

Isabelle Huppert plays a clingy stalker in 'Greta'

New in New York, poor, callow Frances (Chloë Grace Moretz) is just out of Smith College and devastated by her mother's untimely death, when she finds a green leather purse on the MTA. | P13

THE DAILY **tribune**



Evan Rachel Wood self harmed during abusive relationship

14 CELEBS

WORLD 6 China blocks JEM chief ban

\$7 billion aid pledged for Syria

Brussels, Belgium

International donors yesterday pledged nearly \$7 billion in aid for 2019 for civilians caught up in Syria's bloody civil war but the total fell short of what the UN says is needed.

EU Humanitarian Commissioner Christos Stylianides announced the total at the end of a three-day conference of 80 countries and organisations in Brussels, on the eve of the eighth anniversary of the start of the conflict.

The European Union led the pledges with two billion euros, but the conference failed to drum up the \$9 billion the United Nations said was needed to help the millions of Syrians forced to flee the country as well as those facing a humanitarian crisis at home.

Brought perpetrators of Khashoggi murder to justice: Saudi

Geneva, Switzerland

Saudi Arabia yesterday reiterated its rejection of calls to "internationalise" the investigation into Khashoggi murder, saying the Kingdom has brought the perpetrators of Khashoggi murder to justice.

Addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council, President of Saudi Arabia's Human Rights Commission (HRC), Dr Bandar al-Aiban, said that the Kingdom was taking all the "measures required for us to resolve this heinous crime".

"We are horrified at Khashoggi killing and that it was a 'heinous crime' and an 'unfortunate accident'," said Dr Bandar al-Aiban.

Dr Bandar al-Aiban, who heads Saudi Arabia's human rights commission, stressed that any calls to "internationalise" the investigation "amount to an interference in our domestic affairs".

Dr al-Aiban was in Geneva presenting his country's response to a review of its rights record before the council last November. He told the council that most of the recommendations Riyadh had received regarding how to pursue the Khashoggi case during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November were already guaranteed by its constitution.

The suspects, he said, "were entitled to a fair trial... and none of their human rights has been

violated, and they have been subjected to no form of torture or cruel and inhuman treatment".

"They are entitled to legal counsel, and they have also been informed of their rights to resort to the services of counsel during the investigation phase and during the trial," he said.

Aiban said that there had so far been three hearings and that the accused and their lawyers had been present.

He also said, "representatives of international organisations as well as NGOs and other stakeholders... were able to monitor and see how the court cases were unfolding."

Saudi Arabia has accepted as many as 453 human rights rec-



Dr Bandar al-Aiban

the Council provided 70 recommendations, of which 52 were accepted by the Kingdom. In 2013, it accepted 151 out of 225 recommendations. In 2018, the number of accepted recommendations was 182 out of a total of 258 recommendations.

But he said Saudi Arabia could not accept recommendations during the UPR for the country to allow international experts to participate in the investigation and to oversee the process.

"Saudi Arabia is a sovereign country... Such demands made upon us are tantamount to the international community doubting the integrity of our judicial apparatus and doubting the independence of our judiciary," he said.

Abbas slams US dropping 'occupied' in report



Mahmud Abbas

● **Trump is expected to unveil his plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace in the coming months**

Ramallah

A spokesman for Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has criticised a US move to no longer refer to the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights as occupied territories in its annual human rights report.

Nabil Abu Rudeineh called it "a continuation of the hostile approach of the American administration toward our Palestinian people and... contrary to all UN resolutions."

In a statement carried by official Palestinian news agency Wafa late Wednesday, he said the change was part of US President Donald Trump's plan to "liquidate" the Palestinian cause.

Trump is expected to unveil his long-awaited plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace in the coming months, even though the Palestinian leadership has frozen contact with Washington over Trump's 2017 declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Delay Brexit

British MPs vote for Brexit delay and new vote on deal

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Britain's parliament yesterday voted to ask the European Union to delay Brexit until at least June and head off a potentially calamitous end to their 46-year partnership in two weeks.

MPs, however, also voted against a proposal to hold a second referendum during the delay, dealing a blow to the hopes of pro-EU campaigners.

Britain is barreling towards the March 29 Brexit deadline with no approved EU withdrawal agreement and a prime minister who appears to have lost control over her bickering cabinet.

Anxious businesses are pleading for action and US President Donald Trump waded in to pronounce himself "surprised to see how badly it has all gone".

MPs have twice rejected the deal struck by Prime Minister Theresa May's with the other 27 EU nations -- in January and



The tellers delivering the result of vote on a government motion on whether to seek a delay in the date of leaving the EU, in the House of Commons in London

on Tuesday.

They voted on Wednesday to leave without an agreement but without any firm roadmap on the way forward three years after Brexit was launched in a bitterly divisive referendum.

The plan they all finally agreed on -- after turning down four other proposals -- was submitted by May herself: to ask EU leaders to postpone Brexit.

The motion also included a proposal to hold a third vote early next week on May's

twice-rejected deal.

It passed by a 412-202 margin, providing some welcome respite to the prime minister.

"All of us now have the opportunity and responsibility to work together to find a solution to the crisis facing this country, where the government has so dramatically failed to do so," said Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition Labour party.

European Union leaders must now unanimously approve the delay. They will meet at a summit in Brussels on March 21-22.

'VETO!' says Trump after Senate votes to end border emergency



Donald Trump

Washington, United States

President Donald Trump made clear yesterday he would use his veto powers, as promised, to override a congressional vote to terminate his border emergency, following an embarrassing defeat in the US Senate.

"VETO!" came the president's one-word response, tweeted after a dozen fellow Republicans joined all Democrats in voting down the emergency declared by Trump as a way to secure alternative funding for his US-Mexico border wall.

But opponents warned that Trump's move smacked of executive overreach, and insisted a vote to curtail his authority would preserve the constitutionally mandated separation of powers.

WAKE-UP CALL

Norway MPs want Nobel for student climate campaigner

Oslo, Norway

Greta Thunberg, the Swedish school girl climate campaigner who has inspired worldwide protests, should be awarded this year's Nobel Peace prize, Norwegian lawmakers said yesterday.

"We have proposed Greta Thunberg because if we do nothing to halt climate change it will be the cause of wars, conflict and refugees," Norwegian Socialist MP Freddy Andre Ovstegard said.

"Greta Thunberg has launched a mass movement which I see as a major contribution to peace," he added.

Six months ago no one knew who

Thunberg was when, as a 15-year-old, she camped outside Sweden's parliament next to a hand-written sign: "SCHOOL STRIKE FOR CLIMATE".

Since then she has gone global, striking a chord with younger people disillusioned by the slow progress of the adult world in halting climate change.

On Friday, thousands of students are expected to demonstrate in more than 100 countries in what activists say could be a milestone moment.

"We are only seeing the beginning," Thunberg, now 16, tweeted recently.

"I think that change is on the horizon and the people will stand up for their future."



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg holds a placard bearing the number of signatures of a petition to support her during a demonstration of students calling for climate protection

Two NASA astronauts, one cosmonaut blast off for ISS

Baikonur, Kazakhstan

NASA astronaut Nick Hague and his Russian colleague Alexey Ovchinin, who survived a dramatically aborted Soyuz launch last year, blasted off to the International Space Station yesterday.

The two men lifted off along with rookie US astronaut Christina Koch from Russia's Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan at 1914 GMT.

The October abort was caused by a sensor damaged during the rocket's assembly.



03 Defeating Daesh

04 Startups pitch their business models

05 Am I flying on a 737 MAX?





Deputy King, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulides, at Gudaibiya Palace. Deputy King and the Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs discussed Bahrain-Cyprus bilateral relations, including mechanisms to enhance cooperation in different areas. The meeting also provided an opportunity to review a number of regional and international issues of common interest. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, also attended the meeting



Representatives Council Speaker Fawzia bint Abdullah Zainal with NIHR President Maria Khouri during a discussion. She praised the key role of the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR) in protecting human rights and freedom of expression, stressing the keenness of the Representatives Council to develop legislation to boost human rights



Interior Minister, General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa with Saudi Director-General of Border Guards, Admiral Awad Eid Al-Balawi. The meeting asserted the importance to reinforce cooperation and coordination between Saudi Border Guards and the Coast Guard of Bahrain to ensure marine security and safety

PM: Enhance executive, legislative cooperation

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa called for strengthening coordination between the Executive and Legislative branches to benefit Bahrain and its people.

"We are all working for the sake of the nation and its people, and we must strengthen coordination between us that would contribute to achieving the aspirations of citizens," HRH the Premier told Parliamentarians during a meeting held at Riffa palace.

HRH Premier underlined government's continuous efforts to implement modernisation and development projects saying, "meeting the citizens' needs and providing the requirements of decent living for them is a government priority."



HRH PM with Parliamentarians during a meeting held at Riffa Palace

"Let those in the 'House of the People' be assured that their interests are ours and that our aspirations for the sake of the citizens go beyond theirs. We spare no effort and harness all available potentials and resources to make the citizens feel that their security is preserved and their stability is en-

ured," the Premier added. Members of the Representatives Council lauded HRH Premier's open-door policy and extended deepest thanks and appreciation to HRH the Prime Minister for his unwavering support for strengthening Executive-Legislature cooperation.



The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Khaled bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, congratulated the Director of Information Systems at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ali Jassim Al-Aradi, for winning the IT Man of the Year Award at the Future IT Summit 2019 in the United Arab Emirates. He was granted the award in recognition of his efforts in the Digital Transformation Project for Unified Communications Infrastructure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions abroad

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Minister honours Innovation contest winners

TDT | Manama

Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Oil Minister, yesterday honoured the winners of the first edition of the Innovation Contest praising their creativity in providing research and chemical innovations

"We are proud of the students who are strong and eager to develop various sectors in the Arab countries," the Minister said highlighting the importance of innovation and research in the development.

The contest came under the activities of the GPCA Innovation and Research Summit held from March 13-14.



The Minister with a winner during the award ceremony

Athari Muhammed Al Hosni from Caledonian College of Engineering of the National University of Science and Technology in Oman won first place in the competition and a cash prize

of AED 10,000 for 'Production of polymers from sulfur solid waste'.

Hebatallah Humaid Al Jabri from the National University of Science and Technology in Oman was awarded second place and a cash prize of AED 6,000 for his work in 'Application of nanotechnology in corrosion inhibition of oil pipelines'.

The jury awarded third place and a cash prize of AED 4,000 to Hussain Al-Ibrahim from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia for his 'Design integration of gasification and reforming technologies for the syngas production.'

BBBF, British Embassy host "F1 Grand Prix Night 2019"

TDT | Manama

The Bahrain British Business Forum (BBBF) in association with the British Embassy jointly hosted the annual F1 Grand Prix Night event on Wednesday at the British Embassy Gardens.

Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa, Chief Executive Officer of Bahrain International Circuit, attended as a guest speaker. Shaikh Salman briefed the guests about the upcoming Bahrain Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix on 29-31 March and the exciting events, concerts and entertainment around it.

Simon Martin, British Ambassador to Bahrain, said: "Sophie and I are happy to host our fourth BBBF F1 Grand Prix Night Event in the beautiful Embassy gardens."



Guest of honour Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa with Simon Martin and Sophie Martin, BBBF Chairman Khalid Al Zayani OBE together with the BBBF executive committee members

"We at the BBBF are very grateful to Simon Martin CMG, his wife Sophie and the British Embassy team, for their unwavering support of the forum and our activities," said BBBF Chair-

man Khalid Al Zayani OBE. The event, sponsored by Bahrain International Circuit, Euro Motors Jaguar Land Rover, Gulf Brands International and British Airways, was attended by

over 160 BBBF members. During the night, two British Airways Business Class return tickets to the UK and 10 tickets to the Bahrain Formula 1 Grand Prix, were raffled between the guests.

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Defeating Daesh

Bahrain affirms full support to the Global Coalition against Daesh

TDT | Manama

Bahrain yesterday affirmed its commitment to supporting the Global Coalition Communications Working Group against Daesh saying the Kingdom would stand with all the countries that fight violence and extremism of all forms.

This came as Bahrain's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa delivered a statement commending the efforts of the Global Coalition against Daesh.

The Global Coalition against Daesh was formed in September 2014 and is unique in its membership, scope and commitment. It is committed to degrading and ultimately defeating Daesh.

Beyond the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, the Coalition is committed to tackling Daesh's financing and economic infrastructure; preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders; supporting stabilisation and the restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from Daesh and countering the group's propaganda.

The meeting held in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Men suspected of being Islamic State (IS) group fighters walk together towards a screening point for new arrivals run by US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, where suspected jihadists -- many of them wounded -- were being interrogated outside Baghouz in the eastern Syrian Deir Ezzor province. - AFP

in London discussed the developments of the fight against Daesh in conflict and liberated

areas amid its transformation into rebel groups with broad agendas in the presence of rep-

resentatives from 79 countries and international organisations. Participants also urged to



The Islamic State, or ISIS, is a militant organisation that emerged as an offshoot of al Qaeda in 2014. It quickly took control of large parts of Iraq and Syria, raising its black flag in victory and declaring the creation of a caliphate. The group is sometimes also referred to as ISIL – for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – or by its Arabic acronym, Daesh

come up with new strategies to combat terrorism and extremism, citing the increasing use of new age media tools by terrorist outfits.

Bahrain, the ambassador explained, played the host of several important UN meetings to work on implementing its resolutions and help curb the danger posed by terrorist groups, particularly Daesh.

Shaikh Fawaz referred to the national efforts aimed at aligning local laws with international resolutions to suppress terrorism and extremism worldwide.

Bahrain, he said, has highly specialised competencies in this field and welcomed the exchange of expertise with its partners to confront extremist ideologies and dry out their sources of funds.

The participants affirmed the importance of benefiting from the different experiences of the coalition's member states while taking into account Daesh switching their ways and tactics after the hard military blows received in conflict zones.

Daesh, according to the Coalition, will likely revert to an insurgency in Iraq and Syria, and the Coalition is supporting partners through training and equipping security forces, to deny Daesh any space to act.

Man gets sentence revoked after 5 years

TDT | Manama

A Bahraini man, who received a three-year jail term in 2014 for his alleged involvement in an illegal gathering and burning tyres on the main road in Juffair, got his

verdict revoked following an appeal.

In the appeal, the man claimed that he was not officially informed about the case or its trial sessions.

The Supreme Court of Appeals accepted the man's plea

and ordered to return the case to the same court that sentenced him five years ago.

The details of the case show that the security forces were tipped-off about rioting and illegal acts being carried out near Al Dulab (Old Juffair) intersection on Al Fateh Highway.

At the scene, the police saw a group of masked individuals burning tyres and garbage containers to block the vital road.

Some of the culprits escaped the scene, but the forces succeeded in the arrest of one of them, who told the police that he received a text message to assemble at the location to block the road.

On 24 February 2014, the Public Prosecution accused both men of intentionally setting fire to objects and endangering the lives and property of people.

The prosecution also charged them of participating with other unknown persons in an illegal gathering of more than five people to disturb public security with Molotov cocktails.

In September of the same year, the court issued a three-year imprisonment sentence against the defendants, including the appellant, who was sentenced in absentia. The Supreme Court of Appeals mentioned in its announced verdict yesterday that the previous case didn't specify if the appellant was informed about the case and its trial sessions.

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Startups pitch their business models

TDT/Manama
Harpreet Kaur

Flat6Labs Bahrain hosted its Second Demo Day at The National Theatre of Bahrain where eight startups from its second cycle pitched their businesses.

The second cycle received over 200 applications from more than 40 countries which were then narrowed down to a final selection of eight Startups.

The team included both local and international participants with businesses offering products and services from a wide range of industries such as SaaS, FinTech, EdTech, F&B, E-commerce and more.

Throughout the four-month intensive developmental programme, the startups were given access to world-class trainers, mentors and coaches as well as a host of perks, office space, legal support and company registra-



Participants and officials during the Second Demo Day of Flat6Labs Bahrain at the National Theatre of Bahrain

tion in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Ahmed El Alfi of Founder, Flat6Labs told *Tribune*, "This initiative has created some great companies and provided some great investment opportunities and has helped to create a vibrant ecosystem that will self-perpetuate itself.

"An ecosystem is a self-sustainable cycle and we want to create that in different fields such as education, innovation, entrepreneurship, support, growth, funding, giving these companies business, corporate supporting them, interacting with them where tremendous

steps are being taken to create the self-perpetuating cycle so that we have major developments in Bahrain."

"Moreover, I want to thank the entrepreneurs not persuading regular jobs and persuading fantastic ideas and dreams and building companies and taking

the risk from going out there and building the company from zero," Ahmed added.

The Labour Fund (Tamkeen)'s Chief Executive Dr Ebrahim Mohammed Janahi praised the key role of the programme in assisting startup ventures to become fully operational and



The second cycle received over 200 applications from more than 40 countries which were narrowed down to eight

sustainable businesses.

Khalid Al Rumaihi, Chief Executive of the Bahrain Economic Development Board, further added: "As part of our mandate to diversify the economy, the EDB will continue to support the start-up ecosystem to allow entrepreneurs to develop and learn from key mentors so that they can thrive and scale out to the region and beyond."

Witnesses testimonies awaited in drug dealer's murder case

TDT | Manama

The First High Criminal Court yesterday adjourned the case of two brothers accused of murdering a drug dealer to March 20 this year to review witness testimonies.

The court also ordered to keep the brothers behind bars pending further procedures.

According to court files, the brothers killed a 50-year old man and abandoned his body in Gudaibiya area in the Capital after stealing his belongings.

The body was identified by the dead man's brother.

The defendants were accustomed to attacking and robbing drug-dealers after buying drugs from them

The defendants, police said, were accustomed to attacking and robbing drug-dealers, taking advantage of the fact that they won't be reporting the incidents to police.

The two brothers contacted the victim and lured him into

an abandoned house, where they attacked him and stole his money.

The brothers said that they were doing so to repossess the money they paid for the drugs.

They, however, denied murdering the man, claiming that he had died of drug overdose.

Public Prosecution accused them in 2018 of premeditated murder. The prosecution viewed that the suspects' intentions were deliberate.

The prosecution also accused them of beating the victim and causing him the injuries described in the coroner's report.



Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, received and congratulated the newly appointed President of National Labour Union Sameer Sedeeq Hashem. Gulf Air CEO Kresimir Kucko, Deputy CEO Captain Waleed Al Alawi and Director of Human Resources Nouf Al Sowaiddi met Sameer Hashem and wished him all success in his new role



Major Shaikh Salman bin Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa, Commander of the Special Operations Unit at the National Guard, received Captain Abdullah Mustafa Mohammed and congratulated him for achieving first place in the State of Kuwait's 15th advanced infantry course and physical fitness. Shaikh Salman also congratulated the captain on his research on "The Phantom Drone and its Effect in the Armed Forces" for which he obtained the third place in the course

Driving Digital transformation

TDT/Manama
Harpreet Kaur

Daniel Seal, a special advisor to international governments and who is backed by Temasek – Singapore's Sovereign Wealth Fund and a leader in digital transformation and has worked extensively throughout the Middle East and a founder CEO of Unbound, a London-based advisory house, connecting governments to entrepreneurs, corporates and investors - in one ecosystem to facilitate digital transformation.

Unbound, well-known for its award-winning innovation festivals which, to date, have taken place annually in Singapore (with Temasek), London,

Miami and Bahrain has witnessed speakers from all over the world.

Unbound festival which was hosted as a part of Startup Bahrain week brought together finest minds in AI, fintech, sustainability, energy, investment, the blockchain, digital wellbeing and more, to make invaluable connections and discover inspirational insight and emerging technologies that will shape the future of entrepreneurs and career and business.

Daniel Seal, CEO of Unbound spoke to *Tribune* in an exclusive interview on the transformation of Bahrain and the wider regional economy.



The whole Middle East region is transforming from an oil and energy-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, and Bahrain is at the centre of this process of innovation

DANIEL SEAL, CEO OF UNBOUND

Excerpts:

● About the focus in Bahrain

We are a cross-industry, cross-vertical organisation that connects corporates, brands, governments with start-ups. We use these connections to foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem to promote business acumen and innovation. The forward-thinking Bahrain Economic Development Board impresses us. Start-up companies feel increasingly comfortable here and want to be part of a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

● The significance of Unbound in Bahrain

The whole Middle East region is transforming from an oil and energy-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, and Bahrain is at the centre of this process of innovation. Its economy is a testbed and launchpad for the wider region. So, the reason why we wanted to host Unbound in Bahrain is we see the opportunity of the ecosystem. We think Unbound could be a great part of it and so there's no better place to host it.

● Tell us more about your projects

My personal highlight is the number and quality of the speakers we've brought to Unbound Bahrain. This includes high-level international speakers, thought leaders, and people who have never spoken in the region before. They are all bringing fresh ideas and content to share with attendees. As an ecosystem enabler, we are helping Bahrain develop innovation and entrepreneurial-driven economy. Our locally based team can host corporates wishing to connect to the ecosystem and can help companies scale into the region. Unbound is not just an event - it's a platform for innovation.

● Future plans for Bahrain?

Our future plans for Bahrain are to bring more start-ups, more innovation and more technologies to the country - and the wider region. Next year Unbound Bahrain is going to be bigger and better with more people and more speakers. We have big plans to remain strongly involved in the country and help the entrepreneurial ecosystem grow.

The whole region is undergoing this transformation, you see it with Saudi 2030 Vision, with UAE 2020 Vision, and you see all the regional economies looking for this industry transformation and the creation of digital-led economies - Bahrain is at the centre of it.

However, inspiring communities and building ecosystems do not happen overnight. Fostering such environments requires a leap of faith by governments in commitment and capital. There is also a lead-time to investment in start-ups and entrepreneurs. Like any relationships, it takes time, sustained effort and investment to nurture networks and connect them with capital. That is why we remain committed to being a part of Bahrain's start-up and innovation ecosystem and we have a real desire to help make it bigger and better.



Am I flying on a 737 MAX?

TDT | Manama

Flight desks all around the globe are being swamped with this particular question for the past few days.

Am I flying on a 737 MAX?

Responding to requests, some like the Southwest Airlines allowed passengers to re-book at no charges, which, however, is not the case with several others like the American Airlines which demands a charge.

The latest news, however, is that many of the pilots and flight crew have grown increasingly cautious about the make of their ride following the crash of Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX 8 on Sunday which killed all 157 passengers and crew.

Voicing support, the Airline Personnel Union (APFA), which represents American Airlines employees, has told its members not to board a 737 MAX 8 if they do not feel safe.

Even though, the US President Donald Trump also weighed in with a tweet on Tuesday saying: "Airplanes are becoming far too complex to fly."

"Pilots are no longer needed,

but rather computer scientists from MIT," he wrote, referring to the prestigious university.

Trump later Wednesday announced a plan to ground all Boeing 737 MAX aircraft amid intense international and political pressure following the second deadly crash in less than five months.

"We're going to be issuing an emergency order of prohibition regarding all flights of the 737 MAX 8 and 737 MAX 9," Trump told reporters the White House.

Will it affect the Gulf?

The news has also pushed Civil Aviation authorities in the Middle East to high alert with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt and Oman banning Boeing's 737 MAX jet from their airspace. The UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority said the move was a "precautionary measure aimed at protecting public safety," state news agency WAM reported.

Budget airline flydubai said it had grounded 13 of its aircraft and would

operate flights using alternative Boeing jets in its fleet. Flydubai, in a statement, confirmed that it had grounded its fleet of 11 MAX 8 and two MAX 9 aircraft following

"Flydubai is adjusting its schedule to minimise disruption to passengers and will operate flights with its fleet of next-generation Boeing 737-800 aircraft," a spokesperson said.

"Where there are flight cancellations flydubai will contact passengers directly."

The spokesperson added: "Flydubai continues to be in touch with the manufacturer and regulator."

Saudi unaffected

Saudi Arabia does not have Boeing 737 MAX planes in its own aircraft registry, an official with the civil aviation authority. "The skies of the kingdom are clear of this type of planes," he said.

Kuwait bans

Kuwait also banned the aircraft because "it seems that this type of airplane is facing a technical problem," said Imad Jalouli, deputy head of the country's aviation safety department.

"We are waiting for information from the manufacturing company that confirms the safety of the plane," he said.

The authority said that "the operation of Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft have been suspended for all flights including overflights until further notice."

Oman suspends

Oman announced earlier Tuesday it would temporarily suspend operations of the 737 MAX aircraft, in a Twitter post by Muscat's Public Authority for Civil Aviation.

The sultanate's national carrier, Oman Air, has five Boeing MAX aircraft in its fleet, according to the airline's website.

Oman Air's statement said that it is currently rescheduling flights affected by this decision. It will inform passengers of all the flights to be cancelled,

Bahrain joins 737 ban

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Zafran

The operation of Boeing B737 MAX aircrafts across Bahrain airspace has been suspended as a precautionary measure, it was revealed.

According to the Civil Aviation Affairs the aircraft has been banned from flying over the Kingdom's airspace.

"The suspension of this aircraft is a precautionary measure following the tragic crash of the Ethiopian Airlines " an official source said.

Bahrain's Gulf Air, according to their website, doesn't operate any 737 MAX 8 aircraft. Its roster is dominated with Airbus aircraft, with Boeing 787 9 being the only exception.

Oman News Agency (ONA) reported. The company has called on its passengers to follow up updates via its website or contact the Oman Air's Communication Centre.

Egypt bars all 737s

Egypt said yesterday it

would bar all Boeing 737 MAX aircraft from its airspace.

The aviation ministry said it was banning the model from "taking off and landing" at Egyptian airports or "passing through" its airspace.

"The civil aviation authority took this necessary precaution to ensure the safety of passengers," it said in a statement.

The widening action against the aircraft has also put pressure on Boeing to prove the 737 MAX is safe, and the company has said it is rolling out flight software updates by April that could address issues with a faulty sensor.

The 737 MAX has four variants -- MAX 7, 8, 9 and 10 -- distinguished by the number of passengers they can carry. The MAX 8 costs \$ 121.6 million at list price and last year made up a third of Boeing's profits. By the end of January, 4,661 of the planes had been ordered, representing approximately 80 percent of the company's orders.

The manufacturer produces 52 of the planes each month, and planned to increase that monthly pace to 57 this year, key to the goal of delivering 895 to 905 aircraft this year.



A crew works with an investigative team to clear the site after the Sunday crash of the Ethiopian Airlines operated Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, at Hama Quntushele village in the Oromia region

1. Will my flight be affected?

Probably not. The percentage of 737 Max jets in the global airline fleet is tiny at the moment. At the end of February, Boeing had delivered 376 to airlines and leasing companies around the world. The global airline fleet comprised 24,400 planes at the end of 2017, according to Boeing.

2. How do I know I'm about to step aboard a 737 Max?

Check your ticket; you should be able to tell from the booking details. If you are making a booking online, many sites indicate the plane model. If not, websites such as flightstats.com allow you to dig into details of flights at least a few days in advance, including the make and type. For those who want to change flights, most of the airlines permit you to do so but at a cost.

3. How long this go on?

This will depend on what the investigators in Ethiopia find and what corrective action, if any, is ordered. The investigation into the Oct. 29 Lion Air crash pointed to a malfunction of a software feature that repeatedly forced the plane into a nosedive. Investigators have already retrieved the Ethiopian Airlines flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder, and the world will be watching closely to see if they reveal any similar problem.

Pilots reported problems with Boeing

Washington, United States

American pilots have reported issues with the plane late last year, it has emerged.

At least four pilots made reports following the October crash of a Lion Air flight in Indonesia shortly after takeoff, all complaining that the aircraft suddenly pitched downward, according to documents reviewed on a flight safety database.

The incidents seem to involve

the flight stabilization system designed to prevent the aircraft from stalling, the "MCAS," which was implicated in the fatal accident in the Lion Air crash that killed 189 people shortly after takeoff.

'DONT SINK DONT SINK'

One pilot logged an incident in November 2018, just weeks after the Lion Air crash, saying the plane "pitched nose down" two to three seconds after engaging the autopilot following takeoff, according to the report on the Aviation Safety Reporting System, maintained by NASA.

"The captain immediately disconnected the autopilot and pitched into a climb," the report said. "The rest of the flight was uneventful."

The report said the flight crew reviewed the incident "at length... but can't think of any reason the aircraft would pitch nose-down so aggressively."

Another pilot on a flight in November said

the crew discussed the concerns about the aircraft and "I mentioned I would engage the autopilot sooner than usual."

But again once engaged, there was a quick automated warning of "DONT SINK DONT SINK!"

"I immediately disconnected the AP (autopilot) ... and resumed climb," the officer said. But after review, "frankly neither of us could find an inappropriate setup error."

"With the concerns with the MAX 8 nose-down stuff, we both thought it appropriate to bring it to your attention."

The Lion Air accident had focused attention on Angle of Attack (AOA) sensors connected to the Aircraft Stabilization System (MCAS).

A malfunction of these tools may erroneously correct the path by pitching the aircraft down due to a mistaken assessment that the aircraft is in stall.

The Ethiopian Airlines disaster took place shortly after takeoff and the aircraft experienced irregular climbs and descents just after taking off.

Skies closed to 737 Max

AFRICA

- Namibia
- Nigeria

ASIA-PACIFIC

- Australia
- China
- India
- Indonesia
- Kazakhstan
- Malaysia
- New Zealand

MIDDLE EAST

- Egypt
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Oman
- United Arab Emirates

NORTH AMERICA

- Canada
- United States

EUROPE

- All EU countries

WORLD
world**Over 100 Malaysian schools shut after toxic waste dump**
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Over 100 schools in Malaysia have been closed after the dumping of toxic waste into a river caused hundreds of people to fall ill, including many children, authorities said.

A lorry is believed to have dumped the waste in southern Johor state last week, sending hazardous fumes across a wide area and causing those affected to display symptoms of poisoning such as nausea and vomiting.

Over 500 people, many of them school pupils, have received medical treatment after inhaling the fumes, with over 160 admitted to hospital, according to official news agency Bernama.

Education Minister Maszlee Malik initially ordered the closure of 43 schools in the area Wednesday, but later announced that figure had more than doubled.

"The ministry of education has decided to close all 111 schools in the Pasir Gudang area immediately," he said in a statement.

China blocks JeM chief ban

AFP | New Delhi, India

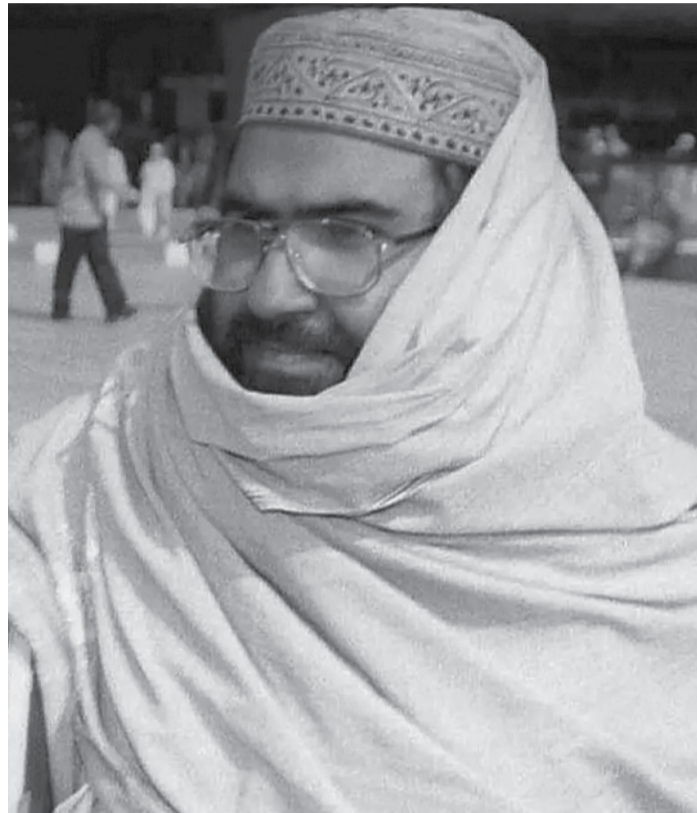
India said yesterday it was "disappointed" by China again delaying a bid to blacklist the leader of a Pakistan-based militant group that claimed a massive suicide bombing in Kashmir last month.

The blast on February 14 killed 40 Indian troops and triggered tit-for-tat air strikes and an aerial dogfight in the most serious bust-up in years between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Although the suicide bomber was native to the part of Kashmir that Indian controls, the attack was claimed by Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), one of several militant groups based in Pakistan.

China on Wednesday put on hold a request by Britain, France and the United States to add the leader of JeM, Masood Azhar, on a UN sanctions blacklist which would subject him to a global travel ban, an assets freeze and an arms embargo.

China -- an all-weather ally of Pakistan which has blocked three similar moves -- said it needed more time to examine the sanctions request targeting Azhar, and asked for a technical hold which could last up to nine



Masood Azhar (Courtesy of Economic Times)

months.

In a statement, the Indian foreign ministry said it "was disappointed by the outcome", adding it would continue to pursue all avenues to make sure "terrorist leaders who are involved in heinous attacks on our citizens are brought to justice".

China has blocked three previous attempts at the committee on sanctions against Al-Qaeda and IS-linked groups to blacklist the JeM leader. The group itself was added to the UN terror list in 2001.

China's decision was the top news across Indian media

“
We are disappointed by this outcome. This has prevented action by the international community to designate the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a proscribed and active terrorist organization which has claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir on 14 February 2019

INDIAN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Ten arrested in India for playing PUBG mobile game

Ahmedabad, India

Indian police have arrested ten university students for playing PUBG, the hugely popular smartphone game described by one minister as a "demon in every house".

The arrests occurred in western Gujarat, where local authorities enforced an outright ban on PUBG last week over concerns about its impact on the "behaviour, conduct and language" of those playing it. The students were released on bail later the same day.

Another police official, Rohit Raval, told the Indian Express newspaper the game was "highly addictive and the accused were so engrossed in playing" they did not even see police approaching. Gujarat is the only Indian state to ban the game -- which has been downloaded more than 100m times around the world.

Ethiopian Airlines 'has flown' black boxes of crashed Boeing to Paris

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ethiopian Airlines said yesterday that the black box flight recorders from the Boeing 737 MAX 8 that crashed with 157 people on board have been flown to Paris for analysis.

"An Ethiopian delegation led by Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) has flown the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) and Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) to Paris, France for investigation," the airline wrote on Twitter.

Urgency is mounting to determine the causes of Sunday's



A researcher of the Office of Investigation and Analysis (Bureau d'Enquete et d'Analyses - BEA) retrieves the data of a flight recorder in Le Bourget, Paris.

crash as Boeing finds its entire fleet of the model grounded.

Ethiopia said it does not have the equipment to process the data and Germany said it would not analyse the boxes as it was unable to read the software used by Boeing. US Federal Aviation Administration acting chief Daniel Elwell said the black box flight data recorders had been damaged. In Kenya, which lost 32 citizens in the crash, a minute of silence was observed at the One Planet Summit on climate change.

Third K-pop star embroiled in South Korea sex video scandal

Seoul, South Korea

A K-pop star has quit after admitting he watched illicit sex videos received from another artist, his agency said yesterday, the third singer to be engulfed in a scandal sweeping South Korea's music industry.

Yong Jun-hyung, 29, who is a member of boy band Highlight -- formerly known as Beast -- said he watched a video of singer Jung Joon-young having sex with women taken without their consent.

Jung, 30, was questioned by police on Thursday after admitting he shared the footage with other men, including mega K-pop star Seungri, who is also embroiled in a sex-for-investment criminal investigation.

Both Seungri -- a member of boy band BIGBANG -- and Jung, announced their retirement from show business earlier this week.

Yong "has watched the footage... and had an inappropriate conversation with (Jung)," the singer's agency Around Us Entertainment said in a statement, adding Yong will leave the band Highlight on Thursday.

South Korea has been battling a growing epidemic of so-called "molka", or spycam videos -- mostly of women, secretly filmed by men.

As well as secretly filming women in schools, toilets and offices, "revenge porn" -- videos men take of themselves



Yong Jun-hyung

having sex with their exes or partners filmed without the women's consent -- is believed to be equally widespread.

According to Han Sol, an activist at Flaming Feminist Action, such videos have long been watched and shared by South Korean men as a form of entertainment and a way to strengthen their "brotherly ties".

Yong, who has also worked as a record producer and actor, previously denied allegations that he had been involved in the ongoing K-pop sex scandal.

Mumbai bridge collapse kills four

Mumbai, India

Four people were killed and dozens injured when a footbridge collapsed near Mumbai's main train station yesterday, the latest accident to highlight creaking infrastructure in India's financial capital.

The bridge, which was under repair according to multiple Indian media reports, gave way around 7.30 pm (1400 GMT) as rush hour commuters made their way into Chhatrapati Shivaji terminus.

"Twenty-eight people were injured when the bridge collapsed. Four of those taken to hospitals have succumbed to

their injuries," Tanaji Kamble, a spokesman for the local civic authority's disaster management cell, said.

India's National Disaster Response Force said it had sent a team to the site over fears that people may be trapped under rubble.

The accident comes almost two years after 23 people died in a crush on a narrow overcrowded footbridge at Prabhadevi station in the centre of the city in September 2017.

Some 7.5 million passengers commute in nearly 2,500 trains daily on Mumbai's colonial-era rail network, a lifeline for the city's 20 million residents.



Onlookers, office-goers gathering around injured people after a footbridge collapsed outside the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus railway complex in Mumbai.

N Korea murder case: Vietnamese woman loses bid for release



Vietnamese Doan Thi Huong is escorted to court in Shah Alam, Malaysia (Courtesy of the Guardian)

Shah Alam, Malaysia

A Vietnamese woman suspected of assassinating the North Korean leader's half-brother lost her bid for immediate release yesterday as Malaysian authorities refused to drop a murder charge, days after her Indonesian co-accused was freed.

Doan Thi Huong broke down in tears as a prosecutor announced the attorney-general had rejected a request to free her and her trial would continue. She has been on trial for a year and a half over the 2017 assassination of Kim Jong Nam at Kuala Lumpur airport.

On Monday a murder charge was unexpectedly withdrawn against the Indonesian woman accused alongside her, Siti Aisyah, raising hopes that Huong might also be freed imminently.

The Vietnamese defendant, who had to be helped out of court by two police officers following the shock announcement, tearfully told reporters: "I am depressed. I am innocent... I want my family to pray for me."

Huong's lawyer said he would make a second bid to get the charge against her dropped, and said failing to free her following Aisyah's

release "does not bring confidence to our criminal justice system".

The pair had always denied murder, saying they were tricked by North Korean spies into carrying out the Cold War-style hit that shocked the world using a highly toxic nerve agent, and believed it was a prank for a reality TV show.

Their lawyers presented them as scapegoats and said the real killers were four North Koreans, who were suspected of being the masterminds behind the plot but fled Malaysia shortly after the assassination.

The prosecutor did not give any reason why charges were not being dropped for Huong, 30, who is now the sole defendant on trial for Kim's murder and could face death by hanging if convicted. Indonesia had mounted a sustained diplomatic offensive to get Aisyah freed, while Vietnam had only stepped up pressure since the Indonesian woman's release this week.

During the trial, the court was shown airport CCTV footage showing Huong approaching Kim, placing her hands on his face and then running away. Aisyah was only seen as a blurred figure fleeing the scene of the crime.

Oil slick heading to French coast

● France will deploy four ships to help battle the oil slick

AFP | Brest, France

An oil slick was heading towards the French coastline yesterday after an Italian cargo ship sank in the Atlantic carrying 45 containers of "dangerous materials", authorities said.

"According to our forecasts, fragments could reach some areas of the coast in Nouvelle-Aquitaine by Sunday or Monday owing to bad weather, which also risks making the anti-pollution operation more difficult," environment minister Francois de Rugy said Wednesday. France will deploy four ships to help battle the oil slick at sea and will prepare for a clean-up operation on land, he added.

The Grande America was en route from Hamburg in Germany to Casablanca in Morocco when a fire broke out late on Sunday. All 27 people on board were evacuated the following day as the fire worsened, before the ship sank some 300 km west of the town of La Rochelle on Tuesday.

"For now the possible pollution risk consists mainly of the 2,200 tonnes of heavy fuel oil on board," Jean-Louis Lozier, head of the regional maritime authority, told reporters in Brest on France's Brittany coast.

Lozier said the hybrid ship's Italian owner Grimaldi had indicated that 365 shipping containers were onboard, "of which 45 are carrying dangerous materials", as well as around 2,000 vehicles.



Flames on the Italian merchant ship Grande America off the coasts of the French Brittany



The sheet of oil, 10 kilometres (six miles) long and one km wide, could hit parts of the country's southwest region near the port city of Bordeaux this weekend.

The fire is thought to have broken out on the car deck before spreading to a container, however the cause is unknown, Lozier said.

"Around forty containers fell into the sea before the ship sank," he said. "Most of them were badly damaged by the fire." The contents include a hundred tonnes of hydrochloric acid and 70 tonnes of sul-

phuric acid. The pollution risk posed by the chemicals "would be very localised", Lozier said, adding most of it would have already burned in the fire.

"Dilution in the ocean would not have serious consequences for the environment."

But French environmental campaign group Robin des Bois (Robin Hood) said the group intends to file a complaint at Brest district court over the environmental damage.

"Two thousand vehicles -- it's a car crash at the bottom of the sea, representing hundreds of tonnes of toxic materials in an area very rich in fish, plankton and marine animals," said Jacky Bonnemains, spokesman for the NGO, adding he also feared possible coastal pollution.

Local authorities have opened an investigation and the ship's owner has been warned to "take all necessary measures to contribute to the fight against pollution", the environment minister said.

Pakistan, India hold 'positive' talks on Sikh visits



Islamabad, Pakistan

Pakistan and India held "very positive" talks yesterday, as they sat down to discuss a visa-free corridor for Sikh pilgrims just weeks after soaring tensions brought the two nuclear-armed powers to the brink of war.

Officials from the two countries met in Attari, India, to discuss the details of an agreement that would allow Indian Sikhs to visit a shrine to their religion's founder in eastern Pakistan.

Upon completion of the corridor, Indian Sikhs will be able to access the site without first having to apply for a Pakistani visa

"Both sides held detailed and constructive discussions on various aspects and provisions of the proposed agreement and agreed to work towards expeditiously operationalizing the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor," read the joint statement released by Pakistan's foreign ministry.

The two sides are set to meet again in the coming weeks to finalise the deal, the statement added.

"They were very welcoming, the whole meeting took place in a very positive environment," added Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesman Mohammad Faisal.

Indonesia says uncovers huge explosives stash

Sibolga, Indonesia

Indonesian police said yesterday they had uncovered a huge stash of explosives linked to a terror suspect whose wife blew up herself and a child following a dramatic standoff at their home.

The discovery of some 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of assembled explosives and bomb-making materials raised fears that a major attack was being planned, a month before national elections and less than a year after Indonesia was rocked by a wave of deadly suicide bombings.

The suicide blast early Wednesday morning came after police had arrested the husband, Abu Hamzah, who was identified as a member of Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD).

Officers surrounded the arrested militant's home in Sibolga on Sumatra island when the confrontation began.

During a nearly 12-hour standoff, the wife lobbed an explosive device at security personnel, wounding a police officer, authorities said.

They later found parts of a woman's corpse and that of at least one child. Police initially



Indonesian police prepare to blow up explosives in Sibolga

said they thought two of the couple's children might have been killed.

"We're still trying to formally identify his wife because the body isn't one piece," said national police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo.

Police said they uncovered a large cache of bombs and explosive materials in the couple's home and another in the same city.

"A total of 300 kilogrammes of bombs and bomb-making materials were discovered," Prasetyo said.

On Thursday, police destroyed materials in a controlled explosion in a field.

University of Indonesia terrorism expert Stanislaus Riyanta said the large stash hinted that a serious attack was being planned.

"This is frightening," he said.

"The impact of bombs depends on the materials used. But this amount -- 300 kilogrammes -- if used all at one time, could certainly be very destructive and deadly, especially in a densely populated area."

Fast and Furious



Mahouts racing their elephants during the Buon Don elephant festival in Vietnam's central highlands of Dak Lak province. Locals say the race is a celebration of the much revered animals -- traditionally thought of as family members in this part of Vietnam -- but conservation groups are calling for an end to the festival, which they say is cruel and outdated.

Bahrain based dance drama plays at Indian art festival

LIVE ACTION

'Kamala: A Ballad of Celestial Love' takes its story thread from Herman Hesse's Siddharthain



A scene from the drama 'Kamala'



Actors during a dance in the drama 'Kamala'

TDT | Manama

Bahrain-based dance drama Kamala: A Ballad of Celestial Love mesmerised the Indian audience when it was

staged at the Tagore Theatre, Trivandrum in the Indian state of Kerala, as part of the 111 days long Soorya Festival on Sunday. Directed and choreographed by Vidya

Sreekumar, 'Kamala', which takes its story thread from Herman Hesse's Siddhartha, was a huge success and made a signature in the festival.

WORD

Spoken word artist makes hers

Danabelle Gutierrez emphasizes how the UA



Danabelle Gutierrez with her book 'Until The Dreams Come'

Arab News | Dubai

"I've been a vagabond for far too long now. I can't keep navigating the rough terrains in the land of men. I would like to set my bags down now. I want to go home," reads a passage from a prose written by Danabelle Gutierrez, a Dubai-based Filipino writer who has found her home in the UAE's cultural oasis.

Gutierrez settled in Dubai more than a decade ago after moving between five different cities – Manila, Vienna, Oman, Cairo and Doha – a transient life, which according to her, has informed her art. "I've been moving from country to country since I was 7 years old, I bring every city that I've lived in, and at some

point, called home, with me, and it's evident in my work, the imagery is all over the poetry," she said.

"I have lived here for nearly 15 years, and it's the longest that I've stayed anywhere," she added.

Although Gutierrez admitted that she's only in the country "for as long my job allows me to be here," she emphasized how the UAE has been instrumental for her as an artist.

She has published two poetry books while living in Dubai and is soon releasing a third book, which she said would deal "a lot with the idea of home and this somehow nomadic existence."

In 2014, Gutierrez started going to spoken word gigs, sitting in the audience. But after attending three open mic events, she finally stood up and performed her poems, which usually tackle raw human emotions, drawn from her own experiences.

Four years later, Gutierrez's audience got bigger, as she was handpicked to perform at Louvre Abu Dhabi in early November, a gig she described as the best thing that happened to her career.

"It's still not my favourite thing to do.

I only do it because I w

the work that I've writ

is meant to be read," sh

Gutierrez wishes to

lish more books in th

also regularly attendi

events.

Danabelle Gutierrez has published two poetry books while living in Dubai and is soon releasing a third book

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DANABELLE GU

44 BC

Julius Caesar is stabbed to death by Brutus, Cassius and several other Roman senators on the Ides of March in Rome



221

Liu Bei, a Chinese warlord and member of the Han royal house, declares himself Emperor of Shu-Han, claiming legitimate succession to the Han Dynasty

1493

Christopher Columbus returns to Spain after his first voyage to the New World

1962

Five research groups announce the discovery of anti-matter

“I was struck by the character Kamala after reading Hesse’s Siddhartha. Although Siddhartha is the protagonist of the story, he remains in search of enlightenment at the end, while Kamala, a courtesan, finds peace with herself and the world,” says Vidya.

Vidya has also taken threads of thoughts from Deepak Chopra’s ‘I Am The Universe’. Her draft was later polished by Sreekumar Ramakrishnan. A theatre artiste, Sreekumar says the duo took a bird, a passing reference in Hesse’s Siddhartha, and turned it into the narrator. “The bird, played by Nithin Janardhanan, introduces the characters on stage, provides tid-bits and so on.”

Kamala may look simple as it appears to tell the story of her love for Siddhartha, their pairing and eventual understanding of the transitory nature of life and its myriad emotions. However, this art form has multifaceted dimensions as it portrays the loneliness of woman and her sufferings in a male dominated society



Actors of ‘Kamala’ perform a dance

They also introduced a Buddha bhikshu to the tale. Achu Arun Raj, creative designer in the Daily Tribune who plays the

bhikshu says, “My character, though small, is significant as he helps Kamala in changing her perspective towards life.”



A scene from the drama ‘Kamala’

Kamala may look simple as it appears to tell the story of her love for Siddhartha, their pairing and eventual understanding of the transitory nature of life and its myriad emotions. However, this art form has multifaceted dimensions as it portrays the loneliness of woman and her sufferings in a male dominated society.

The music was composed by Palakkad Sreeram and the Sanskrit lyrics by the famous poet Dr L Sampath. Sneha Ajith who had elevated KAMALA with her dedicated artistic talent and proficiency in dance forms displayed her immense talent.

Over the years, Soorya, by presenting prolific and authentic art forms of highest eminence, has secured the undisputed place as the best cultural society in India, the largest in Asia. An opportunity to perform in a Soorya stage is considered the rarest of

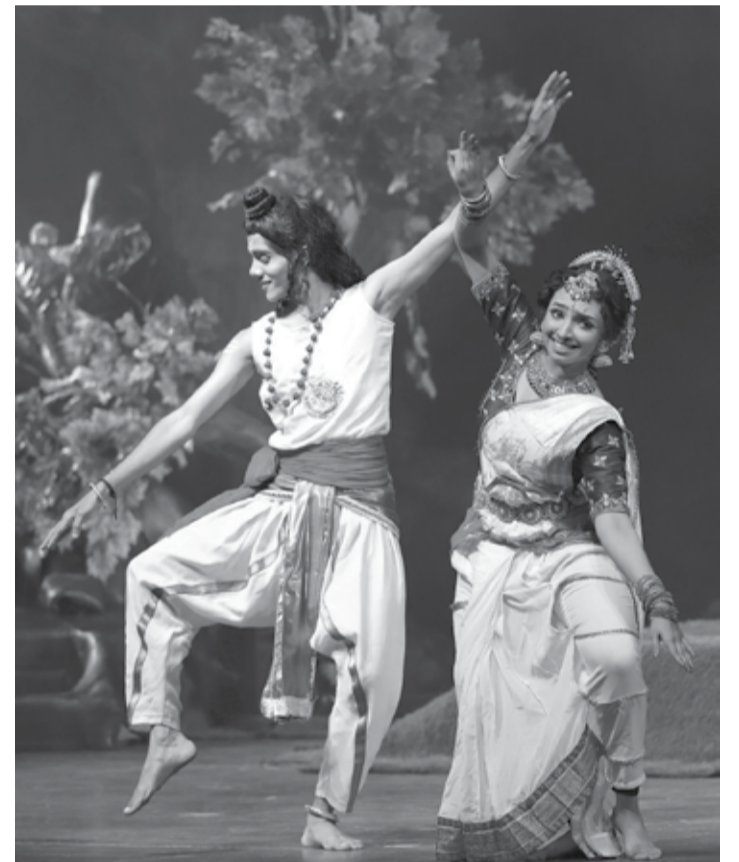
the opportunity for renowned artists even.

“Soorya Krishnamurthy, who was the chief guest for the Inaugural show of Kamala, which was staged on June 30th 2018 at Cultural hall, Bahrain, was overwhelmed to see the talent, dedication and skill of Sneha and rest of the “Kamala” crew. By selecting Kamala for further stage shows in India, Soorya is appreciating the excellence of Bahrain Artists; Sneha and Vidya in particular” Soorya Bahrain chapter secretary Varghese Karakkal added.

“Art forms are means to inculcate powerful messages to the society. Kamala; by its theme and its multifaceted dimensions, is unique, relevant and deals with the loneliness of woman in a

man centric society. Research and preparation in streamlining and developing the story to a dance drama form has been fruitful with the success of Kamala. It is indeed a proud moment for me too as my directorial venture has been selected by Soorya,” Says Vidya.

“We consider the success of Kamala as the success of the rich heritage of Indian Art. We are proud to note the passion of the younger generation to carry the elegance of Indian Art and Culture to the generations to come, by their dedicated committed performances. Kamala will be remembered as the example of such commitment and we are proud to organize events like Kamala,” she added.



A scene from the drama ‘Kamala’ during the Soorya Festival

FLOW

Self at home in the Middle East

AE has been instrumental for her as an artist

Want to be fair to ten, and poetry e said. write and pub- e future, while g spoken word

iving from country 7 years very city d in, and t, called me, and t in my agery is poetry

TIERREZ



Danabelle Gutierrez at Louvre Abu Dhabi

business

India's Reliance caps oil purchases, stops diluents supply to Venezuela

● **Venezuela is reeling from an unprecedented, week-long nationwide blackout and inflation**

● **Infrastructure has degraded over years because of a lack of investment**

● **The US and European Union recognises opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president.**

AFP | Mumbai, India

India's biggest private oil refiner Reliance Industries has capped crude imports from sanction-hit Venezuela, the company said yesterday.

The energy-to-telecoms conglomerate has also stopped exporting diluents to the crisis-hit South American country, it said.

The announcements come after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo asked India to halt all

crude imports from Nicolas Maduro's regime, which the United States does not recognise.

"Our US subsidiary has completely stopped all business with Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PdVSA, and its global parent has not increased crude purchases," Reliance said in an emailed statement.

"Reliance has halted all supply of diluent to PdVSA and will not resume such sales until sanctions are lifted," added the company, which is owned by India's richest man Mukesh Ambani.

Venezuela -- a once-rich oil-producing nation -- is in the grip of an economic and political crisis and analysts said ending diluent exports would hamper Venezuela's output.

"Venezuelan oil is thick and needs these raw materials for processing crude," PetroWatch editor Madhu Nainan said.

Venezuela is reeling from an unprecedented, week-long nationwide blackout and inflation is projected to reach 10 million percent this year, according to the IMF.

The country's infrastructure has degraded over years because of a lack of investment, a signif-

icant brain drain, and the government's practice of putting the military in charge of key civilian facilities and companies.

The situation has worsened with successive rounds of US sanctions against Maduro's government, including steps that have severely curbed its oil exports.

RELIANCE SAID IN AN EMAILED STATEMENT

The US and European Union recognises opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president.



Venezuelan opposition leader and self-proclaimed acting president Juan Guaido (R, top) speaks during a protest in Caracas



India became the top importer of crude from Venezuela in February after US President Donald Trump issued a de facto ban on imports.

On Tuesday, Pompeo asked India to stop buying crude from Venezuela, so as not to provide an "economic lifeline" to Maduro's regime.

The following day, New Delhi warned oil companies that they faced "undisclosed consequences" if they continued to buy Venezuelan oil.

"We will continue a constructive dialogue with the US government to ensure Reliance remains in compliance," the conglomerate, which operates the world's biggest refining complex, added in its statement.

China's industrial output slows, unemployment rises

● **In January and February car sales continued to fall and manufacturing activity sunk.**

Beijing, China

China's industrial output slowed during the first two months of the year as unemployment rose, official data showed Thursday, while some indicators showed a slowdown in the world's second largest economy stabilising.

The figures from the National Bureau of Statistics come as Beijing and Washington appear to be nearing a deal to resolve their painful trade spat, and Chinese leaders convene in the capital for an annual parliamentary session.

Output growth at China's factories and workshops for the first two months slowed to 5.3 percent on-year, from 5.7 percent in December, a multi-year low and short of forecasts.

"We must be aware that there are many uncertainties and instabilities from the external environment," said NBS spokesman Mao Shengyong. "The economy faces downward pressure," he told reporters.

China's normally steady unemployment rate rose to 5.3 percent in February, from 4.9pc in December, with the NBS saying it had expected worse numbers.



A worker welds a liquefied natural gas (LNG) tank at a factory in Nantong in China's eastern Jiangsu province

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang last week laid out a lower growth target of 6.0-6.5pc this year, from 6.6pc growth in 2018, which was already the slowest pace for almost three decades.

Policymakers huddled in Beijing have talked up plans to support the economy, announcing tax cuts, fee reductions, and financing support. A plan to cut value-added tax for manufacturers will help the struggling sector.

In January and February car sales continued to fall and manufacturing activity sunk.

The latest data showed growth in retail sales for January-February remained flat from December, rising 8.2

percent on-year and slightly above forecasts from economists polled by Bloomberg News.

However, retail sales remain near a 15-year low, said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a note, adding that "the near-term outlook still looks downbeat".

Beijing is counting on consumers and renewed investment to stabilise the economy.

Fixed-asset investment rose 6.1pc in the first two months, from 5.9pc in 2018. Last year investment in infrastructure crumbled as China hit the brakes on major projects such as subway lines and motorways to keep a lid on debt.

Motorcity Wins Volvo Excellence Award



The award ceremony

TDI | Manama

Motorcity, the exclusive distributor of Volvo Cars in Bahrain, said it has won the Volvo Excellence Award in Sales and Customer Service for 2018 in recognition of the outstanding accomplishments of the company.

With this achievement, Volvo Cars Bahrain has joined the Volvo Excellence Club which gives winning organ-

isations more benefits directly from the manufacturer.

Volvo Cars recently reported an operating profit of over \$1.5 billion for 2018, an increase of 0.9 per cent compared with 2017 despite tariffs and increasing price competition in several markets.

The company also announced the best ever annual sales of 642,253 cars globally, an increase of 12.4 per cent compared to 2017.

Investors could pump \$1 billion into Uber cars

San Francisco, United States

A group of investors including SoftBank Group is in talks to invest \$1 billion or more into Uber's self-driving car unit, The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday.

Word of a potential infusion of cash valuing the Uber autonomous vehicle

division at from \$5 billion to \$10 billion comes as the ride-hailing startup steers toward a hotly-anticipated stock market debut.

Under terms being discussed, SoftBank's Vision Fund and other investors, including a car maker, would take a minority stake in Uber's self-driving vehicle unit, according to the Journal.

Led by Japan's Masayoshi Son, the Vision Fund is heavily invested by Saudi Arabia. The Journal described the "late-stage" talks as fluid, with the possibility a deal might not be reached.

Uber has been in a race with Google-owned Waymo and a host of other companies, including major automakers, to develop self-driving vehicles.

US ups pressure on Europe over 5G

Washington, United States

The US upped pressure on Europe Wednesday to avoid turning to Huawei for 5G telecom infrastructure, with a top commander saying NATO forces would cease communicating with their German colleagues if Berlin teams up with the Chinese firm.

The US and several other Western nations, fearful of the security risks posed by a company closely tied to the Chinese government, have shut Huawei out of tenders for the development of super-fast fifth-generation, or 5G, networks.

"We're concerned about their telecommunications backbone being compromised in the sense that, particularly with 5G, the bandwidth capability and ability to pull data is incredible," US General Curtis Scaparrotti, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, told US lawmakers.

"If it also is inside of their defense communications, then we're not going to communicate with them" across those systems, the general said before the House Armed Services Committee.

"And for the military, that would be a problem."

Scaparrotti's comments came during questioning about trade talks in Europe, and Germany in particular, with Chi-



US General Curtis Scaparrotti

nese telecom groups such as Huawei.

Chinese law obliges companies headquartered in the country to provide technical assistance to intelligence services, but Huawei has strenuously denied allegations its equipment could be used for espionage.

Kathryn Wheelbarger, acting US assistant secretary of defense for international affairs, told the committee Huawei represents a "threat" to Europe.

Private and military concerns

"I can assure you that in all our conversations with all our European partners, we make very clear the threat of Chinese investment or development of the telecommunications infrastructure in Europe," Wheelbarger said.

UAE port operator's profit rise

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Dubai port and logistics giant DP World said yesterday its net profit for 2018 rose over five percent on increased trade and higher returns from new acquisitions.

The global provider, which runs port operations in over 40 countries, said in a statement that it posted a net profit of \$1.27 billion in 2018, compared to \$1.21 billion the previous year.

"This robust performance has been delivered in an uncertain trade environment, once again highlighting the resilience of our portfolio," said DP World chairman and CEO Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem.



This robust performance has been delivered in an uncertain trade environment, once again highlighting the resilience of our portfolio

SULTAN AHMED BIN SULAYEM
DP WORLD CHAIRMAN AND CEO

He said DP World had made new acquisitions worth \$2.5 billion last year, strengthening its presence around the world. They included Berbera port in



Somaliland, Continental Warehousing Corp. in India, Cosmos Agencia Maritima in Peru, and the Unifeeder Group in Denmark, as well as the pan-Eu-

ropean logistics business P&O Ferries.

The state-owned company said its revenue for the year rose 20 per cent to \$5.65 billion, with important contributions from new acquisitions.

Its capital expenditure on the company for the year, however, hit just \$908 billion -- well short of the planned \$1.4 billion.

It said it plans to invest up to \$1.4 billion this year.

DP World said it had transported some 71.4 million standard containers in 2018, up around two percent on the previous year. It has the capacity to handle 91 million standard containers.

US, India commit to building six nuclear plants

Reuters | Washington

The United States and India on Wednesday agreed to strengthen security and civil nuclear cooperation, including building six US nuclear power plants in India, the two countries said in a joint statement.

The agreement came after two days of talks in Washington. The United States under President Donald Trump has been looking to sell more energy products to India, the world's third-biggest buyer of oil.

The talks involved Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale



India's Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale

and Andrea Thompson, the US undersecretary of state for arms control and international security.

"They committed to strengthen bilateral security and civil nuclear cooperation, including the establishment of six U.S. nuclear power plants in India," the joint statement said.

It gave no further details of the nuclear plant project.

The two countries have been discussing the supply of US nuclear reactors to energy-hungry India for more than a decade,

but a longstanding obstacle has been the need to bring Indian liability rules in-line with international norms, which require the costs of any accident to be channelled to the operator rather than the maker of a nuclear power station.

India plans to triple its nuclear capacity by 2024 to wean Asia's third-largest economy off polluting fossil fuels.

Last October, India and Russia signed a pact to build six more nuclear reactors at a new site in India following summit talks between their leaders in New Delhi.

Myanmar's black gold lures plucky oil drillers

Minhla, Myanmar

As clouds of acrid, black smoke belched above the flames engulfing an artisanal oil field in central Myanmar, prospectors from nearby hillsides arrived in droves, hoping for riches from a fresh line of black gold.

"The fire's a really good sign -- it means there's lots of oil here," Khin Maung Htay tells as he scouted around the site just hours after the blaze was

a day coming out."

The fields near Minhla, north of Yangon, are Myanmar's equivalent of the American Wild West, where informal oil entrepreneurs scramble from site to site in the hope of striking lucky.

It is a hard way to make a living.

A forest of temporary "dericks", three legged pyramids made from metal or bamboo stretching 30 feet or more into the air, covers the hillsides.

more than a kilometre into the ground.

Each is manned by a team working round-the-clock, often caked in black, viscous grime as they wait for a potentially lucrative spurt of oil.

"It's like the lottery," shouts Than Moe over the deafening noise of generators powering the field's hundreds of drills.

As he cooks up some rice for his crew of seven, he explains that setting up a drilling opera-

Setting up a drilling operation can set you back more than \$60,000. But if we strike oil, we can get that back in one day

THAN MOE

The teams live right next to the wells in bamboo huts and tarpaulin tents offering some protection from the searing heat.

Many even bring their families along for their nomadic life.

Children run around the hillsides dodging motorbikes and trucks transporting barrels of oil, while a handful of restaurants and tea shops serve the transient population of several thousand.

guished, some trudge knee-deep through a river of oozing filth, overflow from the wells mixing with water left behind by fire trucks, scraping up any oil they can salvage.

People here dismiss the risks involved.

"The fires aren't dangerous. They happen all the time," one man says without giving his name.

"We're just worried about losing money."



Workers filling barrels with crude oil at an informal oil field in Minhla township, central Myanmar. The weekend's blaze extinguished, some trudge knee-deep through a river of oozing filth, overflow from the wells mixing with water left behind by fire trucks, scraping up any oil they can salvage.



A woman salvaging spilled oil from a pond filled with mud and filth at an informal oil field in Minhla township, central Myanmar.



Workers operating machines to extract crude oil from a well at an informal oil field in Minhla township, central Myanmar.



The weekend's blaze extinguished, some trudge knee-deep through a river of oozing filth, overflow from the wells mixing with water left behind by fire trucks, scraping up any oil they can salvage.

A day not to 'like' for Facebook

Some media outlets branded the outage as the biggest in Facebook's history

San Francisco, United States

Facebook grappled with challenges on two fronts Wednesday, an hours-long outage and intensified scrutiny from investigators reportedly probing data deals struck by the world's largest social network.

As the outage continued, gripes flooded rival Twitter as well as a comments section on downdetector.com, which tracks trouble accessing online pages.

"I have never seen Facebook down this long," one user lamented.

"And many other sites and apps are having issues too."

A Downtetector map late Wednesday showed Facebook service troubles persisting in parts of Australia, Asia, Europe, South America and North America.

"11 hours and still global wide outage continues," read another comment. "This is very bad. Seriously this is not something funny or worth the amusement to even troll about."

Some media outlets branded the outage as the biggest in Facebook's history.

The outage, of unknown origin, also affected Facebook-owned Instagram, as well as Messenger.

In some cases the apps could be accessed but would not load posts or handle missives.

'Not a DDoS attack'

The California firm which has more than two billion users



Facebook's "War Room," during a media demonstration in Menlo Park, California. (file)

acknowledged the outage after users noted on Twitter they could not access Facebook or had limited functionality.

"We're aware that some people are currently having trouble accessing the Facebook family of apps. We're working to resolve the issue as soon as possible," a Facebook statement said on Twitter.

A short time later, Facebook indicated the outage was not related to an attack aimed at overwhelming the network.

"We're focused on working to resolve the issue as soon as possible, but can confirm that the issue is not related to a DDoS attack," Facebook said.

Distributed denial of service cyber strikes involve hackers overwhelming websites with tidal waves of simultaneous requests, typically using armies of

“
We're focused on working to resolve the issue as soon as possible, but can confirm that the issue is not related to a DDoS attack
”

FACEBOOK

computers infected with malicious code.

The social network said there was no update of the situation as evening arrived in California.

Last November, a Facebook outage was attributed to a server problem, and a September disruption was said to be the result of "networking issues."

A grand jury subpoena

While the outage continued, *The New York Times* reported that US prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into the social network's practice of sharing users' data with companies without letting its members know.

A grand jury in New York has subpoenaed information from at least two major smartphone makers about such arrangements with Facebook, according to the *Times*.

Regulators, investigators and elected officials in the US and elsewhere in the world have already been digging into the data



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks during the annual F8 summit at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center in San Jose, California (file)

sharing practices of Facebook, which has more than two billion users.

The social network's handling of user data has been a flashpoint for controversy since it admitted last year that Cambridge Analytica, a political consultancy which did work for Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign, used an app that may have hijacked the private details of 87 million users.

"It has already been reported that there are ongoing federal investigations, including by the Department of Justice," a Facebook spokesman said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"As we've said before, we are cooperating with investigators and take those probes seriously. We've provided public testimony, answered questions, and

pledged that we will continue to do so."

Facebook has shared limited amounts of user data with smartphone makers and other outside partners to enable its services to work well on devices or with applications. Regulators, and now prosecutors, appear intent on determining whether this was done in ways that let users know what was happening and protected privacy.

The social network has announced a series of moves to tighten handling of data, including eliminating most of its data-sharing partnerships with outside companies.

The focus of the grand jury probe was not clear, nor was when it started, according to the *Times*, which cited unnamed sources.

Ringling the bell for gender equality



Officials during the event

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Bourse hosted a bell ringing ceremony in parallel with the celebration of International Women's Day, yesterday, as part of a move promoting gender equality and empowering women in the capital markets sector.

Narjes Farookh Jamal, Chief Operating Officer and Abeer AlSaad, Director of the Capital Markets Supervision at the Central Bank of Bahrain rang the market-opening bell in the presence of the Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain Rasheed Mohammed Al-Maraj and Chief Executive Officer of Bahrain Bourse alongside other senior officials and female executives from listed companies.

Commenting on this occasion, Abeer AlSaad, Director - Capital Markets Supervision at

Central Bank of Bahrain stated, "This event contributes towards building an inclusive culture and gender balance at the workplace."

The CBB has also taken measures to provide an opportunity to women across hierarchy levels wherein 45 per cent of all employees at the CBB are women and 75pc of staff at the Capital Markets Supervision Directorate are women.

AlSaad also added, "Let us not lose sight of the fact that the Financial Sector contributes 16.7pc to the GDP, the second largest contributor to Bahrain's real GDP and that Bahrain has remained one of the leading financial market hubs in the region for more than 40 years. The growth story of Bahrain's financial sector reflects the capability, competency and determination of 35pc of Bahraini



Bell-ringing events aim to raise awareness on women's economic empowerment and the opportunities for the private sector to advance gender equality and sustainable development

women and their contribution cannot be undermined."

On her part, Narjes Farookh Jamal, Chief Operating Officer commented: "Women's economic empowerment is a key driver of sustainable develop-

ment as well as a key corporate sustainability issue. Locally, we are committed to the Equal Opportunities Committee initiative spearheaded by the Supreme Council for Women. At a more global level, we are committed to the Sustainability Stock Exchanges initiative, of which gender equality is a pivotal factor. Ideally, we would like to see more gender diversity at the C-suite level as well as the Board of Directors level within the capital markets."

Bahrain Bourse has joined 83 other global exchanges to mark the occasion over a week of bell-ringing activities for the first time since its establishment, in partnership with the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) Initiative, the World Federation of Exchanges, IFC, UN Global Compact, UN Women.

UK watchdog puts Brexit war chest at £26.6 billion

London, United Kingdom

Britain will have a £26.6-billion (\$35.2-billion, 31.1-billion-euro) war chest to battle the potential damage of its exit from the European Union, a government oversight body said.

With the Brexit deadline approaching on March 29 and no deal reached over the UK's departure, the government is stepping up economic contingency plans.

Its efforts will be helped by extra money if it keeps to a budget deficit below two per cent of gross domestic product in 2020-2021, the Office of Budget Responsibility, which the government tasks with reviewing its budgets, said late Wednesday.

Its report assessed finance minister Philip Hammond's latest economic report

which he delivered earlier Wednesday.

"The forecast changes and policy decisions leave (Hammond) with £26.6 billion (1.2 per cent of GDP) of headroom against his fiscal mandate," the OBR said.

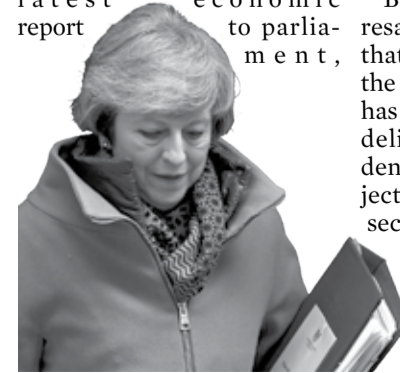
"This is up from £15.4 billion in October, as the fiscal costs of the temporary near-term cyclical weakness of the economy have been swamped by the fiscal gains from higher income tax and lower debt interest spending."

The figure represents the difference between the OBR's new budget deficit forecast and the government's own fiscal targets.

The money should help Britain offset an economic slowdown caused by uncertainty over how Brexit will be resolved.

British Prime Minister Theresa May stressed on Tuesday that parliament's approval of the withdrawal agreement she has reached with Brussels will deliver a fiscal "Brexit dividend". But lawmakers still rejected her deal, sending it to a second defeat since January.

May on Wednesday agreed to ask the 27 EU leaders for a postponement of the Brexit deadline.



celebrities

Demi Moore puts relationships over work

IAN S | Los Angeles

Actress Demi Moore says she has changed her life and shifted her priorities over the last seven years.

The 56-year-old actress opened up about it while speaking to Gwyneth Paltrow and Arianna Huffington at the 2019 In Goop Health summit, reports people.com.

Moore said she has shifted her priorities to refocus on her health and the people around her in the "last seven years".

"My relationships are more important, and what I do comes second," she said.

She no longer looks outwards for validation. "What does it matter what anyone thinks?" she said. "Nothing is

that bad."

This new outlook came after "my health took me down", Moore said, referencing her 2012 collapse at her home. The mother of three was hospitalized after the incident and entered a rehab treatment for addiction and an eating disorder.

Demi Moore



Beckinsale 'really happy' with Pete Davidson

IAN S | Los Angeles

Actress Kate Beckinsale is reportedly "really happy" with Pete Davidson as their budding romance continues to heat up.

"She's very happy with Pete," a source close to the actress, 45, told people.com.

"They have really similar senses of humour and she's always laughing

with him."

They have been spotted spending time together in recent months after they hit it off at a Golden Globes afterparty in January.

On Saturday, Davidson addressed the romance - and the 20-year age gap - for the first time on "Saturday Night Live".

During the end of Davidson's appearance on Weekend Update, Colin Jost asked if his co-star had any new life developments "like a new girlfriend". Davidson was initially reluctant but soon opened up about Beckinsale.

Kate Beckinsale



Pete Davidson



Evan self harmed during abusive relationship

PTI | Los Angeles

Evan Rachel Wood has revealed that she used to self harm when she was involved in an abusive relationship.

She opened up about the abuse on Twitter Monday, using the #IAMNotOk hashtag in an attempt to raise awareness about domestic violence.

"Two years into my abusive relationship. I resorted to self harm. When my abuser would threaten or attack me, I cut my wrist as a way to disarm him. It only made the abuse stop temporarily. At that point I was desperate to stop the abuse and I was

too terrified to leave," Rachel Wood tweeted, alongside a picture of herself with scars on her arm.

The 31-year-old actor also shared photographs from a shoot which she attended during her time in the relationship, adding she fell into a pool of tears on the job and had to go home.

"The day of this photoshoot, I was so weakened by an abusive relationship. I was emaciated, severely depressed, and could barely stand. I fell into a pool of tears and was sent home for the day," she said.

Rachel Wood recently opened up about her experience with domestic abuse during an interview with Dax Shepard for his podcast.

Evan Rachel Wood



Nick gifts Maybach to Priyanka

IAN S | Los Angeles

With "Sucker" reaching top spot on the US Billboard, pop singer Nick Jonas gifted his actress-wife Priyanka Chopra Jonas a luxurious black Maybach.

Priyanka posted two photographs of herself along with Nick.

In the first image, the couple are seen sharing a kiss in front of the car.

In the second one the couple is holding champagne flutes in one hand and Priyanka is holding her dog

Diana, in her other arm.

"When the hubby goes number one.. the wifey gets a Maybach! Introducing... Extra Chopra Jonas. haha. I love you baby! Yay! Best husband ever -- Nick Jonas," she captioned.

According to billboard.com, The trio (Nick, Kevin and Joe) had previously reached a number 5 high with "Burnin' Up" in 2008.

The "Sucker" video was unveiled earlier this month and the couple featured in it along with the extended Jonas clan.

It also features Kevin and his spouse Danielle, as well as Joe and his fiancée and "Game of Thrones" star Sophie Turner in the over three-minute video.

Jonas Brothers' band was formed in 2005. The band has created hits like "Burnin' up", "Hold on" and "Fly with me".

Priyanka Chopra



Nick Jonas

Morgan Freeman joins 'The Hitman's Bodyguard' sequel

PTI | Los Angeles

Morgan Freeman is set to star in Ryan Reynolds' 'The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard', the sequel to 'The Hitman's Bodyguard'.

The veteran actor has joined Frank Grillo, who was last cast in the film.

No details are as yet available about Freeman's character.

Samuel L Jackson and Salma Hayek are set to return for the second installment.

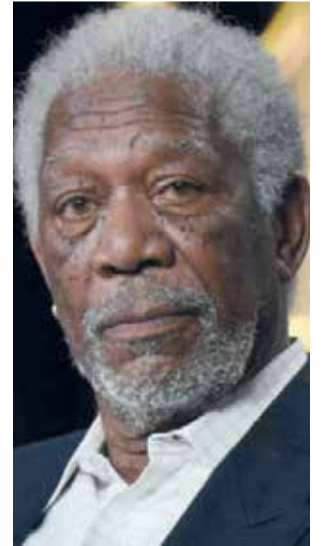
Patrick Hughes is returning to direct and Tom O'Connor has penned the script.

The sequel follows bodyguard Michael Bryce (Reynolds), who is enlisted by Jackson and Hayek's characters to join them on a mission along the Amalfi Coast.

Production is expected to start this month.

Freeman's last cinematic outing was Disney's 'The Nutcracker and the Four Realms', which released months after multiple women accused him of sexual misconduct on production sets or on promotional tours over his career spanning more than five decades.

He next stars in 'Angel Has Fallen'.



Morgan Freeman

Gwyneth Paltrow



Gwyneth Paltrow: I've never said that I am quitting acting

PTI | Los Angeles

Gwyneth Paltrow said she has not bid adieu to acting.

The actor, who was last seen in 'Avengers: Infinity War' in a cameo, said she is currently focused on her lifestyle brand, Goop.

"I've never said that I am quitting acting. What I say is Goop is my full-time passion, and being the founder and CEO over here is what I do all day every day, and occasionally when something is the right thing and it works out around my children and my com-

pany life, I'm able to participate.

"I think I'm just not focused on full-time acting right now," Paltrow said in an appearance on a show.

The actor's comments come months after her admission that she does not miss acting.

She will next be seen reprising her role of Pepper Potts in the upcoming 'Avengers: Endgame', which will mark her seventh and last appearance in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Last month, Paltrow said she believes it is time for her to say goodbye to her character.

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SPORTS
sports

Messi brilliance leads Barcelona past Lyon

Lionel Messi proves too much for Lyon as Barcelona reach Champions League quarters

● Argentine forward scores twice as the Spanish champions beat their French opponents 5-1 at Camp Nou to progress to the last-eight

AFP | Barcelona

Lionel Messi came up just short of matching Cristiano Ronaldo's hat-trick a day earlier but still scored twice and set up two more as Barcelona beat Lyon 5-1 on Wednesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals.

After Ronaldo's treble on Tuesday for Juventus sent Atletico Madrid packing in Turin, Messi delivered his own symphony at the Camp Nou, where Lyon were outplayed save for a very brief period in the second half when they threatened a comeback in this last-16 tie.

"Cristiano yesterday was impressive," Messi said afterwards. "It was a big surprise because I thought Atletico would be stronger but Cristiano had a magical night."

A 0-0 draw in France in the first leg last month meant Lyon always had a chance to make Barca nervous, but Messi's sumptuously chipped penalty and a simple finish from



Lionel Messi scores his second goal against Lyon

Philippe Coutinho looked to have finished them off before half-time.

Yet Lucas Tousart's volley left Lyon one goal away from putting Barcelona out, only for Messi to take charge again. He scored once more, before teeing up Gerard Pique and Ousmane Dembele to complete the victory.

Messi now has 108 goals in

the Champions League, behind Ronaldo's imperious 124, but his latest double takes his team one step closer to the trophy they crave the most.

"When he is at that kind of level, he is almost unstoppable," Lyon coach Bruno Genesio said. "We did what we could."

Barcelona go into Friday's draw for the last eight as the sole Spanish representative,

along with Juventus, Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur, Porto and Ajax.

The last time Spain only had one team left at this stage was 2010 and after defeats for Atletico and Real Madrid, it was up to Barca to avert a first Spanish blackout since 2005.

Coutinho had been whistled off by his own fans last week-



Messi now has 108 goals in the Champions League, behind Ronaldo's imperious 124

end but was picked to start, preferred to Dembele who had just recovered from a hamstring strain. The Brazilian was bright, enjoying one of his best performances in weeks.

"In the last few weeks, months even, I've not been playing well," Coutinho said. "You never know what the future holds but I am happy with my performance today."

"He has come in after not such a good run," said coach Ernesto Valverde. "It was an important match for him and he played very well."

Lyon could barely escape their own penalty area in early exchanges as Messi got to work. He fired one shot towards the top corner and then latched onto a Sergio Busquets pass but Anthony Lopes sprung out to intercept.

Karters set for ultimate test in 24-hour endurance race at BIKC

TDT | Manama

The 2018/2019 edition of the Bahrain SWS Endurance Championship is set for a grand finale this weekend, with the much-anticipated 24-hour final round taking place at Bahrain International Karting Circuit (BIKC) in Sakhir.

The event is set to be the toughest tests of the endurance karting season, with multiple factors potentially influencing the race outcome including teamwork, stamina, elements, tough competition, and the like.

Mudabbar edge Brave Warrior

TDT | Manama

Mudabbar beat Brave Warrior by 157 runs in a CBA Division C 25 Overs League match.

Mudabbar won the toss and elected to bat first. Opener Waqas (80) scored a brilliant half century and was well supported by Ehtesham (44) who helped Mudabbar to score 208 runs at the end of 25 overs. Khalid and Ahmed took two wickets each for warriors.

In second innings, Anamul (five wickets) and Nadeem's (three wickets) magic spell helped Mudabbar to restrict the opponent for just 51 runs, and win the match by 157 runs.

Brief Score : Mudabbar 208/5 in 25 overs (Waqas 80, Ehtesham 44, Ahmed 2/37) beat Brave Warriors 51/10 (Khalid 17, Anamul 5/20, Nadeem 3/5) by 157 runs

Al Nusuf affirms progress plan

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) secretary general Mohammed Al Nusuf expressed pride for the Royal decree approved by HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, representative of His Majesty the King for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, Supreme Council for Youth and Sports Chairman, during his term as committee president, appointing him as new secretary general of the BOC.

In an official statement, Al Nusuf asserted his keenness to exert all possible effort and his vast experience in the development of sports in Bahrain, thus fulfilling the aspirations of the committee.

Al Nusuf added that the youth and sports sectors in the kingdom are on verge of a new stage based on professional work and changing sport into an industry of success.

Bahrain's own Hussain Ayyad in 'enemy territory' for Brave 22

TDT | Manama

One of Bahraini MMA's brightest prospects, Brave Flyweight Hussain Ayyad is used to fighting at home and is coming off a win in Manama, when he beat Mohammed Abo Ali at Brave 18. However, he will be in a different environment. This Friday night, "Iron" takes on Jason Vergara at Brave 22: Storm of Warriors, set for the Mall of Asia Arena, in Manila, Philippines.

Ayyad will be going straight into "opponent's territory" and will take on Vergara in his backyard. However, he doesn't seem fazed at the prospect of having to fight against the crowd's favourite fighter.

"Personally, the challenge of fighting an opponent in front of his own fans makes me give a stronger push to win. I shouldn't let the crowd affect me. I think it's the opposite. I think it affects him. When I catch him with something, I'm sure his fans will blame him, and not me", he recently said in an interview with Bah-



Hussain Ayyad during a weigh in

with Jason Vergara. However, I couldn't find enough videos on him, but from what I saw, I feel he trusts his striking game and uses a lot of his muay thai skills. So we developed a gameplan to deal with that, training to fix some of the mistakes in my previous fights. Hopefully, all the training will pay off and the fight will be easier because of the time I put in the preparation".

Klopp says Liverpool 'back at the top' after Bayern triumph

● Sadio Mane and Virgil van Dijk take Liverpool past Bayern Munich

AFP | Munich

Jurgen Klopp said his Liverpool side proved they are "back on the European stage" after an impressive 3-1 win at Bayern Munich on Wednesday put them into the Champions League quarter-finals.

Sadio Mane scored twice at the Allianz Arena to put last season's finalists Liverpool through with a 3-1 aggregate last-16 win.

"It's a big step to get this club back on the European stage and I am really happy," said Liverpool's German manager.

"If Barcelona, if Real Madrid come here, they know this is a hard place to win.

"It's a big step for us, let's see what we can do with it, but we



Liverpool's Sadio Mane scores their third goal

have a set a bar for this wonderful club that we really are back on the landscape of top international football.

"We think that is where this club should be, but let's carry on, we have a lot to learn, a lot to improve, but we're back."

Having missed the goalless first leg at Anfield three weeks ago through suspension, Virgil van Dijk's long pass led to Mane's excellent first-half goal.

"His first goal was ridiculous, the calmness with how he's finished it off," Liverpool midfielder James Milner said.

"He's on fire at the minute and let's hope it continues for the rest of the season."

Dutch centre-back Van Dijk then headed Liverpool into a 2-1 lead from a Milner corner on 69 minutes after Joel Matip's own goal had handed Bayern a first-half equaliser.

Federer, Nadal, steam into quarters

● **Rafael Nadal of Spain is through to the quarter-finals of the ATP Indian Wells Masters after a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Filip Krajinovic**

● **Kecmanovic is into the quarter-finals after Nishioka retired while trailing in their fourth-round match**

AFP | Indian Wells

Former champions Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal edged closer to a blockbuster semi-final showdown at the ATP Indian Wells Masters with brisk fourth-round wins.

World number two Nadal overpowered Serbian qualifier Filip Krajinovic 6-3, 6-4 to book his quarter-final berth in one hour and 26 minutes.

Federer, seeking a record sixth title in the California desert, needed just 64 minutes to get past Britain's Kyle Edmund 6-1, 6-4.

Nadal said his performance on a windy stadium court wasn't as good as his 6-3, 6-1 third-round win over Argentine Diego Schwartzman.

But he was more than a match for 113th-ranked Krajinovic, breaking him early in each set and saving the only break point he faced.

Nadal, who lifted the Indian Wells trophy in 2007, 2008 and 2013, is in the last eight for the



Roger Federer of Switzerland returns a shot to Kyle Edmund of Great Britain

first time in three years after missing last year's edition, skipping both Indian Wells and the Miami Masters with a hip injury.

He next will take on 13th-ranked Russian Karen Khachanov, who beat world number nine John Isner 6-4,

7-6 (7/1).

Khachanov produced just one ace to the big-serving American's 12 but stretched his record over Isner to 4-0.

Fourth-seeded Federer, fresh off his 100th career title, looked poised to finish off Edmund in

less than an hour.

But the Swiss great had to fight off three break points as he served for the match, just a small speed bump in a match that he took charge of early.

"He didn't have the best start, so that cost him the first set,"



Nadal, who lifted the Indian Wells trophy in 2007, 2008 and 2013, is in the last eight for the first time in three years after missing last year's edition

Federer said. "Second set, it was definitely better. I think he probably struggled throughout a little bit. He never really got going."

"Conditions are tough with the glare, and the jump of the ball it's sometimes hard to find the rhythm and timing."

Federer will fight for a semi-final berth against 22-year-old Pole Hubert Hurkacz.

Hurkacz, ranked 67th in the world, sent 25th-ranked Canadian Denis Shapovalov packing 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-3.

Although he'll be an overwhelming favorite against Hurkacz, Federer said he wouldn't take a semi-final meeting with Nadal for granted.

"I hope I can get there," Federer said, "but I'm not going to underestimate Hubert."

Kecmanovic capitalizes

A day after world number one Novak Djokovic tumbled out of the third round, 19-year-old Miomir Kecmanovic kept the Serbian flag flying.

Kecmanovic became the first lucky loser to reach the last eight at Indian Wells since the ATP's Masters 1000 series launched in 1990.

Kecmanovic, ranked 130th in the world, had taken the first set against Yoshihito Nishioka 6-4 when the 74th-ranked Japanese retired because of injury.

Kecmanovic, who gained entry to the second round when fifth-seeded Kevin Anderson withdrew with an elbow injury, is in his first ATP quarter-final.

Kecmanovic is the last teen left in the men's draw, after the departure of 19-year-old Shapovalov.

At the other end of the age spectrum, 40-year-old Croatian Ivo Karlovic's run came to an end with a 6-4, 6-3 loss to 25-year-old seventh seed Dominic Thiem.

Thiem needed less than an hour to subdue the 89th-ranked Karlovic, surrendering just seven points on his own serve and punishing Karlovic's second serve.

Thiem said putting 87 percent of his first serves in play was key in his first meeting with Karlovic.

"I felt pretty confident on my own service games. That's what I transferred also to the return games," he said. "I made two breaks in the right moment I would say."

Thiem booked a meeting with 18th-seeded Gael Monfils of France, who defeated Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-0, 6-2 in 57 minutes a day after the German stunned world number one Novak Djokovic in the third round.

Vettel fired up to return Ferrari to the top

AFP | Melbourne

Four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel yesterday vowed to shrug off a "disaster" 2018 and topple arch-rival Lewis Hamilton, with his refreshed team passionate about returning Ferrari to the top.

The German won the opening race of the season in Melbourne last year and backed it up with victory at the next in Bahrain. But Hamilton roared back to sweep 11 of the remaining 19 Grand Prix and the 31-year-old is desperate to turn the tables.

"There is a lot of passion inside this team willing to get out and to express ourselves through winning I think is the best we can do," he said.



Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel greets fans during an F1 live event to introduce drivers and team principals in Melbourne

"So that's the target. So far the atmosphere is good, the spirit is right within the team and we will try to carry that into the season."

Vettel is a winner and having to settle for second in the drivers' and constructors' championship last year was tough to take.

He said it was normal for Ferrari fans to consider finishing runner-up a "disaster".

"You know the winner takes it all. Lewis has been in that position the last couple of years and we will try to turn it around," he said.

"In the end we are racing for Ferrari and we will try to get Ferrari back to where we've been trying to get it back to for the past few years." Ferrari haven't won the constructors' title since 2008 and their last drivers' crown came in 2007 through Kimi Raikkonen.

The Italian team have a new look heading into the season, with tech chief Mattia Binotto replacing Maurizio Arrivabene as team principal and young gun Charles Leclerc in for the experienced Raikkonen.

Asked if Ferrari were in a better situation now than 12 months ago, the 31-year-old replied: "Yeah quite frankly because last year's winter testing didn't go well for us."

"We had some issues with the car to fix. We got a bit lucky during the race weekend (in Melbourne) with the safety car to grab the win."

Andreescu overwhelms Muguruza

AFP | Indian Wells

Bianca Andreescu's breakout season continued as the Canadian teenager swept past two-time Grand Slam champion Garbine Muguruza and into the Indian Wells WTA semi-finals.

Andreescu, 18 and ranked 60th in the world, won the first nine games on the way to a 6-0, 6-1 victory that took just 52 minutes.

She reached her third semi-final of the season after a run to the final in Auckland and the last four in Acapulco.

"I just went out there, went for it," Andreescu said. "I didn't focus on who was on the other side."

"It really helped me. I used my serve to my advantage. She didn't serve so well today, so I took advantage that as well."

Andreescu, who began 2019 ranked 152nd in the world, is now headed for the top 40.

The win over Muguruza, now ranked 20th, followed a victory over 18th-ranked Wang Qiang of China in the fourth round and took her win-loss record to a remarkable 26-3 in 2019, including qualifying matches.

"I had a good day," Andreescu said. "She didn't have such a good day. I felt she was holding back a lot so I just kept putting pressure. She just kept missing."

Muguruza said the overall quality of Andreescu's game was just too much.

"I struggled to find a way to

turn things around, because she was keeping her high level all the time," Muguruza said.

Andreescu will get a shot at another top-10 player in the semi-finals, after sixth-ranked Elina Svitolina clawed out a 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory over another red-hot teen -- Marketa Vondrousova of Czech Republic.

Vondrousova, who reached her second WTA final in Budapest in February to arrive in California ranked 61st in the world, was coming off an upset of world number two Simona Halep in the third round, which followed wins over 2018 finalist Daria Kasatkina and former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Svitolina, coming off a 7-6 (10/8), 5-7, 6-4 win over Aussie Ashleigh Barty that -- at three hours 12 minutes -- was the longest on the WTA Tour this year, struggled to get to grips with the unfamiliar left-hander's game.

But her experience and determination

made the difference in the end.

"Not every day you play your best game, you just have to stay strong and stay calm and fight for every ball," Svitolina said.

The remaining quarter-finals will be played today, with Belinda Bencic taking on Karolina Pliskova and Venus Williams facing Angelique Kerber in a battle of former world number ones.



Bianca Andreescu

"I just went out there, went for it. I didn't focus on who was on the other side. It really helped me. I used my serve to my advantage. She didn't serve so well today, so I took advantage that as well. I had a good day. She didn't have such a good day. I felt she was holding back a lot so I just kept putting pressure. She just kept missing"

BIANCA ANDREESCU

Bencic, 22, stunned world number one Naomi Osaka 6-3, 6-1 in the fourth round, bringing the Japanese star's first WTA title defense to an abrupt end.

The Swiss player is on the rise after a spate of injuries slowed her career and is ranked 23rd in the world after claiming her first title in four years at Dubai last month.