

THE DAILY **tribune**



'Trump discussed payments to Playboy model'
New York

President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer secretly recorded Trump discussing a potential payment for a former Playboy model's account of having an affair with him, people familiar with an investigation into the attorney said yesterday.

The payment was never made, according to Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, who confirmed the recording and said it shows Trump did nothing wrong.

Former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen surreptitiously made the recording two months before Trump's 2016 election, according to a person familiar with a federal investigation into Cohen that brought the tape to light.

New Hajj link for Qatari pilgrims
Riyadh

The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has allocated a new website link to receive the requests of Qataris who wish to perform Hajj after the Qatari authorities blocked the old one.

The new link was made available as part of King Salman's efforts to facilitate the arrival of all pilgrims and ensure that any obstacles that they may face are overcome. The ministry said that it welcomes the arrival of Qatari pilgrims this year irrespective of the ongoing Gulf dispute. The arrival and departure of Qatari pilgrims will take place via King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah and through any airlines except Qatar Airways.

Shops selling beIN Sports cards to face tough action

Manama

The Ministry of Information Affairs yesterday announced that it will step up inspections against shops selling beIN Sports receivers, warning strict action against violators.

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have banned the import of beIN Sports receivers and stopped the sale and renewal of subscriptions to the Qatar state-funded sports channels.

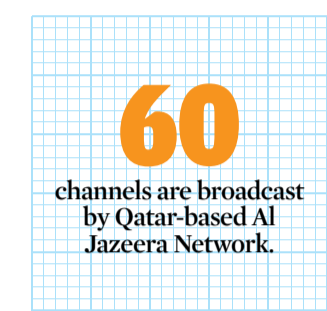
The Doha-headquartered beIN media group is the suc-

cessor of Al Jazeera Sports launched in 2003.

In January 2014, the beIN media group was incorporated and Al Jazeera Sports channels were rebranded to beIN Sports.

In November 2015, the group announced it would be expanding from sports-only offerings to air "blockbuster movies, family entertainment, factual and kids' content."

The group says it broadcasts 60 channels across five continents, within 43 countries, and in seven different languages. It has more than 55 million pay-TV



subscribers.

The network is blatantly involved in suspicious cases linked to supporting terrorism

and extremist groups and to promoting the discourse of sedition, hatred and extremism in the region, the ministry said.

The channels were also found, mainly during the broadcasting of FIFA World Cup matches, to be involved in campaigns of political distortion against several Arab countries and in abuses to discredit them.

The ministry said that it condemned such abuses that reflected a poor mind-set within the channels and the adoption of a confused policy and terrible

media standards that cannot be missed by any observer.

"We reiterate our consistent position of denouncing the policy adopted by the beIN Sports channels that intrudes politics into sports in order to achieve personal gains that clash with the universal goals of sport," the ministry said.

The ministry renewed its call to review the legal position of the beIN Sports channels in each country, especially after the offensive campaigns they adopted to harm the Arab countries and peoples.

Strategic friends

13 agreements and memoranda of understanding signed between China and the UAE during Xi's visit

● As both a major energy exporter and a hub for international trade, the UAE is an important part of Xi's "Belt and Road" initiative.

● China's commerce minister Zhong Shan said that his country was ready to cooperate with the UAE to promote globalisation.



Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan with Xi after the Chinese President was conferred with the Order of Zayed, the UAE's highest civil decoration.



Abu Dhabi Global Market, a financial center, while the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and the China National Petroleum Corporation agreed to explore joint business opportunities.

As both a major energy exporter and a hub for international trade, the UAE is an important part of Xi's "Belt and Road" initiative to invest in infrastructure linking China by both sea and land to markets in Asia and Europe.

"We have many areas of politi-

cal and economic agreement and a solid base of projects in the energy, technology and infrastructure sectors. More importantly (we have) a strong political will to start a greater phase of cooperation and integration," Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid wrote in a Twitter post.

"Today, we have exemplary relations with China and a Chinese leadership that sees the UAE as main strategic partner in the region," he added.

China is the UAE's second largest trading partner and biggest source of imports. The UAE is the gateway for about 60 per cent of China's exports to the Middle East, and on its own accounts for around a quarter of total Arab trade with China.

UAE economy minister Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri said that total bilateral trade between his country and China is expected to reach \$58 billion in 2018, up from \$53.5 billion in 2017.

FALLING IN LOVE

India's Modi surprised by opposition star Rahul Gandhi hug

New Delhi

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi surprised Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday when he interrupted a no-confidence debate by walking across the parliament floor to give his rival a hug.

Modi easily survived the no-confidence vote thanks to his parliamentary majority but not before a 12-hour debate in which his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) battled with Gandhi's Indian National Congress, in a warm-up for elections due by May.

The Hindu nationalist BJP calls Gandhi, the fourth-generation scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family, a "failed dynast" out of touch with ordinary people whose only political credential is the accident of his birth.

After a speech accusing Modi of promoting crony capitalism, Gandhi addressed such criticism: "You have anger



Rahul winks after hugging Modi.



Rahul hugs Modi in Lok Sabha.

against me, you can call me names, you can abuse me, but I don't have a speck of hatred against you. I will take out this hatred out of you and turn it into love," he said before striding across the floor to put his arms awkwardly around the seated prime minister.

Startled by Gandhi's gesture, Modi

froze in his seat but later called Gandhi back to his seat and shook hands, smiling.

Modi, whose BJP is setting up next year's vote as a presidential-style contest between the experienced prime minister and an untested challenger, is himself known for his bear hugs, embracing leaders such as US President Donald Trump

and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

After a poor start in politics, losing a string of elections to Modi's party, Gandhi is drawing crowds as he seeks to exploit Modi's failure to deliver tens of thousands of jobs he promised India's youth and a broader decline in law and order.



03 Can't pay? Won't pay!

04 Comedy 'booming on social media'

05 Court acquits man accused of arson



A pioneer in e-governance

Bahrain ranked fifth in Asia by top UN survey on e-governance

● **Bahrain achieved an Online Service Index (OSI) of 0.7986, EDGI of 0.8116 and Human Capital Index (HSI) of 0.7897.**

● **Mr. Ahmed pointed out that TII is considered one of the most important international telecommunication indices that measures other sub-indices like the Internet usage rate as well as spread of mobile and fixed lines and broadband service.**

**TDT|Manama
Mohammed Zafran**

The 2018 United Nations eGovernment Development Index has offered fifth rank in Asia to Bahrain, stressing the Kingdom's e-governance strides.

The Kingdom also achieved a high ranking of 26th internationally.

This makes Bahrain one of two Arab countries to be categorised as 'Very high E-Government Development Index' (EDGI) countries by the UN.

Only 40 countries received the 'Very High in EDGI' classification amongst 193 countries that were evaluated.

Denmark, Australia, and Republic of Korea came out on top of the 40 countries.

Ranked 21st, the UAE was the only Arab country that ranked higher than Bahrain ranking at 21st. The countries that ranked above Bahrain in Asia are Republic of Korea, Singapore, Japan, and the UAE.

Bahrain achieved an Online Service Index (OSI) of 0.7986, EDGI of 0.8116 and Human Capital Index (HSI) of 0.7897.

In its comments on the GCC, the report stated that the countries have managed to make good progress in recent years. "United Arab Emirates has the highest EDGI among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries followed

by Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar."

The GCC countries managed to achieve a series of substantial accomplishments related to improving e-government systems and making it easier for citizens to access government portals of other GCC member states.

"During the fifth GCC eGovernment Ministerial Committee, which took place in Bahrain, the proposal of a virtual academy for e-Government training was discussed. Such an institution would contribute towards the development of e-government by providing qualified specialists for GCC comprehensive e-government strategy," the report stated.

Explaining the purpose of the report, the UN stated, "The UN eGovernment Survey report looks at how e-govern-



I congratulate the country's leadership as Bahrain received this honour.

MR AHMED



The efforts of government entities helped greatly in Bahrain's advancement.

MR ALQAEED

Country	Sub-region	OSI	HCI	TII	EGDI	EGDI Level	2018 Rank
Republic of Korea	Eastern Asia	0.9792	0.8743	0.8496	0.9010	Very High	3
Singapore	South-Eastern Asia	0.9861	0.8557	0.8019	0.8812	Very High	7
Japan	Eastern Asia	0.9514	0.8428	0.8406	0.8783	Very High	10
United Arab Emirates	Western Asia	0.9444	0.6877	0.8564	0.8295	Very High	21
Bahrain	Western Asia	0.7986	0.7897	0.8466	0.8116	Very High	26
Israel	Western Asia	0.8264	0.8635	0.7095	0.7998	Very High	31
Cyprus	Western Asia	0.7847	0.8083	0.7279	0.7736	Very High	36
Kazakhstan	Central Asia	0.8681	0.8388	0.5723	0.7597	Very High	39
Kuwait	Western Asia	0.7917	0.6852	0.7394	0.7388	High	41
Malaysia	South-Eastern Asia	0.8889	0.6987	0.5647	0.7174	High	48

Top ten countries for e-governance in Asia

Very High OSI		High OSI		Middle OSI		Low OSI	
Corresponding EGDI level		Corresponding EGDI level		Corresponding EGDI level		Corresponding EGDI level	
Australia	Very High	Albania	High	Afghanistan	Medium	Algeria	Medium
Austria	Very High	Andorra	High	Angola	Medium	Botswana	Medium
Bahrain	Very High	Argentina	High	Antigua and Barbuda	High	Cambodia	Medium
Bangladesh	Medium	Armenia	High	Belize	Medium	Central African Republic	Low
Belgium	Very High	Azerbaijan	High	Benin	Medium	Chad	Low
Brazil	High	Bahamas	High	Bhutan	Medium	Comoros	Low
Bulgaria	High	Barbados	High	Bosnia and Herzegovina	High	Congo	Medium
Canada	Very High	Belarus	Very High	Burundi	Medium	Côte d'Ivoire	Medium
Chile	High	Bolivia (Plurinational state of)	High	Cameroon	Medium	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Low
China	High	Brunei Darussalam	High	Cape Verde	Medium	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Medium

Bahrain ranked one of the highest in Online Service Index

ment can facilitate integrated policies and services across the three dimensions of sustainable development, and is produced every two years by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It is the only global report that assesses the e-government development status of the 193 UN member states.

"It serves as a tool for countries to learn from each other, identify areas of strength and challenges in e-government and shape their policies and strategies in this area. It is also aimed at facilitating discussions of intergovernmental bodies, including the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, on issues related to e-government and development and to the critical role of ICT in development."

Information and eGovernment authority Chief Executive Mohamed Ali AlQaed said that the cooperation and efforts from government entities such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Finance, Supreme Council for Environment and Ministry of Information Affairs helped greatly in propelling Bahrain towards such advancement in the field of e-governance. He said that websites of these government entities were evaluated by the UN for the report.

The Kingdom also achieved fourth position internationally in the Telecoms Infrastructure index (TII) which was part of the UN report. In a statement released yesterday, Transportation and Telecommunication Minister Kamal Ahmed extended his congratulations to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, on Bahrain's achieving fourth place internationally in the Index.

The minister pointed out that TII is considered as one of the most important international telecommunication indices that measures other sub-indices like the Internet usage rate as well as spread of mobile and fixed lines and broadband service.

Healthy and safe summer



The Ministry of Labour and Social Development held a workshop under the theme 'A healthy and safe summer' in cooperation with the Ministry of Health at the Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam in Segaya. The event was held in coordination with the embassies of India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh and the Nepal, in the presence of many workers and safety supervisors representing different sectors. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development had issued an edict banning outdoor work under scorching summer heat from noon until 4 pm, during the months of July and August.



BIG STORY **big story**

Can't pay? Won't pay!

Hundreds of labourers in the construction sector continue to struggle without salaries and access to basic living conditions

● The unionists are finding it difficult to have a proper communication channel with these workers as they don't belong to any trade unions.

● Though Tribune made efforts to contact the employers of these workers, they could not be reached.

TDT|Manama
Harpreet Kaur

A large number of expat workers are facing extreme financial situations due to unpaid wages mainly in the construction sector, according to sources.

In June, workers of two contracting companies staged separate protests over unpaid salaries. They also marched towards the Labour Court demanding strict action from the part of authorities.

Speaking to Tribune, a labourer employed by a contracting company, said, "We, a group of 120 labourers, working at a construction site in Zallaq, haven't been paid for almost a year now."

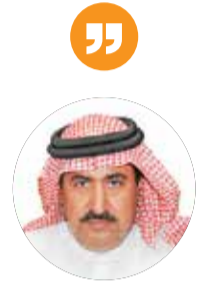
"We worked for over 16 hours a day to complete various projects on time, but never received any money for our hard work."

He said there are many in the group who don't even have proper visas. "The company kept on telling us that our dues would be paid. But nothing happens. We are stuck in the Kingdom with no food to eat."

The labourer said most often company officials don't give proper response to their pleas.



Workers say they are often made to work over 15 hours a day.



We ask all labourers who have disputes with their companies to come to Labour Court and file a petition so that we can take it up.

MR AL DOSARI



The Kingdom has strict labour laws but many a time workers fail to report their cases to the ministry out of fear or other reasons.

Another labourer, an Indian expat said, back home the families of labourers are living in extreme poverty.

"We would work in extremely tough conditions and at times we only got 15 minutes of lunch break. I lost my son a few months back. Neither could I visit my home nor I had the money to pay for his medical bills," he lamented.

"We are left here with no money and no food." Though Tribune made efforts to contact the employers of these workers, they could not be reached.

Though the trade unions in the Kingdom pledged support to labourers, who work allegedly without being paid in the Kingdom, the unionists are finding it difficult to have a proper communication channel with these workers as they don't belong to any trade unions.

"Only two companies in the construction sector are unionised. How can we address the issues faced by these workers?" General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU) assistant secretary for international relations, Karim Radhi was quoted by Tribune earlier.

"There is no proper communication channel between the labourers and the companies. When companies are unionised, both parties can sit together and discuss the problems and try to find a way out of it," he had said.

Speaking to Tribune, Labour Ministry Undersecretary Sabah Al Dosari said the ministry is constantly in the process of helping workers who are in need. "We ask all labourers who have disputes with their companies to come to Labour Court and file a petition so that we can take it up.

"We are now dealing with a few cases involving unpaid wages. The ministry is hopeful that these issues could be solved by taking up the cases with the managements of these companies."

I lost my son a few months back. Neither could I visit my home nor I had the money to pay for his medical bills.

A WORKER

UNIT NO	MORNING		AFTERNOON		OVERTIME		Daily Rate
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	
05	6:00	6:00		6:00			
7	6:00	12:00					
3	6:00	9:00					
3	6:00	6:00					
3	6:00	10:00					
	6:00	4:00					
	6:00	10:00					
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TOTAL-173-							

A slip showing the working hours of a construction labourer.

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Comedy 'booming on social media'

Bahraini comedian Saad Al Ameer, has 100,000 followers on Instagram alone

TDT|Manama
Muhannad Mansour

With the emergence of social media sites, applications and networks in the past decade, more people around the world would explore it as a platform to broadcast their talents leading to the birth of "online celebrities". The phenomenon has spread throughout the different cultures and nations of the world, including Bahrain, where Bahraini Saad Al Ameer, 23, became a prominent comedian on Instagram, YouTube and other sites. Tribune interviewed Mr Al Ameer who spoke about his story and how he became an "online celebrity" across the GCC, with around 100,000 followers on Instagram alone.

When did you start posting your videos on social networks and what motivated you?

I started recording short clips back in 2012 and was initially sharing them only with family and friends, mainly through



Mr Al Ameer

WhatsApp groups. Then, my friends and family appreciated my talent and encouraged me to go public. A year later, I started posting different videos online. They quickly gained popularity and were shared on different social media apps, including Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter. My family and friends helped me grow more in this field and they've

always guided me on the type of topics and materials before posting online.

What is the content you focus on and the audience you target?

I usually film posts touching various topics. I have filmed videos giving religious advice, discussing wrong social behaviours

and funny videos. I have noticed that my audience is mainly between the age of 16 and 32. They are mostly Bahrainis, but I have received a positive interaction from followers from fellow GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE. I also observed that the most shared and liked videos of mine were the funny videos and the clips touching social issues in a comedian frame.

What were the main challenges you faced?

The most difficult phase was the beginning, as I was suddenly exposed to thousands of viewers after my videos were initially shown to family and friends. I have received some harsh comments and had many critics in the beginning. This didn't stop me. It actually motivated and showed me some mistakes that I would avoid in my later works. Interacting with my critics and listening to their comments have actually gained me more followers. Even harsh comments served me a platform for growth.



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I am looking forward to develop my acting career. I haven't studied it. I was told by many that I have a natural talent. My ambition is to act on a stage or on TV one day.

MR AL AMEERI

What are your future plans?

I look forward to develop my acting career. I haven't studied it, I was told by many that I have a natural talent. My ambition is to act on a stage or on TV one day. Anyhow, this won't stop me from posting on social media networks, as it was my beginning.

What's your advice to young people who are planning to build a career similar to yours on social media?

My advice is to believe in yourself and work hard. As everyone knows, it's more difficult to excel on social media nowadays unlike a few years ago. It's because of the existing competition. So I think one will only succeed if he/she comes with a new and innovative idea. When I began, many accounts that have big numbers of followers helped me by sharing my videos. I'll be glad to do the same with any upcoming Bahraini talents.

Top volunteer work award to also honour foreigners

TDT|Manama
Thamer Tayfour

The upcoming Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa Award for Volunteer Work will see a new category being introduced, according to its secretary-general Yacoub Buhaza'a.

Foreigners including Arab nationals will be considered for the award if they are carrying out any volunteer work in the Kingdom, he said.

Mr Buhaza'a said that companies, institutions, teams and individuals are entitled to register for the award and the participation is open to all age groups.

The application for the award began on July 10 and will end on August 15.

"The winning project in the previous versions of the award won't be considered this time. Deadline is very important and no applications will be entertained after the deadline.

"Innovation and leadership elements in the project will be taken into consideration as well as its sustainability

will be the criterion for the award."

He also said that the voluntary work should have been conducted without any discrimination including gender, religious or nationality bias.

"The principles of volunteerism should be upheld throughout the implementation of the project, which is of great importance," he added.

Tribune is the official media sponsor of the award.

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The award will honour innovation and leadership elements in the projects.

MR BUHAZA'A

'Les Clefs d'Or' Pinning Ceremony



The Chief Executive Officer of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, Shaikh Khaled bin Humood Al Khalifa, attended the 'Les Clefs d'Or' Pinning Ceremony organised by the Bahrain Hotels Concierge Group (BHCG) at Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay. The ceremony was initiated by the Founding President of BHCG and Chief Concierge of Four Seasons Bahrain Bay Hotel, Khalil Al Yaman.

Jailed convict blames black magic for drug addiction

● The 37-year-old man admitted to police officers during investigations that he has been a drug addict for over 20 years.

TDT|Manama
Ali Tarif

A Bahraini man was sentenced after he was found guilty of consuming drugs and setting his room on fire.

When asked, he told prosecutors

that someone was doing black magic on him.

The 37-year-old was arrested after his mother reported the incident to police.

According to court files, the defendant told his mother that someone was doing black magic on him

by keeping a special paper in his room.

To get rid of all these papers, he burnt them, which led to a big fire that destroyed the room.

Police officers seized several items used to consume hashish and shabu and other illicit narcotic pills.

The 37-year-old man admitted to police officers during investigations that he has been a drug addict for over 20 years.

He was charged with consuming drugs, and the High Criminal Court sentenced him to one year behind bars along with BD1,000 fine.

Court acquits man accused of arson

Terms investigations 'unserious' and inadequate to hold the accused guilty

● **The detective said in his report that the defendant committed the crime along with unknown men.**

TDT|Manama
Ali Tarif

A 23-year-old Bahraini man accused in a rioting case has been acquitted due to lack of evidence.

He was tried before the High Criminal Court, which cited inconclusive evidences before acquitting the accused.

"The incident occurred in 2014 and the initial investigations could not identify the culprit. After two years, a detective blamed the defendant for committing the crime based on the report of the Criminal Investigation Laboratory," the court ruling stated.

"However, the detective said in his report that he relied on confidential sources in his investigations despite the fact that two years have passed since the incident oc-



The man has been charged on the basis of assumptions.

THE COURT

curred," it added.

Terming the investigations "unserious" and inadequate to hold the accused guilty, the ruling said, "The fingerprint

recovered is not enough to confirm the involvement of the accused in the case. The man has been charged on the basis of assumptions."

The defendant was charged in connection with a riot that broke out in Samaheej.

A police officer said that he saw five tyres that were set on fire surrounding a gas cylinder, which didn't detonate thanks to police officers who put out the fire.

The detective said in his report that the defendant committed the crime along with unknown men.

Leading plastic surgeon mourned



Dr Anwar

TDT|Manama

Renowned plastic surgeon Dr Anwar Abdali Alalawat passed away on Thursday.

He was admitted to King Hamad University Hospital a few days ago after suffering a stroke.

One of the most prominent doctors in the Kingdom, Dr Anwar served Salmaniya Medical Complex for over two decades.

He had also worked at the Vienna General Hospital at the Vienna Medical University in Austria.

He was among the first doctors to present a paper on 'Laser technology and its application in plastic surgery'.

He had set up his own clinic and was considered one of the prominent cosmetic surgeons in the Kingdom.

His immediate survivors include his wife and five children.

Kidnappers assault victim after taking to remote area

● **The accused were later arrested by police, and they confirmed before prosecutors that they assaulted the victim.**

TDT|Manama
Ali Tarif

Quite resembling a Hollywood drama, a disagreement between two men led one to kidnap the other

before attacking him in a remote place, court files revealed.

According to police records, the alleged attacker had quarrelled with the victim and the accused took revenge by kidnapping him with four men to a remote area, where they assaulted him with planks.

It's claimed that they abducted him from a cold store in Manama. "Three of them held me, and the other two hurled punches at me. I tried to resist them, but I couldn't because of their number. I had BD800 at the time of the attack and

a mobile phone which they stole from me," he added.



Three of them held me, and the other two hurled punches at me. I tried to resist them, but I couldn't because of their number.

VICTIM

The culprits abandoned the victim at the scene while he was unconscious, and one of his friends found him.

"I discovered that he had gone missing and began searching for him. After a couple of hours, I saw him lying on the ground," his friend told prosecutors.

The attackers were later arrested by police, and they confirmed before prosecutors that they assaulted the victim.

They have been charged with abduction and assault.

They will appear before the High Criminal Court on September 5, 2018.

60 tech firms from Bahrain to take part in leading expo

● **The popular international ICT expo will be held in Dubai in October; dozens of companies and government entities from Bahrain are expected to take part.**

● **The organiser of the pavilion Bahrain Technology Companies Society (BTECH) said that up to 60 companies and government entities from Bahrain are expected.**

TDT|Manama
Mohammed Zafran

Sixty Information and Communications Technology (ICT) organisations including companies and government agencies are expected to be part of the Bahrain national pavilion at the GITEX Expo to be held in Dubai.

The popular international ICT expo will be held in Dubai in October; dozens of companies and government entities from Bahrain are expected to take part. Thousands of people will attend the event which will be held at Dubai World Trade Center from 14th to 18th October 2018.

The organiser of the pavilion Bahrain Technology Companies Society (BTECH) said that up to 60 companies and government entities from Bahrain are expected.

BTECH, in cooperation with WorkSmart, has ensured Bahraini participation at GITEX in the past 12 years.



A recent meeting was held for those firms participating in the Bahrain pavilion

BTECH Chairman Ubaydli Ubaydli said that the continuous Bahraini participation at the event showcases the vibrancy of the ICT sector in the Kingdom.

"Through the Bahraini National Pavilion at GITEX, Bahrain's ICT companies have kept abreast of the latest developments in the global technology sector, engaging in fruitful deals and partnerships, and exploring best ways for Bahraini companies to develop their services and products according to international standards and regional market needs,"

"GITEX is a platform for the development of the ICT sector in the presence of stakeholders from the



The continuous Bahraini participation at the event showcases the vibrancy of the ICT sector in the Kingdom.

MR UBAYDLI



We believe that GITEX is one of the best platforms to develop the technology sector of the kingdom.

MR AL HUJAIRY

public and private sectors. This will contribute to the development of the technology sector, especially towards attracting and localising international expertise in the fields of cloud computing, large data, etc," he added.

Ahmed Al Hujairy, CEO of WorkSmart said, "We are looking forward to continuing to work with all partners and exhibitors so that we can enhance the competitiveness of this sector locally and regionally. We believe that GITEX is one of the best platforms to meet annually and discuss the prospects of developing the Bahraini technology sector according to the latest global trends."

business

North Korea economy shrinks 3.5pc

AFP| Seoul

North Korea saw its economy contract 3.5 percent last year - its worst showing in two decades - as it was hit by sanctions over its weapons programmes, the South's central bank said Friday.

It was a sharp reversal from 3.9 percent growth in 2016, according to the Bank of Korea (BOK).

The UN Security Council last year banned the North's main exports -- coal and other mineral resources, fisheries and textile products -- to cut off its access to hard currency in response to Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

India, US to hold talks in September

AFP| New Delhi

India will host US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and defence chief James Mattis in September for high-level talks that were postponed twice earlier, the foreign ministry said yesterday. The meeting comes amid differences between the two countries over trade issues and the US threat of sanctions on Delhi if it continues to deal with Iran -- its key energy supplier -- or Russia.

GE profit falls as power business struggles

AFP| New York

General Electric reported a drop in second-quarter earnings Friday amid continued headwinds in its power generation division, although other industrial businesses performed well.

The US industrial giant said profits came in at \$615 million, down 29.7 percent from the year-ago levels.

Revenues rose 3.5 percent to \$30.1 billion.

Kuwait to probe chopper deal

The \$1.19-billion purchase is the latest Airbus military deal that comes under investigation

Arabian Aerospace| Kuwait

Kuwait Prime Minister, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, has ordered an investigation into the 1 billion euros (\$1.19 billion) order signed by the air force for 30 H225M Caracal multirole military utility helicopters, 24 of them for the Kuwaiti Air Force and six for the Kuwait National Guard.

"It has been decided to transfer the case of the Caracal helicopter deal to the National Anti-Corruption Commission," said Kuwait Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Anas al-Saleh. The deal will also be probed by the State Audit Bureau (SAB).

The investigation was launched after the French magazine, *Marianne*, alleged that a Lebanese middleman, Farid Abdelnour, had demanded a commission payment of 60 million (\$71 million) from Airbus in connection with the deal.

The contract for the helicopters, plus an associated support and services package, was originally signed on August 9 2016, during a visit to Kuwait by the then French Defence Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian.

As Foreign Minister, Le Drian is now in the middle of delicate negotiations aimed at settling



The deal will also be probed by Kuwait's State Audit Bureau

the problem.

The Kuwaiti order for the Caracal, which is a military counterpart to the EC225/H225, provided a useful boost for the type after an emergency airworthiness directive grounded the commercial H225 fleet following a fatal accident in Norway.

Kuwait originally issued a request for proposals (RFP) for a

new medium helicopter in 2013, selecting the H225M Caracal in June 2015, while rejecting an AgustaWestland proposal based on the AW149 and a Sikorsky S-70i bid.

Kuwait had previously purchased Gazelles, Pumas and Super Pumas from Airbus Helicopters and its predecessor companies (Eurocopter and

Aerospatiale) and the new aircraft were intended to replace a fleet of 11 older SA330 Puma and AS332 Super Puma variants.

Delivery of the first helicopters was originally expected in early 2019.

The Kuwaiti probe is the latest in a series of investigations into commercial and military sales by Airbus. In 2016, the British

Serious Fraud Office started investigating "irregularities" involving the company's use of middlemen to secure contracts overseas; the French Parquet National Financier opened a similar investigation in 2017; and there is also an Austrian investigation into allegations of fraud and misrepresentation connected to the Alpine nation's Eurofighter purchase.



The investigation was launched after the French magazine, *Marianne*, alleged that a Lebanese middleman, Farid Abdelnour, had demanded a commission payment of €60 million (\$71 million) from Airbus in connection with the deal

Property giant Emaar plans \$1.4bn

Agencies| Dubai

Dubai-based developer Emaar is to hoping to raise \$1.4 billion from a sale of assets to counteract the effects of a property slump in the emirate, according to reports in the *Financial Times*.

The company, which is 30 per cent owned by the government of Dubai, is looking to sell its portfolio of hotels, clinics and schools.

Mohamed Alabbar, the chairman, has briefed journalists that he is close to agreeing a sale for much of the property.

Dubai's property market has registered a gentle decline in rental income and sale price throughout the year. The latest figures, from agent Cavendish



Emaar is 30pc owned by Govt

Maxwell, in its second quarter Dubai Market Report, registered quarter-on-quarter declines of 1.1 per cent in residential sales prices and an average 2.5 per cent drop in rental values. The fall in residential rents was 5 per cent year-on-year.

According to the report, annual rental declines in Dubai in

the second quarter were most pronounced in International City, The Greens, Discovery Gardens and Al Furjan, which registered 12-month changes of more than 6 per cent.

In response to the sluggish property market, Emaar's share price has halved since its September 2014 peak, is down about 20 per cent over the course of 2018.

Emaar has responded by seeking ways to cut costs. In March, it entered into an \$8.2 billion strategic partnership with Abu Dhabi's biggest property developer Aldar, and the pair intend to create efficiencies through jointly building projects such as Saadiyat Grove in Abu Dhabi, and Emaar Beachfront in Dubai.

Trump 'not happy' with US Fed interest rates

AFP| Washington

President Donald Trump criticised the US central bank in comments aired Thursday, saying its course of interest rate increases counteracted his efforts at growing the economy.

The rare rebuke was likely to stir a backlash, as it broke with the long-established practice of the executive branch not commenting on the Federal Reserve's decisions out of respect for its independence.

"I'm not thrilled," Trump told CNBC in an interview. "Because we go up and every time you go up they want to raise rates again." "I'm nothappyabout it.

But at the same time I'm letting them do what they feel is best."

A Fed spokesman declined to comment on Trump's remarks but referred a reporter to comments Powell made this month in public radio interview in which he said he was "not concerned" by any threat to central bank's independence.

Hoping to keep a lid on inflation as the world's largest economy gathers pace, the Fed has raised its benchmark lending rate seven times since 2015 and expects two more rate hikes this year. Doing so slows growth, as it raises the cost of borrowing, but can also prevent runaway inflation from damaging the economy.

Hackers steal health records of 1.5 million Singaporeans

AFP| Singapore

Hackers have stolen the health records of 1.5 million Singaporeans including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, authorities said yesterday, with the leader specifically targeted in the city-state's biggest ever data breach.

Singapore's health and information ministries said a government database was broken into in a "deliberate, targeted and well-planned" strike, describing the attack as "unprecedented".



Hackers used a computer infected with malware to gain access to database

Attackers specifically and repeatedly targeted the personal particulars and outpatient information of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

GAN KIM YONG
HEALTH MINISTER

"Attackers specifically and repeatedly targeted the personal particulars and outpatient information of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong," health minister Gan Kim Yong told a press conference. Forensic analysis by Singapore's Cyber Security Agency "indicates this is a deliberate, targeted, and well-planned cyberattack and not the work of casual hackers or criminal gangs," he added. Officials declined to comment on the identity of the hackers, citing "operational security", but said

the prime minister's data has not shown up anywhere on the internet. "I don't know what the attackers were hoping to find. Perhaps they were hunting for some dark state secret, or at least something to embarrass me," Lee wrote on Facebook.

"My medication data is not something I would ordinarily tell people about, but there is nothing alarming in it."

Hackers used a computer infected with malware to gain access to the database between June 27 and July 4.

US asks WTO on EU sanction amount

Geneva | Switzerland

The United States has asked the WTO to determine the amount it can impose in sanctions against the European Union for failing to comply with a ruling to remove subsidies for aircraft maker Airbus, a World Trade Organization official said Friday.

The United States submitted last week its request that a WTO arbitrator begin determining the amount, the official said, but a decision is not expected this year given the complexity of the case.

In May, the the appellate division of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body ruled the EU had failed to remove illegal Airbus subsidies, handing a major victory to the United States and its national aviation giant Boeing in a multi-faceted dispute that has raged for 14 years.

Swiss, German drugmakers join US price freeze

Reuters | Zurich

European drugmakers Roche, Bayer and Merck KGaA became the latest companies to freeze prices in the United States for the rest of 2018 following criticism by President Donald Trump over the cost of medicine.

Roche did boost U.S. prices for nine key drugs by an average of 3 percent on July 1, but said it would hold off additional increases as discussions with the Trump administration continue over a longer-term solution to containing healthcare costs.

The European announcements on Friday follow similar moves from Novartis, Pfizer and U.S. drugmaker Merck.

Some analysts doubted such freezes would have much overall impact, however, since the companies' pledges may take them out of Trump's immediate firing line while still leaving leeway to resume increases in 2019.

Turkey in talks on US sanction impact

Ankara | Turkey

Turkey yesterday hosted an American delegation for talks to address concerns about the potential negative impact on its economy of the looming reimposition of US sanctions against Iran.

US President Donald Trump decided in May to abandon the 2015 deal agreed with other world powers on Iran's nuclear programme and reimpose nuclear-related sanctions. The sanctions have alarmed Turkey which imports Iranian crude. "Our relevant authorities are carrying out necessary work for Turkey not to be negatively impacted by the upcoming sanctions," the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement.

Oil up as drillers cut rigs

● **Drillers cut 5 oil rigs for a total of 858 rigs in the week to July 20**

Reuters | New York

Oil prices edged up yesterday as a weakening dollar and lower expected August oil exports from Saudi Arabia supported the market, offsetting concerns about US-China trade tensions and supply increases.

Despite the day's advance, prices remained on course for a third consecutive weekly decline as gains in supply had dragged on prices during the week.

Brent crude was up 34 cents at \$72.92 a barrel by 1:23 p.m. EDT (1723 GMT). Brent was on track to fall 3.2 percent in the week.

The expiring US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for August delivery was up 79 cents at \$70.25 a barrel, while the more liquid September con-



Draugen is an oil field in the Norwegian Sea at a sea depth of 250 meters. Its is around 150 km north of Kristiansund and the fields operator is A/S Norske Shell

tract rose 10 cents to \$68.34 a barrel. US crude is set to end the week down 1 percent.

US drillers this week cut oil rigs by the most since March, with the rate of growth slowing over the past month with recent declines in crude prices.

Drillers cut 5 oil rigs for a total of 858 rigs in the week to July 20, according to a weekly report from Baker Hughes.

A weakening US dollar, following US President Donald Trump's criticism of the Fed-

eral Reserve's policy moves, has helped relieve some pressure on oil prices, said Phil Flynn, analyst at Price Futures Group in Chicago.

"The dollar was a one-way ticket for the last couple of weeks and basically reversed directions, giving us some strong support," Flynn said.

Prices also received a boost after OPEC's largest oil producer, Saudi Arabia, said it would temper its exports next month.

Trade tensions continued to

weigh on the market, providing a ceiling for any gains, traders said. Trump said in a CNBC interview he was ready to slap tariffs on all \$500 billion of imported goods from China.

Lower oil demand in the United States and China caused by an economic slowdown due to the trade spat between the two countries would likely weigh heavily on markets, some analysts said.

"The impact on world economic growth of a levy of this



Brent is a major trading classification of sweet light crude oil. This grade is described as light because of its relatively low density, and sweet because of its low sulphur content

magnitude will be severe and will likely have a strong negative impact on markets," said Olaf van den Heuvel, chief investment officer at Aegon Asset Management.

The People's Bank of China on Friday reduced its midpoint for the yuan for the seventh straight trading day to the lowest in a year.

The yuan then retreated to a near 13-month low, although it rebounded later.

Signs of Russia and Saudi Arabia increasing oil production, as well as last week's surprise build in US crude stocks, have also weighed on prices, said Tariq Zahir, analyst at Tyche Capital Advisors.

"You're having supply come back on to the markets, so it's not surprising to see a little bit of weakness," Zahir said.

Space, not Brexit, is final frontier for Scotland

AFP | Farnborough, UK

Never mind Brexit: For a remote peninsula in the Scottish highlands, the buzz is all about hi-tech rocket launchers firing satellites into space.

In just three years' time, rockets will send satellites into orbit from the rugged stretch of coastline, under British government plans unveiled this week.

The sleepy county of Caithness and Sutherland has been selected as the site of the country's first ever space port, Britain announced at the Farnborough Airshow, a showpiece event for the global aerospace sector.

The UK Space Agency awarded a £2.5-million (\$3.3-million, 2.8-million-euro) grant towards the construction of a vertical space port facility in Sutherland, which will become operational in 2021.

The announcement has boosted hopes for an industry worried about the effects of Britain leaving the European Union and raised spirits in pro-EU Scotland, which was outvoted in the 2016 referendum.

"It is rocket science," Roy Kirk, area manager for Caithness and Sutherland at Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), a development agency for Scotland's devolved government, said in an interview with AFP at Farnborough.

The launchers, made by established player Lockheed Martin and startup business Orbex, will stand 17 metres (56 feet) tall and will fire rockets that take just eight minutes to get into orbit. "We are delighted we have been



A model of the Aston Martin Vision Volante Concept aircraft is displayed at the Farnborough Airshow,

selected as a spaceport for vertical launch," said Kirk, adding that the site would also create tourism opportunities.

"The local economy will benefit." The space port would employ about 40 staff within three years of operation, but the supply chain around that would support nearer 400 jobs.

Satellite uses include navigation, weather forecasting, telecommunications and financial transactions, while they are also vital for defence and energy sectors.

The Sutherland facility will cost an estimated £17.3 million to build, including some £10 million from HIE.

The port will be well positioned geographically to launch satellite rockets over the North Pole.

'No different than before Brexit'

Prime Minister Theresa May's government is seeking to develop the UK space industry after its role in European space projects was called into question by Brexit.

ferent than it was before Brexit," Graham Turnock, head of the UK Space Agency, told AFP on the sidelines of Farnborough.

"We are actually looking to the opportunities for trade deals with the rest of the world after Brexit so we are very positive about that.

"We are still aiming to achieve 10 percent of the world space market by 2030. We are very confident that we can do that."

He also sought to dispel concerns that Britain's departure from the European Union in 2019 would hurt the industry.

"Obviously we are talking to the EU about our future participation in the space programmes.

"We have said that we'd very much like to continue to partic-

ipate in Galileo Copernicus, but it takes two sides to want to have that discussion."

Britain wants continued participation in the EU's Galileo satellite navigation system -- but Brussels rejects the idea.

UK Transport Secretary Chris Grayling meanwhile appeared at Farnborough to champion the space investment.

"After pioneering the development of those small satellites over many years, adding our own space ports means we can now move to offering customers a one stop shop in the United Kingdom," Grayling told delegates.

"A full package of services -- from design to build, right up to launch."



Visitors rest in deckchairs near an Airbus A380 passenger aircraft, operated by HiFly, at the Farnborough Airshow, south west of London,

Japan lifts ban on Canadian wheat imports

AFP| Tokyo

Japan on Friday lifted a ban on Canadian wheat imports more than a month after it halted shipments following the discovery of unauthorised genetically modified (GM) plants there.

On June 15, Tokyo banned sales and imports of Canadian wheat after Ottawa said unauthorised GM wheat plants were found.

"We have decided to lift the ban as we found no such wheat circulated domestically," said an official of the agricultural ministry.

"We will also resume bid tenders next week on condition that all imports should be inspected to check there is no GM wheat mixed in," he told AFP. Canada is Japan's second largest wheat exporter after the US, accounting for about a third of its total imports.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency said a GM wheat plot was discovered last summer by a farmer in Alberta who was surprised to see wheat resist after a Roundup spray. Canadian authorities determined the herbicide-tolerant wheat was a banned Monsanto GM wheat line.

Netherlands, Turkey resume full diplomatic ties

AFP| The Hague

The Netherlands and Turkey said Friday they were resuming full diplomatic ties for the first time since Dutch officials barred two Turkish ministers from attending an election rally in 2017. In a joint statement, the two countries said their foreign ministers met on the sidelines of last week's NATO summit in Brussels and "agreed to normalise the diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Turkey."

"To that extend the ministers agreed to reinstate ambassadors in Ankara and The Hague shortly," the statement said. The Hague withdrew its ambassador to Ankara in February as relations plunged to new lows in a festering dispute that began when the Netherlands expelled Turkey's Family Minister Fatma Betul Sayan Kayar in March 2017.

The country also barred another minister's plane from landing as both Turkish politicians sought to attend a Rotterdam rally of Dutch-Turkish citizens in favour of Turkey's April 2017 referendum, in which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan narrowly won sweeping new powers. Erdogan at the time accused the Dutch of behaving like "fascists" in their treatment of the Turkish ministers -- comments which triggered anger in the Netherlands, occupied by Nazi Germany in World War II. The Netherlands is home to some 400,000 people of Turkish origin, and the two countries have had diplomatic relations for four centuries.

Trump threatens tariffs on \$505 bn Chinese imports

● The United States early this month imposed 25pc tariffs on \$34 billion Chinese mechanical and technological products

AFP| Washington

US President Donald Trump said in an interview released yesterday he is willing to hit all Chinese goods imported to the United States with tariffs if necessary.

"I'm ready to go 500," the Republican leader told the US network CNBC, referring to the \$505.5 billion in Chinese imports accepted into the United States in 2017.

"I'm not doing this for politics, I'm doing this to do the right thing for our country," Trump said.

"We've been ripped off by China for a long time," he added.



US President Donald Trump speaks during his meeting with members of his Cabinet in Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington. - AP (File Photo)

After weeks of apparently fruitless negotiations, the United States early this month imposed 25 percent tariffs on approximately \$34 billion of

Chinese mechanical and technological products -- sparking an immediate response from Beijing, which said it would hit back dollar for dollar.

China accused the United States of starting the "largest trade war in economic history."

A second tranche of \$16 billion in products is under review and could soon be added to the US measures.

In the full interview released Friday Trump reiterated his claim that the United States is "being taken advantage of" on issues including trade policy.

"I don't want them to do well," the US president said of China. "I really like President Xi a lot. But it was very unfair."

The US-China spat is the largest and broadest of several trade fights picked by Trump.

The growing share of international trade under threat has raised the prospect of the escalating trade war could harm the global economy by disrupting companies supply chains, pushing firms to hold off on investments and making goods more expensive for consumers.

In excerpts of the interview



I'm ready to go 500. I'm not doing this for politics, I'm doing this to do the right thing for our country

DONALD TRUMP

released on Thursday Trump had broken with the long-established executive branch practice of not commenting on the Federal Reserve's decisions out of respect for its independence.

"I'm not thrilled," Trump told the network in an interview excerpt aired Thursday. "Because we go up and every time you go up they want to raise rates again."

Stock bubble force S. Korea to issue warning

AFP| Seoul

Rumours of a treasure trove on a Russian ship that sank off South Korea a century ago have sent a company's shares on a rollercoaster ride, triggering a warning Friday from financial regulators.

Start-up business Shinil Group announced earlier this week that it had found an imperial Russian navy vessel off Ulleung island in the Sea of Japan, saying it was believed to contain gold bullion and coins worth 150 trillion won (\$130 billion).

But critics noted that in 2003 another firm had already sparked an investor bubble by announcing the discovery of the Russian Imperial Navy cruiser Dmitrii Donskoi, which was scuttled by her crew in a 1905 naval battle against Japan.

Others pointed out that Russia would have had no reason to load a vast treasure trove on a

ship it was sending into battle, and doubly so as it had a land route to its destination Vladivostok anyway. Stocks of Jeil Steel, in which Shinil Group's founder has acquired a large



The warship is believed to have been carrying about US\$130 billion in gold. - (Photo: Shinil Group)

share, skyrocketed, only to fall by 20 percent on Thursday and another 30 percent on Friday.

"Concerning the treasure ship salvage project, investors' discretion is recommended as there are risks of them suffering great losses if they rely on rumours," the Financial Supervisory Ser-

vice said in a statement.

"Spreading false informations or groundless rumours about the 'treasure ship' salvage can be subject to a criminal punishment," it added. It noted that investors already suffered great losses in 2003 when the bubble burst and Donga Construction

Co., which claimed the discovery of the "treasure ship", went belly-up. The warning came with Shinil Group reportedly selling virtual coins to investors, promising huge returns after salvaging the ship, which it said was at a depth of more than 1,400 feet (426 metres).



A start-up firm announced last week it found a Russian navy vessel in the Sea of Japan, saying it was believed to contain gold bullion and coins worth 150 trillion won (\$130 billion)

Japan passes controversial bill to allow casinos

AFP| Tokyo

Japan yesterday enacted a controversial law to allow casinos that the government says will boost tourism and growth but was bitterly opposed by the opposition.

In a last-ditch attempt to delay the vote on the bill in the upper house, opposition lawmakers called a confidence vote on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet, despite the premier being guaranteed an easy win by his large parliamentary majority.

Japan's government has long touted the drive for mega "integrated resorts" (IRs) that will include casinos, entertainment venues, restaurants, hotel and conference halls, on the Las Vegas model.

It argues the casinos will bring in tourist and business spend-



Japan hopes casinos will bolster the stagnant economy

ing, like other regional gambling destinations in Singapore and Macau, and provide a shot in the arm for a stagnant economy.

But legislation has been controversial, including among ac-

tivists concerned about Japan's already well-documented problem with gambling addiction.

The law enacted Friday allows the construction of three IR facilities, and comes after the

more powerful lower house approved the same bill in June.

"Japanese IRs are not only about casinos," top government spokesman Yoshihide Suga told reporters Friday, ahead of the vote.

"It is an integrated resort facility that will help increase tourism across Japan," Suga said, adding that the law would help Japan "become a major tourism nation," and boost the economy as a whole.

'Holy Grail' of gaming

Japan was long the only developed nation banning casinos but passed legislation in 2016 paving the way to legalise the industry.

Public opinion is heavily against the legislation, with 62 percent of voters saying in a survey earlier this month that they opposed it. Just 22 percent

were in favour, with 16 percent unsure.

Bolstered by public opinion on the issue, the opposition fought hard with administrative measures to delay a vote on the legislation. They also criticised the government for prioritising the bill over measures to address a massive floods and landslides that hit western Japan earlier this month killing more than 200 people.

"There are countless reasons that the Abe administration deserves a no-confidence (resolution)," said Yukio Edano, leader of the main opposition.

The casino bill is "not something that we have to make a hasty decision on" as Japan still faces disaster relief measures in western Japan, Edano said in the lower house after submitting the no-confidence resolution.

Dubai Duty Free sales hit \$1bn in first half

The National | Dubai

Airport retailer Dubai Duty Free reported a 10 per cent rise in sales to Dh3.67bn (\$1bn) in the first half of 2018, helped by new developments at Dubai International Airport (DXB) and Al Maktoum International.

This year “has been a fantastic year for Dubai Duty Free so far,” said Colm McLoughlin, executive vice-chairman and chief executive, in a statement on Thursday. “We have continuously grown our business and are happy to see a double-digit increase for the first half.”

With new retail areas operational, and other ongoing retail developments coming on-stream at both airports, DDF is set to reach the \$2bn mark at the end of this year, he added. The results build on 5.6 per cent year-on-year growth in sales in 2017 to Dh7.05bn on the back of a resurgence in tourism numbers, DDF reported in January. The figure reversed a two-year sales decline when the strong US dollar had held back growth, the retailer said at the time.

Dollar weakens on Trump criticism; stocks tepid

Reuters | New York

The US dollar weakened yesterday against key world currencies as President Donald Trump complained again about its strength, while US and European stock markets were tepid amid fresh tariff talk and another round of corporate earnings.

US government bond yields rose as Trump repeated his criticism a day earlier of the Federal Reserve's policy on raising interest rates, saying it takes away from the United States' “big competitive edge.” He also lamented the strength of the dollar and accused the European Union and China of manipulating their currencies.

The dollar was on pace for its biggest single-session drop in three weeks against a basket of major currencies, stalling a rally that had driven the greenback to a year high.

“The dollar is an important issue today especially because we have been on a rise for quite a long time,” said Randy Freder-



Bundles of banknotes of US Dollar are pictured at a currency exchange shop in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. - REUTERS/File Photo

ick, vice president of trading and derivatives for Charles Schwab in Austin, Texas.

The dollar index, tracking it against six major currencies, fell 0.59 percent, with the euro up 0.57 percent to \$1.1707.

On Wall Street, the Dow

Jones Industrial Average rose 41.81 points, or 0.17 percent, to 25,106.31, the S&P 500 gained 4.14 points, or 0.15 percent, to 2,808.63 and the Nasdaq Composite added 31.92 points, or 0.41 percent, to 7,857.21.

“The dollar going down typi-

cally tends to lift equities and I think that is partly why we have seen a little bit of a turnaround today,” Frederick said.

Microsoft shares rose, boosting indexes after a strong earnings report, while General Electric shares sank after the

conglomerate cut a key financial target.

In the latest trade salvo, Trump said he was ready to impose tariffs on all \$500 billion of imported goods from China.

MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe gained 0.45 percent, helped by Asian markets.

The pan-European FTSEurofirst 300 index lost 0.13 percent, amid rising trade tensions.

European auto shares, sensitive to trade tensions as U.S. officials work towards slapping tariffs on car imports, fell 2.1 percent.

Benchmark 10-year U.S. notes last fell 12/32 in price to yield 2.8894 percent, from 2.847 percent late on Thursday.

Benchmark Brent crude stabilized as a weakening dollar and lower expected August oil exports from Saudi Arabia supported the market, overtaking concerns about U.S.-China trade tensions and supply increases.

U.S. crude rose 0.81 percent to \$70.02 per barrel and Brent was last at \$73.15, up 0.79 percent on the day.

Artificial intelligence, cloud lift Microsoft revenue, profits

● The US tech giant's revenue rose 17pc to \$30 billion this quarter as compared to last year

AFP | San Francisco

Microsoft has said its revenue and profit climbed in the recently ended quarter, getting results from its bets on cloud computing services and artificial intelligence.

The US tech giant reported its net income increased 10 percent to \$8.8 billion on revenue that was up 17 percent to \$30.1 billion when compared with the same period last year.

Microsoft Corp saw revenue gains across its full range of businesses including business services, gaming, internet search ads, its consumer software including Windows and



The US tech giant's net income increased 10 percent to \$8.8 billion this quarter

Office and LinkedIn, the recently acquired professional social network.

Shares were up more than three percent to \$107.80 in after-hours trading following the release of earnings for the quarter ending the fiscal year

quarter for Microsoft. “We had an incredible year,” chief executive Satya Nadella said in a press release.

“Our early investments in the intelligent cloud and intelligent edge are paying off, and we will continue to expand our reach in

large and growing markets with differentiated innovation.”

Microsoft executives told analysts they expected another year of growth, with demand for computing on the rise and the technology giant well-positioned in that market.



Microsoft saw revenue gains across its full range of businesses including business services, gaming and internet search ads

China, EU accused of currency fixing

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday launched a fresh attack on American trading partners, saying the EU and China were manipulating their currencies as he took another swipe at the US central bank.

The remarks on Twitter early in the day followed a CNBC interview in which Trump said he was willing to hit all Chinese imports to the United States with tariffs.

The harsh comments took fresh aim at pillars of the international economic system and compounded Trump's break with long-established norms by again openly rebuking the Federal Reserve.

They also signaled an undiminished appetite for battle on multiple fronts after a week dominated by coverage of the fallout from his dealings with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In a pair of tweets, Trump

said China, the European Union and others had been “manipulating their currencies and interest rates lower” while the dollar gained in strength, eroding “our big competitive edge.”

He said the Fed's course of tightening monetary policy “now hurts all that we have done.”

Fed has raised the benchmark lending rates twice this year, after three increases in 2017, and two more rate hikes are expected this year as the central bank removes stimulus from the economy to keep a lid on inflation.

The chance inflation might accelerate has increased after the massive tax cut Trump championed, which has raised the US debt and budget deficit.

“The US should be allowed to recapture what was lost due to illegal currency manipulation and BAD Trade Deals,” Trump said on Twitter. “Debt coming due & we are raising rates - Really?”

S. Korea's ex-president Park given eight more years in prison

● The Seoul Central District Court gave Park six years for taking 3.3 billion won (\$2.9 million) from a spy agency

AFP | Seoul

Disgraced former South Korean president Park Geun-hye was convicted of charges including illegally receiving funds from the country's spy agency on Friday and given eight more years in prison, on top of her

current term. Park, the South's first female president, was impeached last year after huge street protests over a sprawling scandal, and was jailed for 24 years for corruption and abuse of power in April. Friday's penalty -- issued in her absence after she refused to attend the Seoul Central District Court -- came after a separate trial for pocketing money from the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and improperly intervening in 2016 in the selection of her ruling party's parliamentary candidates. The Seoul Central District Court gave Park six years for taking 3.3



Park Geun-hye arrives at a court in Seoul, South Korea. - Reuters (File photo)

billion won (\$2.9 million) from the spy agency, and two years for the electoral offence. The penalties apply consecutively, meaning the 66-year-old now faces a total of 32 years in prison.

“The accused received some three billion won over three years from the three NIS chiefs. Through this crime, the accused incurred a considerable amount of loss to the state treasury,” said senior judge Seong Chang-ho.

Three former NIS chiefs testified they had funnelled the funds to Park on her orders, the court said. The judge rebuked Park, who denied the charges, for be-

ing “un-cooperative” throughout the court hearing and questioning by prosecutors.

Park allegedly squandered the taxpayer money on maintaining her private house, financing a boutique where her secret confidante Choi Soon-sil -- the central figure in the corruption scandal -- had Park's clothes made and other private purposes, including massage treatment.

Choi was found to have taken advantage of her “long private ties” with Park to extort bribes worth millions of dollars from businesses including Samsung and Lotte.

SOCIETY



Rotary Club of Sulmaniya held a regular lunch meeting at the Golden Tulip Hotel on Wednesday. Guest speaker was Kai Miethig who spoke on the topic 'Enhancing lifestyle and quality of living in Bahrain by managing our waste'.



The Public Security Sports Association held a series of fitness and health awareness lectures for personnel from different directorates of the Interior Ministry. Captain Abdullah Al Zubae from the Physical Fitness Division highlighted that the lectures aimed to enhance the skills of staff and the importance of fitness to prevent various diseases.



The Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC) organised an awareness lecture on its commitment to protect the environment. The lecture aimed at training students who are members of the Leadership and Learning Academy. The academy has developed a comprehensive programme of educational lectures and workshops aimed at providing trainees with leadership skills and awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



The Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam Acting President Dileesh Kumar V S, General Secretary M P Raghu, other executive committee members and community leaders met Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister of India, on the sidelines of the new Indian Embassy Complex inaugural ceremony in Seef.



'Samskrithi' President Suresh Babu and Secretary on an official visit to the Kingdom.

Society



Sustainable Development Goals as part of... who are interns at the company's Academy for these trainees, which includes... and generating awareness on United



47,200
Bahraini dinars were raised by the community service teams at St Christopher's School.

The community service teams, led by Ellie Dawson (Primary School), and Anne Looker (Senior School), raised over BD47,200 for charities across the world this academic year. The school thanked all those who have been supporting the initiative.



Secretary Praveen Nair presented a memento to India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, who was



The ICAB Toastmasters Club has elected the new executive committee for the year 2018-19. The members are Raghu Iyer, President (centre), Panchanathiswaran, VP Education, Venkata Raman Rao, VP Membership, Maheshkumar Narayan, VP Public relations, Kunjan Choksi, Secretary, M Venkatraman K, Treasurer and Clifford D'Souza, Sergeant At Arms.

WORLD
world**17 dead as boat sinks in Missouri lake**

Washington, United States

A tourist boat capsized and sank Thursday during a fierce storm on a lake in Missouri, killing at least 17 people, the local sheriff said.

The incident on Table Rock Lake which happened as thunderstorms rumbled through the US Midwest left another seven people hospitalized while at least five were still missing, Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader told journalists, saying some of the dead were children.

The local branch of the Cox Medical Center said two people were in critical condition, while the sheriff added several people had made it to shore.

Pakistan troops kill IS-linked blast mastermind

Quetta, Pakistan

Pakistani security forces on Friday killed the mastermind of the country's worst ever suicide bombing in an early morning shootout in the southwest province of Balochistan, officials said.

The operation was carried out on an intelligence tip off about the presence of an Islamic State (IS) operative identified as Hidayat Ullah in a house in Darenjo village of Qalat district in the restive province.

"The Frontier Corps (FC) raided the house and killed Hidayat Ullah after a strong resistance from him," Qaisar Khan, a senior administration official in Qalat, said.

UN warns of war as deadly Israeli strikes pound Gaza

Kunduz, Afghanistan

Israeli forces unleashed a wave of strikes across the Gaza Strip after saying troops came under fire, killing three Hamas members as a fresh escalation heightened fears of wider conflict.

Fireballs exploded into the sky over the Palestinian enclave as the UN urged all sides to step "back from the brink" of war after months of tensions. A fourth Palestinian was also shot dead during protests along the frontier with Israel, Gaza's health ministry said.

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nikolay Mladenov said "everyone in Gaza needs to step back from the brink. Not next week. Not tomorrow. Right NOW!" "Those who want to provoke Palestinians and Israelis into another war must not succeed," he wrote on Twitter.

Knife attack on bus

Attacker arrested, several injured, no one was killed

● **The attacker is an Iranian man in his mid-30s**

● **Germany has been on high alert**

● **Security services estimate there are around 11,000 Islamic radicals in Germany**



Policemen stand near a public service bus in Kuecknitz near Luebeck northern Germany

Several people were injured yesterday in an attack by a man wielding a knife on a bus in northern Germany, officials said yesterday, although his motive remained unclear.

The packed bus was heading in the direction of Travemuende, a popular beach destination

close to the city of Luebeck, when a man pulled a weapon on passengers, local media Luebecker Nachrichten reported, quoting an unnamed witness.

The bus driver immediately stopped the vehicle, allowing passengers to escape, the daily said on its website.

"The passengers jumped out of the bus and were screaming. It was terrible. Then the injured were brought out. The perpetrator had a kitchen knife," a witness who lives close to the scene, Lothar H., told the daily.

An unnamed female passenger on the bus said one of those

injured had only just given up his seat to an elderly woman, "when the perpetrator stabbed him in the chest."

A police car which happened to be close by arrived at the scene quickly, allowing officers to detain the assailant, added the report.



Germany remains a target for jihadist groups, in particular because of its involvement in the coalition fighting IS in Iraq and Syria, and its deployment in Afghanistan since 2001

Confirming that a man went at fellow passengers on the bus with a knife, Luebeck chief prosecutor Ursula Hingst added: "We will not release information on the identity of the man nor the motive of the act."

Can't interrogate US citizens, says Trump

AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump has rejected a proposal by Vladimir Putin to allow Russian officials to interrogate a former US ambassador and other American citizens, the White House said Thursday.

'I don't know' what they said

Washington

The top US intelligence official said Thursday that, three days after President Donald Trump met privately with Russian leader Vladimir Putin for more than two hours, he does not know what the two men discussed or agreed.

"I don't know what hap-

pened in that meeting," Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said.

"I think as time goes by, and the president has already mentioned some things that happened in that meeting, I think we will learn more."

Coats oversees and coordinates the CIA, NSA and other US espionage bodies.

'Good for all': Merkel Berlin, Germany

Meetings between the US and Russian presidents should become the "normality", German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Friday, adding that it is "good for all" that Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin plan new talks.

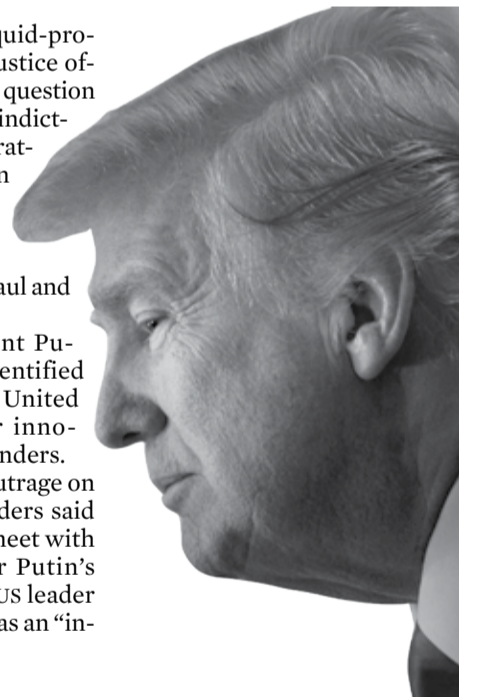
"That talks are held is basically good for all, in particular between these two countries," Merkel said at her regular summer press conference.

Trump is planning to host Putin for talks in Washington later this year, after a first bilateral meeting in Helsinki on Monday.

Putin had offered a quid-pro-quo of permitting US justice officials to go to Russia to question 12 intelligence officers indicted for hacking Democratic Party computers, in exchange for Russia being allowed to question former US envoy to Russia Michael McFaul and others.

"Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt," said Sanders.

McFaul expressed outrage on Wednesday when Sanders said Trump was "going to meet with his team" to consider Putin's proposal -- which the US leader had initially described as an "incredible offer."

**Kenyan beauty queen sentenced to death for murder**

Kamande's lawyer Joyner Okonjo said she would appeal the sentence

AFP | Nairobi, Kenya

A Kenyan court has sentenced a 24-year-old beauty queen to death for murdering her boyfriend by stabbing him 25 times, drawing criticism from rights groups who called the punishment "inhumane".

Ruth Kamande, who won a prison beauty pageant while awaiting trial, slashed her partner Farid Mohammed, 24, to death in 2015 and was convicted in May.

"I want young people to know that it is not cool to kill your boyfriend or girlfriend even where you feel disappointed or frustrated -- don't do it," said High Court judge Jessie Lesiit passing



This picture taken on August 30, 2016 shows Ruth Kamande after having been crowned 'Miss Lang'ata Women Prison' in Nairobi as she awaited trial for killing her boyfriend in 2015

sentence on Thursday.

"Instead, it is cool to walk

away and thereafter to forgive."

The judge accused Kaman-



Kenya has an effective ban on carrying out death sentences and no death row prisoner has been executed since 1987.

de of "manipulative" behaviour that included accessing the victim's mobile phone as well as showing no remorse for the vicious attack which left "blood all over" the crime scene.

"I think passing any other sentence than the one prescribed (death) would turn the accused into a hero," said Lesiit.

The victim's family insisted the sentence matched the crime.

"We're glad that this day came and his grandparents, his sister were actually in court today when this verdict was given," the victim's tearful aunt Emmah Wanjiku told reporters after the sentencing.

"He had just started his job when his life was cut short."

French President under fire

● Security aide detained in assault inquiry

● Videos emerged showing him strike a young man during a demonstration

● Scandal erupted this week when a French daily published the video

AFP | Paris, France

French President Emmanuel Macron, trying to curb what has become the most damaging scandal of his presidency, yesterday fired a top security aide who has been taken into custody after videos emerged showing him strike a young man during a demonstration in Paris in May.

The Elysee Palace said that Alexandre Benalla would be dismissed after “new elements” emerged in the case, namely that he is suspected of unlawfully receiving police surveillance footage in a bid to clear his name.

A source close to the inquiry



a man identified as Elysee Chief Security Officer Alexandre Benalla wearing a police visor as he drags away a demonstrator during May 1 protests in Paris.



French President Emmanuel Macron

said that three police officers, including two high-ranking officials, have been suspended on suspicion of providing the footage to Benalla.

He is facing charges of violence by a public official, impersonating a police officer and the illegal use of police insignia, and complicity in unauthorised use of surveillance footage, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

Macron and his government are facing fierce criticism over the affair, with some opposition lawmakers saying Interior Min-

ister Gerard Collomb's job is on the line if he knew about the incident but kept quiet about it.

A source close to the inquiry said Friday that Macron's cabinet chief, Patrick Strzoda, had been questioned by investigators on Thursday.

“The very core of the state has been tainted. Our work must stop immediately and the prime minister must come and explain this,” said Christian Jacob of the rightwing Republicains party.

The scandal erupted this week when French daily Le Monde published a video taken by smartphone showing Benalla, wearing a police helmet, manhandling and striking a protester during a May 1 demonstration.

In a second video published by the newspaper late Thursday, Benalla -- who has never been a policeman -- is also seen violently wrestling a young woman to the ground.

It was not clear who informed Benalla's superiors of the incident, but a few days later he was suspended without pay for two weeks and transferred to an administrative role instead of organising security for Macron's trips.

But the incident was not reported to prosecutors.

US proposes roll back of endangered species protections

Washington

The US administration of President Donald Trump on Thursday proposed sweeping changes to the 45-year-old Endangered Species Act which would roll back protections for threatened animals, sparking alarm by environmentalists.

The 1973 federal law is considered the gold standard for global environmental protection, and is credited with saving dozens of key species from extinction, including bald eagles, manatees, humpback whales and American alligators.

One proposed change, announced by the Interior and Commerce Departments, would remove a sentence that aims to separate economic impacts from decisions about animal protection. Other provisions would vary protections for animals on a case-by-case basis. Meanwhile, another suggested change would remove a clause that automatically conveys the same protections to threatened species as endangered species.

WhatsApp limits forwarding

Facebook will remove the “quick forward button” next to media messages, making sending on messages more cumbersome

New Delhi, India

WhatsApp announced limits yesterday on the forwarding of messages by its 200 million Indian users in an effort to stop a spate of horrific lynchings and to assuage government threats of legal action in its biggest market.

More than 20 people have been butchered by crazed mobs in the past two months across India after being accused of child kidnapping and other crimes in viral messages circulated wildly on WhatsApp.

Late Thursday India's government, scrambling to find a response, threatened to take WhatsApp to court, saying the “medium” for spreading malicious rumours “cannot evade

responsibility and accountability”.

“If (WhatsApp) remain mute spectators they are liable to be treated as abettors and thereafter face consequent legal action,” the information technology ministry said.

The Facebook-owned firm responded on Friday with an announcement it will test limiting the ability to forward messages and cap at five the number of contacts or groups that messages can be forwarded to.

It addition, it said it will remove the “quick forward button” next to media messages, making sending on messages more cumbersome.

“We believe that these changes -- which we'll continue to

evaluate -- will help keep WhatsApp the way it was designed to be: a private messaging app,” a statement said.

Worldwide, the company will limit the number of forwards to 20 other groups, a spokesman said.

The firm had already announced new features to help users identify messages that have been forwarded.

It bought full-page adverts in Indian newspapers with tips on how to spot misinformation.

The ministry also called on WhatsApp to enable the “traceability” of messages when an official request is made.

But the platform on Friday said its messages would stay “end-to-end encrypted”.

Italy, Libya reject EU's migrant policy

Brussels, Belgium

The European Union's migrant strategy suffered a major new setback yesterday with Italy refusing to freely accept people rescued at sea and Libya spurning a proposal for asylum processing centres.

The salvos follow a fractious EU summit in June which agreed to set up “disembarkation platforms” outside the bloc to process migrants after Italy's new populist government said it was closing its

ports.

“Italy does not want to be the only country where migrants saved at sea by its own naval units disembark,” Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi said in a letter to EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

The Italian position and its implications will be discussed at a meeting later Friday by member states in Brussels, EU sources said.

Libyan Prime Minister Fayed al-Sarraj meanwhile rejected the EU proposal for asylum processing centres in his country, saying: “We are strictly against Europe officially placing illegal migrants who are no longer wanted in the EU in our country.”

Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia were also approached by the EU but have already refused to host such centres.

Russia raids space research centre in ‘treason probe’

Moscow, Russia

Russia's FSB security services yesterday raided a top space research centre in a probe into staff alleged to be spying for the West, the Kommersant daily reported, citing sources.

“This morning, the FSB raided offices of staff at the Central Research Institute of Machine-Building,” which is a subsidiary of Roscosmos, the Russian space agency, Kommersant reported, citing sources in law enforcement agencies.

It reported that the FSB carried out raids in the town of Korolyov outside Moscow after finding out that Western security services had information on “secret hypersonic developments by Russian industry.”

World's loneliest man: Last known survivor of Amazonian tribe

Daily Mail

Captivating footage has emerged of the last known survivor of an Amazonian tribe who has wandered the rainforest alone for 22 years - after the rest of his people were wiped out by murderous land-grabbing cattle ranchers two decades ago.

The half-naked man in his fifties uses an axe to chop down a tree in the footage taken by Brazilian government officials in the remote state of Rondonia.

There are believed to be 113 uncontacted tribes living in the Amazon, 27 of which have been sighted by experts who attempt to track their movements.

This tribesman is known as ‘the indigenous man in the hole’ and was first caught on camera

in 1998. He spends most of his time hunting forest pigs, birds and monkeys with a bow and arrow, and lives in a hut surrounded by papaya and corn

plantations. Experts from the Brazilian agency for native tribes, called FUNAI, believe the man belonged to a tribe of six - five of whom



Aerial shots in 2016, captured the confusion of an uncontacted tribe in Brazil as they watched an aircraft flying overhead



There are believed to be 113 uncontacted tribes living in the Amazon

were murdered by farmers in the 90s.

Survivors of other indigenous groups have told how invading farmers shot them in the back while taking their land during the period. And Funai has publicly blamed cattle ranchers for



In 2008, an incredible set of pictures emerged of tribesmen hurling spears and firing bow and arrows at an aircraft buzzing overhead

the deaths of his fellow tribespeople.

It is thought that he managed to survive when farmers and land grabbers killed and expelled indigenous Amazonians throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

They do not know his name or

the name of his tribe, but have worked to extend the area of his jungle home to 8,070 hectares so he can maintain his lifestyle.

An indigenous reserve known as Tanara was set up in the 1990s as part of moves to protect his territory.

WORLD

features

AfriSki, the skiing hub

Africa's 'bucket list' ski resort dreams of Olympic racers



A snowboarder performs a jump

Since 2002, Afriski in northeastern Lesotho has also become a hub for the country's young winter sports enthusiasts to hone their skills and maybe one day compete for gold at the Winter Olympics

AFP | Lesotho

Nestled high in the mountains of Lesotho, skiers and snowboarders from around the world rub shoulders at Africa's leading ski resort, which is cultivating a loyal clientele despite its diminutive size and remote location.

Since 2002, Afriski in northeastern Lesotho has also become a hub for the country's young winter sports enthusiasts to hone their skills and maybe one day compete for gold at the Winter Olympics.

"Afriski was always a unique option as a destination," said resort snowmaker Martin Schultz, 35, who comes from South African surfing hub Jeffreys Bay but swapped his surfboard for a snowboard to take to the slopes. "It's been a nice progress -- nice amounts of terrain we've been able to open up," he added, wearing stylish wrap-around blue mirrored sunglasses and a lemon yellow crash helmet.

Schultz is responsible for maintaining the quality and consistency of the artificial snow on the slopes, used by the 12,000 visitors who travel to the resort in the Maluti Mountains every season.

"We use high-pressure air, high-pressure water and a certain temperature and humidity," he said, of the resort's state-of-the-art snowmaking equipment, used when snow is not falling naturally.

Afriski's main kilometre-long piste is a strip of brilliant white

snow between brown grassy ridges and dotted with artificial snowmakers, although, on average, its three slopes are covered with natural snow for several weeks a year.

'Lesotho at the Olympics?'

Both expert and novice skiers go down the pristine slope from a height of 3,222 metres (10,570 feet) to the compact alpine-style resort below. There, visitors drink Gluehwein and listen to chart music in sub-zero temperatures.

"Ready? Go!" shouts one ski instructor, from the United States, as she loads her young charge onto the lift, while more experienced snowboarders spin and flip on ramps nearby.

Schultz, who worked as a ski instructor at resorts across Europe before spending nine seasons at Afriski, hopes the resort will help the tiny kingdom one day win medals at the Winter Olympics.

"One of Afriski's biggest priorities is to try and expand the skiing community in Lesotho and we have kids' programmes that generate a lot of interest from the local communities," he said, of the resort which employs 240 staff, three-quarters of whom are locals.

"Some of our kids like Thabang Mabari, the son of one of the guys who works here, has been skiing for about five years and he's brilliant. There's a good future for kids like that," he said.

"Hopefully in the future we can aim to get those kids to an Olympian standard so they can actually fly the Lesotho flag at the Olympics."

Ten-year-old Thabang's mother, Mathabang Mabari, who also works at the resort, told AFP that he had started skiing at the age of three.

"It's something he liked a lot. Of course it's in his blood to compete, of all the other kids of people who work here, he was



A ski instructor swirls fires ahead of a torchlight procession from the top of the main 1km slope

the first to ski and teach the others," said Mabari, 36, who is from the nearby village of Moteng.

Outside, slender-framed Thabang glides down the slope with ease dressed in yellow boots, a black puffer jacket and red snow trousers.

Despite some promising youngsters, southern Africa has yet to make a mark at the Winter

Olympics.

'Huge potential'

South African alpine skier Sive Speelman qualified for the Sochi games in 2014 -- but was blocked from attending by his own Games Committee who said he was too slow.

His dream to be his country's first black contender in his discipline was also thwarted at this year's tournament in South Korea and he was instead a technical assistant to South Africa's solitary winter games participant, Connor Wilson.

Lesotho has never put a Winter Olympian forward.

Afriski is Lesotho's sole ski resort -- the only other one in sub-Saharan Africa is Tiffindell in South Africa which has two runs and relies on artificial snow.

"Afriski has been a great help in my training. I don't think I would have got to the Winter Olympics without them," said Wilson, 21, who was training at Afriski for a fortnight.

"There's huge potential here. I always join in with the (local kids') training... they're copying what I'm doing and they are always interested.

"One day hopefully, they will go to the Winter Olympics for Lesotho."

Ski in Africa

Despite its small size and relatively limited facilities, Afriski still sees itself as a destination firmly on the global winter sports circuit.

It even pays homage to its European competitors, naming its chalets after renowned ski centres like France's "Meribel" and "Courchevel".

French ski and snowboard instructor Thomas Frontoni, 23, said that he would recommend skiing in southern Africa to Europeans despite the relatively short piste.

"Try it -- it's always beautiful, perfect views, friendly people. Southern Africa is cheap for European guys," said Frontoni, originally from Nice. A full-day "snowpass", which gives access to all the pistes and lifts, costs \$34 (29 euros).

"It's a small resort... but I think if a French or European skier came here they'd have a good time.

"I have seen lots of South African pupils, Argentine pupils, Canadian pupils."

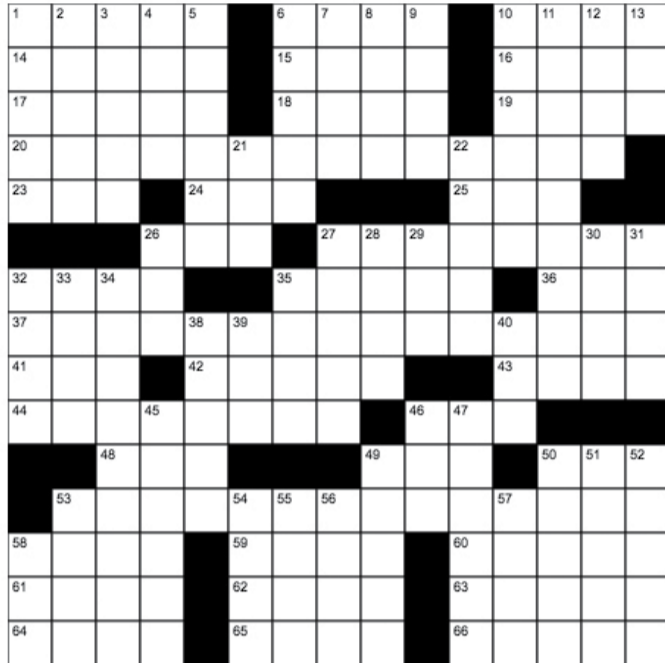
"They don't come here because it's a kilometre of skiing, they don't come here because it's massive mountains," added Schultz. "They come here to ski in Africa, because it's on their bucket list."



This general view shows the entrance to the 'Sky Restaurant' at Afriski

entertainment

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



else; 58- Yours, in Tours; 59- Rapper born Tracy Marrow; 60- Use a soapbox; 61- Fireplace opening; 62- Singer Perry; 63- Nostrils; 64- Throw; 65- ___ about; 66- Distributed cards;

Down

1- Vestige; 2- Chopper topper; 3- Foe; 4- Mild cheese; 5- Gaming tile; 6- The Hilton, e.g.; 7- At a distance; 8- Actress Talbot; 9- Bickering; 10- Prance; 11- Protein building block; 12- Dregs; 13- Naval rank, briefly; 21- Join a poker game; 22- "Peer Gynt" playwright; 26- Drops on the grass; 27- Brewery kilns; 28- Do ___ others...; 29- Get thee ___ nunnery; 30- Wife of a rajah; 31- Verge; 32- Bed-and-breakfasts; 33- Inside info; 34- Energetic; 35- "Believe" singer; 38- Pineapple fiber; 39- Golf prop; 40- Put on; 45- Mimics; 46- Flightless bird; 47- Donny or Marie; 49- Role player; 50- Stiller's partner; 51- Chip maker; 52- This is only ___; 53- WWII battle site; 54- Puerto ___; 55- Screen image; 56- Verne captain; 57- Scottish hillside; 58- Sternward;

Across

1- Cornered; 6- Mandlikova of tennis; 10- Racer Yarborough; 14- Sonata movement; 15- Think nothing ___; 16- Prayer ender; 17- First-stringers; 18- French actor Jacques; 19- Competes; 20- Sympathy; 23- Trick ending?; 24- Zilch; 25- Sis's sib; 26- Speck; 27- Win a "no blinking" contest; 32- ___ dixit; 35- Summer camp transport; 36- Structural engineer's software; 37- In spite of; 41- Neither here ___ there; 42- Take care of; 43- "Garfield" drooler; 44- Ghosts; 46- Great length of time; 48- Cambodia's Lon ___; 49- Early hrs.; 50- Actress Farrow; 53- Resting on something

BEETLE BAILEY



WORD OF THE DAY

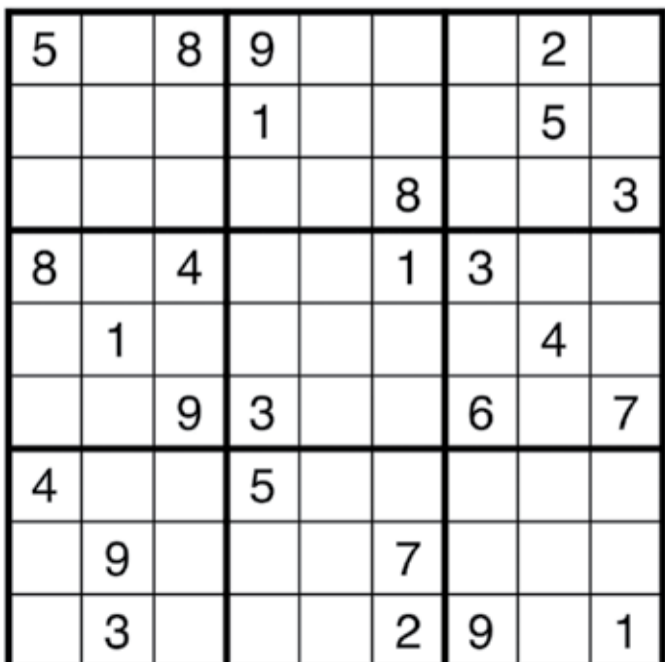
Paste

Definition:
1 : to strike hard at
2 : to beat or defeat soundly

Did You Know?

We're not talking about adhesives here: the paste of interest here came to be as an alteration of the word baste, which means "to beat severely or soundly." (This baste is unrelated to the two distinct baste homographs that mean "to sew with long stitches" and "to moisten while cooking.") The exact origin of baste is uncertain, but it probably comes from the Old Norse word beysta, meaning "to bruise, thrash, or flog." Baste was first seen in the 16th century, but paste didn't turn up in print until the mid-19th century, and it only recently acquired its "defeat" sense. Baste is now less popular than paste, though its relative lambaste ("to beat" or "to censure") is prevalent.

SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



How to play

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

YOUR STAR TODAY



Aries

Today, matters surrounding business and finances need immediate attention, and this could prove a bit disheartening. Do you have a lot of unfinished tasks that have piled up? Gear up and get to them.



Taurus

New opportunities to advance your professional standing may arise. The aspects bode well for business and money. Promising new projects may present themselves. Your tendency to serve and nurture others should strengthen your work relationships, so morale on the job takes a tangible upswing at this time.



Gemini

Restlessness may plague you throughout the day, because you could be brimming over with physical energy but have no outlet for it. You might have to stay in and wait for something important, which could prove frustrating. Put on an exercise video and do aerobics while you wait.



Cancer

Though current business and money matters could well encounter obstacles, at this time you may find yourself reaping the rewards of past efforts. Your naturally persevering nature practically assures more success in the future, even though you might be blocked now.



Leo

Today your powers of persuasion are at an all-time high. This is a good day to ask for a raise or promote a new project. Your drive to gain recognition for your accomplishments may necessitate seeking the public eye, so if publicity is what you need, this is the day to go for it.



Virgo

This day bodes well for accomplishments in business and finance. Long-term investments of either time or funds may finally pay off. New opportunities could come your way. This is a better time to complete old projects than start new ones, but if you must, new projects started now should be successful.



Libra

Your insight, creativity, and inventiveness are in full swing, and new ideas come thick and fast. However, you might find yourself too caught up in boring, mundane tasks to do very much about it. Yet physical energy is plentiful, so you have it in you to take care of chores and then have time to do what you enjoy.



Scorpio

As a natural healer, you might find yourself experiencing a rush of transformative energy today, which you should put into practice. This is a great time to go for a massage or study natural healing modalities such as herbs or aromatherapy.



Sagittarius

Be prepared to work diligently toward making your dreams a reality today. Success is definitely on the way, though it may not be approaching quite as quickly as you might like. A lot of significant letters and phone calls could come your way, keeping you busy. Don't allow yourself to get too frazzled, though.



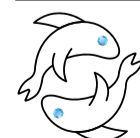
Capricorn

You could find it harder than usual to wake up this morning, as your energy may be flagging. Personal or professional pressures might stir feelings of futility, but don't fall into this trap. In spite of your momentary lethargy, everything on the horizon looks far better than it seems - primarily because of your own hard work.



Aquarius

Today it might suddenly hit you that you have a lot of unfinished tasks that need to be completed, and this might lead to a case of the blues. Take heart! The process appears more overwhelming than it is, Aquarius. A little planning and focused discipline should enable you to get through everything without stressing yourself out too much.



Pisces

Business and financial matters look promising today, but you could find yourself torn between the need to attend to these matters and the desire to relax at home. If you have to make a choice, it might be best to choose the former, because today's aspects promise opportunities that might not come around again for a while. The evening should be your own. Plan an intimate dinner with a lover. You'll like the results!

show

MAMMA MIA: HERE WE GO AGAIN

(ROMANTIC/COMEDY/DRAMA/MUSICAL) NEW
 LILY JAMES, AMANDA SEYFRIED, MERYL STREEP
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 11.30 AM + 2.00 + 4.30 + 7.00 + 9.30 PM + 12.00 MN + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)

DAILY AT (VIP I): 10.30 AM. + 1.00 + 3.30 + 6.00 + 8.30 + 11.00 PM.
SEEF (II) DAILY AT: (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)

SEEF (I) DAILY AT: 11.15 AM. + 1.45 + 4.15 + 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM.

SAAR DAILY AT: 10.45 AM. + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM.

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: 11.00AM. + 1.30 + 4.00 + 6.30 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM.

DHADAK

(HINDI/ROMANTIC/DRAMA) NEW
 ISHAAN KHATTAR, JHANVI KAPOOR, ASHUTOSH
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: FROM FRIDAY 20TH: 10.30 AM. + 1.00 + 3.45 + 6.30 + 9.15 + 12.00 MN.

SEEF (I) DAILY AT: FROM FRIDAY 20TH: 12.45 + 3.30 + 6.15 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM.

SAAR DAILY AT: FROM FRIDAY 20TH: 12.15 + 3.00 + 5.45 + 8.30 + 11.15 PM.

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: FROM FRIDAY 20TH: 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM.

GOTTI

(15+) (CRIME/DRAMA/BIOGRAPHY) NEW
 JOHN TRAVOLTA, SPENCER ROCCO LOFRANCO,
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 12.30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 11.30 AM. + 1.45 + 4.00 + 6.15 + 8.30 + 10.45 PM

SAAR DAILY AT: 9.15 + 11.30 PM.

THE DOMESTICS

(ACTION/CRIME/HORROR) NEW
 KATE BOSWORTH, TYLER HOECHLIN
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 10.45AM. + 3.00 + 7.15 + 11.30 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 2.30 + 7.00 + 11.30 PM.

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: 2.30 + 7.00 + 11.30 PM.

A PRAYER BEFORE DAWN

(ACTION/CRIME/BIOGRAPHY) NEW
 JOE COLE (VII), VITHAYA PANRINGARM
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 12.45 + 5.00 + 9.15 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM.

IN DARKNESS

(18+) (THRILLER/CRIME) NEW
 NATALIE DORMER, EMILY RATAJKOWSKI
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 12.30 + 4.30 + 8.30 PM. + (12.30 MN THURS,/FRI.)

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 11.00 AM. + 1.00 + 6.00 + 11.00 PM. + (1.00 AM THURS,/FRI)

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: 1.45 + 5.45 + 9.45 PM.

7-STILL/BORN

(15+) (HORROR/THRILLER) NEW
 CHRISTIE BURKE, JESSE MOSS, REBECCA OLSON
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 10.30 AM. + 2.30 + 6.30 + 10.30 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 2.15 + 6.45 + 11.15 PM.

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: 11.45 AM. + 3.45 + 7.45 + 11.45 PM.

BILLIONAIRE BOYS CLUB

(15+) (THRILLER/CRIME/BIOGRAPY) NEW
 TARON EGERTON, EMMA ROBERTS
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 2.45 + 7.15 + 11.45 PM.
SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 6.45 + 12.00 MN.

SKYSCRAPER

(PG-13) (ACTION/THRILLER/DRAMA)
 DWAYNE JOHNSON, NEVE CAMPBELL
CINECO (20) DAILY AT (IMAX 3D): 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM.

DAILY AT (VIP II): 11.45 AM. + 2.00 + 4.15 + 6.30 + 8.45 + 11.00 PM.

DAILY AT (ATMOS): 10.30 AM. + 12.45 + 3.00 + 5.15 + 7.30 + 9.45 + 12.00 MN.

DAILY AT: 10.30 AM + 12.45 + 3.00 + 5.15 + 7.30 + 9.45 PM + 12.00 MN + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: (1.00 AM THURS,/FRI.)

SEEF (I) DAILY AT: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM.

SAAR DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM.

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: 12 .30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM.

HOTELTRANSYLVANIA 3: SUMMER

(PG) (ANIMATION/COMEDY/DRAMA)
 ADAM SANDLER, ANDY SAMBERG
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 11.15 AM. + 1.30 + 3.45 + 6.00 + 8.15 + 10.30 PM.

DAILY AT (DUBBED IN ARABIC): 12.30 + 5.00 + 9.30 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM.

SAAR DAILY AT: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 PM.

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: 11.45 AM + 2.00 + 4.15 + 6.30 + 8.45 + 11.00 PM

ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

(PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)
 PAUL RUDD, EVANGELINE LILLY, MICHAEL PENA
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 11.15 AM. + 1.45 + 4.15 + 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM. + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 11.30 AM. + 2.00 + 4.30 + 7.00 + 9.30 + 12.00 MN.

WADI AL SAIL DAILY AT: 12.00 + 4.30 + 9.00 PM.

OCEAN'S EIGHT

(PG-15) (COMEDY/CRIME)
 SANDRA BULLOCK, CATE BLANCHETT
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 12.30 + 5.00 + 9.30 PM.

THE FIRST PURGE

(18+) (ACTION/CRIME/HORROR)
 MARISA TOMELI, LEX SCOTT DAVIS
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 10.45 AM + 12.45 + 2.45 + 4.45 + 6.45 + 8.45 + 10.45 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 11.00 AM. +1.00 + 3.00 + 5.00 + 7.00 + 9.00 + 11.00 PM.

THE ESCAPE PLAN 2: HADES

(PG-15) (ACTION/THRILLER)
 SYLVESTER STALLONE, DAVE BAUTISTA
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 + 12.00 MN.

JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM

(ACTION/ADVENTURE/THRILLER/SCI-FICTION)
 BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD, CHRIS PRATT
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 11.00 AM. + 1.30 + 4.00 + 6.30 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM.

SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 12.00 + 4.30 + 9.00 PM.

THE INCREDIBLES 2

(PG) (ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE)
 CRAIG T. NELSON, SAMUEL L. JACKSON
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 11.15 AM. + 3.45 + 8.15 PM.

DEADPOOL 2

(15+) (ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)
 RYAN REYNOLDS, JOSH BROLIN, MORENA
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 10.45 AM. + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM.

AL ABLA TAMTAM

(PG-13) (ARABIC/COMEDY)
 YASMIN ABDULAZIZ, HAMD ALMIRGHANI,
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 1.45 + 6.15 + 10.45 PM.

TAXI 5

(PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)
 MALIK BENTALHA, BERNARD FARCY, RAMZY
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 1.30 + 6.30 + 11.30 PM.

AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR

(PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE)
 KAREN GILLAN, ROBERT DOWNEY JR.
CINECO (20) DAILY AT: 10.30 AM. + 3.30 + 8.30 PM.

AMERICAN ANIMALS

(PG-15) (CRIME/DRAMA/COMEDY) NEW
 ANN DOWN, EVAN PETERS, BARRY KEOGHAN
SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 2.45 + 7.15 + 11.45 PM.

THE SHONKU DIARIES: A UNICORN ADVENTURE

(PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY) NEW
SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 10.30 AM. + 12.15 + 2.00 PM.

TEEFA IN TROUBLE

(PG-15) (URDU/ACTION/COMEDY/ROMANTIC) NEW
 ALI ZAFAR, MAYA ALI, MEHMOOD ASLAM
SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 3.45 + 9.00 PM.

17-SANJU

(PG-15) (HINDI/DRAMA/BIOGRAPHY)
 RANBIR KAPOOR, SONAM KAPOOR
SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 3.00 + 8.00 PM.

THE INCREDIBLES 2

(PG) (ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE)
 CRAIG T. NELSON, SAMUEL L. JACKSON, CATHERINE KEENER
SEEF (II) DAILY AT: 11.45 AM. + 4.15 + 8.45 PM.

NIRAALI

(MALAYALAM) NEW
 MOHANLAL, PARVATI NAIR, SURAJ
SEEF (I) DAILY AT: 11.00 AM. + 1.30 + 4.00 + 6.30 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM.

AL HAMRA DAILY AT: 12.00 + 3.00 + 6.00 + 9.00 PM + (12.00 MN THURS/FRI)

TAMIZH PADAM 2

(TAMIL)
 SHIVA ISHWARYA MENON, DISHA PANDEY
SEEF (I) DAILY AT: 11.30 AM. + 2.30 + 5.30 + 8.30 + 11.30 PM.

Zazie Beetz in Talks for Joker

Hollywoodreporter | London

Actress Zazie Beetz is moving from absurd superheros to a supervillain character drama.

The actress, who co-starred in Deadpool 2, is in talks to join Joaquin Phoenix in Joker, the stand-alone origin project from Warner Bros. and The Hangover helmer Todd Phillips.

Phoenix is portraying the DC Comics villain in a film that is more moderately budgeted and darker than the studio's other DC-based movies, known as the DC Cinematic Universe. The project is also described as more of a dark character study than a crime thriller, with Taxi Driver and The King of Comedy as the tonal watchwords.

While details of the Phillips- and Scott Silver-penned script are being kept under wraps, if a deal is made, Beetz would play a single mother who catches the interest of the man who will become the "clown prince



Zazie Beetz

of crime."

Joker is due to begin shooting in September in New York. The studio has set an Oct. 4, 2019, release date.

Beetz gained notices for her breakout work on FX's Don-

ald Glover-led series Atlanta. The show trampled her into high-profile movie roles, including the Deadpool sequel and Fox Searchlight's upcoming Noah Hawley sci-fi drama starring Natalie Portman.

'Powell is very hard-charging'

IAN S | Los Angeles

Actor Justin Theroux found stunt coordinator and second-unit director Gary Powell, who has worked in films including the James Bond and Bourne franchises, very hard-charging.

The two worked together in the action-thriller "The Spy Who Dumped Me".

"When you're watching a comedy you maybe think, 'Oh it's going to be a little bit softer, a little bit lighter', but Gary is actually very hard-charging. That is his style. There are a



Justin Theroux made his film debut in 1996 in Mary Harron's I Shot Andy Warhol



Justin Theroux

couple of shots, the car chase with the motorcycle that takes one of the hardest hits I've ever seen on film," Justin Theroux said in a statement.

The Lionsgate Production film also stars Mila Kunis and Kate McKinnon who get caught in an undercover agent trap after Mila Kunis' on-screen spy and former boyfriend dumps her.

Justin Bieber loses right to defend himself in court

IAN S | Los Angeles

Pop star Justin Bieber has lost the right to defend himself in court after blowing off depositions over his vandalism case.

According to court documents obtained by a website The Blast, the judge overseeing the pop star's battle with his former neighbour Jeff Schwartz has sanctioned Bieber for failing to sit for his deposition on multiple occasions.

Schwartz urged lawmakers to issue a warrant for the singer's arrest after Bieber skipped a deposition last month to hang out with his fiancée Hailey Baldwin here, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The judge declared that since Bieber had refused deposition requests, he will not be allowed to "testify on his own defence".

The jury will also be told that Bieber "refused to appear for



Justin Bieber

his deposition", and now it will be admitted as fact that Bieber is liable for the infamous 2014

egg attack on his ex-neighbour's home - and that he did so "with malice."

'We need positivity, goodwill toward'

IAN S | New York

Actor-comedian Ben Stiller, a newly named goodwill ambassador for UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), says a lot more needs to be done to stand in solidarity with, protect and support refugees in the "current climate".

As Hollywood fights to end family separation at the US border, Stiller took a trip to Guatemala from his "safe, comfortable home in New York". He wrote about it in a guest column for The Hollywood Reporter.



Ben Stiller

Stiller travelled with UNHCR over the past few years, visiting refugees in Germany and Jordan and meeting individuals caught up in the global refugee crisis firsthand. Then he was invited to become an official Goodwill Ambassador.

"While honoured to be asked to take on such a role, if I was being honest with myself, I was not quite sure what it actually meant. Yes, right now, we desperately need positivity and goodwill toward refugees, especially in our current climate.

SPORTS

sports

Heroin killed British rugby players in Sri Lanka: court

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Two English amateur rugby players had taken heroin just before their deaths while in Sri Lanka, a court was told Friday as it ordered the arrest of those responsible for selling the narcotics.

Concluding inquests into the deaths, Colombo Fort magistrate Lanka Jayaratne ruled that Thomas Howard, 25, died from heroin poisoning while Tom Baty, 26, overdosed.

Germany team doctor quits following WC flop

Berlin, Germany

Germany's long-serving team doctor Hans-Wilhelm Mueller-Wohlfahrt quit yesterday after 23 years in the job. Known fondly as 'Mull', the doctor is the first member of back-room staff to quit following the 2014 WC winners' shock exit.

Nibali in hospital after collision

L'Alpe d'Huez, France

Former champion Vincenzo Nibali was doubtful for the remainder of the Tour de France after a collision, allegedly with a police motorbike, on Alpe d'Huez left him nursing a "suspected broken vertebra". Nibali was chasing Frenchman Romain Bardet when he suddenly came crashing down four kilometres before the summit of the climb.

The biggest Volleyball show

19th Asian Men's U20 Championship begins today at Isa Sports City in Riffa



Officials during a technical meeting and coaches' Press conference held yesterday

- 24 nations from across the continent are competing in the event

- Matches begin at 11.30am and continue until the evening

- Games will be played simultaneously in two arenas at Isa Sports City

- Entrance for spectators is free and all are welcome

TDT | Manama

The stage is set for one of the biggest volleyball competitions in the world, the 19th Asian Men's U20 Championship, which gets underway today at Isa Sports City in Riffa.

An impressive field of 24 nations from across the continent are competing in the event, which is scheduled to go on for the entire week.

The tournament has been organised by the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) in cooperation with the Bahrain Volleyball

Battle is wide open, says Iran coach

Iran head coach Behrouz Ataie said that the battle for the title is wide open. Their junior national volleyball team are one of the pre-tournament favourites, having won the silver medals in the previous continental competition in 2016 and then being crowned champions in the FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship last year, in a tournament also held in Bahrain.

But as this year's Asian showcase, Ataie prefers not to live by the favourites tag, even with nine players returning from the squad that won the 2017 world title. "The thing about Asia is there are many tough teams, even from the small countries, and then we have the big teams like Japan and Korea, and some Arab teams, who are always fighting at the top," Ataie said today.

"Our main goal in this competition is to finish in the top two and qualify for the FIVB Men's U21 World Champion-

ship next year, that is what we are thinking about."

This tournament marks only the second time this year that more than 16 nations are taking part in an AVC event, and it will also be the first time a new competition format, proposed by the AVC, is set to be used.

"It's great to see 24 teams here competing in this championship," said Australia head coach Marty Collins. "It really shows the wide region we are playing in."

Mixed opinions

There were mixed opinions, however, with the new format for the championship. One of the coaches said he was in favour of the change, explaining that it gave teams more of a chance of qualifying past the first round. Others, like Ataie, however, were not as enthusiastic for the new format, as it segregated the strong teams from the weaker ones, and he expects it to be altered once again in the near future.

Preliminary Round

Division One:

Pool A1 : China, Iran and South Korea
Pool B1 : Japan, Thailand and Turkmenistan
Pool C1 : Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan and Australia
Pool D1 : Bahrain, Iraq and Qatar

Division Two:

Pool A2 : Chinese Taipei, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia
Pool B2 : Hong Kong, Jordan and the UAE
Pool C2 : India, New Zealand and

Uzbekistan

Pool D2 : Macau, Maldives and Malaysia

Today's matches

(in order of Time, Court 1 game, Court 2 game)

11.30am: Taipei vs Saudi Arabia, India vs Uzbekistan
2pm: Thailand vs Japan, Maldives vs Malaysia
4.30pm: China vs Iran, Jordan vs Hong Kong
7pm: Bahrain vs Iraq, Sri Lanka vs Kazakhstan

Association. It is being held under the patronage of His Majesty the King's Charity Works and Youth Affairs Representative, Supreme Council for Youth and Sports Chairman and Bahrain Olympic Committee President Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

A general technical preparatory meeting was held at Golden Tulip Hotel in Manama.

In attendance were the tournament's Control Committee President Saeed Derakhshandeh, International Referee Chang Chin Jong, Local Organising Committee Executive Director Jihad Khalfan, and officials from all the participating national teams.

Khalfan relayed the greetings of BVA President Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Al Khalifa to all participating teams, and wished them all the best for the championship.

The rules of the tournament were also discussed along with other relevant formalities, and the teams were given a chance to voice any concerns heading into the start of play.

The tournament's team of international referees was also introduced, as were the medical and media delegates.

A Press conference followed, with the participation of several of the head coaches of the participating nations.

Philippines to create history at Brave 14 in Morocco

TDT | Manama

Jeremy Pacatiw has signed the contract to compete at Brave 14 hosted in Omnisports indoor club of Tangier, Morocco on 18th August 2018. Pacatiw who trains at Team Lakay will become the first fighter from the Philippines to compete at an event by the global promotion hosted in the continent of Africa. Brave 14 has materialised as an initiative under His Highness Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain and under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

Pacatiw will face Keith Lee from the United States of America. Born in Detroit, Michigan, United States, Lee had an undefeated amateur career prior making his 5 fight professional career. Keith Lee is the brother of the high profile UFC fighter, Kevin Lee. Pacatiw will be competing in a top priority bout to bounce back from the



Jeremy Pacatiw

losses suffered in his career. Currently, Jeremy Pacatiw is the fighter from the Philippines with the most number of appearances at Brave Combat Federation.

Pacatiw had suffered recent losses

after making a statement by defeating two of the top talent from India and Brazil where he gains wins over Chaitanya Gavali and Diego Coleta. Pacatiw fights in the bantamweight division which is dominated by the champion, Stephen Loman from Team Lakay, Philippines.

"The bout will be highly competitive and will showcase two of the most promising talent with contrasting styles. Athletes from the Philippines have displayed heart, commitment and skills which make them integral when Brave Combat Federation takes over the responsibility to bring the first-ever global mixed martial arts event to the continent of Africa. This is also an opportunity to give a platform for athletes to showcase their skills around the world and to bring the martial arts community spread around the world closer", said Mohammed Shahid, President of Brave Combat Federation.

AC Milan back in Europa League

Lausanne, Switzerland

The world's top sports court on Friday overturned a European ban imposed on AC Milan for violating UEFA's financial fair play rules, calling the punishment "not proportionate." UEFA banned Milan from playing

in next season's Europa League citing the club's failure to meet the "break-even requirement," which bars clubs from taking on debt to fund daily operations. But the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that "some important elements have not been properly assessed," by UEFA judges.



Spin Maharaj tames the Lankan lions

● **Record eight-wicket haul helped South Africa fight back**

● **At stumps, the hosts were 277 for nine**

● **Sri Lanka, who won the first Test in Galle**

Colombo | Sri Lanka

Spinner Keshav Maharaj thanked his lucky stars as well as the pitch yesterday after his record eight-wicket haul helped South Africa fight back on the opening day of the second Test against Sri Lanka.

"I think it was written in the

stars by God that things worked out this way," Maharaj said after his 8-116, the best figures for a South African spinner in a first innings anywhere, in addition to his own personal record.

"I think I did get a little bit of assistance off the wicket. It is a little bit different here than in Galle, because the ball skids on. There's a chance of getting LBWs and also the top edge when the batsman sweeps."

At stumps, the hosts were 277 for nine at Colombo's Sinhalese Sports Club Ground, giving the Proteas hope they can avoid their first series defeat to Sri Lanka since 2006 after their drubbing in the first Test in Galle.

The left-arm Maharaj's first eight-for in 22 Tests hurt Sri Lanka with regular strikes after a 116-run opening stand between Danushka Gunathilaka, who hit 57, and Dimuth Karunaratne, who made 53.

Sri Lanka, who won the first Test in Galle, had elected to bat first in their bid to clinch the two-match series. Akila Dananjaya, on 16, and Rangana Herath, on 5, hung on until the close of play.

The islanders started on the right foot with Gunathilaka and Karunaratne mixing caution and aggression to keep the South African bowlers at bay on 93-0 at lunch.

The left-handed duo reached



South Africa's Keshav Maharaj celebrates after he dismissed Sri Lanka's Dhananjaya de Silva

their respective half-centuries just after lunch but fell to Maharaj's guile soon after.

Maharaj, South Africa's only regular spinner, got Karunaratne caught behind with a drifting delivery down the leg side. He got Gunathilaka in his very next over. And in the last session, he came out all guns blazing as the hosts lost six wickets with only Dhananjaya de Silva putting up some resistance with his 60-run knock.

Paceman Kagiso Rabada was

the only other bowler to pick up a wicket, dismissing Roshen Silva for 22.

The hosts, led by Suranga Lakmal, are without regular captain Dinesh Chandimal, who is suspended for the series over a ball-tampering charge. Coach Chandika Hathurusingha and manager Asanka Gurusinha have also been banned over the case.

Maharaj said though that he was not focused on personal records -- not yet anyway.

Peter Sagan strikes again



Slovakia's Peter Sagan, wearing the best sprinter's green jersey, celebrates as he crosses the finish line

AFP | Valence, France

Slovakian Peter Sagan underlined his sprint credentials for the third time on the Tour de France yesterday after powering to victory in the 13th stage from Bourg d'Oisans to Valence.

Sagan, of the Bora team, is one of the few real sprint specialists still in the race after surviving an Alpine stage trilogy that proved fatal to the hopes of rivals Mark Cavendish, Marcel Kittel, Andre Greipel, Dylan Groenewegen and Fernando Gaviria.

All the aforementioned exited the race over two tough days in the Alps, and Sagan -- who had won two stages on this edition so far -- was quick to capitalise.

"It was very beautiful to win today after three days in the Alps," said Sagan, whose 11th stage win on the race helped take his tally in the points competition to 398 points.

Norwegian Alexander Kristoff (UAE), who finished a close second, has 170 while Frenchman Arnaud Demare, of Groupama, has 133.

"I was on the wheel of (Alexander) Kristoff, then I made my move. But it wasn't easy for me. "The team did a great job, but in the last kilometre I was maybe in 20th or 25th position, so I had to sprint to get back up to the front."

Sagan was given extra work after Belgian upstart Philippe Gilbert (Quick Step) brazenly attacked a leading peloton full of ambitious sprinters 930 metres from the line. But Sagan, and his rivals didn't flinch.

They kept the pace high and one-day classics specialist Gilbert was caught, much to his dismay, with 245m remaining.

The Groupama team of Demare, as well as Kristoff's UAE outfit had been key in chasing down a relatively tame four-man breakaway in the closing kilometres of the race.

But the Frenchman came up short when it came to payback.

He launched his burst first, but, as Kristoff and Sagan came

standings

Class standings after the 13th stage of the Tour de France, a 169.5km ride from Le Bourg-d'Oisans to Valence

Points:

1. Peter Sagan (SVK/BOR) 398 pts
2. Alexander Kristoff (NOR/EAU) 170
3. Arnaud Dømare (FRA/FDJ) 133
4. John Degenkolb (GER/TRE) 128

5. Andrea Pasqualon (ITA/WGG) 100

Team overall:

1. Movistar 160 h 28:10.
2. Sky at 4:03.
3. LottoNL 12:06.
4. Bahrain 25:39.
5. AG2R La Mondiale 47:02.
6. Astana 52:16.
7. Giant 1 h 05:45.
8. Mitchelton 1 h 37:17.
9. BMC 1 h 40:17.
10. Katusha 1 h 44:47.

up on his left, Demare ran out of juice. "I thought I was going to win, I started my sprint well but I came up short. Sagan was too strong," he said.

Sagan now has one hand on a sixth green jersey, and one eye now on winning the final stage to the Champs Elysees.

But the 28-year-old Slovakian star, who on Thursday announced his impending divorce from his wife Katarina, won't be performing any of his trademark wheelies just yet.

The 14th stage is a difficult and technical ride over 188 km starting in Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. Although Sky will be hoping to keep powder dry for the crucial third week,

Froome said rivals could try to steal time on the steep, 3km-long climb to finish in Mende.

2nd Test scoreboard

Sri Lanka

D. Gunathilaka c Rabada b Maharaj	57
D. Karunaratne c de Kock b Maharaj	53
D. de Silva lbw b Maharaj	60
K. Mendis c Rabada b Maharaj	21
A. Mathews c du Plessis b Maharaj	10
R. Silva b Rabada	22
N. Dickwella c du Plessis b Maharaj	5
D. Perera c Ngidi b Maharaj	17
A. Dananjaya not out	16
S. Lakmal c Markram b Maharaj	0
R. Herath not out	5
Extras (lb2, nb1, w8)	11
Total (9 wickets, 86 overs)	277

Zaman hits Pakistan's first ODI 200

● **Fakhar hits record double ton**

AFP | Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Fakhar Zaman became the first Pakistan player to hit a double century in one-day internationals as Pakistan crushed Zimbabwe by 244 runs to go 4-0 up in their one-day series yesterday.

Zaman smashed 210 not out from 156 deliveries, moving past the previous record for a Pakistan batsman set by Saeed Anwar with his 194 more than 21 years ago.

That wasn't the only record to tumble.

Pakistan's openers blazed a world record 304-run stand, with Imam-ul-Haq hitting 113, the triple hundred partnership becoming Pakistan's biggest for

any wicket in ODIs.

It also broke the previous record for an opening stand in all

internationals, set by Sanath Jayasuriya and Upal Tharanga for Sri Lanka against England

Scoreboard

Fourth one-day international

Pakistan

I. ul Haq c Musakanda b W Masakadza	113
F. Zaman not out	210
A. Ali not out	50
Extras (b4, lb5, w17)	26
Total (1 wkt, 50 overs)	399
Did not bat: B Azam, S Malik, S Ahmed, F Ashraf, S Khan, Y Shah, J Khan, U Khan	

Fall of wickets: 1-304 (ul Haq)

Bowling: Muzarabani 10-0-77-0 (3w); Ngarava 7-0-65-0 (1w); Tiripano 10-0-85-0 (3w); Chisoro 10-0-56-0 (2w); W Masakadza 10-0-78-1 (6w); H Masakadza 3-0-29-0

Zimbabwe (all out, 42.4 overs) 155

Result: **Pakistan won by 244 runs**

Johnson sets the pace

AFP | Carnoustie, United Kingdom

Former champion Zach Johnson survived miserable conditions and birdied the 18th for the second day running to seize the clubhouse lead at the British Open, but Tommy Fleetwood and Rory McIlroy also excelled at Carnoustie yesterday.

The 42-year-old Johnson, who won the Claret Jug at St Andrews in 2015, followed his 69 in the first round with a second-round 67 in the rain, as he moved to six under par for the tournament.

He recovered from a bogey at the first hole of his morning round with five birdies and no more dropped shots after that to lead by a stroke in the clubhouse from Fleetwood.

"The reverence I have for this championship and specifically that trophy, that Claret Jug, I'm not suggesting that someone doesn't have a higher reverence for it, but I'd argue with them," said Iowa native Johnson, who had made the cut at 11 straight Opens before this one.

"I'm not going to sit here and say, man, I just love playing in the wind and rain because I don't, but I can do it, you know." Fleetwood, who was raised



England's Tommy Fleetwood plays from the rough

on links golf, had briefly surged to the top of the leaderboard at the end of his second round, starting the day one over par before shooting a brilliant six-under-par 65 to go to five-under overall.

That put him level with overnight leader Kevin Kisner of the United States, who went out in the afternoon looking to benefit from calmer, drier weather.

Fleetwood also capped his round with a birdie at the difficult 18th hole on the Scottish

links. That was his sixth birdie of a round that was not blemished by a single bogey, with the 27-year-old showing how comfortable he is at a venue where he holds the course record following a 63 at last year's Dunhill Championship.

Now right in contention, Fleetwood is dreaming of becoming the first English golfer to lift the Claret Jug since Nick Faldo in 1992.

"If I could pick one tournament in my life to win, it would

be The Open," admitted Fleetwood, who was unable to properly challenge in last year's Open on his home course at Royal Birkdale.

"We are only halfway through the tournament unfortunately. You've got 36 holes to go but there's no point thinking about the end game."

McIlroy went out shortly before 8am and shot his second successive 69 to go to four-under for the tournament, alongside South Africa's Erik van Rooyen in sitting two shots off the clubhouse lead.

The Northern Irishman, looking for his first major since 2014, had four birdies for the day as well as dropped shots at the 13th and 14th holes, and was happy with his effort.

"In those conditions I would've taken that score today going out. It wasn't that bad, but it was just damp enough and cold enough that the game plan that I was trying to adapt to be aggressive and hit driver a lot, I just couldn't do it," he said.

"There is still a long way to go, but I'm in a great position going into the third day."

Woods fails to ignite

However, it is looking a little less likely that this tournament will finally be the one where

Tiger Woods ends his decade-long major drought, as he shot a second straight even-par round of 71.

"I played a little bit better yesterday. Today wasn't quite as good," he admitted, before insisting: "It will be a pretty packed leaderboard, and I'm certainly right there in it."

At least he will be here for the weekend, in contrast to world number one Dustin Johnson, whose underwhelming 72 leaves him six over par for the tournament. The last world number one to miss the Open cut was England's Luke Donald at Royal St George's seven years ago.

Ireland's Padraig Harrington, who won the last Open here in 2007, is eight-over and will also miss the cut, along with Spain's Sergio Garcia, who he beat in a play-off 11 years ago and is four-over now.



US golfer Zach Johnson reacts after making a birdie putt on the 18th green

Brighton sign Tau



Percy Tau

London, United Kingdom

Brighton signed South Africa star Percy Tau from Mamelodi Sundowns on Friday, with the Premier League club set to send the forward on loan for the coming season.

Tau agreed a four-year contract with the Seagulls after emerging as the hottest prospect in South Africa.

The 24-year-old striker is the first South African in the English Premier League since Steven Pienaar, who left Sunderland in 2017 after spells with Everton and Tot-

tenham.

Tau has made 12 international appearances for South Africa, scoring five goals, and was the country's player of the season in 2017-18.

"This move should help me play more international football," Taus said. "I'll be learning a lot, which will also be good for my country. 'Hopefully I can make some great memories here - I love making memories and I'm so happy to be here.'"

Tau won the South African title twice with Sundowns, as a fringe player in 2014 but as a regular last season.

Marseille snap up Caleta-Car

Marseille, France

Croatian central defender Duje Caleta-Car has signed a five-year contract with French club Marseille for an undisclosed fee, the club announced Friday.

A member of the Croatian squad which lost to France in the World Cup final on July 15, Caleta-Car, 21 moves to Marseille after playing four seasons for Austria's Red Bull Salzburg.

Media reports said Marseille paid around 20 million



Duje Caleta-Car

Euros for the powerful young centre back who helped the Swiss side reach the semi-finals of the Europa League last season.

Caleta-Car made his World Cup debut for Croatia in their third group match against Iceland.

Lamela in Tottenham until 2022

London, United Kingdom

Erik Lamela became the latest Tottenham star to sign a new contract as the Argentine playmaker agreed a four-year deal with the north London club yesterday.

Lamela's new terms will keep him at Tottenham until 2022 as he followed in the footsteps of Son Heung-min and Harry Kane, who have also signed improved deals since the end of last season.

"We are delighted to announce that Erik Lamela has signed a new contract with the Club, which will run until 2022," a statement on Tottenham's website said.

Lamela made his comeback from injury last November and went on to make 33 appearances, scoring four goals including a brace on the final day of the season against Leicester.



Erik Lamela

The 26-year-old joined Tottenham from Roma in 2013 and has since scored 23 goals in 154 appearances.

Lamela has 23 caps and three goals at international level for Argentina since making his debut in 2011.

He began his pre-season with a first-half hat-trick in Tottenham's friendly against Southampton and will be part of the club's pre-season tour of the United States.

Chelsea prepare for life under Sarri

Perth, Australia

Chelsea players have backed new manager Maurizio Sarri's plan for a more fluid and attacking brand of football starting with Monday's pre-season friendly against Perth Glory in Australia.

Sarri, who was appointed on a three-year deal following Antonio Conte's sacking last week, said he didn't know what to expect from his new side in their first outing under him.

"We started only four days ago. So I hope to do the best. But I don't know how is our best at the moment," Sarri told reporters in Perth on Friday.

Sarri has vowed to bring flowing football to Chelsea, and that's music to the ears of Spanish international midfielder Cesc Fabregas.



Maurizio Sarri

"It's a way of football that I believe in, that I really like, that I grew up in this system," Fabregas said.

"For the type of player like myself, we can take a lot of advantage."

Fabregas, who is in Australia along with David Luiz, Pedro and new signing Jorginho,

Neymar staying at PSG

Sao Paulo, Brazil



Brazilian superstar Neymar on Thursday sought to quash speculation about his future, insisting he planned to remain with French giants Paris Saint-Germain.

"I'm staying, I'm staying in Paris, I have a contract," Neymar told reporters at an auction to raise money for his charitable foundation in Sao Paulo.

Neymar, who became the world's most expensive footballer last year after moving to PSG from Barcelona in a record \$264 million deal, has repeatedly been linked to a move to Real Madrid.

The European champions have issued a series of statements denying they have an interest in signing the 26-year-old striker. Speculation of a Neymar move to the Bernabeu has intensified in the wake of Cristiano Ronaldo's shock move to Juventus, a development that has left a vacancy at Madrid for an elite, superstar player.

Liverpool gets Alisson

Liverpool, United Kingdom

Liverpool on Thursday signed Brazil goalkeeper Alisson from Roma in a world record deal valued at 72.5 million euros by the Italian club.

"The 25-year-old signed a long-term contract with the Reds after undergoing a medical and completing the formalities of his switch at (training centre) Melwood today," said the Liverpool website.

Roma confirmed the value of the transfer for Alisson who featured at the World Cup in Russia.

Verstappen fastest

Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen steers his car during the second free practice session



The Dutchman clocks an outright circuit lap record and fastest lap at German GP practice

Hoffenheim, Germany

Max Verstappen believes he can improve and challenge for pole position after clocking an outright lap record as Red Bull topped the times in Friday's practice for the German Grand Prix.

The young Dutchman recorded a best lap of one minute and 13.085 seconds to outpace Lewis Hamilton by 0.026 seconds with Valtteri Bottas third, in the second Mercedes.

They were quickest ahead of championship leading Sebastian Vettel, who forecast a three-way scrap for pole, and his Ferrari team-mate Kimi Raikkonen.

"It's usual that Mercedes and Ferrari go faster on Saturday, but we can still improve and so I hope we can be close. Let's see what happens," said Verstappen.

On a sweltering afternoon at the Hockenheimring, with an air temperature of 31 degrees Celsius and the track at 50 degrees, most of the session was used for evaluating tyre performance.

"The weather is amazing," said Hamilton, a day after penning a new two-year deal with Mercedes. "It's very hot, which makes it very demanding and physical in the car. It's quite a technical track even though it is a pretty short circuit.

"We've got through our programme and got all the information we needed from the tyres. The car was feeling good, but it is very close, so there's lots of work to do tonight.

"We've been working on our starts, making sure to get a better understanding of the tyres and tyre temperatures and trying to be as perfect as we can in that area."

Vettel and Ferrari appeared to



Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen

be content with their performance as they were close to the pace of the leading cars and comfortably clear of sixth placed Romain Grosjean and his Haas team-mate Kevin Magnussen, both powered by Ferrari.

Vettel said it all indicated a very close battle for pole.

"Yeah, especially for one lap," he said, of the relative speeds of the leading teams.

"I haven't seen much of the Red Bulls on the long run, but one lap it definitely is. It seems very close.

"I think it will be crucial to have a solid day tomorrow (Saturday) and a good result. It always helps and that is what we will try to do."

Vettel has never won at his 'home' Hockenheim circuit, which is only half an hour from his family home at Heppenheim, but hopes he can also improve.

"We need to see what we find and how we were compared to others. I think we are still missing a little bit in terms of one-lap performance, I think we can improve," he said.

Bottas said he felt relieved that the speculation over his place at Mercedes alongside Hamilton was now over.

"It's always nice when it's official," he said. "I think, honestly, that never in my career so far, I've known at this point already for next year so that's positive.

"I think it's really good that we can both, me and Lewis, focus on the rest of the year. I think it's going to be a tough battle between two or maybe three teams."

Monegasque rising star Charles Leclerc, widely tipped to be a target for Ferrari next season, was eighth in his Ferrari-engined Sauber ahead of Nico Hulkenberg of Renault and Esteban Ocon of Force India.

Australian Daniel Ricciardo, who upstaged Hamilton by going fastest in the morning, finished 13th in the second Red Bull after focussing on race performance because he is due to start from the back of the grid due to penalties for taking new engine parts.

Second Practice

Driver	Team	Fastest Lap
1	Red Bull	1:13.085
2	Mercedes	1:13.111
3	Mercedes	1:13.190
4	Ferrari	1:13.310
5	Ferrari	1:13.427
6	Haas	1:13.973
7	Haas	1:14.189
8	Sauber	1:14.374
9	Renault	1:14.496
10	Force India	1:14.508

First Practice

Driver	Team	Fastest Lap
1	Red Bull	1:13.525
2	Mercedes	1:13.529
3	Red Bull	1:13.714
4	Ferrari	1:13.796
5	Mercedes	1:13.903
6	Ferrari	1:14.267
7	Haas	1:14.691
8	Haas	1:14.853
9	Sauber	1:15.097
10	Renault	1:15.282

Bottas to stay

Hockenheim, Germany

Mercedes confirmed yesterday that Valtteri Bottas will continue as team-mate to Lewis Hamilton for at least another year. A day after announcing that defending four-time champion Hamilton had agreed a two-year blockbuster contract extension keeping him at Mercedes until 2020, the team said they had retained Finn Bottas for next year with an option for 2020.

"I'm really pleased," said



Bottas

Bottas. "I love working with this team, I love the team spirit, the atmosphere in the team and everyone is pushing so hard for the results.

"I will keep doing all my best to achieve those results. I will give 100 per cent as always."

Team chief Toto Wolff said: "Valtteri's performances have been excellent this season and, if not for our mistakes and his misfortune, he could be leading the drivers' championship.

"When we took the decision in favour of Valtteri for 2019, it wasn't just about his undoubted speed and work ethic, but also a question of character.

"His relationship with the team, including Lewis, is open and trusting, without any politics at all. Those are the ingredients you need when you're fighting strong rivals in both championships and they mirror the values inside the team."

Ricciardo upstages Hami in opening practice

Hockenheim, Germany

Daniel Ricciardo upstaged Lewis Hamilton to top the times for Red Bull in Friday's opening free practice.

The Australian, who is likely to start at the back of the grid after collecting grid penalties for three new power-unit parts, clocked a best lap in one minute and 13.525 to outpace the defending four-time champion's Mercedes by just 0.004 seconds.

Ricciardo's Red Bull team-mate, Dutchman Max Verstappen, was third, nearly two-tenths off the pace, ahead of championship leader and local hero Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari and Finns Valtteri Bottas, in the second Mercedes, and Kimi Raikkonen, in the second Ferrari.

Shortly before the session, Bottas was confirmed as staying at Mercedes next year to partner Hamilton, whose own

bumper two-year contract extension to the end of 2020 was announced on Thursday.

Frenchman Romain Grosjean was seventh ahead of his Haas team-mate Dane Kevin Magnussen, Monegasque Charles Leclerc of Sauber and German Nico Hulkenberg of Renault.



It's usual that Mercedes and Ferrari go faster on Saturday, but we can still improve and so I hope we can be close. Let's see what happens

MAX VERSTAPPEN



Australian Red Bull racing driver Daniel Ricciardo

There were no major incidents in a relatively quiet session that saw five Ferrari-powered cars finish in the top ten. Ricciardo's success meant Hamilton's mini-run of being fastest in the previous three Friday opening sessions was ended.