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Thursday 23 August 2018 | 12 Dhul-Hijja | 1439

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Volume 23 | Number 7627 | 2 Riyals



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# Eid entertainment shows draw thousands to malls

RAYNALD C RIVERA  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Shopping malls have emerged as the major destination this Eid holidays as they continue to bring joy to thousands of visitors including children and families with unique kid-friendly shows and activities.

The malls particularly those taking part in the Qatar Summer Festival (QSF) organised by Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) have proved a magnet to multitude of visitors with their lineup of entertainment offerings coupled with promotions.

Their live stage shows catered mainly to young children and presented several times daily witness huge number of families.

Yesterday, Mall of Qatar's (MoQ) Ooredoo Stage saw hundreds of young spectators watching SpongeBob SquarePants and Friends as they performed for the first time in Qatar their world class 'I Heart Dancing' show taking the audience through SpongeBob SquarePants' story as he tirelessly trains for his big dance audition. In addition, children also had the chance to meet SpongeBob SquarePants at the exclusive activity area.

"Coming to Mall of Qatar today is definitely worth our time because of the variety of shows and activities which my children

**Mall of Qatar's Ooredoo Stage saw hundreds of young spectators watching SpongeBob SquarePants and Friends as they performed for the first time in Qatar their world class 'I Heart Dancing' show, while a local children's choir entertained the audience with a live performance of "Riding Free".**

have all enjoyed. They were very happy to see SpongeBob and other characters in person," said Juliana, a mother of two.

She expressed happiness of the longer Eid holidays which means they have plenty of time to spare watching mall shows for free. "We are planning to visit other malls as well to see the other shows in the coming days," she added.

Another crowd-puller at MoQ was a local children's choir entertaining the audience with a live performance of "Riding Free", the theme song of "Spirit-Riding Free" which is a new Netflix series launched by Dreamworks and beIN.

In addition, children also engaged in fun activities including a barn-like fully equipped sound-proof studio where they could record their own version of the song.

Many children also took part in the live interactive game show by Al Rayyan TV. The show being staged in partnership with the Ministry of Education as part of their back to school campaign gave away prizes and comprised other interactive activities including face painting and creative workshops.

"With a combination of shows and interactive activities, Mall of Qatar has become a one-stop shop to entertain as well as hone children's skills in preparation for the school opening," said Anthony, a parent who was with his young daughter watching the show.

"We as parents are very much pleased that the shows and activities are both entertaining and educational," he added.

Doha Festival City's (DHFC) Eid offerings which centre on the adorable character Ben 10 is also a big hit drawing hundreds of families to the range of shows and interactive activities. DHFC has partnered with Cartoon Network, one of the most popular kids channel to bring the popular show and other Ben 10 activities to the mall-goers.

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Families and children watching SpongeBob SquarePants live show as part of Eid celebrations at Mall of Qatar, yesterday. PIC:ABDUL BASIT / THE PENINSULA

## Foreign Minister, US Secretary of State review ties



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met yesterday with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, during an official visit to the United States of America. The meeting focused on discussing bilateral relations and the means to enhance them, in addition to discussing the latest regional developments.

## Demand for budget hotel rooms and serviced apartments rises

MOHAMMAD SHOEB  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The demand for budget hotel rooms and serviced apartments in Qatar has witnessed a significant growth in June 2018 compared to the corresponding month last year.

This surge in demand was recorded despite the ongoing blockade against Qatar.

The average occupancy rate for hotel apartments saw a double-digit growth. The demand for hotel apartment in June 2018 increased by a remarkable 11 points to 73 percent in June 2018 compared to 62 percent in the same month last year.

The occupancy for the deluxe apartments surged to 73 percent in June this year against 59 percent a year ago. While the demand for standard category apartments remained unchanged at 69 percent in June this year.

Three-Star hotels registered the highest rate of occupancy among all segments of hotel rooms. The occupancy rate in this category of hotels surged to 69 percent in June 2018, up by 9 percent compared to the same month last year, while the occupancy rate for 2 & 1-Star hotels touched 54 percent against 50 percent in June 2017.

The average occupancy rate of hotel rooms in all categories (including 4 and 5-Star hotels) stood at 59 percent in June 2018, which is about three points lower than the 62 percent recorded in June last year, latest data released by the Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics show.

The occupancy rate of 5-Star hotels in June 2018 declined to 55 percent from 61 percent a year ago, and 4-Star hotels' occupancy fell to 60 percent from 63 percent (in June last year).

The average room rate (of all categories of hotels) declined to QR398 in June 2018, down by 13.66 percent compared to QR461 in the same month previous year.

The average tariff for 5-Star rooms in June 2018 reduced to QR582 from QR638 in June 2017 (down by QR56), and room rates for 4-Star and 3-Star hotels declined to QR250 and QR185 in June this year from QR302 and QR255 (same month last year), respectively. While the rates for 2&1-Star hotels were reduced to QR147 from QR199 a year ago.

The average revenue per available room (in all categories of hotels) fell to QR234 against QR284 in June last year, down by QR50 per room.

The average revenue per available room in 5-Star hotels declined to QR323 in June 2018 from QR388 in the corresponding month last year, down by QR65 per available room.

## Sidra treats 600 children's emergency cases since July

FAZEENA SALEEM  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Sidra Medicine has treated more than 600 cases at its Children's Emergency Department (CED) and Urgent Care Clinic since the opening in July this year.

Sidra Medicine's CED treats serious emergency cases of children up to the age of 18, including loss of consciousness, severe trouble in breathing, major bone fractures, seizures and convulsions and other emergencies. Children and young people admitted to the CED are treated free of charge.

At the same time, it operates a Children's Urgent Care Clinic (UCC) in the same location. The clinic treats non-emergency cases including upper respiratory issues such as sore throats and coughs, rashes, or low-grade fever.

"As an emergency department, we want to keep focus of our time and resources on true emergency cases like the ones mentioned above. We are of course equipped and able to treat cases like mild fevers and colds, however, such care can be administered out of hospital," Peter Morris Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sidra

Medicine told *The Peninsula*.

When parents with children require non-emergency care choose to come to the Sidra Medicine CED for treatment, they are directed to the UCC. "Our team of highly qualified and experienced staff determines the urgency of treatment and the appropriate level of care required on site."

Following the successful opening, Sidra Medicine is engaged in continuous testing and training of its facilities and operations to ensure the department is always at the leading edge of world-class patient care.

"For example, we are working together with Qatar's Ambulance Services to provide an immediate response for children's emergency cases. Just recently, Sidra Medicine's CED team took part in a practice run to airlift children to Sidra Medicine as part of an ongoing series of simulation exercises designed to ensure a culture of safety," said Morris.

The CED and Urgent Care Clinic together have 60 rooms and are expected to treat approximately 20,000 patients in the first 12 months. That number is expected to increase to 50,000 patients per year over time.

The CED offers 24-hour care and is staffed by an international team with the highest qualifications in paediatric emergency care, including physicians, nurses, emergency medical technicians and imaging and lab professionals.

The Department of Pediatrics at Sidra Medicine is guided by a holistic approach that is family-centred, focusing on empowering patients in their care and is guided by evidence and research.

The pediatric services offered at Sidra Medicine include a comprehensive range of advanced medical

care for children.

"Our surgical program covers a wide spectrum of needs including orthopedics, ophthalmology, general surgery, urology, neurosurgery and plastic surgery.

"Recently, we announced the success of a series of complex surgeries including a complex neurosurgery and in July, the first open-heart surgery performed at Sidra Medicine.

"Our Cardiac Program provides all aspects of medical, interventional and surgical care for patients with congenital or acquired heart disease," said Morris.



# Families throng Eid festivities at Souq Al Wakra

AMNA PERVAIZ RAO  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Eid Al Adha Festival 2018 at Souq Al Wakra attracted big number of families along with children on second day of Eid. The festival will continue till Sunday. The festival is organised by the Private Engineering Office to engage children with several colourful activities during the Eid holidays.

Talking to *The Peninsula*, Khalid Saif Al Suwaidi, Head of Souq Al Wakra said: “On behalf of Souq Al Wakra, we wish Eid Mubarak to people living in Qatar. We inaugurated the festival yesterday at 3:30pm and will continue till Sunday.”

“This year we have organised the festival in a new manner and none of the activity was repeated from the last year. We have organised this festival just for families and children. Various playful activities at the festival are free of cost for children with disabilities. We are providing care-takers as well male and female both depending on the family’s requirement.”

Speaking about the activities, Al Suwaidi said: “We have 25 different games at the festivals especially designed for kids. We have face painting, drawing, painting, skill games, video games and many more games for kids. We have pony rides located outside the festival tent, which is again very exciting for kids.”

He said that the management was

The management was organising four hour-long shows daily filled with entertainment. The family beach located at Al Wakra Souq is also now open as the development works have come to an end. Now Families can enjoy swimming at Souq Al Wakra beach as well.

organising four one-hour long shows daily filled with entertainment. “The performers have come from four different countries which include, England, Spain, Lebanon and France. The cost of games and shows are only QR10 which is very reasonable just to maintain the decorum of the festival.”

The family beach located at Al Wakra Souq is also now open for families as the development works have come to an end. Now Families can enjoy swimming at Souq Al Wakra beach as well. “We have finished making changing rooms, shower area and bathrooms. We are providing life jackets for the safety purpose and we have life guards at the beach too,” said Al Suwaidi.

Families with children enjoyed live shows followed with a number of



Khalid Saif Al Suwaidi, Head of Souq Al Wakra during an interview with *The Peninsula* yesterday. RIGHT: Kids enjoying the painting and drawing section at Eid Al Adha Festival 2018 in Souq Al Wakra. PIC: AMNA PERVAIZ RAO / THE PENINSULA

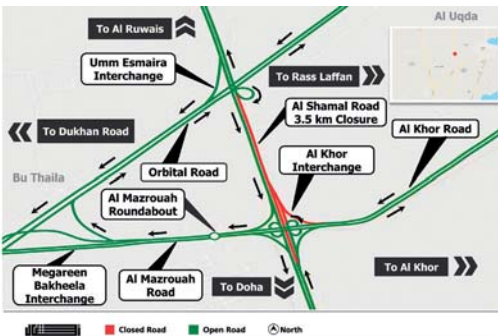


## Four-hour closure on northbound lanes of Al Shamal Road

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Public Works Authority ‘Ashghal’ will temporarily close 3.5km of the north-bound lanes on Al Shamal Road between Al Khor Interchange and Umm Esmira Interchange in order to complete the installation of the last remaining signage gantry of the Orbital Road.

The diversion, designed in coordination with the General Directorate of Traffic, will be



implemented on Friday, (August 24) and will be in place from Mazrouah Road, go straight

4am to 8am (four hours). Road users travelling northbound along Al Shamal Road heading to Al Ruwais will be required to exit at Al Khor Interchange and take the second exit towards Al Mazrouah Road, go straight

through Al Mazrouah roundabout then keep right and take the slip road signposted “Al Ruwais”. Follow the road for 500m then take the right exit loop at Umm Esmira Interchange back onto Al Shamal Road and continue their journey to Al Ruwais.

The Public Works Authority will install the new guiding signage, and has urged all road users to abide by the reduced speed limit at 80 kph and follow the new signs for their safety.

## QRC provides emergency aid to quake-hit Lombok

DOHA: The Qatar Red Crescent (QRC) has announced that it will provide emergency assistance to those affected by the recent earthquake in the Indonesian island of Lombok at a cost of \$ 200,000. The QRC said in a statement that the assistance is to provide non-food relief items, which include a shelter package, such as plastic sheets, blankets, mosquito nets, and water-saving containers.

The assistance also includes the provision of health services of first aid, personal hygiene and awareness packages for the benefit of 700 affected families. On August 5, the Qatar Red Crescent launched the Emergency Information Management Center to follow up on the latest developments of the earthquake and is in constant contact with the partners of the International Movement and the National Assembly in Indonesia to follow up the situation there.

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LEFT: The Superheroes of Avengers doubles taking pictures with fans as part of Eid celebrations held at Lagoona Mall yesterday. RIGHT: The Sleeping Beauty Show as part of Eid celebrations held at Lagoona Mall yesterday. PIC: BAHER AMIN / THE PENINSULA

# Entertainment shows draw thousands to malls

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The three Ben 10 live shows as well as the activity zone witnessed hundreds of children yesterday. The young children relished an unforgettable experience with all the aliens from Heathblast to Four Arms at the designated arts and crafts sessions area of the mall.

Also a big draw was the Ben 10 Hero Experience AR Pod, an augmented reality platform which allows children to transform into an alien.

Another crowd-drawer at DHFC was Al Rayyan TV's "Ya'Alaydo" show which featured audience interaction and live performance by TV personalities.

The timeless tale of "Sleeping Beauty" was the main attraction at Lagoona Mall. The show featured 11 cast members who flew all the way from the United Kingdom to bring to life one of the oldest and most beloved fairy tales.

Many of "The Avengers" fans, both young and old, were seen seizing the opportunity to take photos with famous characters in complete costumes including Iron Man, Spider-Man, Captain America, and Black Panther. They are part of the roaming shows which rotate



ABOVE: Peter Pan's Adventure show at Mall of Qatar. RIGHT: The SpongeBob SquarePants live show at Mall of Qatar. PIC: ABDUL BASIT / THE PENINSULA

around the participating malls which also include Peter Pan's Adventure, Levitation Man, Characters from Frozen, The Roaming Robots, and Qatar Traditional Dance.

At Mirqab Mall, the delightful Minions brought smiles to hundreds of young children in the audience who danced along with the yellow creatures from the popular ani-

mated comedy film.

Other QSF participating malls including Al Khor Mall, B Square Mall, Dar Al Salam Mall, Gulf Mall, Hyatt Plaza and Landmark Mall also witnessed visitors in huge numbers flock to see their colourful shows and take part in different activities.

Yesterday's shows and activities at Al Khor Mall included Characters from

Frozen, Syrian Arda, Magic Show and balloon twisting and face painting while Gulf Mall had the Roaming Robots entertain mall-goers. Visitors at Landmark, on the other hand, enjoyed the Avengers characters while those who chose to visit Hyatt Plaza enjoyed watching Robinhood and Levitation Man. On show at the Dar Al Salam Mall was The Princess and the



Beast and Qatar traditional dance while B Square Mall presented Peter Pan's Adventure in addition to activities such as face painting and henna.

Meanwhile, various outlets at the malls continue offering discounts and promotions, among which is a chance to win any of big the cash prizes as well as a Lamborghini Huracan (2018 model) luxury super car at the final draw at the end of this month to be held at DHFC.



LEFT: Al Rayyan TV show "Ya'Alaydo", performed as part of Eid celebrations at Doha Festival City. RIGHT: The Rust Bucket Camping Adventure Live Show, organised at part of Eid celebrations at Doha Festival City. PIC: QASSIM RAHMATULLAH / THE PENINSULA

# Hundreds of migrant workers celebrate Eid with fervour

QNA

**DOHA:** Hundreds of migrant workers in the country participated in the celebrations on the occasion of the blessed Eid Al Adha, at various areas in the country, while the Ministries of Interior and Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs provided important awareness items for the members of the communities.

Festive events were held in the Asian village of the Industrial City, Barwa Al Baraha near the industrial zone, and at the Barwa leisure complex for workers in Al Khor city.

The celebrations included many artistic and heritage pieces that reflect the cultures of a number of Asian peoples such as India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and other countries with a long-standing artistic

heritage spanning hundreds of years.

During the celebrations, the Ministry of the Interior provided awareness-raising activities on security and safety and the role of community policing in enhancing relations with the public and enhancing security and order, as well as shedding light on some laws relating to residence and work within the State, worker's rights and duties

and other related matters.

In turn, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs presented awareness clauses on the Labor Law, the workers' rights and the duties stipulated therein, as well as the services provided by the Ministry to all citizens and residents.

The migrant workers attend the Eid celebration programmes.





# Palestinians reject US overtures on east Jerusalem

AFP

**RAMALLAH:** Palestinian leaders rejected overtures by US President Donald Trump yesterday after he said they would get something “very good” in exchange for his country recognising Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

Senior Palestinian official Ahmad Al Tamimi said the US President’s assertion that he had removed Jerusalem from future negotiations was “a continuation of the US policies in favour of Israel”.

Speaking to official Palestinian news agency Wafa, he added that Trump’s push for a Israeli-Palestinian peace deal was impossible without “recognising east Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state”.

The December decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and move the US embassy to the city sparked fury among Palestinians, with the political leadership cutting off ties to the US administration.

Palestinians see the eastern part of the disputed city as the capital of their future state.

The opening of the US embassy on May 14 saw mass protests and clashes on the Gaza border in which at least 63 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire.

Speaking to supporters in the United States on Tuesday, Trump again defended the move, saying he had eased future negotiations.

“If there’s ever going to be peace — remember I said it — with the Palestinians, it was a good thing to have done because we took it off the table, because every time there were peace talks they never got past Jerusalem,” Trump said at a rally in the US state of West Virginia. “And you know what, in the (future) negotiations Israel

**Senior Palestinian official Ahmad Al Tamimi said the US President’s assertion that he had removed Jerusalem from future negotiations was “a continuation of the US policies in favour of Israel”.**

will have to pay a higher price because they won a very big thing.” “Now (Jerusalem’s) off the table, there is nothing to negotiate. But they (the Palestinians) will get something very good because it’s their turn next.” The move has greatly complicated efforts by Trump’s administration to broker what he has called the “ultimate deal,” as the Palestinians will no longer accept US mediation.

Speaking in Jerusalem yesterday, Trump’s national security adviser John Bolton said he hoped the Palestinian leadership would move on from the embassy issue.

“As a dealmaker, as a bargainer, he would expect, you would expect, I would expect that the Palestinians would say ‘ok, great, so we didn’t get that one, now we want something else, and we’ll see how it goes’,” Bolton told journalists.

Saeb Erekat, secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, rejected Bolton’s comments and said east Jerusalem must be the capital of a Palestinian state.

“The words of Bolton are nonsense and don’t correspond to reality,” Erekat said in a statement.

“You cannot talk about peace without Jerusalem being the capital of an independent Palestinian state on the basis of the 1967 borders.”

# Iran regime change not US policy: Bolton

REUTERS

**JERUSALEM:** US sanctions are having a strong effect on Iran’s economy and popular opinion, though regime change there is not part of Washington’s policy, US President Donald Trump’s national security adviser said yesterday. The Trump administration re-imposed sanctions this month after withdrawing from the 2015 international nuclear deal with Iran, which Washington saw as inadequate for curbing Tehran’s activities in neighbouring Middle East countries and denying it the means to make an atomic bomb.

The US turnaround outraged Iran, which has taken a defiant stance, and has rattled other world powers where some businesses have been debating whether to divest from the Islamic Republic.

“Let me be clear, the reimposition of the sanctions, we think, is already having a significant effect on Iran’s economy and on, really, popular opinion inside Iran,” National Security Adviser John Bolton said.

At a news conference in Jerusalem, Bolton was asked whether the United States had discussed any plans with Israel on how to capitalise on economic protests in Iran and if the demonstrations posed any tangible threat to the



US National Security Adviser John Bolton attends a press conference in Jerusalem, yesterday.

Tehran government. “Just to be clear, regime change in Iran is not American policy. But what we want is massive change in the regime’s behaviour,” Bolton said.

“I think the effects, the economic effects certainly, are even stronger than we anticipated,” Bolton said. “But Iranian activity in the region has continued to be belligerent: what they are doing in Syria, what they are doing with

Hezbollah in Lebanon, what they are doing in Yemen, what they have threatened to do in the Strait of Hormuz.” The Strait is a strategic waterway for oil shipments which Iran’s Revolutionary Guards have threatened to block in response to Trump administration calls to ban all Iranian oil exports. At the news conference, Bolton said: “We are going to do other things to put pressure on Iran as well, beyond economic

sanctions.” He did not elaborate.

Meanwhile, Germany called on Tuesday for Europe to set up payment systems independent of the United States if it wants to save the Iran nuclear agreement.

“We expect that Europeans will see, as businesses all over Europe are seeing, that the choice between doing business with Iran or doing business with the United States is very clear to them,” Bolton said.

# Syria’s Al Qaida leader vows to fight on in Idlib province

AP

**BEIRUT:** The leader of Syria’s Al Qaida affiliate has vowed to fight on in Idlib province, the country’s last major rebel stronghold, in the face of a possible government offensive there.

The rare public statement by Abu Mohammed Al Golani came as Syrian President Bashar Assad’s forces have been sending reinforcements into areas around Idlib in the country’s northwest, along the border with Turkey.

The United States, Britain and France have expressed concern at reports of the Syrian military targeting civilians, schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure in Idlib and underlined “concern at the potential for further — and illegal — use of chemical weapons” to bring the province under government control.

In Jerusalem, US National Security Adviser John Bolton warned Syria against using chemical weapons as it prepares to launch an offensive on Idlib, vowing a tough US response if

that happens. “We are obviously concerned about the possibility that Assad may use chemical weapons again. We had hoped that our (air) strikes had created structures of deterrents to convince the Assad regime not to do that,” Bolton said. “But, just so there’s no confusion here, if the Syrian regime uses chemical weapons we will respond very strongly.”

In return, Syria’s Foreign Ministry lashed out at the West, especially the US, France and Britain, for what it called a “campaign of threats.”

# Suicide attack in Iraq province leaves 6 tribal fighters dead

**BAGHDAD:** Six Sunni tribal fighters were killed yesterday, and another 30 people injured, in a suicide attack in Iraq’s Saladin province north of Baghdad, according to a local police source.

“A suicide bomber detonated his explosive device at a checkpoint manned by pro-government Hashd Al Ashaeri fighters... in the town of Shirqat north of provincial capital Tikrit,” Police Lieutenant Salahuddin Al Jabouri said. Although no group has claimed responsibility for the deadly attack, Al Jabouri pointed the finger at the IS terrorist group.

Last year, officials in Baghdad declared that IS military presence in Iraq had been all but destroyed following three years of conflict with the Iraqi army and a US-led international coalition. The notorious terrorist group, however, still appears to maintain a limited presence in certain parts of the country.

# Morocco king pardons 188 people linked to Hirak protests

**RABAT:** Morocco’s King Mohammed VI has pardoned a total of 188 people linked to the “Hirak” protest movement on the occasion of Eid Al Adha, the National Council on Human Rights said.

The council initially reported that royal pardons had been granted to 11 activists serving sentences of two to three years in prison for their part in the Al Hirak Al Shaabi, or “Popular Movement” whose protests rocked the northern Rif region in 2016-2017.

The other pardons concern people sentenced in connection with the demonstrations in the disadvantaged region. The social unrest linked to Hirak began in October 2016 after the death of a fisherman and spiralled into a wave of protests demanding more development in the Rif region and railing against corruption and unemployment.

# Court to rule on Mnangagwa poll win tomorrow

REUTERS

**HARARE:** Zimbabwe’s top court will on Friday issue its verdict on whether to overturn or uphold President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s July 30 election victory, which his main challenger insists was rigged.

Crowds gathered yesterday around screens outside

Zimbabwe’s top court to watch a legal showdown, as lawyers for Mnangagwa and opposition leader Nelson Chamisa squared off before nine Constitutional Court judges.

Many more around the country were glued to live television and online footage of the hearing, the first time the public has seen the inner workings of

the court. Riot police blocked roads leading to the court in the capital Harare and vehicles carrying water cannon were parked nearby.

Chamisa, 40, says the first vote since the overthrow of Robert Mugabe in a November coup was rigged by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). The commission and

Mnangagwa say there was no foul play. Chief Justice Luke Malaba said the Constitutional Court would announce its ruling at 2pm (1200 GMT) on Friday. It could throw the case out, declare a new winner or order a fresh election within 60 days.

Wednesday’s hearing was cast as a major test of the independence of the highest court,

whose verdict is final.

Mnangagwa and Chamisa were not at the hearing in person but their lawyers and the ZEC’s faced off in the packed courtroom. Chamisa’s lead lawyer Thabani Mpofu argued that presidential election results announced by the ZEC were different to those it had submitted in its court papers.

# Iraqi grandmother fends for 22 children after sons slain by IS

REUTERS

**MOSUL:** Iraqi grandmother Sana Ibrahim Al Taei has a full-time job feeding and clothing her 22 grandchildren after Islamic State killed their fathers — her sons — a struggle in a cramped flat with little help from the state.

Al Taei and her husband, who has Alzheimer’s, share their four-room apartment in eastern Mosul with the children, aged between two and 16, their daughter and two of their sons’ widows. Rent, food, clothes and schooling depend on donations and charity handouts.

Al Taei is waiting to hear if the government will provide pensions of 500,000 dinars (\$420) a month for her sons, who worked in the military and

police. “I hope that the authorities will give pensions and housing for those orphans, because I am not going to live for 100 years,” the 60-year-old said. Al Taei, who is in poor health with vocal cord paralysis, has provided death certificates for three sons but said the other two were buried in mass, unmarked graves and she has not been able to find their bodies.

That means they are classed as missing rather than dead so she has no death certificates for them and cannot apply for their pensions — a common problem for families in the north and west of the country where Islamic State controlled vast swaths of territory in 2014.

The militants were driven out by US-backed Iraqi troops



Sana Ibrahim Al Taei, 64, whose five sons were killed by Islamic State militants, play with her grandchildren at her home in Mosul.

in December, but the government has said it will need up to \$100bn to rebuild the cities with Mosul’s mosques, churches, markets and other landmarks left in ruin.

“When Daesh (Islamic state) militants seized our areas, they destroyed us. By God, the militants humiliated us. They killed our sons and nothing has remained,” Al Taei said.

The two widows living in the cramped home had been working for local civil organisations but left after not being paid. They are now looking for work as servants.



# Kerala presses Centre to allow foreign aid

IAN S

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** India's refusal to accept foreign aid for relief work in flood-battered Kerala has touched a raw nerve, with leaders of political parties in the state pressing the Centre to review the decision.

The state's ruling CPI-M and the opposition Congress expressed unhappiness over the Centre's stand, with former Defence Minister A K Antony saying that the rules should be changed to accept foreign donations.

The issue snowballed following reports that the Centre was averse to taking help from foreign governments following a stand taken by UPA government on not accepting such donations because the country had the capacity to cope up with natural disasters.

Several countries including Qatar and UAE, where most of expatriates are from Kerala, had offered millions as aid to the state to overcome the devastation caused by the worst floods in nearly a century.

Thailand's Ambassador to New Delhi tweeted about India not accepting overseas donations for flood relief in Kerala.

"Informally informed with regret that the government of India is not accepting overseas donations for Kerala flood relief. Our hearts are with you, the people of Bharat," Chutintorn Sam Gongsakdi said.

The Maldives also reportedly offered donations for the state

**The issue snowballed following reports that the Centre was averse to taking help from foreign governments following a stand taken by UPA government on not accepting such donations because the country had the capacity to cope up with natural disasters. CPI-M and the opposition Congress expressed unhappiness over the Centre's stand.**

where the death toll stands at around 370 and where over one million people have taken refuge in more than 3,000 camps.

Wading into the issue, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told the media that if needed, he would talk to Prime Minister Narendra Modi who, he said, had tweeted his welcome to the gestures.

He said according to the National Disaster Policy of 2016, foreign funds can be accepted and so it should not be a problem.

"Indians, especially Keralites, have contributed immensely in their nation building," Vijayan said.

State Finance Minister Thomas Issac said he was surprised the Centre was blocking the financial aid to the flood

victims when it had extended only Rs6bn so far.

"We asked for Rs20bn, they (Centre) could give us only Rs 6bn. I don't know why they should deny some other government's help", he told NDTV news channel.

Former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy also expressed unhappiness that the Centre had reportedly refused to accept monetary help offered by foreign countries.

"I am sorry that the financial assistance announced by the government of India is quite disappointing as far as the magnitude of the crisis is concerned," Chandy said in a letter to Modi.

He said Kerala was expecting reasonable monetary help to overcome the crisis.

"It is a great relief to the people of Kerala that so many kind hearted persons and social organisations across the country and abroad consider this disaster as their own matter (and) offered unbelievable help to us for managing this tragedy," added Chandy.

He urged Modi to remove obstacles against acceptance of foreign financial aid.

Antony, who is also a former Chief Minister, asked the Modi government to rewrite the rules so that financial support can come from abroad for Kerala.

"If the rule was changed by the previous government, I have no qualms to say that the Modi government should rewrite it," he told the media.

It was during the first Congress-led UPA government that the rules was altered that



A volunteer cleans a house following floods on the outskirts of Kochi in the southern Indian state of Kerala, yesterday.

financial assistance from foreign countries should not be accepted after natural disasters.

"It must not be forgotten that with a huge Kerala diaspora

working in the Middle East, the governments in those countries have an emotional bonding with Kerala. That's why the UAE government responded so quickly.

Likewise we will be getting assistance from the UN and other agencies too. So any law that has to be amended must be done," said Antony.

## Cochin airport opening postponed to August 29

IAN S

**KOCHI:** The Cochin International Airport, shut on August 15 due to floods, will reopen on August 29, it was announced yesterday.

The airport had said on Tuesday that it would resume operations on August 26.

The airport was closed on August 15 after it was flooded when various dams in Idukki district

opened their sluice gates in the wake of torrential rains. Officials said the opening had been put off by three days as 90 per cent of the staff had been affected by Kerala's worst flooding in a century and they needed to report to work.

The airport was first closed on August 9, for a few hours, and then on August 15. The Cochin airport is one of three airports in Kerala and also the busiest.

## Sri Lanka to end execution moratorium soon: President

AFP

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka will soon resume executions after a 42-year moratorium but will send home five Pakistanis sentenced to death for drug smuggling for execution in their home country, President Maithripala Sirisena said yesterday.

The five are among 18 people, including a woman, on death row for drug offences whose execution will go ahead, according to Sirisena. He did not give a date for the first hanging.

"I am determined to carry out the death penalty for serious drug offenders and I will start with a list (of 18) given to me by the prisons," he told a public meeting in the north of the country.

Sirisena said he would hold talks with talks with Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan on repatriating the condemned Pakistanis and having them executed there.

He gave no further details on the feasibility of such a move.

International rights groups and the European Union have asked Sri Lanka to reconsider since Sirisena announced last month that he wanted to end the moratorium on hanging.

Police believe the Indian Ocean island is being used as a transit point by drug traffickers. More than a tonne of cocaine seized in recent years was destroyed by police in January.

Official figures show there were 373 convicts on death row in Sri Lanka, including the 18 drug offenders, as of last month.

Death sentences are still passed for crimes including murder, rape and drug-related offences but the last execution was in 1976.



## Modi meets Chinese Defence Minister

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) meeting with China's Defence Minister Wei Fenghe in New Delhi.

## Twin bypolls in Meghalaya today

IAN S

**SHILLONG:** The stage is set for today's twin assembly by-elections to South Tura and Ranikor in Meghalaya with four companies of Central armed forces being deployed in both the constituencies.

Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, who is also the national chief of the National People's

Party (NPP), is contesting the by-election and is hopeful to win the South Tura assembly seat in order to retain his chief ministership.

Agatha Sangma resigned as member from South Tura Assembly seat to pave the way for her brother Conrad to contest the by-election.

Conrad is pitted against Congress candidate Charlotte W Momin, John Leslee K Sangma

and Kris Kabul A Sangma who are contesting as Independents.

The Ranikor assembly seat fell vacant after former Public Works Department Minister, Martin Dango, resigned as member of the State Assembly and joined the ruling NPP after the government announced the creation of Ranikor Civil Sub-Division.

## Four dead in Mumbai high-rise blaze

IAN S

**MUMBAI:** At least four persons, including an elderly woman, were suffocated to death and 14 others injured yesterday when a massive fire swept through a highrise building in the city, officials said, adding the fire has been doused after about eight-hour struggle.

The fire broke out on the 12th floor of the 17-storied Crystal Tower building located in Parel.

The flames quickly spread to the 13th floor and adjacent flats, trapping many of the 100-plus residents in the building.

The Mumbai Fire Brigade rushed 12 fire tenders, a snorkel and other advanced equipment to combat the blaze.

The firemen wearing gas-masks managed to rescue 20 persons. Though the exact cause of the fire is being investigated, officials suspect it could have been sparked by a short-circuit.

The cause of the four deaths was attributed to the dense smoke which had accumulated inside. Two of the victims were identified as Shubhada Shelke, 62, and Bablu Shaikh, 36. The identities of the two other persons was being ascertained.

Among the injured were

two firemen — Rajeev Narwade and Sandeep Manjre, said an official.

Residents said the building was not granted the occupation certificate, lacked functional fire-fighting equipment and proper fire escapes.

Mumbai Mayor Vishwanath Mahadeshwar said a probe would find out if there were any safety violations in the building.

The role of fire-woman Sunita B Patil came in for appreciation after she rescued at least 17 trapped residents.

A 10-year old girl Zane Sadavarte guided the panic-stricken residents who were running helter-skelter and screaming for help from the upper floors.

"I have learnt in school how to remain composed during emergencies like fire. I told all the people to use wet towels, avoid inhaling the dangerous fumes, move in an orderly fashion to the stairs and avoid touching electrical gadgets," Zane told mediapersons.

Meanwhile, an official of BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said this evening that the redeveloped Crystal Tower building was occupied without a certificate in 2016.

He served as Union Minister of State for Communications and IT.

Kamat resigned from the Congress in 2016 over his reported unhappiness with the functioning of the local party unit in Mumbai but was persuaded by the top leadership to withdraw it. In April 2017, he sprang another surprise by quitting all party posts though he remained a staunch Congressman till the end.

## Congress leader Gurudas Kamat dead, funeral today

IAN S

**MUMBAI/NEW DELHI:** Former Union Minister and senior Congress leader Gurudas Kamat died in New Delhi yesterday following a massive heart attack. He was 63.

According to a family friend, Kamat complained of severe chest pain while having his morning tea at his home. He called out his driver who rushed him to a hospital in Chanakyapuri

where he died within minutes.

Kamat, 63, is survived by wife Maharookh and son Sunil.

His body was to be flown to Mumbai last night and the funeral shall be held in Chembur this afternoon, said a party official.

Congress President Rahul Gandhi, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, among other leaders, con-

doled the death.

UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi visited the hospital where Kamat passed away and placed a wreath on his body.

Respected across party lines, the late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had picked Kamat as part of a four-member official delegation to the UN in 2003 along with former Prime Minister I K Gujral and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

Kamat represented former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the UN International Conference on Federalism in Addis Ababa in 2010.

A five-time Lok Sabha member from Mumbai, Kamat served as Union Minister of State for Home in 2009 but abruptly resigned in 2011 citing "personal reasons" after his appointment as Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Drinking Water and Sanitation.



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EDITORIAL

Eid, a time to promote peace

Believers across the world are celebrating the blessed Eid Al Adha or the Festival of Sacrifice with performing prayers and offering sacrifices. The Festival's true spirit is sacrifice and sharing our resources, which Allah the Almighty has showered upon us, with the less-privileged.

This is an occasion to unite our efforts and intentions to promote peace, tranquility and happiness and to achieve security and stability in the world.

Apart from celebrations, it is also a time to pause for a moment for self-examination and reflection on the conditions of people in other countries and conflict zones who are burdened with untold suffering resulted from none of their mistakes.

We are duty-bound to stand united to declare solidarity with our brothers and gather all our strength to extend a helping hand in every way possible to those who are torn apart by wars and differences. It is a moment for all the believers to tell the world that Islam stands for promotion of peace and tolerance and it promotes dialogue, intimacy and reunion.

**This is an occasion to unite our efforts and intentions to promote peace, tranquility and happiness and to achieve security and stability in the world.**

We should not turn a blind eye towards the persecution of the Palestinian brothers at the hands of the Zionists, who bid to Judaize Al Quds and make it the eternal capital of Israel.

People in countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen also deserve to enjoy peace and stability so that they can perform their religious duties and celebrate festivals with their family, friends, relatives and all the fellow beings.

The Rohingya refugees in their camps in Bangladesh, who were driven out of their own homes and land by the repressive forces, are finding it difficult to make both ends meet. The cessation of war and conflicts is the duty of every Muslim and the responsibility of the international community and its organisations, because wars and conflicts have created humanitarian disasters that demand concerted efforts to find peaceful solutions that preserve human life and their right to live with dignity.

This is the second Eid Al Adha that people in Qatar are denied their right to perform their religious duty of Haj, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. The Ministry of Haj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia has closed the electronic register system and the Saudi authorities are still keeping the land, air and sea routes to and from Qatar shut, thus depriving the people in Qatar from entering that country.

Politicising Haj and blocking people from entering the House of Allah will remain not only an eternal pain in the hearts of those who were denied the right to perform Haj but is also a black mark on the forehead of those who have committed it.

QUOTE OF THE DAY




We hope that we'll have a solution on (North American Free Trade Agreement) issues in the next couple of hours, or the next couple of days.

**Ildefonso Guajardo**  
Mexican Economy Minister



Torpedoing Africa, and then complaining about ‘migration’

  
**LORENZO KAMEL AL JAZEERA**

Out of the 67 coups in 26 African countries in the last 50 years, 61 percent took place in former French colonies. Fifty percent of the monetary reserves of 14 African countries are still today under full French control: none of them has any control over its macroeconomic and monetary policy. France makes billions of euros from Africa annually under the form of “reserves”, and lend part of the same money to its owners on market rates.

These few numbers hide one major truth: many European countries, France first and foremost, are still today shaping the lives of millions of Africans - three quarters of whom live on less than two dollars a day - determining both their present and future.

**These few numbers hide one major truth: many European countries, France first and foremost, are still today shaping the lives of millions of Africans - three quarters of whom live on less than two dollars a day - determining both their present and future.**

of the total French population and yet, between 40 percent and 70 percent of the population of France's prisons are estimated to be Muslims, mainly originate from African countries).

How are the European Union (EU) and many European citizens responding to this reality? They tend to focus on the “final rings of the chain” (including NGOs, “hotspots”, or how to “divert irregular migration”), meaning that they focus on “the migration crisis plaguing Europe” without addressing some of the main structural conditions behind these phenomena.

A number of agreements signed in recent years by the EU in different parts of Africa have been largely detrimental for local populations, not least because they have exposed weak economies to unfair competition, adopted “divide and conquer” tactics when negotiating with African countries, and reduced trade between African nations.

On top of this, these agreements are often signed by countries that are still heavily dependent on external powers. A case in point is represented by the accord - the covers goods and development cooperation - reached by the EU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on February 24, 2014.

Almost all countries that are part of both ECOWAS and UEMOA (West African Economic and Monetary Union) - including Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Senegal - are still today de facto “post-colonial possessions”.

The Central Bank of each of these African countries is in fact compelled to maintain at least 50 percent (it was 65 percent until 2005) of its foreign exchange reserves in an “operations account” controlled by the French Treasury. Moreover, each Central Bank is required to maintain a foreign exchange cover of at least of 20 percent of its liabilities.

It should also be mentioned that still today - despite the efforts made by ECOWAS to create a new common currency (ECO) for West African states - the CFA Francs, which are in reality two different currencies both guaranteed by the French Treasury, are the official currencies in 14 West and Central African countries.

CFA Francs, contrary to the dollar or euro, cannot be converted into any other currency. This means that all these countries are excluded from the international foreign exchange market (FOREX), the largest and most liquid market for options of any kind in the world. It could be claimed that the countries that operate with these currencies might freely leave the arrangement at any time. In truth, dozens of African leaders, from Silvanus Olympio in Togo to Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, have tried in recent decades to replace these tools of monetary and financial control with a new common African currency.

Almost all of them - with the possible exception of Malian President Modibo Keita (1915-77) - have been killed or overthrown the very moment in which their attempts were close to succeeding. For many centuries, Europe contributed to intercontinental migration more than any other continent. On the other hand, migrants from other continents rarely chose Europe as a destination.

Much is changed during the 20th century, and yet, still in 1990, migrants from West Africa, where many of the current migratory waves directed to Europe stem from, represented only the 0.005 percent of the annual population growth in Europe, which at the time was 0.184 percent.

The upsurge of net migration from Africa from the late 1990s, and more specifically the upswing of migratory traffic across Sahara from West to North Africa, is the result of an unprecedented “perfect storm”, meaning the (never so) well organised exploitation of Africa - mainly at the hands of single European countries and companies, with the connivance of corrupted local leaderships - the increasing destabilisation of the entire region (to which European weapons are also contributing much), and the epochal challenges posed by the combination of climate change and demographic growth (according to the United Nations, more than half of global population growth between 2015 and 2050 is expected to occur in Africa).

Measles is racing ahead in Europe

**THE WASHINGTON POST**

Measles, A highly contagious disease caused by a virus, once killed 2.6 million people a year. Thanks to a safe and effective vaccine, which has been in use for a half-century, global deaths declined to 89,780 in 2016. But even with this vaccine, measles cases are now hitting a record high in Europe. This is a warning of the costs of ignorance, war and complacency.

The World Health Organization reported Monday that more than 41,000 people in the organization's European region have been infected with measles in the first half of this year, far in excess of the total for every other year in this decade and way above the 23,927 cases in 2017. At least 37 people have died. Seven nations have seen more than 1,000 infections: France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine.

Ukraine has the most people

affected, 23,000, more than half Europe's total. Measles is spread by coughing, sneezing and “close personal contact or direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions,” the WHO says. In a report, the WHO said although there has been a noticeable uptick in vaccination coverage in Ukraine, of the laboratory-confirmed cases last year, more than three-fourths had no history of immunization. These people were sitting ducks for the disease, and the story is much the same elsewhere - the unvaccinated are vulnerable. The cases have occurred in all regions of Ukraine, but part of the blame must rest on the war Russia instigated in early 2014 that has engulfed the southeastern part of the country. The WHO says that, to prevent outbreaks, at least 95 percent immunization coverage is necessary.

Measles was eliminated in the United States by 2000 with widespread use of the vaccine. Extensive research has disproved the fears of a

link between vaccination and autism, but ignorance and unfounded suspicions persist. In recent years, outbreaks have been caused by unvaccinated Americans and by foreigners bringing the virus to the United States after becoming infected abroad. This year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there have been 107 cases in 21 states and the District, fewer than the big outbreak of 2014 with 667 cases, but still worrisome.

Meanwhile, vaccination fears are driving Italy toward folly. An amendment approved by the Italian Senate this month, supported by the populist government, suspends a requirement that parents provide proof of 10 routine vaccinations when enrolling their children in nurseries or preschools. The lower house is expected to vote next month. If approved, more people will go without immunisation. Some will die. It should not be allowed to happen.



# Rifts at the top rattle Zimbabwe after Mugabe



JOE BROCK  
REUTERS



Western governments and big business fear Zimbabwe may not fulfil its economic potential, putting at risk billions of dollars in aid and foreign investment. Zimbabweans had hoped that the election on July 30 would turn a page following decades of turmoil under Mugabe.

As Zimbabwe braced for opposition protests after this month's disputed election, a heated argument broke out in the offices of President Emmerson Mnangagwa over who was in charge of national security, two people with direct knowledge of the meeting said.

At one point, Vice President Constantino Chiwenga reminded Mnangagwa that it was he who had installed the president in power after last year's coup against Robert Mugabe. Details obtained about the post-election rift between Mnangagwa and Chiwenga paint the clearest picture yet of a power struggle that could define Zimbabwe's future.

As a result, Western governments and big business fear Zimbabwe may not fulfil its economic potential, putting at risk billions of dollars in aid and foreign investment. Zimbabweans had hoped that the election on July 30 would turn a page following decades of turmoil under Mugabe. That optimism evaporated in the days that followed a military crackdown on demonstrators, when the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) was alleged by the opposition to have rigged the vote, and police and soldiers were accused of abusing opposition supporters.

Mnangagwa, the 75-year-old Mugabe ally who replaced his old friend, was declared the winner by the ZEC on August 2, but the leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Nelson Chamisa, 40, is challenging the result in the constitutional court this week.

Analysts say the court is unlikely to overturn the result. Presidential spokesman George Charamba said

there were no divisions between Chiwenga and Mnangagwa, echoing the united front the two have maintained publicly.

"The overbearing reality of harmony within the Presidency will not change because of wishful scenario-building," Charamba said in an emailed response to questions. "One gets a sense some interests feel threatened by the combination in the Presidency."

After a more peaceful build-up to the election compared with the violence of the Mugabe years, nervousness grew when the ZEC delayed releasing the presidential result.

When it eventually became clear that the ZEC was about to announce Mnangagwa had won, Chamisa claimed victory on July 31 and accused ZEC chairwoman Priscilla Chigumba of collaborating with ZANU-PF, the ruling party, to steal the election. Chigumba has defended her independence.

As tension mounted that day, Mnangagwa, Chiwenga, and defence forces chief Philip Sibanda held crisis talks in the presidency offices in Harare, according to the two sources, one from the military and another from ZANU-PF. Several other senior officials were present, they said.

Chiwenga, 61, said that since he held the defence portfolio he should manage security at opposition demonstrations expected the following day, the sources said.

Mnangagwa and Sibanda wanted any protests to be handled by the police. "Chiwenga was unhappy. He said the election had been badly managed and stability needed to be restored. It got heated," said the mil-

itary source.

"Chiwenga said no one should forget who got rid of Mugabe." Charamba, who speaks for the president and vice-president, declined to comment further. Chiwenga did not answer a call to his phone. An army spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A day after the meeting, as riot police tried to disperse protesters in Harare, military armoured vehicles unexpectedly rolled onto the streets. Soldiers fired live rounds and beat opposition supporters. Six were killed.

Since then human rights groups have reported more than 150 incidents of alleged abuses by security forces against opposition supporters, including illegal detention, assault, looting and rape. Many in the MDC have fled. Mnangagwa has denied reports of an opposition crackdown and said last week that human rights groups "have an agenda". International election observers have called for greater transparency over the army crackdown on Aug. 1, which they say is threatening to undermine Mnangagwa's credibility.

Mnangagwa, who has opened an investigation into the violence, says the MDC is to blame for any deaths because it encouraged demonstrations. There has been no explanation why soldiers used live rounds against unarmed protesters.

The police have said they called for military assistance.

But two senior Western diplomats said Mnangagwa's team told them that Chiwenga was responsible for ordering the army onto the streets, without providing any evidence.

Chiwenga, who spent four decades as a soldier before going into government in December, has not commented about the military intervention publicly.

"If Mnangagwa ordered the deployment it is a worry. If he didn't know about it, in a way, it is more worrying. You have to ask: who is in control?" one of the diplomats said.

"This internal struggle may paralyse any reform process and Zimbabwe will continue to lurch from crisis to crisis." Many analysts and diplomats in Harare believe Chiwenga's ultimate ambition in removing Mugabe was to take his seat but he handed power to Mnangagwa to give the military intervention the veil of legitimacy.

"Chiwenga should not be underestimated. He will dig in," said Alex Magaisa, a London-based political analyst. "If Mnangagwa survives the court challenge, I still do not expect him to finish his term. I expect Chiwenga to take over before the next election." The acrimony between the Mnangagwa and Chiwenga factions has intensified due to the failure to achieve the smooth election Mnangagwa promised, security sources say.

"They are operating parallel governments," Magaisa said.

The split between Chiwenga and Mnangagwa is making it difficult for investors, who say they don't know who to talk to. Many deals have fallen apart.

If Zimbabwe is to secure the International Monetary Fund help it needs to revive the economy, Mnangagwa and Chiwenga must find a way to push through painful reforms. They have a history of overcoming adversity together.

In 2003 Chiwenga, Mnangagwa and Mugabe were among 77 Zimbabweans sanctioned by the United States for allegedly undermining "democratic processes" and causing "politically motivated violence" in elections the previous year. Mugabe's administration denied committing human rights violations. Despite a spending decades alongside Mugabe, both men are trying to show they are a break from the past.

Mnangagwa has made progress improving relations with Western states since taking power as he seeks to shed his image as Mugabe's right-hand man and allegations of involvement in a crackdown in the 1980s that killed 20,000 people. He denies wrongdoing.

However that charm offensive may already be unravelling after spokesman Charamba - a close Chiwenga ally - blamed "hostility" from Western states, primarily the United States, for putting off investors.



RINA CHANDRAN &  
UMBERTO BACCHI  
REUTERS



A ban on foreigners buying homes in New Zealand is not enough to solve the problems of affordable housing and homelessness, analysts and campaigners said, as the country became the latest to impose curbs on non-residents buying property.

New Zealand's parliament last

may trickle through to affordability at the lower end. However, it won't have much effect," said Timothy Hazledine, professor of economics at the University of Auckland.

"There definitely is an affordability problem, generated simply by the pressure of demand on a finite supply of desirable real estate. Bans on foreign ownership are a tiny step in this direction," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Wednesday.

The United Nations estimates that globally, at least 150 million people, or about 2 percent of the population, are homeless. More than a fifth of the population lacks adequate housing.

Governments worldwide are under pressure to boost housing affordability and fix a growing problem of urban homelessness.

Canada last year recognised housing as a fundamental right, and committed to creating up to 100,000 affordable housing units and providing financial assistance to some 300,000 low-income households.

India has pledged to provide housing for all citizens by 2022, with an aim to build 20 million urban housing units and 30 million rural homes, although activists say the programme does not address the problem of homelessness.

New Zealand has the highest rate of homelessness amongst wealthy nations that are part of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, with almost 1 percent of its population living without a permanent shelter in 2015.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has unveiled an ambitious plan to build social

infrastructure, including an extra NZ\$634m for housing to help thousands of residents sleeping in cars and shop entrances.

This is on top of the NZ\$2.1bn previously announced to fund Kiwibuild, a government building program to increase affordable housing supply. The new law is unlikely to help the homeless, said James Crow at the advocacy group Gimme Shelter Aotearoa.

"Although this law allows a more level playing field for first home buyers, these are unlikely to be the individuals and families sleeping in cars every night," he said.

"The major issue remains around affordable rental accommodation, as most homeless are renters. Better access to first, emergency shelter and then long-term rental accommodation is a critical next step to resolving (homelessness)," he said.

With at least 55 percent of the world's population living in urban centres, homelessness is ever more apparent, from Los Angeles to Auckland. This has fuelled resentment against foreign buyers who are accused of pushing up house prices, and often leave their properties vacant for several months of the year.

In London last year, squatters briefly occupied a mansion left empty by its foreign owner in one of the city's most expensive neighbourhoods.

Foreign home buyers in New Zealand made up about 3 percent of property transfers overall, according to official data, which does not capture property bought through trusts.

## Will banning foreign buyers solve homelessness in New Zealand?



Foreign ownership has attracted criticism in recent years as New Zealand grapples with a housing crunch that has seen average prices in the largest city, Auckland, almost double in the past decade, and rise more than 60 percent nationwide.

week passed a law to bar many non-resident foreigners from buying existing homes in a bid to curb house price growth and reduce rates of homelessness.

The ban exempts Australians and may also exclude Singapore.

Foreign ownership has attracted criticism in recent years as New Zealand grapples with a housing crunch that has seen average prices in the largest city, Auckland, almost double in the past decade, and rise more than 60 percent nationwide.

But reaction to the ban was mixed, with some analysts saying it may help boost affordability, while campaigners said it would not solve the more pressing problem of homelessness.

"It will take some price pressure off the top end of the market, which

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# Ban on suspect candidates spells trouble in Afghan polls

REUTERS

**KABUL:** A ban on dozens of Afghan strongmen and lawmakers from running for parliament because of suspected links to illegal armed groups has spurred threats to disrupt a general election already at risk from worsening security.

The October polls, seen as an important test of Afghanistan's democratic legitimacy and a dry run for a presidential election next year, have been repeatedly delayed because of organisational problems.

"There will be riots, protests and road-blockages if they don't accept me," said Assadullah Sharifi, a lawmaker who is among 35 people the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) has barred from standing.

"I will do whatever it takes to contest elections," said Sharifi, who is close to the powerful former governor of the northern province of Balkh, Atta Mohammad Noor.

Afghanistan has for generations been plagued by the problem of powerful provincial figures defying central authority, taxing whatever business they can and maintaining private forces.

The United Nations, which is overseeing the election, has welcomed the decision to vet candidates in preparation for the October 20 election.

Even without dozens of angry candidates to contend with, election authorities face daunting insecurity. The Taliban have warned people not to vote and dozens of people have been killed in militant attacks on voter registration centres.

Election Commission officials trying to weed out

**"There will be riots, protests and road-blockages if they don't accept me," said Assadullah Sharifi, a lawmaker who is among 35 people the Electoral Complaints Commission has barred from standing.**

candidates with links to illegal groups point to the limited influence that parties have in politics, and in elections in particular, meaning candidates have traditionally run as independents, with few checks on their records.

This year's bans have for the first time highlighted ties between politicians and armed groups, to the fury of excluded candidates.

Some of them have shut down election commission offices and launched anti-government protests.

Sharifi rejected the accusations levelled by voters in his constituency of ties to an illegal militia and of violent crime.

"I am ready to surrender before the top court if they can prove me guilty," he said.

Electoral officials this month summoned and questioned more than 100 hopeful candidates against whom complaints had been lodged, mostly by the public, eventually banning the 35.

Many of those questioned said that while they may have hired armed bodyguards, in a country plagued by militant violence and kidnapping for ransom, that did not mean they

were linked to proscribed group.

Another of the banned candidates, Mullah Tarakhel, a powerful lawmaker from Kabul, suggested that his supporters could cause trouble.

"The ECC has committed a blunder by not allowing me to stand for elections. My supporters can stop the vote," Tarakhel told a news channel.

Tarakhel was not available for comment and his aide declined to discuss the issue.

One policeman was killed and one wounded in a suicide bomb attack this month during a protest by Tarakhel's supporters in Kabul. There was no claim of responsibility.

President Ashraf Ghani's office, election officials and diplomats have tried to intervene to defuse tension but electoral officials say they still face danger.

"Our officials collected evidence to prove their links with criminals and underground armed groups," said Alireza Rohani, spokesman and secretary at the ECC.

"We have nothing personal against them, but they are attacking us," Ghani, who is widely expected to run for a second five-year term in 2019, is under pressure from his international allies to hold the parliamentary elections and bolster democracy.

But some of the banned lawmakers accuse Ghani of using the ECC to sideline lawmakers who oppose him.

"President Ghani wants to kick us out of parliament," said Fawzia Koofi, who along with her sister, Mariam, has been banned because of suspected links with an illegal militia. The sisters deny any links.



## United in prayer

Pakistanis perform Eid Al Adha prayers outside a mosque in Quetta, yesterday.

# Internet must be 'righteous and clean', says Chinese President

REUTERS

**BEIJING:** The Internet must be "clean and righteous" and vulgar content must be resisted in the field of culture, Chinese President Xi Jinping told a meeting of senior propaganda officials, state media said yesterday.

The government has been tightening controls over Internet content as part of what it says are efforts to maintain social stability, taking on "vulgar" and pornographic content as well as the unauthorised dissemination of news.

The moves come amid a broader clamp-down targeting online content from livestreams and blogs to mobile gaming, as the country's leaders look to

tighten their grip over a huge and diverse cultural scene online popular with China's youth.

Speaking at a two-day meeting, attended by officials from major state media outlets and the Internet regulator, Xi said propaganda efforts needed to be put front and centre, the official Xinhua news agency said.

"Uphold a clean and righteous Internet space," the report cited Xi as saying.

China shut as many as 128,000 websites that contained obscene and other "harmful" information in 2017, Xinhua reported in January, citing government data.

China's media regulator has also been cracking down on video spoofs, as part of the

intensified crackdown on any content that is deemed to be in violation of socialist core values under Xi.

Despite strict censorship, China has a fairly lively online community of bloggers, who frequently respond to breaking events with humorous - and sometimes risqué - sketches and short videos, although they often face their posts being taken down.

Xi told the meeting that those who work in culture and the arts had to express quality and responsibility and respect the law, Xinhua said.

"Reject the vulgar, the base and the kitsch," Xi added. "Put forward more healthy, high quality Internet works of culture and art."

## Two dead and five missing after boat sinks Pakistan

AP

**QUETTA:** A Pakistani official said at least two anglers drowned and five others were missing after their boat sank in rough waters in the Arabian Sea off the coast of southwestern Baluchistan province.

Abdul Shakoar Ronjho, a Fisheries Department official, said 15 fishermen who managed to reach land near Sonmiani were rescued yesterday.

Ronjho said during the search-and-rescue operation the bodies of two fishermen were recovered and rescuers were searching for the remaining five.

## Indonesia sinks 125 foreign illegal fishing vessels

AP

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia has sunk 125 mostly foreign vessels involved in illegal fishing as it ramps up efforts to exert greater control over its vast maritime territory, an official said yesterday. The sinkings at 11 locations across Indonesia were carried out simultaneously on Monday.

Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry spokeswoman Lily Pregiwati said Wednesday the operation wasn't announced in advance to avoid straining relations with neighbouring countries.

Indonesia says it has sunk 488 illegal fishing vessels since October 2014, usually with explosives. The government says the boats are a threat to the local fishing industry.

# Party rebels press Turnbull for second leadership vote

REUTERS

**CANBERRA:** Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull clung to power yesterday as rebel Liberal party lawmakers pressed for a second leadership contest just a day after he narrowly survived a challenge from former home minister Peter Dutton.

Turnbull, whose Liberal Party is the senior partner in the coalition government, had won a party-room vote by 48 to 35 on Tuesday, but the unconvincing victory had left him vulnerable to another challenge.

Australian lawmakers told reporters that party rebels were

petitioning for another vote as early as yesterday, though it appeared unlikely that the move would get enough support before today. The move needs a majority of 43 signatories to force a fresh contest.

If Dutton's supporters succeed, Turnbull is likely to be ousted without completing three years in power, and whoever replaces him will become Australia's seventh prime minister in a decade.

Dutton said he was canvassing for support to take another tilt at Turnbull, possibly as early as this week.

"I'm speaking to colleagues," Dutton told 3AW Radio. "If I

believe the majority of colleagues support me then I will consider my position," he said.

Jane Prentice, a Liberal lawmaker, said she saw a copy of the letter calling for a second vote late yesterday and it so far had nine signatories. Should Dutton's supporters manage to muster enough signatures by Thursday, the vote could be held before parliament breaks for a two week holiday.

Amid mounting uncertainty over Turnbull's premiership, Governor-General Peter Cosgrove cancelled travel plans and will remain in Canberra this week, a source familiar with his schedule said.

Cosgrove is British Queen Elizabeth's representative in Australia and would need to be on hand to swear in a new prime minister if Turnbull was ousted, or to accept Turnbull's request to dissolve parliament if he decides to call an early election. The next election is due by May.

Australian newspapers echoed the frustration many voters feel over the constant leadership changes.

"It would be kinder to voters and more in the national interest if Mr Turnbull drove to Yarralumla (Cosgrove's official residence) and called an election a year early," *The Sydney Morning Herald* wrote in an editorial.

"The big risk is that he might be shafted even before he got to the end of the driveway," it said.

The opposition Labor Party has gleefully watched the Liberals internal conflict deepen, with the growing prospect of an early election.

Labor used Question Time in parliament on Wednesday to ask seven of the nine Cabinet ministers who voted for Dutton whether they still supported Turnbull.

All seven had tendered their resignations to Turnbull, who refused them in an attempt to show unity and later said he had been given "unequivocal assurances of continuing loyalty".



## Huge drugs haul in Thailand

Thai police officers unload seized drugs from a vehicle in a police station in Bangkok, yesterday. Thai police have seized more than 14 million methamphetamine pills worth \$45m that were bound for neighbouring Malaysia and beyond, authorities said.

# Two Vietnamese-Americans jailed for bomb plots

REUTERS

**HANOI:** A Vietnamese court found two Vietnamese-Americans guilty of terrorism yesterday and sentenced them to 14 years in prison for masterminding a series of bomb plots earlier this year, a court official said.

James Nguyen and Angel Phan were convicted, along with 10 accomplices who received short jail terms, after a two day trial. All defendants had been charged with "attempting to overthrow the state".

Phan and Nguyen had been accused of organising at least three attacks, including the attempted bombing of Vietnam's largest international airport in Ho Chi Minh City last April, and the successful bombing of a police station in June this year.

"The remaining 10 defendants in the same trial received prison terms of

between five and 11 years," an official at the Ho Chi Minh City People's Court said by phone.

According to state media, Phan and Nguyen were acting on behalf of the "Provisional Government of Vietnam", a California-based organisation run by Vietnamese-Americans still loyal to the now defunct state of South Vietnam.

The US organisation dispatched Phan and Nguyen to Vietnam in February 2017 to carry out attacks on Vietnamese national holidays, the Ministry of Public Security said in a statement on its website.

Phan and Nguyen ran a network of underground operatives in Vietnam, some of whom were given titles in a shadow government such as "governor of Saigon", or "commander of national defence guards," the Ministry of Public Security said yesterday.



# US sanctions against Russia senseless: Putin

AP

MOSCOW: US economic sanctions against Russia are senseless, President Vladimir Putin said yesterday, voicing hope that Washington will eventually agree to a constructive dialogue.

Speaking after talks with Finnish counterpart Sauli Niinisto in Sochi, Putin described last month's Helsinki summit with US President Donald Trump as positive, but blamed Trump's administration for continuing to hit Russia with sanctions.

"As for our meeting with Trump, I view it as positive and useful," Putin said. "No one expected that all disputed issues could be settled during a two-hour meeting, but a direct conversation and exchange of opinions are always useful."

Even as Trump has sought closer ties with Putin, his administration has intensified economic pressure on Moscow over its actions in Ukraine and Syria, as well as Russia's alleged efforts at meddling in the 2016 US presidential election and disrupting other western democracies.

Putin noted that "it's not just the position of the US president, but that of the so-called



**Putin described last month's with US president as positive, but blamed Trump's administration for continuing to hit Russia with sanctions.**

establishment, the ruling class in the broad sense of the word which matters."

He said the US restrictions are "counterproductive and senseless, especially against such country as Russia," adding that Moscow expects Washington to realise their usefulness and engage in constructive cooperation.

The Trump administration added to its growing list of sanctions against Russia on Tuesday, blacklisting two companies and two individuals suspected of trying to circumvent earlier US sanctions imposed in June in response to cyberattacks, and sanctioning two Russian shipping companies for suspected trade with North Korea.

Commenting on the

prospective Germany-bound Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline that US has threatened to target with sanctions, Putin said Europe needs the project to satisfy its energy needs.

Putin and other Russian officials have noted that the US opposition to the new pipeline stems from its desire to remove a powerful competitor and promote supplies of its own more expensive liquefied natural gas to Europe.

"Russia is the optimum supplier for European economy," Putin said. "We are ready to compete with anyone, but we expect a fair competition in line with international norms."

Putin also noted that Russia has to respond to Nato's deployments near its borders. He emphasised that Moscow is ready to discuss ways to increase mutual trust, such as the security of military flights over the Baltic, but claimed that Nato has stonewalled Russian proposals on the subject.

"I don't think that the idea of reducing the degree of confrontation and increasing the level of security in the Baltic is dead," Putin said. "Just the other way round, it has become even more acute."



The interior of an illegal gun factory in Hailsham, Britain.

## UK uncovers 'sophisticated' illegal gun factory

REUTERS

LONDON: Investigators said yesterday they had found a "sophisticated" illegal gun factory in Sussex, southern England, and had made three arrests as part of an inquiry into the criminal production of firearms.

A site with a sign outside saying it was a gearbox repair business contained machinery and components suspected to be used to make firearms and

ammunition, the National Crime Agency (NCA) said.

"NCA investigators have discovered what they believe to be a sophisticated gun factory on an industrial estate in East Sussex," the agency — which specialises in fighting serious and organised crime — said on its website.

The arrests were made on Saturday after officers heard shots which sounded like gunshots from inside the unit in the town of Hailsham.

A taser was used in one of the arrests.

Two handguns and ammunition, and guns in various stages of production were also recovered.

The head of the NCA's National Firearms Threat Centre Rob Hickinbottom said the investigation was continuing.

"We suspect that this operation has disrupted a group that would appear to be involved in the criminal production of firearms," he said.

# Suspect named in Dutch schoolboy's 1998 murder

AFP

THE HAGUE: Dutch detectives said yesterday they have identified a suspect in the brutal murder of a young boy two decades ago, in a case that has gripped the Netherlands.

Nicky Verstappen's body was found on August 11, 1998, a day after he disappeared from a youth camp in southern Limburg province. He had been abused before he was killed.

Police at the time mounted a massive search closely followed by local media and the Dutch public, but the 11-year-old

boy's killer was never found.

As time ran out to catch the suspect, police earlier this year appealed to more than 20,000 men to donate DNA samples in a bid to close in on the perpetrator.

"New investigative techniques gave us new opportunities. We now have a one-on-one DNA match with the (DNA) traces found on Verstappen's body," police detective Ferdinand Schellinkhout told a press conference in the southern city of Maastricht yesterday. "We are looking for Jos Brech, 55. He was last seen in France."

Dutch and French police believe that Brech — who was interviewed at the time of the crime as a witness — is hiding somewhere in France's mountainous eastern Vosges region, where he owns a chalet.

His family reported him missing in April after the former scout worker, who is believed to be a survival expert, told them he was going for a walk in the mountains, Schellinkhout said.

"We are convinced that the suspect has gone into hiding," Limburg police chief Ingrid Schaefer-Poels said, asking the public to contact police with any

information of his whereabouts.

Yesterday's announcement brings Verstappen's family one step closer to what happened to Nicky the night he disappeared, in what became one of the most extensive murder investigations to date in the Netherlands.

Police said new digital techniques helped them to develop a DNA profile in 2008, from traces found on Verstappen's clothing, but there had been no match.

Earlier this year, some 16,000 men living in the area where Verstappen was murdered volunteered to hand over

DNA samples after a call by detectives.

However, Brech who was 35 at the time, was not among the volunteers but as he was previously interviewed as a witness, police became suspicious.

When his family reported him as missing, Dutch and French police searched his cabin in the Vosges region.

"We found traces of DNA on his personal belongings. It was a match," said chief prosecutor Jan Eland.

A European-wide warrant for Brech's arrest was issued on June 12.

## Russian national arrested over alleged bomb plot

AP

BERLIN: German authorities yesterday arrested a Russian national suspected of plotting an extremist attack in Germany along with an alleged accomplice detained last year in France.

Federal prosecutors said the 31-year-old, identified only as Magomed-Ali C because of German privacy rules, was arrested in Berlin.

They said they believe that, in 2016, he stored a "significant quantity" of the explosive TATP at his apartment for an attack in Germany.

However, prosecutors said the plans by C and alleged accomplice Clement B were disrupted by a "preventive police measure," and the men decided to split up.

Clement B left for France.

He was arrested in Marseille in April 2017 over plans to carry out an attack in France, with several weapons and 3 kilograms of TATP.

The French investigation produced evidence against Magomed-Ali C, and German prosecutors said they were keen to find out what happened to the explosives he is believed to have stored.

Spokeswoman Frauke Koehler said that no explosives were seized in yesterday's raid.

## Migrants force way into Spanish enclave

REUTERS

MADRID: More than 100 African migrants managed to force their way into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from Morocco yesterday when hundreds tried to storm the highly fortified border, a Spanish police spokesman said.

Television images showed some of the migrants with bloodied arms and legs, apparently caused by the razor wire that tops the border fences, cheering as they walked towards a temporary reception centre. Most of them were young men.

"I love Spain!" shouted one. Some were draped in European and Spanish flags.

More than 3,800 migrants have crossed the Moroccan border into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla so far this year, according to the UN refugee agency, UNHCR. The route accounted for 14% of the total 27,600 who arrived, mainly by sea, between January and July, a 130% increase on previous year.

Five migrants were injured in the jump, and seven Spanish policemen suffered burns caused by a corrosive substance thrown by the migrants, the

spokesman said yesterday.

During a recent visit to Spain, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez agreed to increase dialogue with Morocco to handle migrant inflows to Spain, which is now the main destination for people seeking a better life in Europe.

EU leaders have failed to agree a long-term plan on where to house migrants since brokering a convoluted deal in June that appeared designed to appease divergent views rather than provide concrete solutions to the crisis.



Two men speaking to fellow migrants after forcing their way into the Spanish territory of Ceuta, yesterday.

## Poland moves to name new judges amid EU concerns

AFP

WARSAW: Polish officials yesterday moved to speed up the appointment of new judges to the Supreme Court despite objections at home and from the European Union.

The governing conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party had introduced the forced early retirement of judges over the age of 65 as part of a raft of controversial judicial reforms that have drawn concern from Brussels.

"We're speeding things up as much as we can," judge

Leszek Mazur said.

Mazur is the new head of the National Council of the Judiciary, a body overseeing judicial impartiality whose composition was changed as part of the reforms.

The PiS insists the judicial changes tackle corruption and overhaul a judicial system still haunted by communist era.

But the opposition, democracy watchdogs and the EU have warned they undermine judicial independence, the rule of law and democracy.

## Visa rules stop artists from visiting UK

AP

LONDON: Complex and inflexible UK visa rules are deterring international artists from coming to Britain and robbing UK audiences of the chance to see global talent, leaders of several major arts festivals said yesterday.

This summer the WOMAD world music festival and the Edinburgh International Book Festival have both complained that several invited performers have been denied visas. Last month, WOMAD founder Peter Gabriel said Britain risked becoming "a white-breaded Brexit flatland ... losing the will to welcome the world."

In a letter to the Guardian newspaper, directors of events including WOMAD, the Hay group of literary festivals, Celtic Connections and the Manchester International Festival said the "lengthy, opaque and costly" visa application process was deterring artists from visiting Britain.

They urged the government to make the process cheaper and more flexible, saying "these refusals directly reduce UK audiences' opportunities to see and engage with international artists."

Many of those who have had problems are from Africa and the Middle East. Britain's exit from the European Union will

also end the automatic right of people from 27 EU nations to come to Britain — and it's not certain what, if any, visas European artists will need to perform in the UK.

In a speech yesterday at the Edinburgh Television Festival, Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright said the government "understands how important mobility is" for the creative sector and intends to seek a post-Brexit culture accord with the EU.

In advance extracts released by his office, Wright said the proposals include "reciprocal arrangements to allow UK nationals to visit the EU without a visa for short-term business reasons" and vice-versa.



# Call to probe Trump after Cohen’s guilty plea

BLOOMBERG

**WASHINGTON:** Michael Cohen’s attorney said Congress should open an investigation into whether President Donald Trump directed his longtime fixer to commit a crime.

“There is most certainly enough evidence now” for Congress to open a probe, Cohen’s lawyer, Lanny Davis, said in response to a question about whether Congress should pursue impeachment proceedings.

Cohen pleaded guilty to illegal campaign finance charges over hush money paid to actress and a former model — all but naming Trump as having ordered him to do it.

Trump derided Cohen in a tweet early yesterday and said he didn’t think the two campaign finance violations were crimes at all.

“That would be the first time in American history that we have evidence of a crime of a president in office, with somebody pleading guilty to a crime and saying that he was directed to commit that crime by a president,” Davis said.

Davis said that his client



**President Donald Trump derided Michael Cohen in a tweet and said he didn’t think the two campaign finance violations were crimes at all.**

-- Trump’s longtime personal lawyer and fixer — is “willing to cooperate with anyone who asks him questions,” adding that he is “100 percent going to tell the truth.”

After first denying knowledge of a payment to actress Stormy Daniels, Trump admitted in May to reimbursing Cohen for the \$130,000 payment made on the eve of the election although he maintained the transaction had nothing to do with the campaign or involved campaign funds. Trump was also heard on a 2016 recording made by Cohen that appears to show Trump was informed of the payments.

Earlier yesterday, Davis said



FROM LEFT: A combination pictures of Michael Cohen, US President Donald Trump and Paul Manafort.

that Cohen has knowledge that would be of interest to Special Counsel Robert Mueller in his investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election and whether there was collusion with Trump or members of his campaign.

“It’s my observation that Mr Cohen has knowledge that would be of interest to the special counsel about the issue of whether Donald Trump, ahead of time, knew about the hacking of emails, which is a computer crime,” David said.

In a barrage of tweets yesterday, Trump at first seemed to shrug off Cohen’s guilty plea with

a quip, saying, “If anyone is looking for a good lawyer, I would strongly suggest that you don’t retain the services of Michael Cohen!”

Later, though, Trump wrote, “Michael Cohen plead guilty to two counts of campaign finance violations that are not a crime. President Obama had a big campaign finance violation and it was easily settled!”

In 2010, the Federal Election Commission fined Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign \$375,000 for various violations, including accepting \$1.4m in contributions over the legal limit for individual donors. But it

## Manafort convicted of 8 charges

AP

**ALEXANDRIA:** Paul Manafort, the longtime political operative who for months led Donald Trump’s successful presidential campaign, was found guilty of eight financial crimes in the first trial victory of the special counsel investigation into the president’s associates.

A judge declared a mistrial on 10 other counts the jury could not agree on.

The jury returned the decision after deliberating four days on tax and bank fraud charges against Manafort, who led Trump’s election effort during a crucial stretch of 2016, including as he clinched the Republican nomination and during the party’s convention.

Manafort, who appeared jovial earlier in the day amid

signs the jury was struggling in its deliberations, focused intently on the jury as the clerk read off the charges. He stared blankly at the defense table, then looked up, expressionless, as the judge finished thanking the jury.

The jury found Manafort guilty of five counts of filing false tax returns on tens of millions of dollars in Ukrainian political consulting income. He was also convicted of failing to report foreign bank accounts in 2012 and of two bank fraud charges that accused him of lying to obtain millions of dollars in loans after his consulting income dried up.

The jury couldn’t reach a verdict on three other foreign bank account charges, and the remaining bank fraud and conspiracy counts.

found no indication that the candidate was aware of the infractions.

Trump suffered through perhaps the worst day of his

presidency yesterday as Cohen implicated him in a crime at almost the same time his former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, became a convicted felon.

## Reduction of US staff in Havana hampers embassy operations

REUTERS

**HAVANA:** The United States’ ability to monitor Cuba, defend human rights, conduct consular activities and comply with bilateral agreements is being undermined by a drastic reduction in staff at the embassy in Havana, according to a congressional report.

The administration of President Donald Trump, which has partly rolled back Washington’s detente with Cuba, has sharply reduced US staff in Havana and expelled 15 Cuban diplomats.

The document from the non-partisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) states that the decision to reduce staffing from more than 50 diplomats to a maximum of 18 – due to a mysterious illness that has affected 26 officials and family members — overwhelmed those remaining at their posts.

“Because of the reduction in US staff, US officials maintain that those officers at post often wear two or three hats in terms of responsibilities,” read the report, issued at the request of New York Representative Eliot Engel.

While diplomatic and humanitarian visas are being granted, Americans in Cuba can only expect emergency services, the report said.

Outreach to civil society and human rights activists has

also been reduced at a time when Cuba is transitioning to a new generation of political leaders, internet access is spreading and a revamped constitution is headed for a referendum vote.

The US State Department this month announced this month that the few remaining staff would be assigned for just a year instead of two, “making it difficult for the continuity of operations and familiarity with working in Cuba,” the report stated.

The US Embassy in Havana was not immediately available for comment on the report.

Not a single refugee visa has been issued so far this year as the processing office is closed, the report noted. Often granted to government opponents claiming persecution, a total of 177 such visas were issued in 2017.

A 1994 agreement to accept 20,000 Cuban migrants annually will also not be met in 2018, according to the report, in part because applicants must travel to Guyana for interviews.

The Trump administration insists the current policy will remain in place until the mystery of the health problems among diplomatic staff, which it often refers to as “attacks,” is solved.

Staff have suffered symptoms, according to the State Department.



### Rough sleepers

Venezuelan migrants on their way to Peru sleep along the Pan-American Highway between Tulcan and Ibarra in Ecuador, after entering the country from Colombia, yesterday. Ecuador announced on August 16 that Venezuelans entering the country would need to show passports from August 18 onwards, a document many are not carrying.

## Facebook, Twitter remove accounts linked to Russia, Iran

AFP

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Facebook announced it identified stealth misinformation campaigns from Russia and Iran and shut down hundreds of accounts as part of its battle against manipulation of its platform, prompting a fresh denial from Moscow.

The social network said that it removed more than 650 pages, groups and accounts identified as “networks of accounts misleading people about what they were doing,” according to chief

executive Mark Zuckerberg.

Separately, Twitter said it suspended 284 accounts “for engaging in coordinated manipulation,” adding that “it appears many of these accounts originated from Iran.”

“As with prior investigations, we are committed to engaging with other companies and relevant law enforcement entities,” Twitter said.

For Facebook, it was the second time in less than a month that it acted against manipulation, following the shutdown in

late July of 32 fake pages and accounts involved in an apparent “coordinated” effort to stoke hot-button issues ahead of November midterm US elections.

The social network giant said content from some of the pages shut down in the latest move was traced back to Iran, while others were tied to groups previously linked to Russian intelligence operations.

Zuckerberg said the latest effort involved two separate sets of campaigns, including one with ties to Iran’s state-owned media

and another apparently linked to Russian military intelligence services.

The accounts, some of them on Facebook-owned Instagram, were presented as being independent news or civil society groups but were actually working in coordinated efforts, executives said.

Content posted by accounts targeted Facebook users in Britain, Latin America, the Middle East and the US, according to head of cybersecurity policy Nathaniel Gleicher.

## Hawaii braces as hurricane Lane approaches

AFP

**LOS ANGELES:** Residents of Hawaii braced for a powerful hurricane bearing down on the US state, with warnings issued in several counties in the island chain.

President Donald Trump, in a tweet, urged residents to prepare for Hurricane Lane, which is expected to bring torrential rains, high winds and dangerous surf.

“Everyone in the path of #HurricaneLane please prepare yourselves, heed the advice of State and local officials, and follow @NWSHonolulu for updates. Be safe!,” he said.

Lane weakened slightly overnight to a Category 4 storm,



Members of the Alapa Hoe Canoe Club move their canoes off the beach to higher ground as Hurricane Lane approaches Honolulu.

packing maximum sustained winds of 155 miles per hour, the

Central Pacific Hurricane Center said.

The National Weather Service said a hurricane warning has been issued for Maui County and Hawaii County while a hurricane watch was in effect in Kauai and Oahu.

“The center of Lane will move very close to or over the main Hawaiian Islands from Thursday through Saturday,” it said.

It added that though Lane is forecast to weaken in the next 48 hours it will remain a dangerous hurricane as it nears the Hawaiian Islands.

“Lane is expected to produce total rain accumulations of 10 to 15 inches with isolated amounts greater than 20 inches over the Hawaiian Islands,” the NWS said.

## Former beauty queen faces trial over husband’s death

AFP

**MIAMI:** The trial of a Puerto Rican former beauty queen accused of hiring a hitman to kill her millionaire Canadian husband got underway in the US territory’s capital San Juan after she spent several years in Europe as a fugitive. Jury selection began yesterday and could take several days.

Aurea Vazquez Rijos stands accused of hiring hitman Alex Pabon Colon to kill Adam Anhang Uster in September 2005, according to the indictment from the prosecutor’s office which dates back to 2008.

The defendant’s objective

was to “obtain financial gain” with the death of Anhang, prosecutors said. “She had signed a prenuptial agreement six months before ordering the murder of Anhang, a Canadian real estate developer with properties in Puerto Rico.”

According to court documents, at the time of his death he had a net worth of \$24m.

“Shortly after getting married, Anhang Uster began to explore the possibility of divorcing the accused,” the prosecution said.

Under the terms of their agreement, she would receive much more as a widow than if she divorced.



PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR03.51 AM

SHOROOK05.11 AM

ZUHR11.37 AM

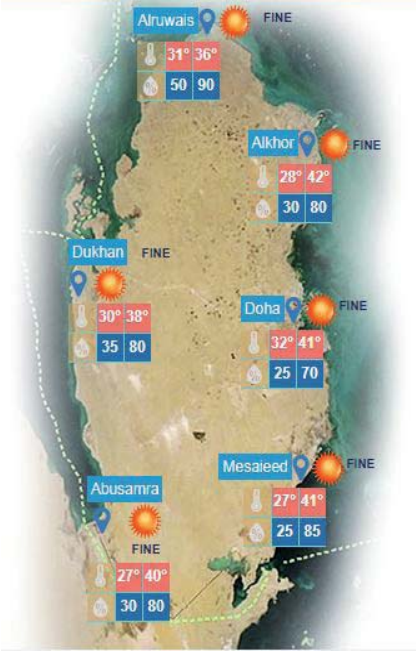
ASR03.06 PM

MAGHRIB06.04 PM

ISHA07.34 PM



WEATHER TODAY




32°C | 41°C

Minimum | Maximum

Misty to foggy at places by early morning, becomes hot daytime with slight dust at times and humid by night.

HIGH TIDE 01:45 - 16:00 LOW TIDE 08:00 - 23:15

Courtesy: Qatar Meteorology Department



Today in History

August 23, 2016

▲ Police in the Philippines said that over 1,900 people had been killed in a crackdown on illegal drugs since Rodrigo Duterte became president on June 30

1818: The first steam ship service went into operation on the Great Lakes in North America

1948: The World Council of Churches was formed

1966: NASA's Lunar Orbiter 1 took the first photograph of the Earth from the Moon, during an unmanned mission

1973: A botched bank robbery in Sweden, in which hostages began to sympathise with their captors, led to the term "Stockholm syndrome"

Picture: Associated Press © GRAPHIC NEWS

## ‘Crazy Rich Asians’ author wanted for dodging military service in Singapore

REUTERS

**SINGAPORE:** The author of the book “Crazy Rich Asians”, which inspired the Hollywood hit film of the same title, is wanted in his home country of Singapore for defaulting on his military service, the defence ministry said yesterday.

Kevin Kwan (pictured), author of the 2013 book and an executive producer of the film, was notably absent from the Singapore premier of the romantic comedy on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Defence said Kwan had failed to register for National Service (NS) in 1990, despite notices and letters sent to his overseas address, and he had also stayed overseas without a valid exit permit.

“Mr Kwan is therefore wanted for defaulting on his NS obligations,” the ministry said in a statement.

He was liable to a fine of up to S\$10,000 “and/or imprisonment of up to 3 years upon conviction”, the ministry said.

Kwan could not be reached for comment.

Singapore has a strict law on national service for all male citizens



and enforces it with few exceptions. It makes it illegal for men to give up citizenship without having completed their military service, of about two years.

Kwan left Singapore at age 11, first moving to Texas with his family, and has lived in the United States since then, Singapore media said.

His 1994 application to renounce his Singapore citizenship and a subsequent appeal had been rejected, the ministry said.

Kwan’s book and the film directed by Jon M. Chu depict Singapore as a playground for the super-rich in a story about an Asian-American woman who goes to the city state to meet her boyfriend’s wealthy family.

Kwan himself comes from a prominent Singapore family.

His great grandfather was a founding director of the Overseas-Chinese Banking Corporation — Singapore’s oldest bank.

# Australians putting brake on fast fashion

AFP

**SYDNEY:** In a small shop along one of Sydney’s busiest streets, Sarah Freeman is encouraging Australians to slow down and break their addiction to fast fashion.

Shocked by the speed at which Australians buy and throw away cheap garments, she is trying to harness an ancient concept — libraries — to persuade shoppers to rent instead of purchase clothes.

“Today’s society wear clothes once and they throw them away,” the passionate vintage garment aficionado said at her Clothes Library in the inner suburb of Potts Point.

“That’s not how clothes are supposed to be designed. The clothes nowadays are manufactured for six wears, I think, which is terrible.”

Globally, clothing production doubled from 2000 to 2014, with the number of garments bought each year by consumers soaring by 60 percent, according to consulting firm McKinsey & Company.

A booming part of the industry, including in Australia, is fast fashion, which quickly turns catwalk designs into apparel sold at low or ultra-low prices and easily accessible via online sites.

In Australia, where the demand for textiles is one of the highest per capita in the world, the fast fashion sector grew by 19.5 percent over five years to \$1.4bn in 2017 to 2018, research firm IBISWorld reported.

A recent YouGov survey also found that almost a quarter of Australians have thrown away an item of clothing after wearing it just once, and four in 10 admitted they had binned unwanted garments, adding to landfill.

“They don’t always see it as something that is a valuable product to keep



Workers collecting clothing from a bin belonging to the St Vincent de Paul Society, a major charity recycling clothes, in Sydney.

in your wardrobe,” Alison Gwilt, a sustainable fashion expert and researcher at the University of South Australia, said.

“So already the mindset from the very beginning when you buy that type of product is that you think of it as something that’s short-lived.”

At the Sydney distribution centre of St Vincent de Paul Society, a major charity recycling clothes, manager George Blakely has seen the longevity of some donated items decline in recent years.

“Some products only last two or three washes, which is not favourable... The volume they get through here is usually increasing, because people are turning over products in their own home more quickly,” Blakely said.

The rock bottom prices for consumers contrast with the high cost paid by the environment.

Tonnes of cheap clothes are churned out every year in developing

countries, using up copious amounts of energy and resources and polluting waterways near factories with toxic chemicals.

The materials used are often synthetic and non-biodegradable, meaning even washing can be hazardous, with some textiles shedding plastic micro-fibres that make their way to water catchments and oceans in consumer countries like Australia.

In recent months, the devastating impact of waste has made headlines after China, Australia’s biggest market for recycling waste, cracked down on foreign imports.

Beijing’s restrictions on “contaminated” recycled materials including fabric has forced Australians to think about how much waste they produce and galvanised efforts to explore more sustainable approaches.

Producers have been proactive with natural fibres — Australia is a key supplier of wool and high-quality

cotton — Australian Fashion Council chief executive David Giles-Kaye said.

Retailers including major player Cotton On are pledging to make their manufacturing chains transparent and ethical.

At Melbourne’s Deakin University, researchers won support from Swedish mega-retailer H&M to develop “circular denim”, where old jeans are used to colour new ones, reducing the impact on landfills and of dye run-off.

St Vincent’s has joined the efforts at the recycling level, examining better ways to sort donated clothes into different fibre types and repurpose garments to extend their life-cycle.

“We have to become a lot... smarter and really use technology to try and break things down into their base form so that things can actually be reused and we can become a true circular economy,” the charity’s retail development manager Jacqui Dropulic said.

Although the efforts could lead to significant change within the fashion industry, Giles-Kaye believes the key to solving the issue ultimately lies with consumers and their desire for even quicker and cheaper clothing.

“It’s still very much a fringe movement... When consumers continue to want more product at a lower price it really drives the producers into less sustainable areas of manufacturing.”

Freeman is convinced that if concepts like hers allowing shoppers to borrow and return quality secondhand clothes for a small monthly subscription fee take off, people power can make a difference.

“Hopefully it will catch on and people will start being more conscious and just make an effort to not go out and purchase the fast fashion items,” she said. “I mean if we stop demanding it, then they (retailers) have to stop supplying it.”

## Many teens and parents feel tethered to phones: Study

AP

**NEW YORK:** Parents lament their teenagers’ noses constantly in their phones, but they might want to take stock of their own screen time habits.

A study out yesterday from the Pew Research Center found that two-thirds of parents are concerned about the amount of time their teenage children spend in front of screens, while more than a third expressed concern about their own screen time.

Meanwhile, more than half of teens said they often or sometimes find their parents or caregivers to be distracted when the teens are trying to have a conversation with them. The study calls teens’ relationship with their phones at

times “hyperconnected” and notes that nearly three-fourths check messages or notifications as soon as they wake up. Parents do the same, but at a lower if still substantial rate — 57 percent.

Big tech companies face a growing backlash against the addictive nature of their gadgets and apps, the endless notifications and other features created to keep people tethered to their screens.

Many teens are trying to do something about it: 52 percent said they have cut back on the time they spend on their phones and 57 percent did the same with social media.

Experts said parents have a big role in their kids’ screen habits and setting a good example is a big part of it.



A woman stands to the side of a busy sidewalk to look at her mobile phone, in New York, yesterday.

“Kids don’t always do what we say but they do as we do,” said Donald Shifrin, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington School of Medicine, who was not involved in the Pew study. “Parents are the door that

kids will walk through on their way to the world.”

The study surveyed 743 US teens and 1,058 US parents of teens from March 7 to April 10. The margin of error is 4.5 percentage points.

## Student designs game controller to boost sister’s dexterity

REUTERS

**LONDON:** Jess Searle has a type of cerebral palsy that means she has always struggled with handheld devices or game consoles.

“It made me not really bother about technology, because I struggled so much,” the 25-year-old said.

“I found other ways of communicating because that was just easier for me,” she said at her home in Bromley, South London.

With his sister Jess in mind, Billy Searle, in his final year of Loughborough Design School, created a controller, shaped like an orb, to help people with disabilities improve their dexterity.

He named the device ‘Mylo’ — a reference to the mile-long distance that Jess walked for charity in 2016.

Billy hopes the controller could one day make gadgets and gaming more accessible as well as help develop muscles and movements.

“The idea is that Mylo can be an occupational therapy system whilst being a fun, engaging exercise, something ... someone wants to engage with.”

The 3D-printed prototype connects to a smartphone or tablet via Bluetooth, and has multiple sensors.

Billy has created several game

concepts designed to help disabled people strengthen certain muscles. For example, Mylo features a twistable section that mimics the action of unscrewing a jar lid or turning a door handle.

“There’s also a mechanism inside that means the more the user plays with the controller it becomes harder for them to twist. So it’s also enhancing their

muscle strength,” he said.

After handling and playing with Mylo for about half an hour, Jess said the controller opened up more possibilities for her.

“It’s easy to hold and easy to use and [you are] playing a game along with that as well,” she said.

Billy Searle is now looking for potential investors to help him develop his prototype into a finished product.



Designer Billy Searle showing his sister Jess how to use ‘Mylo’, a spherical games controller he has built to help people with disabilities to improve their mental fitness and dexterity.