

Kylie, Travis are planning a family vacation

Reality TV personality Kylie Jenner and her beau and rapper Travis Scott are planning a family trip to focus on their relationship. **P14**

Who will speak out for the forgotten women of conflict?

THE DAILY **tribune**

Emilia Clarke 'overwhelmed' by fans support after opening up about aneurysms

WORLD 5 Thai junta takes shock lead

Massacre in Mali

Bamako

Armed men reportedly dressed as traditional hunters have killed 134 people, including women and children, during an attack on a village in central Mali.

A further 55 civilians were hurt in the attack in Ogoossagou in the Mopti region.

The region's Fulani ethnic community is frequently targeted and accused of having ties to jihadist organisations in the area, according to the UN.

The Malian government said it "reiterates its determination to make every effort to hunt down the perpetrators of this barbarity of another age and to punish them, in accordance with the laws in force".

The Mopti region of Mali has seen repeated instances of violence in recent months. Several soldiers were killed in Dioura last week, while 10 people from the Dogon community were killed in an attack on the village of Gondogourou in February.

A UN spokesperson said the organisation's secretary general António Guterres was "shocked and outraged" by Saturday's attack.

Blast kills eight

Cairo

Sudanese officials say eight children have been killed in an explosion near a military facility where they were searching for scrap metal to resell.

The officials say the explosion happened Saturday in Omdurman, the twin city of the capital, Khartoum.

The Central Committee of Sudan Doctors, an independent professional union, says seven children died at the scene and the eighth succumbed to wounds in a hospital.



03 Man held for torturing dog

Illegal parking near Red Bus stands 'leading to accidents'

04

06 Yildirim squares up for Istanbul election battle

Expansion on track

HRH Crown Prince reviews the progress of the Bahrain Airport Expansion Project

● **HRH the Crown Prince highlighted the important contribution Bahrain's skilled workforce makes in expanding national assets for future generations.**

● **HRH the Crown Prince toured different parts of the project, including the new main passenger terminal.**

Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister yesterday visited the Bahrain International Airport to review the progress of the Airport Expansion Project.

Upon arrival, HRH the Crown Prince was welcomed by Deputy Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, and other senior government officials.

HRH the Crown Prince toured different parts of the project, including the new main passenger terminal which stretches across 210,000 square metres.

Once fully completed, the expansion project will increase the airport's annual passenger capacity from nine million to 14 million, introduce 25 MARS airbridges and a state-of-the-art automated Early Baggage Storage (EBS) system, as well as a multi-storey car park enough for an additional 2,700 vehicles.

HRH the Crown Prince also reviewed the progress of the National Air Traffic Management Program (ORAT), which was recently introduced to ensure seamless operations across



HRH the Crown Prince tours to review the projects with ministers and senior government officials.

the airport's new facilities and terminal.

During the visit, HRH the Crown Prince highlighted that, in line with HM the King's vision to advance prosperity and development, the expansion will provide significant job opportunities for citizens, including a bespoke training programme (Tahleeq) designed to hone the skills of Bahrainis managing airport operations.

HRH the Crown Prince also highlighted the important contribution Bahrain's skilled workforce makes in expanding national assets for future generations and added that their dedication and commitment have been central to the success of the expansion project.

14 million will be the increased passenger capacity of the airport once the expansion projects are completed.

HRH the Crown Prince emphasised the importance of investing in local transport projects and stressed that the expansion will put the International Airport at the centre of Bahrain's advanced logistics sector.

HRH the Crown Prince not-

ed that Bahrain is committed to making the best use of this national asset to bolster its pioneering role as a regional hub for businesses looking to tap into the region's diverse market.

The Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications, Kamal Ahmed, expressed his thanks and gratitude for HRH the Crown Prince's visit, saying that the visit reflects HRH the Crown Prince's commitment to advancing Bahrain's thriving logistics sector.

He also took the opportunity to highlight the ongoing progress of the new passenger terminal and noted that the launch of the new terminal remains on schedule.

Call to take back militants

Damascus

Syria's Kurds warned yesterday that the thousands of foreign militants they have detained in their fight against the Daesh group are a time-bomb the international community urgently needs to defuse.

Speaking a day after Kurdish-led forces announced the final demise of the militants' physical "caliphate," the Kurdish administration's top foreign affairs official Abdel Karim Omar warned that its foreign captives still pose a threat.

"There are thousands of fighters, children and women and from 54 countries, not including Iraqis and Syrians, who are a serious burden and danger for us and for the international community," Omar said.



There are thousands of foreign fighters, who are a serious burden and danger for us and for the international community.

KARIM OMAR

"Numbers increased massively during the last 20 days of the Baghouz operation," he said, referring to the village by the Euphrates where diehard militants made a bloody last stand.

The fate of foreign Daesh fighters has become a major issue as the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces closed in on the once-sprawling proto-state the militants declared in 2014.

DRUGS MENACE

Two female students suspended for 'selling drugs at school'

● **The report went viral on social media after a psychologist threw light on the incident.**

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Zafran

Two female students have been suspended from a school in the Southern Governorate for allegedly distributing drugs to classmates.

The accused, both 13 years old, have confessed to committing the act, sources said.

"These students are accused of bringing drugs to school and selling it to classmates, which was confirmed by the authorities there. There have also been allegations of some students engaging in prostitution, but there are no substantive evidences," the sources added.

Meanwhile, a representative of the Ministry of Education said that an investigative committee has been formed to probe into the incident.

"A decision has been taken considering the seriousness of the issue. Two students have been suspended but they will be able to write the exam," the ministry said.

"The ministry will take every step



A decision has been taken considering the seriousness of the issue. Two students have been suspended but they will be able to write the exam.

EDUCATION MINISTRY

to ensure the safety of the students," it added.

The ministry added that the students can adopt homeschooling even after their suspension.

The report went viral on social media after a psychologist threw light into the

incident. Subsequently, netizens shared a hashtag on the need to spread awareness against the use of drugs at schools.

"Authorities need to take note immediately. This is our future generation, for God's sake," a tweet said.

Speaking to Tribune, Dr Fawzi Abdulrahman Al Jowder, Undersecretary for Educational and Curricula Affairs said that a four-member investigation committee is probing into the issue.

"All those involved have been questioned. Action was taken based on the findings of the committee. The ministry does not wish to publish the names of the students as it could tarnish the reputation of the families of these students," the official added.





His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa yesterday paid a field visit to the Sanabis village and Maroozan area, where he was informed about the service and development projects he had ordered in the region. HRH the Prime Minister was keen to follow up on the needs of the Sanabis and Maroozan region regarding services and facilities, and gave directives to meet them. During the tour, HRH the Premier stressed that the efforts of the government focus on ensuring that all regions across the kingdom enjoy the services and facilities that achieve their comfort. HRH the Prime Minister exchanged talks with the Sanabis and Maroozan region's citizens, and listened to their needs and requirements.



Southern Governor Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa yesterday arrived in Tokyo on an official visit at the invitation of the Japanese Government. He was received on arrival at Narita International Airport in Tokyo by Bahraini Ambassador to Japan Ahmed Al Dosari, Japanese Ambassador to Bahrain Hideki Ito, a number of employees from the embassy and the Japanese Foreign Ministry.



American Mission Hospital medical team held a community outreach programme at the Basma Centre for Special Education. Included in the programme were basic health checks and dental screening to identify health problems. The aim of the programme was to screen the children to discover health issues.



Bahrain India Society (BIS) has elected a new board of directors for the period 2019 -2021 at a meeting held at the Capital Club. The new office bearers are: Chairman Raj Damani, Vice Chairman Abdulrahman Mohamed Juma, Secretary General Madhavan Kallath, Treasurer P S Balasubramanyam, Director, Public Relations Soman Baby. Other directors: Ahmed Jawahery, Talal Mannai, Vijay Bolor, V K Thomas, Kishore Mathur and Harish Gopinath. BIS, which is the leading society consisting of representatives of both Bahraini and Indian community, is involved in programmes aimed at further strengthening the business, cultural, social and educational ties between Bahrain and India.




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Bahrain attends UNWTO meeting Cairo

A delegation of Bahrain Tourism and Exhibition Authority chaired by Director of Tourism Facilities and Services, Hisham Al Saken, yesterday participated in the 45th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for the Middle East being held in Egypt.

The two-day meeting focuses on providing digital solutions that contribute to the improvement of the tourism experience and the integration of modern technologies and sustaining development.

It includes several sessions to focus on the most important issues in the tourism sector in the Middle East, including a session titled '2019, A Year of Education, Skills and Employment', a report on the statistical framework for measuring sustainability tourism, a session on 'UNWTO Tourism Tech Adventure', which is a platform for promoting investment and consolidating partnerships between public and private sectors, as well as encouraging entrepreneurship.

The forum has attracted representatives from public and private sectors and business owners of emerging enterprises.

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Man held for torturing dog

Animal lovers urge tough action amid increasing number of animal torture cases

Five sentenced in fraud case
TDT | Manama

● The footage was widely shared by animal activists and netizens on local social media pages and groups, in a bid to publicise the man's face and eventually nab him.

● The Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BSPCA) issued a statement, thanking the Interior Ministry.

TDT | Manama

A man was arrested on Saturday a few hours after he appeared in a footage brutally torturing a dog at a residence in the Northern Governorate.

The man was secretly filmed by an unknown individual while on the rooftop of a building.

He was seen beating a dog that was tied by its neck to a clothesline. In the video, the man was also seen filming the strangling dog while beating it using a stick.

The footage was widely shared by animal activists and netizens on local social media pages and groups, in a bid to publicise the man's face and



A screenshot of the video that went viral.

eventually nab him.

A few hours later, Northern Governorate Police Directorate confirmed that the incident took place in Bani Jamrah and the

person seen in the video has been arrested.

This was confirmed in a statement that was posted on Interior Ministry's official page on



Torturing animals is against the values of the Bahraini society. This individual should get punished according to the laws of the land.

MR FARAJ

Twitter, stating: "With reference to a circulated video on the social media, the Director-General of Northern Governorate Police, has announced the arrest of a man for torturing a dog in Bani Jamra. Legal proceedings are being taken to refer the case to the Public Prosecution."

However, the ministry didn't reveal any further details on the fate of the dog or the man. But, animal activists in the country have demanded to impose tough punishment on the man, to curb the increasing cruelty against animals, especially stray dogs, of late.

Appreciated

The Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BSPCA) soon issued a statement, expressing thanks and appreciation to the prompt action of Interior Ministry.

BSPCA Chairman Mahmood Faraj said: "I thank the Minister of Interior, for the swift arrest of the perpetrator and torturer of animals. The BSPCA appreciates the efforts of the Ministry of Interior in quickly identifying and arresting the man featured in the video."

In the statement, Mr Faraj extended his thanks and appreciation to General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, the Minister of Interior, for the rapid arrest of the abuser of the animal in the video on social networking sites.

Mr Faraj confirmed that the speed of the arrest reflects the minister's keenness to deliver justice, establish the principles of animal welfare and apply the penalties stipulated by the law on violations committed against animals.

"The chairman praised the prominent role played by the director of the Northern Governorate, General Abdullah bin Jiran, and the efforts made by all members of the ministry, who participated in the arrest of the perpetrator of this inhumane crime, which reflects the ability and speed at which the violator was apprehended," the statement read.

"Torturing animals is against the values of the Bahraini society. This individual should get punished according to the laws of the land," he added.

A man was asked to pay BD3,400 for a Nokia mobile phone worth only BD60 in one of the most unusual fraud cases that have been reported in the Kingdom recently.

This has been revealed before the Minor Criminal Court, which yesterday ordered to imprison a well-known Bahraini unionist for two years for the charges of forging debt bonds of customers at two of his electronic shops.

The court also sentenced four of the employees in the shops to six months for assisting in the fraud.

According to court files, the defendants have forged bills and other documents issued to their customers (victims), after selling them goods on the basis of monthly instalments.

Years later, the first defendant filed cases at the court, demanding the victims to pay the amounts mentioned in the forged documents.

A victim informed prosecutors that he had purchased a Nokia mobile for BD60 and was shocked after few years to find out that a lawsuit has been filed against him to pay BD3,400 for the same phone, while another victim said she had paid 12 monthly instalments of BD64 for a laptop she had bought from the defendant, who demanded her to pay BD1,482 for it seven years later.



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Illegal parking near Red Bus stands 'leading to accidents'

Red Bus has approached the concerned ministries to find a solution and ensure the offenders are punished

Supriya Reginald
TDT | Manama

An average of one accident per week is caused due to illegal civilian parking at bus stops, according to the spokesperson of the Bahrain Public Transport Company.

Vehicles occupying stops designated for Red Buses, have forced drivers to halt the bus mid-road for boarding and de-boarding passengers.

In addition, this risks the safety of the commuters and often causes accidents and damages.

Speaking to Tribune, the spokesperson stated: "The incidents usually involve the bus brushing against the cars parked in the bus stop when trying to leave the road clear for traffic to pass. We have also some accidents, where car drivers crash into the rear side of the bus when it has to stop on the road."

Unauthorised civilian parking has been a lingering issue faced by the current as well as the previous public transport company in the Kingdom.

"This has been an issue since



Civilian vehicles occupying areas designated for Red Buses near the British Council in Salmaniya.

we started over four years ago, and I am sure it was a problem for the previous company as well," revealed the spokesperson.

Bus drivers have expressed concern with regard to safety of the passengers who are forced to manoeuvre through the hindrance to board and deboard.

"Drivers complain that cars parked at bus stops make it very difficult for them to pick up and drop off passengers safely, and they have to stop on the road, instead of designated areas. When this happens the vehicles behind them beep their horns, at times leading to verbal arguments with the bus driver.

"If the bus stop is partly blocked and the driver tries to get into the area that is available, chances of accidents are high," stated the spokesperson.

"It is a big problem for the elderly or disabled passengers or those with small children as they have to walk into the road and climb into the bus which can

be difficult or impossible if they are in a wheelchair," he added.

Red Bus has approached the concerned ministries to find a solution and ensure the offenders are caught and dealt with accordingly.

"We regularly report to the Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Interior (Traffic Police)

"
This has been an issue since we started over four years ago, and I am sure it was a problem for the previous company as well.

SPOKESPERSON

that we are facing this problem, and the specific areas where the problem is greatest," said the spokesperson.

"We are grateful for the support received already and understand that the traffic police only have limited resources. We have suggested to install ANPR CCTV cameras at the bus stops to automatically catch car drivers who park illegally. This would also generate revenue for the Government to reinvest in transport infrastructure," he added.

On a daily basis, Red Bus receives calls from commuters' eager to complain about the issue, it is learnt.

Government to rebuild gutted ma'atam

TDT | Manama

A ma'atam that was destroyed by a devastating fire in Al Daih village on Saturday, will be rebuilt under the supervision of the government, it has been announced.

Interior Ministry confirmed that no injuries were caused by the fire and that "Civil Defence prevented the flames from spreading to nearby areas using six vehicles and 20 personnel".

The ministry added that an investigation has been launched into the incident to determine the causes of the mishap.

A delegation from the Jaffaria Waqf Directorate (JWD) at the Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Ministry visited the ma'atam on Saturday afternoon to assess the damages caused by the fire.

The JWD is the official body concerned about such centres in the Kingdom.

During the visit, JWD Chairman Shaikh Abdulmohsen Al



The delegation headed by Shaikh Al Asfoor assess the damages caused by the fire in Al Daih.

Asfoor announced that "the directorate will co-ordinate the demolition and rebuilding of the ma'atam with the related parties", adding that "the process will be financed by the construction budget allocated by the directorate's administration and donations for ma'atams".

Shaikh Al Asfoor also affirmed that the JWD will work

on "accelerating the issuance of construction permits, in co-ordination with the concerned authorities".

The Chairman reiterated the directorate's concern about the safety of mosques and ma'atams, reaffirming JWD's responsibility of sponsoring, supporting and developing these places.

He thanked the Civil Defence

Directorate in Interior Ministry for swiftly controlling the fire and preventing any casualties.

The delegation was accompanied by the area's parliamentary representative Mamdouh Al Saleh, who said the ma'atam is the oldest in the area and affirmed that it has a great value to the people of Al Daih and the neighbouring areas.

Expat, 25, dies a day before his betrothal

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Zafran

A 25 years old expatriate's life came to an abrupt end as he died in his sleep a day before his marriage fixing ceremony.

Nawaf Musawa went to sleep on Saturday night ready to fly to India the next day for his marriage fixing function, however, fate had something else in store.

A close relative of Nawaf told Tribune that he had been suffering from low blood sugar for quite a while. "All we know at the moment is that he died in his sleep. From what I know, he suffered a cardiac arrest following a complication caused by low blood sugar."

He added that the mortal remains will be sent to India. "The funeral will be held in India in the presence of his parents and the rest of family



The deceased Nawaf

members."

Nawaf hails from Mahe district in the Pondicherry state of India.

According to sources, a friend found Nawaf lifeless in the wee hours of yesterday.

"He was found motionless at 2:15 in the morning by his friend, who rushed him to the hospital," the source said.

Nawaf was an MBA graduate and his immediate survivors include father Faisal Musawa, mother Shahnaz and four siblings.

Nearly 80,000 families register for 'Select Family Physician' initiative

● The programme is currently accommodating nearly 700 registrations per day with less than two weeks left until it ceases.

TDT | Manama
Supriya Reginald

Nearly 80,000 families have registered for the "Select Family Physician" programme as of 24th March, Tribune has learnt.

One of the eight designated health centres, the National Bank of Bahrain Health Centre in Dair, acquired the highest percentage of total number of registrations with 62 per cent.

Commenced on 17th February, the six-week programme has made major strides in the health sector as 22,584 individuals selected their family physician in the first 24 hours of registration.

As part of the third phase of the National Health Plan (2016-2025), the purpose of the programme is to enable Bahraini and expatriate families to choose their desired physician.

The registration process can be carried out via the Ministry's website (www.moh.gov.bh) or by

Health Centre	Registered	% of total registered
NBB Dair	9,522	62pc
Jidhafs	15,157	54pc
Budaiya	12,167	43pc
BBK Hidd	10,540	33pc
Sh Jaber	12,769	41pc
Hamad Town	11,209	40pc
Sh Sabah	4,634	31pc
Halat Bu Maher	3,322	24pc
Total	79,320	

The registration statistics of the designated health centres.

visiting one of the eight designated health centres.

The eight health centres include Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait Health Centre in Hidd, National Bank of Bahrain Health Centre in Al Dair, Bu Maher Health Centre, Shaikh Sabah Al Salem Health Centre, Jedhafas Health Centre, Shaikh Jaber Health Centre, Budaiya Health Centre and Hamad Town Health Centre.

Dr Manal Al Alawi, Assistant Undersecretary of Primary Health at the Ministry of Health, stated that this step comes in line with the activation of the National Health Plan (2016-2025) in the Kingdom.

The programme is currently accommodating nearly 700 registrations per day with less than two weeks left until it ceases.

world

Thai junta takes shock lead

● There are 51 million eligible voters and more than seven million first-timers aged 18-25

AFP | Bangkok, Thailand

Thailand's ruling junta took an unexpected lead in the country's first election since a 2014 coup with more than 90 percent of ballots counted, putting it on course to return to power at the expense of the kingdom's pro-democracy camp.

Yesterday's election was held under new laws written by the military to smooth its transformation into a civilian government.

While it had set the rules of the game in its favour, analysts had not expected the party to win the popular vote, given mounting anger at junta rule and due to the enduring popularity of Pheu Thai, the party of ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

The army-linked Phalang Pracharat party, which wants junta chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha to return as premier, gained more than 7.3 million votes with 91 per cent of ballots tallied, according to the Election Commission -- nearly half a million more than Pheu Thai.

The EC said it would announce full results today, including the numbers of lower house seats won by each party.

The election pitted a royalist junta and its allies against the election-winning machine of billionaire Thaksin -- who was toppled in a 2006 coup -- and featured an unpredictable wave of millions of first-time voters.

There was a high turnout as voters flocked to schoolyards, temples and government offices across the nation, their enthu-



People watch the vote counting process at a polling station in Bangkok



Prayut Chan-O-Cha

siasm fired by years of denied democracy.

The junta has pledged to rescue the kingdom from a decade-long treadmill of protests and coups.

The election commission's announcement late Sunday diminished prospects of a pro-democracy alliance nudging it from power. But still supporters clung on in hope.

"Let's wait until the counting is finished," said Savitree Yodchomchin, 58, outside the Bangkok headquarters of Pheu Thai party, where a party atmosphere earlier among the cluster of supporters had soured.

"I am anxious," said Wipa Ployngam, 53, a supporter of the anti-junta Future Forward party. "I'll stay here all night until everything becomes clear."

Fears of the potential for foul play ricocheted across social media as results came in -- a reflection of the lingering mistrust between rival camps, and

disbelief that a much-pilloried junta could have won a popularity contest against Pheu Thai.

"Thai people come to vote because they want change," said Somkid, 64, a Pheu Thai voter who gave only one name.

"If there is any vote rigging there will be protests."

Royal message

Yesterday's crunch vote was foreshadowed by a cryptic last-minute warning from King Maha Vajiralongkorn to support "good" leaders to prevent "chaos".

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy and the palace is nominally above politics. But the institution retains unassailable powers and is insulated from criticism by a harsh royal defamation law.

The day was framed by the palace statement, which added further intrigue to an election that repeatedly threatened to tip into chaos before a single ballot was cast.

It reiterated comments by late king Bhumibol Adulyadej from 1969 calling for voters to "support good people to govern the society and control the bad people" to prevent them "creating chaos".

While King Maha Vajiralongkorn gave no further clues as to who those "good people" might be, the phrase -- "khon dee" in Thai -- is habitually attached to royalist, establishment politicians.

Another royal command in February torpedoed the candidacy of the king's elder sister Princess Ubolratana for prime minister of a party linked to Thaksin.

That party was dissolved earlier this month, crippling the Shinawatras' electoral strategy.

Thaksin has lived in self-exile since 2008, but he looms large over Sunday's election. His affiliated parties have won every Thai election since 2001, drawing on loyalty from rural and urban poor.



Journalists wait at Phalang Pracharat party headquarters in Bangkok

Syria's return to Arab League not on summit agenda

Cairo, Egypt

The Arab League said yesterday it was not planning to discuss reinstating Syria's membership at a summit later this month, more than eight years after suspending it as the country descended into war.

The pan-Arab bloc, which is set to hold its annual summit in Tunisia on March 31, froze Syria's membership in November 2011 over a bloody government crackdown on protesters.

But several of the bloc's other 21 members have recently renewed ties with the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, and some have called for Syria to be re-admitted to the league.

"The issue of Syria's return to the Arab League has yet to be listed on the agenda and has not been formally proposed," said the League's spokesman Mahmoud Afifi.

He noted that the "Syrian crisis" however still tops the



The issue of Syria's return to the Arab League has yet to be listed on the agenda and has not been formally proposed

LEAGUE'S SPOKESMAN MAHMOUD AFIFI

agenda, along with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the situation in Yemen and Libya.

Syria's conflict flared in 2011 with anti-government demonstrations that sparked a brutal regime crackdown.

It has since drawn in regional powers, killing 370,000 people and displacing millions.

But the regime, backed by allies Russia and Iran, has since re-conquered much of the territory it had lost to rebels and jihadists, and now controls some two-thirds of the country.

Syria's Kurds, which declared victory over the Islamic State group on Saturday, control much of the oil-rich northeast, which the regime has hinted it may seize back in a military operation.

Earlier this month, Syrian officials attended a meeting of Arab states in neighbouring Jordan for the first time since the country's Arab League membership was suspended.

Syria's conflict flared in 2011 with anti-government demonstrations that sparked a brutal regime crackdown

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in December made the first visit of any Arab leader to the Syrian capital since 2011.

The same month, Egypt hosted Syria's national security chief and top Assad aide Ali Mamluk. The UAE also reopened its Damascus embassy in a major sign of a diplomatic thaw.

Arab states have also slammed US President Donald Trump's call for recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a strategic territory the Jewish state seized from Syria in 1967.

Kazakhstan former PM named leader's top aide

Almaty, Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's new president yesterday appointed a recently dismissed prime minister to head his administration -- a move almost certainly approved by the country's veteran leader, who resigned this week.

The appointment of ex-prime minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev as the new president's chief of staff will bolster the view that Kazakhstan's former president Nursultan Nazarbayev still calls the shots in the oil-rich Central Asian country.

Nazarbayev, who ruled the energy-rich Central Asian nation since before it gained independence with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, stunned the country on Tuesday by announcing his resignation in a televised address.



Bakytzhan Sagintayev

The 78-year-old however retains significant powers thanks to his constitutional status as "Leader of the Nation", lifetime position as chief of the security council and head of the ruling party.

Last month, Nazarbayev dismissed Sagintayev as cabinet chief, citing poor economic performance and analysts suggested his dismissal was aimed at tamping down a simmering protest mood. Sagintayev, 55, previously served as economy minister and deputy chairman of the ruling Nur Otan party.



The Viking Sky lost power and started drifting mid-afternoon Saturday

Hundreds airlifted



Passengers on board the Viking Sky, waiting to be evacuated, off the coast of Norway on Saturday (Courtesy of AccuWeather)



Stranded passenger that were rescued by helicopter from the cruise ship Viking Sky are pictured on March 23, 2019 on the west coast of Norway near Romsdal

Stricken Norway cruiseship restarted 3 of its 4 engines

AFP | Oslo, Norway

A cruise liner that ran into trouble in rough seas off Norway was being towed to port yesterday after hundreds of passengers were helicoptered to safety.

The Viking Sky lost power and started drifting mid-afternoon Saturday in perilous waters two kilometres (1.2 miles) off More og Romsdal, prompting the captain to send out a distress call.

The authorities launched an airlift in very difficult conditions rather than run the risk of leaving people on board.

"We would rather have the passengers on land rather than on board the ship," police chief Tor Andre Franck said.

By yesterday, the crew had managed to restart three of its four engines and two tugs arrived.

Authorities said 460 of the 1,373 people on board had been taken off by five helicopters

before the airlift was halted to allow the towing to start.

Police said 17 people had been taken to hospital, one in their 90s and two 70-year-olds suffered serious fractures.

"The evacuation has been put on pause for now", a spokesman for southern Norway's rescue centre said.

"The captain will weigh up the situation" before deciding if the airlift resumes, he added.

The vessel was heading for the port of Molde, with 60 kilometres (45 miles) still to go, and about 500 kilometres northwest of Oslo, officials said.

Dramatic footage of the passengers' ordeal showed furniture and plants sliding round the lurching vessel as parts of the ceiling came down.

Dozens of passengers wearing life jackets were seated around waiting to get off the vessel.

"I have never seen anything so frightening," said Janet Jacob, who was rescued.

"I started to pray. I prayed

for the safety of everyone on board," she told the NRK television channel.

"The helicopter trip was terrifying. The winds were like a tornado," she added.

"We were sitting down for breakfast when things started to shake... It was just chaos," said another passenger, American John Curry, as quoted in Norwegian by media.

Passenger Rodney Horgan said he had been reminded of the Titanic.

"The best word, I guess, is surreal," he said.

"Sea water 6-7 feet (about two metres) high just came rushing in, hit the tables, chairs, broken glass and 20-30 people just ... went right in front of me.

"I was standing, my wife was sitting in front of me and all of a sudden, she was gone. And I thought this was the end," Horgan said.

But it all ended well for Ryan Flynn. "Here's my 83-year-old dad being airlifted from the #vikingsky," he said.

Yildirim squares up for Istanbul election battle

● The vote in Istanbul, with a population of 15 million out of Turkey's 80 million, will be a major test for Erdogan's party

● Turkish will cast their ballots for local elections on March 31, 2019

AFP | Istanbul, Turkey

If former Turkish prime minister Binali Yildirim wants a reminder of how much he needs to win as Istanbul mayor in this month's election, he just has to listen to his boss.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who started his own political career as Istanbul mayor, likes to tell his Justice and Development Party (AKP) that winning the country's economic hub is like winning Turkey itself.

Picking a well-known name and ruling party heavyweight like Yildirim for mayor shows how key Istanbul remains for Erdogan. The Turkish leader has been campaigning hard around Turkey, often in Istanbul, to drum up support for the AKP before the March 31 municipal election.

Even though Yildirim is the favourite, the stakes are high: Turkey's economy is in recession and a lira currency crisis and double-digit inflation are threatening to undermine some AKP support at the ballot box.

"We should not underestimate the Istanbul mayor office. Look at Mr Chirac," Yildirim told AFP referring to Jacques Chirac, the late French president who was mayor of Paris from 1977-95 in between two stints as prime minister.

The vote in Istanbul, with a population of 15 million

out of Turkey's 80 million, will be a major test for Erdogan's party to consolidate its power. Istanbul is seen as a political bellwether with its mixed population of secular and conservative Turks as well as Kurds.

In the 2017 referendum on the new executive presidential system that concentrated powers under the Turkish leader, Istanbul narrowly voted against Erdogan's plan.

"Istanbul is a country on its own," he said.

'Only one captain'

Erdogan is actively touring for the AKP even though he is not standing for election. In Istanbul alone, he has held over a dozen rallies in several neighbourhoods in the past few weeks.

On Sunday, Erdogan called a giant rally, with his right-wing ally Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahceli in Istanbul's Yenikapi district.

Fielding a younger candidate, the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) hopes a fresh approach will help them take the Istanbul mayor's office from Erdogan's ally.

Ekrem Imamoglu, 49, current mayor of Istanbul's Beyluku district on the outskirts of the city, worked in a family business and was a board member of a Turkish football team.

A loyalist to Erdogan since the 1990s, Yildirim holds no grudge over the disappearance of the prime minister office he held for two years. He even campaigned for "Yes" in the 2017 vote on reforms that handed Erdogan more authority.

"Two captains can sink a ship. There should be only one captain," he said at the time of the vote that abolished the premier's office.

Yildirim, born into a poor family in an eastern province, served as

transport minister between 2002 and 2014 and oversaw grandiose projects from new highways and high-speed trains to tunnels and bridges.

Erdogan often touts such projects as a symbol of Turkey's success during his time in power. But Yildirim has never shown any ambition to outshine the president.

Known for his slow-talking style, the AKP candidate says in the introduction of a rap tune prepared for his election: "I speak slow but I work fast like my surname." His surname means "lightning."

Yildirim never makes secret of his love for Istanbul.

"Istanbul is all my youth, a city that has given me everything, so to serve this city is a big honour for me," Yildirim said.

Asked if his boss Erdogan was giving him advice, Yildirim said: "Of course. We always benefit from his experiences."

Both candidates have shown an appetite to win over the other's side's supporters in the cosmopolitan city.

Imamoglu hopes his discreet profile could turn out to be an "advantage," against a popular AKP candidate.

"Society has recently built a resistance against all that is well known in politics," he said.

The CHP candidate lamented that conditions were not equal, especially with most Turkish media taking a pro-Erdogan line. But he was still in the fight.



Supporters of Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan wave flags during a rally

Caliphate 'a living hell'

Baghdad, Iraq

For the millions forced to endure the Islamic State group's brutal rule, life in the "caliphate" was a living hell where girls were enslaved, music was banned and homosexuality was punishable by death.

The jihadists applied an ultra-conservative interpretation of Islamic law across the swathes of Syria and Iraq that they captured in 2014, torturing or executing anyone who disobeyed.

The fall of the last sliver of IS territory in eastern Syria marks the end of their proto-state, once the size of the United Kingdom and home to more than seven million people.

The fate of prisoners used by the jihadists as human shields remains unknown, but more than 3,000 Yazidis are still missing.

The jihadists singled out the minority, followers of an ancient religion, for particularly harsh treatment which the UN has said may amount to genocide.

They slaughtered thousands of Yazidi men and boys, abducting women and girls then selling them at slave markets.

Many suffered years of sexual abuse.

"We did everything they demanded," said Bessa Hamad, an Iraqi Yazidi sold six times by jihadists before escaping their last redoubt in Syria.

"We couldn't say no."

Yazidi boys who were not killed were forced to fight and indoctrinated to hate their community, leaving families struggling to reconnect with those who were rescued.

Children who went to IS-run schools learnt to count with



Picture shows the fallen Islamic State group's last bastion in the eastern Syrian village of Baghuz after the defeat of the jihadist group.

maths books featuring guns and grenades, but pictures of people were banned.

As well as frontline fighters, IS ran its own police force, whose officers could impose fines or lashes on men whose breath smelt of cigarettes or alcohol.

Books were burned, while dancing and music were banned. Instead the jihadists broadcast propaganda via their own radio station.

The jihadists used sledgehammers to destroy priceless ancient artefacts they deemed idolatrous.

A strict dress code forced even young girls to wear a full black Islamic veil.

Beards and traditional robes were compulsory for men.

Thrown from rooftops

The extremists ran their own courts, sentencing people to death by beheading and hanging.

Men and women accused of adultery were stoned to

death. Men were shot or thrown from rooftops for the "crime" of being gay. The jihadists even introduced their own currency, minting coins that veterans of the battle against IS now keep as trophies.

Jail terms were imposed on those unable to pay IS taxes.

Iraq's major northern city of Mosul and Raqa in Syria were transformed into the twin de facto capitals of the "caliphate".

Raqa became a byword for atrocities carried out by the jihadists, and it was from there that IS organised devastating overseas attacks.

Human heads were displayed on spikes in the city along with crucified bodies, to sow terror.

IS initially won support from some residents who felt abandoned and abused by corrupt state authorities.

But today, those who survived its rule accuse the jihadists themselves of graft -- as well as ex-

treme acts of violence.

IS left more than 200 mass graves in Iraq and thousands of bodies are expected to be uncovered in Syria.

Numerous women interviewed by AFP said they received IS-stamped death certificates for their executed husbands, but the jihadists would not return their bodies. It could take years to discover what happened to some of their victims.

Some IS members leaving the group's last redoubt of Baghuz in eastern Syria have criticised the group's leadership.

"God's law was applied," said Abdel Moneim Najia, a jihadist who stayed in what was left of the "caliphate" until its final days. But he voiced the same grievances as Iraqis and Syrians expressed about their governments ahead of the IS takeover.



People said to be members of the Islamic State (IS) group exit with children from the village of Baghuz in the eastern Syrian province of Deir Ezzor (file)

Disease fears mount for cyclone survivors



Women and children take a shelter from rain in Buzi, Mozambique

Beira, Mozambique

'We suffered a lot'

Disease is threatening to aggravate the already dire conditions facing millions of survivors following the powerful tropical cyclone which ravaged southern Africa 10 days ago, officials warned on Sunday.

Cyclone Idai smashed into Mozambique's coast unleashing hurricane-force wind and rain that flooded swathes of the poor country before battering eastern Zimbabwe -- killing 705 people across the two nations.

"It is inevitable that cases of cholera and malaria will arise. In many areas we are already fighting with malaria cases," said Land Minister Celso Correia at a briefing in Beira, 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) north-east of the capital Maputo.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, also at the briefing, warned that disease outbreaks in inaccessible areas could be "really problematic".

The World Food Programme said Friday that the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Mozambique is on a par with the situation in Yemen and Syria which are both in the grip of civil wars.

Refugee workers from across the world are continuing to arrive in the region to bring help to more than two million affected people across an area of roughly 3,000 square kilometres (around 1,160 square miles).

Survivors are struggling in desperate conditions with some still trapped on rooftops and those rescued in urgent need of food and medical supplies.

"The government is already setting up a cholera treatment centre to mitigate cholera. We should not be frightened when cholera issues arise," added Correia, describing efforts to control the emerging humanitarian crisis.

"It is normal. It's almost inevitable. Malaria, we know how it arises. We have lots of wetlands and we're going to have malaria that is sure to come up (there)."

Wilfried Deloviare, a 19-year-old resident of Beira which was caught in the eye of the storm, said he felt "sorry for our town, our city, because we suffered a lot to build it".

"Houses are completely destroyed, and some people don't have money to rebuild their businesses -- and many businesses are going to fail," he said.

More than two million people have been affected in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi where the storm started as a tropical depression causing flooding which killed 60 and displaced nearly a million people. Hundreds are still missing in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The International Committee said it had recorded two cases of cholera so far but the UN was unable to confirm the reports.

Boulder-sized sunfish washes ashore in Australia

Sydney, Australia

A boulder-sized fish of a kind known to "sink yachts" has washed up on an Australian beach.

The 1.8 metre (six feet) specimen -- believed to be a Mola mola, or ocean sunfish -- came ashore near the mouth of the Murray River in South Australia at the weekend.

The enormous creature is distinct for both its size and peculiar shape featuring a flattened body and fins.

The fish can weigh up to 2.5 tons (2,200 kilogrammes), according to National Geographic.

A photo circulating on social media showed two people on a beach standing over the giant specimen, which had died.

"The amount of news and media from all over the world wanting to report it has been on another level," Linette Grzelak, who posted the image to Face-



A sunfish that was washed ashore and found dead in Coorong, near the mouth of the Murray River in South Australia.



The name Mola mola comes from the Latin word for "millstone." It's named for its gray, round body, and rough texture.

book, said.

"Never expected this."

South Australian Museum fish collection manager Ralph Foster said the fish was actually at the smaller end of the scale for the species.

It earned its name for basking in the sun near the ocean's sur-

face, but is also known to dive several hundred metres (feet) into the depths, he said.

"I've actually had a good look at it, we get three species here and this is actually the rarest one in South Australian waters," Foster told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

"They can get a lot bigger... it's probably an average-sized one, they can get nearly twice as big as that," he added.

Mola Mola have also been known to damage vessels, Foster added.

"We get a lot of them hit by boats and some of them are so large they actually sink yachts," he said.

"We know very little about them, it's only in the last few years that technology has allowed us to start learning about them.

"They are amazing things, they really are."

Who will speak out for the forgotten women of conflict?

Deeply traumatised women socialised to 'know their place' often have zero sense of their rights or options



BARIA ALAMUDDIN

International Women's Day rightly celebrates the impressive achievements of courageous women. Yet the world has had less to say about our most vulnerable sisters, as historically elevated levels of displacement due to conflict have left millions of women in hellish conditions in sprawling refugee camps.

A common denominator in these camps — from Greece to Lebanon and Yemen — are epidemic levels of rape and sexual violence, exacerbated by the stigma and ostracisation facing the innocent victims of these crimes. Systematic rape in South Sudan or against Rohingya women seeks to humiliate and dehumanise entire populations based on tribal or religious affiliation. A shocking 2011 statistic estimated that 48 women were raped every hour in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with sexual attacks becoming gruesomely routine in many conflict zones.

Thousands of Iraqis languish in miserable camps long after Daesh's supposed defeat. Wives have seen husbands and sons indefinitely detained, leaving them prone to sexual predation by rampaging paramilitaries.

We can't comprehend the abuse that thousands of Yazidi women endured at the hands of Daesh: Loved ones slaughtered, forced into sexual slavery, daily torture and violation, fearing that each day would be their last.

I was overjoyed at Nadia Murad becoming joint winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. According to

some traditionalist attitudes, a victim of such abuse is no longer an "honourable" part of society. Yet, instead of withdrawing into self-pity, Nadia and others defiantly told their stories, helping make it possible for women to be non-judgmentally embraced back into their communities.

These brave girls must feel no shame. They are heroic survivors and witnesses to monstrous acts by sick individuals who themselves bring shame upon mankind.

Around 1,500 foreign women and children remain in Iraqi custody accused of Daesh links: Are they victims or terrorists? Should we forgive them after they express horror at Daesh's crimes? Should home countries support them in overcoming their traumas? Children aren't accountable for the sins of their parents but, according to Human Rights Watch, that hasn't prevented the Iraqi authorities torturing and detaining hundreds of minors on vague and unproven charges.

Displaced Syrian women have been hugely vulnerable to exploitation. Criminal networks — including elements from Hezbollah — have been involved in prostitution and people-smuggling networks. Women have been compelled or tricked with promises of work, finding themselves shackled into the worst forms of slavery. Starving families resort to selling underage daughters into marriages with wealthy men who they never met.

Deeply traumatised women socialised to "know their place" often have zero sense of their rights or options. We thus must educate all our girls to know their rights; to know how to assert themselves in the face of male aggression and harassment; and to know they are capable of



Ethiopian refugee women wait to receive non-food items distributed by the Kenyan Red Cross.

achieving the highest goals they can imagine for themselves.

In the pressure-cooker environment of the refugee camps, levels of domestic violence are appallingly high — 51 per cent of married Gazan women report domestic violence, while 76pc report psychological abuse. For 70 years, the daily realities of Palestinian women have been arrests, harassment and police brutality. Fearless women like Ahed Tamimi engage in acts of defiance against the horrors of occupation, knowing the brutal and arbitrary responses that Israeli police will mete out.

Within some populations, the woefully misnamed phenomenon of "honour killing" is far more prevalent than official reports indicate. Studies in Russia's Caucasus region demonstrate how the authorities collaborate

Let us not brag about women's empowerment until we have done everything in our power to empower our most vulnerable sisters.

to thwart such cases on the rare occasions when families take action. Young girls who buck tradition and shun arranged marriages to pursue their education are frequently sought out for trumped-up accusations,

with participation in such brutal travesties sometimes even seen as a route to social advancement. There have been cases of gang-rape where the attackers later approached the woman's family demanding that she be killed to atone for the dishonour she brought upon the perpetrators.

It is a joy to read the inspiring stories of successful women: Female government ministers, leading businesswomen, women who have conquered all in our male-dominated world. However, there must not be silence for the forgotten women whose suffering shames us all. We are shamed by the daily reality of rape and abuse against victims of war, but we are doubly shamed by our inability to honestly speak out. In several countries, progress has been made in outlawing female gen-

ital mutilation, yet the societal taboos against discussing the abuse by parents against their own daughters, along with the lack of enlightened education and debate, make it difficult to eliminate this barbaric practice altogether.

The UN, the US, Europe and the world have had their opportunities to act on behalf of the female victims of war. Eight years after the beginning of the Syria uprising, it is safe to say that they have failed. In my experience, inward-looking Western governments are disgraced and fully set to become less engaged on these challenges.

I, and women like me, live in a blessed cocoon: Blessed by education, loving parents and thousand opportunities to improve our status. Yet, how can we celebrate breakthroughs for women's rights knowing that tonight millions of terrorised women will cry themselves to sleep, traumatised by memories of vicious abuse, and from fear that the noises outside the flimsy shelters emanate from men with predatory intentions.

The #MeToo movement proves how decisive women's voices can be when we take action against sexual harassment. It is well past time for us fortunate women to act together on behalf of those women — from Libya to Palestine to Myanmar — whose daily reality is violence and abuse. Let us not brag about women's empowerment until we have done everything in our power to empower our most vulnerable sisters.

(Baria Alamuddin is an award-winning journalist and broadcaster in the Middle East and the UK. She is editor of the Media Services Syndicate and has interviewed numerous heads of state.)

No Alice in Wonderland!

ANAND NAIR

Exams, salaries, job stability, rising prices, increasing demands! The swords are out. Every day seems to be a battle and the war is never ending. One of the best decisions that I took in recent times is to stop watching NEWS. I was bombed with negative surgical strikes daily and the panel discussion on it. My mind was not allowed to think freely and independently. I became a victim of planted new syndrome. This is not me, I believe. Stopping news was a relief. It helped me think free.

Looking around, I can see only expectations growing. The world market is down and so are the markets in local areas. As a re-

sult, there are serious issues all over. Increasing prices and overheads have started taking a toll and expenditure of every family is in check. The lifestyle of many and lifestyle decisions of many have baffled me. Recently a friend came and shared some startling information about the financial mess another friend has landed into. He has used all his credit cards (three of them I believe), have acquired maximum loans from the banks, took private loans at interest, borrowed from lot of known sources and now see an uncertain future as he does not have any idea how to repay it. The bank collection department keeps on calling him after his failure to pay. I was shocked. Even if his

salary increases four times, he will not be in a position to repay back immediately. A disturbing time awaits him very soon. How can he be supported, this is a big question mark.

Another friend mentioned how he has been a victim of excessive charity. He has helped a few with money out of his meagre salary in times of need. The emotional pressure was so much that he loaned out a portion of his salary. Today when he is in dire need, no one has the ability to return it. He is scared that he too will get into the vicious circle of borrowing. It is a commercial market and to sell, the market hooks us to various offers. If my phone is working fine, why do I need a latest hand-

set on credit that will impact my monthly budget? For how many years will someone earn to just pay EMI's, bank loans, luxury and commodity loans? Where can the thin line be drawn? Who will draw it?

Rags to riches story happens only for Alice in Wonderland. For common people like us, Alice lives on the land full of ground realities not in wonderland. When Mulla Naseeruddin (folklore character believed to have existed in 1208, Turkey) sold one donkey, he immediately asked his wife to spend the entire money. His wife who was very calculative asked him, "If we spend the entire money, what will be left for the future?" Mulla Naseeruddin replied, "You

are always in doubt. If I could sell one donkey, I will surely sell the remaining ones too. With that we will have lot of money and we can spend a lot. Money will start flowing. You take my word; it will. So just spend." He earned, she spent till no more donkeys were left. The future was bleak. With no money, Mulla Naseeruddin realised that he lost many friends too. He broke down. His wife hugged him and said, "Every donkey you sold, I spent only half of the money. Rest half I kept it in the earthen pot. We have money for our use. Let us use it wisely now at least." Though it is just a story, we can draw lessons from it.

The rich is not rich because they spend. The rich is rich because

they save and spend. They know how to save; in today's world — they know how to invest. Remember there is no free lunch (even at home). We need to earn it. Whatever we earn, we have lot of avenues to spend. But let us be wise and choose our spending.

What if Franklin Jerome (don't worry who is he!) cannot go for Paris trip! Let him create his happiness as same as Paris even if he visits his hometown.

It is not wise to survive on credit and create all stress around.

Be wise to live within our means.

No Alice in wonderland. Only Alice on Land.

(Anand Nair is a vice-principal at the Indian School Bahrain.)

1802

The Treaty of Amiens is signed as a "Definitive Treaty of Peace" between France and the United Kingdom.

1807

The Slave Trade Act becomes law, abolishing the slave trade in the British Empire.

1807

The Swansea and Mumbles Railway, then known as the Oystermouth Railway, becomes the first passenger-carrying railway in the world.



1811

Percy Bysshe Shelley is expelled from the University of Oxford for publishing the pamphlet The Necessity of Atheism.

Will Mexico save its vanishing vaquita?

Less than two dozen of the tiny porpoises remain in the wild. But there's plenty the government can do to avert its extinction



RICHARD PARKER

In recent decades, the sleek, wide-eyed vaquita porpoise has been pushed to the brink of extinction by poachers pursuing another critically endangered sea creature, the totoaba, a fish whose swim bladder sells on the Chinese black market for thousands of dollars. The porpoises end up caught in nets intended for the totoaba and killed as collateral damage.

The vaquita (its name is Spanish for "little cow") is a toothed whale and the smallest of all cetaceans; a full-grown female can measure just 5 feet and weigh only 75 pounds. Thousands of vaquitas once plowed the Sea of Cortez, also known as the Gulf of California, which is bordered on the east by the Mexican mainland and on the west by the Baja California peninsula. Today, their numbers are estimated at around 10 but no more than 22 in the wild. Without a strictly enforced ban on even possessing gillnets, the species will soon go extinct in the wild. Just last week, the badly decomposed body of what was thought to be a vaquita was found caught in a gillnet.

There is little time left to act to save the vaquita, yet there is hope. For Mexico's new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the fate of the little porpoise represents political opportunity and the chance of failure. He can do nothing and preside over the first sea mammal extinction in North America in decades. Or he can save one of Mexico's national symbols and rescue a troubled fishing industry.

"This is doable even now," said Brooke Bessesen, a conservationist and author of a new book, "Vaquita: Science Politics and Crime in the Sea of Cortez." "We have to come up with solutions that buy time. This is not a numbers game. It's a game of time."

The Sea of Cortez is 62,000 square miles of azure and turquoise water that ranks as one of the most productive fisheries in the world, with more than 900 species of fin fish, including blue marlin and whale sharks. Commercial fishing started in earnest in the 1940s and is largely concentrated off the Mexican state of Sonora, on the eastern shore of the sea. But poachers are generally thought to be the problem these days.

The small-scale fishermen who live on the sea's western and northern shores motor out in cheap fiberglass skiffs known



There is little time left to act to save the vaquita, yet there is hope.

as pangas, armed with gillnets. These nets, made from near invisible nylon mono- and multifilament, float on or near the surface and are weighted at the bottom. They kill indiscriminately, entangling everything from sea lion pups to great white sharks. Today, there are so many abandoned nets that the government pays fishermen to drag them ashore.

Poor poachers still use gillnets to catch the totoaba, whose swim bladder sells for \$20,000 on average in China for traditional medicine and even as investments. A bladder is both a high-end business gift and a sort of trophy in itself. The trade is so lucrative that the drug cartels have become involved in the poaching.

Last April, Mexican authorities stopped a Chinese man at the Mexico City International Airport with 355 totoaba swim bladders. Three days later, another Chinese man bound for China had 417 swim bladders in two suitcases. And in December, Chinese officials confiscated 980 pounds of swim bladders, estimated to be worth \$26 million. Sixteen people were arrested.

So it is no wonder that poachers and their gillnets have pushed the totoaba onto the list of critically endangered species maintained by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and dragged the even more endangered vaquita along with it. The tiny porpoises drown when they are snagged in these nets.

The Mexican government

shares some of the blame. Warnings that the vaquita might vanish arose years ago when there were still hundreds in the wild, but it failed to take effective actions to protect them. López Obrador's predecessor, Enrique Peña Nieto, banned the use of gillnets in the porpoise's habitat in 2015, for instance, but not their possession.

An attempt to capture porpoises to breed them in captivity in 2017 led to one dying; another nearly did and had to be released. The totoaba, however, is being bred in captivity, giving the species a path to survival. But that effort is likely to be counterproductive for the vaquita, because it will only encourage more poaching of the totoaba.

The vaquita's situation is so dire that Thomas A Jefferson, a San Diego marine biologist and conservationist, said he feared that extinction was its most likely fate. "The conservationist in me doesn't want to admit that but the biologist has to," he said.

Yet the vaquita clings to life. In October, four were spotted in open water. The little porpoise may possess a unique genetic advantage that could allow it to recover in the wild if just left alone. The vaquita was never widely distributed, numbering perhaps only 5,000 at its modern height and located only in the Sea of Cortez. But there is no evidence that it has hit the bottleneck of birth defects from inbreeding often seen in declining populations.

And so, there is hope — if López Obrador acts swiftly. The

Obrador can do nothing and preside over the first sea mammal extinction in North America in decades.

vaquita is one of Mexico's national animals, along with the golden eagle and the jaguar. He's under economic pressure to do so. But by acting aggressively to save the porpoise, he can also fulfill core campaign promises and emerge a hero, not just in Mexico but around the world.

Pressure is coming from the United States. Last year, the United States Court of International Trade in New York temporarily banned seafood imports from Mexico caught in the Sea of Cortez with gillnets. The injunction was issued in response to a lawsuit brought by environmentalists complaining that the Trump administration was not enforcing a 1972 law that protects marine mammals from being killed in the process of fishing.

It has been a crippling blow to the fishing industry in the Sea of Cortez, blocking an estimated 1,400 tons of seafood worth \$300 million from being sold in the

United States. Even before that, the grocery retailer Trader Joe's had banned blue shrimp from the Sea of Cortez from its nearly 500 stores because of concerns that vaquitas were being killed in gillnets intended for shrimp.

Even if he wasn't facing that economic pressure, saving the vaquita represents an opportunity for the new president. Mexican presidents cannot run for re-election, so López Obrador is at the zenith of his power at the start of his six-year term.

By banning the possession of gillnets, López Obrador would slow the killing of both the totoaba and the vaquita and perhaps resolve the trade dispute with the United States. By expanding the practice of paying more fishermen to remove ghost nets, he would put idle anglers to work. By allowing video of illegal fishing to be used as evidence in court — it is now not admissible — the Mexican navy could make poaching arrests stick. And by managing the fishery wisely, he would keep it producing for Mexicans and foreign markets alike. Already this kind of fishery management is taking shape in parts of Sonora.

"There has to be some way. But this comes down to López Obrador," said Bessesen, the author. "He is the remaining flicker of hope for the vaquita."

So, yes, there is hope. But in the Sea of Cortez, there is little time for either the president or the porpoise.

(Richard Parker is the author of "Lone Star Nation: How Texas Will Transform America.")



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



My father abruptly immigrated to the US at age 44. He was a senior executive, spoke fluent English, but was unable to find suitable work. While working two jobs, he earned a PhD after six years of night school at age 66. Fight for your happiness. And don't quit on your dreams.

@ValaAfshar

02



Moments ago, I pledged that at the end of my first term as president we'll close the teacher pay gap with the largest federal investment in teacher pay in American history. No teacher should have to work 2-3 jobs to survive. That's wrong. I'm ready to do something about it.

@KamalaHarris

03



How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Let's heed God's word and strive to weave strong bonds of friendship, brotherhood and construct a harmonious society.

@WilliamsRuto

04



Noted athletes @HimaDas8, @DipaKarmakar and @SakshiMalik, India is proud of you and you inspire many others youngsters. Now, it is time to inspire greater voter awareness and participation, especially among youngsters. #VoteKar

@narendramodi

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

business

CBB announces guidelines for short selling, security lending

TDT | Manama

Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) yesterday announced a resolution introducing short selling of securities as well as giving securities on loan into the capital markets ecosystem of Kingdom.

The resolution No. (23) issued by the top bank says that it is "for the Issuance of Regulations in respect of Short Selling and Giving Securities on Loan."

Further citing Article (92) of the Decree No. (64) of 2006, the bank states it would "specify the types of securities, which may be traded by loan and short sale, the terms and procedures of such transactions and the rights and obligations of all concerned parties".

Licensed Exchange and the Licensed Clearing House, the CBB statement said, shall issue their own rules and guidelines and shall establish controls and



Sheikh Khalifa bin Ebrahim Al-Khalifa, Chief Executive Officer of Bahrain Bourse and Vice Chairman & Managing Director of Bahrain Clear



Abeer Al Sheikh Ebrahim Al Saad, Director of the Capital Markets Supervision Directorate at the CBB

procedures related to dealing in securities through lending and borrowing and short selling according to the provisions stipulated in the Resolution.

"The objective of this Res-

olution is to improve the efficiency of the capital markets in the Kingdom by promoting new investment and trading strategies through diversification of investment instruments which

shall result in better price discovery, enhanced liquidity and attracting new sophisticated investors," said Abeer Al Sheikh Ebrahim Al Saad, Director of the Capital Markets Supervision Directorate at the CBB.

She said that the Resolution encompasses the controls and procedures pertaining to lending, borrowing and short selling of eligible securities, the obligations of the related parties, and makes reference to guidelines and instructions necessary to implement the requirements of this Resolution.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Ebrahim Al-Khalifa, Chief Executive Officer of Bahrain Bourse and Vice Chairman & Managing Director of Bahrain Clear stated, "The roll-out of this market feature within the capital market is expected to attract significant international investment interest as well as form a stepping stone towards the achievements of an Emerging market status."

Bahrain participates in GCC eGovt meeting in Oman



Group photo of GCC eGovernment Executive Committee members

TDT | Manama

Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA) Chief Executive Mohammed Ali AlQaed headed the 20th GCC eGovernment Executive Committee Meeting - hosted during 24th and 25th of March by Oman. The highly esteemed meeting was attended by chief executives and general managers of GCC eGovernments.

During the meeting, the implemented resolutions of the General Secretariat's report were viewed. The committee also discussed the status of the eGovernment Strategic Guidelines- second phase.

Bahrain presented a study in the field of eGovernment Strategic Guidelines where Dr. Khalid Ahmed AlMutaawah - Enterprise Architecture & Information Technology Director at iGA - addressed the measures and requirements of



Mohammed Ali AlQaed

the next phase.

The committee presented - during the meeting - a study of utilizing framework agreements with ICT suppliers - provided by the Sultanate of Oman. It also discussed a proposal on developing the GCC Portal that the United Arab Emirates presented. After viewing the agenda of the 15th meeting for the National Center of Computer Emergency Response Committee, the committee approved the recommendation put forward.



Galleria Mall, Bahrain's open-plan shopping destination in New Zinj held its first food market. The theme of the food market was Discover #Block331GalleriaMall which offered a variety of cuisines served up by the tenant restaurants. The event was in support of the Royal Charity Organisation's Al Faris Project to donate insulin pumps to children with diabetes. Also present was the Bahrain Diabetic Society. The event also featured various entertainments and free blood sugar and blood pressure test



Sri Lanka opens work on \$3.85bn refinery



A man walks past a billboard of a construction site of an oil refinery and storage facility in the southern port city of Hambantota

Hambantota, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka began construction yesterday of a nearly \$4 billion oil refinery it hopes will revive foreign interest in its shipping facilities after Beijing's takeover of a nearby port spooked international investors. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said Hambantota, a district in Sri Lanka's south which lies on one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, would become a global investment hub with the addition of the oil refinery and storage complex.

The \$3.85 billion project is the single largest foreign investment in Sri Lanka's history. It is jointly funded by Oman and Singapore-registered Sil-

ver Park International, a company owned by an Indian business family.

"The interest shown by the Oman government, the interest shown by many other investors from other parts of the world shows that Hambantota will become a truly international investment zone," Wickremesinghe said Sunday.

Wickremesinghe also said he hoped to strike a deal within three months with Indian airport authorities to revive a \$210 million airport in Hambantota dubbed the "world's emptiest" international terminal for its lack of flights.

The oil storage tanks are expected to be completed within two years while the refinery is due to be up and running by 2023.



Kuwait Finance House employees who were recognised for their outstanding achievements and performance during the final quarter of 2018 under 'Fursan Baytik' Employee Recognition programme during a group photo opportunity at the award ceremony held at the bank's Headquarters in Bahrain World Trade Center with Abdulhakeem AlKhayyat, the Managing Director and CEO at KFH-Bahrain. AlKhayyat presented the awards and certificates. The employees honoured included Khalid Al Ammadi from the Shari'a Audit Department in the 'Teamwork' Award category, Khalid Al-Ammer from the Corporate Banking Group in the 'Teamwork' Award Category, and Imran Rafeeq from the Financial Control Department for the "Smart Performance" Award Category

MAX anti-stall software fix ready

New York, United States

A fix to the anti-stall system suspected in the crash of a Boeing 737 MAX 8 jet that killed 189 people in Indonesia is ready, industry sources said Saturday, as the company tries to avoid a lengthy grounding of its planes.

Boeing was due to present the patch to officials and pilots of US airlines -- American, Southwest and United -- in Renton, Washington state, where the plane is assembled, other sources said.

"Boeing has already finalized the necessary corrective measures for the MAX," an aviation sector source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will receive the patch "early next week," a government source added.

Asked how long the certification process could take after the

patch is in the hands of the authorities, this source said that nothing has been decided yet.

The FAA declined to comment. The Lion Air crash in Indonesia last October and another accident this month involving an Ethiopian Airlines jet, which killed 346 people between them, have raised major concerns about the safety certification of the 737 MAX 8 model.

The Ethiopian Airlines crash on March 10 led to the global grounding of 737 MAX planes.

Although it will take months to determine the exact cause of both crashes, investigators in the Lion case have honed in on the MCAS automated anti-stalling system designed to point the nose of the plane downward if it is in danger of stalling, or losing lift.

American Airlines and Southwest pilots were set to test simulators with the updates on Saturday, according to the sources.

Boeing neither

confirmed nor denied the information.

The FAA had given until April for Boeing to make the necessary changes to the critical anti-stall system, and on March 15 two anonymous industry sources told AFP the upgrade would be ready in about 10 days.

A spokesman for United Airlines, whose fleet includes 14 of the 737 MAX 9 planes, confirmed the company's attendance at the training session.

Consumer protection

Southwest and its SWAPA pilots union "have subject matter experts from our Technical Pilot Team and Training Teams headed to Boeing to review documentation and training associated with the modification to the B737 speed trim system," a spokeswoman said.

The company is one of the biggest 737 MAX 8 cus-

tom-

ers, owning 34 of the planes.

"We've been working diligently and in close cooperation with the FAA on the software update. We are taking a comprehensive and careful approach to design, develop and test the software that will ultimately lead to certification," a Boeing spokeswoman said.

"There will be training provided by Boeing."

In addition to the software modification, the industry sources said Boeing has also finalized updates to its flight and pilots' training manuals, as the FAA asked.

"We have been engaging with all 737 MAX operators and we are continuing to schedule meetings to share information about our plans for supporting the 737 MAX fleet," the Boeing spokeswoman said, declining to confirm the timeline for the changes.

In another

modification, the 737 MAX will be outfitted with a warning light for malfunctions in the anti-stall system, an industry source told AFP on Thursday, standardizing a feature previously sold as an optional extra.

Neither the Lion Air aircraft nor the Ethiopian Airlines jet had the feature, the industry source said.

US and Ethiopian authorities have said this month's crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight ET302 near Addis Ababa bore "similarities" to last year's Lion Air crash.

Since the Ethiopian crash, pressure has intensified on Boeing and the image of the company -- which also makes combat aircraft and space equipment -- has been eroded.

Share value of the firm, which says it is the world's largest aerospace manufacturer, has dropped 12 percent since the accident, wiping out \$28 billion in market capitalization. Boeing and the FAA are un-

der investigation by the Transportation Department over how the rollout of the jet was handled, including the anti-stall system.

The acting FAA head is among transport officials who are to testify on Wednesday before a congressional subcommittee.

Questioning is likely to focus on tight links between Boeing and the regulators, who maintain offices in the airplane factories and delegated a large part of the certification process for the 737 MAX and its anti-stall system to employees of Boeing, sources said.

Press reports say that the Department of Justice has also opened a criminal investigation into the 737 MAX's development.

Ralph Nader, the veteran US consumer protection advocate who lost a relative in the Ethiopia crash, called Friday for an organization to defend passengers' rights.



Jakarta opens mass rapid transit system

- The multi-billion dollar project is funded through a loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

- The train system runs above and below ground

- The line expects 130,000 daily passengers

Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia's capital inaugurated its first mass rapid transit system on Sunday, a \$1.1 billion project seen as crucial to tackling some of the world's worst traffic congestion.

President Joko Widodo and other officials joined a ceremony in Jakarta to give a green light for the 16-kilometre (10 mile) line, almost six years after construction began on the Japanese-backed project.

Tens of thousands of excited Jakartans were in attendance and eager to try riding on the subway for the first time, mobbing the president for selfies while music blared and traditional performers danced on a nearby stage.

"Honestly I am so happy," office worker Mutia Fitrianti told AFP. "Now we don't have to go abroad just to ride an MRT."

The train system runs above and below ground and stretches from the central Hotel Indonesia to the southern reaches of the Southeast Asian megalopolis of some 30 million people.

It aims to cut travel times between the two points to just



Passengers on board a Jakarta mass rapid transit (MRT) coach during a trial run in the city



Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (R) greets people gathered outside the Bundaran HI mass rapid transit (MRT) station

30 minutes from around two hours, offering some relief to frustrated commuters long used to spending much of their day stuck in traffic.

The new line is set to open to the public on Monday, with tickets free during the first week.

Construction on a second line linking downtown to Jakarta's northern port is also kicking off Sunday with completion slated for 2024, and more lines are envisioned in the future.

A separate elevated rail net-

work is also being built to link satellite cities with Jakarta, nicknamed the Big Durian after the pungent fruit that bitterly divides fans and its detractors.

The public transit projects are part of a sweeping infrastructure push that Widodo hopes will boost the fortunes of Southeast Asia's biggest economy -- and get him re-elected in national polls next month.

"If we have and integrated transportation system, it will be easier for people to go places

and they will leave their cars or motorcycles at home," Widodo told journalists yesterday.

Clogged streets

Over the past decade, rising incomes in the country of 260 million have created a ballooning middle class and sent vehicle ownership soaring.

But that's also brought hazardous air pollution and annual economic losses that run into the billions as cars crawl along the capital's roadways in the steamy tropical heat -- alongside an underused bus system.

Environmentalists hope that the new line will cut traffic-linked carbon emissions by about half.

It could also make a dent in annual economic losses of some 65 trillion Rupiah (\$4.6 billion) linked to road congestion.

The multi-billion dollar project is funded through a loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

"We think MRT Jakarta is the project of the century for us," JICA senior vice president Tanaka Yasushi told reporters.

But transport analysts have cautioned that the new line and cheap prices will not cure the traffic woes of a city infatuated with private vehicles and with few decent sidewalks.

"The MRT won't immediately ease the traffic because changing the culture and attitudes isn't easy," Hendi Bowoputro, a public transit expert at the University of Brawijaya, told AFP before the inauguration.

And the line's expected 130,000 daily passengers represent only about 10 percent of those who already cram into a decades-old commuter rail network.

Last hurdle for EU copyright reform in European Parliament

Strasbourg, France

The European Parliament will vote Tuesday on controversial copyright reforms championed by news publishers and the music business but criticised by big tech and internet freedom activists.

The run-up to the vote has seen furious lobbying and protests by both supporters and opponents of the law, which is designed to update European copyright legislation that is now nearly two decades old.

The reform, two years in the making, is loudly backed by media companies and artists, who want to obtain a better return from web platforms -- such as YouTube or Facebook -- that use their content.

It is strongly opposed by some of those same internet giants such as YouTube-owner Google, which make huge profits from the advertising generated on content they host, and also by supporters of a free internet, who fear it

will result in unprecedented restrictions to web freedom.

Tens of thousands of protesters rallied in cities around Germany on Saturday under the slogan "Save the Internet".

There were similar protests in Austria, Poland and Portugal on Saturday.

Germany is at the heart of the anti-reform movement, led by Julia Reda, a 32-year-old Pirate Party MEP, who has led a campaign against two of the law's provisions that have become flashpoints in the debate.

First is Article 13, which aims to strengthen the bargaining power of rights holders with platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Soundcloud, which use their content.

In the reform, for the first time European law would hold platforms legally responsible for enforcing copyright, requiring them to check everything that their users post to prevent infringement.



A protestor holds a plastic "Godzilla" and a portrait of German member of European Parliament Axel Voss during a demonstration under the slogan "Save The Internet" against the planned copyright law in Berlin

Apple eyes streaming, services

San Francisco, United States

Apple looks to begin a fresh reinvention today as it rolls out Hollywood stars for its new streaming television service, part of a broad shift of direction for the California technology giant.

Having seen a pullback in the once-sizzling smartphone market, Apple will seek to diversify by getting deeper into the television business, and with the likely launch of a subscription news service.

The iPhone maker, which has officially been mum on its plans, was expected to bring in Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon and "Star Wars" director J.J. Abrams to a launch event at its Silicon Valley headquarters.

"It seems fairly obvious they are launching a new video service," said Techspontaneous technology market analyst Avi Greengart.

Big questions to be answered include how compelling content will be; how much the service will cost, and what makes it unique in an increasingly crowded streaming television market, according to the analyst.

"If the content is compelling



Apple CEO Tim Cook attends the Economic Summit held for the China Development Forum in Beijing

enough, people will subscribe," Greengart said.

"This is not new, but it is hard to do well."

The event comes with Apple under pressure to diversify its revenues amid sluggish growth in smartphones, which have delivered the bulk of Apple's profits for the past decade.

While iPhone sales remain enviable, growth has stalled. Meanwhile, money Apple takes in from selling services or digital content has climbed.

The Cupertino-based company recently stopped disclosing iPhone sales numbers with

quarterly earnings releases and has taken to stressing the money-making potential of selling services, apps, music, movies and more to the millions of people using its devices.

The new service will be "a pivotal step for Cupertino in further driving its services flywheel and entering the 'streaming content arms race' which is clearly starting to take form," said Daniel Ives of Wedbush Securities in a research note.

Ives said he believes Apple's services business will be "worth roughly \$400 billion on a stand-alone basis."

Crowded stage

In streaming, Apple is taking on not just Netflix and Amazon but some of the biggest names in the media-entertainment world.

Walt Disney Co. has announced its new streaming service Disney+ will launch this year, as will another from WarnerMedia, the newly acquired media-entertainment division of AT&T.

The new entrants, with more

expected, could launch a formidable challenge to Netflix, which has some 140 million paid subscribers in 190 markets, and to other services such as Amazon and Hulu.

These rivals are coming into the segment which has been transformed by the spectacular growth of Netflix and a growing movement by consumers to on-demand television delivered over internet plat-

forms.

Subscriptions to online video services globally climbed 27 percent last year to 613 million, eclipsing cable television subscriptions for the first time, according to the Motion Picture Association of America.



What's new in news?

Apple is also widely believed to be set to launch a subscription news service described as a "Netflix for news" with partners in the media world.

A New York Times report said the Wall Street

Journal would be part of the Apple service likely to cost \$10 a month, but that many other news organizations including the prestigious New York daily and the Washington Post were balking due to Apple's demand for a 50 percent slice of revenue.

According to

Bloomberg News, the website Vox would also be part of the Apple News effort.

The move comes amid deepening woes for the news sector facing a difficult transition to the digital world where few people want to pay for information and advertising is problematic.

Along with investing some of its considerable war chest in original shows, Apple could try to spice up its streaming service by adding in benefits such as access to its music library or online storage capacity at iCloud.



Saudi stocks retreat

● Petrochemicals and banks weigh on Saudi index

● SHUAA Capital surges on merger talks

● Banking shares fall in Abu Dhabi

Reuters | Dubai



Traders on the floor of Saudi Stock market (Courtesy of Amazons)

Saudi Arabia's stock market closed lower yesterday, along with other Gulf markets, having ended the previous week at its highest in nearly four years after inclusion in the FTSE Russell's emerging-market index.

Saudi's Tadawul index will have a weighting of 2.9 per cent in the FTSE Emerging All Cap Index and this year will join the MSCI emerging market benchmark.

The Saudi index dropped 0.7pc yesterday, dragged down by petrochemical and banking shares.

Petrochemical companies Saudi Basic Industries and Saudi Kayan closed 1.1pc and 4.6pc down respectively. Sipchem lost 0.9pc after its chief executive Ahmad al-Ohali resigned following his appointment as Governor of the General Authority for Military Industries.

National Commercial Bank retreated by 1.1pc, Al Rajhi Bank eased by 0.4pc and Riyadh Bank

Closing Bell

SAUDI ▼ 0.7 pc to 8,647 pts

ABU DHABI ▼ 0.6 pc to 5,095 pts

DUBAI ▼ 0.4 pc to 2,619 pts

QATAR ▼ 0.6 pc to 9,890 pts

EGYPT ▲ 0.4 pc to 14,841 pts

KUWAIT ▲ 0.5 pc to 5,920 pts

OMAN ▼ 0.6 pc to 4,127 pts

BAHRAIN ▼ 0.3 pc at 1,423 pts

lost 1.1pc.

In Dubai, the main index dipped by 0.4pc, extending Thursday's losses, with the Dubai Islamic Bank falling 1pc and Emirates NBD losing 0.6pc.

Developers DAMAC Properties and Emaar Properties lost 2.1pc and 0.4pc respectively.

SHUAA Capital surged 15pc after announcing it was in talks with Abu Dhabi Financial Group on a potential merger. It said each party had formed

a working group to review the commercial potential of a deal.

The Abu Dhabi index closed 0.6pc down, with First Abu Dhabi Bank and Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank losing 0.9pc and 0.7pc respectively.

Qatar's index was off 0.6pc as Qatar National Bank gave up 1pc, Industries Qatar lost 0.8pc, and Commercial Bank fell by 1.9pc.

In Egypt, the index firmed by 0.4pc, helped by a 0.5pc gain for manufacturer Eastern Co and a 1.5pc rise for Commercial International Bank.

El Sewedy Electric Co also gained 1.5pc.

Arqaam Capital said in a note that it sees an increasing chance of a 50-100bps interest rate cut in Egypt because of a more dovish stance in the United States, strengthening the Egyptian pound, and continued portfolio inflows.

Abu Dhabi aims to lure start-ups with new technology hub

Reuters | Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi will commit up to 1 billion dirhams (\$272 million) to support technology start-ups, it said yesterday, in a dedicated hub as part of efforts to diversify its economy.

US tech giant Microsoft will be a strategic partner, providing technology and cloud services to the businesses that join the hub as the capital of the United Arab Emirates continues its push to reduce reliance on oil revenue.

Abu Dhabi derives about 50 per cent of its real gross domestic product and about 90pc of central government revenue from the hydrocarbon sector, according to ratings agency



General view of Abu Dhabi

S&P.

The emirate launched a 50 billion dirham (\$13.6 billion)

stimulus fund, Ghadan 21, in September last year to accelerate economic growth. Ghadan means tomorrow in Arabic.

The new initiative, named Hub 71, is linked to Ghadan will also involve the launch of a 500 million dirham fund to invest in start-ups, said Ibrahim Ajami, head of Mubadala Ventures, the technology arm of Mubadala Investment Co.

The goal is to have 100 companies over the next three to five years, Ajami said. "The market opportunities in this region are immense," he added.

Mubadala, with assets of \$225 billion and a big investor in tech companies, will act as the driver of the hub, located in the emirate's financial district.

Malaysia threatens EU fighter jet boycott over palm oil

● French lawmakers recently voted to remove palm oil from the country's biofuel scheme starting from next year

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Malaysia may retaliate against an EU plan to curb palm oil use by purchasing new fighter jets from China instead of European arms companies, its leader said yesterday.

The Southeast Asian country is the world's second largest palm oil producer after neighbouring Indonesia, and recently threatened to challenge the

bloc's plan to phase out its use in biofuels at the World Trade Organization. Both Malaysia and Indonesia have been at loggerheads with EU lawmakers over the crop's cultivation, which has caused rampant deforestation and destruction of wildlife.

In his strongest statement yet on the proposed curbs, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said his country could look elsewhere to upgrade its ageing air force fleet of Russian Mig-29 fighters -- in effect abandoning plans to purchase France's Rafale jet or the Eurofighter Typhoon.

"If they keep on taking action against us, we will think of buying airplanes from China or any other country," he was quoted as



Palm oil trees at the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) research station in Bukit Lawang in southern Johor state

saying by the official Bernama news agency. But the premier said he was not "declaring war" on the EU as his country needed goods from the bloc, many members of which are among Malaysia's top trading partners.

Mahathir's remarks come ahead of a five-day international defence exhibition starting Monday on the resort island of Langkawi, where representatives of global weapons manufacturers have gathered.

Any EU palm oil curbs could seriously hurt farmers who represent an important voter base in both Malaysia and Indonesia.

Both countries are struggling to spur demand in palm oil, which is used in everything from soap to chocolate.



Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad

celebs



Kylie Jenner

Kylie, Travis are planning a family vacation

Los Angeles

Reality TV personality Kylie Jenner and her beau and rapper Travis Scott are planning a family trip to focus on their relationship.

The pair want a “family trip with no distractions”, reports tmz.com. Scott was recently forced to deny claims he had cheated on Kylie, after he axed one of his tour dates due to illness.

His representative said: “Travis Scott vehemently denies he cheated on Kylie. It is not true. He did not cheat. He cancelled one show tonight because he is under the weather.”

Sources close to the pair previously said that Kylie had been having a “rough week” after her former best friend Jordyn Woods was accused of hooking up with Khloe Kardashian’s ex-partner Tristan Thompson and she then had an “argument” with Scott.



Travis Scott



Emilia Clarke

Emilia Clarke ‘overwhelmed’ by fans support after opening up about aneurysms

Los Angeles

Emilia Clarke, who recently revealed about her battle with brain aneurysms that nearly took her life, says she is “overwhelmed” and “profoundly moved” after fans and followers came forward in her support.

The “Game of Thrones” star on Saturday took to Instagram to express gratitude towards the audience after she shared her secret health scare in an essay for The New Yorker, which she faced soon after the success of the first season of the HBO epic-fantasy drama.

In the video, the actor said, “The response to my story has been overwhelming - and deeply and profoundly moving. Thank you so much.”

Clarke said she was surprised how many people resonated with her story.

“A million million thank you’s to everyone who has read shared and sent love for my story, it’s a beautiful thing to behold and I can’t quite believe how many of you this has affected!” she wrote as the caption.

The actor also tagged her charity, SameYou, which is dedicated to increasing access to rehabilitation after brain injury and stroke for young people.

“@sameyouorg is ready to hear your stories, how you recovered and what could have made that recovery experience better. By hearing your stories we can build a case for an improved aftercare experience for all in the future... who wouldn’t want that!” Clarke further said.

Streisand clarifies her remarks on MJ

Los Angeles

Veteran singer-actress Barbra Streisand has clarified the remarks she made about the recent allegations of underage sexual abuse against late King of Pop Michael Jackson.

“To be crystal clear, there is no situation or circumstance where it is okay for the innocence of children to be taken advantage of by anyone,” Streisand said in a statement, reported variety.com.

“The stories these two young men shared were painful to hear, and I feel nothing but sympathy for them. The single most important role of being a parent is to protect their children. It’s clear that the parents of the two young men were also victimized and seduced by fame and fantasy,” she added.

Streisand also posted an apology to Instagram.

“I am profoundly sorry for any pain or misunderstanding I caused by not choosing my words more carefully about Michael Jackson and his victims, because the words as printed do not reflect my true feelings. I didn’t mean to dismiss the trauma these boys experienced in any way.”

Halle Berry wanted to be in ‘John Wick 3’ even before script was written: Chad Stahelski

Los Angeles

“John Wick: Chapter 3 Parabellum” director Chad Stahelski has revealed that Hollywood star Halle Berry had expressed her desire to star in the film even before the team had finalised the script.

According to Entertainment Weekly, the Oscar-winning director said he was approached by Berry’s team in 2017.

“It was a right before the holidays (in 2017). I got a call saying, ‘Halle Berry would like to meet with you.’ I was like, ‘That’s cool.’ I’d never met her before. She came to my offices in Manhattan Beach the next day, walked right in, sat down, goes, ‘I want a part in John Wick 3.’

“I’m like, well, ‘That’s very flattering, but we don’t have a script yet.’ She said, ‘I don’t care.’ I’m like, ‘Well, I don’t even know if there’s a female (part).’ She goes, ‘I don’t care, I want to be in it, let’s party,’” Stahelski said.

The director called Berry five-months after their first meeting and was happy to know that the actor was still ready to star in the third installment of the action franchise led by Keanu Reeves.



Halle Berry

Eva Mendes wants to work with Ryan Gosling again

Los Angeles

Actress Eva Mendes, who has taken an extended hiatus from acting to care for her daughters Esmeralda and Amada, says she would return to the big screen and she would like to work with her husband and actor Ryan Gosling.

The two last starred with each other in the 2012 movie “The Place Beyond The Pines”.

Mendes told Extra magazine that she would “absolutely” work with Gosling again, adding: “I’m excited to go back to work, it’s just not, like, I’m dying to do a movie again, so it has to be something really special.”

She also said that she is the stricter parent to the couple’s daughters, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Eva Mendes



Ariana Grande wins big at Kids’ Choice Awards

Los Angeles

Ariana Grande, Shawn Mendes and Adam Sandler were among the big winners at the 2019 Nickelodeon Kids’ Choice Awards, where “Avengers: Infinity War” was named favourite film.

The event was held on Saturday at the Galen Center here. DJ Khaled hosted the kids-voted show, which dumped buckets of slime on unsuspecting celebrities, and handed out honours for

music, movies, TV and video games.

Producer-rapper Khaled, who won Favorite Collaboration for “No Brainer” with Justin Bieber, Chance the Rapper and Quavo, arrived at the ceremony after taking a yacht and a helicopter, with help from Kylie Jenner and the Jonas Brothers.



Ariana Grande

Elle Fanning ‘refused to watch’ sister Dakota on Friends after failing in audition

Los Angeles

Actor Elle Fanning has revealed she decided to boycott “Friends” after she could not clear the audition for a role in the cult show and her sister Dakota made the cut.

In an interview with the PorterEdit, the 20-year-old actor said, “I might be remembering this wrong but I think I was gonna be one of Phoebe’s triplets. I auditioned for it but I didn’t get it and I was like, ‘I’m boycotting the show, I’m nev-

er watching this again?’

“Then my sister was on it and I refused to watch the episode. I was like, “I am not watching this!” she added.

Friends, which started airing in 1994, was a worldwide phenomenon and continues to have a large fanbase.

The show, featuring Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry and David Schwimmer, enjoyed a decade long run on NBC.



Elle Fanning and Dakota Fanning

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SPORTS
sports

Spain survive Norway scare

● **Barella, Kean get Italy off the mark in Euro 2020 qualifiers**

● **Sergio Ramos scores decisive penalty for Spain**

AFP | Paris

Sergio Ramos scored a second-half penalty to help Spain beat a spirited Norway 2-1 on Saturday in their opening Euro 2020 qualifier, while teenage striker Moise Kean netted in Italy's win over Finland.

Spain were not at their clinical best in Valencia, but got their Group F campaign off to a solid start despite Norway threatening an upset.

The 2010 World Cup winners have been unpredictable at Russia in the last 16 of the World Cup and then missing out on the Nations League finals after a home loss to England.

"The team responded well to their equaliser. You always have the dream and aim of achieving something important," Ramos told Spanish television channel TVE.

"We're in a new stage with a coach who has a fantastic style of play. We'll take things game by game. We'll pick up more confidence from winning."

Coach Luis Enrique named an attacking line-up, with Marco Asensio, Alvaro Morata and



Sergio Ramos chips the ball past Norway's goalkeeper from the penalty spot

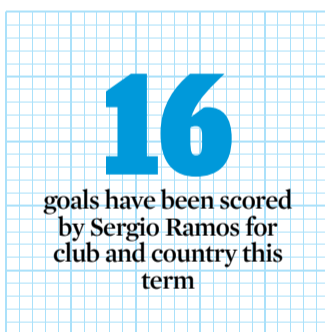
Rodrigo all starting, and it was the latter who volleyed home the opener from Jordi Alba's cross in the 16th minute.

Winger Jesus Navas created several other early chances for his teammates on his first Spain appearance since March 2014, but Rodrigo headed over and Morata was denied by away goalkeeper Rune Jarstein.

Norway started to grow into the game and were handed a chance to draw level in the 65th minute when Inigo Martinez grabbed Bjorn Johnsen, and Bournemouth striker Joshua King stepped up to slot past David de Gea.

Spain wasted little time in getting their noses back in front, though, as Jarstein felled Morata to concede a 71st-minute penalty.

Centre-back Ramos stepped up and confidently dispatched a 'Panenka' spot-kick down the middle to score his 16th goal of the season for club and country.



Kean makes his mark

Juventus youngster Kean, 19, became the youngest striker to start for Italy in more than a

century as Roberto Mancini's men saw off Finland 2-0.

Italy got off to a flying start in Udine, as Nicolò Barella gave them a seventh-minute lead with his maiden international goal.

The 22-year-old Cagliari midfielder hammered home a low volley after a free-kick was only half-cleared by the Finnish defence.

The day belonged to Kean, though, as he slotted in the second with 16 minutes to play to mark his full debut in style.

"To become part of Azzurri history is an added incentive to keep working," said Kean.

"There are many goals ahead of me and my aim is to achieve them. I wanted to show that I deserved this chance from Mancini."

F1 Fanzone to bring fun-filled challenges



Race-goers engage in activities at BIC's F1 Fanzone

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit's (BIC) off-track entertainment at this weekend's Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2019 would not be complete without a series of activities that give race fans a first-hand taste of life in motorsport. The F1 Fanzone provides just that.

A staple at BIC's Formula 1 Village vending area each year, the F1 Fanzone is the central place where Formula 1 aims to break down the barriers between the sport and race enthusiasts. It offers a variety of engagement activities that are similar to what is experienced by drivers, team personnel, and others involved in the world's leading racing championship.

These F1 Fanzone activities include F1 Esports, a Reaction Challenge, a Pitstop Challenge and a TV Challenge, plus an appearance of driver Bobble Heads. Each offers its own unique thrills, and they all add to the "Limitless" fun and excitement this Thursday to Sunday at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East" in Sakhir.

F1 Esports is where fans can race against 15 other competitors in the official Formula 1 video game. Battles are held throughout the day on the virtual Bahrain Grand Prix race track and the 10 quickest of each day get to go on an F1 Paddock tour with an accom-

panying guest of their choice. Meanwhile, Formula 1 drivers have some of the quickest reaction speeds in the world, and the Reaction Challenge gives fans a chance to test their own such abilities.

This family activity calls on teams of four to press as many of the flashing lights as possible on an F1 steering wheel in the space of one minute. The fastest participants get to win a prize along with the ultimate bragging rights.

The Pit-stop Challenge gives fans an insight into what it takes to be a part of a world-class pit crew. This activity gives three teams of six the chance to compete against each other in a knockout competition changing Pirelli tyres on a Formula 1 car.

A contest for the top three teams are held daily, with an F1 Paddock tour awaiting the entire winning team. Formula 1 will bring a pitstop crew from one of the top flight's teams to do a pitstop demonstration for the fans, and even compete against some of them.

The F1 TV Challenge lets participants experience what life is like as a Formula 1 commentator.

Those who take part can choose between three top moments from a Grand Prix and receive those clip to share on social media after activation. The clip with the most likes during the day will receive a prize from Formula 1.

BIC's luxurious Corporate Lounges sold

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) announced today that all 34 of its Corporate Lounges have been completely sold out for this weekend's Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2019.

Strategically located at the upper-most level of the Main Grandstand, the Corporate Lounges offer an exclusive, first-class setting from where to enjoy the region's biggest sporting and entertainment spectacle, scheduled for this Thursday to Sunday in Sakhir.

Each lounge delivers a stunning view of the most crucial parts of the circuit, including the start and finish lines, the main straight, the Formula 1 Pit Lane and the winners' podium.

Brazil denied victory by determined Panama

AFP | Porto, Portugal

Brazil were held to a 1-1 draw against Panama in an international friendly played at Porto's Dragao Stadium on Saturday.

AC Milan's Lucas Paqueta claimed his first international goal for the five-time World Cup winners before captain Adol-



Brazil's Lucas Paqueta scored his first international goal against Panama



Brazil's Lucas Paqueta shoots to score

fo Machado responded for the side in 76th place in the world rankings.

Injured Paris Saint-Germain forward Neymar watched the game from the stands as he recovers from a fractured right foot.

"The performance wasn't brilliant but it wasn't below par either," coach Tite said.

"When we go to the Copa America we will make more accurate choices to be more efficient."

The Selecao opened the

scoring just after the half-hour mark.

Midfielder Paqueta was on the end of a deep Casemiro cross to volley home at the back post.

Skipper Machado brought the teams level four minutes later.

Erick Davis' central free-kick found the centre-back near the penalty spot who lobbed his long-distance header over a stunned Ederson who appealed for offside.

Everton attacker Richarlison came close to bagging his side's second as his effort smashed the crossbar five minutes after the break.

Real Madrid's Casemiro had two chances to win the game for Tite's outfit with a header and a powerful shot with quarter of an hour remaining.

Both teams made a wave of substitutions in the closing moments and Eder Militao went close with an injury-time header.

Title race will go down to the wire - Beckenbauer

AFP | Berlin

Germany legend Franz Beckenbauer has warned former club Bayern Munich they will have to fight until the very last day of the season in a nail-biting Bundesliga title race.

With eight games to go, Bayern are level on points with Borussia Dortmund at the top of the table as they chase a seventh successive league crown.

In recent months, champions Bayern have overturned what was once a nine-point deficit to nose ahead of Dortmund on goal difference.

Yet Beckenbauer has said on Sunday that the title race is a long way from being over.

Osaka, Zverev stunned

Serena Williams withdraws from Miami Open due to knee injury

● Ferrer topples third-ranked Zverev in Miami

● Hsieh shocks Osaka to reach fourth round

AFP | Miami

Naomi Osaka crashed out of the third round of the WTA and ATP Miami Open on Saturday as Hsieh Su-Wei exacted revenge for a painful Australian Open defeat with a 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 victory.

World number one Osaka had looked in little danger after winning the first set and moving a break ahead in the second.

But Taiwan's Hsieh, who was a set and 4-1 up in Melbourne earlier this year before losing to the Japanese star in the third round, battled superbly.

"This was a very emotional win for me," said Hsieh, whose 39 winners were one less than her opponent. "Any time you beat one of the top players it is amazing."

It wasn't the only shocker of the day, as Spanish veteran David Ferrer rallied to beat world number three Alexander Zverev 2-6, 7-5, 6-3 to reach the third round.

Ferrer, 36 and ranked 155th in the world, received a wild card into the tournament as he



Naomi Osaka of Japan reacts in her match against Su-Wei Hsieh of Taipei

continues a limited schedule in a 2019 billed as his farewell tour.

Zverev, runner-up to John Isner here last year, coughed up 12 double faults as he suffered

his second straight early exit in succession after a third-round

departure at Indian Wells.

Osaka was coming off a fourth-round exit at Indian Wells, but Hsieh's coach said her victory wasn't all that surprising.

"She has enough experience to stay strong and you saw that,"

French coach Frederic Aniere, who has worked with Hsieh for the last two years and is also her boyfriend, told AFP.

"Yes it's huge, but for her it's not a big surprise."

Osaka's second-round win

over Belgian Yanina Wickmayer on Friday saw a second set wobble from the two-time Grand Slam winning star and it was more of the same against Hsieh, who simply refused to give up the fight.

"I was kind of immature because I was thinking too much, like everything was on my racquet," admitted Osaka. "I got ahead of myself."

"Of course I want to win every match and I think I have dealt with people always asking me if I am going to win because I have number one next to my name," added the Japanese star.

"I thought I was doing fine with that but I guess I am not."

Injured Serena withdraws

The 33-year-old Hsieh will play Caroline Wozniacki in the fourth round of the women's draw, which now looks wide open following Osaka's defeat and former world number one Serena Williams's surprise exit with a left knee injury.

The American has completed just seven matches this year, withdrawing in Indian Wells with illness midway through a round of 32 match with Garbine Muguruza.

There are surely doubts now that the 37-year-old can add to her tally of 23 Grand Slams, something which has so far proved beyond her since return-



Alexander Zverev, runner-up to John Isner at the ATP Miami Open last year, coughed up 12 double faults as he suffered his second straight early exit in succession after a third-round departure at Indian Wells

ing last year after taking time out following the birth of her first child.

With Williams out, Wang Qiang, the 18th seed from China, advances to the fourth round on a walkover.

In the late game, unseeded Canadian Bianca Andreescu beat Angelique Kerber for the second time in a week 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, outlasting the German eighth seed in a two hour, nine minute three setter.

The duo also met in the WTA Indian Wells final, with Andreescu winning 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.

Federer rallies to beat 46th-ranked Albot in Miami opener

AFP | Miami

Roger Federer battled back from a set down to overcome 46th-ranked Radu Albot 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 on Saturday and reach the third round of the ATP and WTA Miami Open.

Moldova's Albot superbly took hold of the match and posed plenty of problems for the 20-time Grand Slam winning legend, who took a while to get adjusted to the new surroundings at the Hard Rock Stadium.

But the Swiss star's class and experience eventually shone through as he booked a round of 32 match with Serbian Filip Krajinovic who surprised three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka 5-7, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) earlier in the afternoon.

"I definitely think Radu played a great match, it was really tough and I struggled early on," admitted Federer, a three time Miami Open champion.

"I am very relieved and happy to make it through. It was a great atmosphere."

Moldovan Albot, 29, is enjoying a rich vein of form and arrived in Miami at a career high ranking.

He had never played the Swiss legend before but wasted little time in breaking Federer's serve in the very first game before holding for 2-0.

He was anything but overawed by facing Federer and it was no surprise to see him wrap



Roger Federer of Switzerland in action against Radu Albot of Moldova

up the first set and leave the world number five with plenty of work to do.

Federer missed a break point opportunity at 4-3, Albot then crashing home a winner to

"I definitely think Radu played a great match, it was really tough and I struggled early on. I am very relieved and happy to make it through. It was a great atmosphere"

ROGER FEDERER

heap the pressure back onto the 37-year-old before brilliantly sealing the first set.

The pro-Federer crowd were stunned, but the Swiss upped his game in the second, hitting 15 winners and five aces as well as saving a break point to keep carefree Albot at bay and take an entertaining tussle into a third set.

Federer managed to keep the pressure on and cracked the Moldovan who was serving at 3-4.

After a brilliant one handed backhand down the line from Federer clipped the line, Albot hit long once more and that gave Federer the break and opportunity to serve out for the match and move into the next round and a meeting with the 103rd-ranked Krajinovic.

Referees must not penalise all contact in box, says Maguire

Reuters | London

Referees should not penalise players for making contact with their opponents inside the penalty area unless it is a legitimate foul, Leicester City defender Harry Maguire has said.

Maguire, 26, believes defenders should be allowed to mark their man closely without the risk of conceding a "soft" penalty.

"It's up to the laws as to what is deemed soft, but I don't think you can outlaw all contact in the box because that's how you defend," Maguire was quoted as saying by The Guardian. "You get tight to your man and try to use your strength."

"I do believe there still has to be some contact in the game because if you are not bumping into your man at a corner you are not getting tight enough."

"A little push or a nudge should not be enough for a penalty, but being silly by grabbing someone round the neck is obviously different."

Maguire, who is currently with the England squad for their European Championship qualifiers, will miss Leicester's next game after he was sent off for fouling Johann Berg Gudmundsson in the fourth minute of their 2-1 win at Burnley last weekend.

Maguire did not complain about the decision as he was the last defender when he fouled the Iceland winger who was

through on goal.

"As soon as I heard the whistle I knew it was a red card," Maguire added. "I've heard people saying it was harsh because I didn't mean to touch him but the rules are clear."

"He was going clear on goal and I clipped his heels. The referee got it right."

Harry Maguire



Give finger spinner a role at World Cup, says Harbhajan

Reuters | Mumbai

Harbhajan Singh dismissed a trio of top batsmen in the Indian Premier League's opener on Saturday before underlining the importance of a finger spinner to India's cause at the upcoming Cricket World Cup.

Playing for champions Chennai, Harbhajan sent back Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) skipper Virat Kohli, former South Africa batting mainstay AB de Villiers and England all-rounder Moeen Ali on a MA Chidambaram Stadium track that offered assistance to slow bowlers.

Wrist spinners, once considered a luxury for their penchant to bleed runs in the chase for wickets, have taken the limited-overs formats by storm and banished their finger spin cousins to the fringes.

Five of top 10 spots in International Cricket Council's rankings for one-day international bowlers are occupied by wrist spinners - Afghanistan's Rashid Khan, Imran Tahir of South Africa, Indian pair Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal, and England's Adil Rashid.

Harbhajan, who played 103 tests and 236 ODIs for India, said there is a perception that wrist spinners have more chance of success as they possess more variations in their armoury.