. But the government faces more tumult in Parliament in the months to come over other pieces of Brexit legislation. It has been two years since Britain voted by 52-48 percent to exit the 28-nation EU after four decades of membership, and there are eight months until the UK is due to leave the bloc on March 29, 2019.

Drought haunts farmers in Poland and Baltic states

AFP

WARSAW: Poland's prime minister yesterday warned of "very significant" crop losses as the EU country scrambled to help farmers struggling to cope with an unusual spring drought amid soaring temperatures.

Farmers in the nearby Baltic EU states of Latvia and Lithuania are also facing drought.

Farmers in the nearby Baltic EU states of Latvia and Lithuania are also facing drought, with Latvian officials due to consider declaring a state of emergency today, according to the BNS Baltic News Service. Dry weather has affected half of Poland's farmland with cereal crops most at risk, according to Poland's Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation (IUNG). The drought in "June is worse than in the worst dry years of 2006 and 2015, so losses may turn out to be very significant," rightwing Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters in Warsaw.

Speaking alongside him, new farms minister Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski vowed to present a package of measures to help farmers cope in the coming weeks, without going into details.

Deputy farms minister Jacek Bogucki on Tuesday estimated that losses caused by the drought were "unprecedented", according to Poland's PAP news agency. Experts said that about a third of Polish crops have suffered amid the unusual spring drought marked by unseasonably high daily temperatures.

This May was the warmest in 55 years in Poland, with average daily temperatures pegged at 18.7 degrees Celsius (65 degrees Fahrenheit), up from 15.3 degrees Celsius last year, Professor Zuzanna Sawinska from the University of Life Sciences in the western city of Poznan told the PAP.

With no rain since May 3, the dry weather has already forced farmers in western Latvia to begin culling their cattle due to a shortage of fodder. Grain and vegetable farmers in neighbouring Lithuania have also warned of drought-related losses. "We estimate today that at least 30 percent of the harvest has already been lost," said Ausrys Macijauskas, chairman of the Lithuanian Grain Growers' Association, quoted by the BNS.



Reading Challenge at The Hub

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon speaks during a celebration event for the First Minister's Reading Challenge at The Hub, Edinburgh, yesterday.

Germany foiled biological attack with Tunisian arrest

AFP

BERLIN: German police said yesterday they had foiled a biological attack with last week's arrest of a Tunisian suspected militant in possession of the deadly poison ricin and bomb-making material. "Very concrete preparations had been made for an act with a... biological bomb, which is a first for Germany," said Holger Muench, head of the BKA Federal Criminal Police Office.

German police commandos on June 12 stormed the Cologne apartment of the 29-year-old Tunisian identified only as Sief Allah H and discovered "toxic substances" that turned out to be ricin. Produced by processing castor beans, ricin is lethal in minute doses if swallowed, inhaled or injected and 6,000 times more potent than cyanide, with no known antidote.

Muench said "we became aware of this person a few months ago, and then evidence emerged pointing to links to the so-called Islamic State". The Tunisian man, who has been charged with violating German law on the possession of weapons of war and "preparing a serious act of violence against the state", was thought to have followed instructions on making a ricin bomb disseminated online by the IS.

In reversal, Trump signs order stopping family separation

Until yesterday, the President, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and other officials had repeatedly argued the only way to end the practice was for Congress to pass new legislation, while Democrats said he could do it with his signature alone. That's what Trump did yesterday.

AP

WASHINGTON: Bowing to pressure from anxious allies, President Donald Trump signed an executive order yesterday ending the process of separating children from families after they are detained crossing the U.S. border illegally.

It was a dramatic turnaround for Trump, who has been insisting, wrongly, that his administration had no choice but to separate families apprehended at the border because of federal law and a court decision.

The news in recent days has been dominated by searing images of children held in cages at border facilities, as well as audio recordings of young children crying for their parents – images that have sparked fury, question of morality and concern from Republicans about a negative impact on their races in November's midterm elections.

Until yesterday, the president, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and other officials had repeatedly argued the only way to end the practice was for Congress to pass new legislation, while Democrats said he could do it with his signature alone. That's what he did yesterday.

"We're going to have strong, very strong borders, but we're going to keep the families together," said Trump who said he didn't like the "sight" or "feeling" of children separated from their parents.

He said his order would not end the "zero-tolerance" policy that criminally prosecutes all adults caught crossing the border illegally. The order aims to keep families together while they are in custody, expedite their cases, and ask the Department of Defense to help house families.

Justice Department lawyers had been working to find a legal workaround for a previous class-action settlement that set policies for the treatment and release of unaccompanied children who are caught at the border.

Still, Trump's order is likely to create a new set of problems involving length of detention of families, and may spark a fresh court fight.

Also playing a role in his turnaround: First lady Melania Trump. One White House official said Mrs. Trump had been making her opinion known to the president for some time that she felt he needed to do all he could to help families stay together, whether by working with Congress or acting on his own.



Watched by Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen (left) and Vice-President Mike Pence, US President Donald Trump signs an executive order putting an end to the controversial separation of migrant families at the border, in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington DC, yesterday.

Nielsen traveled to Capitol Hill Wednesday afternoon to brief lawmakers. And members on the fence over pending immigration legislation headed to the White House to meet with Trump.

Trump had tweeted earlier Wednesday, "It's the Democrats fault, they won't give us the votes needed to pass good immigration legislation. They want open borders, which breeds horrible crime. Republicans want security. But I am working on something – it never ends!"

The administration recently put into place a "zero tolerance" policy in which all unlawful border crossings are referred for prosecution – a process that moves adults to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service and sends many children to facilities run by the Department of Health and Human Services. Under the Obama administration, such families were usually referred for civil deportation proceedings, not requiring separation.

The policy had led to a spike in family separations in recent weeks, with more than 2,300 minors were separated from their families at the border from May 5 through June 9, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Two people close to Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen said early Wednesday that she was the driving force behind the plan to keep families together after they are detained crossing the border illegally.

One of the people said Nielsen, who had become the face of the administration's policy, had little faith that Congress would act to fix the separation issue and felt compelled to act. Nielsen was heckled at a restaurant Tuesday evening and has faced protesters at her home.

But others pushed back on the idea that Homeland Security had led the rollback. One official said it was the Justice Department that generated the legal strategy that is codified in the working executive order, and disputed the notion that Homeland Security was involved in drawing up the document.

Planning at the Justice Department had been underway over the past several days to provide the president with options on the growing crisis, said the official, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the effort before its official announcement.

The person said Trump called the Justice Department Wednesday morning asking for the draft order. The official did not know what prompted Trump to change course.

The Flores settlement, named for a teenage girl who brought the case in the 1980s, requires the government to release children from custody and to their parents, adult relatives or other caretakers, in order of preference. If those options are exhausted, authorities must find the "least restrictive" setting for the child who arrived without parents.

In 2015, a federal judge in Los Angeles expanded the terms of the settlement, ruling that it applies to children who are caught with their parents as well as to those who come to the U.S. alone. Other recent rulings, upheld on appeal, affirm the children's rights to a bond hearing and require better conditions at the Border Patrol's short-term holding facilities.

In 2016, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that child migrants who came to the border with parents and were held in custody must be released. The decision did not state parents must be released. Neither, though, did it require parents to be kept in detention, apart from their children.

Boycotts and nuclearisation: Canada defiant

AFP

OTTAWA: US President Donald Trump's trade threats and bellicose diplomacy is being met on America's northern frontier with boycotts of US goods and travel, and even a call for nuclearization.

The grassroots backlash reflects the angry mood that has set in since Trump slapped punishing US tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum and publicly assailed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

As the Canada-US relationship slides to new lows -- with trade fights spilling into the aerospace and lumber sectors, and threatening the auto industry as well -- Canadians are rallying behind Trudeau.

Canadian patriotism has bristled under hashtags like #BoycottUSA, #BuyCanadian and #VacationCanada that urge people not to buy American ketchup, coffee and cars.

"I think I'd be physically sick just seeing the US flag at the border. My tourist dollars are staying the hell out the US," Vancouver resident Tracey Hirsch said on Twitter.

Others posted images of "Trump-free grocery carts" and said they happily paid double for Canadian strawberries over imported US varieties, or took twice as long to shop in order to avoid American labels.

Canadian retailers also are being pressured to dump Trump ties and his daughter Ivanka's dress brand.

The National Post, meanwhile, mused about Canada building an atomic bomb to gain leverage with the US like North Korea did.

"We've got the uranium, the know-how and a sudden desire to be respected by our nearest neighbor," said the article.

The viral protest -- which some said could backfire -- has even swept up a few Americans. "I'm an American but will be vacationing in #Canada this year to show support for our good friends and neighbors up north. #BuyCanadian," said Pittsburgh cartoonist Joe Wos in a social media post.

Ken Wong, a professor at the Smith School of Business at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, cautioned against "emotional responses," however.

A trade war "hurts everybody" while "playing into Trump's hands," he said.

"Is a boycott feasible? Yes. Is it advisable? Probably not," he said.

Canada and the United States traded an estimated $673.9 billion worth of goods and services in 2017, with the US scoring a small surplus ($8.4 billion), according to the Office of the US Trade Representative. The United States is also the top destination for Canadian vacationers, who made 42 million trips to the US in 2017.

A report by conservative Canadian think tank C.D. Howe Institute concluded that the Trump administration is trying to keep others off-kilter on purpose. "The Trump administration is deploying uncertainty as a new weapon in trade protection," it said.

In impoverished Bolivia, new palace an eyesore for some

AFP

La Paz: Bolivia's new Presidential Palace is certainly an attention-getter, from its heliport to its 29-storey tower and its presidential jacuzzi in South America's poorest nation.

President Evo Morales, the Andean nation's leftist leader, is shrugging off nay-sayers. This is "wasteful," opposition leader Samuel Doria Medina claims. The $34-40m price tag would be better spent on a cancer hospital, he said.

Even a bolivian cardinal, Toribio Ticona, took the time out of his day to denounce the princely luxury of the "Evo Palace."

Almost 40 percent of bolivia's population lives in poverty. The 120-meter (400-foot) skyscraper should not have been allowed under restrictions in La Paz's Spanish colonial old quarter. But Morales got an exception from the legislature, where his allies are in control. The building also boasts seven elevators, including one for the exclusive use of the commander in chief, local media reported. Two floors will be reserved for the head of state, including a presidential suite of 1,068 square meters (11,500 sq feet), according to plans revealed by the newspaper Pagina Siete.

It will also boast a sauna, a jacuzzi, a massage area and a gym. In power for 12 years, Morales, the country's first indigenous president and a key leader of Latin America's far left, has been authorised by the courts to seek a fourth term in 2019, despite a referendum saying otherwise.

He has christened his new palace the "Great House of the People."

"We will leave a solid infrastructure, a legacy for the children of our children... of a strong, solid country, as opposed to a colonial state" that existed before Morales, Franklin Flores of the president's ruling party said on Monday.



The new headquarters of the Bolivian government in La Paz. President Evo Morales will inaugurate the 120-metre-high building today.

Senate defies Trump by refusing to cut $15bn in spending

BLOOMBERG

WASHINGTON: The Senate defied President Donald trump by refusing to cancel $15bn in unspent funds from prior years using a procedure that required a simple majority of 50 votes to pass.

The 48 to 50 vote yesterday was an embarrassment to the White House, which unveiled the spending cut request with much fanfare in May after crafting the package with House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California.

The vote comes even as Republicans generally have been reluctant to defy trump with November congressional elections looming. Democrats have reason to be optimistic about gaining control of the House while the party will have a harder time reversing the 51-49 Republican majority in the Senate.

Republicans Susan Collins of Maine and and Richard Burr of North Carolina joined Democrats in voting against the measure, which passed the House earlier this month.

Collins had said she was not comfortable with supporting cuts to the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Burr opposed a $16m cut to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, according to a Senate Republican aide.

"It is disappointing that the Senate chose to reject this common-sense plan, and the American people should be asking their representatives in Washington one simple question: If they cannot pass good-government legislation to recapture unnecessary funds, how can we ever expect them to address Washington's staggering debt and deficit problem?" said White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney in a statement.

trump sought to cancel spending after the GOP came under fire from conservatives for signing a $1.3 trillion fiscal 2018 spending bill.

Using an obscure provision in the 1974 Budget Act, the president can freeze spending for 45 days while Congress debates a request to cancel appropriated spending. A bill making the cuts cannot be filibustered in the Senate, unlike regular spending bills.

The White House initially sought to cancel some spending from that bill.

Republican lawmakers said that doing so would violate bipartisan deals they had struck with Democrats. The White House settled on seeking to cut funds from prior years.

Mexico rescues 4 after small plane falls into the ocean

AP

MEXICO CITY: Mexican Navy officials say four people have been rescued after a light aircraft fell into the Gulf of California off the northwestern state of Sinaloa.

The Navy sent a rescue boat out after receiving a report that a plane had gone done and rescuers spotted the four survivors aboard a life raft about 65km out to sea.

The Navy said yesterday the survivors suffered only minor injuries.

The Peninsula
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EU set to impose duties on US imports

AP

BRUSSELS: The European Union will start taxing a range of US imports from tomorrow, including quintessentially American goods like Harley-Davidson bikes and cranberries, in response to President Donald Trump's decision to slap tariffs on European steel and aluminum.

The 28-nation EU's trade chief, Cecilia Malmstrom, said yesterday that the bloc would introduce the tariffs on about €2.8bn ($3.4bn) worth of US products. The tariffs, which had been announced earlier this year, had previously been expected to come into force next month.

The EU bloc would introduce the tariffs on about €2.8bn ($3.4bn) worth of US products.

The goods targeted include typical American exports like peanut butter, cranberries and orange juice, in a way that seems designed to create the most political pressure on Trump and US politicians.

"We are left with no other choice," Malmstrom said in a statement. Trump imposed tariffs of 25 percent on steel imports and 10 percent on imported aluminum from the EU on June 1. Europeans claim that is simply protectionism and breaks global trade rules.

"The rules of international trade, which we have developed over the years hand in hand with our American partners, cannot be violated without a reaction from our side," she said.

"Needless to say, if the US removes its tariffs, our measures will also be removed."

Trump said the measures against the EU are meant to protect US national security interests, but the Europeans claim it cannot be that close allies, many of them NATO partners, would endanger US security.

The EU exported some 5.5 million tonnes of steel to the US last year. European steel producers are concerned about a loss of market access but also that steel from elsewhere will flood in. Economists note that on the whole, the US and EU tariffs will not immediately cause great damage to either side's economy. The EU does not rely on the US as a market for its steel exports as much as Canada or Mexico, which are also being hit by the US tariffs and stand to lose more.

However, experts say the risk that the sides could keep adding tariffs could hurt business confidence, weighing indirectly on the economy.

The EU, which is the world's biggest trading bloc, has taken its case to the World Trade Organisation. If the WTO rules in its favour, or after three years if the case is still going on, the EU plans to impose further tariffs of €3.6bn on US products.

The spat comes amid a wider push by the Trump administration to hit other countries with tariffs that would reduce the US trade deficit. Its biggest target has been China, against which Trump this week ordered new tariffs on $200bn worth of goods. That comes after the US put a 25 percent tariff on $34bn of Chinese goods, to which Beijing responded by imposing an identical charge on the same amount of American goods.

Iran signals compromise for modest rise in Opec oil output

REUTERS

VIENNA: Iran signalled yesterday it could compromise on a small increase in Opec oil output when the group meets this week, as Saudi Arabia scrambled to convince fellow members of the need for a larger rise in production.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries meets on Friday to decide output policy amid calls from major consumers such as the United States and China to cool down oil prices and support the global economy by producing more crude.

Iran said on Tuesday Opec was unlikely to reach a deal, setting the stage for a clash with kingpin Saudi Arabia and non-member Russia, which are pushing to raise production steeply from July to meet growing global demand.

But yesterday, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said Opec members that had over-delivered on cuts in recent months should comply with agreed quotas. That would effectively mean a modest boost from producers such as Saudi Arabia that have been cutting more deeply than planned despite production outages in Venezuela and Libya.

"Opec could keep the same deal with compliance going back to 100 percent," said an Opec source who is aware of Iran's stance.

Opec Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo said he was confident there would be a deal when the producer group meets in Vienna on Friday.

Russia has proposed Opec and non-Opec producers raise output by 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd), effectively wiping out existing production cuts of 1.8 million bpd that have helped rebalance the market in the past 18 months and lifted oil to $75 per barrel. Oil traded as low as $27 in 2016.

Saudi Energy Minister also said yesterday that the market demanded more oil in the second half of this year and that Opec was moving towards "a good decision".

Ecuador said Opec and its allies could agree to a compromise increase in output of around 0.5-0.6 million bpd.

A decision to increase output could be taken even with Iran refusing to sign up, as has happened before in Opec.

Iran has so far been the main barrier to a deal, with Zanganeh saying Opec should not yield to pressure from US President Donald Trump to raise output.

Zanganeh said he would leave Vienna on Friday even before Opec holds talks with non-Opec producers the next day, but efforts were underway yesterday to convince Iran to participate in a deal.

Saudi Arabia did not want to be seen as putting too much pressure on Iran and hence Russia was instead trying to convince Tehran.

Zanganeh is due to attend a ministerial committee today.

Oman's oil minister Mohammed bin Hamad Al Rumhy said he believed Iran would agree to an output increase on Friday. He said the meeting would tackle over-compliance with oil output cuts and that Iran was "very cooperative".

Global trade war: Top central banks see growing gloom



FROM LEFT: Fed Chair Jerome Powell, ECB President Mario Draghi, and BoJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda

REUTERS

SINTRA: A developing trade war between the world's biggest economies is weighing on business confidence and could force central banks to downgrade their outlook, the world's most powerful policymakers argued yesterday.

After imposing punitive tariffs on a number of its top trading partners, the United States earlier this week threatened China with further duties on $200bn, escalating a conflict that has already drawn retaliatory steps from nearly all corners of the world. Sitting side by side in a Portuguese hill-top town, the heads of the US Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan and the Reserve Bank of Australia all took a gloomy view on the escalating conflict, arguing that the consequences are already evident.

"Changes in trade policy could cause us to have to question the outlook," Fed Chair Jerome Powell said in some of his strongest remarks yet on the issue. "For the first time we are hearing (from business leaders) about decision to postpone investment, postpone hiring, postpone making decisions," he said.

While not directly criticising the administration, the comments to the European conference indicate that the Fed is already contemplating how to shape its own policy amid rising global tensions that could curtail an economic expansion now in its 10th year.

"If you ask is it in the forecast yet, is it in the outlook, the answer is no. And you don't see it in the performance of the economy," Powell said.

Speaking alongside Powell, ECB chief Mario Draghi said he had little reason to be optimistic, arguing that the ECB would have to incorporate the newest wave of punitive measures into calculation. "It's not easy and it's not yet time to see what the consequences on monetary policy of all this can be, but there's no ground to be optimistic on that," Draghi said.

He warned that the impact could come through reduced confidence, lower investments and a drop in exports, all potentially exacerbated by retaliatory moves.

The ECB last week downgraded its growth forecast for the year, and Draghi said the economy's soft patch could be longer than the bank's staff predicted.

But Haruhiko Kuroda, who heads the BoJ, said the biggest impact could be indirect, stemming from dented confidence among consumers and enterpreneurs. "The indirect impact on the Japanese economy could be quite significant... if this escalation of tariffs between the US and China continues," Kuroda told the Sintra conference.

Disney boosts Fox bid to $71.3bn

AFP

WASHINGTON: Disney raised its offer for key assets of 21st Century Fox yesterday to $71.3bn to counter a rival bid from Comcast in the latest move in a bidding war that could create a dominant player in the media-entertainment world.

The move by Walt Disney Co. comes a week after Comcast, the largest US cable provider and owner of the NBCUniversal group, bid $65bn for the prized Fox assets being shed by Rupert Murdoch's family empire.

Disney announced that it signed an amended acquisition agreement with Fox, adding a cash component to the $52bn stock deal announced in December.

Disney chairman and chief executive Robert Iger **(pictured)** said the acquisition of the 20th Century Fox studios and television assets in the US and abroad would better position his company to compete in a media landscape being disrupted by big technology players.

The tie-up "is an extremely compelling proposition for consumers that will allow us to create even more appealing high quality content, expand our direct to consumer offerings, an international presence and deliver more exciting and personalized entertainment experiences to meet the growing demands of consumers worldwide," Iger told a conference call.

Disney said the value of the assets -- which include production companies responsible for "The Simpsons" and "Modern Family," as well as film production businesses -- had increased compared to December due to tax reform and operating improvements.

The deal also would give Disney a controlling stake in Hulu, the online platform created by media groups to challenge Netflix and Amazon. Comcast and Disney each own a 30 percent stake in Hulu and Time Warner holds 10 percent.



Murdoch said in a statement the company is committed to the deal with Disney.

US lawmakers hammer Wilbur Ross over trade

AFP

WASHINGTON: Indignant US lawmakers yesterday grilled Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross **(pictured)** on President Donald Trump's multi-front trade offensive, saying it risked spiraling out of control and damaging the American economy.

Pleading for an assortment of interests -- from nail manufacturers in Missouri to cherry growers in Washington state -- senators told Ross US trade policies are alienating allies and jeopardising US livelihoods.

"Mister secretary, as you consider these tariffs, know that you are taxing American families," said Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

"You are putting American jobs at risk, and you are destroying markets, both foreign and domestic, for American businesses of all types, sorts and sizes."

Hatch said Trump's threatened tariffs of 25 percent on the auto sector would amount to a $73bn tax increase on American consumers and endanger 200,000 jobs and $65bn in annual auto exports.

Trump's threatened tariffs of 25% on the auto sector would amount to a $73bn tax increase on American consumers and endanger 200,000 jobs and $65bn in annual auto exports.



The chorus of criticism amounted to a rare rebuke of a sitting president by the members of his own party.

Global markets have shuddered at the brinksmanship over trade between Beijing and Washington.

US President Donald Trump threatened Monday to put tariffs on the vast majority of China's exports to the United States -- leaving the door open to further retaliation by China.

Ross countered that in Trump's view, the United States was already the loser in a long-standing trade war and was only now beginning to fight back.

He said that, despite the hue and cry, Trump's aggressive moves had pushed US trading partners to combat harmful supply gluts in the metals trade.

"Suddenly Europe is enacting safeguards against steel dumping into Europe. They didn't do much before," he said. "Canada is taking action. Japan for the first time has created an enforcement body ... to deal with the problem."

"While they're complaining bitterly about the tariffs, the fact is they're starting to take the kind of action which if they had taken sooner would have prevented this crisis," Ross said.

"Even if farmers don't have to sell their physical crop right now, the sudden volatility in the market can increase the cost of hedging and in some cases require margin calls for those who are long in the market," he said, calling on the White House to tone down threats that could provoke Chinese retaliation.

Deutsche Bank fined $205m in US for forex manipulation

AFP

NEW YORK: US officials fined embattled German banking giant Deutsche Bank $205m in a settlement to resolve foreign exchange market manipulation violations, New York's top banking regulator announced yesterday.

The bank's violations included improperly coordinating trading activity with other financial institutions in order to boost the bank's own profits, Department of Financial Services said. Deutsche Bank traders participated in multi-party online chat rooms where confidential information was shared and currency prices were manipulated, DFS said. The violations were uncovered following an investigation from 2007 to 2013.

"Due to Deutsche Bank's lax oversight in its foreign exchange business, certain traders and salespeople repeatedly abused the trust of their customers and violated New York State law over the course of many years," said DFS superintendent Maria Vullo.

MarketWatch

QSE	FTSE100	DOW	BRENT
8,881.85	7,627.40	24,691.90	$66.53
-216.06 PTS	+23.55 PTS	-8.31 PTS	+1.46
2.37%	0.31%	0.03%	

Dow & Brent before going to press

Rupee hits record low, IMF urges Sri Lanka to let it slide

AFP

COLOMBO: The International Monetary Fund urged Sri Lanka yesterday to let its rupee keep sliding and not intervene further to bolster the ailing currency as it fell to historic lows.

The currency bottomed out at roughly Rs160 to the US dollar yesterday, its weakest ever point, despite efforts by the central bank to stop its steady decline in recent weeks.

The bank spent $190m in May alone to ease pressure on the exchange rate, sounding alarm bells at the IMF.

The Washington-based fund urged Colombo -- which is emerging from a balance of payments crisis -- to conserve its foreign exchange reserves instead of propping up the rupee.

"We think the central bank has allowed for greater flexibility (in the exchange rate) than in the past," said IMF mission chief Manuela Goretti.

"The rupee should be allowed to depreciate. When you look at emerging markets, the rupee has depreciated less."

The IMF extended Sri Lanka a staggered $1.5bn loan in June 2016, the latest tranche of which was released earlier this month.

The international lender said Sri Lanka's economy had rebounded since growth fell to a 16-year low of 3.1 percent in 2017. But it warned Sri Lanka was still vulnerable to shocks from at home and abroad and stressed that restructuring the island's loss-making national airline and reforming its energy sector was vital to maintain the recovery.

QATAR STOCK EXCHANGE

QNB	▼	106	151.40	151.16	1,374	151.40	157.00	151.40	158.40	-7.00	-4.42	725	1,002,081	153,701,159.67
Qatar Islamic Bank	▼	681	119.20	119.00	10,131	119.00	121.90	119.00	121.00	-2.00	-1.65	407	215,275	25,545,896.94
Comm. Bank of Qatar	▼	1,000	37.37	36.00	11,858	36.00	36.11	36.00	38.23	-2.23	-5.83	291	313,849	11,568,412.71
Doha Bank	▼	14,384	27.20	27.03	5,515	27.03	27.50	27.03	27.50	-0.47	-1.71	167	201,782	5,499,049.88
Ahli Bank	◇	1,477	30.56	30.11	100	0.00	0.00	30.10	30.10	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00
Intl. Islamic Bank	▼	2,507	53.84	53.21	290	53.21	53.12	53.21	53.97	-0.76	-1.41	39	40,024	2,141,274.81
Rayan	▼	1,000	34.17	34.00	107,147	34.00	34.20	34.00	34.50	-0.50	-1.45	545	1,196,583	40,564,291.42
Al khalij Commercial Bank	▲	980	10.90	10.80	2,079	0.00	10.71	10.90	10.80	0.10	0.93	4	6,235	67,747.73
* Qatar First Bank (QFC)	▼	14,600	5.23	5.22	4,094	0.00	5.23	5.23	5.28	-0.05	-0.95	36	116,372	608,339.74
QE Index ETF	▼	2,150	90.90	88.53	1,586	0.00	89.10	89.10	90.42	-1.32	-1.46	1	2,000	178,200.00
Al Rayan Qatar ETF	▼	228	21.65	21.20	2,000	0.00	21.71	21.63	21.90	-0.27	-1.23	10	5,143	111,522.00
Qatar Insurance	▼	10,000	36.50	35.00	27,226	35.00	37.41	35.00	37.30	-2.30	-6.17	313	256,577	9,285,825.27
Doha Insurance	▼	853	12.95	12.04	433	0.00	12.04	12.04	13.00	-0.96	-7.38	1	169	2,034.76
General Insurance	◇	445	49.80	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00
Alkhaleej Takaful	▼	2,534	11.09	11.00	2,233	0.00	11.00	11.00	11.20	-0.20	-1.79	1	1,260	13,860.00
Islamic Insurance	▼	98	50.50	50.40	8,500	50.40	50.50	50.40	50.50	-0.10	-0.20	4	1,902	95,861.00
Ind. Manf. Co.	▼	300	41.70	40.40	926	0.00	40.40	40.40	41.75	-1.35	-3.23	2	1,574	63,589.60
National Cement Co.	◇	500	55.54	54.50	170	0.00	0.00	54.55	54.55	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00
Zad Holding Company	▲	335	86.00	84.00	570	0.00	83.10	85.60	84.00	1.60	1.90	12	6,028	510,329.60
Industries Qatar	▼	265	106.30	105.00	1,213	105.00	107.35	105.00	105.90	-0.90	-0.85	609	326,603	34,560,344.26
United Dev. Company	▲	4,139	14.19	14.12	4,754	14.19	14.06	14.19	14.01	0.18	1.28	143	330,583	4,669,472.86
Qatar German Co. Med	▼	8,164	5.27	5.21	600	0.00	5.22	5.27	5.29	-0.02	-0.38	10	19,118	99,742.88
The Investors	▼	125	30.50	30.05	1,630	30.05	30.50	30.05	30.65	-0.60	-1.96	43	39,450	1,187,422.78
Qoredoo	▼	26	69.74	68.10	12,582	68.10	71.00	68.10	70.10	-2.00	-2.85	398	175,501	12,287,004.00
Electricity & Water	▼	17,463	181.50	181.04	200	181.50	190.00	181.50	190.00	-8.50	-4.47	359	187,849	34,551,597.05
Salam International	▲	2,754	5.35	5.30	8,731	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.28	0.02	0.38	2	1,269	6,725.70
National Leasing	▼	3,000	9.45	9.34	1,000	0.00	9.40	9.40	9.60	-0.20	-2.08	17	26,141	244,155.21
Qatar Navigation	▼	100	61.99	60.01	200	60.01	62.28	60.01	62.28	-2.27	-3.64	73	94,183	5,688,007.97
Medicare	▼	500	62.37	61.26	115	61.26	63.70	61.26	63.60	-2.34	-3.68	35	21,006	1,285,002.15
Cinema	◇	0	0.00	18.12	200	0.00	0.00	20.01	20.01	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00
Qatar Fuel	▲	6,667	138.00	137.20	1,200	137.20	138.00	137.20	135.00	2.20	1.63	182	78,887	10,939,743.09
Widam	▼	450	61.99	60.51	4,329	0.00	61.00	61.99	62.00	-0.01	-0.02	6	3,131	190,021.43
Gulf warehousing Co	▼	1,520	42.70	41.90	450	41.90	41.90	41.90	42.60	-0.70	-1.64	3	450	18,855.00
Nakilat	▼	3,000	16.00	15.72	12,376	15.72	15.92	15.72	16.30	-0.58	-3.56	362	892,411	14,327,753.86
Dlala	▼	3,197	14.29	14.12	476	14.12	14.29	14.12	14.34	-0.22	-1.53	11	18,053	256,987.29
Barwa	▲	7,275	33.88	33.78	14,000	33.88	33.50	33.88	33.50	0.38	1.13	285	225,782	7,600,408.68
Mannai Corp.	▲	124	49.00	48.01	657	49.00	48.04	49.00	48.98	0.02	0.04	14	3,007	145,465.80
Aamal	▼	8	9.05	9.00	432	9.00	9.05	9.00	9.10	-0.10	-1.10	16	16,537	149,004.16
Qatar Oman	▼	5,410	6.19	6.10	10,098	0.00	6.20	6.19	6.23	-0.04	-0.64	7	15,090	93,552.10
Ezdan Holding	▼	8,302	8.48	8.30	144,871	8.30	8.65	8.30	8.49	-0.19	-2.24	380	899,767	7,600,186.96
Islamic Holding	▲	1,099	28.19	27.25	483	28.19	27.40	28.19	27.51	0.68	2.47	14	7,048	195,283.88
Gulf International	▼	2,500	17.09	16.78	2,347	16.78	16.77	16.78	17.00	-0.22	-1.29	51	68,397	1,164,723.41
Mesaieed	◇	4,700	15.15	15.06	500	15.15	15.15	15.15	15.15	0.00	0.00	78	150,257	2,264,618.87
Investment Holding	▼	19,845	5.48	5.42	9,865	5.48	5.46	5.48	5.50	-0.02	-0.36	23	59,271	321,686.33
Vodafone Qatar	▼	1,000	8.65	8.60	1,615	8.61	8.73	8.61	8.74	-0.13	-1.49	60	184,275	1,590,800.78
Al Meera	▼	612	150.00	148.02	250	148.02	150.00	148.02	151.99	-3.97	-2.61	10	1,022	151,999.42
Mazaya Qatar	▼	19,332	6.89	6.80	5,000	0.00	6.90	6.89	6.90	-0.01	-0.14	41	342,483	2,356,517.45

QE INDICES SUMMARY

QE Index	8,881.85	2.37 %
QE Total Return Index	15,648.84	2.37 %
QE Al Rayan Islamic Index - Price	2,181.61	1.36 %
QE Al Rayan Islamic Index	3,539.71	1.36 %
QE All Share Index	2,587.61	2.40 %
QE All Share Banks & Financial Services	3,124.69	3.25 %
QE All Share Industrials	2,836.62	1.61 %
QE All Share Transportation	1,882.10	3.32 %
QE All Share Real Estate	1,599.39	0.71 %
QE All Share Insurance	3,026.07	4.44 %
QE All Share Telecoms	966.54	2.30 %
QE All Share Consumer Goods & Services	5,906.56	0.38 %

QE MARKET SUMMARY COMPARISON

20-06-2018	
Index	8,881.85
Change	216.06
%	2.37
YTD%	4.21
Volume	7,554,425
Value (QAR)	393,904,478.50
Trades	5,790
Up 09 | Down 34 | Unchanged 00	
14-06-2018	
Index	9,097.91
Change	17.67
%	0.19
YTD%	6.74
Volume	32,169,011
Value (QAR)	2,482,660,000.67
Trades	9,207

WORLD STOCK INDICES

Index	Day's Close	Pt Chg	% Chg	Year High	Year Low
All Ordinaries	6274.6	65.7	1.06	6256.5	5834
Cac 40 Index/D	5402.19	11.56	0.21	5657.44	5038.12
Dj Indu Average	24700.21	-287.26	-1.15	26616.71	21197.08
Hang Seng Index/D	29696.17	228.02	0.77	33484.08	29129.26
Iseq Overall/D	7105.24	41.48	0.59	7257.41	6410.26
Kse 100 Inx/D	43002.83	-680.01	-1.56	47144.12	40169.62
S&P 500 Index/D	0	0	0	2872.87	2532.69

GOLD AND SILVER

GOLD QR149.5385 per gramme
SILVER QR1.9658 per gramme

EXCHANGE RATE

Currency	Buying	Selling
US$	QR 3.6305	QR 3.6500
UK	QR 4.7726	QR 4.8404
Euro	QR 4.1880	QR 4.2477
CA$	QR 2.7143	QR 2.7682
Swiss Fr	QR 3.6323	QR 3.6833
Yen	QR 0.03281	QR 0.03345
Aus$	QR 2.6674	QR 2.7195
Ind Re	QR 0.0530	QR 0.0540
Pak Re	QR 0.0296	QR 0.0304
Peso	QR 0.0675	QR 0.0689
SL Re	QR 0.0226	QR 0.0230
Taka	QR 0.0425	QR 0.0437
Nep Re	QR 0.0331	QR 0.0338
SA Rand	QR 0.2639	QR 0.2691

South American trade bloc eyes new deals

REUTERS

A meeting between Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance countries of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, is scheduled for next month.

ASUNCION: The leaders of South American trade bloc Mercosur pushed for trade deals with Asian and other Western Hemisphere countries during a summit as roadblocks remained in talks with the European Union (EU) despite optimism earlier this year.

European officials said earlier this month that talks for a long-delayed trade agreement with the Mercosur bloc of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay were nearing a close. But Uruguay's President Tabare Vazquez, who assumed the bloc's rotating presidency, criticised delays in negotiations.

"We are not prepared to waste time in eternal negotiations," Vazquez said in a speech. "Nor are we prepared to sign a watered-down version." Vazquez reiterated that Uruguay was keen to sign a free-trade deal with China, its top trade partner, even if it had to sign it alone rather than as part of Mercosur. China is the main market for many of the raw materials the bloc produces, but its manufacturing exports also compete with domestic industries.

The last round of EU-Mercosur talks in April ended with limited progress and finger-pointing about who was holding up a deal. Key gaps remain on how far to open each other's markets to industrial goods and farm products, such as Latin American beef and EU cars and dairy.

The Mercosur countries emphasised in a joint statement on the need to "have the political support from both parties" to reach a deal.

"We should not abandon the idea of this alliance," Brazilian President Michel Temer told reporters. "Closing the doors now would impede negotiations which recently have had reasonable success."

Temer also pushed for trade talks with the neighboring Pacific Alliance countries of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, which are generally far more open to international trade than their Mercosur counterparts. A meeting between the two blocs is scheduled for next month.

In the joint statement, the bloc described recently launched trade talks with Canada and South Korea as an "assertive response against protectionist tendencies."

Argentine Vice President Gabriela Michetti also called on the bloc to "advance quickly" in talks with Singapore, India and North Africa. In separate statements, the Mercosur members also condemned violence in Nicaragua, where a wave of anti-government protests have left 170 dead.

The bloc also expressed concern about the humanitarian and migrant crisis in Venezuela, which was formerly a Mercosur member but got kicked out last year.



The leaders of the Mercosur trading bloc and associate countries on the sidelines of the Mercosur Summit in Luque, Paraguay.

Former Irish bank chief jailed over crisis-era fraud

AFP

DUBLIN: A judge yesterday jailed a former head of Anglo Irish Bank for six years for carrying out fraud at the start of the world financial crisis a decade ago.

David Drumm **(pictured)**, had at an earlier hearing been found guilty of fraud and false accounting at the bank, whose rapid fall from grace epitomised Ireland's own financial collapse.

Ahead of sentencing, the court yesterday heard from the defence that Drumm had acknowledged a "huge error in judgement" over the €7.2bn fraud.

Judge Karen O'Connor, sitting at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court, stressed that Drumm was not being jailed for "the financial crisis", instead "only for the two specific offences for which he has been convicted".

Drumm had been accused of transferring huge sums between



Anglo Irish Bank and another financial institution, to make the bank's balance sheet look better than it was as the global financial crisis took hold.

Anglo Irish Bank required a huge state bailout and was nationalised in 2009, contributing to an economic crisis in Ireland that later forced Dublin to seek an €85bn international rescue.

GE to be dropped from Dow Jones stock index

AFP

NEW YORK: Slumping US industrial giant General Electric will be booted from the prestigious Dow Jones stock index next week, S&P Dow Jones Indices announced Tuesday.

GE will be replaced on June 26 by pharmacy chain Walgreens Boots Alliance, which will contribute "more meaningfully" to the index, S&P Dow Jones said.

GE was an original member of the Dow in 1896 and has been in the index continuously since 1907.

The move comes on the heels of a bruising two-year slump for the iconic US company, which has seen shares tumble nearly 60 percent over the last 24 months amid downturns in its power generation and oil services businesses.

S&P Dow Jones noted that the Dow index is weighted by stock price, which means that GE accounts for less than one percent of the overall benchmark.

Thomas Edison launched GE in the 19th century. The company has pared back some of these businesses in recent years, selling NBC Universal to Comcast and divesting most of its finance business.

GE's best performing units of late have been health care and aviation.

Under pressure from Wall Street, GE last year replaced Jeffrey Immelt with John Flannery as chief executive.

Since Flannery became CEO last summer, GE has trimmed costs, streamlined its board, cut its dividend and revamped employee compensation. The company also has announced plans to sell $20bn in industrial assets.

BREAK TIME

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Dutch bloom
6 Blows one's top
12 Hereditary
13 Pooch's play area in a park
14 Puzzle
15 Droid's rival
16 "The Martian" actor Damon
17 Biblical pronoun
19 West of Hollywood
20 Toledo's state
22 NASCAR sponsor
24 PC program
27 "E Pluribus —"
29 Sicilian peak
32 "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" poet
35 Level
36 Calf-length
37 24 hours
38 Melancholy
40 1492 vessel
42 Tours season
44 Rocker Clapton
46 Charades player
50 "Raging Bull" star
52 Accustoms
54 Fitzgerald title character
55 Margarita option
56 Op-ed pieces
57 Occurrence

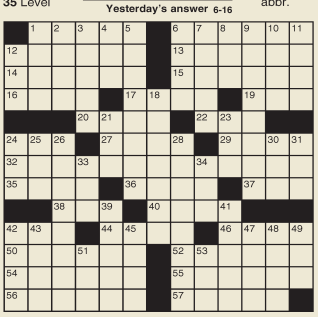
DOWN

1 Funny Fey
2 Military group
3 Without a — to stand on
4 Cartesian conclusion
5 Element No. 78
6 Actress Falco
7 Lassos
8 "This tastes awful!"
9 Cued
10 Sushi fish
11 Old dagger
12 NASA moon-craft
18 Famed escape artist
21 "Ben- —"
23 Hanoi holiday
24 Literary rep
25 Architect I.M. —
26 Santa's bagful
28 Pharmacy purchase
30 Actress Vardalos
31 Whatever amount
33 La-la lead-in
34 Do wrong
39 Bowler
41 Tickle
42 Rim
43 Herbal drinks
45 Rogers and Orbison
47 Persia, today
48 Thaw
49 Superlative suffix
51 "This — test"
53 Calendar abbr.

Solution time: 26 mins.

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

Yesterday's answer 6-16



NOVO Pearl Qatar

Adrift (2D/Action) 10:00am, 12:00, 2:00, 4:00; 6:00, 8:00 & 10:00 & 11:59pm; **Deadpool 2 (2D/Action)** 11:00am, 12:30, 2:00, 3:00, 5:00, 8:00, 8:30pm; 9:00 & 11:00pm; **The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation)** 10:00am, 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00 & 10:30pm
Leilet Hana Wa Srour (Arabic) 10:00am, 12:00noon, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00 & 11:59pm; **Abla Tamtam (2D/Arabic)** 10:00am, 2:00, 6:00 & 10:00pm; **Hereditary (2D)** 12:00, 3:15 & 8:30pm
Maya: The Bee 2 (2D) 10:00am, 3:15 & 8:30pm
Race 3 (2D/Hindi) 12:00, 5:15 & 10:30pm;
Beirut Aka High Wire Act (2D) 10:00am, 12:15, 2:30, 4:45, 7:00, 9:15 & 11:30pm
Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action) 10:00am, 12:00, 12:45, 3:30, 6:00, 6:15, 9:00, 11:45 & 11:59pm;
The Incredibles (2D/IMAX) 10:00am & 6:005pm
Deadpool 2 (2D/IMAX) 12:30 & 8:30pm
Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (3D/IMAX /Action) 3:10, & 11:20pm

MALL

Abraham's Santhathikal (2D/Malayalam) 2:30am & 11:15pm; **The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation)** 2:00, 4:15, 6:30pm; **Race 3 (Hindi)** 2:15; 8:45 & 11:30pm; **Jurrasic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action)** 5:00, 9:15 & 11:30pm; **Din Mohabbat In (2D/Urdu)** 5:00pm; **Abla Tamtam (2D/Arabic)** 7:30pm; **Beirut (2D/Thriller)** 7:15pm; **Adrift (2D/Action)** 9:15pm

LANDMARK

Abraham's Santhathikal (2D/Malayalam) 2:15, 5:00 & 11:30pm; **Race 3 (Hindi)** 2:15; 8:45 & 11:00pm; **The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation)** 2:30, 4:45 & 7:00pm; **Maya: The Bee 2 (2D/Animation)** 4:30pm;
Jurrasic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action) 6:15 & 11:30pm; **Abla Tamtam (2D/Arabic)** 7:30pm;
Adrift (2D/Action) 9:15pm;
Beirut (2D/Thriller) 9:30pm.

FLIK Mirqab

Adrift (2D/Action) 11:20 am; 07:05 pm; 12:20 am
The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation) 12:10, 2:35, 4:40 & 6:05
Dead Pool 2 (2D/Action 11:50am, 4:50, 6:45, 8:309:50 & 11:35pm
Maya The Bee 11:20am, 1:10, 2:55 & 5:00pm
Jurrasic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action) 1:05, 2:15, 3:35, 7:15, 9:05, 10:50pm & 12:15am

6-16 CRYPTOQUIP

R'Y ALIVDBE SLZS GIM DBBC VLMVDRUF SLIAB ACIUFG NZKKA ZS BXBOGNIEG, GIM'XB FIS Z KIS IO UBOO!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals L

ROYAL PLAZA

The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation) 2:30; 5:00 & 7:15pm; **Abraham's Santhathikal (2D/Malayalam)** 2:00; 6:00 & 11:30pm; **Race 3 (2D/Hindi)** 2:00, 8:30 & 11:15pm; **Maya: The Bee 2 (2D/Animation)** 4:15pm; **Adrift (2D/Action)** 9:30pm; **Jurrasic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action)** 4:45 & 11:00pm; **Beirut (2D/Thriller)** 7:00pm; **Leilet Hana Wa Srour (2D/Arabic)** 9:00pm

ASIAN TOWN

Abraham's Santhathikal (2D/Malayalam) 12:00, 12:30, 2:15, 3:15, 5:00, 5:45, 6:00, 7:45, 8:45, 10:30, 11:00, 11:30pm 1:15am, 1:45am & 2:00am;
Race 3 (Hindi) 6:00 & 11:30pm,
B-Tech (Malayalam) 3:15pm & 08:30pm
Tik Tik Tik (Tamil) 1:00, 3:30 & 9:00pm

ROXY

Abraham's Santhathikal (2D/Malayalam) 12:30, 3:30; 6:30 & 9:30pm;
Adrift (2D/Action) 12:30; 5:30; 2:40 & 4:50pm
The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation) 12:30, 3:00, 5:30 & 8:00pm
Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action) 10:30am, 4:30 & 10:10pm
Tik Tik Tik (Tamil) 1:00, 3:30 & 9:00pm

AL KHOR

Abraham's Santhathikal (2D/Malayalam) 11:30am, 2:30; 5:30, 8:30 & 11:30pm
Race 3 (Hindi) 11:30am, 5:15, & 11:00pm
The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation) 10:30am, 3:45 & 6:15pm
Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action) 2:40, 7:30, 10:10, 7:00, 9:40; 10:30pm.
Tik Tik Tik (Tamil) 12:30; 3:10; 5:50 & 9:00pm

Note: Programme is subject to change without prior notice.



ABRAHAMINTE SANTHATHIKAL

Abrahaminte Santhathikal is a 2018 Indian Malayalam-language action crime thriller film directed by debutant Shaji Padoor and written by Haneef Adeni.

VILLAGGIO & CITY CENTER









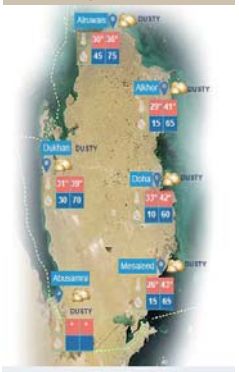




PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR	03. 14 AM		
SHOROOK	04. 44 AM		
ZUHR	11. 36 AM	MAGHRIB	06. 28 PM
ASR	02. 58 PM	ISHA	07. 58 PM

WEATHER TODAY



33°C Minimum | **42°C** Maximum

Strong wind expected over most areas and poor horizontal visibility

HIGH TIDE 12:45 - 23:15 LOW TIDE 06:15 - 16:15

Courtesy: Qatar Meteorology Department

Italy's Osteria Francescana crowned world's best restaurant again

AFP

BILBAO, SPAIN: Italy's Osteria Francescana was crowned the world's best restaurant for the second time on Tuesday at an awards ceremony put on by British trade magazine *Restaurant*, beating out top eateries in Spain and France.

Run by chef Massimo Bottura, the restaurant in Modena, Italy pipped last year's winner, New York's "Eleven Madison Park," in the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards, after first taking the honour in 2016. It is the only Italian establishment to have won the annual accolade.

"This is amazing, this is something we built all together," Bottura told the awards ceremony held in Bilbao in Spain's northern Basque Country, famous for its avant-garde haute cuisine.

"I am going to use this spotlight to show that chefs in 2018 are much more than the sum of their recipes." The top restaurants list's organisers praised "Bottura's contemporary cuisine, which challenges and reinvents Italian culinary tradition while make use of the finest produce from the Emilia-Romagna region." His father wanted him to become a lawyer but when he was 23-years-old Bottura, who was famous for rustling up culinary delights for his friends, dropped his law studies to open a Trattoria in Campazzo, in the countryside around Modena in the Po River Valley.

On his days off, he would study with French chef Georges Cogny, who had a restaurant two hours away.

"He said to me: 'always follow your palate, because you have a great palate which will make Modena known around the world'," Bottura said during an interview with AFP in 2016.

He opened Osteria Francescana in 1995 after spending time in New York and Monaco.

-- Two Peruvians in top 10 - Spain's El Celler de Can Roca, which took the top honour in 2013 and 2015, came in second while third place went to Mirazur in southern France.



Italian chef Massimo Bottura talks with the press after receiving the Best Restaurant award for his restaurant L´Osteria Francescana, during the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards in Bilbao, yesterday.

Nigeria sees a rush to get Nollywood online

AFP

LAGOS: A glamour blogger, a filmmaker and a tech mogul are competing to create a homegrown African rival to Netflix, but poor internet connections and intense competition are proving daunting obstacles.

They dream of popularising access to films made in Nigeria, which is home to the world's second biggest movie industry in terms of production behind Hindi-language Bollywood.

With nearly $4bn in revenue and almost 2,000 productions every year, films made in what is known as Nollywood are largely sold on the streets and to idling motorists caught in traffic as pirated copies for just a few dollars.

Local start-ups and Nollywood stars understand the interest in changing the distribution of films that are hugely popular across Africa, where cinemas are few and far between.

With such a huge potential market, video-on-demand platforms have sprung up in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital and home to the country's film industry.

And competition is already fierce.

Blogger Linda Ikeji — one of Nigeria's biggest names on social networks — recently launched Linda Ikeji TV (LITV) to great fanfare.

It offers dozens of films, series and programmes inspired by US shows but with a Nollywood twist for a monthly fee of 1,000 naira ($2.80, €2.35).

"We are hoping to be to Africa what Netflix is to the world," Ikeji wrote on her Instagram page, which has some two million followers.

She promised glamour, sass and humour, particularly with reality shows such as "Football Wives" or "Highway Girls of Eko", "a show on real-life prostitutes" in Lagos.

The 37-year-old former model-turned-business-woman made her fortune through advertising revenue on her site, which tracked the lives of Nigeria's rich and famous. She said she had invested "half-a-billion naira" of capital in the project. As well as buying video, she is also making original content from her own studios in Lagos. Before the end of the year, Nigerian company Envivo is expected to launch its own platform with an initial investment of more than $20 million, said filmmaker Chioma Ude, who is the firm's marketing director.

Indonesia takes a bite out of food waste one wedding at a time

AFP

JAKARTA: In the slums of Jakarta, Indonesia's poor are getting a taste of how the other half live thanks to a new programme that aims to take a bite out of its mammoth food-waste problem.

Called a 'Blessing to Share', the service supplies leftover wedding dishes to some of the poorest members of society in the sprawling capital.

Even as it struggles with poverty and malnutrition, the Southeast Asian nation bins more edible food per person than any other country except Saudi Arabia, according to an Economist Intelligence Unit survey last year. Indonesia's 260 million citizens each throw out an average of almost 300kg of food annually, ahead of the United States in third spot, the survey said.

The country's food waste problem can be partly chalked up to local hospitality, which calls for ample helpings at all celebrations.

Hosts often err on the side of abundance, and many hungry revellers' eyes are bigger than their stomachs -- meaning lots of uneaten food. Globally, about 30 percent of food produced every year is tossed out or spoiled — about 1.3 billion tonnes — which translates into some $1 trillion in economic costs, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Association. That's where a Blessing To Share comes in.



A waiter packing uneaten food for distribution through the programme "A Blessing to Share", after a wedding at a hotel in Jakarta.

"There are lots of weddings in Indonesia and lots of extra food," said programme founder Astrid Paramita. "And there are lots of hungry people unfortunately, so this programme is trying to close that gap between the rich and needy." So far the programme is fairly limited, but Parmita has big plans and hopes to expand to other cities and also start sourcing edibles from company meetings and conferences.

Since starting in November, about 50 weddings have participated in the programme with about 1.6 tons of food collected for distribution through a local food bank.

Fashion's new black prince reigns over Paris shows

AFP

PARIS: Fashion's designer of the moment Virgil Abloh channelled James Dean, Bart Simpson and the graffiti legend Dondi White at his Off-White Paris show yesterday.

The American creator's hype machine has pretty much hijacked the first three days of Paris men's fashion week, with Kanye West's former sidekick and muse about to make his debut at the helm of Louis Vuitton today.

He rolled out his own Off-White label's spring summer collection yesterday, which he said was inspired by "those crazy summer New York City nights when it's just as sticky hot at midnight as it was at noon." With temperatures in the French capital every bit as high, Abloh sent out a run of almost nostalgic youth culture looks, with references to the classic film "Rebel Without a Cause" and white T-shirts with tags in homage to the late New York artist White.

True to his streetwear roots, his tees were long and baggy and often cut to the elbow and beyond. Some were decorated with scenes from the Simpsons, with one declaring, "I'm Bart Simpson, who the hell are you?" His love of branding even extend to the shoelaces, which had "shoelaces" written on them just in case their might be a doubt. Several models sported neck and trouser chains made from climbing hooks, with recut and embroidered jeans apeing a DIY teenage bedroom vibe, which included leaving the security tags on shoes. - Doubters - While Abloh is drooled over by young fans who flock to his shows, some in the front rows whisper that the new darling of the French luxury conglomerate LVMH -- which owns Vuitton — is "not a real designer" because he didn't go to fashion school.

Instead the creator -- who trained as an engineer and architect -- cut his teeth with his famous friend West designing outfits on Photoshop. He has also accumulated an enviable address book of celebrity friends and 2.3 million Instagram followers.

He did, however, learn a thing or two about the trade from his mother, an immigrant seamstress from Ghana who made a new life in Illinois.

Janet Jackson reveals battle with depression

NEW YORK: Janet Jackson has revealed that she suffered an "intense" battle with depression, which she linked to a childhood inferiority complex and societal racism and sexism.

In an essay in the latest issue of Essence, a magazine geared toward African American women, the 52-year-old pop superstar said that she has found joy after giving birth to her first child last year.

But the singer — who became a superstar in her 20s with her blending of hip-hop into pop music and her elaborately choreographed live shows -- said that her 30s were "difficult years." "The struggle was intense. I could analyze the source of my depression forever," she said, according to excerpts released yesterday.

"Low self-esteem might be rooted in childhood feelings of inferiority. It could relate to failing to meet impossibly high standards. And of course there are always the societal issues of racism and sexism," she said. "Put it all together and depression is a tenacious and scary condition. Thankfully, I found my way through it."

Samina Baig to lead first Pakistani women's team to scale Everest

INTERNEWS

ISLAMABAD: Samina Baig **(pictured)**, the noted mountaineer from Pakistan, plans to lead a first Pakistani women's expedition team to scale Everest, the world's tallest peak, this season.

She said Gilgit-Baltistan women had natural talent in mountaineering sport, but they lacked facilities, besides local traditions were a hurdle.

Born in Shamshal valley of upper Hunza, Baig becamethe first Pakistani woman and third Pakistani mountaineer to climb Everest in July 2013. She is the first Pakistani woman to have climbedall the seven highest peaks in the seven continents.

In July this year, Baig was appointed as thenational goodwill ambassador bythe United Nations Development Programme.

She said her main aim in mountaineering field was to empower women to participate in mountaineering and trekking sports.

"For this purpose I started training camps in Shimshal in 2014, where girls from all over Pakistan got training in mountaineering," she said, adding events were also organised by Pakistan Youth Outreach, headed by her brother Mirza Ali, who is also a mountaineer.

Baig said the purpose of the event was to promote outdoor sports, encourage women participation in challenging adventure sports and promote tourism, especially winter and adventure tourism in Pakistan.

About 200 girls and boys from Sindh, Punjab, Swat, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan were trained, she added. Under the programme, she said hiking, trekking and climbing competitions were held. Unfortunately, she said they could not carry on the programme due to financial problems.

She said they had established the world's highest sport arena'Zarthgurben' in Shimshal, Hunza, at an altitude of 4,100m (13,451 ft). She said basic infrastructure had been constructed by themselves, adding football and cricket competitions were held in summer while rock climbing, skiing, and off-road bike trainings were conducted in summer.



"We started these activities in an attempt to empower women and sustain tourism in GB without government support," she said, adding naturally GB people had talent in mountaineering as they are born on mountains. She agreed that GB girls could prove their mettle in mountaineering, but they lacked basic training and guidance, besides social taboos were hurdles to them participating in the sport. "I also faced these challenges, but my family supported me. My brother Mirza Ali is always with me, he is my mentor and trainer," she said.

Baig said girls should take on these challenges and try to do what they wanted. She vowed to ensure women participation in mountaineering.