The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision





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MoI to ensure security, safety during Ramadan

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

In a bid to reduce traffic jam during Ramadan, Traffic Department focuses more on commercial streets, commercial areas and markets. The patrols of Al Fazaa will work round-the-clock to maintain security and to prevent anything that might harm the security and safety of the citizen.

Different departments of the Ministry of Interior will intensify their work during the month of Ramadan, whether related to maintaining security, preventing untoward incidents as well as facilitating traffic which may face congestion during peak hours before and after Iftar.

Mohammad Radhi Al Hajri, Director of Media and Traffic Awareness Department, at the General Directorate of Traffic, said that Awareness Department works within the framework of a systematic awareness plan aimed at achieving traffic safety by educating the public about the speed limits for roads and the use of seat belts, and not using the phone while driving.

Al Hajri pointed out that the Department will raise traffic awareness during Ramadan through many activities such as distribution of Iftar meals among drivers, providing lectures and meeting with community on mass Iftar programmes.

The General Directorate of Traffic usually offers free iftar meals to motorists to avoid accidents and the drive aims at controlling accidents mostly committed by hasty drivers during pre-Iftar rush hour, in particular, heavy vehicle drivers who tend to drive very fast to reach their destination before Iftar which is a major cause of accidents.

In a bid to reduce traffic jam during Ramadan, Traffic Department focuses more on commercial streets, commercial areas and markets, he said adding that Department will monitor the movement of trucks during peak hours. Last year, the department banned the entry of trucks and heavy vehicles into Doha city during the following times; 7.30am to 9.30am, 12.30pm to 3pm and 6pm to 12pm.

Also the patrols of Al Fazaa are working round-the-clock to maintain security and to prevent anything that might harm the security and safety of the citizen. In the month of Ramadan, Al Fazaa patrols continue their tasks more actively.

Major Naif bin Faleh Al Thani, Al Fazaa Police Department Director, said that Al Fazaa is intensifying its patrols in all regions of the country, indicating that there are peak times when the movement of people and patrols in the street and these times are before Iftar and after Taraweeh prayers. The patrols are ready to respond quickly to any emergency.

Regarding the efforts of the General Directorate of Civil Defense, head of media and awareness section at the Directorate General of Civil Defense, Major. Jabir Mohammed Al Marri, said that achieving safety and providing civil protection for individuals and institutions of country is one of the first concerns of the Civil Defense.

On how to avoid fire incidents during Ramadan, he said that among the most important safety measures for children is to keep them away from kitchens during the cooking process. He added that the presence of electrical wires in one location randomly lead to the risk of fire because of the possibility of an electrical contact between the wires.

An official at the civil defence inspection department said that the causes of the fires incidents which are frequent in Ramadan and in the summer include use of counterfeit electrical appliances and negligence of safety measures by some families. Regarding commercial markets, he said that there are inspection raids to ensure that all the required conditions are met, and such drives prove very productive. ➔P2



With the holy month of Ramadan around the corner, hypermarkets in Doha have been witnessing increased shopping activity. PIC: SALIM MATRAMKOT/THE PENINSULA

Maximum fasting hours in Qatar to cross 15 hours

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The astrological calculations conducted by specialists in the Qatar Calendar House (QCH) showed that Ramadan Crescent will appear at 1:45 am Doha local time tomorrow, May 5, which means that it is impossible to see it in the evening.

The crescent of the holy month of Ramadan this year will remain in the skies of Qatar after sunset on Sunday for 31 minutes, while the duration will increase as we go west. The Crescent Sighting Committee at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is the responsible institution to declare the start of the holy month of Ramadan.

Dr Bashir Marzouk, astronomer at the Qatar Calendar House, said that the number of fasting hours during the holy month of Ramadan this year will witness a change from day to day in the State of Qatar and the rest of the Arab and Islamic countries, as a result of the dates of dawn and sunset daily.

He explained that the number of fasting hours in Qatar will change during the holy month of Ramadan this year, and the minimum duration of fasting hours will be 14 hours and 38 minutes on the first day of Ramadan, and gradually increase until the maximum at the end of the holy month to reach 15 hours and nine minutes.

Dr Bashir added that the Muslims of Europe will have the biggest number of fasting hours in the world this year, where they will fast for about 20 hours in Norway and Sweden, 19 hours in Denmark and Germany, 18 hours in France, while Argentina will have the lowest number of fasting hours in the world this year, about 11 hours.

Children's Library, a learning hub outside classroom

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

Qatar National Library provides an ideal setting for families and children to pursue learning outside the boundaries of the classroom. In this inspirational space filled with light and colour, children can discover and pursue new interests and talents in an engaging way.

Libraries for children and young adults offer a setting that equips early learners with the skills and habits they need to become educated, active participants in the community when they grow up. "Reading with your children has tremendous positive effects on their personal and cognitive development," said Maram Al Mahmoud, Acting Manager of the Children's Library and Young Adults' Collection. "The Library is a wonderful place for parents to strengthen their bonds with their children and get to know each other on an intellectual and social level."

The Library makes it easier for parents to make books and learning an everyday part of their children's lives. Visitors can access more than 100,000 print books in many different languages that are available to check out and take home, as well as many electronic resources, including ebooks, digital magazines, and Arabic language tools specifically designed for children.

With many options available, the Library hosts frequent events to help parents navigate the world of early education. Past workshops have included tips for storytelling and reading to children, and sessions on how to best choose appropriate books for young readers.

"We have a wide range of selections, which are growing with time and demand, we make it a priority to connect users with their needs," said Al Mahmoud. "We have board books and picture books for beginning readers, and more advanced materials for older readers that introduce them to everything from famous people in history to science and math."

Also the learning process has taken on increasingly different forms, the Children's Library has computers and iPads equipped with the latest learning programs, as well as traditional educational toys, games, and arts and crafts materials. "Children are very dynamic and eager to learn new ideas. We are constantly searching for new ways to serve them and address their educational needs through both new and traditional means," said Al Mahmoud. "All of these resources—and our team of dedicated children's librarians—are here to encourage children to pursue continuous independent learning and to encourage discovery and expression as a way of life."

The community, in turn, has flocked to the Library: families have already borrowed more than half a million books for children, and events for children are among the most popular at the Library. These programs don't just cover early literacy—they include STEM workshops, arts and crafts, and engaging sessions about Qatar's history and culture. Frequent tours by school groups offer another way for young learners to discover what the Library has to offer them.

"The Children's Library is amazing as it has many books for my children to pick from. It is a rich library and I am happy to have free access to these books. I want my kids to take an interest in books and want them to become good readers in the future. We are visiting several times a week and will continue to visit especially in the weekends," said Rasha Ghanem, mother of two children.

Librarians at the Children's Library work hard to extend learning outside of the Library's walls into the wider community. The team supports librarians across Qatar, and the Library has hosted training for nearly 70 school librarians to help them transform the library experience for their users into an inspirational learning experience.



Kids pursuing new interests and talents at the Children's Library at QNL.

UN calls for immediate halt of demolitions in East Jerusalem

QNA
OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian Territories, Jamie McGoldrick, has called for an immediate halt to the Israeli authorities' destruction of Palestinian-owned property in East Jerusalem.

"Demolitions in East Jerusalem have increased at a staggering pace over the last month, leaving tens of Palestinians displaced and others who have lost their livelihoods overnight, this must stop," said McGoldrick. "

As of 30 April 2019, 111 Palestinian-owned structures had been destroyed in East Jerusalem, either directly by the Israeli authorities or demolished by owners to avoid hefty fines, following the issuance of demolition orders for lack of building permits.

Of these, 57 percent (63 out of 111) were demolished in April, bringing the total number of demolitions in the West Bank to 214 in 2019.

On 29 April alone, the Israeli authorities demolished 31 structures in multiple neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem. This is the highest number of structures demolished in a single day in East Jerusalem since OCHA began systematically monitoring demolitions in 2009.

Overall, more Palestinians were displaced in East Jerusalem in the first four months of 2019 than in all of 2018, 193 compared to 176.

Of particular concern, on April 30, Israeli security forces demolished four structures in the Wadi Yasul area of Silwan, forcibly evicting 11 Palestine refugees, including seven children, with an additional refugee family losing personal property.

Five people were seriously injured by Israeli forces, who used beatings, stun grenades and sponge-covered bullets as residents tried to retrieve belongings prior to the demolitions.

One man, whose home was destroyed, was injured with a sponge-covered bullet to his back and subsequently arrested.

He was heavily beaten by Israeli security forces during the arrest and the transfer to the Israeli detention centre. He remains in custody. ➔P3

Doha event trains Omani trade leaders

The five-month programme organised by HEC Paris in Qatar in association with Takatuf Oman, for business leaders drawn from a diverse group of Omani organisations, concluded successfully.

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

HEC Paris in Qatar and Takatuf Oman, the leading Human Capital solutions provider in Oman, have successfully concluded the 'Emerging Leaders Programme' for business leaders drawn from a diverse group of Omani organisations.

The programme leverages Takatuf's Human Capital expertise and HEC Paris' internationally recognised reputation in management programmes with a view to offer a powerful learning experience to emerging leaders.

The five-month programme successfully concluded for 19 of Oman's key business. The hands-on approach helped participants gain new perspective through case studies, role play and 'Action Learning Projects' which are likely to create positive returns for the involved organisation if implemented.

The innovative learning curriculum uniquely designed by HEC Paris in Qatar in collaboration with Takatuf Oman helped develop the leadership competencies most sought-after by Oman's largest organisations.

Dr Nils Plambeck, Dean and CEO of HEC Paris in Qatar, and Academic Director of the 'Emerging Leaders Programme', said: "HEC Paris is one of the most renowned custom-designed programme providers across the globe. "We are confident that this learning will eventually turn into a greater contribution towards their respective professional engagements and will thereby allow positive contributions to Oman's society."

Ibrahim Al Harthi, MD of Takatuf Oman, said, "It has indeed been an enriching journey for us to carry ahead such a successful association with HEC Paris in Qatar. Right from the first edition, we have been receiving accolades and garnering tremendous response from leading corporate houses in Oman and such credentials have only strengthened our partnership in steering the growth momentum."

Structured across three modules, Strategy & Leadership; Business Simulation & Team & Performance Management; and Innovation & Future Leadership, the 'Emerging Leaders Programme' started in November 2018 and ended in April 2019. Takatuf and HEC Paris have been successfully collaborating since 2015.

Chief of Staff visits defence industries fair in Turkey



The Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces, H E Lieutenant General (Pilot) Ghanem bin Shaheen Al Ghanem, visited the International Defence Industries Fair (IDEF 19) which was held from April 30 until yesterday in Istanbul, Turkey. H E the Chief of Staff toured the exhibition where he was briefed on the latest industries and technologies in the field of defence. H E the Chief of Staff and the delegation accompanying him met with the Minister of Defence of Turkey, Hulusi Akar, and President of Defence Industries of the Turkish Presidency, Prof Ismail Demir, where they discussed military relations and means of enhancing them. The two meetings were attended by Qatar's military attache in Turkey, Brigadier General Mohammed Rashed Al Hajri.

QU team visits Rohingya in Bangladesh

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Four public health students from the College of Health Sciences (CHS) at Qatar University (QU) recently visited Bangladesh for five days to familiarise themselves with the 'Qatar Creating Vision' programme, an initiative of Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) in collaboration with Orbis.

The trip also aimed to observe Qatar Charity funded programmes based in Bangladesh. During the visit the students became acquainted with three partner hospitals in different areas in Bangladesh, Ispahani Islamia Eye Institute and Hospital in Dhaka, Chittagong Eye Infirmary and Training Complex and Cox's Bazar Baitush Sharaf Hospital. Additionally, the students and Associate Professor Dr Lily O'Hara from the Public Health Department in CHS visited the Rohingya refugee camps and a number of vision centres within the local host community.

Eman AlBahrani, a senior Public Health Management student, said, "In our trip, we had the opportunity to speak with health managers and the Rohingya refugee leaders to hear their points of view. Based on these stories and the work done by Orbis, QFFD and their many partner hospitals, we learned that no global outreach programme is successful without community engagement."

Ooredoo to sponsor Attend & Win event

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Qatar's leading telecommunications provider yesterday announced it is to sponsor the upcoming Attend & Win event.

The cultural entertainment event is being held at the Ooredoo Stage today. TV presenter Khaled Jassim and Hamad Al Jameela will attend the event, which will see the audience being asked questions at random, with cash and other prizes will be awarded for correct answers.

Along with a range of other subjects, the audience will be quizzed on Ooredoo, including on its renowned range of products and services.

Speaking about the event, Manar Khalifa Al Muraikhi, Director PR and Corporate Communications at Ooredoo, said: "We are always looking for ways to engage our customers, and give them more. This fun-event is the ideal way for us to meet our customers, get our message out there and of course hand out some exciting prizes."



Mohammad Radhi Al Hajri, Director of Media and Traffic Awareness Department

MoI to ensure security, safety during Ramadan

FROM PAGE 1

On the readiness of the department, Assistant Director of the Central Operations Department, Major Abdullah Al Hail, said that the department is responsible for dealing with all communications round the clock throughout the year.

The directors of the security departments of the Ministry of Interior have urged citizens and residents to follow all instructions and abide by the various regulations and rules that guarantee their safety and security in homes, roads, and markets, in order to ensure security and peace for all during the holy month of Ramadan.

First-ever TEDx event at Texas A&M at Qatar shares ideas



A session during the first-ever TEDx event at Texas A&M at Qatar on the theme of empowerment.

THE PENINSULA
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The Leadership Club at Texas A&M University at Qatar and student Ganna Khalil recently organised the first-ever TEDx event at Texas A&M at Qatar on the theme of empowerment.

TEDx is an independently organised event that helps share ideas in communities around the world in the form of short, powerful talks. The event took place at Qatar National Library and the presenters were Texas A&M at Qatar students, alumni, faculty and staff, parents and one VCUarts Qatar graduate. Speakers shared their "ideas worth spreading," which is what TEDx aims to achieve.

The Leadership Club president, Ghaith Glaied, said, "The mission of TEDx is aligned with the mission of The Leadership Club. By sharing ideas worth spreading, we aim to create an authentic community where students have the opportunity to share the impressive ideas they care about."

The students, Saad Moazam and Farah Ramadan, gave a joint talk on valuing time. Moazam, a senior mechanical engineering major student, said a real turning point in his life was when he realised, "I am the best judge of what I should be doing with my time." That realisation was very empowering, and now he and Ramadan choose to invest their time in activities that are fulfilling. Ramadan, a sophomore chemical engineering student, started playing guitar, which led her to start the Aggie Music Organisation at Texas A&M at Qatar as an outlet for musically inclined students. Moazam founded a company after discovering his passion for entrepreneurship and humanitarian engineering. They ended their presentation with a question for every audience member to reflect on: "Do you make the most of your time or does time control you?"

Texas A&M at Qatar graduate Meera Abou Soufah asked the audience to close their eyes and imagine a leader. She then asked the audience if anyone saw themselves. Abou Soufah said, "Self-empowerment is taking control of your life, setting goals and making positive choices." She also said this road to self-empowerment is relative. "Run at your own pace, but run! No one will look after your career if you don't. Keep imagining until when you close your eyes, you see yourself." VCUarts Qatar alumna Farrah Altaweel and Texas A&M at Qatar graduate Mahmoud ElTouny's talks were about their projects empowering specific communities

QC renovates homes of low-income families

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Qatar Charity (QC) started the implementation of the "Renovations Challenge" programme, which aims at the maintenance and makeover of low-income families' homes.

As part of this programme, many community initiatives and companies cooperate with QC to carry out the maintenance work for homes damaged due to natural or unnatural factors and provide suitable furniture for them under their corporate social responsibility.

This programme aims at improving the social, psychological and health situation of low-income families, and achieving social solidarity to ensure a dignified life for all members of the community.

The house, which is currently under the maintenance, belongs to a woman with special needs, requiring further attention and care while fitting doors and installing other things in order to suit her health conditions. Abdul Rahman Mohammed Issa from Qatar Power (QSC), a company catering to the electricity and potable water demands, said the company took the initiative to renovate the house as part of its social responsibility.

He also added that the company started cooperation with QC last year through the "Back to Schools" project, which continues this year with this renovation programme, in addition to the Mobile Iftar during holy Ramadan. He said the company's participation in it came after reviewing various charity projects carried out by QC on the local level, taking over the maintenance of this house at its expense.



The students and staff of CMU-Q with guests and officials during the symposium.

Researchers win awards at CMU-Q event

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

A graduating senior from the Computer Science Program won the top award at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar's (CMU-Q) 'Meeting of the Minds' research symposium.

Omar Khattab created a novel framework that makes it easier and more efficient for information retrieval experts to develop and deploy scalable search engines. Large-scale information retrieval is central to many applications like web and e-commerce searches.

Second place went to Beom Jin Jayden Park and Hawra Al Saygh for their project, "Effect of aspartame on kinetics of calf intestinal alkaline phosphatase," and third place went to Youssef Kanbour for "Re-expression of BRCA1 using targeted DNA demethylation in breast cancer cells." Al Dana Al Mohannadi won the Best Poster Design award for her project, "Educating girls in Qatar: Toward enhancing technology use in public schools."

There were more than two dozens in the undergraduate poster category.

Role of family crucial in diabetic care

"Family support in diabetes care has shown to have a substantial effect in improving health outcomes for people with diabetes. It is therefore important that ongoing diabetes self-management education and support be accessible to all people with diabetes and their families," said Dr Abdullah Al Hamaq.



Dr Abdulla Al Hamaq, Executive Director of Qatar Diabetes Association, with other officials during the symposium at the Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha yesterday. PIC: SALIM MATRAMKOT / THE PENINSULA

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

With the high prevalence of diabetes in the country, a symposium was held yesterday to promote the role of the family in the management of the condition.

'Diabetes and Family' symposium organised by the Qatar Diabetes Association (QDA), a member of the Qatar Foundation (QF), shed light of the role of the family in the management, care, prevention and education of diabetes.

"Family support in diabetes care has shown to have a substantial effect in improving health outcomes for people with diabetes. It is therefore important that ongoing diabetes self-management education and support be accessible to all people with diabetes and their families to reduce the emotional impact of the disease that can result in a negative quality of life," said Dr Abdullah Al Hamaq, Executive Director of QDA.

"This symposium is being organised in line with the theme 'The Family and Diabetes' for World Diabetes Day 2018 and 2019. Studies have indicated that family members can improve the condition of people with diabetes, so we educate the health care professionals how they can involve the families in managing the condition of people with diabetes," he added.

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) has chosen the theme 'The Family and Diabetes' for a two-year time frame to raise awareness on the impact that diabetes has on the family and support network of those affected. It also aims to promote the role of the family in the management, care, prevention and education of diabetes.

At least 17% of the population have diabetes in Qatar. Most of these cases are type 2 diabetes, which is largely preventable through regular physical activity, a healthy and balanced diet, and the promotion of healthy living environments.

Families have a key role to play in addressing the modifiable risk factors for type 2 diabetes and must be provided with the education, resources and environments to live a healthy lifestyle. "Like any chronic condition, diabetes can have an influence on the family of the person who has the illness. Diabetes management can be quite complex, requiring life-long commitment and drastic changes to the patient's lifestyle. Empirical studies have shown positive and significant relationships between social support and treatment adherence among patients with diabetes. Social support from family provides patients with practical help and can buffer the stresses of living with illness," said Dr Mahmoud Ali Zirie, Senior Consultant, Internal Medicine, Diabetes and Endocrinology, at Hamad Medical Corporation.

Qatar wins 4 gold, 2 silver medals at ITEX in Malaysia

QNA
KUALA LUMPUR



The students from Qatar explain about their presentation to an official at the International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition in Malaysia.

Qatar has won four gold and two silver medals at the International Invention and Innovation Exhibition (ITEX) in Malaysia.

The Simaisma Secondary School for Boys, Al Wakra Secondary School for Boys, Amna bint Wahab Secondary School for Girls and Al Ghuwairiya Preparatory School for Girls were awarded gold medals for their project, while projects provided by Hassan bin Thabit Secondary School for Boys and Qatar Technical Secondary School for Boys received two silver medals.

Qatar's Students participate in various scientific research projects including using solar energy to cool dairy farms, research on designing smart glasses for the blind to avoid obstacles while swimming, electromagnetic glasses to help the elderly with Alzheimer's in the early stages of the disease in Qatar, and another on school emergency program. The competition is one of the largest international competitions in the field of scientific research and innovation. The Qatar's student delegation includes 12 students from 6 preparatory and secondary and this participation comes within the framework of cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Qatar National Research Fund and Qatar Science and Technology Park at Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development.

661 patients treated at HMC's Sealine Medical Clinic

THE PENINSULA
DOHA



Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) has concluded activities at its Sealine Medical Clinic as the camping season comes to a close.

This is the ninth consecutive year, the healthcare organisation operated the clinic, which began receiving patients in early November.

Ali Abdullah Al Khater (**pictured**), Chief Communications Officer at HMC, thanked all clinic staff, including doctors and nurses, ambulance service staff, and administrators, for their service. He also thanked the Ministry of Municipality and Environment for its ongoing support of the clinic throughout the season.

Al Khater, who is also project manager for the Sealine Medical Center, said HMC operates the clinic each year to ensure medical services, and specifically emergency medical services, are available for residents during the busy camping season. He said the annual operation of the clinic reinforces HMC's commitment to providing the best possible healthcare to campers in the Sealine, Khor Al Adaid (Inland Sea), and surrounding areas.

The Sealine Medical Clinic, which officially closed on April 27, was located close to the seashore and popular camping areas, at the same site as the last four years. The location was chosen to facilitate easier access for residents and visitors. The clinic, which operated every weekend during the camping season, opened each Thursday at 3pm and remained open until Saturday 5pm.

Dr Hamid Ghareeb, Consultant at HMC's Medical Administration Department and Medical Supervisor of the Sealine Medical Clinic, said a total of 661 patients (613 adults and 48 children) were treated during this year's camping season, including 413 Qataris and 248 expatriates.

The officials at the clinic have said patients were treated for a variety of complaints and ailments, with 370 cases involving fever, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, and cough, and 207 patients receiving treatment for wounds, burns, intestinal infections, and asthma. Eighty-four cases involved severe medical conditions, such as accidents, bone fractures, and heart attacks. Forty-three patients were transferred by ambulance to HMC Emergency Departments for additional treatment.

UN calls for immediate halt of demolitions in East Jerusalem

FROM PAGE 1

These demolitions were preceded by those of two other structures in Wadi Yasul on April 17. Nearly all structures in Wadi Yasul face a heightened risk of demolition following the near complete exhaustion of efforts to protect homes in the area; over 550 people face the threat of displacement as a result. "Some of the elderly refugees in Wadi Yasul who were originally displaced as a result of the 1948 conflict now face the prospect of losing their homes for the second time in their lifetime. For them and for the younger generations this cycle of loss is being perpetuated," said Gwyn Lewis, Director of West Bank Operations for UNRWA.

"As we have seen from the numerous cases UNRWA has responded to in the past, displacement, particularly for the most vulnerable, such as the elderly and children is extremely traumatic, destroys livelihoods, and separates families from their communities," she added. "As the occupying power of West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel is obligated to ensure the well-being of the local Palestinian population," said James Heenan, Head of OHCHR in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Kahramaa gifts workers on Labour Day

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa), represented by the National Program for Conservation & Energy Efficiency 'Tarsheed' and in cooperation with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), organised an event for labourers at Kahramaa Awareness Park at the occasion of Labour Day which falls on May 1 every year.

This event comes within an Initiative for workers launched by Kahramaa to appreciate their efforts in society and to highlight their significant roles as well as their contributions made in the infrastructural projects as being partners in overall developments witnessed by Qatar.

The event included several activities exclusively for labourers and it was marked with the presence of officials of Kahramaa and Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy. At the event, a film on conservation and energy efficiency was screened and gifts were distributed among labourers. A number of competitive games and activities were conducted for workers who participated enthusiastically and expressed their happiness for joining the event.

Kahramaa always shows willingness to felicitate workers throughout the year by organising several initiatives, events and activities for them. It also believes in the importance of works done by them and their crucial roles in evolving the country's infrastructures which is reflected through the massive development of Qatar.

Bedaya Ramadan Bazaar inaugurated at Al Mirqab Mall

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The General Manager of Bedaya Center for Entrepreneurship and Career Development (Bedaya Center), the joint initiative by Qatar Development Bank and Silatech, Reem Al Sowaidi along with Rony Mourani, General Manager Al Mana Malls, on Tuesday inaugurated the Bedaya Ramadan Bazaar, which is taking place in collaboration with Al Mirqab Mall until May 21 daily from 7pm to 1am.

The "Bedaya Ramadan Bazaar", with its outstanding design, which symbolises the old popular Souq is inspired by the one thousand- and one-nights stories. With a centred place for the herald who will be telling stories for kids on an hourly basis, the Bazaar will be the perfect platform for 30 local startups to showcase, promote and sell their goods under one vibrant and colorful roof.

The "Bazaar" aims to support small and medium businesses established by young, talented, ambitious, and creative Qatari entrepreneurs by providing them with the opportunity to showcase their products in a strategic location, considered as one of the most appealing shopping malls in Qatar.

Reem Al Sowaidi said, "We aim, through the "Bedaya Ramadan Bazaar", to provide an attractive platform and a golden opportunity for the start-ups and business owners operating small and medium businesses to showcase their products during the holy month of Ramadan at Al Mirqab Mall."

Rony Mourani, from Al Mana Malls, stated, "We are delighted to partner with Bedaya Center for Entrepreneurship and Career Development by supporting the "Ramadan Bazaar" initiative."

"We are always keen on encouraging and supporting entrepreneurs by offering all possible assistance to promising entrepreneurs to succeed in their businesses, which is in line with our vision to support this segment as they play a prominent role in moving the local economic wheel." Mourani added.



The General Manager of Bedaya Center, Reem Al Sowaidi, and Rony Mourani, General Manager of Al Mana Malls, inaugurate Bedaya Ramadan Bazaar at Al Mirqab Mall on Tuesday.

Fighting rages in Tripoli as more civilians flee

REUTERS
TRIPOLI

The fighting has so far killed 392 people and wounded 1,936, the World Health Organization tweeted. Around 50,000 people have been displaced, it added.

Fighting raged in the battle for the Libyan capital Tripoli yesterday, with neither faction able to secure gains as an offensive by eastern commander Khalifa Haftar entered its fifth week, killing almost 400 people and displacing 50,000.

Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), which is allied to a parallel administration based in Benghazi, has in the past week brought up more troops and heavy guns to the frontline.

But it has been unable to breach the defences in the city's southern suburbs of forces loyal to the internationally recognized government in Tripoli.

Libya has been in a state of chaos since Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in 2011 after 40 years in power by insurgents backed by Nato air power.

The battle for Tripoli has all but wrecked UN-backed efforts for a peace deal between the rival factions, and has disrupted the oil industry of a country that is one of Africa's largest producers.

There was heavy fighting from Thursday afternoon until early morning yesterday in the area of the former international airport, but the frontline has changed little, residents said.

It resumed at midday yesterday. Eight fighters allied to Tripoli were killed and 42 wounded, a medical source said.

The fighting has killed 392 people and wounded 1,936, the World Health Organization tweeted earlier. Around 50,000 people have been displaced, it added.

The LNA moved up on one part of the front earlier this week but was repelled by the Tripoli forces, who had built barriers, including shipping containers, on southern roads where tanks and artillery guns are in position.

The Tripoli forces gained some ground but analysts say the threat of the LNA will persist as long as it keeps its forward base in Gharyan, about 80 km (50 miles) south of Tripoli.

The town is difficult to take because it lies in mountains that rise from the coastal plain on which Tripoli sits.

The LNA, whose principle supporters include Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, has sent troops and material to Gharayn by road from Haftar's power base in Benghazi, the main eastern city, or via the central air base in Jufrah, military sources say.

A Tripoli government spokesman said his administration was talking to its ally Turkey to obtain military and civilian help - "anything that is needed to stop the assault".

Others remain trapped in conflict zones, where food is running short and the wounded and sick are in need of medical help.

European countries are concerned the fighting could provoke a new flight of refugees and migrants from Libya and elsewhere in Africa across the Mediterranean. Trafficking gangs have used Libya as a hub for their operations.

The latest flare-up also threatens to leave a power vacuum that Islamist militants could exploit.



Police officers stand guard outside the parliament headquarters in Libya's capital Tripoli, during the first session of the Government of National Accord (GNA), yesterday.

Israeli air strikes kill 2 Palestinians in Gaza

AP
GAZA CITY



An injured Palestinian kid is being carried away after Israeli military's interventions in the 'Great March of Return' at Israel-Gaza border in Khan Yunis, yesterday.

Two Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike yesterday after gunshots from the Gaza Strip wounded two Israeli soldiers, officials said.

The flare-up shattered a month-long easing of hostilities that was mediated by Egypt in exchange for Israel's scaling back restrictions on the territory. However, Gaza's Hamas rulers accused Israel of not honouring the deal.

Leaders from the Hamas were in Egypt for further talks. Cairo has hoped negotiations could lead to a long-term cease-fire.

The Israeli army said the soldiers who were shot were moderately and lightly wounded, respectively. Israeli aircraft hit a Hamas site in response. In addition to the two killed, two other Palestinians were wounded in the airstrike, Gaza's health ministry said.

The escalation in violence came as thousands of Palestinians demonstrated along Gaza's perimeter fence with Israel yesterday.

The health ministry said 50 Palestinians suffered various injuries during the protests at several sections of the frontier. There was no breakdown of what caused their wounds.

Hamas has hoped that Egyptian mediators could alleviate the blockade that Israel and Egypt imposed when it seized full control of Gaza in a 2007 coup against the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

More than 200 Palestinians and an Israeli soldier have been killed in the border protests that Hamas has led since March last year. Last month, Israel allowed Gaza fishermen to sail up to 15 nautical miles off the enclave's coast, but retracted the decision this week, scaling it down to the longtime previous limit of nine miles after rockets were fired from Gaza.

Yemen: 6 civilians dead in suspected Al Qaeda bombing

REUTERS/ADEN

At least six civilians, including children, were killed in Yemen yesterday when a roadside bomb believed to be planted by al Qaeda went off in the country's southeast, a Yemeni security official said. At least six others were wounded in the blast, the second attack in less than a week in Al Qatn village in the vast Hadramaut region

Al Qaeda's local affiliate in Yemen, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), has taken advantage of a civil war between the Iran-aligned Houthi group and President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi's Saudi-backed government to strengthen its position in the impoverished country.

Khashoggi's fiancee renews quest for justice

ANATOLIA
WASHINGTON

The fiancee of murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi has renewed her quest to seek answers for the killing, *The New York Times* reported yesterday.

Khashoggi first met Hatice Cengiz at a conference in Istanbul in 2018, and after numerous interactions, the two connected and Khashoggi asked for her hand in marriage.

Everything changed in early October last year when Khashoggi went to the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul for documents that would allow him to marry Cengiz.

Once he entered the consulate, he was subsequently killed. After offering a series of changing narratives to explain what happened, the Saudi government eventually admitted he had died there but blamed the operation on a botched rendition attempt.

In the aftermath, Cengiz met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, spoke with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, gave interviews and even helped with a book about Khashoggi's life. After some time, Cengiz became overwhelmed with grief and withdrew from view, according to *The Times*.

She even rejected an invitation to visit the White House. Now she is reversing course and is determined to obtain justice for Khashoggi. "One must take action to conclude this case legally and humanely," Cengiz told *The Times* in an interview. "It is a moral duty."

Cengiz said she is planning to visit the US later this month where she hopes to speak with members of Congress and US President Donald Trump, according to the newspaper.

"I am not a politician, but I can talk about what is moral," she said. "I don't know if I can change the mind of a president." The official Saudi narrative has been met with international skepticism as well as stern criticism from U.S. lawmakers over the possibility that Khashoggi's murder could have been carried out without the explicit consent of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

But Trump and his top officials have rejected any role bin Salman played in Khashoggi's grisly murder. Trump's own intelligence community determined with high confidence, however, bin Salman ordered his killing.

Tunisia orders army to transport fuel

REUTERS
TUNIS

Tunisia ordered the army yesterday to transport fuel to petrol stations yesterday, a government source said, the second day of a strike by fuel distribution workers that has caused empty pumps and long queues across the country.

The government is facing rising public demands for more pay with inflation at about 7 percent. It is also contending with pressure from international lenders to cut the public wage bill and other spending to shore up state finances. The fuel distribution workers launched a three-day walkout on Thursday to press demands for a wage rise of about 300 dinars ($100) a month. Their strike is the latest in a series of stoppages by education, health and transport workers.

"Prime Minister Youssef Chahed has bordered the army to distribute fuel in light of the ongoing strike, which has gone against the interests of the people," the government source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said. The walkout has disrupted normal life as drivers have had to abandon their cars after running out of fuel, while thousands have had to queue for long hours with jerry cans to fill up at petrol stations.

12 dead in pro-regime attacks in Syria

AFP/BEIRUT

Attacks by Syrian regime forces and their Russian allies killed 12 civilians in the country's northwest yesterday in the latest violation of an eight-month-old truce, a war monitor said.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said four women were among the 12 people killed in shelling and airstrikes on several towns and villages in Idlib and neighbouring Hama province.

"The attacks have been continuously escalating for four days," Observatory head Rami Abdul Rahman said.

A correspondent saw intense bombardment of southern Idlib yesterday, when warplanes dropped bombs that sent huge plumes of grey smoke billowing into the sky.

Idlib and nearby areas have been protected from a massive regime offensive since a September deal inked by Damascus ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey. But the region, currently harbouring some three million people, has come under increasing bombardment since the jihadist group Hayat Tahrir Al Sham took full control of it in January.

The escalation has killed 200 civilians and displaced nearly 140,000 since February, according to the UN.

Abdul Rahman said shelling and airstrikes in recent days have primarily targeted positions and bases belonging to former Al Qaeda affiliate HTS and other armed groups.

Rivals agree on 6-month extension in S Sudan peace deal

AP/JUBA

South Sudan's once-warring parties yesterday agreed to delay key next steps in a fragile peace deal by six months after the main opposition warned it might walk away. The agreement came after closed-door talks in neighboring Ethiopia. The chairman of a smaller opposition party that attended, Denay J. Chagor, confirmed the details.

The extension needs approval next week by a council of regional foreign ministers from Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda. Several attendees said they expect it to pass.

The agreement on an extension is a change of heart for the government. A May 12 deadline has loomed for opposition leader Riek Machar to return and again become President Salva Kiir's deputy in a power-sharing arrangement. But Machar's supporters say security arrangements are insufficient.

Sudanese protesters vow to campaign during Ramadan

AFP
KHARTOUM



Sudanese protesters gather during Friday prayers outside the army headquarters in Khartoum as they continue to protests demanding that the ruling military council hand power to a civilian adminstration.

Defiant Sudanese protester Ahmed Hamid insists nothing can stop him campaigning for the army to relinquish power — not even the start next week of strength-sapping fasting during Muslim holy month Ramadan.

Demonstrators remain camped out in the soaring heat of Khartoum calling for civilian rule three weeks after the military ousted veteran leader Omar Hassan Al Bashir.

"We cut the head and part of the body is still there and holding the head of this president," Hamid, 21, said at the sprawling protest site. "We will stay fasting here the whole of Ramadan and even after Ramadan until we meet our demand."

Sudan has been rocked by months of nationwide protests that initially targeted Bashir's 30-year rule, accusing the leader and his regime of running the country's economy into the ground.

On April 6, thousands of protesters braving volleys of tear gas from security agents reached the army headquarters in central Khartoum and set up camp.

Five days later the military stepped in and deposed Bashir as calls from the crowds grew for them to intervene and end his rule.

But the 10-member army council that then took over has so far rebuffed pressure from the street and international calls to hand power to a civilian body.

So the protesters are now rallying against the council, demanding it be dissolved.

After several rounds of talks between the generals and protest leaders, the two sides agreed to form a joint civilian-military council that will replace the existing military body.





Residents inspect damages on street stalls at a promenade after Cyclone Fani landfall in Puri in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, yesterday. RIGHT: Bangladeshi fishermen moor their boats in Khulna as Fani barrels northeastwards into West Bengal state and towards Bangladesh.

Major cyclone claims 8 lives in India

Authorities in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, where 10,000 people perished in a 1999 cyclone, had evacuated more than a million people as they worried about a possible 1.5-metre storm surge sweeping far inland. Authorities in Bangladesh, where Fani was headed, said a woman was killed.

AFP
KOLKATA

Normally bustling Kolkata was eerily quiet late yesterday as one of the biggest cyclones to hit India in years bore down on the major city after leaving a trail of deadly destruction in its wake.

Cyclone Fani ("Snake" in Bengali) slammed into the eastern state of Odisha earlier in the day, reportedly killing at least eight people and one in Bangladesh, where it was headed after Kolkata, officials said.

With effects felt as far away as Mount Everest, winds gusting up to 200km per hour sent coconut trees flying and cut off power, water and telecommunications. Authorities in Odisha, where 10,000 people perished in a 1999 cyclone, had evacuated more than a million people as they worried about a possible 1.5-metre (five-foot) storm surge sweeping far inland.

Eight people were killed, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, including a teenage boy, a woman hit by concrete debris and an elderly woman who suffered a heart attack in one of several thousand shelters packed with families.

Odisha disaster management official Prabhat Mahapatra said there were not yet any confirmed casualty figures.

"Around 160 people were injured in Puri alone. Our relief work is ongoing," he said.

Authorities in Bangladesh, where Fani was headed, said a woman was killed, also by a tree, and that 14 villages were inundated as flood dams broke due to a tidal surge. Disaster management spokesman Mohammad Jahir said that 400,000 people from Bangladeshi coastal villages have been taken to shelters.

"We are mooring our boat because it's the only means of income for us. Only Allah knows when we can go back to fishing again," Akbar Ali, a fisherman in near the town of Dacope in Bangladesh said while battling surging waves to tie his boat to a tree. "I am closing my stall early this evening and leaving it to its fate. It may get blown away today if the storm gets too strong," said Morium Akter, a tea stall owner by the river Rupsha in Khulna town.

Hundreds of thousands more people in India's West Bengal state have also been given orders to flee. Local airports have been shut, while train lines and roads were closed. "It just went dark and then suddenly we could barely see five metres in front of us," said one resident in Puri.

"There were the roadside food carts, store signs all flying by in the air," the man said from a hotel where he took shelter. "The wind is deafening." Another witness said he saw a small car being blown along a street by the winds and then turned over.

After pounding Puri and Odisha state capital Bhubaneswar and heading northeastwards, losing strength as it goes, authorities were battling to remove fallen trees from roads and to restore phone and internet services.

"We are monitoring the situation 24x7 and doing all it takes... Be alert, take care and stay safe for the next two days," West Bengal's chief minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted.

The winds were felt as far away as Mount Everest, with tents blown away at Camp 2 at 6,400 metres (21,000 feet) and Nepali authorities cautioning helicopters against flying.

Meanwhile a baby was born near Bhubaneswar just as the cyclone passed through. "We are calling her Lady Fani as she was born when the hospital was hit," a spokesperson said. Meteorologists have warned of the "total destruction" of thatched houses, the uprooting of power and communication poles, the "flooding of escape routes" and damage to crops in some areas.

Three militants including top commander dead in Kashmir

ANATOLIA / SRINAGAR

Three Kashmiri militants, including a top commander, were killed by Indian forces yesterday in Shopian district of southern Kashmir. The killings come two days before the district goes to polls in the ongoing Indian parliamentary elections.

Indian paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) confirmed the killings and said they had recovered the bodies of the militants. One Indian army soldier was also wounded in the gunfight. "The operation has concluded. Killed militants have been identified as Hizbul Mujahideen Commander Lateef Tiger, Tariq Molvi, and Sharik Ahmad Nengroo," the forces said.

Tiger was a close aide of Burhan Wani, a commander of the pro-Pakistan militant group Hizbul Mujahideen, whose killing in July 2016 sparked a massive rebellion and led to the resurgence of militancy in the region. Tiger was the only surviving active militant from the original 'Burhan group' that included 12 militants. Only one of them, Tariq Pandith, who was arrested by Indian forces in 2016 and is incarcerated, survives.

Two kids die of starvation in Andhra

IANS / AMARAVATI

Two children have died of starvation after they resorted to eating mud in Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur district during the last six months, a child rights group has said. Balala Hakkula Sangham, a non-governmental organisation fighting for children's rights, has complained to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) that the two children aged around 5 died as they were eating mud to satiate their hunger.

Vennela died on April 28 while her cousin Santosh died six months ago. Both children were buried near their hut by Mahesh and Neela Veni, who had migrated from Karnataka along with six children in search of livelihood. While Santosh was their son, Vennela was the daughter of Neela's sister. The couple was addicted to liquor and were unable to provide food to the children.

Sri Lanka frees journalist on bail

AFP/COLOMBO

A Sri Lankan court yesterday released on bail a Reuters news agency journalist arrested on a charge of trespassing while covering the aftermath of the Easter bombings.

A court in Negombo, north of Colombo, granted bail to New Delhi-based photographer Danish Siddiqui, an official said.

"He was asked to provide a surety bail. It was done and he was released from custody, but a formal hearing will be on May 9," a court official said.

Police said they arrested the photographer following a complaint from a school in Katana, north of Colombo, which accused him of trespassing.

Sri Lanka has been on edge since the April 21 attacks that killed 257 people and wounded nearly 500.

The country is under a state of emergency giving greater powers to police and security forces to arrest and detain suspects.

Modi's remark on UPA strikes abuse to forces: Congress

IANS
NEW DELHI

Slamming Prime Minister Narendra Modi for mocking the Congress on its claims of surgical strikes carried out during the UPA regime, the grand old party said yesterday that Modi's comment was a direct abuse of the indomitable courage and bravery of the armed forces.

The Congress on Thursday claimed that six anti-terror surgical strikes were conducted by the Manmohan Sing-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government but the party never took political advantage out of them.

Addressing an election rally in Rajasthan's Sikar yesterday, Modi said: "When you have to do it on paper only, or in video games, then whether they (surgical strikes) are 6 or three or 20 or 25, what difference does it make to the people."

Talking to reporters here, senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said: "The Prime Minister at a rally in Sikar has insulted our brave armed forces. Downgrading the surgical strikes conducted by the armed forces as "on paper" and "video games" is nothing but a direct abuse of the indomitable courage and bravery of our jawans."

"It is sad that Modiji even faulted the statement of the then Army Chief, General Bikram Singh, on the surgical strike carried out on December 23, 2013," he said.

Suspected electronic device found on bird's body

IANS/HAJIPUR

The Bihar police have recovered an electronic device from the body of a dead bird that usually could not be spotted in the local area. "Local birds had killed a bird on Thursday that is of different species and could not be seen in local region. The villagers spotted the bird and found a chip in his body and a brass tag was also tied on its feet," said Uday Shankar, SHO, Mahnar police station in Vaishali district.

"The police have handed over the body of the bird to the forest department and is probing the matter," he said. He said that some times scientists place electronic devices on birds and animals to collect more authentic information about them.

Rahul pens emotional letter to Amethi people

IANS
LUCKNOW

Congress President Rahul Gandhi has written an emotional letter to the people of Amethi, asking them to vote for him and promising development of the region as soon as Congress forms government at the Centre.

The letter is addressed to 'Mera Amethi Parivar' and says that the BJP has been setting up 'factory of lies' and is distributing 'rivers of cash' to entice voters. He says that the strength of Amethi lies in its honesty, integrity and simplicity.

It is being distributed in every house in Amethi which goes to



polls on May 6 in the fifth phase. Gandhi has not been able to devote sufficient time to his constituency since he has been busy campaigning across the country. His sister and Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, however, has been campaigning for her brother.

In his letter, Gandhi said: "It is my promise to the people of Amethi that the moment the Congress comes to power at the Centre, the schemes blocked by the BJP will be started. On May 6, vote in large numbers to bring back this member of the family." He further said that Amethi has been his family and it gives him courage to stand by the truth. He says he can hear the pain of the poor and will continue to raise his voice in their support.

More attacks feared as Sri Lankan Muslims condemn bombings



Security personnel stand guard outside a mosque during Friday noon prayer in Colombo.

AFP
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka bolstered security yesterday with fears of attacks against bridges in the capital as the prime minister vowed to hunt down any remaining Islamic State extremists behind the deadly Easter bombings.

Sri Lanka's minority Muslims, meanwhile, held Friday prayers under tight security, condemning the attacks that killed 257 people on April 21. Extremists were believed to be planning further attacks, authorities said, this time against several bridges and flyovers in the city as well as police stations. The warnings came as Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said some of the conspirators in the April 21 bombings of three hotels and three luxury hotels may still be at large.

"Most of those responsible for the Easter attacks have been arrested. Some have been killed," Wickremesinghe said during a tour of island's east, where a Christian church was hit. "We are trying to see if there are any more secret IS cells in the country," he said. "We will ensure that IS terrorism will be eradicated from our land." He hoped normality would return by Monday when public schools reopen after an extended Easter vacation. About 50 children were among those killed.

As Muslims held prayers, mosque leaders said donations they received will be diverted to help rebuild the three churches. At Colombo's Dewatagaha Juma mosque, hundreds of Muslims prayed after being frisked by police for explosives. Vehicles were not allowed to be parked near the Sufi mosque.

Banners in front of the mosque condemned the atrocities and expressed solidarity with Christians. One of the banners offered the mosque for Christians to conduct their services.

"The situation has come to normal but not completely," chairman of the mosque, Reyyaz M Salley, said. "People are still scared. Non-Muslims and Muslims are in a very tense situation."

Police confirmed they had instructed stations around Colombo to deploy additional officers and asked the navy to deploy more vessels on rivers following the leak of police intelligence warning bridges were at risk of attack. Sri Lanka's military has also set up a special command centre to co-ordinate anti-jihadist operations, while the army said more troops have been deployed for search operations.

SILK ROAD EXHIBITION

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE



SILK ROAD EXHIBITION

3-5 NOVEMBER 2019

DOHA EXHIBITION & CONVENTION CENTER

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The Silk Road Exhibition is an event to highlight the path of the new road and the countries through which it deals. It will be an international forum that brings together investors, implementers and decision-makers under one roof. Through this exhibition, participants can learn about the products and exports of the route countries, and businessmen can meet with their counterparts and seize business opportunities for their companies and institutions.

EXHIBITION OBJECTIVES

1. The exhibition aims at presenting the state-of-the-art technologies which are included in the shipping services of all types, transport and port management in the participating countries.
2. Provide an opportunity for direct meeting between exhibitors and many decision makers from local authorities and delegations, public and private institutions both participants and visitors.
3. Provide an ideal structure for establishing business ties between participants.
4. Attract investments and specialized modern technology to the State of Qatar.
5. Provide opportunities for building agreements and mutual cooperation between Qatar and the Silk Road States in various fields.

INVITED SECTORS

1. Customs Authorities
2. Shipping and Transportation Companies by Sea, Air and Land
3. Logistics Services Companies
4. Port Construction and Development Companies
5. Dry Dock (Shipyards) Developers
6. Insurance Companies
7. Shipbuilders
8. Container Builders
9. Oil & Gas Tankers Builders
10. Land Freight Trains
11. Port Management Companies
12. Industrial and Commercial Products of Countries Located on the Sea and Air Silk Line
13. Navigation Technology Management
14. Navigation Universities and Training Institutes
15. Security and Safety Companies for Shipping Lines
16. International Organizations and Companies Specialized in the Same Field
17. Consulting Companies
18. Cruise Ships
19. Navigation & Meteorological System
20. Cargo Packaging Equipment
21. Courier Express
22. Logistic Zone
23. Design and Construction of Warehouse Providers
24. Environmental and Pollution Control Technology

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Court orders Manila to protect S China Sea

REUTERS
MANILA

The order represents a rare challenge by the judiciary to what critics say is President Rodrigo Duterte's capitulation to China's expansionism and militarisation in the South China Sea, in return for economic incentives that have not been forthcoming.

The Philippine Supreme Court ordered the government and security agencies yesterday to protect the environment in disputed areas of the South China Sea, responding to fishermen's complaints of inaction against illegal Chinese activity.

The top court said it had issued a writ instructing heads of key ministries, the coastguard, navy and police to enforce international conventions and domestic laws to protect reefs and marine life in the Philippines' 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The order represents a rare challenge by the judiciary to what critics say is President Rodrigo Duterte's capitulation to China's expansionism and militarisation in the South China Sea, in return for economic incentives that have not been forthcoming. The court was responding to a petition by fishing communities from two provinces who alleged that island-building by the Chinese state and Chinese fishing practices were violations of a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, in a case lodged and won by the Philippines. Duterte has been accused of squandering the advantage of that landmark ruling by giving in to China's strategic demands, in the hope of securing billions of dollars of loans and investments.

Yesterday's order by the Supreme Court covers three disputed area, the Scarborough Shoal, the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal, and Mischief Reef, one of three reefs that China has converted into artificial islands equipped with radar, bunkers and surface-to-air missiles.

The court gave no timeframe and did not say how authorities should enforce the laws. The justice minister and the president's spokesman did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the court order.

The ruling compounds what is arguably Duterte's biggest foreign policy crisis in his presidency, as China tighten its control over the strategic waterway where more than $3 trillion in commerce passes each year. Opinion polls consistently show that Duterte's huge popularity among Filipinos has done little to change feelings of mistrust towards China.

Duterte denies caving in to Beijing but argues it is pointless and dangerous to challenge a more superior military power.

He met Chinese President Xi Jinping at a summit in China last month and voiced opposition to swarms of Chinese fishing boats near a disputed island occupied by the Philippines.

Abdiel Fajardo, President of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, said the writ affirms the arbitration ruling and effectively reminds the authorities they have a duty to follow the constitution and domestic laws.

"The Philippines, at least through the judiciary, is not waiving its rights over them by acquiescing to the unilateral actions of another state," he said in a text message.

Over 90 test positive for HIV in Sindh province

ANATOLIA
LARKANA, PAKISTAN

Hundreds of Pakistanis crowded into blood screening camps in Larkana, a remote district of southern Sindh province yesterday after more than 90 people, mostly children, tested positive for the HIV virus last week, according to authorities.

The district made headlines after 13 of 16 children tested positive for the virus.

The shocking results led health officials to deploy teams of doctors and area residents rushed to be screened amid fear of a rise in number of affections. Police arrested an HIV positive local doctor earlier this week on charges of deliberately spreading the fatal disease among children.

The doctor denies the charge and said he was not aware of his own condition until he was screened this week.

"We have so far screened nearly 2,700 people since April 25. Out of them, some 91 have been tested positive for HIV," Director General of the Sindh Health Department, Dr Masood Solangi, said. Health department figures show 79 of the 91 are children. Police and health officials have launched a crackdown against unauthorised laboratories, blood banks and clinics across the province following the results.

"This is, no doubt an alarming situation as we were not expecting these figures," Sindh AIDS Control Program, Dr. Aftab Ahmad said.

The government is expanding blood screening facilities to other districts, which would continue testing until the level of positive tests plummeted, he said.

A large number of Pakistanis suffer from poverty and illiteracy, mainly in rural areas, and are taken advantage of by phony doctors who repeatedly use disposable syringes. "The level of quackery [fake doctors] is too huge," said Ahmad. "Until and unless, it is controlled, I am afraid spreading of HIV virus cannot be contained." Unsafe blood transfusions at unregistered and ill-equipped blood banks in Pakistan is another reason behind the spread of HIV, which already has seen a 45% increase since 2010.



This file picture shows New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern walking back to her baby Neve and partner Clarke Gayford, after speaking at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit during the 73rd United Nations General Assembly in New York City, New York, US.

New Zealand PM engaged to partner

REUTERS
WELLINGTON

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is engaged to her longtime partner, Clarke Gayford, after a proposal over the Easter holidays, her spokesman said yesterday. The forthcoming nuptials are a rarity for world leaders in office and follow Ardern's pregnancy last year which was seen around the globe as a symbol of progress for female leaders. She is only the second elected leader to give birth while in office, after Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto in 1990 and, if she marries while in office, will be the first major leader to do so since French President Nicolas Sarkozy wed Carla Bruni in 2008. Her fiancé, Gayford, is a 41-year-old host of a television fishing show who takes care of their daughter, while Ardern runs the country.

Pakistan central bank governor dismissed

REUTERS
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's government has fired the governor of the central bank and the chairman of the tax collection body, two senior government officials said yesterday, in another setback to efforts to tackle economic turmoil.

The removal of the two comes only weeks after Finance Minister Asad Umar was asked to step down amid vital bailout negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, suggesting the government wants to overhaul its financial team amid weakening growth rates and soaring inflation.

"The government has decided to remove the governor of the State Bank and the chairman of FBR," a Finance Ministry source said, referring to State Bank of Pakistan Chairman Tariq Bajwa and Federal Bureau of Revenue Chairman Jahanzeb Khan.

Local TV channels Geo and Ary also reported that both men have been dismissed, but Dawn TV said that Bajwa had resigned.Bajwa, appointed governor in 2017 during the tenure of the previous government, was one of the key figures in Pakistan's ongoing bailout negotiations with the IMF.

He was also seen to be close to Ishaq Dar, the former finance minister who appointed him and who championed a "strong rupee" policy that many analysts blame for Pakistan's current economic woes, including current account deficits.The IMF is pushing Pakistan to embrace a more flexible policy to end repeated boom-and-bust cycles, with many analysts arguing that the local currency is overvalued.

Afghanistan's grand council ends with call for peace talks

AP
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

An Afghan grand council convened by President Ashraf Ghani ended yesterday with a resounding call for peace with the Taliban and a promise from the president to free 175 Taliban prisoners ahead of holy Ramadan, the Islamic holy month that starts next week.

The council – known as Loya Jirga — brought together more than 3,200 politicians, tribal elders, prominent figures and others to hammer out a shared strategy for future negotiations with the Taliban.

Ghani had sought to project a unified stance with the council but several prominent Afghans boycotted the gathering, including Ghani's partner in the government, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, exposing the deepening rifts in the administration. "I want to say to the Taliban that the choice is now in your hands," Ghani said at the closing ceremony in Kabul. "Now it is your turn to show what you want to do." Ghani said the message of the five-day gathering was clear: "Afghans want peace" and offered a cease-fire, though he stressed it would not be unilateral. In the statement yesterday, the Taliban rejected a cease-fire, saying attacks will continue during holy Ramadan but said "fighters are very careful of civilians during any operation." The group has rejected cease-fire proposals saying US and Nato troops must withdraw from the country first.

The Taliban called the Loya Jirga an attempt by Ghani to shore up his popularity and criticised it for not mentioning the latest United Nations report, which said the US and Afghan forces killed more civilians in the first three months of this year than the insurgents.

In recent months, the Taliban have stepped up their attacks, inflicting staggering casualties on Afghan forces, and now hold sway over half the country. The US, meanwhile, has accelerated efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the 17-year war — America's longest conflict — and has pressed for direct talks between the Taliban and Kabul.

The US's special peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, has been crisscrossing the region since his appointment last year, seeking consensus among Afghanistan's neighbours, as well as Russia and China, on the need for a peace settlement.

Vietnamese woman in Kim Jong Nam murder case freed

AFP
KUALA LUMPUR



Vietnamese national Doan Thi Huong, accused in the murder of Kim Jong Nam, smiles as she is escorted by police out of the High Court in Shah Alam.

A Vietnamese woman who stood trial for the assassination of the North Korean leader's half-brother was freed from prison yesterday, bringing down the final curtain on a dramatic and often bizarre two-year murder mystery.

Kim Jong Nam, the estranged relative of Kim Jong Un and once seen as heir apparent to the North's leadership, died in agony after having his face smeared with a banned nerve agent as he waited at Kuala Lumpur airport in February, 2017.

The sensational killing made headlines around the world, and sparked a furious diplomatic row as Seoul accused Pyongyang of an elaborate plot to murder a figure who had spent years in exile and been critical of his family's rule. Doan Thi Huong from Vietnam and Indonesian Siti Aisyah were arrested after being spotted on CCTV approaching Kim, but they always denied murder. The women insisted they were tricked into carrying out the hit by North Korean agents who said it was a reality TV show prank and fled Malaysia after the killing. They went on trial, but in March prosecutors dropped the murder charge against Aisyah after diplomatic pressure and she flew home.

Then last month they withdrew murder charges against Huong, who pleaded guilty to a reduced count of "causing injury" and was told she would be released in May at the end of her sentence.

More than two years after her arrest, the 30-year-old former hair salon worker was freed from prison outside the Malaysian capital in the early morning, racing past journalists in a van with heavily tinted windows. "I'm very happy, thank you all a lot," said Huong, in a message read by her lawyers to media after her release. She went to an immigration office in the afternoon and was due to fly to Vietnam, where she will be reunited with her family.

While there is relief for the women, no one else is in custody over the murder and those behind the plot are unlikely to ever be punished.

"The assassins have not been brought to justice," said her lawyer Hisyam Teh Poh Teik, adding the women's legal teams consistently argued that four North Koreans who fled Malaysia after the killing, and were charged in absentia, were the real murderers.

The women were arrested after they were captured on airport CCTV cameras walking up behind Kim as he waited for a flight, and one was seen clasping her hands over his face.

Kim, who fell from grace in after a bizarre attempt to visit Tokyo Disneyland, died shortly afterwards, his face smeared with poison. The women went on trial in October 2017 but the case was slow-moving due to the large number of witnesses and appeals from the defence teams.

Australia jails extremist for Philippines boat plot

AP
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The ringleader of a plot to take six extremists from Australia in a motor boat to the southern Philippines to overthrow the provincial government was sentenced by an Australian judge yesterday to seven years in prison.

Victoria state Supreme Court Justice Michael Croucher ordered Islamic State group sympathiser and firebrand preacher Robert "Musa" Cerantonio to serve at least five years and three months in prison before becoming eligible for parole. The 34-year-old had pleaded guilty. Cerantonio and five other men had plotted in 2016 to take a 7-metre half-cabin fiberglass power boat off the northeast Queensland coast to encourage others to overthrow the government in the southern Philippines.

Sharif's bail extension plea rejected

ANATOLIA
KARACHI

Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday turned down former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's plea seeking an extension in his bail in a graft case on medical grounds, court records and local media reported.

The judges also rejected Sharif's petition seeking permission for cardiac treatment at a London hospital where he had undergone open-heart surgery in 2015, local broadcaster Geo News reported.

The three-time premier, who has been sentenced to 17 years in jail in two corruption cases, was granted a six-week bail by the top court last month after a medical board suggested his shifting to a hospital for immediate cardiac treatment.

His bail will expire on May 7. According to the top court's judgment, Sharif, 69, has to surrender himself to the jail authorities following expiry of his bail.

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EDITORIAL

World trusts Qatar

The 16th Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) hosted in Doha last week was a productive diplomatic activity that played an important role in strengthening political, economic cooperation between the member states. The meeting which was attended by foreign ministers and other top officials from Asian countries was a collective expression of will by the Asian states to enhance mutual cooperation for peace, progress and prosperity.

Doha not only hosted the 16th Ministerial Meeting of the ACD but it was also decided unanimously by the ACD member states that Qatar will host the Third Summit of Asia Cooperation Dialogue in 2020. The trust of Asian countries on Qatar reflects Qatar's growing international role. The most important part of the meeting was Doha Declaration which outlines the contours of future coordination either political or economic between ACD member states for the better tomorrow.

The Doha declaration issued by the 16th Ministerial Meeting of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) appreciated Qatar's initiatives to teach the Arabic language to non-Arabic speakers in the ACD member states.

The meeting through joint declaration noted that communication and cooperation with other countries as well as international organizations will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing the status of the Asian countries and enable them to benefit from the global experience in various fields so that the ACD member countries can make the most of these experiences.

Doha not only hosted the 16th Ministerial Meeting of the ACD but it was also decided unanimously by the ACD member states that Qatar will host the Third Summit of Asia Cooperation Dialogue in 2020. The trust of Asian countries on Qatar reflects Qatar's growing international role.

The declaration noted the importance of balance and its contribution to economic sustainability and overall development in promoting dialogue, mutual respect, understanding and harmony.

It also stressed the importance of regional cooperation as a key mechanism for accelerating the achievement of the three pillars of sustainable development, which include social and economic development and environmental protection, as well as the stability of the Asian region with its vast and varied natural and human resources, rich and historical heritage and economic and social potential. The participating countries underlined keenness on continuing dialogue to promote cooperation in Asia, in the light of the maintenance of peace, prosperity, solidarity, mutual respect and tolerance, and the support of dialogue among the member states in order to reach understandings and achieve aspirations.

The countries participating in the ACD Ministerial Meeting expressed strong rejection of all forms of racial and religious racism, discrimination, extremism and terrorism, stressing the importance of communication in taking the necessary measures to combat terrorism and extremism through regional and international cooperation to take the necessary measures to meet these challenges. The Doha declaration referred to the importance of promoting free trade and investment between Asian countries and removing the obstacles to this objective. Another important development is that the Doha declaration welcomed Palestine's request to join the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



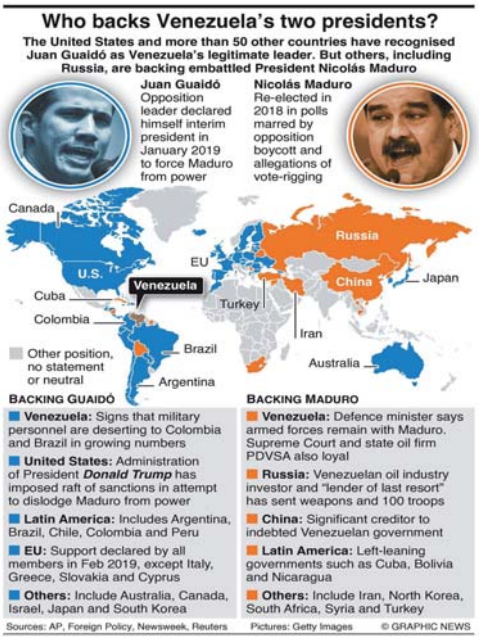
Spain won't allow its embassy to turn into a centre of political activism. We are also confident that, under these conditions, Venezuela will respect diplomatic immunity.

Josep Borrell
Spain's Foreign Minister

The White House wants Maduro gone, but it may be helping him stay in power



ISHAAN THAROOR
THE WASHINGTON POST



In baseball parlance, you could say (and some already have) that Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó may have struck out. His bid to stir a nationwide insurrection against the government of President Nicolás Maduro seemed to fizzle this week, the third time he failed to break Venezuela's perilous political deadlock.

The first moment came in January, when, as head of the country's National Assembly, Guaidó declared himself Venezuela's constitutionally legitimate president. Dozens of countries, including the United States, soon recognized his status – but Maduro, with the country's military at his back, clung to power. Then, in February, Guaidó confronted Venezuelan security forces when he appeared alongside a humanitarian convoy on the Colombian side of the border, hoping a showdown over aid would see patriotic compassion trump loyalty to the regime. But, the convoy stalled amid scenes of violence; only a few Venezuelan soldiers from the lower ranks defected to the opposition.

On Tuesday morning, it seemed Guaidó and his allies were primed for Maduro's downfall. Through apparent back-channel negotiations, a number of key figures in the regime allegedly had been persuaded to switch sides.

"Everyone around Maduro is trying to figure out where they're going to be when the music stops – either sitting down beside him, in jail or out of the country, because, yes, the music is going to stop," a senior US official said.

Leopoldo López, a charismatic opposition leader and Guaidó's mentor, dramatically escaped house arrest and appeared with his protege. Guaidó said whole sections of the Venezuelan military were with the opposition.

But their proclamations, amplified by officials in the Trump administration who cheered the opposition's "Operation Freedom," proved hollow. Maduro seems no closer to leaving office. Bloody clashes between protesters and security forces led to at least four deaths this week, while at least 230 people were injured. Guaidó called on Venezuelans to keep taking to the streets and insisted that a democratic transition was still around the corner. López, now wanted by authorities, found sanctuary in the Spanish Embassy in Caracas.

There are a few ways to interpret the current state of play. On one hand, it underscores the fragility of the Maduro regime, which has not moved to arrest Guaidó despite the opposition leader's provocative gambit. Maduro finds himself surrounded by top military and civilian officials who he now knows are contemplating a future without him. US officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and White House national security adviser John Bolton, spoke confidently of arrangements in place to allow Maduro to leave the country for exile.

"Everyone around Maduro is trying to figure out where they're going to be when the music stops – either sitting down beside him, in jail or out of the country, because, yes, the music is going to stop," a senior US official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told my colleagues.

Yet Maduro endures not just despite American pressure, but perhaps also because of it. For years, even as he presided over the economic collapse of his country and the harrowing humanitarian crisis that ensued, Maduro decried the "imperialist" threat from Washington, snarled at its asphyxiating economic sanctions, and rallied supporters around a narrative of resistance to foreign bullying and meddling. Now, top US officials are essentially proving him right: Pompeo, Bolton and others have made no secret of their desire for regime change and appear to be in close collaboration with Maduro's domestic opponents.

Bolton even publicly identified prominent regime officials who supposedly had been in secret dialogue with the opposition, a move experts warned may have a chilling effect on future prospects for a negotiated transition. "While [Bolton] offered no evidence of this, calling them out as potential US accomplices puts them at risk and likely guarantees that others will refuse to communicate with the United States for fear of being ratted out," wrote Christopher Sabatini of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Rather than accelerating the endgame with Maduro, there's a risk that Guaidó's move – and Washington's vociferous cheerleading – may have reset the clock. "Far more often than not when you're trying to topple a dictatorship – whether it's Pinochet's regime in Chile a generation ago or [Omar] al-Bashir's in Sudan a month ago – the job is to keep creating and exploiting cracks in the wall," wrote Tim Padgett, a Miami-based commentator on Latin American affairs. "The job is not to bring the whole damn wall down in one fell, heroic swoop – because every time that fails, as it usually does, it sets you back."

So now what? Though US officials insist repeatedly that "all options are on the table," there's little appetite for a US military intervention among Washington's allies in the region or within the Pentagon. My Washington Post colleagues detailed a recent tense meeting between senior US military officers and Bolton aides; the former made "the case against a risky escalation" in Venezuela while the latter sought more clear military options from their colleagues in the Pentagon. The meeting was adjourned abruptly after a senior Pentagon official angrily slammed his hand on the table out of frustration with the White House's "confrontational style."

For Bolton, the showdown in Venezuela is an extension of an ideological contest with the leftist government in Cuba and also, by proxy, with Russian influence in the region. US officials accuse Havana and Moscow of propping up the Maduro regime with their own security forces, though the Russians and Cubans have denied extending such direct military aid. According to State Department officials, it was the Kremlin that persuaded Maduro to stay in Caracas this week and hold the line.

No matter their bullish rhetoric, Bolton and other Washington hawks are finding it difficult to get their way. "What the Russians seem to have effectively figured out is how to call our bluff," Fernando Cutz, a former top National Security Council official under Trump, told Politico. "When they send troops into Georgia, or Ukraine, or Syria, or Venezuela, what are we going to do about it? It complicates our calculus and gives Russia the upper hand."

Overfishing risks ocean deserts as stocks plummet

AFP
THE HAGUE

With bigger boats, deeper nets and better sonar than ever before, the fishing industry's response to our insatiable appetite for fish risks transforming much of the world's oceans into aquatic desert.

In 2017, global catches topped 92 billion tonnes, more than four times the amount fished in 1950, according to the United Nations.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warns that fish stocks are overexploited the world over. Some species have become so rare that they require protect status, and experts fear for the very future of the fishing industry if catches continue at their current level.

According to Didier Gascuel, a researcher at Ifremer, which monitors the health of oceans, global fish stocks "could fall so low that it's no longer viable to go fishing."

It is not just the amount of fishing that concerns scientists, it is also how we fish. Today trawlers account for around half of global catches, their giant nets often indiscriminately sweeping up any fish in their path.

Then there's bottom trawling, where a weighted net is dragged along the seabed, seriously damaging ecosystems in the process.

"They plough the ocean depths to fish without discrimination, which impacts the coral, sponges etc," said Frederic Le Manach, from the campaign group Bloom, which lobbies for an end to bottom trawling.

The European Union outlawed the practice in 2016.

Longlining, where baited hooks are stretched out kilometres along a main fishing line leading to birds and turtles being trapped as well as fish, is currently legal. As is electric pulse fishing -- where fish are herded towards nets using electrical currents -- though it is set to be banned in 2021.

The Netherlands in particular relies on this technique, and pro-fishing groups say a ban will drastically impact the industry.

Indonesia is moving its capital city, other cities should take note



JOHN ENGLANDER
BLOOMBERG

Indonesia made a stunning announcement this week that it will relocate its capital from Jakarta. The decision validates decades of warnings about the city's catastrophic flood risk due to sinking land and rising seas. While Jakarta is especially vulnerable to the threat of rising seas, it serves as a profound wake-up call for hundreds of major cities, Washington included.

In making his decision, Indonesian President Joko Widodo said that the move is necessary, given that the city can no longer support its massive population in the face of environmental threats, as well as concerns of traffic congestion and water shortages. Surely at the top of his concerns is the fact that the city is sinking, a phenomenon known as subsidence. In the past 30 years, Jakarta sank more than 10 feet – a problem made only worse as the world's great ice sheets melt.

Jakarta is an extreme case, but it is by no means unique. In the United States, major cities such as New Orleans and Norfolk are also subsiding, though not nearly as fast. Even still, all coastal cities must face up to the reality of rising seas. There is no time to waste in planning and adapting to this threat.

Although Miami is often cited as the city most at risk, there are many highly vulnerable – and highly populous – cities around the world, including Mumbai and Calcutta, India; Shanghai; Lagos, Nigeria; Manila; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Bangkok; Copenhagen; Tokyo; London; Houston; and Tampa. In fact, thousands of coastal cities and rural communities globally are not only at risk, but already experience increased flooding during extreme high tides, often referred to as "king tides."

The swelling oceans demand that we start designing for and investing in the future now. The latest projections for average global sea-level rise this century range from about three feet to as much as eight. Keeping it to the lower part of that range largely depends on extreme global efforts to reduce greenhouse gases far beyond current efforts. But even a one-foot rise in sea level can dramatically increase coastal flooding. Hundreds of millions of people and trillions of dollars of assets are at risk.

Indonesia's decision to be proactive is something all coastal cities should do, what I call "intelligent adaptation." Instead of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on futile efforts to protect Jakarta from the dozen rivers that run through it – extending fragile walls never engineered to cope with the present threat – it will now start investing in a new capital city that has a sustainable future.

Meanwhile in the United States, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently announced that the combination of rising seas and subsidence will render the $14 billion fix to New Orleans's levees inadequate in just four years. Clearly, we need a new strategy, too.

Aggressively reducing carbon emissions could avert the worst scenarios, but sea-level rise probably cannot be stopped this century. The planet has already warmed almost 2 degrees Fahrenheit, which means ice sheets and glaciers will continue to melt for centuries.

Engineering for greater "resiliency" – the new buzzword – is a great idea to prepare for short-duration flood events such as from hurricanes. But preparing for rising sea level is different and requires adapting to a new normal.

Though it is tempting to procrastinate, cities would be smart to begin their adaptation planning now. By planning for rising sea levels, cities create confidence in their future. Adaptation can be a tremendous economic opportunity.

Coastal communities should be crafting 30-year master plans to positively address the threat, which could take many forms. For example, Washington is on the Potomac, a tidal river, and already experiences occasional flooding during extreme high tides and stormy weather. Rising seas will make that worse, but the city can probably protect itself with various forms of flood barriers on the river. Most vulnerable cities are not so fortunate and will need to look at a full range of options.

In Jakarta, the solution was to move the capital. Even that dramatic decision will not quickly solve the challenges for the 10 million residents. Yet it recognizes a new reality, allowing them to truly invest in the future. It's time for all coastal communities to plan for the future.

The sea is rising. We must rise with the tide.

In making his decision, Indonesian President Joko Widodo said that the move is necessary, given that the city can no longer support its massive population in the face of environmental threats, as well as concerns of traffic congestion and water shortages. Surely at the top of his concerns is the fact that the city is sinking, a phenomenon known as subsidence. In the past 30 years, Jakarta sank more than 10 feet – a problem made only worse as the world's great ice sheets melt.



A general view shows the capital of Jakarta, Indonesia

Big agriculture is breeding a worldwide health crisis



MARK BUCHANAN
BLOOMBERG

On the surface, our modern system of food production looks efficient: It produces plenty of food and seems highly innovative. But it also encourages people to eat unhealthy sugars and fats, while fully one-third of all food produced is lost or goes to waste. Industrial agriculture is defiling lakes and rivers with chemical runoff and depleting irreplaceable fertile topsoils.

The food and agriculture industries are pretty good at keeping these and other costs hidden from public view. But that may get harder if people start dying in large numbers, which isn't far-fetched, according to the United Nations. Health officials around the world are struggling with the explosive rise of deadly drug-resistant strains of the fungus Candida auris, which prey on people with weakened immune systems.

Worryingly, their emergence may be tied to indiscriminate use of fungicides in agriculture and food production.

First detected in Japan in 2009, C. auris – a pathogen that is mostly associated with health-care environments and can be spread through contact with infected patients – has since spread across the globe, alarming public health authorities. It's extremely hard to detect and eradicate, and it kills more than 50 percent of those it infects. In the US, hundreds of new infections have been reported in the past few years, mainly in New York, Illinois and New Jersey. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are trying to educate physicians about best practices.

Just as important as education is determining the origin of these strains, some of which are resistant to all three major classes of antifungal medicines. The resistant strains, genetic studies indicate, have arisen independently on multiple occasions and been found in patients having had no prior treatment with medical fungicides. So where did they come from?

One possibility looms large: that the new strains have emerged due to fungicide use not in medicine, but in agriculture. Fungicides known as azoles are widely used to deter fungal growth in plants and fruits. They account for about one-third of all global fungicide sales and, remarkably, are chemically almost identical to the antifungal agents doctors rely on to treat humans.

Research has already implicated agricultural fungicides in the emergence of another drug-resistant fungus, Aspergillus fumigatus.

While the fungus doesn't attack crops, it can be found in soils all over the world; it is one of the most common mold infections worldwide, and it is potentially lethal to those with weakened immune systems. Drug-resistant strains found in fungicide-treated fields or flower beds show specific genetic mutations just like those in Aspergillus detected in infected patients

It will take further research to determine if the new strains of C. auris have their origins in agriculture, but Aspergillus has already illustrated the perils of modern farming. Antibiotics are applied on a massive scale in food production, pushing the rise of bacterial drug resistance. A British government study published in 2016 estimated that, within 30 years, drug-resistant infections will be a bigger killer than cancer, with some 10 million people dying from infections every year.

We don't have to end up there. Pesticide use on most farms can be greatly reduced, or even eliminated, without reducing crop yields or profitability. Methods of organic farming, even as simple as crop rotation, tend to promote the growth of mutualistic fungi that crowd out pathogenic strains such as C. auris.

Unfortunately, because conventional agriculture is heavily subsidized and market prices don't reflect the costs to the environment or human health, organic food is more expensive and faces an uphill battle for greater consumption.

Of course, improved technology could help, with drugs of new kinds or in breeding and engineering resistant strains of plants. There's also plenty of opportunity for lightweight agricultural robots, which can weed mechanically or spray pesticides more accurately, reducing the quantity of chemicals used. But tech shouldn't be the sole focus just because it happens to be the most profitable route for big industries.

In his recent book "The Grand Food Bargain," agricultural expert Kevin Walker of Michigan State University traces the history of farming over the past 100 years, as big agriculture has systematically pushed small farms to the margins. In the US, just four corporations account for anywhere between 50 to 95 percent of seed sales, agricultural chemicals, animal breeding and farm machinery. As these firms have come to control markets, the quality and nutrition in food has decreased, and diets have shifted increasingly to processed foods high in sugars and fats, which earn bigger profits.

"Food is no longer valued for its ability to sustain life," Walker concludes, "but only for its ability to generate profits." As the rise of C. auris suggests, such a narrow focus risks sacrificing the effectiveness of some of our most valuable medicines.

The food and agriculture industries are pretty good at keeping these and other costs hidden from public view. But that may get harder if people start dying in large numbers, which isn't far-fetched, according to the United Nations. Health officials around the world are struggling with the explosive rise of deadly drug-resistant strains of the fungus Candida auris, which prey on people with weakened immune systems.

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Voters punish UK's two main parties

With 90 percent of results in, the Conservative Party had suffered a net loss of 1,124 seats on English local councils that were up for re-election, down by around a quarter. Labour, which would typically aim to gain hundreds of seats in a mid-term vote, instead had lost 100.

REUTERS
LONDON





Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May speaks at the Scottish Conservative party conference in Aberdeen, yesterday. RIGHT: Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn during a meeting with activists following the results of local elections in Sale, Manchester.

English voters frustrated with the deadlock over Brexit punished both Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservatives and the main opposition Labour Party in local elections, results showed yesterday.

Thursday's voting for seats on local councils in England provided a stark display of how Britain's 2016 vote to leave the European Union has split voters beyond traditional party lines.

Brexit has damaged the standing of the big parties, both of which are internally divided over how or even whether to lead Britain out of the EU, and have struggled to deliver a coherent message to voters on either side.

"It just seems voters, period, saying: 'A plague on both your houses'," said John Curtice, Britain's leading polling expert.

Frustration sometimes boiled over. One audience member shouted "Why don't you resign?" before May addressed Conservatives in Wales. Some ballot papers were spoiled, with voters refusing to vote for any of the parties.

With 90 percent of results in, the Conservative Party had suffered a net loss of 1,124 seats on English local councils that were up for re-election, down by around a quarter. Labour, which would typically aim to gain hundreds of seats in a mid-term vote, instead had lost 100.

The main beneficiaries of the swing against the two main parties were the pro-EU Liberal Democrats, who campaigned on a straightforward demand for a new referendum, aiming to reverse Brexit. They had won 599 councillors so far, doubling their seats. The Greens, who also back a second Brexit referendum, gained 164 seats.

The pro-Brexit UK Independence Party (UKIP) lost seats, but its former leader has set up a new brexit Party, which was not contesting Thursday's vote and had called for supporters to stay home or spoil their ballots.

Britain was meant to have left the EU on March 29, but after parliament repeatedly failed to back May's agreement on the exit terms, she was forced to seek an extension. Brexit is now due in October, and May is negotiating with Labour to find a compromise. Talks next week are not expected to reach a breakthrough.

But growing numbers of people on one side want to quit the EU abruptly with no deal, and on the other side hope to avert Brexit altogether, options that neither big party's leadership has backed to the frustration of many of their activists.

The result suggests the two main parties could be in for a drubbing at elections for the European parliament, which Britain is set to hold on May 23 because it has so far failed to leave the EU. The Conservatives and Labour will face an array of parties luring away their activists with straightforward pro- and anti-brexit positions.

Labour sources said their party had little to fear from the results so far, saying it was always going to be a "tough" battle in councils that traditionally favour the Conservatives.

Tough was also the word the Conservatives used to describe the local elections, with some pinning the blame for the party's bad showing on the deadlock in parliament, which has rejected May's Brexit deal three times.

May told her party in Wales: "There was a simple message from yesterday's elections, to both us and the Labour Party: just get on and deliver Brexit."

In rare agreement was Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who said there was now a "huge impetus" on every lawmaker to "get a deal done ... Parliament has to resolve this issue. I think that is very clear."

It is still unclear how the Brexit deadlock might be broken, though some say May might call a general election, a prospect Curtice said could end in another parliament where no party has an overall majority.

'Long overdue' for woman to lead the EU, says Vestager

AFP
BRUSSELS

One of the top contenders to succeed Jean-Claude Juncker as head of the European Commission said yesterday that it was long overdue to have a woman hold a top EU job.

Brussels is fast getting caught up in an EU "Game of Thrones", with a slate of key posts up for grabs soon, including leadership of the European Central Bank as well as EU Council President.

"It's long overdue to have a woman as head of the EU Commission," Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said.

"If you look at the precedents, you see that men have had their go," she said, speaking in her office at commission headquarters in Brussels.

A former finance minister from Denmark, Vestager is a favourite of EU insiders after her five year tenure as an anti-trust enforcer, taking on the likes of Google, Apple and Starbucks.

But she pointedly so far lacks the backing of her government in Copenhagen, a prerequisite for her future at the EU executive in Brussels.

Vestager said gender balance should be a criteria to fill the job openings, that will also include the 28 commissioner posts set for renewal in November. "It is very important that we... show change visibly and fast," she said.

Imposing gender balance at the EU executive is often ignored by member states that nominate commissioners to Brussels for five years.

SAS seals deal with unions to end week-long pilots strike

REUTERS
OSLO/STOCKHOLM

SAS reached a deal with unions to end a week-long strike by pilots that has grounded 380,000 passengers in a costly conflict that has dented the Scandinavian airline's prospects of making a profit this year.

SAS Chief Executive Rickard Gustafson said the airline and the unions agreed on a 3.5 percent salary increase in 2019 as part of a new three-year collective agreement.

Flights would resume as soon as possible, but it would likely take up to 24 hours before operations were entirely up and running again, he said.

SAS had cancelled more than 4,000 flights as of Thursday after pilots went on strike on April 26 over wages and working conditions. "I can with relief inform our customers and our staff that we now can put this conflict behind us. We have tonight signed a new collective agreement with our four pilot unions," Gustafson said.

Sydbank analyst Jacob Pedersen said that while SAS had gained in competitiveness relative to rivals in recent years, the strike and resulting wage deal were a step in the wrong direction. "SAS could be on the brink of losing their competitiveness if this agreement is not counteracted by more savings," he said, estimating that the strike would cost the airline about 500m Swedish crowns ($52m) in lost revenue.

Pilots had been seeking around a 13 percent pay hike, to make up for the 2012 wage cuts, a level SAS said would have led to dire consequences for the airline.

"The agreements between SAS and the pilots' unions concern predictability of scheduling, job security and salaries. In addition, the previously cancelled agreements concerning collaboration and career paths have been reintroduced," SAS said. The Swedish Airline Pilots Association said the key target had been to ensure the job security of its members.

Portugal PM threatens to resign

REUTERS
LISBON



Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa addressing the nation following a meeting with President at Sao Bento Palace, in Lisbon yesterday.

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa threatened to resign yesterday after his leftist allies abandoned the government in a parliamentary vote that could undermine efforts to balance the budget by raising teachers' salaries retroactively.

Late on Thursday, a broad alliance of lawmakers sitting on a parliamentary committee voted to grant teachers salary increases held back over several years since 2005.

Costa called an emergency government meeting yesterday, after which he met President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa for an hour and informed him that he would resign if parliament gives its full approval to the measure.

"Under these conditions, I thought it was my duty to inform the president and the head of parliament that the final approval of this initiative will force the government to submit its resignation," Costa said in a televised address to the nation.

Parliament will hold a full vote on the measure in a session on May 15. The measure would not impact this year's budget.

Losing the support of the far left Communists and Left Bloc in parliament would make it hard for the Socialists, who rule in a minority, to approve laws. Portugal is due to hold a national election in October.

"It is clear dramatisation on behalf of the government," said political scientist Antonio Costa, adding it would be a risk to the leftist parties if the government resigns. "We are six months from a general election and there is no clear benefit for the Socialists from moving it closer."

Costa has relied on the far left allies since reaching an agreement with them when he came to power in 2015. Left Bloc leader Catarina Martins said in a Facebook post that "it appears there are attempts to create an environment of a political crisis. This environment is totally artificial".

Wages for all of the country's civil servants, including teachers, were frozen during the country's debt crisis, a measure not reversed until last year.

With an economic recovery now gathering pace, the government has faced a wave of strikes and protests from teachers, nurses, police and prison guards in the past few months to press demands for pay hikes and better working conditions.

A leading union representing police said that any pay hike for teachers should include all public sector workers.

"The measure passed yesterday in parliament is fair and will compensate teachers after all these years," said former history teacher Joaquim Rodrigues. According to Finance Minister Mario Centeno, approving the measure could cost the country up to €800m ($890m) a year.

Opinion polls suggest the Socialists, whose management of the economic turnaround has been a hallmark of their four years in office, are likely to win the election but may be just short of a majority.

The government presented a plan last month for public accounts to swing to a surplus from 2020 following a deficit of 0.2 percent of GDP this year.

The additional payouts, which if approved would kick in from next year, could affect the plan to post a surplus, particularly as economic growth is expected to slow down this year and possibly next.

The government has suggested the unblocking of pay increases for teachers could be unconstitutional, and even if it were approved by parliament, the president would likely veto it or send it to the constitutional court for an evaluation.

But Ana Paula Coelho, an English teacher in Faro, said she and her colleagues were counting on the long overdue pay rises while their workload was only increasing in a "flawed education system" with lots of red tape, late meetings and extra hours.

Probe after French officer seen hurling stone at protesters

AFP / PARIS

French prosecutors and police inspectors have opened an investigation after an officer was seen hurling a paving stone at protesters during May Day demonstrations in Paris, sources said yesterday.

The incident — captured in video footage posted on social media this week — occurred as riot police clashed with violent protesters during the march on Wednesday. The officer, surrounded by fellow riot police, is seen throwing the stone several meters towards the demonstrators.

The general inspectors' office of the national police has now opened an investigation at the request of French police chief Didier Lallement, police sources said. Prosecutors have also opened a judicial investigation, legal sources said.

"If someone is at fault, there will be a sanction, legal and administrative sanctions," Interior Minister Christophe Castaner told journalists during a visit to Toulon in southern France.

'Russian' whale leads to espionage speculations in Norway

AFP
OSLO

A spy, a far away visitor or a fugitive on the run? A mysterious Beluga whale, caught wearing a suspicious harness, has ignited the imaginations of Norwegians who have yet to receive answers.

The whale has been delighting locals in the area of Finnmark in the far north of Norway for the last week. But more than a week after it was first spotted by fishermen in the Arctic waters off the coast of northern Norway its origin remains unknown.

When Jorgen Ree Wiig, a marine biologist working with the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries, tracked down the mammal with the help of a fisherman and two colleagues on April 26, they managed to remove an obviously man-made harness attached to it. The harness had a mount suited for an action camera and the text "Equipment St. Petersburg" printed on the plastic clasps.

Wiig told AFP yesterday that he believed the whale could have come from neighbouring Russia, where he believed it might have escaped an enclosure.

"The whale is so calm around humans and goes up to boats so it seems to have been accustomed to humans," Wiig said.

Another theory supported by Wiig was that the whale could have been trained by the Russian navy as "they have been known to do so before." Its ease with humans, the markings on the harness together with reports of the Russian Navy training Beluga whales has led many Norwegians to speculate that it could be a "Russian spy".

Moscow has not issued any official reaction but an officer quoted by the media has mocked the idea, arguing that the military would not be stupid enough to "leave their phone number" on an animal trained for clandestine activities. The Barents Sea is a strategic geopolitical area where Western and Russian submarine movements are monitored.

Dmitry Glazov, a scientist working at the Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences, told Russian news agency Interfax that the Russian Navy had programmes involving whales and that they were in part operating out of Murmansk.

"It is a fact that the military has these animals. Among other things, they used them during the Sochi Olympics," Glazov said.

The harness itself has been transferred to the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST), but Martin Bernsen, communications officer at PST, said it was unclear whether they would find anything. "We must admit that examining technical equipment attached to whales is not a daily occurrence for PST," he said. "The whale is not a suspect in our investigation, for now," he added.

Another theory on the origin of the whale is that the "Equipment St. Petersburg," since it's written in English, might refer to the St. Petersburg in the US state of Florida, where there are water parks with Beluga whales, such as Seaworld in Orlando. According to Jorgen Ree Wiig it wouldn't be inconceivable for the whale to have travelled from there. "They can swim quite far and especially young males have been known to travel very far," Wiig said.

No water park has however yet reported the disappearance of a Beluga whale.

Wherever it's from, the whale has become quite the celebrity, and a poll to name it was conducted online by Norwegian broadcaster NRK and gathered 25,000 votes.

Trump, Putin discuss possible new nuclear accord

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

"Had a long and very good conversation with President Putin of Russia," Trump said in a post on Twitter, noting they had discussed trade, Venezuela, Ukraine, North Korea, nuclear arms and Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 US presidential campaign.

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke for more than an hour yesterday, discussing the possibility of a new nuclear accord, North Korean denuclearization, Ukraine and the political situation in Venezuela, the White House said.

"Had a long and very good conversation with President Putin of Russia," Trump said in a post on Twitter, noting they had discussed trade, Venezuela, Ukraine, North Korea, nuclear arms and Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 US presidential campaign.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders told reporters Trump and Putin talked about the possibility of a new multilateral nuclear accord between the United States, Russia and China, or an extension of the current US-Russia strategic nuclear treaty. She called it an "overall positive conversation."

The two men, who last chatted informally at a dinner of world leaders in Buenos Aires on December 1, briefly talked about the report Mueller report that concluded Trump did not collude with Russia during his 2016 presidential campaign.

The Mueller probe discussion was "essentially in the context of that it's over and there was no collusion, which I'm pretty sure both leaders were very well aware of long before this call took place," Sanders said.

The Kremlin confirmed the two leaders talked and highlighted in its statement that the call was initiated by Washington. It said the two leaders agreed to maintain contacts on different levels and expressed satisfaction with the "businesslike and constructive nature" of the conversation.

With the United States concerned about a Russian military presence in Venezuela at a time when Washington wants Venezuelan President Nicolas Madwort to leave power, Trump told Putin "the United States stands with the people of Venezuela" and stressed he wanted to get relief supplies into the country, Sanders said. Putin told Trump that any external interference in Venezuela's internal business undermines the prospects of a political end to the crisis, the Kremlin said.

The 2011 New START treaty, the only US-Russia arms control pact limiting deployed strategic nuclear weapons, expires in February 2021 but can be extended for five years if both sides agree. Without the agreement, it could be harder to gauge each other's intentions, arms control advocates say.

The New START treaty required the United States and Russia to cut their deployed strategic nuclear warheads to no more than 1,550, the lowest level in decades, and limit delivery systems - land- and submarine-based missiles and nuclear-capable bombers.

It also includes extensive transparency measures requiring each side to allow the other to carry out 10 inspections of strategic nuclear bases each year; give 48 hours notice before new missiles covered by the treaty leave their factories; and provide notifications before ballistic missile launches.

Trump has called the New START treaty a "bad deal" and "one-sided." "They discussed a nuclear agreement, both new and extended, and the possibility of having conversations with China on that as well," Sanders said. The Kremlin said the two sides confirmed they intended to "activate dialogue in various spheres, including strategic security".

Sanders also said the two leaders discussed Ukraine. Trump canceled a summit meeting with Putin late last year after Russia seized three Ukrainian Navy ships on November 25 and arrested 24 sailors. Putin also told Trump that the new leadership in Ukraine should take steps to solve the Ukrainian crisis, the Kremlin said.

Trump also raised with Putin the issue of getting North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. Trump has met twice with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un but Kim has yet to agree to a disarmament deal.

Sanders said Trump mentioned several times "the need and importance of Russia stepping up and continuing to put pressure on North Korea to denuclearize".

The Kremlin said both leaders highlighted the need to pursue denuclearization of the region. During an April summit with Kim in Vladivostok, Putin expressed Russian support for a gradual process of trading disarmament for sanctions relief.

Venezuela's Guaido calls for more protests, strikes today

ANATOLIA / AFP
CARACAS



Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido (centre), accompanied by lawmakers, speaks during a press conference at the New Time Party headquarters in Los Palos Grandes neighbourhood in Caracas, yesterday.

Venezuela's self-proclaimed interim president has urged his supporters to take to streets today for more protests to topple country's elected leader, Nicolas Maduro.

Juan Guaido took to Twitter yesterday also calling for a general strike to "end the usurpation of Maduro". "Continuing [the protests] on the street is the only way to maintain the attention, pressure, the action of the international community [...] and to demonstrate to those who still support the dictator that there will be no stability as long as the usurpation continues," he said.

On Tuesday, Guaido posted a video on social media showing him standing alongside a small contingent of uniformed military personnel and armored vehicles in which he called for an uprising to end Maduro's rule.

But Guaido's move, which he said was the beginning of the final phase of the effort to oust Maduro, has seemed to have failed to garner enough support within the military.

In a show of defiance on Thursday, Maduro took to the streets of Caracas in a march flanked by senior military officers and followed by 4,500 military personnel, according to the Defence Ministry.

Venezuela has been rocked by protests since January 10 when President Nicolas Maduro was sworn in for a second term following a vote boycotted by the opposition.

Tensions escalated when Guaido, who heads Venezuela's National Assembly, declared himself Acting President on January 23, a move which was supported by the US and many European and Latin American countries. Turkey, Russia, China, Iran, Bolivia, and Mexico have thrown their weight behind Maduro.

On Tuesday, the opposition leader called on the military to rise up against Maduro, and a small group heeded his call. The movement petered out — with 25 rebel soldiers seeking asylum at the Brazilian embassy in Caracas — but sparked two days of protests during which four people were killed and some 200 injured.

The influential opposition figure Leopoldo Lopez — who made a dramatic appearance alongside Guaido after being freed from house arrest — has since taken refuge at the Spanish embassy. The military leadership has since reiterated its support for the government, and Maduro is standing his ground.

Addressing a press conference in Caracas, Guaido insisted the opposition is "stronger than ever." "We know we must continue to protest. We must continue peacefully and civilly," he said.

The United States is insisting Maduro's days are numbered. But experts warn that US options for breaking the stalemate are limited, and that Washington may have overestimated the opposition leader's strength.

Acting Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan hosted Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the Pentagon yesterday along with National Security Advisor John Bolton and Admiral Craig Faller, commander of the US Southern Command.

Reiterating US President Donald Trump's position — that "all options" are on the table — Shanahan declined to provide any details on a possible military intervention.

"I'm trying to avoid walking into 'We could do this or we could do that,'" he said. "What people should feel confident about is we have... there's depth to these plans." "We have a comprehensive set of options tailored to certain conditions and I'm just going to leave it at that."

Assange's UK bail sentence is 'disproportionate', say UN experts

AFP / GENEVA

The 50-week jail sentence given to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for breaching a British court's bail conditions seven years ago is "disproportionate," the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said yesterday.

Assange took refuge in Ecuador's London embassy in 2012 after a British judge ordered his extradition to face Swedish allegations of assault and abuse, which he strongly denied. He was arrested last month after Ecuador gave him up. He will now serve the nearly one-year jail sentence while fighting a separate attempt to extradite him to the US.

The UN working group noted that the Swedish allegations — the initial offence that triggered his British arrest — had been withdrawn and that the original bail terms should therefore have been nullified.

It noted too that he had been given near the maximum 12-month sentence available in the UK for breaching bail conditions. The group is "deeply concerned about... the disproportionate sentence imposed on Mr. Assange," it said.

It accused Britain of extending "the arbitrary deprivation of (his) liberty." The experts took further issue with Assange's detention at the Belmarsh high-security prison.

Florida passes measure to ban sanctuary cities

AFP
MIAMI

Lawmakers in the southern US state of Florida passed a bill prohibiting so-called "sanctuary cities," requiring local law enforcement to cooperate with immigration authorities.

The measure comes as President Donald Trump pushes policies aimed at cracking down on illegal immigration, while frequently demonizing the migrants as criminals.

Florida's lower house passed the bill 68-45 and it was sent to Republican Governor Ron DeSantis, a Trump ally who campaigned on taking a tough stance against illegal immigration.

"We are a stronger state when we protect our residents, foster safe communities and respect the work of law enforcement at every level," DeSantis said in a statement.

"Local law enforcement agencies can and should work with the federal government to ensure that accountability and justice are one in our state."

The soon-to-be law requires police and other local law enforcement agencies to comply with federal agencies' order of an "immigration detainer" — holding a person who is believed to be a "removable alien" under federal law.

In sanctuary cities — such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York — local law enforcement limit cooperation with US immigration officials.

Florida has no sanctuary cities, according to local media.

"This bill is about respecting the rule of law," said Senator Joe Gruters, who sponsored the legislation and also chairs the Republican Party of Florida.

"It's about cooperating with the federal government, and it's about promoting public safety." The American Civil Liberties Union issued a "travel alert" for Florida, a hub for Latin American immigration and home to large communities of Cubans, Venezuelans and Haitians.

"Both Florida residents, citizens and non-citizens, and travelers could face risks of being racially profiled and being detained without probable cause," it said. The group recommended that all residents memorize the phone number of an immigration lawyer.

According to the US Census, immigrants make up 20 percent of Florida's population, although in large cities like Miami and Orlando the ratio is closer to half.



Sotheby's art auctions

A man looks at Jeff Koons' "Elephant" during a media preview for Sotheby's Impressionist & Modern Art and Contemporary Art auctions, in New York, yesterday.

US House Judiciary chief sets Monday deadline for full Mueller report

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

US House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler yesterday offered Attorney General William Barr a last chance to hand over the full version of US Special Counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation report, before moving to hold Barr in contempt of Congress.

In a letter to the Attorney-General, Nadler set a 9am (1300 GMT) Monday deadline for Barr to comply with a subpoena demanding the unredacted document and underlying evidence from the Mueller probe. He also offered to negotiate further to gain the Justice Department's cooperation, but made clear what would be at stake if Barr refused.

"If the department persists in its baseless refusal to comply with a validly issued subpoena, the committee will move to contempt proceedings and seek further legal recourse," the New York Democrat wrote. The Justice Department declined to comment.

The Mueller report, which Democrats say as vital to congressional probes of Republican President Donald Trump, details extensive contacts between his 2016 campaign and Moscow and the campaign's expectation that it would benefit from Russian hacking and propaganda. It also describes actions Trump took to try to impede Mueller's investigation.

Barr released a redacted version on April 18. Nadler subpoenaed the entire document a day later. But the Justice Department has resisted, saying the subpoena does not constitute legitimate oversight and describing its demands as "overbroad and extraordinarily burdensome".

Republicans in Congress have also dismissed Nadler's efforts as political theater intended to satisfy a progressive voter base that helped give Democrats control of the House of Representatives in last year's midterm election.

But unless Barr complies, the House Judiciary Committee is expected to begin moving forward on Monday with a contempt citation that could ultimately lead to a civil court case against Barr, followed by fines and even imprisonment for failure to comply.

Nadler's letter capped a week of escalating confrontation between Barr and Democrats in the House and Senate.

Lawmaker poised to win Panama presidential poll

AFP
PANAMA CITY

Voters go to the polls to elect a president tomorrow in booming Panama, with anti-graft candidate Laurentino Cortizo the favorite to succeed incumbent Juan Carlos Varela.

Cortizo, a 66-year-old businessman and cattle rancher who campaigned on an anti-corruption ticket in a country tainted by Latin America's Odebrecht bribery scandal, heads into the election with a commanding lead in opinion polls.

A Democratic Revolutionary Party candidate, Cortizo has 36 percent support. His closest challenger, former foreign minister Romulo Roux of the Democratic Change (CD) party, has 26.2 percent.

There is no second-round runoff in the Central American state's presidential election, so the candidate with the most votes on Sunday wins. Cortizo, a veteran politician known popularly as "Nito," said he wants to "rescue and transform Panama" and "leave a legacy" untainted by corruption.

"Hear me well, so that later they can't say they didn't hear it, we are going to do without stealing," he told supporters.

The nation's economy has been one of the fastest growing in the region, but it has yet to shake off its image as a money-laundering paradise following the Panama Papers scandal, in which the Mossack Fonseca law firm helped thousands of clients around the world move money offshore to evade taxes.

Though it has stuttered in the final years of Varela's term, the economy has been boosted by improvements to the Panama Canal and other infrastructure development, amid growing concerns that the country's poorest are being left behind.

US-educated Cortizo is a former agriculture minister who quit the cabinet of then-president Martin Torrijos 13 years ago over a disagreement over the terms of a free trade deal with the United States.

Roux, 54, is also a former chairman of the Panama Canal Authority and appears to have been untainted by his association with former president Ricardo Martinelli, in whose government he served as foreign minister.

Martinelli is in jail awaiting trial for corruption after being extradited from the United States, where he fled in 2015 to evade arrest. Barred from running himself, he has thrown his political weight behind his party colleague Roux.

The campaign has thrown up a surprise candidate in the shape of Ricardo Lombana, a lawyer and journalist who has garnered nearly 20 percent in polls by running on an anti-corruption ticket.

Tomorrow's elections will also see Panama's 2.7 million voters elect 71 lawmakers to Congress, as well as mayors and municipal councilors.

Baby dead, 3 missing after raft capsizes on US-Mexico border

AFP / WASHINGTON

A baby boy died after plunging into the fast-moving waters of the Rio Grande River as his family tried to cross into the United States on a rubber raft, authorities said. Three other people, two of them children, were missing after the raft capsized on the US-Mexico border, US Customs and Border Protection said. The group of nine people aboard are part of a massive wave of migrants — most from violence-wracked Central American countries — trying to enter the United States.

The accident on the Rio Grande took place on Wednesday night. Agents came upon a man who told agents that all nine people on the raft fell into the Rio Grande when the vessel flipped over. His 10-month-old son and seven-year-old nephew were among those swept away. An adult man and a girl were also missing, and the search was continuing.

The wife and six-year-old son of the man who reported the accident were found a short time later, struggling in the water, and were rescued by authorities. The body of the baby boy was found several miles downstream.

Colombian Senate asks court to rule on FARC peace vote

REUTERS / BOGOTA

Colombian lawmakers said they will ask a high court to rule on the legality of a Senate vote this week on whether to make changes to a special tribunal tasked with trying former rebels and military officials for war crimes. The decision to seek a constitutional court ruling comes after 47 lawmakers voted on Tuesday against President Ivan Duque's suggested changes to the law, while 34 supported Duque's alterations — which congress said was not sufficient.

Duque had asked legislators to review six parts of the 159-point law that regulates the Special Jurisdiction for Peace court, which was created as part of a 2016 peace deal between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels. "There was no qualified majority to sink the objections... so we are in the hands of the Constitutional Court and we are confident that everything will go well for the country," Interior Minister Nancy Patricia Gutierrez said.

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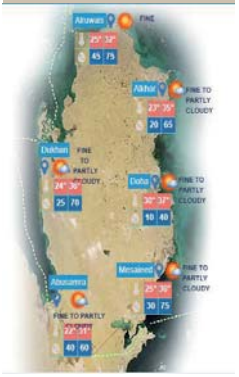
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WEATHER TODAY



29°C Minimum | **37°C** Maximum

Scattered clouds to partly cloudy and a chance of scattered rain becomes thundery at times, and slight to blowing dust at places.

HIGH TIDE 03:25 -17:04 LOW TIDE 11:14 - 23:42

Courtesy: Qatar Meteorology Department



Today in History

May 4, 1979

▲ **Margaret Thatcher became the UK's first woman prime minister. Nicknamed the "Iron Lady" for her uncompromising leadership style, she held power for 11 years**

1654: Kangxi, who ruled as emperor of China for 61 years, was born. Under his reign the Qing Dynasty reached the zenith of its social, economic and military power

1839: Samuel Cunard of Nova Scotia founded the Cunard shipping line

2000: Sri Lanka was placed on a war footing as Tamil rebels advanced

2004: Taiwan's parliament passed a law requiring official documents to be written from left to right

Picture: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS





Georgian National Ballet "Sukhishvili" stages a successful Doha debut at Katara Opera House on Thursday. PICS: BAHER AMIN / THE PENINSULA

Georgian National Ballet marks well applauded Doha debut

RAYNALD C RIVERA
THE PENINSULA





Performing virtually impossible dance moves executed with extraordinary precision and great daring, the Georgian National Ballet "Sukhishvili" blew away a capacity crowd who erupted in numerous ovations during the troupe's Doha debut on Thursday.

Hundreds who filled the orchestra and balcony of the opulent Katara Opera House were spellbound by the show-stopping solid dance routines by around 40 dancers comprising an eclectic medley of traditional Georgian folk dances, classical ballet and modern dance.

Garbed in stunning and elaborate costumes, the members of the 74-year-old dance company performed over a dozen dance items in a 90-minute electrifying show presented by the Georgian Embassy and the Cultural Village Foundation - Katara. They danced to live music provided by a seven-man ensemble playing guitar, flute, drums, and accordion.

While the female dancers exuded elegance and grace performing small steps as if they were gliding, male members of the troupe executed complex quick turns and high leaps defying gravity. One of the more impressive dance numbers resembled war among soldiers in which dancers fought with swords and daggers which produced sparks stunning to watch. The stage was brimming with energy and dynamism with the dancers' fiery passion and unbelievable speed and synchronization.

"I've seen many dance shows before but this was definitely one of the most unique since it was quite a departure from the usual ballet that we watch onstage, with a mixture of many beautiful elements which make the group really remarkable," said Mark, a dance enthusiast in the audience. "It surely requires lots of training and dedication among the dancers and to present the show. What an impressive specatacle, a joy to watch! Truly world class," said Anthony, one of the spectators.

For many years, the Georgian National Ballet "Sukhishvili" has been fascinating audiences around the world by their beauty, elegant athleticism, energy, skills and originality. Since its founding in 1945, the company has travelled to more than 90 countries in five continents in more than 300 tours entertaining over 50 million people.

The company has graced some of the most well known venues such as the Madison Square Garden in New York, the Royal Albert Hall in London, the La Scala in Milan and the Colosseum in Rome.

The standing ovation lasting for several minutes at the curtain call prompted the group to do an encore of their final dance that will surely be remembered for a long time.

Hepburn exhibition opens in Brussels

REUTERS
BRUSSELS

From personal pictures and dresses to film props and awards, an exhibition offering an intimate look at the life of late actress Audrey Hepburn has opened in Brussels, marking the 90th anniversary of the Hollywood star's birth in the Belgian city.

Put together by her son Sean Hepburn Ferrer, "Intimate Audrey" features hundreds of private and professional photos — originals and reprints — as well as some movie memorabilia, such as the scooter used in the 1953 classic "Roman Holiday" for which Hepburn won a best actress Oscar.

Hepburn Ferrer, whose father was US actor Mel Ferrer, said he wanted to offer a more personal perspective of the life of the British actress, who dedicated her later years to charity work and became a Unicef goodwill ambassador.

"She lived a humble life, a simple life, and maybe in there lies the key to why she is still so beloved today," he said.

Hepburn was born in 1929 in the Brussels area of Ixelles to a Dutch mother and British father. She later moved to London to pursue ballet training and eventually turned to acting, taking to the stage in New York in 1951 for Broadway play "Gigi". She starred in a string of films in the 1950s and 1960s, including "Breakfast at Tiffany's", "Charade" and "My Fair Lady". Hepburn died in 1993 aged 63. On display are also Hepburn's fashion drawings and humanitarian writings.

Peter Mayhew, actor who played Chewbacca in 'Star Wars' dies

REUTERS
LOS ANGELES

British-born actor Peter Mayhew, who played Chewbacca the Wookiee, the loyal, furry companion of space buccaneer Han Solo in five of the "Star Wars" movies, has died at age 74, his family said.

Mayhew, whose face was never seen in the "Star Wars" films - his entire body was always clothed in his Wookiee costume - died at his north Texas home on Tuesday, according to the family's statement on Twitter. No cause of death was given.

The lanky performer made his first appearance as the beloved, bleating Chewbacca character in the landmark 1977 sci-fi action-thriller "Star Wars," and went on to co-star in four more films in the blockbuster series - "The Empire Strikes Back", "Return of the Jedi", "Revenge of the Sith" and "The Force Awakens".

He retired from playing Chewbacca for health reasons, although his family recalled that for Mayhew's final turn as the heroic Wookiee in "The Force Awakens," he "fought his way back from being wheelchair-bound to stand tall" once more as the woolly character in the 2015 film.

He also served as an off-camera consultant on the final 2017 film in the series, "The Last Jedi," helping to tutor his successor in the Chewbacca role, Joonas Suotamo, on the ways of convincingly playing a Wookiee.

Co-stars saluted Mayhew as a performer whose own inner poise and grace shone through in his character. "Peter Mayhew was a kind and gentle man, possessed of great dignity and noble character," said Harrison Ford, who as Han Solo shared many scenes with Mayhew.

Lost world: UN report shows Nature at death's door

AFP
PARIS



A file illustration made in Paris shows a figurine with a globe next to a miniature shopping cart. Scientists and diplomats from 130 countries are meeting in Paris to adopt the first global assessment of ecosystems for nearly 15 years, a dark inventory of nature vital to humanity.

A landmark UN report on the state of Nature, obtained by AFP, makes for grim reading, showing how humanity has wreaked havoc with the environment.

The 1,800-page draft document, set to be finalised after a biodiversity summit in Paris this week, depicts a planet ravaged by rampant overconsumption and drowning in pollution, where hundreds of thousands of species risk extinction.

Here is a rundown of the report's key findings, which read like a charge sheet against history's most destructive creatures: ourselves.

POLLUTION

Earth's population has doubled in 50 years. Not only are we living longer than ever before, we are also consuming more. Today, humans extract around 60 billion tonnes of resources from Nature each year — a rise of 80 percent in just a few decades.

And we are leaving our mark in other ways. Since 1980, manmade greenhouse gas emissions have doubled, adding at least 0.7C to global temperatures. We dump up to 400 million tonnes of heavy metals, toxic sludge and other waste into oceans and rivers each year.

The report, compiled from more than 15,000 academic papers and research publications, estimates that 75 percent of land, 40 percent of oceans and 50 percent of rivers "manifest severe impacts of degradation" from human activity.

INEQUALITY

The document, the first of its kind in 15 years, paints a picture of rife inequality, with richer nations consuming vastly more per capita than poorer ones battling to retain their natural resources. Indeed, per capita demand for materials is four times more in high- than in low-income economies.

In Europe and North America, humans now consume several times the recommended intake of meat, sugar and fat for optimal health, while 40 percent of the world's people lack access even to clean drinking water. The inequality gap is huge and widening: GDP per head is already 50 times larger in wealthy nations than in poor ones.

AGRIBUSINESS THREAT

Industrial fishing is destroying our oceans, according to the report. It found that 70,000 industrial fishing vessels operate in at least 55 percent of the world's high seas. Nearly three quarters of major marine fish stocks are depleted or exploited to the limit of sustainability, despite efforts from the fishing community to implement quotas and drive down overfishing.

On land, the situation looks even bleaker. A third of all land is now given over to agriculture and 75 percent of freshwater resources is dedicated to food production. In all, at least a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions come from land clearing, crop production and fertilisation, the vast majority of which comes from animal-based food production.

Agribusiness expansion has also led to the disappearance of vast swathes of CO2-absorbing forests: Earth has lost 290 million hectares — around six percent — of its forests since 1990.

Fertiliser use, which degrades the soil's ability to grow plants and suck in greenhouse gases, has risen four-fold in just 13 years in Asia and doubled worldwide in the same period.

EXTINCTION

Scientists estimate there to be roughly eight million species of plants and animals on Earth, though only a fraction of them have so far been identified.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) "Red List" catalogues some 100,000 species, around a quarter of which are classed as in danger of extinction.

An IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) report goes much further, however, projecting that between 500,000 and one million species could face oblivion due to pollution and habitat degradation.

Its authors stress that whatever losses humans inflict on Nature will in turn be inflicted upon us. More than two billion people still rely on wood as their main energy source, and up to half of all medicines come from plants and animals.

What's more, the world's oceans and forests absorb more than half of our greenhouse gas emissions, which are still climbing year on year.

"At current trends, we risk drastic degradation, with drops in contributions critical for societies and uneven distribution of losses," the report states.