

**James Bond should always be played by a man: Bond Girl Eva**

Former Bond Girl Eva Green is not in the favour of flipping the gender of 007 spy as she believes it would be wrong to ignore the history of the character, which has always been played by a man. **P14**

**EU leaders urge clarity from Britain before Brexit delay**

THE DAILY **tribune**



**Katy Perry is 'open' to collaborating with Taylor Swift**

14 CELEBS

**George Michael's artworks sold for £9.2 million**

**Prez Trump issues veto**

New York

President Donald Trump has vetoed a measure from Congress revoking his declaration of a national emergency at the US-Mexico border.

Lawmakers, including 12 Republicans, had passed the rejection resolution on Thursday in a surprising rebuke of Mr Trump's pledge to build a border wall.

Congress will now need a two-thirds majority in both chambers to override him, which is unlikely to happen.

This is the first veto of Mr Trump's presidency.

"As president, the protection of the nation is my highest duty," Mr Trump said yesterday.

**Protesters step up demands**

Algiers

A huge crowd of demonstrators marched through the Algerian capital for a fourth consecutive Friday to step up demands for President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's ouster, rejecting his offer not to seek re-election.

With police standing back without intervening, protesters converged on Algiers' landmark Grand Poste Square for the rally calling on the 82-year-old to step down after two decades in power.

Men, women and children gathered in a festive atmosphere, in numbers that appeared to match the previous week's demonstration when tens of thousands took to the streets across the country, an AFP correspondent said.



02 Equestrian strides lauded

03 Ex-employee ordered to pay Education Ministry BD6,240

04 'Bahrain, region's FinTech hub'



A man wounded in the mosque attack in Christchurch is loaded in an ambulance.

**49 fall to terror bullets**

Gunman attack New Zealand mosques, livestreaming online



A still image taken from the video circulated on social media, apparently taken by the gunman and posted online live as the attack unfolded.



Policemen apprehend the suspect after the attack.

● **Leaders around the world expressed sorrow and disgust at the attacks, with some deploring attacks against Muslims.**

● **One man who said he was at the Al Noor mosque told media the gunman was white, blond and wearing a helmet and a bulletproof vest.**

Wellington

A gunman shot dead 49 people and wounded more than 40 at two New Zealand mosques yesterday, some as they were kneeling at prayer, livestreaming online some of the killings in what Prime Minister

Jacinda Ardern called an assault on the nation's values.

The gunman broadcast footage of the attack on one mosque in the city of Christchurch on Facebook, mirroring the carnage played out in video games, after publishing a "manifesto" in which he denounced immigrants, calling them "invaders".

The video footage widely circulated on social media, apparently taken by a gunman and posted live online as the attack unfolded, showed him driving to a mosque, entering it and shooting randomly at people inside.

Worshippers, possibly dead or wounded, lay huddled on the floor, the video showed.

It was the worst ever mass killing in New Zealand and the country raised its security threat level to the highest, Ardern said, adding, "This can now only be described as a terrorist attack."

Police said three people were in custody including one man

**Bahrain condemns attack**

Manama

Bahrain strongly condemned the mass shootings that targeted two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, which resulted in the death and injury of dozens of people.

The Foreign Ministry expressed deep condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured as a result of this heinous act of terrorism that

contradicts all religious principles and human values.

It affirmed support to New Zealand, in its relentless efforts to combat terrorism and preserve the security and safety of its citizens and residents.

It stressed unequivocal stance against terrorism, extremism and violence, calling for concerted international efforts to eradicate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

"We were chosen for the fact that we are none of these things. It was because we represent diversity, kindness, compassion, a home for those who share our values.

"You have chosen us but we utterly reject and condemn you."

Police Commissioner Mike Bush said 49 people had been

killed. Health authorities said 48 people were being treated for gunshot wounds, including young children.

Leaders around the world expressed sorrow and disgust at the attacks, with some deploring attacks against Muslims.

One man who said he was at the Al Noor mosque told media the gunman was white, blond and wearing a helmet and a bulletproof vest. The man burst into the mosque as worshippers were kneeling for prayers.

"He had a big gun...He came and started shooting everyone in the mosque, everywhere," said the man, Ahmad Al Mahmoud. He said he and others escaped by breaking through a glass door.

Forty-one people were killed at the Al Noor mosque, seven at a mosque in the Linwood neighbourhood and one died in hospital, police said.

Hospitals said children were among the victims.



**The gunman live-streamed the attacks on Facebook for 17 minutes**

How?

The gunman filmed and shared the attacks using a mobile phone app called LIVE4, which allows users to broadcast directly to Facebook from personal body cameras, according to the app's developer and a Reuters review of videos available online.

48

**people including children were injured in the attack and are being treated for gunshot wounds.**

Viral

The live footage of Friday's attacks, New Zealand's worst-ever mass shooting, was first posted to Facebook and has since been shared on Twitter, Alphabet Inc's YouTube and Facebook-owned Whatsapp and Instagram.

SPECIAL VOTE

**At 102, India's oldest voter all set to poll for record 32nd time**

New Delhi

At 102, India's oldest voter Shyam Negi is all set to head to the polls for a national record 32nd time.

The retired teacher has cast his vote in every major poll since the country's first elections in 1951.

And the father-of-seven, who in 2014 was made brand ambassador and mascot for the Election Commission of India, has the distinction of being the first ever Indian to complete an election ballot paper.



Shyam Negi

Although an ardent supporter of India's current Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Negi believes the outcome of recent Indian-Pakistani tensions over Kashmir could be a crucial deciding factor in the result of

India's general elections later this year.

Negi will be keeping abreast of developments by listening to news updates on his trusty Philips radio from his Kalpa village home in the Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, a state in northern India.



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa attended the opening ceremony of the Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019 held at the Zayed Sports City, Abu Dhabi, UAE, with the participation of more than 7,500 athletes of 192 countries, including Bahraini athletes. HM the King was welcomed upon arrival at the Zayed Sport City Stadium by HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai and HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. HM the King and HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum exchanged views on topics of joint interests and regional developments.

# Equestrian strides lauded

His Majesty attends leading horse race event

Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa patronised yesterday the horse race held for His Majesty King

Hamad Cup at the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club, in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First

Deputy Premier.

On arrival at the club, accompanied by HM the King's Representative for Charity Work and Youth Affairs, Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and Honorary President of Bahrain Royal Equestrian and Endurance Federation (BREEF) His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, HM the King was received by Chairman of the Supreme Authority of the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club Shaikh Abdullah bin Isa Al Khalifa, Deputy Chairman Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and senior officials.

The race was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Representatives Council Speaker Fawzia bint Abdullah Zainal, Shura Council Chairman Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, ministers, senior officials, members of the diplomatic corps and equestrian fans.



His Majesty along with HRH the Crown Prince, senior royal family members and other dignitaries at the event.

HM the King presented the trophies to the winners. He presented the Charter Cup to Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Cup for Arabian Horses to winning owner Hamad Al Merisi, His Majesty the King's Cup for Bahrain-bred Horses to Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Maj-

esty the King's Cup for Imported Horses to Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak Apprentice World Championship Cup to trainer Yusef Al-Buainin and the last cup was presented to Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

HM the King expressed thanks

and respect to all officials of the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club for their efforts to develop the inherent Arabian equestrian sport, pointing out the importance given by the club since its inception to these races, which reflect Bahrain's keenness to preserve them as part of the inherent Arabian sports.



His Majesty presents a trophy to one of the winning teams.



His Majesty poses for a selfie with children upon arrival at the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club.



The eighth judicial course for officers working with the Public Prosecution in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has concluded. Defence Affairs Minister Lieutenant-General Abdulla bin Hassan Al Nuaimi patronised the final ceremony and presented the graduates with certificates, awarding the top achievers. Officers from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman took part in the course along with officers affiliated with the Bahrain Defence Force, the National Guard, the Ministry of Interior and National Security Agency. Lt Gen Abdulla bin Hassan Al Nuaimi commended efforts to ensure the success of the course, stressed the directives of the BDF Commander-in-Chief to provide all financial and human resources.

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# Ex-employee ordered to pay Education Ministry BD6,240

Bahraini woman failed to meet agreement terms after joining BTI

● The MoE had urged, in its complaint, the court to seize the woman's bank account in order to settle the amount.

● The ministry suffered losses as the woman resigned from her job.

TDT | Manama

The High Administrative Court has ordered a Bahraini woman to pay BD6,240 after failing to fulfil an agreement she struck with the Ministry of Education to enrol for an academic course at Bahrain Training Institute (BTI).

The Bahraini woman was serving in the Ministry of Education,

“She neither served the ministry the required years nor she successfully finished the course.

PROSECUTORS

which sponsored her study at BTI. However, she didn't complete the course and she resigned from

the ministry, causing it significant losses as the agreement stipulates her to work in the ministry for the same period she takes to complete the course.

She neither served the ministry the required years nor she successfully finished the course, according to prosecutors.

Therefore, she was taken to court to settle the amount the ministry had paid to BTI for her course.

In its ruling, the High Administrative Court confirmed that the

employee didn't meet the agreement terms, therefore she has to compensate the Ministry of Education.

The latter had urged, in its complaint, the court to seize the woman's bank account in order to settle the amount.

However, the Court declined such a request, explaining that there was no concern over the woman leaving the country or spending the money without paying the compensation amount.

## UNESCO co-operation discussed

Paris

Education Minister Dr Majid Al Nuaimi held a meeting with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Assistant Director General for Education Stefania Gianini and Higher Education Section Chief Dr Peter Wells and discussed joint co-operation.

The meeting was on the sidelines of the presentation of the UNESCO-King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa Prize for the Use of ICT in Education to the winners at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France.

”

The Education Ministry needs the UNESCO expertise to promote world-standard academic programmes.

DR AL NUAIMI

The meeting was also attended by Bahrain Deputy Permanent Representative to the UNESCO, Cultural Attache in Paris Ahaikha Wafa Al Khalifa.

The minister shed light on the Al Hedaya Al Khalifa University project, being established in partnership between the public and private sectors, stressing the ministry's need for the UNESCO expertise to promote world-standard academic programmes.

UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education Stefania Gianini reiterated support to Bahrain in various areas, hailing the Kingdom's efforts, particularly the Al Hedaya Al Khalifa University project.

## Success saga of Bahraini women stressed at forum



A segment of the audience.



Ms Al Ansari speaks at the forum.

Washington

Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW), Hala Al Ansari, has highlighted Bahrain's strides in women advancement during an open meeting, organised by US-based Women's Foreign Policy Group at the National Museum of Women in the Arts here.

Addressing the meeting, attended by HH Shaikha Nayla bint Hamad bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Ambassador to US, Shaikh Abdulla bin Rashid Al Khalifa and officials from the two countries, Ms Al Ansari affirmed that the Kingdom has made giant qualitative leaps in consolidating women's presence and participation in various fields over the past two decades, under the Reform Project spearheaded by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

The royal Reform Project has placed Bahrain among the developed countries in the fields of constitutional democracy and human rights respect, increased

growth rates and activated the potentials of all social segments, including youth and women, she said.

Ms Al Ansari pointed out that the women advancement efforts exerted over the past two decades have yielded fruitful results, as proved by many international indicators and the success of a Bahraini woman to become a Speaker of the Council of Representatives through direct vote, thus becoming the first woman to attain this exploit which reflects the Bahraini society's civilisation and openness.

The multiple Bahraini women's landmark achievements are the fruitful outcome of the Kingdom's civilisational progress for thousands of years in which women played a major role. She noted that Bahraini women's educational process began as early as 1899, and then the first government's school for girls was established in 1928, and women were granted the right to vote in 1924. In the 1930s, women began studying abroad, and in

“Bahrain's milestone achievements in the field of women advancement is a source of pride not only for the Kingdom, but also for its brotherly, friendly and allied countries.

MS AL ANSARI

the 1950s, they started establishing their own NGOs. After that, women proved their distinction in many fields, such as medicine, engineering, military work and many others.

She also highlighted the SCW's effective participation in drafting the National Action Charter and the 2002 Constitution which, she said, guaranteed equality among the citizens, protected freedoms, granted women the right to run as candidates in elections, determined the role of the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches and consolidated the cultures of

human rights, dialogue, co-existence, tolerance and acceptance of the other.

While reviewing the march of SCW, Ms Al Ansari said that it was established as per a Royal Decree in 2001, as a consultative council which is affiliated with HM the King and presided over by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of HM the King, noting that the Royal Decree also stipulated the appointment of a SCW's secretary-general with a ministerial rank, thus becoming the first woman minister in the Arabian Gulf region.

She stressed that Bahrain's milestone achievements in the field of women advancement is a source of pride not only for the Kingdom, but also for its brotherly, friendly and allied countries.

During the open-meeting, moderated by retiring general and the first US Assistant Secretary of Defence, Mary Beth Long, Ms Al Ansari answered questions about Bahrain's experience in supporting women.

A documentary film on Bahrain and the SCW's experience, including the main indicators of women's advancement in the Kingdom, was also screened.

The attendees expressed admiration for Bahrain's experience in all fields of women advancement, praising the Bahraini women's pioneering achievements, and the key role played by the SCW in this regard.

## Detention renewed in court staff bribe case

● Tribune reported earlier that the defendants allegedly received the bribe to facilitate a convict's release from jail.

TDT | Manama

The Lower Criminal Court yesterday ordered to renew the detention of a court employee and his sister (a

lawyer), who are accused of accepting BD50,000 in bribe, for 15 days pending further investigations.

The court's order came as per the request submitted by the Public Prosecution in the presence of both defendants during their trial yesterday.

Tribune reported earlier that the defendants allegedly received the bribe to facilitate a convict's release from jail.

Their arrest came after a tip-off was received by the Anti-corruption and Economic and Electronic Security Directorate

in Interior Ministry, which confirmed that both defendants were caught redhanded while receiving an advance payment of the bribe.

Sources also confirmed that the employee at the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments had been recently promoted to the post of an acting supervisor at the Civil Court and that he oddly disappeared on the day of his arrest.

Number element 50,000 Bahraini dinars were allegedly received by the court staff in bribe.

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# 'Bahrain, region's FinTech hub'

Kingdom at the forefront of providing an ideal environment for a healthy FinTech ecosystem

● **The Bahraini Ambassador noted that while the Kingdom is progressive in supporting public and private sector funding to drive FinTech development, it still maintains strong regulatory and oversight standards.**

Washington

The National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC), in partnership with the Embassy of the Kingdom to the United States of America, hosted an Expert Roundtable on financial technology (FinTech) opportunities in Bahrain.

Amongst the speakers were, the Ambassador of the Kingdom to the United States of America, Shaikh Abdulla bin Rashid Al Khalifa and the Chairman of FinTech Consortium Bahrain and Board Member of Bahrain FinTech Bay, Maissan Almaskati. The Bahraini Ambassador af-

firmed in his remarks that Bahrain's role in shaping the region's financial industry has been 40 years in the making.

He also noted that the Kingdom's early endeavours in reforming an oil-dependent economy to become a regional financial hub shows that Bahrain's forward-thinking policies and regulatory expertise resulted in more licensed financial institutions and registered funds than anywhere else in the region.

He also illustrated how the Government of Bahrain has made economic diversification the cornerstone of its Vision 2030 goals, with SMEs expected to play a significant role.

He added that the future of the financial industry revolves around FinTech innovation, and Bahrain is at the forefront of providing an ideal environment for a healthy FinTech ecosystem.

The Bahraini Ambassador noted that while the Kingdom is progressive in supporting public and private sector funding to drive FinTech development, it still maintains strong regulatory and oversight standards.

The Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) has created a regulatory "sandbox" that provides a se-



Shaikh Abdulla speaks at the round table.

cure, virtual space that allows FinTech companies to test and develop digital banking products.

In this spirit, the CBB announced on February 25 the most comprehensive crypto-currency regulations in the Middle East.

For his part, Mr Almaskati said the strong regulatory framework is essential for Bahrain to compete around the world, adding that the Bahrain FinTech Bay is considered a partnership plat-

form that operates in the country, as well as government stakeholders.

NUSACC's President and CEO, David Hamod affirmed that the Kingdom has been a strategic crossroads for a very long time, and steps that the Kingdom has been making in recent years are unparalleled in their sophistication.

In this regard, the US Census Bureau just announced that American goods exports to Bahrain rose 126.75 percent from 2017 to 2018, from \$898.16 million to \$2.037 billion.

This is the largest single-year increase among all Arab nations (with the exception of war-torn Syria, to which US exports grew 627 per cent from 2017 to 2018).

The Associate Director of the FinTech Program at the Milken Institute, Jackson Mueller, noted that Bahrain has taken a number of steps in recent years to bolster its position in financial technology, where the Kingdom has made a concerted effort to become the leading FinTech hub in the region.

He also added that the Central Bank is actively engaged in offering policies that foster a conducive ecosystem, one that



**The Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) has created a regulatory "sandbox" that provides a secure, virtual space that allows FinTech companies to test and develop digital banking products.**

supports both international and domestic FinTech companies.

In the Bahraini Ambassador's closing remarks, he affirmed that there is no shortage of reasons why business investors should choose Bahrain as a FinTech destination, as the Kingdom's continued development of the FinTech sector provides an opportunity for our country to strengthen its wider financial services by capitalising on our solid banking foundations.



**Over the past 40 years, Bahrain has been playing a greater role in shaping the region's financial industry**

SHAIKH ABDULLA

form that involves every financial institution and technology

## Kuwaiti National Guard to take part in joint drill



The Kuwaiti National Guard team that arrived in the Kingdom to attend joint drill.

Manama

A force from Kuwait's National Guard arrived here yesterday to take part in the joint drill, "Taawun" 4 (Cooperation 4), to be carried

out by Bahrain's National Guard between March 15 and 21.

The Kuwaiti force's participation in the joint exercise is in line with the protocol signed between the National Guards in the two countries.

The joint drill aims to

strengthen joint military coordination, increase the exchange of military expertise, particularly regarding counter-terrorism, and enhance the combat readiness of the forces of the two brotherly countries' national guards.

## 'Saudi Arabia determined to protect, promote human rights'

Riyadh

Dr Bandar Al Aiban, head of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, delivered a speech yesterday in which he asserted that Saudi Arabia is determined to continue to protect and promote human rights and encourage sustainable development.

Al Aiban was addressing the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva in a session to discuss the additional report presented by the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Saudi Arabia and the UN's recommendations on human rights.

He stressed that Saudi Arabia was taking a balanced approach "between achieving the best systems and practices in the field of human rights and the right to the development and

**The Kingdom's legal system exercises its authority in accordance with the internationally recognised principles of the independence of the judiciary.**

DR AL AIBAN

preservation of the values of Saudi society."

He added that the Kingdom's legal system exercises its authority in accordance with the internationally recognised principles of the independence of the judiciary, and that it has "all the elements and standards of justice, transparency and integrity, and operates as an independent authority."

Al Aiban said that the King-

dom's progress in protecting and promoting human rights are "ongoing," adding that Saudi Arabia believes the development of the awareness of human rights at official and social levels is a fundamental pillar of that progress.

With regard to recommendations on fair trials and criminal justice, Al Aiban stated that there are no secret prisons and detention centres in the Kingdom.

Such places are prohibited by Saudi law, he explained, adding that the prisons and detention centres in the Kingdom are monitored by the Public Prosecution, the Human Rights Commission, the National Society for Human Rights and other relevant bodies.

Eight recommendations had been approved and two partially approved, he declared.

## Role of charity societies hailed

Manama

Labour and Social Development Minister Jameel Humaidan yesterday received Iqra Quran Science Society chairman Riyadh Al Rahma and other board members.

The meeting focused on the achievements of the association in the past period to promote the Holy Quranic culture among society and contribute to building a new generation.

The association has also held a Quran memorisation and recitation contest, which attracted over 2,000 partic-



Mr Humaidan with Iqra Quran Science Society members.

ipants. Planned events and programmes to teach Quranic sciences were also highlighted.

The minister lauded the programmes and activities lined up by the association; commending its role in fostering Quranic culture which contribution to strengthening social cohesion and harmony and spreading tolerant Islamic teachings.

He reiterated the ministry's support to the dedicated efforts being exerted by charity and voluntary societies and NGOs and civil society institutions towards consolidating community partnership.

WORLD  
world

## Hong Kong 'abduction victim' convicted for misleading police



Howard Lam, accompanied by Democratic Party officials, shows the wounds he said suspected mainland (Courtesy of EJ Insight)

## Hong Kong, China

A Hong Kong activist was found guilty yesterday of "misleading police" after a local court decided his claims to have been abducted by mainland Chinese agents and punctured with staples were made up, local media reported.

Howard Lam, 44, a founding member of the city's largest pro-democracy party, was sentenced to five months in jail and was freed on bail pending an appeal.

Lam claimed in August 2017 that he had been kidnapped from a busy Hong Kong street in broad daylight over his plan to send a signed photo of footballer Lionel Messi to the widow of late Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.

He held an explosive press conference showing his legs punctured by metal staples and red marks on his stomach.

But acting chief magistrate So Wai-tak concluded Friday that Howard Lam's story was false and there never was an abduction, local newspaper South China Morning Post reported.

"He had orchestrated the entire incident," So said.

Police arrested Lam after local news agency FactWire acquired CCTV surveillance footage which they said showed Lam walking in the neighbourhood of Yau Ma Tei after the time of his alleged abduction from that area.

The prosecution said during the trial that not a single person had witnessed the alleged abduction, according to local broadcaster RTHK.

Despite increasing concerns over mainland interference, Hong Kong still enjoys rights and freedoms unseen on the mainland, and it is illegal for mainland agents to operate in the semi-autonomous city.

## China does not ask firms to spy on others: premier

AFP | Beijing, China

China will "never" ask its firms to spy on other nations, Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday, amid US warnings that Chinese telecommunications behemoth Huawei poses security risks.

The United States has launched a global campaign to convince Western allies to shut Huawei out of next-generation 5G technology over fears the company could be used by Beijing for espionage.

A law recently enacted by Beijing that obliges Chinese companies to aid the government on national security has added to the concerns.

But Premier Li Keqiang said the government would not ask any company to spy on its behalf.

"There is none of that now, and there never will be (any of



Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) chats with Premier Li Keqiang during the closing session of the National People's Congress in Beijing's Great Hall of the People

it) in the future," Li told journalists at a press briefing marking the end of China's yearly parliamentary meeting.

"This is not in accordance with Chinese law, and is not

how China does things."

China's government voiced support last week for a lawsuit Huawei filed against the United States over legislation preventing American federal agencies from buying its equipment and services.

Washington this week upped the pressure on its European allies to not use the firm, threatening to cut back intelligence cooperation with Germany if it uses Huawei equipment.

Canada arrested Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, in December at the behest of the United States over charges of Iranian sanctions violations. Two Canadians, including a former diplomat, have been detained in China in apparent retaliation since then.

Her father is the company's founder, Ren Zhengfei, a former engineer in the People's Liberation Army.

## Dutch arrest two in 2015 Paris attacks weapons link

The Hague, Netherlands

Dutch police have arrested two men in Amsterdam with suspected links to weapons used in deadly attacks in Paris in 2015 that killed 130 people, prosecutors said yesterday.

"Police arrested two men on Tuesday in Amsterdam in an investigation into the origin of weapons used by Islamic State terrorists in the attacks in Paris in 2015," a statement said.

The two men, aged 29 and 31, "are suspected of in some way

being involved in the delivery of weapons" to carry out France's worst terror attacks on November 13 that year.

Armed jihadists gunned down at the Bataclan concert hall and at several bars and restaurants around the French capital and

at the Stade de France stadium. They used automatic weapons including AK-47 assault rifles and explosives in the attacks.

The Islamic State group, based in Syria and Iraq, claimed responsibility for the attacks, coordinated from Brussels.

## George Michael's artworks sold for £9.2 million

London, United Kingdom

A collection of contemporary art owned by late pop idol George Michael, including works by Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, has been sold for £9.2 million (10.8m euros, \$12.2m), Christie's auction house said.

Michael was a keen collector of works by the Young British Art movement and developed friendships with many of the artists, visiting their galleries and studios.

Christie's billed the sale of more than 200 works as a



British singer George Michael (file)

"once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" for fans of the tradition-defying movement from the 1980s and 1990s.

"The Incomplete Truth", a 2006 work by Hirst consisting of a dove preserved in formaldehyde, sold for £911,250 -- below its estimated price of

£1.0-1.5 million.

Proceeds of the auction will go towards Michael's various philanthropic ventures, the auctioneers said.

The singer died of heart and liver problems on December 25, 2016 at the age of 53.

During his career, both with Wham! and later as a solo artist, Michael sold more than 100 million records and had a string of massive hits between 1983 and 1996.

Among his biggest hits were "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go", "Last Christmas" and "Faith".

Stay close to mama!



A polar bear cub and her mother Tonja stay close to the water at their enclosure as the baby is presented to the press after leaving the breeding burrow for the first time at the Tierpark zoo in Berlin. The cub, who does not have a name yet, was born on December 1, 2018.

## 3 astronauts successfully reach ISS



Members of the International Space Station (ISS) expedition

Baikonur, Kazakhstan

A Russian cosmonaut and two US astronauts arrived yesterday at the International Space Station aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft, five months after the failed launch of a rocket carrying two of the passengers.

NASA astronaut Nick Hague and his Russian colleague Alexey Ovchinin, who both survived a dramatically aborted Soyuz launch last year, were joined on the smoothly-executed trip by NASA astronaut Christina Koch.

The rocket blasted off without incident from Russia's Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan and docked at the ISS less than six hours later, more than 400 kilometers (249 miles) above the Earth at 01:01 GMT, a few minutes ahead of schedule.

## Over 2,000 fall ill in Malaysia after toxic waste dumped

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

More than 2,000 people, including many children, have fallen ill after toxic waste was dumped in a Malaysian river and emitted hazardous fumes over a wide area, an official said yesterday.

About 200 schools and nurseries have been closed in the affected area in southern Johor state after a lorry dumped the waste last week. People who

inhaled the fumes suffered from nausea and vomiting, and a handful were left in critical condition.

The number of those needing medical treatment has been slowly rising since the crisis began and on Friday the figure stood at 2,355, including 113 still in hospital, local lawmaker Sahrudin Jamal told AFP.

**No one has died.**

Prime Minister Mahathir Mo-



Fire and Rescue Department's Hazmat unit personnel take water samples

hamad visited victims in hospital on Thursday and praised the response of emergency workers. "They have done their job well even though such a case has never occurred (here)," he said, according to official news agency Bernama.

The military has been deployed along with hazardous waste experts, wearing protective suits and masks, to respond to the emergency and clean up the river near the industrial

town of Pasir Gudang.

Local media have reported the waste was a type of oil commonly used to lubricate ship's engines which emitted methane and benzene fumes. Up to 40 tonnes of the toxic substance is believed to have been tipped into the river.

Three men have been arrested over the dumping of the waste and face up to five years in jail if convicted of breaking environmental protection laws.

# Attacks spark global horror

## Paris, France

Attacks on two mosques in New Zealand which left at least 49 people dead yesterday have sparked horror, revulsion and dismay around the world.

One of the gunmen – believed to be an Australian extremist

-- apparently livestreamed the deadly assault.

"It is clear that this can now only be described as a terrorist attack," said Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, describing it as "one of New Zealand's darkest days."

Here is a summary of the main international reactions so far.

## Muslims face 'mass killing'

”

**With this attack, hostility towards Islam that the world has been has been idly watching and even encouraging for some time, has gone beyond the boundaries of individual harassment to reach the level of mass killing. If measures are not taken right away, news of other disasters will follow this one... I am calling on the world, in particular the West, to take quick measures**

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN, TURKISH PRESIDENT



## 'Do the necessary'

**I hope New Zealand will arrest these terrorists and do the necessary under the law of the country**

MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER MAHATHIR MOHAMAD



**We strongly condemn these kind of violent acts**

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT JOKO WIDODO



## Cruel, cynical attack

**An attack against peaceful people gathering for prayer is shocking in its cruelty and cynicism**

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN



## Sickening violence

**My thoughts are with all of those affected by this sickening act of violence**

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER THERESA MAY



## Racist hatred

**We stand together against such acts of terrorism**

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL



**France stands against any form of extremism**

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON



A view of the Al Noor Mosque on Deans Avenue in Christchurch, New Zealand (file)

## Survivors tell of terror

### Christchurch, New Zealand

Survivors of the Christchurch mosque shootings have recalled how elderly worshippers and children were mercilessly gunned down as a heavily armed attacker methodically targeted Muslims Friday in New Zealand's worst massacre.

Anwar Alsaleh was preparing for Friday prayers at the Masjid al Noor mosque in central Christchurch -- where 41 victims were killed -- when a gunman walked in.

Anwar hid in a bathroom and tried to call emergency services as shots rang out, telling stuff.co.nz he heard the gunman say an expletive about Muslims and "We're going to kill you today."

He said he heard people begging for their lives. "They shot them until they died," he said.

At least another seven people died at the Linwood Avenue mosque, about five kilometres away, where Syed Mazharuddin said a man wearing body armour and a helmet opened fire.

"Just around the entrance door there were elderly people sitting there praying and he just started shooting at them," he told the New Zealand Herald.

"There was a lady screaming and he shot her point blank in the face."

The attacker live-streamed the attack, with footage showing him firing repeatedly at worshippers as he moves from room to room.

Witnesses at the Masjid al Noor mosque said the shooter was a white male with maga-

zines of ammunition strapped to his legs.

One told Radio New Zealand the gunman was "very calm" during the rampage.

Mirwaiz, an Afghan refugee who did not want to provide his surname, said he came close to death when a bullet grazed his head.

"He started shooting at our side of the room and I lay down on the floor as a bullet grazed my head. A couple of centimetres lower and I would be dead," he told stuff.co.nz, saying he fled from the mosque while the gunman's attention was elsewhere.

Carl Pomare was driving past the Masjid al Noor with an employee when he saw people running from the mosque and falling to the ground.

"We managed to get her into the car of one of the people who was helping and got her to the hospital, she was critical," he told RNZ.

There were tales of heroism at the Linwood mosque too, where Syed Mazharuddin said a man wrestled a weapon off the attacker, who cut short his killing spree and ran to a waiting car.

"The young guy who usually takes care of the mosque ... he saw an opportunity and pounced on him (the gunman) and grabbed his gun," Mazharuddin said.

"This guy, the hero, tried to chase but he couldn't find the trigger in the gun... he ran behind him but there were people waiting for (the shooter) in the car and he fled."

## What happened?

During afternoon prayers on Friday -- Islam's holy day -- a gunman opened fire inside the Masjid al Noor mosque in central Christchurch, killing forty-one. Another seven were slain at a second mosque five kilometres away in suburban Linwood, three of them outside the building. It is unclear where the remaining victim died.

Witnesses said some victims were shot at close range, with a Palestinian man at one of the mosques saying he saw someone shot in the head.

He described shots fired in quick succession and scenes of panic as people started running out "covered in blood". Another said he saw his wife lying dead outside as he escaped, with one more saying he witnessed children being shot.

## What is known about the attacker?

He has not been officially named, but Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he was an Australian citizen, and described him as "an extremist, right-wing, violent terrorist".

He published a racist manifesto on Twitter before the shooting then livestreamed his rampage on Facebook. Entitled "The Great Replacement", the 74-page manifesto said the gunman -- who identified himself as an Australia-born, 28-year-old white male from a low-income, working-class family -- had wanted to attack Muslims.

## Bangladesh cricket team escapes

### Christchurch, New Zealand

Bangladesh's cricket team escaped unscathed after the deadly shooting.

Cricket Board spokesman Jalal Yunus said most of the team were bussed to the mosque in Christchurch and were about to go inside when the incident happened.

"They are safe. But they are mentally shocked. We have asked the team to stay confined in the hotel," he said.

## Worst attacks against civilians

2019  
JANUARY

A terror attack on a luxury hotel in the Kenyan capital Nairobi claims 14 lives. The attack was claimed by the Al-Qaeda-linked Somali group Al-Shabaab.

2018  
NOVEMBER

A 28-year-old former US Marine kills 12 people in a crowded California country music bar.

OCTOBER

A gunman opens fire at the Tree of Life synagogue in the northeastern city of Pittsburgh on October 27, 2018, killing 11 people. He reportedly yelled "All Jews must die!" during the attack.

FEBRUARY

A former student opens fire at a high school in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018, killing 15 people on the premises. Two others died in hospital.

2017  
DECEMBER

An Islamic State (IS) group gunman kills nine people in an attack on a church in a south Cairo suburb.

NOVEMBER

A gunman opens fire with an assault rifle during a Sunday morning church service in the rural Texan community of Sutherland Springs on November 5, 2017, killing 26 people and wounding 20.

OCTOBER

A heavily armed "lone wolf" gunman opens fire from a 32-floor hotel room on an open-air concert on the Las Vegas Strip. He kills 58 people before turning the gun on himself. Around 500 are wounded. The IS group claims the gunman but the FBI says it finds no such connection.

AUGUST

A 22-year-old Moroccan man mows down pedestrians with a van on Barcelona's most famous street, Las Ramblas, killing 14 people. The IS group says its "soldiers" carried out the attack.

JUNE

A van rams into a crowd on London Bridge in the British capital and three assailants attack passers-by. Eight people are killed and around 50 wounded.

MAY

A bombing at a pop concert by US star Ariana Grande in the British city of Manchester kills 22 people, including children. Islamist extremists again claim responsibility.

APRIL

A truck ploughs into shoppers outside a busy department store in central Stockholm, killing five people.

- Two churches are bombed on Palm Sunday in Egypt, killing 45 people. The IS group claims responsibility and says both were suicide attacks.

MARCH

- Five people die when a man rams his car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge in London and then fatally stabs a police officer outside parliament.

JANUARY

- A 29-year-old shoots dead 6 worshippers at a Quebec City mosque.

”



**The brutal attack... will never diminish the tolerance and decency that New Zealand is famous for**

EU COUNCIL PRESIDENT DONALD TUSK

”



**Deeply saddened to learn of the injury and loss of life caused by the senseless acts of violence. I assures all New Zealanders, and in particular the Muslim community, heartfelt solidarity**

POPE FRANCIS

”



**My warmest sympathy and best wishes goes out to the people of New Zealand after the horrible massacre in the Mosques. The US stands by New Zealand for anything we can do. God bless all!**

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

## Smuggler arrested with 2,000 endangered turtles

Jayapura, Indonesia

An Indonesian man has been arrested for trying to smuggle 2,000 endangered pig-nosed turtles, police said, marking the latest wildlife-trafficking arrest as the Southeast Asian nation battles the vast trade.

Authorities in Papua province said they seized 2,227 of the palm-sized turtles which were stuffed into boxes on a boat docked in the remote town of Agats.

"Officers saw a port worker carrying three big boxes and got suspicious," Papua police spokesman Ahmad Musthofa Kamal said late Thursday.

"This is protected species and they are not for sale."

Following the discovery, police arrested another man believed to be involved in the trafficking bid. The port worker was not detained.

If convicted, the arrested man could face up to five years in prison and a 100 million rupiah (\$7,000) fine, police said.

It was not clear where the turtle shipment was headed.

The pig-nosed turtle -- which has a distinctive snout-like nose and webbed feet -- is only found in Australia and New Guinea, an island shared between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, and is protected under Indonesian conservation laws.



An Indonesian police inspects boxes full of endangered pig-nosed turtles in Merauke, Papua province, they seized from a smuggler.

## Plane crash probe has begun in Paris: Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

An investigation has begun in Paris into the cause of last week's crash of a Nairobi-bound Boeing jet which killed all 157 passengers and crew, Ethiopian Airlines said yesterday.

"The Ethiopian delegation led by the chief investigator of (the) Accident Investigation Bureau has arrived in the French Safety Investigation (BEA)



A flight recorder

facilities and the investigation process has started in Paris," the airline wrote on Twitter.

The two black boxes from the plane that came down just six minutes after takeoff from Addis Ababa on Sunday, were taken to Paris. BEA investigators will try to retrieve information from the cockpit voice and flight data recorders, which were damaged in the crash.

## 'Cannot go back'

Malawi floods leave thousands homeless

AFP | Bangula, Malawi

"We just sleep on the floor in the tents," said 28-year-old mother-of-five Mary Amidu who like thousands of other Malawians fled her flood-ravaged home.

"It's a camp, so the situation is dire. You just find a small space in the tent with your family and make it home."

Her village is just 10 kilometres (six miles) away on the Mozambique border, beside the west bank of the Shire river which has burst its banks following days of torrential rain.

Across Malawi, at least 56 people have been killed following flash floods while the government estimates almost 83,000 people have been displaced.

The waters last week invaded her home so swiftly that the young widow had to scramble to get her family to safety.

"The floods came very quickly and we had no time to rescue anything, most of my property went with the floods," she said. "What was important was to save lives."

They are now at the emergency camp, located in Bangula, southern Malawi -- close to the border with Mozambique which was hit by tropical cyclone Idai late Thursday, cutting off the coastal city of Berea.

"Although we have food, we have no cooking utensils to prepare the food because everything was lost," said Amidu who said she fears a long stay at the camp as waters begin to subside.

**'No other choice'**

"We cannot go back soon because the water has not receded and so the house has been destroyed. So we will hang around the camp until the situation normalises. We have no other choice."



A displaced woman cooks maize received from a relief delivery at the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) camp for people displaced by flash floods from recent heavy rains

Pilirani Andulu, walked 15 kms to the camp after her home collapsed and has been forced to sleep in the open with her two-year-old girl because the tents are full.

A lack of blankets and mosquito nets means her child is exposed to mosquitoes, malaria and cold.

Relief official Humphrey Magalasi has been battling to ensure the 21 camps opened to handle the crisis can keep up.

"We have huge gaps in terms of resources such as food and non-food items," he told AFP. "What we desperately need right now is food, tents, medication and mosquito nets."

As many as 1,700 households had settled at the Bangula camp as of Thursday.

So far, the Department of Disaster Management Affairs has received just 5,000 bags of rice, supplied by China.

At Bangula airfield, Magalasi has also been dispatching food and

emergency supplies to areas cut off by flooding including Makhanga, 65 kms from Bangula.

**'Accessible by boat or by air'**

"We are airlifting supplies to Makhanga where about 2,000 households have been affected," he said.

"Due to the flooding, the area is only accessible by boat or by air. We intend to airlift 600 bags of rice and other non-food items to Makhanga."

At least 56 people have died in flood-hit areas as of Wednesday, according to the government, while 577 had been injured and three are missing.

"Most of the displaced families are living in camps. So far, a total of 187 camps have been established in the affected districts," said the government in a statement.

"Assessments to establish the extent of damage in all the 14 affected districts (of Malawi's 28) are still underway."

## Millions hit in Manila's 'worst' water shortage

Manila, Philippines

Manila has been hit by its worst water shortage in years, leaving bucket-bearing families to wait hours to fill up from tanker trucks and some hospitals to turn away less urgent cases.

Taps are dry from four to 20 hours per day in the homes of about half of the Philippine capital's roughly 12 million people due to rolling outages driven by a dearth of rain and inadequate infrastructure.

"I have learned to take a bath using only seven pitchers of water," Ricardo Bergado said as he lined up with his buckets. "I even save the bath water to flush our toilet."

The shortages started hitting late last week, with some areas in eastern Manila seeing the supplies of water into their homes being completely cut off.

However, Manila Water Company, one of the capital's two suppliers, said it will now use rolling cut offs spread across the city to share the pain more evenly.

Jerry cans and buckets were flying off store shelves and landing in lines where families were spending hours waiting for deliveries by truck.

"Instead of doing important things, our time is consumed

now by making sure we have enough water," Bergado, a 57-year-old audio-technician said.

At least five public hospitals in the capital have started getting supplemental supplies from water tankers, as shortages had led at least one to limit admissions.

"This is the worst (water shortage) we have experienced. It almost happened last year but we were saved by heavy rains brought by storms," Dittie Galang, Manila Water communications manager, said.

The disruption could last until July when monsoon rains are typically in full swing and would replenish regional reservoirs, one of which is at a two-decade low.

Better known for flooding from its frequent typhoons, the Philippines is experiencing a dry spell that led to reserves being severely depleted.

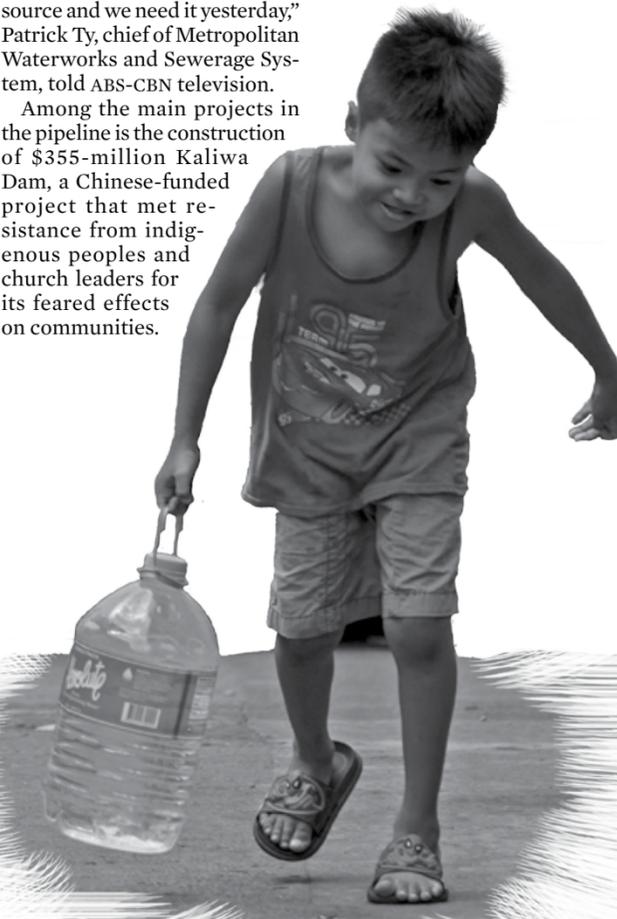
At the same time, the ageing pipelines and dams that provide Manila's water have not kept pace with the growth of the mega-city, which has roughly doubled its population since 1985.

The government has admitted that the problem of growing demand for water has long been forecast but they failed to address it due to delays in projects that would expand

capacity.

"We need an alternative water source and we need it yesterday," Patrick Ty, chief of Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, told ABS-CBN television.

Among the main projects in the pipeline is the construction of \$355-million Kaliwa Dam, a Chinese-funded project that met resistance from indigenous peoples and church leaders for its feared effects on communities.



Residents of Addition Hills in Madaluyong City, Manila, queue to receive water distributed on water tank truck and fire trucks

# SOCIETY



Under the patronage of the Central Bank of Bahrain and with strategic partner Tamkeen, the Royal University for Women, in collaboration with its strategic partner, West Virginia University, held the seventh Annual Workshop on Forensic Analytics and Accounting prevention and detection as a core business issue. The workshop discussed strong internal controls, technologies such as regular monitoring, effective data analysis, and predicting human behavior that can be used to minimize the losses from fraud and other



Rotary Club of Sulmaniya held a regular lunch meeting at the Golden Tulip Hotel. Guest speakers were Ahmed Al Sharaf and Natalie Young from Raptor Rehab Bahrain who spoke about "Owl and Bird of Prey Rehabilitation". They brought an ambassador owl



BIS- BHAVANS celebrated the Graduation Day of Kindergartners on its premises. The ceremony began with an invocation dance followed by speech by Principal Saji Jacob. The kindergartners flawlessly compered the entire show under the guidance of the teachers. The students were felicitated with the certificates for sports day, story writing, Show and Tell and Poem Recitation. The ceremony ended with vote of thanks by the Principal to the parents and BIS fraternity. School directors Himanshu and Saji discussed their further journey.



The British Senior Section of Al Noor International School conducted the Spelling Bee Competition on 19th February 2019. The words challenged the contestants' ability to spell. After four rounds, Areeb Ullah Khan of 8N emerged as the winner and Hamad Muhsen Noor Shahed 9E as the runner up of grade 9. Shakila Nisal has been a winner of the Spelling Bee competition for three consecutive years. The School Director, Dr Muhammad Mashood and the school Principal Mr Amin Mohamed Ahmed Heliwa handed over the trophies to the winners. The members of the school QA department, Head Teachers, Coordinators of the various sections and the senior section students.

Society



...nting Technology in its premises in Riffa. The workshop was presented by Dr Mark Nigrini from West Virginia University and with the participation of more than 60 participant from across the government and private sector. The workshop highlighted fraud r types of misconduct. Both public and private companies, and government entities witnessed significant benefits and skills such as monitoring, periodic analysis, transaction testing, anomaly detection, unstructured data reviews, and pattern recognition.



...named Pipa who was the special attraction at the event.



...teachers. The celebration witnessed the joy and pride as the children spoke about their ... Verma and Ritu Verma congratulated the graduates and wished them good luck in



...stafa of 8F as the runner up of grade 8. Shakila Nisal of Grade 9E was the winner and ... trophies to the winners and certificates to the participants. Also present were the



In line with its continuous efforts to preserve Bahrain's traditional crafts and local craft industries, the Handicrafts Directorate, at Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA); distributed certificates to its 'Henna Painting -Level 1' workshop participants on the 6th of March 2019 at Al Jasrah Handicrafts Centre. The workshop, which was held over a period of 32 hours, was led by the instructor Zahra Lutfallah from the 10th February to 5th March 2019. Attended by a total of 10 trainees, the workshop focused on the tools used in henna painting, demonstrating how henna paste is made, as well as highlighting the basic principles of henna design.

# business

## EU leaders urge clarity from Britain before Brexit delay

AFP | London, United Kingdom

EU leaders yesterday called for clarity from Britain before considering any delay to Brexit after a series of chaotic votes by MPs just two weeks before the deeply divided country is due to leave the bloc.

Quitting the EU after 46 years on March 29 remains the legal default unless EU leaders unanimously grant Britain an extension, with the issue likely to dominate a March 21-22 EU summit in Brussels.

The length of any possible delay will depend on the outcome of another parliamentary vote on the twice massively rejected Brexit deal struck by Prime Minister Theresa May with EU leaders.

The government said it would ask for a "technical" delay until June 30 to pass necessary legislation if MPs finally approve the deal next week.

If MPs vote against it for a third time, the government has warned it will be forced to seek a much longer delay.

"It is very clear that the next steps, the next proposal on how to move forward must come from Britain," German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said in Berlin on Friday.

French President Emmanuel Macron's office said that if the current deal is rejected again "a clear and new alternative plan" must be presented or else Britain would have to leave the EU



It is very clear that the next steps, the next proposal on how to move forward must come from Britain

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL'S SPOKESMAN STEFFEN SEIBERT



If the current deal is rejected again "a clear and new alternative plan" must be presented or else Britain would have to leave the EU with no agreement

EMMANUEL MACRON  
FRENCH PRESIDENT



I think many EU leaders will be very uncomfortable with a long extension

SIMON COVENEY  
IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER

with no agreement.

The British government is hoping that talk of a long delay to Brexit will persuade hardliners in May's own Conservative Party and its ally, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), to get behind her deal.

### Need for 'clear plan'

Speaking on a visit to Paris, Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said "everyone would welcome" MPs approving the deal and Brexit being briefly pushed back to get the necessary legislation through.

But, asked about the possibil-

ity of a longer delay, Coveney said: "I think many EU leaders will be very uncomfortable with a long extension."

He said Ireland would only consider it if it was to "implement a clear plan and strategy to reflect on and perhaps change direction in regard to Brexit".

EU leaders have hinted they could support a longer delay only if Britain were to drop its red lines, particularly its insistence on leaving the EU customs union so as to pursue an independent trade policy.

On currency markets Friday,

the pound jumped versus the dollar and steadied against the euro after a week that saw wild fluctuations for the UK unit triggered by the Brexit twists and turns in parliament.

The UK 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.

On Thursday, MPs voted to ask EU leaders to simply push Brexit back in a bid to head off a hugely disruptive end to their partnership.

### 'Still some common sense'

May struck her agreement with the EU in November after nearly two years of tortuous negotiations.

But the deal has remained deadlocked in the British parliament, chiefly by disagreement over the so-called Irish "back-stop" -- a measure to keep trade flowing and avoid barriers at the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Lawmakers voted on Wednesday not to leave without an agreement but still lacked a clear roadmap on the way forward three years after Brexit was approved in a bitterly divisive referendum in June 2016.

MPs also rejected a call to hold a second Brexit referendum -- a blow to the hopes of a large number of Britons who still dream of keeping their European identity.

The political crisis has weighed heavily on the economy, dragging down growth and forcing businesses to delay investment decisions.

Carolyn Fairbairn, head of the Confederation of British Industry, Britain's main business lobby, has called on parliament to "stop this circus".

Following the votes against a no-deal Brexit and for a delay, the CBI tweeted there was "still some common sense in Westminster".

"But without a radically new approach, business fears this is simply a stay of execution," it said.

### Boeing to upgrade 737 MAX stall prevention system in 10 days: source

New York, United States

Boeing will roll out an upgrade to the software in the MCAS stall prevention system on the 737 MAX aircraft that have had two deadly accidents in recent months, an industry source said.

The system was implicated in the crash of a 737 MAX 8 in Indonesia in October but the source cautioned that the cause of the fatal Ethiopia Airlines accident last weekend has not yet been determined.

The fix will only take about two hours to install, the source said.

The MAX aircraft have been grounded worldwide.

### Cyprus finance minister to step down



Nicosia, Cyprus

Cypriot Finance Minister Harris Georgiades, who is credited with having navigated the island through a painful 2013 EU bailout, announced Friday he will step down at the end of this year.

Georgiades, 46, who was appointed in the heat of the crisis six years ago, denied his decision was linked to calls for his resignation following the collapse in 2018 of the Cyprus Cooperative Bank (CCB).

He is credited with having brought the Cypriot economy back to robust growth after several years of austerity.

### US regulators sue VW over emissions scandal

Washington, United States

US stock regulators have sued Volkswagen over the emissions cheating scandal, alleging the German automaker committed fraud by raising billions in corporate bonds while lying to investors about the environmental impact of its cars.

In a filing in California, the Securities and Exchange Commission said that from April 2014 to May 2015, Volkswagen issued more than \$13 billion in bonds and asset-backed securities in US markets while senior executives knew that more than 500,000 vehicles in the US grossly exceeded legal vehicle emissions limits.

## World can rely on OPEC cushion for urgent needs: IEA

● Venezuela's oil output has long been on a downward spiral

● Venezuela's current oil production is 1.2 million barrels per day (mbd)

● OPEC members have about 2.8 mbd of spare production capacity

Paris, France

Production cutbacks by OPEC nations are building a supply cushion that could be called upon to mitigate a possible supply shock from an abrupt drop in crisis-hit Venezuela's output, the IEA said yesterday.

With a nationwide blackout that paralysed the country for one week, demonstrating the unreliability of the country's electricity network, new questions are being raised about Venezuela's ability to continue to produce and export oil.

In its latest monthly report,

Therefore, in the event of a major loss of supply from Venezuela, the potential means of avoiding serious disruption to the oil market is theoretically at hand. Production cuts have increased the spare capacity cushion

IEA



Representative picture (Courtesy of Alveco)

trimming exports.

However the IEA also noted that Venezuela's current oil production of about 1.2 million barrels per day (mbd) is the size of production cuts agreed by members of the OPEC oil cartel and a number of other nations led by Russia, a grouping often called OPEC+.

Overall, it said OPEC members have about 2.8 mbd of spare production capacity, with much of it being similar in quality to oil produced in Venezuela, which means it could be used without

much, if any, adjustment by refineries.

"Therefore, in the event of a major loss of supply from Venezuela, the potential means of avoiding serious disruption to the oil market is theoretically at hand," said the IEA, adding that "production cuts have increased the spare capacity cushion".

The agency, which advises oil-consuming nations on energy issues, said that thanks to bigger-than-promised cuts by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies, the OPEC+ effort to trim output

was beginning to work.

Since 2016 the OPEC+ nations have agreed on a series of output limits in an effort to counteract the collapse of oil prices in 2014 caused by overproduction. After oil prices had a rollercoaster ride at the end of last year, OPEC+ agreed to cut production by 1.2 mbd in January 2018.

The IEA said OPEC+ production was 0.24 mbd above the target of 44.3 mbd, with overall compliance with reduction targets at 80 percent.

"OPEC's compliance was a robust 94 per cent, compared to 51pc from non-OPEC," said the IEA, adding that major producer Russia was continuing to adjust its production gradually.

"If the producers deliver on their promises, the market could return to balance in the second quarter" of this year, said the IEA.

The IEA left unchanged its forecast for non-OPEC supply increasing to 64.4 mbd this year from a revised 62.7 mbd in 2018, a gain of 1.7 mbd.

It left unchanged its forecast for global oil demand growth of 1.4 mbd to an average of 100.6 mbd in 2019.

# Malaysia plants hope in dwarf trees

● The dwarf trees are about 30 per cent smaller than regular ones

● Small size makes it easier and quicker for the bunches of red berries from which the oil is extracted to be collected

● They produce about 37.5 metric tonnes of palm oil fruit per hectare

● In Malaysia alone, palm oil plantations already cover some 5.8 million hectares



A research officer handling a test tube with a seedling specimen of the newly created dwarf palm oil tree at the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) laboratory in Bangi, on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur



A worker trimming leaves on a newly created dwarf palm oil tree at the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) research station in Bukit Lawiang in southern Johor state

## Bukit Lawiang, Malaysia

Test tubes holding plants line shelves in a Malaysian laboratory, the heart of a breeding programme for dwarf palm oil trees which scientists hope will cut costs and limit the environmental damage caused by the controversial industry.

Palm oil has become a key ingredient in everyday goods from biofuels to chocolate, leading to a production boom in the world's top two growers, Indonesia and Malaysia.

But green groups blame rapid expansion of plantations for laying waste to jungle that is home to orangutans and other animals, as well as tribespeople's lands, and sustained environmental campaigns have damaged its image in the West.

The adverse publicity, combined with rising stockpiles and sluggish demand from key importers, has led to precipitous

falls in prices.

Now the Malaysian Palm Oil Board hopes an initiative to breed smaller trees could go some way to improving industry woes.

"With this smaller variety, we can improve yields, maximise land use and improve palm oil sustainability," plant scientist Meilina Ong-Abdullah told AFP in the lab in the town of Bangi, as other women in white gowns and facemasks sliced at plants and transferred them into test

“  
With this smaller variety, we can improve yields, maximise land use and improve palm oil sustainability

MEILINA ONG-ABDULLAH  
PLANT SCIENTIST

tubes.

But the plan faces huge challenges, not least the relatively high price of the newly created trees, which may make them too expensive for many of the country's hard-pressed farmers.

### Smaller space, more trees

The dwarf trees, which are about 30 per cent smaller than regular ones and have shorter fronds, are the fruit of a decades-long research programme by the palm oil board, which is a government agency.

Their small size makes it easier and quicker for the bunches of red berries from which the oil is extracted to be collected, and means fewer workers are needed for harvesting.

A greater number of the trees can be packed into a smaller space, and they produce about 37.5 metric tonnes of palm oil fruit per hectare -- twice the current per hectare average.

This should mean that less rainforest needs to be logged to cultivate the world's best-selling vegetable oil, and could make more productive use of land that is being replanted after previous clearances.

The plan may help address the problem of land scarcity for cultivation caused by voracious growth of plantations.

In Malaysia alone, palm oil plantations already cover some 5.8 million hectares (14.3 million acres) -- roughly the size of Croatia.

### 'Killer' price

As part of the palm oil board's breeding programme, the dwarf trees have been planted in several areas, including on an estate in Bukit Lawiang in southern Johor state. The dwarf trees there are about five metres (16 feet) tall, compared to an average of about 7.5 metres for conventional trees in the area.

The dwarf trees went on sale in 2017 but take-up has been slow. At about 30 ringgit (seven dollars) each, the seedlings are around twice the price of conventional varieties.

Mohamad Isa Mansor, who has a five-hectare palm oil plantation, said he wanted to buy them -- but the cost was a "killer".

"Smallholders are poor and sustaining our daily life is a challenge due to depressed prices of crude palm oil," he told AFP.

He added: "To replant a hectare with the new variety will cost about 6,000 ringgit. Where are we going to find this huge sum of money?"

Nor does the government appear ready to step in and help. Minister Teresa Kok, whose portfolio includes the palm oil sector, told AFP that the cash-strapped government "doesn't have funds to assist smallholders to do replanting at the moment".

Using smaller trees is unlikely to be enough to take the sting out of environmental campaigns and growing opposition to palm oil, particularly in Europe.

The latest challenge facing Indonesia and Malaysia is a move by the European Parliament to ban the use of palm oil in biofuels, which industry groups claim would devastate the livelihoods of millions of small farmers.

Environmentalists were positive about the dwarf tree programme, but said it needed to be accompanied by efforts to reforest areas already stripped bare for plantations.

"My biggest concern about the palm oil sector is the destruction of biodiversity -- there should be no more clearance of forests," Mohideen Abdul Kader, from Friends of The Earth, said.

"And if possible cleared jungles should be rejuvenated."

## Airbus trials drone delivery to ships



Singapore is aiming to use drones for parcel delivery

### Singapore, Singapore

Airbus yesterday began trials of drones delivering parcels to ships anchored offshore in Singapore, as the high-tech city rolls out the devices for an array of tasks.

Singapore is aiming to use drones for parcel delivery, inspecting buildings, providing security and other jobs, and is working with companies and regulators to put the ambitious plan into action.

European aerospace giant Airbus said it completed the world's first shore-to-ship package delivery using a drone. It involved the device carrying a 1.5 kilo (3.3-pound) parcel to a vessel anchored 1.5 kilometres (about a mile) from the coast.

The drone took off from a pier and landed safely on the ship's deck, deposited its cargo and returned to base, with the entire flight completed within 10 minutes, Airbus said in a statement.

Airbus has partnered with maritime logistics and port services firm Wilhelmsen Ships Services for the trials.

The drones involved can carry up to four kilos of cargo and navigate autonomously along a pre-determined flight corridor to vessels as far as three kilometres from the coast.

At the moment, deliveries to ships anchored offshore are carried out by small boats.

The use of drones can make deliveries to ships up to six times faster, lower delivery costs by up to 90 per cent, cut companies' carbon footprints and is safer, Airbus said.

## Nations agree 'significant' plastic cuts

### Nairobi, Kenya

Nations yesterday committed to "significantly reduce" single-use plastics over the next decade, in a series of voluntary pledges that green groups warned fell short of tackling Earth's pollution crisis.

After marathon talks in Nairobi, countries appeared to have reached a deal over throwaway plastic items such as bags, cups and cutlery to reduce the more than eight million tonnes of plastics entering oceans each year.

The final ministerial statement -- issued on a day of youth protests against climate change -- made only two references to man-made global warming and none to the fossil fuels that drive it.

It said countries would "address the damage to our ecosystems caused by the unsustainable use and disposal of plastic products, including by significantly reducing single-use plastic products by 2030."

Sources close to the talks said that several rich nations, led by the United States, were influential in watering down the pledge.

An initial ministerial statement at the beginning of the UN environment assembly this



Children walk on garbage as others take part in an event to clear garbage from Lampung bay in the Sukaraja village in the Bumi Waras subdistrict of Bandar Lampung

week had proposed a commitment to "phase out single-use plastics... by 2025" -- a far stronger promise than the compromise nations appear to have reached.

"It's hard to find one solution for all member states," said Siim Kiisler, UN assembly president,

told journalists before the final decision.

"The environment is at a turning point. We don't need verbose documents, we need concrete commitments."

The world currently produces more than 300 million tonnes of plastics annually, and there

are at least five trillion plastic pieces floating in our oceans, scientists have estimated.

When asked specifically whether the US had played a spoiler role during the week's negotiations, Kiisler told journalists: "I will not answer that question."

# China approves foreign investment law

● The National People's Congress voted 2,929 in favour of the law -- with eight against and eight abstentions

AFP | Beijing, China

China's parliament approved a foreign investment law yesterday that may serve as an olive branch in trade talks with the United States, but it received a lukewarm welcome from business groups.

The legislation aims to address long-running grievances from foreign firms including stronger protections for intellectual property, but the US and European chambers of commerce voiced concerns that they were not given enough time to give



Chinese leaders sing the national anthem during the closing session of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing's Great Hall of the People

their input.

The National People's Congress voted 2,929 in favour of the law -- with eight against and eight abstentions -- barely three months after a first draft was debated, an unusually quick turnaround for the legislature, which meets once a year.

The move comes as US and Chinese negotiators hold complex talks aimed at resolving a months-long trade war that has pounded businesses with tariffs on \$360 billion in two-way commerce.

US President Donald Trump said Thursday the negotiations should wrap up within four weeks, adding: "We are getting what we have to get."

China's top trade negotiator, Liu He, held phone talks with US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, with the official Xinhua news agency saying they made "sub-

stantial progress".

The bill will eliminate the requirement for foreign enterprises to transfer proprietary technology to Chinese joint-venture partners and protect against "illegal government interference" -- major sticking points in the trade negotiations.

The legislation will come into force on January 1, 2020.

China will also amend its intellectual property law and "introduce a punitive damages mechanism to ensure that all infringements will be seriously dealt with", Chinese Premier Li Keqiang told reporters at the end of the parliament's two-week session.

The changes will "ensure violators have no place to hide", he said. Under the bill, foreign investors will enjoy the same privileges as Chinese companies in most sectors, unless they have been placed on "negative lists", officials say.

## Toyota says to boost US investment to \$13 bn over 5 years

Washington, United States

Toyota announced yesterday it will boost its planned US investment by \$3 billion to \$13 billion over five years to boost manufacturing in multiple states.

The Japanese automaker said part of that higher total is a \$750 million injection in five states unveiled Thursday that will create 586 new jobs.

"These latest investments represent even more examples of our long-term commitment to build where we sell," said Jim Lentz, chief executive officer for Toyota Motor North America.

## BMW 2018 profit slips 16.9pc

Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Profits at German high-end carmaker BMW tumbled in 2018, the firm said yesterday, with trade headwinds and tough new EU emissions tests' drag on performance set to last into this year.

"Challenges facing the entire sector are unlikely to diminish in the coming months," chief executive Harald Krueger said in a statement.

Net profit at BMW slumped 16.9 per cent to 7.2 billion euros (\$8.2 billion), the group said.

The Munich-based firm pointed to "political uncertainty, a cooling global economy... rising production costs to meet regulatory requirements, exchange rate effects and rising raw materials prices" as weights on its earnings.

Operating, or underlying, profits fell less sharply, shedding 7.9pc to 9.1 billion euros.

Revenues were less strongly affected, falling 0.8pc to 97.5 billion.

## EU to slap Google with fresh fine



Margrethe Vestager

Brussels, Belgium

The EU's anti-trust regulator is to slap tech giant Google with a new fine over unfair competition practices, sources said yesterday.

Brussels has targeted the Silicon Valley firm's AdSense advertising service, saying it restricts some client websites from displaying ads from third parties.

The decision in the long-running case, first reported by the Financial Times, is the latest anti-trust salvo against Google,

which has already received nearly seven billion euros in EU fines.

Two sources close to the matter said the verdict would land next week, most likely on Wednesday.

"We are in the process of finalising the AdSense case," EU competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager said earlier this week.

In July 2018, the US giant was ordered to pay a record 4.34 billion euros for abusing the dominant position of Android, its smartphone operating system, to help assure the supremacy of its search engine.

A year earlier it slapped Google with a fine of 2.42 billion euros for abusing its dominant position by favouring its "Google Shopping" price comparison service in search results.

Google has appealed both decisions to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

## US manufacturing sinks again

Washington, United States

US manufacturing dropped sharply for the second consecutive month in February with across-the-board declines in nearly every category of product, the Federal Reserve reported yesterday.

The decline kept overall industrial production from rebounding as analysts had forecast, despite a surge in the volatile utilities component.

The weakness, which many economists say will continue this year, is a blow to President Donald Trump's aggressive trade policies which have been focused on boosting American manufacturing, even as it makes up a dwindling share of the US economy.

Total industrial output eked out a gain of 0.1 per cent, after falling 0.4pc in January -- slightly better than originally reported -- helped by the 3.7pc surge in utilities, according to the monthly report.



Representative picture

But manufacturing fell 0.4pc after a 0.5pc decline in the prior month, even though January's decline was an improvement on the 0.9pc drop originally reported.

Within the manufacturing sector, the negatives were widespread, including losses of about 2pc for nonmetallic mineral products and machinery.

## German lawmakers raise hurdle for diesel bans

Berlin, Germany

Lawmakers in Germany moved yesterday to make bans on older diesel vehicles in city centres less likely, angering environmentalists by backing off EU-wide pollution thresholds. In practice it will give cities above the European Union's upper limit of an annual average of 40 microgrammes of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) per cubic metre, but less than 50 microgrammes, flexibility to take other measures to reduce air pollution.

"Driving bans are a harsh medicine, and they are only proportionate if it is unlikely other measures will quickly mean the limits are respected," junior environment minister Florian Prox said Thursday.

## Elon Musk's Tesla adds 'Model Y' SUV to line-up

Hawthorne, United States

Tesla introduced a new electric sports utility vehicle slightly bigger and more expensive than its Model 3, pitched as an electric car for the masses.

Tesla chief executive Elon Musk showed off the "Model Y" late Thursday at the company's design studio in the southern California city of Hawthorne, and the company began taking orders online.

The all-electric Model Y has a starting price of \$39,000 for a version with a 230-mile (370-kilometer) range. A long-range version of the SUV capable of traveling 300 miles (483 kilometers) on a single charge was priced at \$47,000.

Deliveries were expected to begin late next year for the higher-priced Model Y vehicles, with the standard-range version likely get to buyers by spring of 2021, according to Tesla.

Musk said the Model Y has "the functionality of an SUV but it will ride like a sports car" accelerating from stand-still to 60 mph in 3.5 seconds.



Tesla CEO Elon Musk views the new Tesla Model Y at its unveiling in Hawthorne, California

Model Y featured a "panoramic glass roof" and could seat seven people, according to Musk.

Entry-level SUVs are a hot segment of the vehicle market.

"Even though the Model Y will debut with promises of grandeur, if there are any chinks in Tesla's brand armor, this ve-

hicle will expose them," said Edmunds executive director of industry analysis Jessica Caldwell.

"Tesla is about to learn exactly what it means to go head-to-head with the German automakers." While Tesla has a devoted fan base, with people at the Thursday event shouting

enthusiastically for Musk, the Model Y will be competing with attractive SUVs that titans such as BMW, Mercedes and Audi are bringing to market, according to Caldwell.

### Possible turning point

The latest addition to the Te-

sla line-up comes shortly after the California-based company rolled out its lowest-priced Model 3, an electric car designed for the masses, at a base price of \$35,000, with deliveries promised in one month.

At that price, the Model 3 is less than half the cost of most Tesla on the road and may be eligible for tax incentives which could further lower ownership costs.

"If Tesla truly wants to be a mainstream brand, it's going to have to figure out how to sell cars to people besides young men in California," Caldwell said. Tesla has a sound foundation for the Model Y to be a "turning point," since it has an enviably young base of buyers for a luxury brand and the Model X has had strong appeal to women, according to Caldwell.

The new vehicles suggest Tesla has been able to overcome production bottlenecks to ramp up production to meet demand, and moving toward Musk's goal of making electric vehicles widely available.

## show

## OASIS JUFFAIR

**1- WONDER PARK (PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY) NEW**

⊕ BRIANNA DENSKI, JENNIE GARNER, KEN HUDSON CAMPBELL  
DAILY AT (3D): 12.00 + 4.30 + 9.00 PM  
DAILY AT (KIDS CINEMA): 11.15 AM + 1.15 + 3.15 + 5.15 + 7.15 + 9.15 + 11.15 PM

**2- GRETA (15+) (THRILLER/CRIME) NEW**

⊕ CHLOE GRACE MORETZ, ISABELLE HUPPERT, MAIKA MONROE  
DAILY AT: 2.30 + 7.00 + 11.30 PM

**3- MERE PYARE PRIME MINISTER (15+) (HINDI/DRA-MA) NEW**

⊕ RASIKA AGASHE, SONIA ALBIZURI, SYNA ANAND  
DAILY AT: 12.15 + 2.30 + 7.00 + 11.30 PM

**4- PHOTOGRAPH (PG-13) (HINDI/DRA-MA/ROMANTIC) NEW**

⊕ NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI, SANYA MALHOTRA, AKASH SINHA  
FROM THURSDAY 14TH AT 7.00 PM ONWARDS  
DAILY AT: 4.45 + 9.15 PM

**5- AN INTERNATIONAL LOCAL STORY (PG) (MALAY-ALAM) NEW**

⊕ MANOJ K. JAYAN, TINU TOM, JOHN KAIPPALLIL  
DAILY AT: 12.30 + 6.00 + 11.30 PM

**6- ISPADE RAJAVUM IDHAYA RANIYUM (PG-13) (TAMIL) NEW**

⊕ HARISH KALYAN, SHILPA MANJUNATH, MA KA PA ANAND  
FROM THURSDAY 14TH AT 4.30 PM ONWARDS  
DAILY AT: 3.00 + 8.30 PM

**7- CAPTAIN MARVEL (PG-13) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ BRIE LARSON, GEMMA CHAN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON  
DAILY AT (ATMOS): 11.15 AM + 1.45 + 4.15 + 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM  
DAILY AT (3D): 2.00 + 6.30 + 11.00 PM  
DAILY AT (VIP): 10.45 AM + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM

**8- BADLA (PG-15) (HINDI/THRILLER/CRIME)**

⊕ AMITABH BACHCHAN, TAPSEE PANNU, TONY LUKE  
DAILY AT: 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.30 + 6.00 + 8.30 + 11.00 PM

**9- ESCAPE ROOM (PG-15) (THRILLER)**

⊕ TAYLOR RUSSELL, LOGAN MILLER, DEBORAH ANN WOLL  
DAILY AT: 11.00 AM + 1.15 + 6.30 + 11.45 PM

**10- TOTAL DHAMAAL (PG-13) (HINDI/COMEDY/AD-VENTURE)**

⊕ AJAY DEVGN, MADHURI DIXIT, ANIL KAPOOR  
DAILY AT: 12.00 + 4.30 + 9.00 PM

**11- KUMBALANGI NIGHT (PG-13) (MALAYALAM)**

⊕ FAHADH FAASIL, SHANE NIGAM, SOUBIN SHAHIR  
DAILY AT: 11.00 AM + 5.00 + 11.00 PM

**12- GULLY BOY (PG-15) (HINDI/DRA-MA/MUSICAL)**

⊕ ALIA BHAT, RANVEER SINGH, SIDDHANT CHATURVEDI  
DAILY AT: 3.30 + 8.45 PM

**13- KODATHI SMAKSHAM BALAN VAKEEL (PG-13) (MALAYALAM)**

⊕ DILEEP, MAMTA MOHANDAS, PRIYA ANAND  
DAILY AT: 2.00 + 8.00 PM

## CITYCENTRE

**1- WONDER PARK (PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY) NEW**

⊕ BRIANNA DENSKI, JENNIE GARNER, KEN HUDSON CAMPBELL  
DAILY AT: 11.30 AM + 1.30 + 3.30 + 5.30 + 7.30 + 9.30 + 11.30 PM  
DAILY AT (ARABIC DUBBED): 11.00 AM + 1.00 + 3.00 + 5.00 + 7.00 + 9.00 + 11.00 PM  
DAILY AT (3D): 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.30 + 4.30 + 6.30 + 8.30 + 10.30 PM  
DAILY AT: 11.15 AM + 2.00 + 4.45 + 7.30 + 10.15 PM + (12.30 MN +



1.00 AM THURS/FRI)

**2- GRETA (15+) (THRILLER/CRIME) NEW**

⊕ CHLOE GRACE MORETZ, ISABELLE HUPPERT, MAIKA MONROE  
DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 PM + 12.00 MN + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)  
DAILY AT (VIP II): 11.00 AM + 1.00 + 3.00 + 5.00 + 7.00 + 9.00 + 11.00 PM

**3- THE HOLE IN THE GROUND (15+) (HORROR) NEW**

⊕ SEANA KERSLAKE, JAMES COSMO, SIMONE KIRBY  
DAILY AT: 11.15 AM + 1.15 + 3.15 + 5.15 + 7.15 + 9.15 + 11.15 PM

**4- CAPTAIN MARVEL (PG-13) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ BRIE LARSON, GEMMA CHAN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON  
DAILY AT (IMAX 3D): 12.00 + 2.45 + 5.30 + 8.15 + 11.00 PM  
DAILY AT (ATMOS): 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.45 + 6.30 + 9.15 PM + 12.00 MN  
DAILY AT: 11.15 AM + 2.00 + 4.45 + 7.30 + 10.15 PM + (12.30 MN + 1.00 AM THURS/FRI)  
DAILY AT (VIP I): 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM

**5- BADLA (PG-15) (HINDI/THRILLER/CRIME)**

⊕ AMITABH BACHCHAN, TAPSEE PANNU, TONY LUKE  
DAILY AT: 2.45 + 7.15 + 11.45 PM

**6- ESCAPE ROOM (PG-15) (THRILLER)**

⊕ TAYLOR RUSSELL, LOGAN MILLER, DEBORAH ANN WOLL  
DAILY AT: 10.30 AM + 12.45 + 3.00 + 5.15 + 7.30 + 9.45 PM + 12.00 MN + (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)

**7- COLD PURSUIT (15+) (ACTION/CRIME/DRA-MA)**

⊕ LIAM NEESON, EMMY ROSSUM, LAURA DERN  
DAILY AT: 11.30 AM + 2.00 + 4.30 + 7.00 + 9.30 PM + 12.00 MN

**8- FIGHTING WITH MY FAMILY (15+) (DRA-MA/COMEDY/BIOGRAPHY)**

⊕ DWAYNE JOHNSON, FLORENCE PUGH, JACK LOWDEN  
DAILY AT: 12.30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM

**9- HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD (PG) (ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ CATE BLANCHETT, JONAH HILL, GERARD BUTLER  
DAILY AT: 10.45 AM + 12.45 + 2.45 + 4.45 + 6.45 + 8.45 + 10.45 PM

**10- THE UPSIDE (PG-15) (COMEDY/DRA-MA)**

⊕ KEVIN HART, BRYAN CRANSTON, NICOLE KIDMAN  
DAILY AT: 11.15 AM + 1.45 + 4.15 + 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM

**11- ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL (PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE/ROMANTIC)**

⊕ ROSA SALAZAR, CHRISTOPH WALTZ, JENNIFER CONNELLY  
DAILY AT: 10.45 AM + 4.00 + 9.15 PM

**12- GLASS (PG-15) (THRILLER)**

⊕ JAMES MCAVOY, BRUCE WILLIS, SAMUEL L. JACKSON

DAILY AT: 11.00 AM + 1.30 + 4.00 + 6.30 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM

**13- THE LEGO MOVIE 2 (G) (ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)**

⊕ CHRIS PRATT, ELIZABETH BANKS, WILL ARNETT  
DAILY AT: 2.00 + 6.30 + 11.00 PM

**14- NADI ELREGAL EL SERI (PG-15) (ARABIC/COMEDY)**

⊕ KARIM ABDULAZIZ, GHADA ADEL, MAJDE ALKIDDAWI  
DAILY AT: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM

**15- JOHNNY ENGLISH STRIKES AGAIN (PG) (COMEDY/ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ ROWAN ATKINSON, OLGA KURYLENKO, EMMA THOMPSON  
DAILY AT: 10.45 AM + 12.45 + 5.15 + 9.45 PM

**16- AQUAMAN (PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ JASON MOMOA, AMBER HEARD, NICOLE KIDMAN  
DAILY AT: 1.15 + 6.30 + 11.45 PM

**17- RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET (PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)**

⊕ JOHN C. REILLY, SARAH SILVARMAN, GAL GADOT  
DAILY AT: 11.45 AM + 4.15 + 8.45 PM

## SEEF (I)

**1- WONDER PARK (PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY) NEW**

⊕ BRIANNA DENSKI, JENNIE GARNER, KEN HUDSON CAMPBELL  
DAILY AT: 11.00 AM + 1.00 + 3.00 + 5.00 + 7.00 + 9.00 + 11.00 PM  
DAILY AT (ARABIC DUBBED): 11.30 AM + 1.30 + 3.30 + 5.30 + 7.30 + 9.30 + 11.30 PM

**2- GRETA (15+) (THRILLER/CRIME) NEW**

⊕ CHLOE GRACE MORETZ, ISABELLE HUPPERT, MAIKA MONROE  
DAILY AT: 11.45 AM + 1.45 + 3.45 + 5.45 + 7.45 + 9.45 + 11.45 PM

**3- THE HOLE IN THE GROUND (15+) (HORROR) NEW**

⊕ SEANA KERSLAKE, JAMES COSMO, SIMONE KIRBY  
DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 PM + 12.00 MN

**4- CAPHARNAUM (18+) (ARABIC/DRA-MA) NEW**

⊕ KAWTHAR AL HADDAD, NADINE LABAKY, FADI YOUSEF  
DAILY AT: 10.45 AM + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM

**5- CAPTAIN MARVEL (PG-13) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ BRIE LARSON, GEMMA CHAN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON  
DAILY AT: (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)

**6- ESCAPE ROOM (PG-15) (THRILLER)**

⊕ TAYLOR RUSSELL, LOGAN MILLER, DEBORAH ANN WOLL  
DAILY AT: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM

**7- COLD PURSUIT (15+) (ACTION/CRIME/DRA-MA)**

\* LIAM NEESON, EMMY ROSSUM, LAURA DERN  
DAILY AT: 1.45 + 6.30 + 11.15 PM

**8- FIGHTING WITH MY FAMILY (15+) (DRA-MA/COMEDY/BIOGRAPHY)**

⊕ DWAYNE JOHNSON, FLORENCE PUGH, JACK LOWDEN  
DAILY AT: 12.45 + 5.15 + 9.45 PM

**9- THE UPSIDE (PG-15) (COMEDY/DRA-MA)**

⊕ KEVIN HART, BRYAN CRANSTON, NICOLE KIDMAN  
DAILY AT: 1.45 + 6.45 + 11.45 PM

**10- ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL (PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE/ROMANTIC)**

⊕ ROSA SALAZAR, CHRISTOPH WALTZ, JENNIFER CONNELLY  
DAILY AT: 11.15 AM + 4.15 + 9.15 PM

**11- THE LEGO MOVIE 2 (G) (ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)**

⊕ CHRIS PRATT, ELIZABETH BANKS, WILL ARNETT  
DAILY AT: 11.30 AM + 4.15 + 9.00 PM

**12- NADI ELREGAL EL SERI (PG-15) (ARABIC/COMEDY)**

⊕ KARIM ABDULAZIZ, GHADA ADEL, MAJDE ALKIDDAWI  
DAILY AT: 10.30 AM + 3.00 + 7.30 PM + 12.00 MN

**13- TOTAL DHAMAAL (PG-13) (HINDI/COMEDY/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ AJAY DEVGN, MADHURI DIXIT, ANIL KAPOOR  
DAILY AT: 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 6.30 PM + 12.00 MN

**14- KUMBALANGI NIGHT (PG-13) (MALAYALAM)**

⊕ HARISH KALYAN, SHANE NIGAM, SOUBIN SHAHIR  
DAILY AT: 3.30 + 9.00 PM

## SEEF (I)

**1- GRETA (15+) (THRILLER/CRIME) NEW**

⊕ CHLOE GRACE MORETZ, ISABELLE HUPPERT, MAIKA MONROE  
DAILY AT: (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)

**2- MERE PYARE PRIME MINISTER (15+) (HINDI/DRA-MA) NEW**

⊕ RASIKA AGASHE, SONIA ALBIZURI, SYNA ANAND  
DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM

**3- PHOTOGRAPH (PG-13) (HINDI/DRA-MA/ROMANTIC) NEW**

⊕ NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI, SANYA MALHOTRA, AKASH SINHA  
FROM THURSDAY 14TH AT 7.00 PM ONWARDS



## 'The Hole in the Ground' rewards patience with a killer premise

Lee Cronin, whose first feature is *The Hole in the Ground*, is clearly someone who lives and breathes horror. There's no way someone who didn't would make a film like this, at least not for their first feature.

It tells the story of a young woman, Sarah, and her son. The two are on the run from Sarah's abusive boyfriend, and although it's never explained why, Sarah has a big scar on her forehead to prove it, which she conceals beneath a haircut designed to do just that.

But there's very little backstory of which to speak. When the film opens, the two are driving along a remote forest road, when they almost take an old woman tottering the centre of it clean out. The woman is *Bad News*, which is evident from the tense music, although it isn't clear whether she is the antagonist or

an omen of worse things to come. Then, stranger things happen. Deep in the forest, there's a massive sinkhole in a place in which it has no business being. Sarah's son goes missing one night, briefly, but then returns and seems different. Which is the film's entire premise.

To her, he seems colder, emotionally distant, and all of the anxieties he was facing (worry about not making friends at school, what Sarah's divorce means for him, reconciling with his father's dangerous personality) seem to have been expelled from his mind and replaced by very little. Is her son different, or is it all in her imagination?

Unfortunately, it's very evident that *The Hole in the Ground* is the work of someone who has never made a feature film before. He wears his influences on his sleeve. In this one, there are elements of *The Descent* and *The*



A scene from 'The Hole in the Ground'

*Babadook*, and the film is clearly a product of the spate of modern horrors which favour growing suspense (think *The Witch* and *Hereditary*) over thick-and-fast scares.

But the difference between *The Hole in the Ground* and those two films is that they have enough narrative depth and thematic ambiguity to merit the feature film treatment.

Essays could be written, and I'm sure they have been, about whether or not *The Witch* is a feminist film, or a film about peo-

ple struggling with their faith, or both. *The Hole in the Ground* has none of those lofty themes, and as a result, it's a struggle to remain involved in the plot.

The film hangs in some kind of weird limbo between good and bad. It's neither scary enough to be entertaining, nor in-depth enough to be mentally stimulating. Lee Cronin has made a well-received short film before, *Ghost Train*, and without something extra, a thirty minute runtime would have benefited *The Hole in the Ground* more than

its ninety minutes do.

The scares, on their own, are effective, but the lack of character development doesn't give the audience much of a stake in the game. It's well-trodden ground, but it would have been interesting to see a story in which Sarah meets someone else and tries to move on from her evidently abusive previous relationship.

Ultimately, *The Hole in the Ground* is the rare film which would have benefited from being a little less subtle and amping up the craziness to achieve the sense of unease and disorientation which Cronin was going for.

But many big-name directors, most recently Mike Flanagan, went from very humble beginnings to being one of the most exciting voices in modern horror. It's very possible for Cronin to do the same. All he needs is the right project.

DAILY AT: 12.30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM

**4- CAPTAIN MARVEL (PG-13) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ BRIE LARSON, GEMMA CHAN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON  
DAILY AT: 11.45 AM + 12.45 + 2.30 + 3.30 + 5.15 + 6.15 + 8.00 + 9.00 + 10.45 + 11.45 PM

**5- BADLA (PG-15) (HINDI/THRILLER/CRIME)**

⊕ AMITABH BACHCHAN, TAPSEE PANNU, TONY LUKE  
DAILY AT: 11.00 AM + 1.30 + 4.00 + 6.30 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM

**6- HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD (PG) (ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ CATE BLANCHETT, JONAH HILL, GERARD BUTLER  
DAILY AT: 11.00 AM + 1.00 + 3.00 + 5.00 + 7.00 + 9.00 + 11.00 PM

## SAAR

**1- WONDER PARK (PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY) NEW**

⊕ BRIANNA DENSKI, JENNIE GARNER, KEN HUDSON CAMPBELL  
DAILY AT: 11.30 AM + 1.30 + 3.30 + 5.30 + 7.30 + 9.30 + (11.30 PM THURS/FRI)  
DAILY AT (ARABIC DUBBED): 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.30 + 4.30 PM

**2- GRETA (15+) (THRILLER/CRIME) NEW**

\* CHLOE GRACE MORETZ, ISABELLE HUPPERT, MAIKA MONROE  
DAILY AT: 11.15 AM + 1.15 + 3.15 + 5.15 + 7.15 + 9.15 + (11.15 PM THURS/FRI)

**3- CAPTAIN MARVEL (PG-13) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ BRIE LARSON, GEMMA CHAN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON  
DAILY AT: 12.30 + 3.00 + 5.30 + 6.30 + 8.00 + 9.00 + (10.30 PM + 11.30 PM THURS/FRI)

## AL HAMRA

**1- AN INTERNATIONAL LOCAL STORY (PG) (MALAY-ALAM) NEW**

⊕ MANOJ K. JAYAN, TINU TOM, JOHN KAIPPALLIL  
DAILY AT: 3.00 + 9.00 + (12.00 MN THURS/FRI)

**2- ISPADE RAJAVUM IDHAYA RANIYUM (PG-15) (TAMIL) NEW**

⊕ HARISH KALYAN, SHILPA MANJUNATH, MA KA PA ANAND  
FROM THURSDAY 14TH AT 4.30 PM ONWARDS  
DAILY AT: 12.00 + 6.00 PM

## WADI AL SAIL

**1- WONDER PARK (PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY) NEW**

⊕ BRIANNA DENSKI, JENNIE GARNER, KEN HUDSON CAMPBELL  
DAILY AT: 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.30 + 4.30 + 6.30 + 8.30 + 10.30 PM  
DAILY AT (3D): 1.00 + 5.30 + 10.00 PM

**2- GRETA (15+) (THRILLER/CRIME) NEW**

⊕ CHLOE GRACE MORETZ, ISABELLE HUPPERT, MAIKA MONROE  
DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 PM + 12.00 MN

**3- THE HOLE IN THE GROUND (15+) (HORROR) NEW**

⊕ SEANA KERSLAKE, JAMES COSMO, SIMONE KIRBY  
DAILY AT: 11.30 AM + 1.30 + 3.30 + 5.30 + 7.30 + 9.30 + 11.30 PM

**4- CAPTAIN MARVEL (PG-13) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)**

⊕ BRIE LARSON, GEMMA CHAN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON  
DAILY AT: 11.00 AM + 1.30 + 4.00 + 6.30 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM  
DAILY AT (3D): 10.30 AM + 3.00 + 7.30 PM + 12.00 MN

**5- BADLA (PG-15) (HINDI/THRILLER/CRIME)**

⊕ AMITABH BACHCHAN, TAPSEE PANNU, TONY LUKE  
DAILY AT: 2.15 + 7.00 + 11.45 PM

**6- ESCAPE ROOM (PG-15) (THRILLER)**

⊕ TAYLOR RUSSELL, LOGAN MILLER, DEBORAH ANN WOLL  
DAILY AT: 12.00 + 4.45 + 9.30 PM

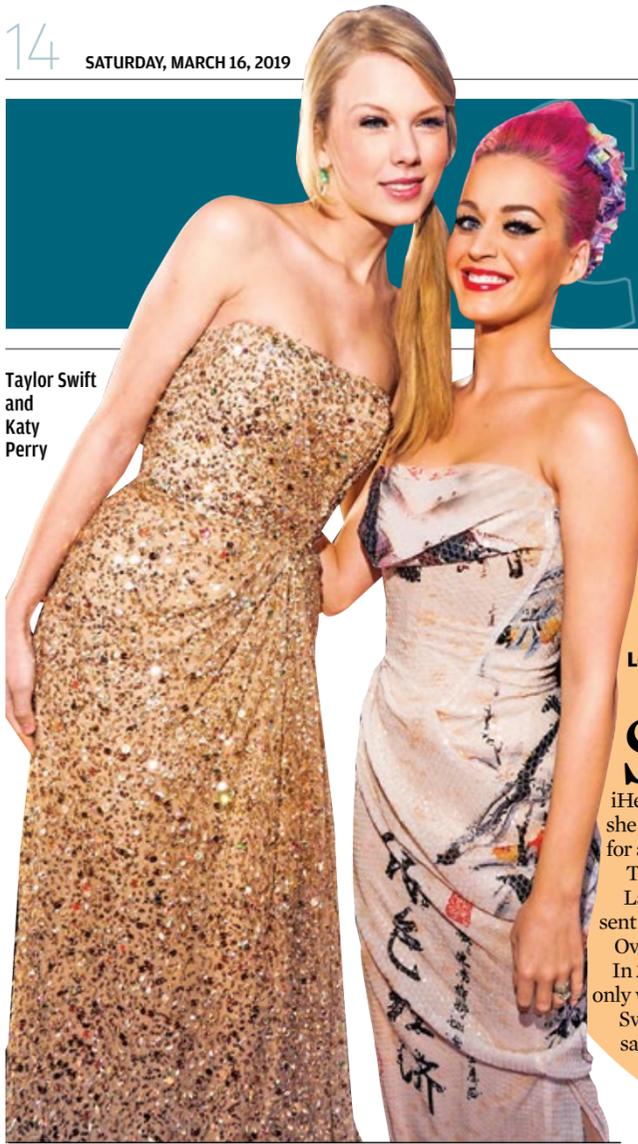
## MOVIE REVIEW

## CHANGE OF NAME

**I, SUKUMARAN BINU FATHER OF ARJUN BINU**, holder of Indian Passport No **L3420348** dated 20/03/2014 issued at **BAHRAIN**, having permanent residence at **KANDOTTUM PADEETATHIL, KOTTAMPALLY, MADATHIL KARANMA PO, KOLLAM DT, KERALA, 6905**

# celebs

Taylor Swift and Katy Perry



## Katy Perry is 'open' to collaborating with Taylor Swift

Los Angeles

Singer Katy Perry says she is "open" to work with Taylor Swift for a new track.

In an interview with Entertainment Tonight on the sidelines of iHeartRadio Music Awards, the 34-year-old singer was asked whether she would be open to collaborating with Swift. The two were frenemies for a long time.

To this, Perry replied, "I'm open! Open, open, open!"

Last year, they ended their feud after the "Bon Appetite" hitmaker sent a surprise package to Swift requesting for her forgiveness.

Over the years, the two singers have shared a love-hate relationship.

In 2017, Perry had said she is ready to move on from the fight and only wished best for her.

Swift was accused by Perry, who claimed the former had sabotaged her tour by stealing her backing dancers.

Earlier, Swift wrote the song "Bad Blood" about their fight and Perry seemed to hit back with her single "Swish Swish".



Eva Green

## James Bond should always be played by a man: Bond Girl Eva Green

Los Angeles

Former Bond Girl Eva Green is not in the favour of flipping the gender of 007 spy as she believes it would be wrong to ignore the history of the character, which has always been played by a man.

The "Casino Royale" star, considered one of the best Bond girls in the history of the franchise, says women should create their own action film legacy.

Daniel Craig is set to leave the franchise after the release of Cary Fukunaga's "Bond 25" in April 2020 and there is already a lot of speculation about his replacement with names such as Idris Elba and Richard Madden doing the rounds.

Some actors and fans are in favour of giving a gender swap to the character as they believe it is time for a female actor to take on the role, created by Ian Fleming.

"I'm for women, but I really think James Bond should re-

main a man. It doesn't make sense for him to be a woman. Women can play different types of characters, be in action movies, and be superheroes, but James Bond should always be a man and not be Jane Bond. There is history with the character that should continue. He should be played by a man," Green told Vanity Fair on the "Dumbo" red carpet.

Green is proud of the fact that her character Vesper Lynd brought about a change in the way Bond girls are perceived.

"I originally had reservations about being a Bond girl. I didn't want to be a bimbo. The women are now perceived differently. They are intelligent and sassy and fascinating. I loved playing Vesper. She's the only one to get to Bond's heart and has a big impact on his life," she said.

"Bond 25" will be Craig's fifth outing as 007 following "Casino Royale", "Quantum of Solace", "Skyfall" and "Spectre".

## Danny Boyle's Beatles movie 'Yesterday' to close Tribeca Film Festival

Los Angeles

Filmmaker Danny Boyle's rock comedy "Yesterday" has been chosen as the closing night film for the Tribeca Film Festival.

The film, penned by Richard Curtis, features Himesh Patel as a struggling singer-songwriter in a tiny English seaside town whose dreams of fame are rapidly fading, despite the support of his childhood best friend, played by Lily James.

After a freak accident during a mysterious global blackout, he wakes up to discover that The Beatles have never existed. Kate McKinnon and Ed Sheeran also star in the movie.

## Sean Paul, J Balvin join hands for song

Los Angeles

Grammy award-winning rapper Sean Paul has teamed up with Latin singer J Balvin for the single "Contra La Pared" (Against the Wall).

"'Contra La Pared' out now! Big up J Balvin," Sean tweeted on Thursday.

Directed by Andy Hines, the song's music video was shot at Utah's Lake Powell, reports etonline.com.



Lilly Singh

## Lilly Singh lands late night show

Los Angeles

YouTube sensation Lilly Singh, who goes by the stage name Superwoman and has her roots in Punjab, has landed a rare chance to host a late night talk show on a major broadcast network -- a feat for a woman of colour.

Canadian-born Singh will replace Carson Daly as the host of NBC's late night talk show. The show will be re-titled "A Little Late with Lilly Singh" and will launch in September, making her the only woman to currently host a late night talk show on one of the big networks, reported variety.com.

"A Little Late" will feature Singh, who first became famous as a

YouTube star, conducting in-studio interviews, as well as feature pre-taped comedy sketches and other "signature elements."

"Lilly is truly a star and we're thrilled to welcome her to our NBC family," said Doug Vaughan, executive vice president, special programmes and late night, NBC Entertainment.

Vaughan added: "She is a multi-talented performer who will surely have a great rapport with not only all her guests but also with our devoted late night audience. We can't wait to get started."

Lilly was set to appear on Thursday night's "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" in order to make the announcement.

"An Indian-Canadian woman with her own late night show? Now that is a dream come true. I'm thrilled to bring it to life on NBC, and I hope my parents consider this to be as exciting as a grandchild," she said.

## A little love on the campaign trail - Rosario Dawson dating Cory Booker

Los Angeles

Actress Rosario Dawson, whose film credits include "Rent" and "Men in Black II," has confirmed reports she is dating U.S. Senator and presidential candidate Cory Booker, calling him "a wonderful human being" who she loves and admires.

Dawson, 39, went public about her relationship with the New Jersey Democrat in an on-camera interview with the celebrity news website TMZ.com as she was strolling through Reagan National Airport near Washington. The video was posted on Thursday.



Cory Booker

Asked if there was any truth to recent media reports that she was involved with the 49-year-old bachelor politician, Dawson gamely replied, "Yes, very much so."

"He's a wonderful human being. It's great to spend time together when we can," she said.



Rosario Dawson

## MJ-inspired pieces to be removed from LV collection

Los Angeles

Fashion house Louis Vuitton said it will remove those items from its Michael Jackson-inspired menswear collection "that directly feature" the late pop singer.

The luxury French fashion house debuted its autumn/winter 2019 men's collection in January in a show that paid homage to Jackson's legacy with pieces including sequin-encrusted tops and a T-shirt with an image of his feet mid-dance move.

The show took place in the Tuileries garden in Paris in a set that had been inspired by the singer's "Billie Jean" 1982 music video. The invitations, meanwhile, were a sparkly white glove, a nod to the ones famously worn by Jackson.

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# Aubameyang seals Arsenal comeback

● Olivier Giroud's perfect hat-trick fires Chelsea into Europa League last eight

● Aubameyang the hero as Arsenal beat Rennes and reach quarter-finals

AFP | Paris

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang spearheaded Arsenal's revival by scoring twice in a 3-0 win over Rennes to reach the Europa League quarter-finals 4-3 on aggregate, as Chelsea and Napoli also booked a last-eight spot on Thursday.

The Gunners cancelled out their 3-1 deficit from last week's first leg in France inside 15 minutes as Aubameyang swept home from close range before teeing up Ainsley Maitland-Niles to head home.

However, Rennes had cause to complain as Aubameyang should have been flagged offside before the second goal.

With VAR not in use for the Europa League unlike the Champions League, there was



Arsenal's Gabonese striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (R) scores their second goal from the penalty spot

no recourse for Rennes and the Ligue 1 side will also reflect on missed opportunities after the break as a historic European run for the club came to an end.

M'Baye Niang struck the post and Sead Kolasinac's last-ditch tackle denied Ismaila Sarr before the Bosnian wing-back crossed for Aubameyang to give Arsenal breathing space.

Winning the Europa League

also offers Arsenal and Chelsea the safety net of Champions League qualification should they fail to make the top four in the Premier League.

But Arsenal boss Unai Emery, who won the Europa League three times as Sevilla coach, also wants the glory of a trophy in his first season in charge.

"It is not only the possibility to go to Champions League, it

is one title and we can feel the possibility to win one title," said the Spaniard.

Chelsea cruised into the last eight with greater ease as six Premier League sides took their place in yesterday's quarter-finals draws with Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool and Tottenham in the last eight of the Champions League. After a 3-0 victory in last

It is not only the possibility to go to Champions League, it is one title and we can feel the possibility to win one title

UNAI EMERY

week's last 16, first leg at Stamford Bridge, Chelsea were even more dominant in Kiev as Olivier Giroud scored his first hat-trick for the club.

"We started very well. We wanted to start in this way," Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri told BT Sport. "We played a wonderful first half and managed the game in the second half."

Giroud, who is yet to start in the Premier League in 2019 after the signing of Gonzalo Higuain, netted a first-half double, before Marcos Alonso slid home a third on the stroke of half-time.

Frenchman Giroud completed his hat-trick before teenage winger Callum Hudson-Odoi rounded off the scoring.

Sevilla shocked by Slavia

Five-time winners Sevilla were beaten 4-3 after extra time

to lose a thrilling tie against Slavia Prague 6-5 on aggregate.

Twice the Spanish side came from behind to take the tie to extra time thanks to goals from Wissam Ben Yedder and Munir El-Haddadi.

However, after Franco Vazquez had given Sevilla a 3-2 lead on the night, Slavia hit back and Ibrahim Traore's winner a minute from time sealed a famous win for the Czechs.

Napoli wrapped up a 4-3 aggregate victory over last season's semi-finalists Salzburg despite a 3-1 second-leg loss in Austria.

Another Serie A giant fell, though, as the highly-rated Luka Jovic scored the only goal of the night and the tie as Eintracht Frankfurt beat Inter Milan at the San Siro.

Russian outfit Krasnodar suffered heartbreak as Goncalo Guedes scored a dramatic injury-time equaliser to send Valencia through 3-2 on aggregate after a 1-1 second-leg draw.

Spanish sides have dominated this competition in recent years and despite Sevilla's defeat will have two representatives in the last eight as Villarreal beat Zenit St Petersburg 2-1 to seal a resounding 5-2 aggregate victory.

## Bencic sweeps into semis

Belinda Bencic sets up Indian Wells semi-final with Angelique Kerber

AFP | Indian Wells

Resurgent Swiss Belinda Bencic toppled another top-10 player, downing fifth-ranked Karolina Pliskova to set up an Indian Wells WTA final against Angelique Kerber.

Bencic, a former world number seven whose ranking slumped as injuries stalled her career, showed no sign of a let-down after her fourth-round victory over world number one and defending champion Naomi Osaka, out-lasted Czech Pliskova 6-3, 4-6, 6-3.

She stretched her WTA match winning streak to 12 -- six of those wins coming against top-10 players with No. 8 Kerber coming up.

Germany's Kerber defeated seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

"Of course I'm very confident," said Bencic, who rose to 23 in the world with her first WTA title in four years at Dubai last month and will crack the top 10 by virtue of reaching the semis here.

"I'm not putting pressure on myself even now," the 22-year-old said. "I'm just playing. The less I think on the court the better it is."

"When you're confident you can just trust your instincts and you don't have to think about it at all. I'm definitely playing how I feel it, and it's going so well I'm not planning on changing that."

Pliskova launched her season with a 12th career title in Brisbane, and shocked Serena Williams to reach the Australian Open semi-finals.

After dropping the first set she came back strong in the second, winning the first four games as she forced a decisive



Belinda Bencic of Switzerland plays Karolina Pliskova of Czech Republic



Belinda Bencic stretched her match-winning streak to 12 - six of those wins coming against top-10 players

third set, although not before Bencic saved four set points.

Close games marked the start of the third, with Pliskova fighting off four break points in a game that went to eight deuces to hold for 2-2.

But Bencic held her next two service games with authority and broke for a 5-3 lead, finally sealing the match with a serve that was too much for Pliskova.

Kerber solves Venus puzzle

Reigning Wimbledon champion Kerber reached the Indian Wells semi-finals for the third time with her win over Williams in a battle of former world

number ones.

Kerber dominated the tie-breaker to grab a hard-fought first set that featured four breaks of serve.

She had to fight for the lone break of the second set as Williams saved four break points to hold for 2-2 and saved four more in the sixth game before Kerber finally converted one for a 4-2 lead that would stand up the rest of the way.

Williams never got her big serve going, producing just one ace. The 38-year-old veteran did her best to catch Kerber out with crafty changes of pace, but the German was able to adjust.

"I think every body saw that Venus is really a player with a lot of experience," Kerber said. "She played really tricky -- in the good way -- it was really hard for me to play my game."

"I was really trying in the first set especially to find my rhythm but it was not so easy. I'm happy that I won the first set and then could move in and play a little bit better."

Other semi-final had already been set with 18-year-old Canadian wildcard Bianca Andreescu due to take on world number six Elina Svitolina of Ukraine.

## Solskjaer goes back to Camp Nou as Man Utd draw Barcelona in Champions League

● An all Premier League-tie sees Tottenham take on Manchester City, while Liverpool will face Porto, and Ajax face Juventus

● Arsenal draw Napoli in pick of Europa League

● Chelsea to play Slavia Prague

AFP | Paris

Manchester United will face Barcelona in the Champions League quarter-finals while Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur clash in an all-Premier League tie following yesterday's draw.

Liverpool were drawn to play FC Porto in the knockout rounds for the second year in succession, as Ajax's reward for eliminating the holders Real Madrid is a two-legged tie against Cristiano Ronaldo and Juventus.

English hopes are high that this could be their year in Europe's elite club competition after all four of their representatives made it through to the last eight.

However, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's United will have their work cut out if they are to go any further as they take on the Barcelona of Lionel Messi in the headline tie.

For Solskjaer, the second leg will bring back memories of the 1999 final, when the Norwegian came off the bench to score a stoppage-time winner for United against Bayern Munich at Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium.



Manchester United club ambassador Andrew Cole shakes hands with FC Barcelona Sporting Director Eric Abidal after the draw

With City and United not allowed to play their home leg in the same week, United will entertain the leaders of La Liga at Old Trafford on April 9 or 10, with the return a week later.

The last time the Premier League had four teams in the quarter-finals, in 2008/09, Barcelona beat the Old Trafford side 2-0 in the final in Rome. The clubs clashed again in the final at Wembley in 2011, with Barca winning 3-1 on that occasion.

Repeat of '96 final

UEFA also drew the semi-finals yesterday, meaning the winners of the Barcelona v United will face either Liverpool or Porto in the last four.

Jurgen Klopp's side, fresh from knocking out Bayern Munich in the last 16, will be confident of beating the Portuguese champions after defeating them 5-0 on aggregate in the last 16 on their way to the final last season.

Liverpool will host two-time European Cup winners Porto at Anfield in the first leg before heading to the Estadio do Dragao in the return on April 16 or 17.

There is guaranteed to be one English team in the semi-finals after Tottenham and City were paired together, with the first leg to be played in London.

With Pep Guardiola's team top of the Premier League, 13 points ahead of Spurs in third, City will be the favourites to advance to their first semi-final since 2016. City have also won their last three meetings with Mauricio Pochettino's team.

The draw means there will be three clashes between the sides in 10 days -- they are also due to meet in the Premier League at the Etihad Stadium on April 20.

The winner of that tie will host either Ajax or Juventus in the first leg of the semi-finals.

The latter tie is a repeat of the 1996 final, which the Italian club won on penalties against an Ajax team who had won the trophy the previous year.

Juventus have lost five finals since then but are hoping Ronaldo can fire them to glory this season after his hat-trick knocked out Atletico Madrid on Tuesday. That result ended Atletico's dreams of reaching the final, which will be played at their Wanda Metropolitan stadium on Saturday, June 1.

# Hamilton dominates practice

● Lewis Hamilton on top at Australian Grand Prix practice as Ferrari struggle in season's first exchanges

● Hamilton heads Bottas as Mercedes go clear of the field

● Hamilton powered round Melbourne's Albert Park circuit under clear skies with a best of one minute 22.600 seconds

AFP | Melbourne



Lewis Hamilton in action during yesterday's first practice session in Melbourne ahead of the Australian Grand Prix

Lewis Hamilton made a mockery of his claim that Ferrari would be half-a-second quicker at the Australian Grand Prix by easily clocking the fastest times in the season's opening practice runs yesterday.

The Briton led a Mercedes one-two in the second session as he powered round Melbourne's Albert Park circuit under clear skies with a best of one minute 22.600 seconds.

It bettered his pace-setting 1:23.599 in the opening practice as he kickstarted his bid for a sixth world title.

Valtteri Bottas was second (1:22.648) with Red Bull's Max Verstappen third (1:23.400), marginally ahead of impressive new teammate Pierre Gasly, who was promoted this year from Toro Rosso.

Sebastian Vettel, who has won in Melbourne for the past two years, could only manage fifth, nearly a second adrift of arch-rival Hamilton, while Ferrari partner Charles Leclerc struggled to ninth, straddling the kerb and spinning as he pushed hard late in the day.

The man Leclerc replaced, Finnish former world champi-

on Kimi Raikkonen, pushed his Alfa Romeo -- formerly Sauber -- into sixth.

The Renaults of Niko Hulkenberg and Daniel Ricciardo were sixth and seventh respectively.

"I have a positive buzz from driving the car today -- this is what I love doing. The car feels like it's in a similar place to where it was in Barcelona, which is positive coming to a different track," said Hamilton.

"We got through our programme really well, there were no issues on track. There's plenty of stuff that we can improve on, but this was not a bad start."

Hamilton is gunning for a third world crown in a row to close in on Michael Schumacher's all-time record of seven.

Much had been made of his insistence after pre-season testing in Barcelona that Ferrari were much faster, but he quickly put that fallacy to bed as he angles for an 84th pole position.

Bottas said the car felt better than during testing.

"We didn't bring a lot of new parts to the car, but we were able to optimise the package that we have," he said.

"We have an idea of how much

we can improve for qualifying, but we have no idea how much performance the other teams can still bring."

**A bit wobbly**

There was some speculation in the paddock that Ferrari may have been sandbagging, or deliberately holding back ahead of qualifying today.

Vettel slid onto the grass at turn one early in the afternoon run.

"Check the car in turns one and four. Feels quite odd... Seems to be something wrong. Box," he said on the team radio. He recovered but later told the team his car was "still a bit wobbly".

Red Bull have high hopes this year for Verstappen but he wasn't reading too much into topping the Ferraris.

"It has been alright. Mercedes looks very quick. We have lots of work to do and will analyse a lot," said the Dutchman.

Toro Rosso new boy Alexander Albon had a troubled introduction to Formula One, losing his front wing in a crash at turn two in the first practice. He slid onto the gravel again in session



**"I have a positive buzz from driving the car today -- this is what I love doing. The car feels like it's in a similar place to where it was in Barcelona, which is positive coming to a different track"**

LEWIS HAMILTON

two and skidded onto the grass. It was also a frustrating day for Poland's Robert Kubica, in his first Formula One drive since his right arm was partially severed in a horror rallying accident eight years ago.

His best time of 1:26.655 for Williams was slowest on a day marred by the sudden death on Thursday of long-serving and well-respected Formula One race director Charlie Whiting.

FIA chief Jean Todt held a minute's silence to mark his passing in a press conference, with deputy race director Michael Masi fulfilling Whiting's duties in Melbourne.

## No problem for Mercedes if Hamilton skydives or surfs

AFP | Melbourne

Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff yesterday said he had no problem with star driver Lewis Hamilton's passion for extreme sports, despite the injury risk to such a lucrative asset.

Hamilton's adrenaline-fuelled off-season hobbies, including skydiving, surfing, snowboarding and riding motorbikes, have raised eyebrows in the past.

But Wolff said the Briton was an adult and knew what helped him "decompress from racing".

"Of course, I'm always worried and we had a laugh last year because I couldn't get hold of him or my chief strategist or one of the race engineers because they were racing motorbikes," he said.

"But Lewis is not an 18-or 19-year-old young man anymore, he is a five-time world champion and he knows exactly what works for him and what doesn't."

"All these activities in my experience are not a negative distraction but something he enjoys doing and every time he decompresses from racing, he comes back stronger."

"We mustn't be judgemental," he added.

"Some people go on a mediation seminar in India, or skydiving, others are out for the ladies."

Hamilton, 34, said this week that his off-season was "a really

precious time".

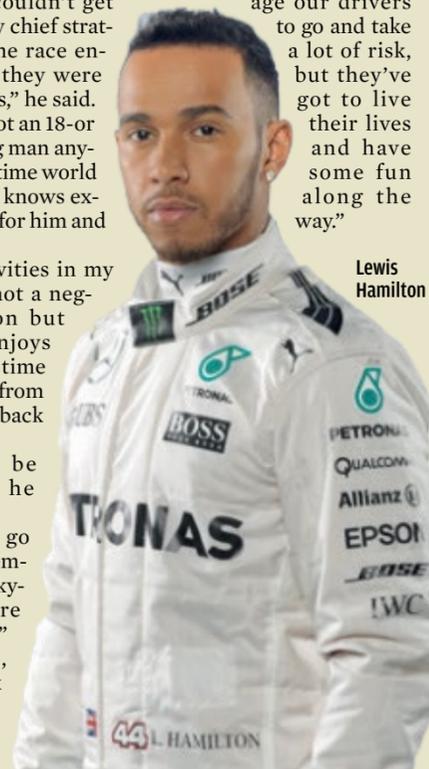
"You get to spend (time) with family and friends and it's the time you don't get to think about racing," he said.

"Then once the season starts you're on tour the whole year and you never really lose sight of your targets."

Red Bull chief Christian Horner agreed with Wolff that drivers shouldn't be restricted in what they did and there were no clauses in his team's contracts to limit dangerous activities for drivers Max Verstappen and Pierre Gasly.

"With Red Bull at the end of the day, no risk no fun," he said.

"We don't actively encourage our drivers to go and take a lot of risk, but they've got to live their lives and have some fun along the way."



Lewis Hamilton

# Thiem reaches Indian Wells semis as Monfils pull out

● Dominic Thiem to face Milos Raonic

AFP | Indian Wells

World number seven Dominic Thiem reached an ATP Indian Wells Masters semi-final showdown with Milos Raonic without hitting a ball as injured Gael Monfils withdrew.

France's Monfils, ranked 19th in the world, pulled out shortly before his scheduled quarter-final against Thiem with left Achilles tendon trouble.

Off-injured Monfils said he'd felt discomfort in his ankle for a couple of days and had been receiving treatment, but the pain was worse after his fourth-round win over Philipp Kohlschreiber on Wednesday night.

"I tried a little jog this morn-

ing, and I couldn't really actually push on it," he said. "Then we taped it. Then I hit a little bit tonight, and I felt that I cannot be 100 percent. I have this pain, and it wasn't the right choice to play."

He said an ultrasound exam confirmed severe inflammation, and he wasn't yet sure if it would prevent him from playing the upcoming Miami Masters.

"Very disappointing, to be honest," said Monfils, who was enjoying a 15-3 start to the season. "Because I was playing great tennis, feeling strong."

Thiem is through to the semi-finals at Indian Wells for the first time, having reached the quarters once before in 2017.

"I was really surprised," Thiem said, who was waiting to be taken to the court when he realized there was a problem.

"I'm really sorry for him. Ob-



Dominic Thiem in action during his 4th round match

viously we are both playing well here. He's having a great season. I'm picking up my form again. So I think it would have been very tough but also a very fun

match for us, for the crowd. So it's a pity," said Thiem who has lost both of his prior matches against Raonic.

Raonic ended the dream run

of lucky loser Miomir Kecmanovic, beating the 19-year-old Serbian 6-3, 6-4.

Raonic, ranked 14th in the world, fired 13 aces and broke Kecmanovic once in each set to keep his bid to better his 2016 runner-up finish on track.

Kecmanovic, who failed to make it through qualifying but gained entry to the main draw when fifth-seeded Kevin Anderson withdrew, was the first lucky loser to reach the quarter-finals at Indian Wells since the tournament served as the inaugural ATP Masters 1000 in 1990.

**Room for improvement**

Raonic's serve wasn't at its booming best. He put only 55 percent of his first serves in play.

"I think that can get better," Raonic said. "But there's other things I'm doing well, for sure. As soon as I had a chance on

the first forehand, I was able to find my way to be the one dictating the point. And I put a lot of returns in and gave myself a chance there."

While the 130th-ranked Kecmanovic fell short in his bid to become just the third lucky loser to reach the semi-finals of a Masters 1000 event, he can regroup for the upcoming Miami Masters -- where he has been given a wild card into the main draw.

Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal will be vying to set up a blockbuster semi-final when they play in the other two quarter-finals today.

Federer, the 20-time Grand Slam champion who claimed his 100th career title at Dubai last month, takes on 67th ranked Hubert Hurkacz of Poland while Nadal faces 12th-seeded Russian Karen Khachanov.