



2 Kuwait and ILO join forces for 'decent work' program



13 Chevrolet Alghanim sets record for largest flag flown by vehicle



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28 Atlanta beat Portland to seize MLS Cup crown in 2nd season



Amir calls for end to media campaigns that sow discord

Saudi king urges regional unity against terrorism at GCC summit

RIYADH: HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday that "malicious media campaigns" will never succeed in unraveling the impenetrable bond shared by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Such efforts will be rendered futile given the bloc's unyielding determination to remain united, he said during annual talks bringing together leaders from across the Gulf region.

As the 39th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit kicked off in the Saudi capital, HH the Amir thanked the host nation for organizing the meeting. This year's gathering holds much significance given the mounting challenges facing the Gulf region, HH the Amir said in his speech, pointing out that the talks come after a spate of ministerial-level meetings held throughout the year. "We are cognizant of the enormity of the challenges that lie ahead, chief among them the lingering diplomatic crisis, which only behooves us to remain united and work as a cohesive unit," he said.

On other perennial concerns, Sheikh Sabah said terrorism continues to be a grave threat, urging the international community to do everything in its power to rid the world of the scourge. HH the Amir also spoke of "humanitarian disasters" that are unfolding around the region, naming Yemen and Iraq as examples, hoping for definitive solutions to these conflicts.

He said the continuation of the Yemeni conflict is a direct threat to us all, hoping the ongoing talks in Sweden will be successful. He added Kuwait provided logistical support for the talks in the hope that they reach a political resolution based on the GCC initiative



RIYADH: Leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries pose for a group photo during a GCC summit in the Saudi capital yesterday. — Amiri Diwan (See Page 3)

and relevant UN resolutions. Sheikh Sabah also praised Sweden for hosting the talks. Regarding Iraq, the Amir congratulated Baghdad on a successful political transition, wishing the war-torn nation the best of luck as it begins the reconstruction process.

HH the Amir called for an early resumption of Middle East peace talks, hoping that a comprehensive and permanent deal would be reached according to relevant

international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Concerning Iran, the Amir reiterated that relations with Iran are based on UN principles, mainly non-interference in states' internal affairs, respect of their sovereignty and commitment to rules of good neighborliness.

Meanwhile, Bahrain and Qatar traded barbs over the Qatari Amir's decision not to attend the summit, an absence that suggests a rift between Doha and three

Gulf states is unlikely to be resolved soon. Qatar sent its state minister for foreign affairs to the annual one-day summit, which is overshadowed by the economic and diplomatic boycott of Doha since mid-2017 by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt over allegations Doha supports terrorism, which Qatar denies.

Continued on Page 24

Assembly to discuss obligatory health insurance for visitors

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly is expected to debate tomorrow a draft law calling to impose obligatory health insurance on foreigners who visit the country, MP Khalil Al-Saleh said yesterday. Saleh said he has submitted a motion calling to give priority to debating and approving the draft law in order to reduce the number of patients at public hospitals and stop squandering drugs. The bill stipulates that before issuing a visit visa to a foreigner, the sponsor must attach a health insurance policy to the application, adding that this system is applied in several countries.

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Trump tries again to reset White House

WASHINGTON: Nick Ayers, in talks with President Donald Trump to become his new White House chief of staff, is a 36-year-old political whiz-kid who could help with the looming re-election campaign, but critics question whether he has the grit needed to keep Trump and an often chaotic administration under control. A photogenic Georgia native, Ayers has advised a series of high-profile Republican governors and has been

Vice President Mike Pence's chief of staff, running one of the most effective political teams in Washington.

He has spent his entire career in Republican politics - a sharp contrast to the man he would replace, retired Marine Corps general John Kelly - and earned a fortune selling ads to political campaigns. Still, Ayers has little experience wheeling and dealing on legislation in Congress and would take the reins at a time when Trump is weakened by Democrats winning control of the House of Representatives at midterm elections last month.

Trump now faces House probes into his businesses and most controversial policies, and special counsel Robert Mueller is investigating possible collusion between Trump's election campaign team and Russian officials in 2016. Chris Whipple, who wrote a book on

White House chiefs of staff called "The Gatekeepers," said he is skeptical that Ayers has enough clout to be effective as Trump's chief of staff. "I think Donald Trump desperately needs in that job someone who can walk into the Oval Office, close the door, and tell him what he does not want to hear," Whipple said. "I'm not sure he (Ayers) has the gravitas to do that," Whipple said.



John Kelly

Continued on Page 24

News in brief

\$13bn remitted from Kuwait

KUWAIT: A migration and remittances report by the World Bank on expat remittances in 2017 showed Kuwait stood 8th worldwide, with over \$13 billion in remittances made from Kuwait compared to only \$22 million made to Kuwait in the same year. The report also showed that Kuwait collects the lowest fee for remittances made to the Philippines, East Asian countries and the Pacific - less than 2.5 percent of the remittance value. The report also showed a 10.8 percent growth in remittances made to developing countries, with figures expected to reach \$528 billion this year. The report said India topped the list of countries receiving remittances in 2018 with \$80 billion, followed by China with \$67 billion, Mexico and the Philippines with \$34 billion and Egypt with \$26 billion. — A Saleh

Ground One, Tabeey join forces

KUWAIT: Tabeey, a Kuwait-based social health network, has secured an investment of \$770,000 from Ground One Ventures, a private investment company based out of the United Kingdom. Tabeey connects patients, doctors, and healthcare providers across the GCC and has millions of users. The investment from Ground One Ventures will be used to further enhance Tabeey's healthcare technology platform and deliver new innovations to highlight the concept of prime health. Tabeey has been featured as a media partner and created recognition in hundreds of health and medical conventions across the region. With a 79 percent increase in social media reach within the last two years, Tabeey aspires on setting the global standard for the future of the digital healthcare industry. — Press release

Empty flats raise fears of Lebanon real estate collapse

BEIRUT: Ghostly apartment blocks and half-built buildings dot Lebanon, as entrepreneurs and experts fear that the country's key real estate sector is on the brink of collapse. The small Mediterranean country's construction sector witnessed an unprecedented boom from 2008, fuelled in part by sales to wealthy Gulf Arabs and Lebanese expatriates. But after civil war broke out in neighboring Syria in 2011, political

insecurity caused these sales to dwindle and local demand to drop.

A slump in oil prices from 2014 compounded this slowdown, leaving thousands of apartments unsold across Beirut, and forcing some developers to freeze construction sites. "Some 3,600 unsold apartments exist today in Beirut alone," says Guillaume Boudisseau, an expert at the Ramco real estate consultancy firm. In front of Beirut's port, a building dubbed "The Coast" is one of many luxurious apartment blocks desperately looking for buyers.

The tower was completed in 2014, boasting views over the Mediterranean and moored cargo ships from its 500-sq-m apartments. But in the four years since, just two of its 21 flats have been sold. "When we started works in 2010, the context was very different," said

Continued on Page 24



BEIRUT: This picture taken on Nov 26, 2018 shows halted construction sites with the city's landmark Mohammad Al-Amin Mosque in the background. — AFP

Large crowds call on Modi to build temple

NEW DELHI: Tens of thousands of hardline Hindu protesters marched in New Delhi yesterday, calling for a grand temple to be built on the ruins of a destroyed mosque in a flashpoint Indian city. Trident-waving devotees clad in saffron filled a huge parade ground in the Indian capital under tight security, where speakers warned Prime Minister Narendra Modi they would not let up until the temple was sanctioned. Some of Modi's supporters feel the Hindu nationalist leader has not done enough to raise

a shrine at a site in Ayodhya, a city believed by many to be the birthplace of the deity Ram.

The site was home to a medieval mosque for 460 years until Hindu zealots tore it down in 1992, kicking off riots across India that left thousands dead, most of them Muslims. Its future has been tied up in courts for decades but some hardliners want Modi, who is seeking reelection in 2019, to push parliament to guarantee the temple by law. "The gathering here is telling you that Hindus won't sit back until the temple is built, and our wishes are respected," said Champat Rai, the leader of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) group that organized the protest.

Demonstrators chanting "Praise be to Ram" packed the Ramlila Maidan, a vast

Continued on Page 24



NEW DELHI: Indian Hindu hardliners hold a cutout of a temple as they participate in a rally yesterday. — AFP

Local

Crown Prince receives Prime Minister; Speaker, Defense Minister meet ambassadors

Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad congratulates Saudi King on anniversary

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received Kuwaiti Ambassador to Azerbaijan Saud Al-Roumi in his office. The speaker also met Kuwaiti Ambassador to Lebanon Abdelal Al-Qenai.

In the meantime, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held talks with Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Takashi Ashiki, accompanied by Japanese military attache, on issues of common interest. The meeting dealt with many topics, such as Kuwait's future vision 2035 as well as how to benefit from Japanese expertise in this field, said the Defense Ministry in a statement. Sheikh Nasser praised the deep bilateral relations

between the two countries, it added.

Also yesterday, Kuwait's Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri met yesterday with a number of ambassadors in Kuwait, where they discussed many cultural and media issues, in addition to finding ways to enhance the ongoing cooperation among them. Minister Al-Jabri met with Russian Ambassador Nikolay Makarov, Australian Ambassador Jonathan Gilbert, Brazilian Ambassador to Kuwait Norton de Andrade, and Azerbaijan's Ambassador Elkhan Gahraman, a statement by Kuwait's Ministry of Information.

Saudi anniversary

In other news, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a cable of congratulations to Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the fourth anniversary of Saudi King Salman

bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud's fourth anniversary of assuming power. In the cable, Sheikh Nasser praised King Salman's achievements and decisions in different fields, while wishing Saudi Crown Prince good health.

Furthermore, Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah congratulated Saudi Arabia on the occasion of the four-year anniversary of the ascendency of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. The warm sentiments were expressed in a press statement addressed to King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and the Saudi people. The ambassador wished the Kingdom prosperity and further accomplishments, underlining that bilateral relations would remain a model for transparent and devoted brotherly companionship and fruitful cooperation under the two countries' wise leaderships. — KUNA



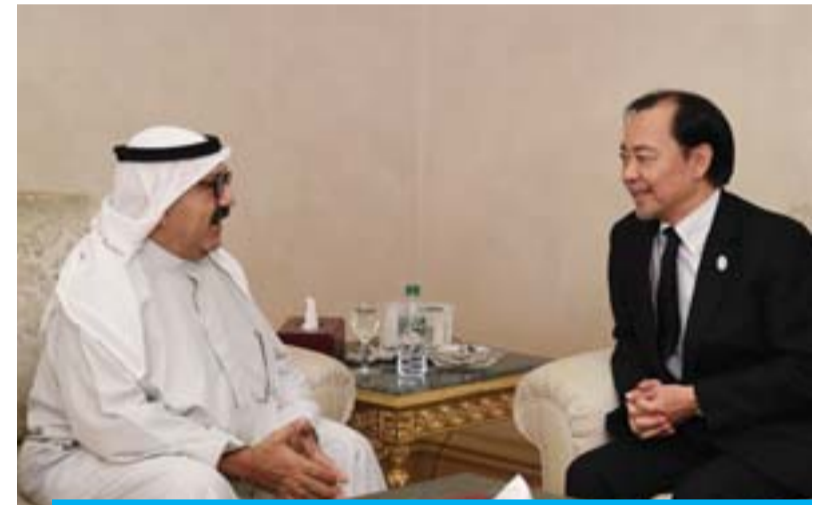
KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Premier Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Azerbaijan Saud Al-Roumi.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Lebanon Abdelal Al-Qenai.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Takashi Ashiki.



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh (center right) and ILO's Regional Director for Arab States Ruba Jaradat (center left) cut a cake during the signing ceremony. — KUNA

Kuwait, ILO join forces for 'decent work' program

KUWAIT: Kuwait has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the International Labor Organization (ILO) over a three-year 'decent work' program, which deals with employment that respects fundamental human rights. As she signed the deal alongside the ILO's Regional Director for Arab States Ruba Jaradat, Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh said the MOU encapsulates the productive relationship the Gulf state has with the UN agency. Kuwait's job market is regulated by rigid legislation, the minister explained, which is

necessary given the rapid changes on the economic and social fronts.

Echoing the Kuwaiti minister's sentiments, the ILO official hailed the deal as a step towards establishing a closer rapport between Kuwait and the UN body, saying the program is an integral part of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Seen as a vehicle through which the UN body provides support to its member states, the ILO introduced its 'Decent Work Country Programs' in 2004, which involve governments, employers and labor organizations. — KUNA

Kuwaiti cultural center wins Int'l Property Award

LONDON: Kuwait's Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center has won the Best Architecture Single Residence in the Middle East award as part of the International Property Awards. Assistant Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan for Engineering Affairs Engineer Nyaz Khaja was handed the award during a ceremony held in London. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre is one of the world's largest cultural complexes housing a total of 22 galleries with over 1,100 exhibits. It was set up at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

This latest achievement clearly reflects Kuwait's interest in cultural facilities. The complex is home to a Natural History Museum, Science and Technology Museum, a Fine Arts Centre, Arabic Islamic Science Museum, Space Museum, and Theatre. The International Property Awards are open to residential and commercial property professionals from around the globe. They celebrate the highest levels of achievement by companies operating in all sectors of the



LONDON: Officials from Kuwait's Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center receive the Best Architecture Single Residence In the Middle East award. — Amiri Diwan photo

property and real estate industry. An International Property Award is a world-renowned mark of excellence.

The awards are split into regions covering Africa, Asia-Pacific, Arabia, Canada, Caribbean, Central and South America, Europe, the UK and the United States. Participants enter at their relevant national level and are judged by a highly experienced team of professionals who cover the

whole range of property disciplines. Companies selected as winners are then invited to attend a glittering awards dinner for each region and have the right to use the prestigious logo in their marketing. The highest-scoring winners from each region are automatically entered into the overall International Awards, which ultimately determine the world's finest property companies. — KUNA

Official highlights Kuwaiti women's labor achievements

LONDON: Member of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Development Office in Kuwait Sheikha Intisar Salem Ali Al-Sabah praised achievements made by Kuwaiti women in the labor market, which helped them take leading positions in several sectors. This came during a lecture she delivered at the Regent's University London late Saturday on 'The Arab woman and her role in developing society,' in participation with a host of women activists, as well as academics and diplomats.

In the lecture, Sheikha Intisar assured that success of Kuwaiti women came from the faith of the political leadership in their ability to play a leading role in developing a society. Kuwaiti women were more fortunate than their peers the Gulf region, as many of them had the opportunity to enroll in regular education since the 1950s, which had a great impact on establishing an educated society where women account for 47 percent of its labor market nowadays, she noted.

She also stressed the importance of women to have trust in their capabilities and potentials to achieve their goals. Sheikha Intisar expressed the hope that societies will change their stereotypical thinking that considers men as the main component for any society, reaffirming that successful societies are those who depend on both men and women in the working environment. — KUNA



LONDON: Member of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Development Office in Kuwait Sheikha Intisar Salem Ali Al-Sabah speaks during the lecture. — KUNA

Kuwait Fund, Madagascar sign \$10 million deal

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt: The Republic of Madagascar and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) have inked a loan agreement worth KD 3 million (\$10 million) for funding a river bridge project. The deal was signed by Director General of KFAED Abdulwahab Al-Bader and Madagascar's minister of finance Vonintsalama Andriambololona, on the sidelines of the Africa 2018 conference which kicked off Saturday in the Egyptian resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh. The signing ceremony was attended by Madagascar's President Rivo

Rakotovo and Kuwait Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh. The project aims to transfer passengers and move goods as well as facilitate traffic to sell agricultural products and promote tourism. This is the seventh loan provided by KFAED to Madagascar, the other six ones were offered to finance some projects in different sectors. They were estimated at KD 17.2 million (about \$58.5 million). KFAED also has provided one technical aid to the country evaluated at KD 130,000 about (\$442,000) for a feasibility study of a project. — KUNA

Kuwaiti delegation discusses judicial cooperation in Russia

MOSCOW: A Kuwaiti delegation headed by Undersecretary of Ministry of Justice Zakaria Al-Ansari held talks yesterday with officials of Russia's Ministry of Justice to discuss judicial cooperation between the two countries. The Kuwaiti delegation arrived in Russia on a three-day visit to discuss with officials the terms of the extradition agree-

ment and other agreements between Kuwait and Russia, Ansari said in a statement to the press. He also explained that both sides are keen on developing bilateral relations on the legal level, indicating that these negotiations were a culmination of previous efforts over the years of discussions between the ministries of both countries. — KUNA

Local

Amir's speech sincere call for restoring GCC's previous spirit: PM

Oman commends Amir's speech at Riyadh summit



A handout picture provided by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) yesterday shows a general view of the meeting at the Diriyah Palace in the Saudi capital Riyadh during the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit.

RIYADH/KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's speech at the 39th GCC Summit is a sincere call for restoring the Gulf bloc's previous spirit, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said in a statement yesterday. Commending His Highness the Amir's speech, His Highness the Prime Minister said that it stresses Sheikh Sabah's keenness on the Gulf entity and its unity. His Highness the Amir addressed the 39th summit earlier yesterday by underlining his support to, and keenness on, the GCC, along with his unremitting effort to maintain it.

Example to be followed

Meanwhile, Oman's Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs Fahad Al-Said yesterday applauded His Highness the Amir's speech during a Gulf summit in Riyadh as an 'example' to be followed. Addressing the 39th GCC Summit held in Riyadh yesterday, Said said His Highness the Amir's address reflected the actual reality. He also voiced thanks and appreciation to the Saudi King for hosting the annual Gulf event. In the meantime, GCC Secretary-General Abdul-Latif Al-Zayani expressed gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for his distinguished presidency of the 38th summit held in Kuwait last year. His Highness the Amir's presidency was marked by much wisdom and interest in joint Gulf action, he said, adding that Kuwait had exerted a great effort to promote the bloc and safeguard its assets. This year's gathering comes amid critical regional conditions and challenges that necessitate more solidarity among the GCC member states and more efforts to bolster coordination and integration, he noted. The GCC chief, further, spoke highly of the major GCC accomplishments as the fruit of the leaders' efforts.

Luncheon banquet

In other news, His Highness the Amir attended a luncheon banquet hosted by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud in honor of GCC leaders participating in the 39th GCC Summit held in Riyadh yesterday. Upon his arrival in Riyadh where he headed Kuwait's delegation that participated in the summit, His Highness the Amir was welcomed by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Riyadh Governor



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers his speech at the 39th GCC Summit.



RIYADH: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud attend the 39th GCC Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia yesterday. — Amiri Diwan and AFP photos



Previous summit's presidency hailed

Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, GCC Secretary-General Abul-Latif Al-Zayani, Saudi princes, ministers, head of the mission of honor Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz and both countries' ambassadors. His Highness was seen off upon his departure from Kuwait by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as senior government officials. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah bids farewell to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his departure to attend the 39th GCC Summit in Riyadh.



King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud welcomes His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the 39th GCC Summit.



King Salman welcomes His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Diriyah Palace.



Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz (right) meets His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in Diriyah Palace during the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City's skyline captured during sunset. — Photo by Kamal Atchi (KUNA)

Zain showcases digital strategy, affirms partnership with 'New Kuwait 2035'

Company participated in 'IoT: Driving Kuwait's Digital Future' conference



KUWAIT: Zain Kuwait's Chief Technical Officer Nawaf Al-Gharabally speaks during the conference.



Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq attends the panel discussion.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its participation in the 'IoT: Driving Kuwait's Digital Future' conference organized by Oliver Wyman in collaboration with Bloomberg Businessweek Middle East. The event, held at Jumeirah Hotel, witnessed the participation of many public and private sector executives and officials.

The event witnessed the presence of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CIT-RA) Salim Al-Othaina, Director General of the Kuwait Ports Authority Sheikh Yousef Al-Sabah, Director of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Qusai Al-Shatti, Zain Kuwait's Chief Technical Officer Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq, as well as a number of experts, professionals, and leaders from the ICT sector.

Zain's participation in the conference came to highlight the company's leadership in further pushing the digital transformation wheel in Kuwait through empowering a smart life and an efficient business sector. Being one of the biggest integrated digital service providers in the region, Zain considers itself an active partner in creating the future of smart life in Kuwait.

During his opening presentation at the conference, Zain Kuwait's Chief Technical Officer Nawaf Al-Gharabally said: "the effects of digital transformation has reached beyond the telecommunications sector, extending to healthcare, finance, education, and other sectors."

Gharabally continued: "By using the most advanced Internet of Things (IoT) technologies, companies across various sectors connect their devices together, giving them unprecedented advantages that boost speed and operational efficiency. Today, we can see many compa-

nies failing for not adopting the changes that come with digital transformation."

Gharabally added: "digital transformation is not only impacting businesses, but even cities and entire nations, and this is currently the focus of our digital transformation strategy at Zain. We consider ourselves an active partner in achieving the goals of the Kuwait National Development Plan that stems from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's conceptualized vision of a new Kuwait by 2035, where we participate alongside the public sector in executing the seven pillars of the New Kuwait vision to enrich economic development and digital diversity by offering our latest innovative solutions to empower a smart life, a safe community, and a highly efficient business sector".

During his participation at the panel discussion during the conference, Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq said: "Internet of Things (IoT) technologies play a great role in the digital revolution witnessed by businesses around the world, as they offer a wide range of applications that rely on IoT-specific solutions to develop new tools that reinforce services offered by businesses and enterprises from both the public and private sectors."

Marzouq added: "with the fast-paced advancements in technology, enterprise productivity and service efficiency are changing, and that's why we at Zain are committed to investing in IoT areas to offer its technologies and innovative solutions to the government sector and business community in Kuwait. Zain's digital transformation journey began two years ago with our partnership with the Ministry of Electricity and Water through the Smart Meters project. In addition, early this year, we launched the all-new Zain LIFE brand, which consists of a portfolio of flexible digital services that include an array of innovative services for consumers



Nawaf Al-Gharabally



Hamad Al-Marzouq

and businesses, further enriching Zain's leadership in offering the latest digital transformation applications."

According to Oliver Wyman, Internet-connected devices are expected to increase worldwide to between 50 to 100 billion devices by 2020, with a notable increase of 15 billion devices from 2014. These connected devices, including self-driving cars, drones, and heartbeat regulating devices, will be a part of the emerging Internet of Things (IoT) sector that is worth billions of dollars. These devices will also contribute to offering large quantities of data that will help, through analyzing and processing, make enormous developments to systems and services because of the deep valuable information it provides.

The IoT sector in the GCC is witnessing fast-paced growth in as many telecom operators replace their traditional infrastructure with the latest fourth generation

(4G) services through fiber optics. Telecom operators in the region have also reached advanced stages of 5G technology testing, which will play a vital role in empowering IoT technologies.

Zain considers itself an active partner in creating the future of smart life in Kuwait, as well as empowering the community through the use of advanced technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Smart Cities, and more. This motivated Zain to take part in this conference to enrich the role played by private sector companies in achieving the developmental goals of the country.

Zain's strategy is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter portable lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology and Zain's long experience to enable an easier and more flexible life.

Local

92 percent of employers hold domestic workers' passports: Study

62.2 percent of employers unaware of domestic workers' law

in my view

Those who write history

By Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.net



History does not write itself - history is made by human beings, and not any human being. Only the distinguished carry in their brains an "ink" with which they can write history. US President George HW Bush wrote history and changed the path of events when the shouters among his people stood outside the White House demanding "no war" during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The people were influenced by the Vietnam War, but President Bush was the maker of his country's glory. He answered those who asked him about people's demands by saying: "If I listened to them, America will not be the strongest in the world. Power had its requirements, and it will only have its effect at the hands of history makers."

It is our good luck that George Bush Sr was at the helm of power in America, and King Fahd in Saudi Arabia. History changed its path and Kuwait's people returned to their country with gratitude to those who stood beside them. The last knight who departed was President George HW Bush, who Kuwaitis have love and appreciation for.

The "ink" of history will not dry out from the brains of the great, and as Bush made history, we wish that our leaders in liberated Kuwait complete what started in 1991 - the movement of a new Kuwait. The movement in which people's alliances change so justice and equality become the headline of the new era, an era HI the Amir started for the sake of a different Kuwait - Kuwait 2.0 - the dream of Kuwaitis.

A Kuwait in which the alliance of politicians with merchants ends, and every citizen feels that he is able to participate in running his country with only his efforts and knowledge and not in his grandfather's name; a Kuwait that is not monopolized by the few of the few, as if it is a milch cow that pours money in their pockets like the flying gravel because of the rain; a Kuwait in which alliances and counter alliances are banned so that Kuwait is the only comprehensive alliance.

Then, and only then we will have preserved the gift Allah granted to us - He sent men who made history for our sake. Bush Sr passed away recently, the last of those who made the history of new Kuwait, so that the era of Kuwait 2.0 starts under the leadership of new writers of history.

KUWAIT: Employers and domestic workers are not sufficiently aware and familiar with the provisions of the Domestic Employment Act No. 68 of 2015, according to a study released by the Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) yesterday.

The law did not reach the minimum needed level of awareness in its enforcement and application fields 62.2 percent of the employers who were included in the survey are not aware that the domestic workers' law exist in spite of the fact that more than three years have passed since the law was issued. On the other hand, 71.59 percent of the domestic workers are not aware of it, says the study released yesterday and titled 'Domestic Workers Rights Between Legislation and Enforcement through the Law 68 for the Year 2015.'

Moreover, 91.9 percent of the employers who were included in the survey admitted that they hold the workers' passports with them even when they request to have a law that regulate the work relationship between them and the workers on one hand, and between them and the recruitment offices on the other. Holding a worker's passport is considered as a violation of the law.

The study also revealed that 86.95 percent of recruitment office owners see that the law failed to provide a positive connection between recruitment offices and the domestic work-

ers' department. Meanwhile, 78.25 percent of them think that the new terms and conditions to issue or renew a work permit so as to practice their recruitment business are 'unjust' and 'complicated.'

The study also made a number of recommendations including the call to abolish or reformulate the sponsorship law - also known as the 'Kafala system' - that gives more powers to the employers and creates unequal positions for both parties in the working contract.

Furthermore, the study urged the government to hire professional bilingual detectives to handle domestic workers' cases, hire translators for the main languages spoken by domestic workers, and obligate recruitment offices to hold workshops and seminars regarding the law for employers working in the offices.

In addition, the study called for providing legal proceedings for domestic workers in case of fake absconding complaints, and have their cases seen by courts in Kuwait to have a final fair judgment, arguing that absconding complaints in the current legal system have 'major shortfalls.' The study is part of a major project called 'Support,' and it was prepared by the Kuwait Society for Human Rights in cooperation with the Swiss agency for development and cooperation (SDC).



Call for abolishing 'Kafala system'

Amendments eyed to lure citizens into private sector

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Yousef Al-Fadhlah announced that the private labor law's amendments concerning indemnity and adjusting article 70 of law 85/2019 concerning official leaves will be discussed in a parliamentary session on Jan 8, before preparing a report by the parliamentary health committee. Fadhlah added that the adjustments target resolving problems that had been making citizens reluctant to work for the private sector.

Subsidized goods

Official documents issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) show that most citizens are satisfied with sub-

dized goods and construction material the ministry provides. A recent survey by MoCI showed that 87 percent of the participants (221 citizens) were fully satisfied with the subsidized construction material, 70 percent of them thought the procedures followed were simple and easy, 64 percent thought some of the items were more than needed and requested swapping them with other materials and 72 percent of the participants thought the supplying companies fully cooperate with citizens, while 75 percent thought the materials' quantity was insufficient.

Undersecretaries' reshuffle

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Lt Gen Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah issued limited transfer resolutions for some assistant undersecretaries including transferring the assistant undersecretary for citizenship and residency affairs Maj Gen Faisal Al-Nawaf to be appointed assistant undersecretary for general security affairs. The resolution also included transferring assistant undersecretary for administrative affairs Maj Gen Talal Maarafi to be appointed as assistant undersecretary for citizenship and residency affairs. The minister also referred major generals Ibrahim Al-Tarrah and Ali Madhi to retirement on their request and promoted them to the rank of retired lieutenant general.

Unlawful payment

Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's assistant undersecretary for financial and administrative affairs Hamad Al-Enezi stressed that the malfunction in the social aid system in 2016 allowed undeserving individuals to join the citizens unlawfully receiving social aid allowances of a total value of KD 30 million so far. Enezi added that a specialized systems solutions company has been hired to provide the social care department with the latest systems for KD 244,000, noting that the one-year contract includes building the system and maintaining it for a year, plus training ministry employees on using it.

Farwaniya Hospital fight

Farwaniya Hospital Manager Dr Ref'ah Al-Rasheedi said those involved in a fight in the hospital's casualty department yesterday were referred to relevant authorities. Commenting on a video circulated on social media showing citizens fighting in the hospital, Rasheedi explained that the fight had started outside the hospital and that the fighting parties resumed their fight in the casualty department before they were all controlled by relevant authorities.

98,888 housing welfare applications by November end

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The total number of housing welfare applications filed till the end of November was 98,888, said the official spokesperson of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare Ibrahim Al-Nashi at a press conference, noting that 2,778 of the applicants had disability priority. Nashi added that 8,326 applications were made for houses in South Sabah Al-

Ahmad residential city project till the end of 2017. Nashi said 43.6 percent of Mutlaa city roads have been laid, which is ahead of the 35.2 percent specified in the contract for the same period. He also noted that 11.84 percent of the infrastructure needed for 4,999 plots in blocks 1 and 4 of Mutlaa city have been completed compared to 10.66 specified in the project's contract. Nashi said 69.24 percent of the total of 520 apartments in Jaber Al-Ahmad City have been completed compared to 63.32 percent specified in the project's contract for the same period.

Mapping system

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan approved a 'mapping' system to compare economic activities in Kuwait to those in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states with the aim of unifying statistical data at gov-

ernment bodies following the UN's related statistics. The resolution urged relevant government bodies to issue lists of the activities subject to their respective control as well as the regulations and description of each activity.

Interest-free loans

MP Safa Al-Hashem yesterday congratulated the Kuwaiti people in a tweet, announcing that the government approved granting retired citizens interest-free loans equal to 10 months of their pension, adding that the government had also approved the early retirement law equally for both male and female citizens. "Good news! The government has agreed to grant retirees interest-free loans equal to 10 months of their pension," she tweeted, noting that the move was nice and that its application would be even nicer. "The Kuwaiti people deserve this," she stressed.

Kuwaiti army launches blood donation drive

KUWAIT: Chief of the Kuwaiti Army General Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khuder said yesterday that the army has commenced a blood donation campaign just out of its patriotic and humanitarian role. The initiative, which runs until December 16, is mainly intended to answer the country's national blood needs, and to provide all types of help and support to different ministries and state agencies, the Kuwaiti general said while partaking in the campaign. Meanwhile, Director of the Defense Ministry's Moral Guidance and Public Relations Department Brig Khaled Al-Jeteili said in a statement that the largest-of-its-kind campaign covers all army units. By doing so, the Kuwaiti army seeks to provide



all local hospitals and medical centers with all necessary blood needs, he added. —KUNA



No injuries in vehicle fire on Sixth Ring Road

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A vehicle caught fire on Sixth Ring Road near Industrial Jahra yesterday, prompting occupational Jahra fire station to respond and put out the blaze. No injuries were reported. A case was filed to investigate the cause of the fire.

Vehicle auction

The traffic department announced the sale of several motorcycles and ATVs at the vehicle impounding department (Kuwait Gulf Link Company) in Dajeej. It announced the vehicles' plate numbers and owners' names in newspapers, radio and TV on Tuesday, Oct 23, and asked them to refer to the committee. The sale of the vehicles will be in an auction at 4 pm on Wednesday, Dec 12.

CRIMES

Social media celebrities questioned over possible money laundering

KUWAIT: Detectives received several notices to investigate more than 10 accounts belonging to social media celebrities to determine the source of funds deposited in the accounts. Al-Jarida reported yesterday quoting sources who noted that investigation calls were motivated by suspicions of money laundering. The suspected social media influencers will be sent to the public prosecution in case of any illegal action. The referral was due to the inflated accounts of several 'fashionistas,' as their balances exceeded millions, said the sources, adding that they must prove the source of the money which was locally transferred to them from companies and individuals. If investigations reveal the existence of money laundering, the accounts will be frozen and owners will be sent to the prosecution.

Fight

Two unidentified persons attacked two Kuwaiti citizens near Messila beach following a dispute. Detectives are working to arrest the two suspects and their accomplice, who was waiting in a car, Al-Rai reported. A security source said the incident took place in Messila when the attackers almost ran over the citizens, then a fight broke out. The two suspects then got out of the car with two swords and attacked the citizens - one of them suffered a deep wound in his arm, muscles and tendons, while the second was injured in the tendons of his left hand and broke his fingers. A complaint was lodged at Adan police station.

Environmental violation

Six people, three citizens and three Asians, were sent to the Environment Public Authority (EPA) after they were caught uprooting saxaul plants from the desert and threatening wildlife. The fine for each person may reach KD 250 in case of settlement with the EPA, and in case of repeat offenses, the fine may reach KD 5,000 in court, Al-Rai reported yesterday.

Cleaner insulted

Criminal detectives are looking for a citizen who beat, filmed and insulted a cleaning worker after accusing him of theft. A video clip went viral showing a man attacking the worker, accusing him of theft, but the worker denied the accusations. Meanwhile, detectives were able to identify the attacker and he will be arrested and questioned, reported Al-Rai.

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Short, sharp shock of a no-deal Brexit

El Chapo's trial loaded with twists and turns

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HONG KONG: Dora Lai, Cathay Pacific Flight Attendants Union leader and a cabin manager, poses during an interview with AFP in Hong Kong. Immaculate-looking flight attendants who appear unruffled by the demands of a life spent in the air are part of the slick image sold by carriers-but Hong Kong-based workers are increasingly hitting back against sexual harassment. —AFP

Sexual harassment in the sky

Hong Kong flight attendants fight back

HONG KONG: Immaculate-looking flight attendants who appear unruffled by the demands of a life spent in the air are part of the slick image sold by carriers-but Hong Kong-based workers are increasingly hitting back against sexual harassment. Female cabin crew told AFP of how they had been harassed by not only passengers but also other airline staff. While they say carriers have made some steps in the right direction, they argue airlines still lag far behind in the #MeToo era.

Venus Fung, whose experiences drove her to join and lead the Cabin Attendants Union of Hong Kong, says airlines must teach workers on how to deal with harassment. Fung, 29, said the issue was never raised in her company training. The Hong Kong-based attendant told AFP she had been physically picked up by a pilot who touched her chest, waist and bottom, commenting she had a nice body, when she was new to the job more than two years ago. "At that moment I was really angry, but I was mostly also panicking and afraid. My mind went completely blank-I had no idea what to do or how to react," said Fung, who works for a European airline which she did not want to identify for fear of retribution. The cabin manager who witnessed the incident did not intervene, Fung added, instead threatening to report her for wearing a skirt that was "too tight". As a result Fung stopped wearing skirts at work for more than a year, opting for trousers instead.

She has since been training colleagues on how to report sexual harassment and seek help, but said long-term cultural changes are needed. "When a flight attendant comes out it looks very fan-

cy with the uniform, heels and makeup. There are fantasies around this industry and it's hard to change public perception but it absolutely cannot be an excuse for bad behavior," Fung said, calling for an awareness-raising campaign. "Education is key to changing people's attitudes. It's difficult to carry out overnight, it takes time, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do these things." The airline did not respond to requests by AFP for comment.

Bikini backlash

The complaints from attendants like Fung come as demands for change grow worldwide. The US-based Association of Flight Attendants last year called on American airlines to "renounce the past objectification of flight attendants". Vietnamese budget carrier VietJet, which has staffed some of its inaugural flights with bikini-clad attendants and publishes a calendar featuring scantily-dressed models posing on planes, has sparked criticism for its marketing ploys.

Owned by Vietnam's only female billionaire, the airline had to apologize for sending lingerie models to join the country's under-23 football squad on a flight home in January after a social media outcry. Some airline staff in Hong Kong told AFP the perceived glamour attracted many women to the job-there are popular makeup tutorials on YouTube by flight attendants from Dubai-based airline Emirates on how to achieve their look.

But others say some of the industry's grooming standards are outdated. Staff at Hong Kong flag carrier Cathay Pacific must wear eyeshadow, lipstick and nail polish in specifically approved

shades and check it at regular intervals, according to an official handbook. Male staff are also under scrutiny-banned from wearing make-up but told they must "maintain a clear complexion at all times". Cathay's cabin crew representatives say they will push to make nail polish optional in talks with the company next year.

The airline announced in March it would introduce a trouser option for female attendants, ending a 70-year skirt rule. But Dora Lai, Cathay Pacific Flight Attendants Union leader and a cabin manager, said that while the move was a step toward gender equality, it would do little to end sexual harassment without a shift in public and staff awareness. Lai said many airline advertisements deployed beautiful women to sell the industry's "sex appeal", rather than the practical skills of the job. "We are there to provide a service and to bring our passengers safely from point A to point B," she said.

Zero tolerance

Despite Cathay launching an online course with a special section on sexual harassment for Hong Kong cabin staff in March, the union says some in-flight managers continue to distrust staff who report cases. A Cathay attendant who did not want to be identified told AFP her in-flight manager had been reluctant to warn a passenger who had patted her head and back repeatedly, which she described as "humiliating". "I felt angry and sad. I was the concerned party, not just relaying the incident... And after telling him, the supervisor was still not supportive," she said.



HONG KONG: Photo shows Cathay Pacific Airways passenger jets on the tarmac at Hong Kong's international airport. —AFP

Cathay Pacific told AFP it provided training to all staff on the "prevention and elimination of discrimination and harassment in the workplace". But attendant Michelle Choi said the company needed to go further to support staff in taking immediate action, from giving warnings to asking passengers to apologize, or in some cases reporting to police. "We want flight attendants to know what they can do instead of feeling embarrassed about reporting the case, and in the end making excuses to tolerate these acts as many used to do before," she said.—AFP

The Land of Noah: Armenia's history, culture, tradition

YEREVAN: Armenia yesterday holds snap parliamentary polls that were sparked by reformist Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan last month. Here are points on the culture and history of the tiny landlocked mountainous nation located in the South Caucasus.

Biblical Land

Armenia, which in the fourth century became the first country in the world to officially embrace Christianity, is an ancient biblical land where the Book of Genesis says Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat after the Great Deluge. Now inside Turkey, Mount Ararat is regarded by Armenians as a national symbol and features on the country's coat of arms and banknotes. The Bible was translated into Armenian in the fifth century by Saint Mesrop Mashtots, the creator of the distinctive Armenian alphabet.

Great Crime

When World War I broke out in 1914, Armenia - which for most of its history has been occupied by foreign powers - was divided between the Ottoman and Russian Empires. During the war, Ottomans massacred and deported more than 1.5 million Armenians in what has become the

most tragic event in the history of the Armenian people, which they call Meds Yeghern, or the Great Crime. Up to this day, Armenia and Turkey are locked in a bitter diplomatic battle over whether the massacres should be described as "genocide".

UNESCO treasures

Armenia's preeminent cultural institution, the Matenadaran museum, is a repository of the country's national treasure — the vast collection of ancient manuscripts that cover almost every sphere of Armenia's ancient and medieval science and culture. In recognition of its universal significance, the collection - one of the world's richest - was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 1997. The collection includes more than 17,000 manuscripts, books and 30,000 other documents, that embrace a wide range of subjects such as theology, philosophy, history, medicine, literature, art history, and cosmography in Armenian and many other languages.

Duduk

A symbol of Armenian national identity, the duduk oboe is a double-reed wind instrument whose roots go back to the times of the Armenian king Tigran the Great (95-55 BC). Made from the wood of an apricot tree, the Armenian duduk is distinctive in construction and performance technique and characterized by a warm and soft timbre. Duduk music accompanies popular Armenian traditional songs and dances and is played at social events such as weddings, anniversaries, and funerals. In 2005, UNESCO proclaimed it a Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity.—AFP

Women accuse famous Brazilian spiritual 'healer' of sex abuse

RIO DE JANEIRO: Several women have come forward in Brazil to accuse an internationally known self-proclaimed spiritual healer of sexually abusing them under pretext of trying to "cure" them of depression or other problems. The allegations against Joao Teixeira de Faria, 76, better known as "Joao de Deus" ("Joao of God") were made late Friday on a program on the widely viewed Globo Television network.

A Dutch choreographer identified as Zahira Leeneke Maus and nine Brazilian women who remained anonymous accused Faria. Maus also told the program that Faria had raped her. The associated O Globo newspaper later reported that it had spoken to two other women who gave similar accounts of sexual abuse by Faria, bring-

ing the total to a dozen. All the women said they were aged in their 30s when the alleged acts took place between 2010 and early this year in Faria's "spiritual hospital" in the town of Abadiania, close to the capital Brasilia.

A vehement denial

Globo's G1 news website cited a statement from Faria's press service saying he had used his powers to treat thousands of people over the past 44 years and "he vehemently rejects (allegations of) any improper practice during his treatments." Faria's reputation reaches far beyond Brazil, with followers in the United States, Europe and Australia. Oprah Winfrey, the US television celebrity and producer, visited Faria in 2013 to look into his "miracles." Several media outlets have done critical investigations into Faria's claims of healing, and some uncovered previous allegations of sexual abuse and other improprieties for which Faria has never been prosecuted. The fresh allegations aired by Globo come amid a global reckoning of alleged sexual misconduct by powerful men against women under the #MeToo campaign.—AFP

International

Britain's Prime Minister ignores doubts on historic Brexit mission

May seeks to steer Britain out of Europe

LONDON: Theresa May wants to go down in history as the prime minister who safely steered Britain out of Europe—a cause she did not believe in when the Brexit referendum was held. The internal struggles and contradictions of the Oxford-educated daughter of a vicar reflect those tearing apart her island nation before its March divorce from the EU. The Financial Times has wondered whether the 62-year-old could be “Britain’s Angela Merkel”—the German leader who embodies Europe—while an op-ed in the Independent condemned her for waging an “anti-immigrant vendetta”. Her ability to keep intact her policies and composure through a cascade of crises have drawn invariable comparisons to the iron will of the late Margaret Thatcher. It is a doggedness that permeates May’s entire demeanour—a perceived robotic mannerism and monotone that earned her the “Maybot” moniker.

‘Goody two shoes’

May described herself in a 2012 interview as a “goody two shoes” whose Protestant faith defined her upbringing. She listened to cricket matches on the radio with her father and knew that she wanted to become a politician when she was just 12. May studied geography and met her husband Philip at Oxford before joining England’s central bank. The two never had children and May devoted herself to a life of public service that saw her become Conservative Party chairwoman in 2002. May made her first splash by telling her Tories at an annual conference to stop being “the nasty party” if they wanted to unseat then-popular Labour leader Tony Blair. But her 2010-16 stint as Home Secretary saw May adopt isolationist rhetoric that included a vow to create “a really hostile environment for illegal migration”. “In the UK illegally?” asked one advert the Home Office put on a couple of vans that drove around the country in 2013. “Go home or face arrest.”

‘Too small to cope’

Yet May’s own faith in a “great, global” Britain did not translate into a rejection of the European Union as a whole. She wanted to retake control of Britain’s laws and borders while keeping London a magnet of world talent and financial wealth. May did not campaign for the “Leave” vote ahead of the 2016 referendum and made clear on several occasions that Britain benefited from staying in the world’s largest single market. “Britain is too small a country to cope outside the European Union,” she said in an April 2016 address. May later told a private Goldman Sachs gathering that “the economic arguments are clear” for Britain staying in the bloc. “There are definitely things we can do as members of the European Union that I think keep us more safe,” she said in remarks that were later leaked to the press.

‘Brexit means Brexit’

But Britons voted to split by a 52-48 margin and May took over from David Cameron as prime minister after winning a 2016 leadership contest in which she proclaimed: “Brexit means Brexit”. It became her mantra—a gritty determination to bear down and get the job done no matter the political cost. That job got immeasurably harder after May made the mistake of calling a snap June 2017 election that she hoped would lay to waste domestic opposition to her Brexit plans. She ended up losing her majority and entering a forced marriage of convenience with Northern Ireland’s tiny and fervently anti-EU Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

The dysfunctional relationship broke down for good when the DUP came out against the watered-down Brexit deal May hopes to push through parliament tomorrow. May’s attachment to the withdrawal papers she signed



LONDON: Protesters hold up placards and Union flags as they attend a pro-Brexit demonstration promoted by UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) in central London yesterday, as the crucial vote on the Brexit deal in the House of Commons looms. — AFP

with Brussels is shared by few in London. Pundits are counting down her days in office and the fate of Brexit itself is clear to none. It is a political crisis of a generation—and one that finds May trying to will her Brexit deal over

the line. “This argument has gone on long enough,” she told hooting and hollering lawmakers during the opening Brexit debate Tuesday. “It is corrosive to our politics and life depends on compromise.” — AFP

Brexit doubts grow in Wales as crunch vote looms

SWANSEA: The 12 stars of the European Union flag are on proud display across Swansea University’s new campus. The EU helped finance the site, along with many other projects in Wales, which voted in favor of Brexit in 2016 but is now having doubts as the day approaches. “We’ve created real jobs. We’ve created jobs where you have high skills and we’ve been able to expand the campus,” Pro-Vice-Chancellor Iwan Davies told AFP on a recent visit. The spectacular 26-hectare site on the sea is located close to the centre of this city of 245,000 people. The EU has financed more than £100 million (112 million euros, \$127 million) out of the total £450 million cost, helping the university’s bid to become a centre of excellence. The project’s economic impact for Wales, which has some of Britain’s poorest regions, is estimated at £3.0 billion.



SWANSEA: Work, part-funded by the EU, takes place on the Kingsway in Swansea city centre in south Wales. The 12 stars of the European Union flag are on proud display across Swansea University’s new campus. The EU helped finance the site, along with many other projects in Wales, which voted in favor of Brexit in 2016 but is now having doubts as the day approaches. — AFP

European Union programs have helped us create 45,000 new jobs in Wales and 13,000 new businesses,” he told AFP.

‘It’s so complicated’

For MPs preparing for a once-in-a-lifetime vote on whether or not to back Prime Minister Theresa May’s Brexit deal tomorrow, views in places like Wales will be paramount. The Welsh parliament held its own non-binding vote on the Brexit deal last week, with 57 percent against. On the streets of Swansea, many residents still say that they want Britain to be the master of its own destiny by cutting off ties to the EU. Others hesitate, however, worried about the catastrophic scenario of Britain crashing out of the EU with no agreement in place on March 29, 2019.

A poll by YouGov in November found that a 51-percent majority in Wales would now vote to stay in the EU. “I did vote to leave but I thought just for us, to make our own decisions,” said Julie Matthews, a 56-year-old retail worker. “But now I’m not sure. I think we’ve got a better deal staying in the EU,” she said. Philip Griffiths,

who sells plants at Swansea’s indoor market, said: “I would probably remain because of how divided Britain is now. It has divided the whole country. It’s so complicated. It’s not as easy as shutting the door and saying goodbye. It’s going to take time,” the 42-year-old said.

‘We cannot act in isolation’

Drakeford said he was concerned about what would happen beyond 2020 when the British funding guarantee stops. “That is much less certain,” he said. “People in Wales who voted to leave the European Union did so having heard a promise... that Wales would not be a penny worse off as a result from leaving the European Union.” Despite the uncertainty, Davies said Swansea University was “confident” about its ability to retain foreign students. But he said the university was also planning for a possible “worst case scenario” and would create their own international student exchange program if needed. “Whatever happens to Brexit, what we are concerned about is how we can open our doors to the world, because we know that we cannot act in isolation,” Drakeford said. — AFP

nightmare at the best of times. But planes getting grounded when Brexit strikes at 2300 GMT on March 29 because airlines lose their licences would create chaos that ripples across the world. London says it would “envisage” granting European carriers special permission to keep flying — and that it would “expect” the 27 EU countries to do the same.

Forms, forms, forms

Prepare to start signing your name. A lot. Thousands of companies that do business with Europe would have to fill out reams of customs and duties declarations. Tourists who want to rent a car may need to get international driving permits because their UK licences become invalid. And even pets might need to jump through new administrative hoops that require them to have new passports. People might want to check their as well. Those that expire within six months of travel might need to be renewed in advance.

Drug dilemma

Things turn more serious for those who rely on medication. Officials are talking to drug companies about creating a six-week “buffer stock” on top of the three months they already have in place. This should help cover any short-term disruptions at the border. Britain will also waive the need for EU firms to re-test their drugs under new rules.

Shoppers beware

That one-click purchase at your favorite online store might start looking slightly less tempting. The government says “increased costs and slower processing times” for payments

made in euros are a possibility. Parcel deliveries could get more expensive because waivers for certain import and sales taxes would expire.

Flicks and tunes

Catching up on the latest Netflix releases while coasting on a high-speed Eurostar train may suddenly become a whole lot harder. Britons could theoretically lose access to streaming services while abroad — everything from Spotify to Amazon Prime — because the UK would no longer be in Europe’s “digital single market”. And the Eurostar service itself might be in trouble because old licenses of UK train operators in Europe will be invalid.

Meat pies

Britons are proud of their Stilton cheese and Scotch whisky. But the status of everything from Cornish pasties to Melton Mowbray pork pies will be up in the air because they will lose their “geographical indication” status in Europe. Britain’s 86 GI-protected products make up a quarter all its food and drink exports.

Surprises

A host of other industries and products could also be affected. Britain will have to come up with its own warning stickers for packs of cigarettes because the current ones are protected by the EU image library. Imported sperm donations could face delays or stoppages. Caviar supplies might start running out because Britain will not be able to trade in goods covered by European endangered species rules. Also facing possible disruption: breeders of pedigree British horses and sheep. — AFP

What next if UK MPs reject Brexit deal?

LONDON: Prime Minister Theresa May appears likely to lose a historic vote on the Brexit deal she has struck with EU leaders in a crucial parliament vote tomorrow. Defeat in the House of Commons is almost certain to lead to either a no-confidence vote from the opposition or a leadership challenge from within her own Conservative Party. Here are some of the most probable scenarios:

Renegotiate deal

The prime minister could face demands to head to Brussels and attempt to extract concessions before putting the deal to a second vote by parliament. EU leaders have rejected the prospect of renegotiating the withdrawal agreement itself but European sources

speaking privately say tweaks in the accompanying declaration on post-Brexit ties might be possible. May is headed to Brussels anyway for a summit with 27 fellow EU leaders on Thursday and Friday. “Theresa May is going to come to the European summit on December 13 and 14 and ask for a renegotiation and the 27 are going to say no, the texts are agreed,” an informed European source told AFP on condition of anonymity. “They are then going to fall back on a protocol or a clarification on a point seen as important to then go back to parliament.”

With MPs having more of a say in the process, it is possible they could push for a “plan B”, which would see Britain adopt a softer Brexit, such as staying in the EU’s satellite trading bloc the European Economic Area — the so-called Norway option. Although being in the single market would require maintaining freedom of movement of EU citizens into Britain — a contentious issue for May and many pro-Brexit voters — this approach is considered more likely to command a majority in parliament and potentially pass a second vote. — AFP

Short, sharp shock of a no-deal Brexit

LONDON: A popular London wine merchant became the latest business last month to start stockpiling in case Britain splits from the European Union without a deal in March. The possibility of Britain breaking off from its main trading partner without any arrangements in place will grow if the UK parliament rejects the draft withdrawal agreement on Tuesday. Doom-and-gloom predictions about life after a “no-deal” Brexit are plentiful and highly politically charged. The truth is no one really knows what will happen because Britain is the first to leave the bloc. But here are some things London is telling Britons to brace for in the first days of a worst-case scenario pullout.

Rip-off roaming

We check our mobiles incessantly and this is where people could notice things first. Free roaming would no longer apply and UK mobile phone operators can start charging extra for subscribers who pop off to “the Continent”. London is also urging people in Northern Ireland to watch out for “inadvertent roaming” when straying too close to the EU border with Ireland.

Grounded at Heathrow

Heathrow and other big airports can be a

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Director of Facilities	Bachelor's Degree in Engineering, Facility Management or a related discipline; master's preferred; 8 years or more experience at increasing levels of responsibility may be considered. At least 4 years recent experience in the administration and management of a physical plant, in an institutional setting preferred.
Retail Manager	Bachelor's Degree required. Prior experiences in managing retail spaces and vendors to include cafeteria, other retail operators.
Admission Specialist	Bachelor's Degree from a regionally accredited institution required. Demonstrated experiences using computer skills; proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, social media and database management.
Senior Accountant	Bachelor's Degree required in Accounting, Finance or related field. Minimum of three years' experience in an accounting / finance position, preferably in an educational environment.
Executive Secretary	Bachelor's Degree preferred. Minimum of three years experience in clerical administrative role.
Registrar	Bachelor's Degree required; Master's Degree preferred in Higher Education Administration / Student Personnel or related field. Bilingual English and Arabic strongly preferred. Five years experiences in higher education environment; at least 3 years working in Registrar's office with increasingly complex roles.
Chair Engineering Dept	Master's Degree in related field; PhD preferred. Three to five years full-time classroom teaching experience.
Chair Business Dept	Master's Degree in related field; PhD preferred. Three to five years full-time classroom teaching experience.
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International

Secrets, threats, controversy: Month One of El Chapo's trial

Guzman's trial loaded with twists and turns

NEW YORK: From documents under seal and accomplices with colorful nicknames to suspicions about his wife and surreal details about his high-flying lifestyle, the first month of the US trial of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman has been loaded with twists and turns. Here are a few key moments and news notes from the proceedings in a federal courtroom in Brooklyn, where the alleged Sinaloa cartel co-founder is facing 11 trafficking, firearms and money laundering charges. The trial, which began on November 5 with jury selection, is expected to last four months. He stands accused of smuggling more than 155 tons of cocaine into the United States over a period of 25 years. If convicted, the 61-year-old Guzman could spend the rest of his life behind bars in a maximum security US prison.

Documents under seal

Most of the trial documents have been kept under wraps: they are classified. Neither the media nor the public can access the motions or communications between the two sides and Judge Brian Cogan. Prosecutors have justified the move by citing the security of the witnesses, who could be targets for payback doled out by El Chapo's inner circle. They have asked the defense team's cross-examinations to be limited in scope, especially in terms of alleged kickbacks paid to

the cartel by two former Mexican presidents. Cogan has so far accepted most of the prosecution's requests, and rejected news media pleas for better access to the documents.

Wife under fire

El Chapo's wife, 29-year-old former beauty queen Emma Coronel, has been a star of the trial so far. She sits in the public gallery each day, smiling at her husband and bringing him fresh suits to wear. Coronel's body-hugging wardrobe and stilettos have raised eyebrows. Prosecutors are certainly watching her. Since Guzman's extradition to the United States in January 2017, she has been barred from visiting him and cannot speak to him on the telephone. Only attorneys are allowed to use telephones in the courthouse. Federal attorneys cried foul when it emerged that despite those bans, she allegedly used the cell phone of one of Guzman's attorneys in a courthouse cafeteria last month. Prosecutors said she could have used it to talk to her husband, though he is not believed to have access to a phone. Cogan downplayed the incident, and accepted explanations that she was using the phone for translation purposes.

Patron 'saint' of traffickers

Attorneys for El Chapo said a mysterious statue of

Jesus Malverde - the so-called patron saint of drug traffickers, a gangster born in 1870 in Guzman's home state of Sinaloa who gave his ill-gotten gains to the poor - appeared in the room next to their workroom. A few days later, it was gone. "Where is Jesus Malverde?" tweeted Eduardo Balarezo, Guzman's showy lawyer.

Nicknames galore

There must be an unspoken rule that drug traffickers and their associates must have nicknames. In a month of hearings, each one mentioned in court had a more colorful moniker. Guzman, of course, is El Chapo, or "Shorty." He also goes by "Speedy" for his ability to get cocaine into the United States quickly. Another of his nicknames is "The Architect," for dreaming up the networks of tunnels under the US-Mexico border that allowed him to get narcotics into the United States with ease.

Guzman's brother is called "El Pollo", or "The Chicken." The brother of his main associate within the Sinaloa cartel - now a key witness for the prosecution - is called The King.

Guzman's Colombian cocaine source? El Chupeta, or Lollipop. His pilot and manager of his dealings in Mexico? Fatty. His right-hand man? The Graduate, because he went to college. Traffickers also use

coded communications: "girls" means airplanes; "wine" is fuel for those planes; "shirts" means cocaine; "documents" means money, one witness - "Fatty," whose real name is Miguel Angel Martinez, said in a deposition.

Agent provocateur

Balarezo, El Chapo's lead attorney, willingly stokes the fires of controversy. On the stand, one witness explained that a certain song was a favorite of El Chapo, and when he heard it from his prison cell, he understood that El Chapo's associates would try to kill him that night. What did Balarezo do? He tweeted a link to the song. Prosecutors said the tweet was a threat to witnesses and jurors alike.

Balarezo has also taunted two former Mexican presidents: Enrique Pena Nieto, who just left office, and his predecessor Felipe Calderon. "Tick tock," he said on Twitter - an apparent hint that news about bribes they allegedly took from drug cartels could be mentioned at trial, and followed up on by Mexican authorities. Twice during the trial so far, prosecutors have shown the court what several kilos of cocaine look like, for emphasis. The second time, Balarezo picked it up. When prosecutors asked him to wear gloves, he shot back: "Right now, I need a pick-me-up."—AFP

Morocco seizes more than a ton of cocaine

RABAT: Moroccan authorities said they had seized more than a ton of cocaine and detained seven people suspected of smuggling the narcotic from South America to Europe. The Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation said the cocaine was found in a truck along with two dinghies near the port city of El Jadida, according to a statement carried by the official MAP news agency. Seven Moroccan citizens were arrested "for their alleged links to a transnational criminal network involved in the international trafficking of cocaine between Morocco, Latin America and Europe".

The authorities said initial information suggested the drugs had been shipped over from South America on a commercial vessel before being transferred onto a smaller fishing boat and brought ashore in Morocco. Cocaine traffickers have developed new routes to Europe over the past decade. The drug is mostly sent from Central America via West African countries and more recently through North Africa, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In recent years, the Moroccan authorities have reported increasing cocaine seizures, including a record 2.5-tonne haul in October last year.—AFP

Armenia votes in polls to cement reform drive



YEREVAN: Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is about to cast his ballot during early parliamentary elections in Yerevan yesterday. —AFP

YEREVAN: Armenians yesterday were voting in parliamentary elections triggered years ahead of schedule by reformist leader Nikol Pashinyan, who is aiming to cement his political authority in the post-Soviet country. The 43-year-old former journalist became prime minister in May after spearheading weeks of peaceful anti-government rallies that ousted veteran leader Serzh Sarkisian. He has pledged to root out endemic corruption and address widespread poverty, earning him supporters in the impoverished landlocked nation of about three million people. However Pashinyan's reform drive was stalled for months by opposition from Sarkisian's ruling party which dominated the National Assembly until his calculated resignation triggered parliament's dissolution last month.

"After the elections, we will be developing Armenian democracy and make an economic revolution happen," Pashinyan told journalists after casting his ballot, pledging to "hold free, fair, and transparent elections." At a polling station in central Yerevan voters expressed optimism about the political change promised by Pashinyan and venting their anger at former corrupt officials. "Thanks to the revolution, we will finally have fair elections," 72-year-old pensioner Parzik Avetisyan told AFP. "I voted for the positive change promised by Nikol (Pashinyan)," he added.

Another voter, 52-year-old painter Garnik Arakelyan, said: "I want all those corrupt officials who for many years were robbing and humiliating people to be jailed." Turnout was 7.7 percent at 11am (0700 GMT), three hours after polls opened. —AFP

They survived the Holocaust. Must they go back into hiding?

NEW YORK: They survived the Europe of the Holocaust. But a recent rise in anti-Semitic acts in the United States has rekindled old fears: Should they again go into hiding, or should they instead reach out to share their experiences? Nearly all of them were children or adolescents in the early 1940s. They remember having their youth stolen from them - by fear, by desperate flight, by separation from relatives, and in some cases by the Nazi death camps. If there was one country where they felt they were safe, it was the United States, where many of them have now lived for decades.

They have, to be sure, heard the occasional anti-Semitic slight or perhaps seen a swastika daubed on a wall, but still they felt safe - an all-important word for them. Now, however, these survivors - several of whom came together in the Oheb Shalom synagogue in an affluent New Jersey suburb to celebrate Hanukkah and to mark International Holocaust Survivors Night - are deeply worried: Anti-Semitic acts in the US soared last year by 37 percent, according to FBI statistics.

The October 27 slaughter at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, where a white nationalist has been charged with gunning down 11 mostly elderly Jews as they worshiped, greatly heightened those fears. "A crazy man listened to Trump," said David Lefkovic, 89, referring to the Pittsburgh shooter. As an adolescent in southwestern France during World War II, he was saved only by his blond hair from being snatched up in a roundup of Jews. Trump "calls anybody that he doesn't like 'weak' - that's exactly Nazi language," said Adela Dubovy, who, as a 6-year-old, survived the notorious Theresienstadt concentration camp. "You're weak, you're to be destroyed."

'It can happen again'

"Before, they were hiding," Lefkovic said of America's anti-Semites. "It's now out in the open that it's okay to pick on the Jews all over again," said Hanna

Soviet dissident Alexeyeva dies

MOSCOW: Lyudmila Alexeyeva, a Soviet-era dissident who became a symbol of resistance in modern-day Russia as a leading rights activist, died after a long illness at the age of 91 in Moscow on Saturday. In an extraordinary career emblematic of the country's turbulent history, she tirelessly defended human rights in the USSR from the 1950s, and continued to do so in strongman leader Vladimir Putin's Russia.

"This is a huge loss for the entire human rights movement in Russia," Mikhail Fedotov, head of the Kremlin Human Rights Council, said in a statement. Alexeyeva died at about 1630 GMT Saturday in a Moscow hospital, he added. "It was not the first time that she was in this hospital, doctors had already revived her several times in the most difficult of situations. But there are situations in which doctors can do nothing," he added.

"She had been struggling with illness recently, but her mind was always stronger than her body and far stronger than any disease," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin, of whom Alexeyeva was a strong critic, had sent a message of condolences to her family. The president "greatly appreciates Lyudmila Alexeyeva's contribution to the development of civil society in Russia and had great respect for her point of view on several issues concerning the life of the country," Russian news agencies quoted Peskov as saying. Alexeyeva had been the leader of the

Moscow Helsinki Group, one of Russia's oldest human rights organisations which she helped found in 1976. The group lamented the loss of a "legendary, wise and humane person who remained a defender of human rights until the last moments of her life". Russia's rights ombudswoman Tatiana Moskalkova also mourned Alexeyeva. "For those who have appreciated democracy in the past, for those who appreciate it now, and those who will appreciate it in the future, Lyudmila Mikhailovna has always been and will always be a symbol of honesty and the uncompromising struggle for human rights," Moskalkova told the Interfax news agency.

Fighting for dissidents

Alexeyeva, who trained as an archeologist, said that like many Soviet citizens she cried when the Josef Stalin died in 1953. Her economist father and mathematician mother were both Communists who venerated Lenin. But she lost confidence in the Soviet system when Stalin's crimes were revealed by new leader Nikita Khrushchev. In the late 1950s, her apartment became a meeting place for the Soviet dissident intelligentsia, and a point for storing and distributing banned publications.

She campaigned against trials for dissidents, losing her job as a science publisher and enduring numerous searches and interrogations at the hands of the KGB. With her security under threat, she left the USSR in 1977 to live in the United States, continuing her fight from afar through her writing. She returned to Russia in 1993 with liberals hopeful of a new era after the Soviet Union's collapse under President Boris Yeltsin. But Yeltsin's presidency col-



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump speaks during a Hanukkah reception with Holocaust survivors in the East Room of the White House. —AFP

Keselman, who was born in Germany in 1930 and spent much of the war in France and Italy.

The anti-Semites "are very strong, even in colleges," said Roman Kent, who survived life in camps including Auschwitz. "They should have people that are more intelligent." In recent weeks, anti-Semitic acts have taken place on the campuses of some of America's most prestigious universities, including Columbia and Cornell in New York state and Duke in North Carolina. Of the Pittsburgh massacre, said Kent, who took part in negotiations with Germany over compensation to be paid to Jews, "I'm afraid that it can happen again, and it will happen again."

'I don't want to live that way'

Adela Dubovy said she has four grandchildren at various universities. She said she lives in a retirement home - a "bubble" that insulates her to some extent. But she admits to being "scared." "Now I don't wear

my Star of David. I tell my grandkids: Don't wear your kippah (yarmulke) in the street - you don't want to be attacked." "I understand" the urge to be discreet, said Keselman, "but I would not tell my grandchildren that." "I don't want to live that way anymore... I did it. Enough of that."

When she traveled back to Italy, where her father was arrested and then killed, "I purposely wore a Jewish Star of David. I felt, 'This is me back, and I feel safe here.'" Today, said the soft-spoken 88-year-old, "I want to live free and open with everyone." Keselman, a painter, is not fond of public speaking but she forces herself to meet with young people to keep alive the haunting memories that some people feel will be lost forever when the final survivors die. Roman Kent says he regrets that too few members of younger Jewish generations have picked up the torch. "If they would, then there would not be 60 or 70 percent that don't know the word Holocaust," he said. —AFP



MOSCOW: In this file photo, Russian human-rights activist Lyudmila Alexeyeva gestures while speaking to the media in Moscow, on the first anniversary of the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky's death. —AFP

lapsed into economic chaos and the horror of the first Chechen war, followed by a new clampdown on civil society after Putin took over in 2000.

Putin era

Alexeyeva's job was not done. After protests in the winter of 2011-2012 spawned hopes of a new beginning, the Kremlin responded with restrictions on non-governmental organizations. Alexeyeva refused to register the Moscow Helsinki Group as a "foreign agent" as required by a new law, instead cutting foreign and funding to get around the measure. She slammed Moscow's seizure of the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 for "bringing shame on my country".

The following year, she denounced the "awful political killing" of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov.

She also tried to shed light on the fate of accountant Sergei Magnitsky, who died in prison after accusing Russian officials of tax fraud, and denounced the imprisonment of anti-Kremlin tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky. On Alexeyeva's 90th birthday, Putin gave her a state award for "outstanding achievements in the protection of human rights, and praised her "courage". The European Parliament in 2009 awarded Alexeyeva the prestigious Sakharov Prize for defenders of human thought, along with the Memorial human rights group. "If I save even one person, it's already a true joy," she said at the time. —AFP

International

Nearly 2,000 Bangladesh opposition supporters arrested ahead of poll

Another blow for a beleaguered opposition

DHAKA: Bangladesh's opposition party yesterday said nearly 2,000 of its supporters have been arrested on trumped-up charges in a crackdown aimed at derailing its campaign just weeks from a general election. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which is seeking to unseat Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on December 30, said at least 1,972 party officials and grassroots campaigners had been detained since the election was announced a month ago.

The arrests are yet another blow for a beleaguered opposition whose leader Khaleda Zia has been jailed for corruption and barred from running against arch-rival Hasina, who is seeking a third consecutive term. The opposition boycotted the 2014 election, saying it was rigged against Zia in favour of Hasina and her ruling Awami League party. BNP spokesman Rizvi Ahmed told AFP the majority of party cadres rounded up since late November in the police sweep were still behind bars. "They have filed hundreds of ghost, or fictitious cases, against our party workers and leaders," he said.

Another party official said at least 11 opposition candidates had also been detained before official campaigning begins today. "Six of them are still in the jail," said the official, who declined to be named. Police have said those arrested had outstanding warrants or were wanted over alleged connections to ongoing cases. Ahmed denied this, saying the crackdown was a political "blueprint" by the

ruling party to intimidate its opponents. "The government wants to hold a lopsided election. These arrests are just to create fear among the people, so that they don't go to vote," he said.

The opposition also accused police officials in Chittagong, a southern city, of campaigning on behalf of the Awami League. Police in the port city denied the allegations. The arrests further hinder an already battered alliance of opposition parties, led by the BNP, which have seen their core leadership jailed on charges they say are fabricated. Zia, a two-time former prime minister and friend-turned-foe to Hasina, was last month ordered by a court to stay behind bars for a decade for graft. Her supporters say the charges are politically motivated to stymie Hasina's chief political threat.

Zia's son, a potential heir to the BNP throne, was sentenced in absentia to life behind bars while hundreds of other loyalists have been arrested or jailed, party officials say. Just a month from the polls, the BNP has not announced an alternative candidate to run against Hasina, whose rule has been marred by allegations of rights abuses and intolerance for dissent. Bangladesh has been led by either Zia or Hasina since the 1990s and the two powerful women have turned from close allies to fierce enemies. Hasina has refused to allow a caretaker government to oversee the country during the campaign period. — AFP



DHAKA: Bangladeshi relatives hold photos of disappeared persons during a press meeting in Dhaka. Hundreds of relatives of people who went missing in Bangladesh in the last few years join a protest, demanding justice for the victims. Rights groups said hundreds of people have allegedly been abducted by security forces as part of a crackdown on opposition activists. — AFP

Efforts to reinvigorate 'toothless' agreement on rights activists

WASHINGTON: Cristina Palabay knows what it means to be targeted - and left unprotected by her government. The 37-year-old head of Karapatan, an alliance of human rights groups in the Philippines, has been at the centre of a rising wave of violence against activists - facilitated, she said, by a culture of impunity. The country is one of the most dangerous for activists, with dozens of land rights and human rights workers killed there in 2017, she said, adding that some of her colleagues had been threatened while others had been booked on false charges.

"Being a human rights defender in a country such as the Philippines, fraught with a hideous human rights record, means putting oneself in the line of fire," Palabay said. The situation mirrors a global rise in the repression of rights workers two decades after the international community recognized the issue - in 1998 the UN General Assembly adopted what is known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. This week Michel Forst, the UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders, said more than 3,500 rights activists had been murdered since 1998 - most of them women.

Ahead of Sunday's 20th anniversary of the agreement to protect human rights defenders, Forst joined other UN experts urging governments to pass laws to keep rights workers safe, and to repeal legislation that obstructs their work. In a statement, they said the "international consensus on the need for human rights defenders to be protected has been falling apart over time". Experts said land activists were among the most vulnerable - 207 land and environment advocates were killed last year, the highest on record, said advocacy group EarthRights International in a report this week.

Palabay said intimidation in the Philippines took different forms. "Offices of human rights defenders are raided, lobbied with explosives or burned to sow terror among them and the communities they serve," Palabay said. Many advocates are subject to stalking, harassment and vilification campaigns, she said, while some are illegally arrested, tortured - or simply "disappeared". The situation under President Rodrigo Duterte has worsened, Palabay said, to the point where one rights worker is killed on average each week. In an agrarian country like the Philippines, she said, most victims tend to be involved in land rights.

When the declaration was adopted two decades ago, governments pledged for the first time to support and protect rights workers. Yet today, Palabay and others warn that the promise of the declaration is slipping. There were more than 300 deaths last year - twice as many as two years earlier, according to Front Line Defenders, an advocacy group

based in Ireland. Adam Shapiro, its head of campaigns, said the declaration was effectively "toothless". Despite that, he and others said, there has been some positive action over two decades as a result of its existence. Shapiro highlighted specific efforts in Latin America, where governments in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Honduras set up protection for lawyers, human rights workers and others. These include undertaking risk assessments and providing armed guards and other measures for homes, offices and vehicles, for instance, he said.

However, said Shapiro, in each instance the "track record is not very good". Along with the Philippines, the four Latin American nations saw more rights workers killed than any others. Several of the initiatives look good on paper, he said, but are poorly coordinated and lack funding - including in Mexico, for instance, due to greatly increased demand for protection. An effort is underway to learn from these experiences and set the legal groundwork for similar - but more effective - mechanisms worldwide. In 2016, activists and lawyers finalized a model law that could be used in any country to help draft national legislation to protect rights workers.

The model is a way to bolster the impact of the UN declaration, said Tess McEvoy, legal counsel with the International Service for Human Rights, a non-profit that supports human rights defenders, and which spearheaded the effort and is helping to roll it out. "Not many states have incorporated the declaration comprehensively into national law - and some are doing the opposite, by developing laws that restrict defenders," she said. "The model law is intended to guide other actors to ensure the full and effective implementation of the declaration."

She said Mali, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast had passed laws based on the model draft, while the Philippines and Mongolia have laws pending that are based in part on it. Similar bills are in development in at least six other countries. The Ivory Coast law, which states that rights workers cannot be detained or investigated for doing their job, has already been used to defend advocates, McEvoy said. "We hope that other countries that are currently drafting similar protection laws will follow this example," said Melanie Sonhaye Kombate of the West African Human Rights Defenders Network.

The 20th anniversary of the declaration has prompted a number of initiatives aimed at making it more effective. In October, Paris hosted the first Human Rights Defenders World Summit. It finalized a series of recommendations for governments, businesses and others that will be presented to the UN General Assembly at a special forum on December 18.

The summit provided a clear sense of how strong activists have become in the past two decades, said Guadalupe Marengo, who heads Amnesty International's team on human rights defenders. "But also that there appears to be a backlash, and human rights defenders are on the front line - particularly around the rise in killings of land rights defenders in Brazil, Honduras and the Philippines," Marengo said. "Protecting the Earth has become one of the world's most dangerous professions," said Katie Redford of EarthRights International, which this month launched a program to protect environmental and land rights workers. — Reuters

Clashes over immigration outside Canada Parliament

OTTAWA: Right-wing protesters opposed to Canada joining a UN pact for better regulating worldwide migration clashed Saturday with pro-immigration groups in the biting cold outside parliament. An estimated 200 members of far-right groups and 100 counter-protesters lobbed explosive-laced insults at each other on the snow-covered lawn, resulting in one arrest. Scuffles erupted just as the event got underway, but riot police quickly separated the two sides.

The crowd then began chanting "Reject immigration pact," but was drowned out by shouts of "Shame" and "Refugees welcome, racists go home." Sylvain Brouillette, spokesman for the protesters, said the United Nations pact risks eroding sovereign immigration policies - a view echoed by opposition Conservative leader Andrew Scheer, and conservative politicians in other countries, but roundly dismissed by its proponents.

"Canada was built on immigration. We have learned to live together and we have found a way to do it well, so we don't need a UN migration pact to tell us what to do and change a system that works," Brouillette said. Passerby Aditya Rao stopped to listen to the arguments but concluded that the protesters were misguided. "It boggles the mind," he told AFP. "These people are grumbling about all the chaotic migration, but at the same time are complaining about an effort to make it orderly and safe. It's atrocious."

The non-binding pact is due to be formally adopted at a December 10-11 conference in Marrakesh, Morocco. It lays down 23 objectives to open up legal migration and better manage migratory flows, as the number of people on the move worldwide has increased to 250 million, or three percent of the world population. Among its principles are the protection of human rights, including those specific to children, and recognition of national sovereignty. Its objectives also include helping countries deal with migration by sharing standards to improve information and integration.

The US quit talks on the pact last December, and several countries including Hungary, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Australia also rejected it. Immigration has become a more polarizing issue in Canada, where the number of refugee claims last year nearly doubled compared with the previous year. In Ottawa, former Conservative foreign minister Maxime Bernier, who broke with the party in September to start his own, has gathered 48,000 signatures on a petition to limit immigration.

"Canadians want their government, not foreign entities, to be in control of our immigration system," Scheer said during a faceoff in Parliament with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who vowed to sign the UN pact. "Welcoming people through a rigorous immigration system, from around the world, is what has made Canada strong, and indeed something the world needs more of, not less of," Trudeau countered. In late 2017 Canada's Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen said his country will boost immigration to one million over the next three years. Canada has seen a rise in asylum seekers since its neighbor the United States elected President Donald Trump, who has tightened US immigration policies. — AFP

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Sugarcane means money, renewable energy in Mauritius

Far out into the Indian Ocean where it is forced to be self-reliant, the island nation of Mauritius is weaning itself off fossil fuels by turning to its main cash-crop sugar cane, for electricity. The leftover, crushed sugarcane stalks and tips - dry fibrous material known as "bagasse" - is burned to help power Mauritius and reduce its reliance on coal and oil. Electricity from sugarcane now accounts for 14 percent of the island's needs and, when combined with other renewable sources such as solar, wind and hydro, provides nearly a quarter of daily consumption.

"The government's goal is to increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix to 35 percent by 2025," said deputy prime minister Ivan Collendaveloo who is also energy minister. "The 35 percent is not far off; we will have 11 solar parks by next year and at least two wind farms," he said. "Independent producers in the sugar industry will continue to provide the largest share of renewable electricity from bagasse," he added.

In Mauritius, around 60 percent of the island's electricity is generated by four sugar companies, each running its own thermal power station. The plants run on coal for part of the year then switch to sugar cane byproducts when harvest season comes.

Power 24/7

At the end of November, the harvest is in full swing in the fields surrounding the Omnicane company, in the south of the island. Heavy trucks pulling huge trailers are lined up next to an immense warehouse to unload their cargo of fresh-cut sugarcane. During the harvest, 8,500 tonnes are sent daily to this facility - a total of around 900,000 tonnes for the year. The cane stalks are crushed to extract juice for sugar production. They are then soaked to extract the last juice and then heated to dry.

Finally, squashed and dried, the stalks are fed into a thermal power station where they burn at 500 degrees Celsius, fuelling turbines that produce electricity for the plant and the national grid. "Electricity is available 24 hours a day, on demand, without having to wait for the wind or the sun, since we can store bagasse as we would oil and coal," said Jacques D'Unienville, Omnicane's manager. And the carbon dioxide greenhouse gas produced by the burning? It is captured, according to D'Unienville, and used to add the fizz to soft drinks.

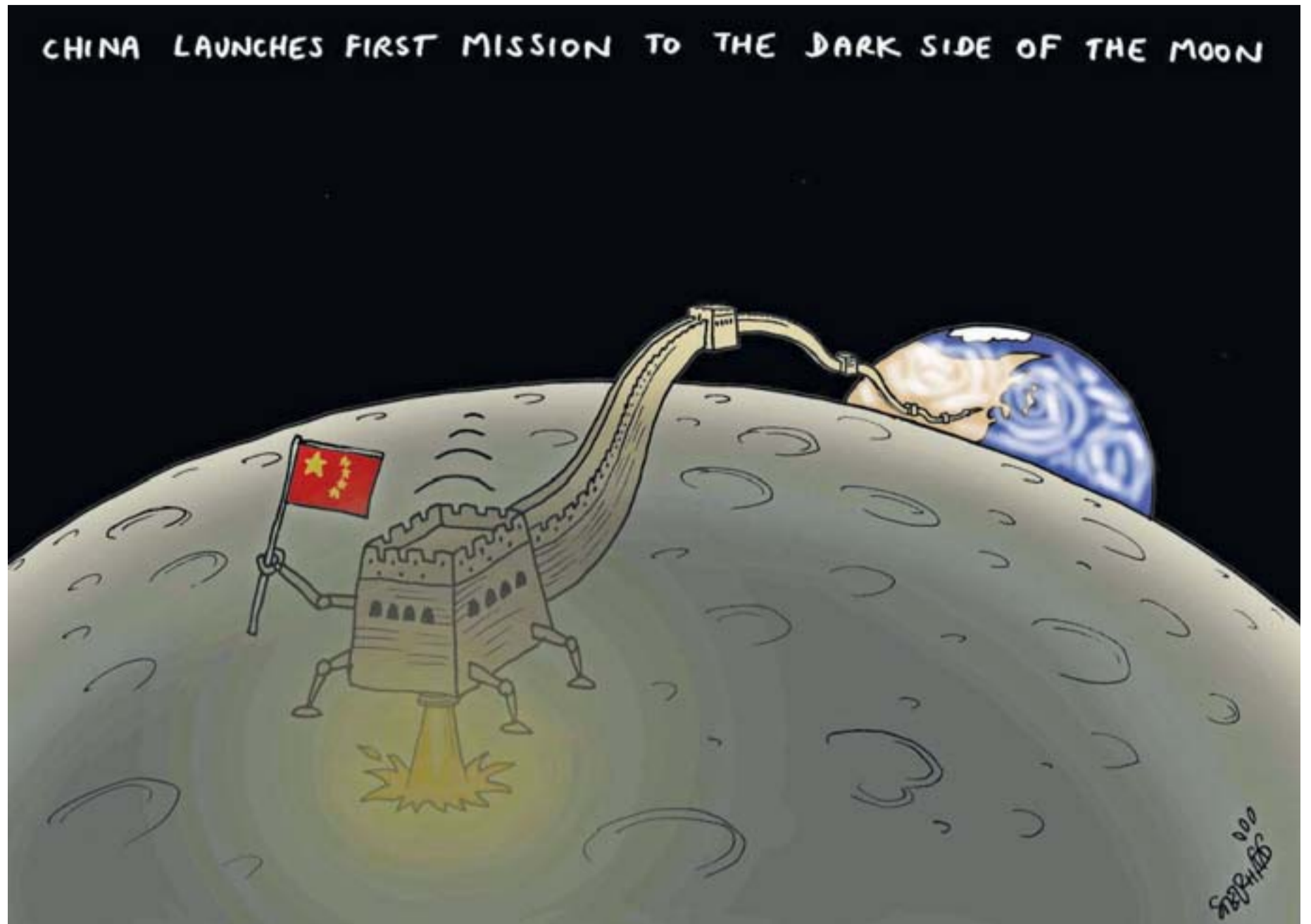
Cloud on horizon

However there are clouds on the horizon in the form of a drop in sugar prices since the European Union ended quotas in 2017, and increases in production in Thailand, Brazil and India, which together have put pressure on the island's farmers. Jacqueline Sauzier, secretary general of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture said falling sugar prices were "a fatal blow to the local sugar industry". "The number of small farmers has fallen from 26,000 in 2010 to 13,000 in 2018," said Agriculture Minister Mahen Kumar Seeruttun.

The question is whether Mauritius will be able to produce enough sugar cane to meet its target for renewable, bagasse-based electricity. Some sugar producers are hoping that preferential treatment might provide an answer. "Mauritius is a small, vulnerable island. We do not have the capacity of Thailand, Brazil and India, but we are an efficient producer because we value the entire sugar production chain," said D'Unienville. "We need protected access to preferential markets. Small countries should have quotas as a priority because we are very vulnerable," he said. — AFP



A photo taken on Nov 22, 2018 shows trucks carrying sugarcane at the Omnicane Savannah Sugar Factory in l'Escalier in Mauritius. — AFP



Another Brexit referendum is a terrible idea

In the "careful what you wish for" stakes, few issues rank higher than the plan for a second referendum by those in the UK hoping for a reversal of the country's June 2016 vote to leave the European Union (the "Remainers.") If secured, the outcome could be a fast track to a phenomenon the UK has so far avoided - the creation of a large, angry populist party, probably of the right and perhaps also of the left. That would be very bad news for the UK, for its politics, for Europe, and for the cause of democracy generally. It would be seen, with some justice, as "they" crushing the democratic vote of "we the people".

The second referendum plan is justified by arguing that the British people deserve to have a choice between the government's Brexit proposal, agreed by Theresa May's cabinet with difficulty last month and to be voted on by parliament on Dec 11, and that of scrapping Brexit altogether. The electorate, the Remainers argue, will make an informed choice rather than a mere expression of frustration with the EU, as in 2016.

But of course, the organizers hope for a reversal of Brexit. They believe the electorate is frightened by the prospect of slower growth, or even an economic shock from crashing out without a plan - both warnings put out last week by Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, supported by an official government analysis.

No country is an island, not even one that is, like Britain. The surge of often violent militancy in France, left and right united against the centrist and once popular President Emmanuel Macron and his République en Marche party, is the most vivid and frightening example of the confrontation between "us" and "them." But the disaffection is deep and wide in the rest of Europe, and - as Yves Leterme, former prime minister of Belgium warned in June, the populists are united by "their refusal to play by the rules of conventional politics."

In France, what began as a more or less conventional protest, mainly in the provinces, against a fuel price rise has now transformed itself into something like a revolution. The promise by the French Prime Minister Edouard

Philippe on Tuesday to suspend the fuel tax increases for six months was followed by more rioting. On Wednesday evening, the government surrendered completely, taking the rises out of the 2019 budget, with no threat of their renewal. This weekend will see how well that works.

This, from an administration which had appeared the most resolute and confident in Europe, with a president who only two weeks ago made a virtue of not following his predecessors in his office in backing down in face of



Disaffection is deep and wide in rest of Europe

protests, is a terrible warning to European governments - and perhaps more widely in the democratic world. France seems to demonstrate that the democratic choice of an administration one year is vulnerable to a wave of militant anger the next. If that confirms itself as a trend, the knell for democracy surely tolls.

How likely is such a trend? There's no steady political weathervane pointing in only one direction. In Germany, where the fears of a far-right surge are most impregnated with 20th century horrors, the Alternative for Germany hit a high of 17 percent in a late summer poll, only to fall away to 12 percent in regional elections in Bavaria and Hesse, where the leftist Green Party surged.

Italy's national populist coalition government remains popular, and the deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, Italy's most prominent politician and an outspoken opponent

of immigration, proposes liberalizing gun ownership laws, courting fears of the rise of a gun lobby as powerful as that in the United States. Italy's government is locked in a struggle with the EU over a budget, agreed between Brussels and the previous center-left administration, which the populist coalition refuses to observe. Neither side can afford to back down, but compromises may save temporary face.

In Spain, seen as immune to right-wing populism, a new force grows. Vox, a far-right party came from nowhere to win 12 seats in the regional parliament of Andalusia this month, and may enter government there with a manifesto that was much more about national issues such as control of immigration, more power to a centralized national government, promotion of increased awareness of Spain's contribution to civilization and more.

That Andalusia voters should respond with enthusiasm to a party which wants power to flow back from the regions to the center shows a large disaffection with Spain's system of devolved rule - a system which has produced a continuing standoff between separatists in Catalonia and the government in Madrid. The quarrel, says the Catalan commentator Juan Jose Lopez Burniol, "has a massive ability to destabilize the whole of Spain."

Burniol's comment applies to all of Europe. The national populists have not won - though they pin large hopes on a much-increased vote, even a majority, in the European elections in May 2019 - but they are extremely destabilizing. Sweden is struggling to form a government because the far-right Swedish Democrats hold the balance of power, and no mainstream party will coalesce with them.

In Austria, the radical right party, FPÖ, is the junior partner in a rightwing coalition which stresses restrictions on immigration - and outrages liberals by attacks on the state broadcaster, alleged efforts to suppress investigations into racist behavior by far-right supporters and - a particularly bitter issue - the government's cancelling of a law against smoking in restaurants. No country can avoid a reckoning with a large group of citizens who hate what mainstream parties have done. — Reuters

Slow recycler Turkey seeks better uses for its trash

Turkish woman Tulay Gercek stands in front of a vending machine at a busy Istanbul metro station but instead of putting coins into a slot, she crams plastic bottles into a hole. Every bottle or can Gercek places in the machine gives extra credit on her Istanbul card - the universal ticket for using public transport in the city - in a pilot project by the municipality to promote recycling. "I'm bringing plastic bottles every day," she said at Sishane station, where she had brought a large bag of bottles and cans. "In the past I used to throw them into the bin. This is a very good project. There should be more," she said. "I believe it will help raise public awareness a little bit."

The machines are in place at three metro stations in Turkey's mega city and officials hope to expand to more in the future. It's so far a relatively rare step in a country of over 80 million people with a notoriously bad record on recycling and waste. Activists say this must change fast and there are signs, albeit tentative, that the authorities are starting to understand the need to change profligate habits.

'Polluting the soil'

Turkey ranks 108th with a score of 52.96 in the 2018 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), produced by the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy, that analyses the environmental per-

formance of 180 nations. Top of the eco-chart is Switzerland, with a score of 87.42, indicating a strong showing across most issues, especially climate, energy and air pollution.

Oya Guzel, of the Mind Your Waste (Copune Sahip Cik) foundation, said Turkey was producing around 31 million tonnes of waste annually, out of which 11 percent was recycled. "We are polluting the soil and the environment with plastics, metals and glass which remain in the natural environment for years," she told AFP. "We have a target of 35 percent (of all waste to be recycled) by five years from now, which is also low but we believe progress can be made" in that time.

She said it was consumers in the end who have to decide what is recyclable. "We could turn it into raw material, or throw away litter and make it trash," Guzel said, urging consumers to give up on disposable materials. "We use a plastic bag for an average time of 12 minutes. It becomes trash 12 minutes later." The Istanbul municipality told AFP that, of the non-recycled waste, 61 percent was burned to produce electricity and the remaining 28 percent buried with no use.

End to free bags

Green policies do not appear as yet to be a major vote winner in Turkey but there are signs the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is now paying some attention to the issue. Environment and Urbanization Minister Murat Kurum said there would be a compulsory charge for plastic bags from January, bringing Turkey into line with other European countries. That would be a revolution in a country which uses plastic bags massively. Kurum said that every Turkish citizen uses, on average, 440 bags a year, adding the aim was to reduce this to 40 by 2025.



Turkish workers handle garbage at a recycling center in Istanbul on Nov 14, 2018. — AFP

The recycling campaign is also strongly backed by Erdogan's wife Emine, who said at a conference on zero waste that the target was a "more livable environment" and a "stronger economy by classifying the waste at its source and recycling". She said Erdogan's presidential palace was leading the way with its staff now trained in how to recycle waste on site. "We have not had garbage trucks at the presidential complex for a long time," she said.

'Will get better'

At a sorting facility on the outskirts of Istanbul, organic waste is separated, processed and used as fertilizer in parks and gardens throughout the city, while non-organic materials, like glass, plastics and metals, are recycled. But Ibrahim Halil Turkeri, the city's recycling chief, said that "greater responsibility falls to individuals". "If the waste is classified at its source,

cleaner waste will reach our facility and factories, and they will have better value as secondary raw materials, and all will have been recycled."

Ahmet Hamdi Zembil, environment engineer at waste management company ISTAC, said gas from burning organic waste can be transformed into electricity. But he added that classifying at source was crucial so that synthetic waste was not mixed in. "We have disposed of seven million tonnes of waste here over the last year and produced 400 million kilowatt hours of electricity," he said. Back at Sishane, Gercek slotted her plastic bottles into the machine, realizing to her chagrin that only 0.03 lira is given for each can or bottle, meaning she would need to recycle 87 cans or bottles for a single free trip that normally costs 2.60 lira (\$0.50). "But still, it is a start. I believe this system will get better," she said. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2018

12 US, global markets clouded in uncertainty, Brexit vote crucial**13** Chevrolet Alghanim sets a Guinness World Records title**14** Mazda named 'Best Car Brand' by US News & World report

PARIS: A man with a sign reading "Macron resign" waves a French flag as "yellow vests" (Gilets jaunes) protesters gather to protest against rising oil prices and living costs at the highway's toll of La Barque, yesterday.—AFP

Macron faces heat as protests grip France

Authorities count the cost of violent protests, looting

PARIS: Calls mounted yesterday for President Emmanuel Macron to bring an end to the "yellow vest" crisis gripping France as authorities in Paris and elsewhere counted the cost of another day of violent protests and looting. Authorities said the anti-Macron riots in Paris had been less violent than a week ago, with fewer injured but city hall said the physical damage was far worse as the protests were spread out across the capital.

Burned-out cars dotted the streets in several neighborhoods yesterday morning as cleaners swept up the broken glass from smashed shop windows and bus stops. "There was much more dispersion, so many more places were impacted," Paris deputy mayor Emmanuel Gregoire told France Inter radio.

"There was much more damage yesterday than there was a week ago." The southwestern city of Bordeaux was also badly hit by rioting during a fourth successive weekend of nationwide "yellow vest" protests.

What began as demonstrations against fuel tax hikes have ballooned into a mass movement over rising living costs and accusations that Macron, an ex-banker, only looks out for the rich. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said the unrest was creating a "catastrophe" for the French economy, with nationwide roadblocks playing havoc with the traffic and putting off tourists from visiting Paris.

Parts of the city were on lockdown Saturday, with

department stores shut to avoid looting along with museums and monuments including the Eiffel Tower.

"It's a catastrophe for commerce, it's a catastrophe for our economy," Le Maire told reporters as he visited shops in Paris hit by looting. Government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux vowed that Macron's centrist administration would find solutions that took into account protesters' different grievances.

Overwhelmingly made up of people from rural and small-town France, the movement nonetheless includes protesters of various political stripes whose goals range from lower taxes to Macron's resignation. "We need to find solutions that take account of each person's reality," Griveaux told Europe 1 radio. "It is anger that is difficult to understand from an office in Paris," he acknowledged.

Mass arrests in Paris

The protests have shown little sign of easing since they began on November 17. The interior ministry said 136,000 people had taken part nationwide in Saturday's protests, which turned violent in several other cities including Marseille and Toulouse. In Paris, around 10,000 "yellow vests" flocked to the Champs-Élysées and other areas — 2,000 more than joined the action last week, as many headed in from the provinces for the first time. Nationwide, more than 1,700 people were detained-over

1,000 of them in Paris as police vowed "zero tolerance" for anarchists, far-right supporters and others seeking to cause trouble. More than 500 people were still in custody in Paris by yesterday morning, officials said. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe had congratulated police on the security operation, which mobilized 8,000 officers and saw armored vehicles deployed in Paris for the first time. Thibault de Montbrial, head of the CRSI security think tank, tweeted that authorities had managed to contain the hooligans who have repeatedly hijacked the protests to go on a looting and rioting spree.

But he added: "The state cannot mobilize such forces every Saturday, and neither can shopkeepers barricade themselves in faced with violence which is not diminishing. "This is a decisive political moment."

'Macron, resign'

The embattled president—whose name rang out across the Champs-Élysées as protesters shouted "Macron, resign"—is expected to address the demonstrations in a much-anticipated speech in the coming days. The crisis facing a leader who had been hailed internationally as a youthful defender of liberal values is being closely watched abroad. Spain's El País newspaper said it was the first time the 40-year-old was "hesitating, giving the impression that he does not know what to do". Macron

has already offered protesters a string of concessions, including scrapping further rises in fuel taxes—a major climbdown for a president who had vowed not to be swayed, like his predecessors, by mass protests. So far he has refused to back down on another policy hated by the "yellow vests": his decision to scrap a "fortune tax" on the wealthiest. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen—who is backed by some protesters from "forgotten" provincial France, but by no means all-called for Macron to "recognize society's suffering and deliver immediate, very strong responses".

Russian propaganda accounts?

The movement has spread beyond France's borders, with around 400 arrested at a "yellow vest" event in Brussels on Saturday and peaceful demonstrations taking place in Dutch towns. In France, authorities have also launched an investigation into social media activity from accounts allegedly drumming up support for the protests, sources said. According to Britain's Times newspaper, hundreds of online accounts linked to Russia were used to stoke the demonstrations.

Citing analysis by New Knowledge, a cybersecurity company, the Times said the accounts spread disinformation and used pictures of injured protesters from other events to enhance a narrative of brutality by French authorities. —AFP

Free Huawei CFO or face consequences: China to Canada

BEIJING/OTTAWA: China warned Canada on Saturday that there would be severe consequences if it did not immediately release Huawei Technologies Co Ltd's chief financial officer, calling the case "extremely nasty". Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's global chief financial officer, was arrested in Canada on Dec 1 and faces extradition to the United States, which alleges that she covered up her company's links to a firm that tried to sell equipment to Iran despite sanctions.

The executive is the daughter of the founder of Huawei. If extradited to the United States, Meng would face charges of conspiracy to defraud multiple financial institutions, a Canadian

court heard on Friday, with a maximum sentence of 30 years for each charge.

No decision was reached at the extradition hearing after nearly six hours of arguments and counter-arguments, and the hearing was adjourned until today.

In a short statement, China's Foreign Ministry said that Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng had issued the warning to release Meng to Canada's ambassador in Beijing, summoning him to lodge a "strong protest". Adam Austen, a spokesman for Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, said Saturday there is "nothing to add beyond what the Minister said yesterday".

Freeland told reporters on Friday that relationship with China is important and valued, and Canada's ambassador in Beijing has assured Chinese that consular access will be provided to Meng. When asked about the possible Chinese backlash after the arrest of Huawei's CFO, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told reporters on Friday that Canada has a very good relationship with Beijing. Canada's arrest of Meng at the request of the United States while she was changing plane in Vancouver was a serious breach of her lawful rights, Le said. The move "ignored the law,

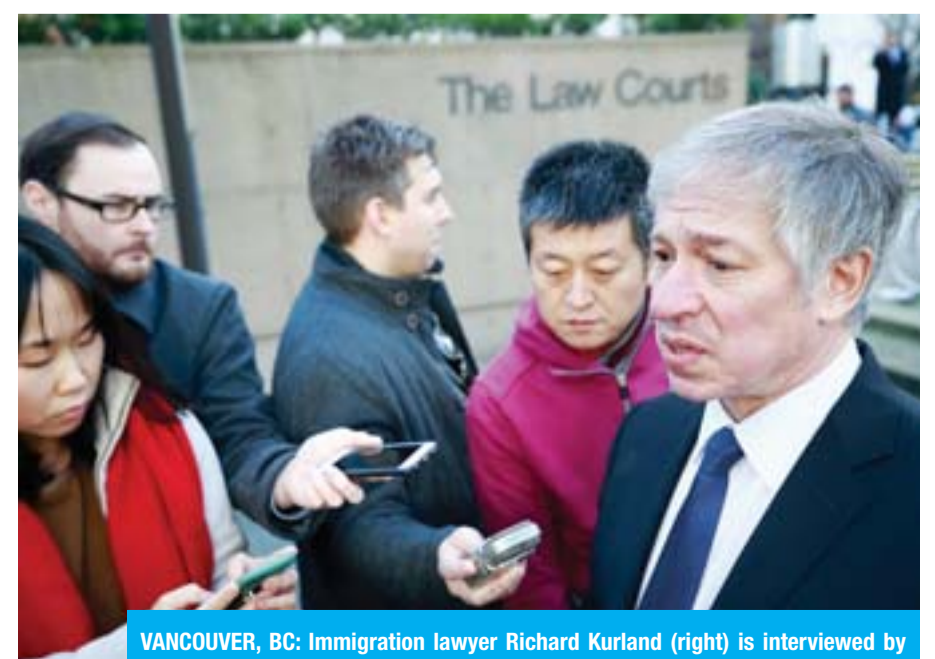
was unreasonable" and was in its very nature "extremely nasty", he added.

"China strongly urges the Canadian side to immediately release the detained person, and earnestly protect their lawful, legitimate rights, otherwise Canada must accept full responsibility for the serious consequences caused."

The statement did not elaborate. "There will probably be a deep freeze with the Chinese in high-level visits and exchanges," David Mulroney, former Canadian ambassador to China, said on Friday.

"The ability to talk about free trade will be put in the ice box for a while. But we're going to have to live with that. That's the price of dealing with a country like China."

Yesterday, the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily said that while China would not "cause trouble", it also did not fear trouble and that nobody should underestimate China's determination on this case. "Only if the Canadian side corrects its mistake and immediately stops infringing upon the lawful, legitimate rights of a Chinese citizen and gives a proper accounting to the Chinese people can it avoid paying a heavy price for this," it said in an editorial.—Reuters



VANCOUVER, BC: Immigration lawyer Richard Kurland (right) is interviewed by media outside the B.C. Supreme Courthouse at the bail hearing for Huawei Technologies Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver, Canada. — AFP

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

US, global markets clouded in uncertainty, Brexit vote crucial

OPEC, allies agree on new output cut

KUWAIT: US and global markets were clouded in uncertainty last week as US government bonds yields inverted for the first time in ten years and trade war tensions reemerged. US treasuries yields have been steadily declining the past month on expectations the US Fed will cease its rate hiking cycle in 2019. The sentiment was further supported after Fed Chairman Jerome Powell recently declared that US interest rates were close to their neutral levels. The neutral level is where interest rates neither boost nor put the brakes on the economy. Powell did not say whether rate hikes should stop at neutral and stressed that the level was very difficult to estimate. In any case, the statement would make the Fed increasingly data dependent when adjusting its policy.

The trade spat between China and the US was flung back into controversy after Huawei's global chief financial officer was arrested in Canada for violating US sanctions. The CFO of the Chinese technology giant also happens to be the daughter of the company's founder. Sources told Reuters in April that US authorities have been investigating Huawei since at least 2016 for allegedly shipping US-origin products to Iran and other countries in violation of US export and sanctions laws. The arrest came literally days after US President Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping agreed to a truce that delayed the imposition of new tariffs for 90 days. China had expressed confidence in striking a trade deal with the US within the ceasefire period, while also praising the recent meeting with Trump as highly successful. The shock arrest jeopardizes the resolution of the trade dispute and threatens a more extreme retaliation from China.

The convergence of bad news, risks to growth, and expectations of capped interest rates all played a role in the US treasury yield inversion. While all US yields moved lower, the five year treasury yield in particular had largest effect. It even fell below the two and three year yields leading to the inversion. The concerns lay with the fact that preceding every major US recession in the past 50 years, there had been an inversion in the yield curve where shorter-dated securities yielded more than longer maturities. However, last week's inversion had only been limited to the short-end of the yield curve rather than the more closely studied recession indicator such as the gap between two and ten year note yields. As

it stands, investors and economists are debating whether this warns of economic weakness or if it reflects market's doubt in the Fed's ability to raise interest rates next year.

US Labor disappoints

The US's latest labor data release supported market's bearishness on the US economy where job growth slowed in November and monthly wages increased less than expected. The data suggests some moderation in economic activity that could support expectations of fewer interest rate increases from the Federal Reserve in 2019. Nonfarm payrolls increased by 155,000 jobs last month down from 237,000 and average hourly earnings rose 0.2% in November after gaining 0.1% in October.

Vote on Brexit

Prime Minister Theresa May said last week that the parliament's vote on her Brexit deal will go ahead on December 11 despite suggestions from lawmakers to delay that vote to avoid a game-changing defeat. The outcome is uncertain, particularly if May suffers defeat. Some speculate it could lead to a change of prime minister, an attempt to revise the Brexit deal, the complete collapse of government, or even a second vote on whether Britain should leave Europe at all. May has been trying to win over critics of an agreement that would keep close economic ties with the European Union when Britain leaves in March, but her warnings that it's her deal, no deal or no Brexit have fallen flat so far. Some lawmakers have called on May to change the deal, and have suggested she could use an EU summit next week to try to win some concessions from officials to try to ease some of their concerns. However, EU negotiator Michel Barnier said on Thursday that the deal was the best Britain will get. Theresa May's proposal now needs the backing of more than half of the 639 MPs that vote in Parliament to pass.

Eurozone GDP slows

The euro zone economy grew at its slowest pace in four years in the third quarter of 2018. GDP rose by 0.2 percent in the euro area compared with the previous quarter's 0.4 percent increase, according to an estimate published by Eurostat. Year over year, GDP rose by 1.6



percent. The weak growth and soft underlying inflation means the ECB will struggle to fulfill its policy normalization plans over the next couple of years. As such, no policy or guidance changes are expected from the central bank in their upcoming meeting December 13.

Safe havens rise, equities fall

Continuing with the risk adverse nature of the markets last week, safe haven currencies and gold were the best performers as financial markets witnessed a demand reduction in risky assets. The Japanese yen, Swiss franc, gold and US government bonds were in high demand as a result. In the past five trading sessions, the JPY and CHF appreciated by 0.84 percent and 0.90 percent respectively versus the US dollar. Gold opened the week at \$1,223 and reached its highest level in 5 months before closing at \$1,247.76 Friday.

US Equities dropped in reaction to the developments last week. Fears surrounding the outcome of the Brexit process, plus wider concerns about the world economy, seem to be weighing on the minds of

investors. Furthermore, expectations of decelerated growth, driven in part by higher funding costs and the end of Trump's fiscal tax boost, began to materialize. The S&P 500, Dow Jones and NASDAQ all lost around 5 percent of their value.

OPEC agrees on new cut

OPEC and its allies moved closer on Friday towards finalizing a deal that would cut oil production by more than the market had expected despite pressure from US President Donald Trump to reduce the price of crude. The tentative agreement would see OPEC members reducing output by 0.8 million barrels per day while non-OPEC members cutting by 0.4 million bpd. The combined cut of 1.2 million bpd is set to begin in January. Oil prices rallied around 5 percent after the news to close the week at \$61.67.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30370
The USDKWD opened at 0.30370 yesterday morning.

US locks in duties on Chinese aluminum sheet imports

WASHINGTON: The US International Trade Commission said it made a final determination that American producers were being harmed by imports of common alloy aluminum sheet products from China, a finding that locks in duties on the products. The ITC determination means that duties ranging from 96.3 percent to 176.2 percent previously announced by the US Commerce Department would be put in place for five years.

The department said last month the products were being subsidized and dumped in the US market.

The decision marked the first time that final duties were issued in a trade remedy case initiated by the US government since 1985. Usually, trade cases are launched based on a complaint from a US producer or group of producers. The Trump administration has promised a more aggressive approach to trade enforcement by having the department launch more anti-dumping and anti-subsidy cases on behalf of private industry.

There were contrasting reactions from trade organizations for aluminum producers and the recreational boating industry to the ITC move.

The decision "provides much-needed certainty and confidence to US common alloy sheet producers, allowing them to invest, grow, and add jobs to the US economy," Aluminum Association President and Chief Executive Heidi Brock said in a statement.

The National Marine Manufacturers Association criticized the measure and urged the administration to "to back off their tariffs first trade policy." "Boat builders are seeing a 30 to 40 percent price increase for aluminum sheet, even though the vast majority source the material domestically. In addition, the compounding tariffs on Chinese aluminum sheet have strained the global supply, making it difficult for our industry to find enough aluminum sheet to keep up with manufacturing demand," it said.

In 2017, imports of common alloy aluminum sheet from China were valued at an estimated \$900 million. The flat-rolled product is used in transportation, building and construction, infrastructure, electrical and marine applications. US aluminum industry firms, including Alaris Corp., Arconic Inc and Constellation NV, testified in the case last year about what they termed a surge in "low-priced, unfairly traded imports." —Reuters

Italy's League leader faces friendly fire over budget

ROME/PADUA: Italy's deputy prime minister, Matteo Salvini, normally relishes confrontation, but now the firebrand populist is under attack from a place he calls home.

Dissent is growing in his League party's political heartland, the industrial north, adding to pressure on Salvini and his coalition partner to reverse course on their 2019 budget.

"I always thought the League was able to help people who work - real people - and for this I had put my trust in them at this historic moment," said industrialist Patrizio Dei Tos, who had high hopes when the League took power six months ago. Now, he and other northern entrepreneurs are not so sure.

Since the League and the anti-establishment 5-Star party formed a government, the economy has gone into reverse and the new administration's big-spending budget plans have sent interest rates up and

prompted fears of another banking crisis.

In the regions of Lombardy and Veneto, which together account for a third of the national economy and are run by League administrations, small to medium-sized businesses have begun to openly question party leader Salvini's strategy. "We are focusing on running the country according to emotions instead of the numbers," said Dei Tos, whose wood-flooring firm Gruppo Labor Legno has annual sales of around 40 million euros (\$45 million).

"We must be careful not to push our luck," even as Salvini, who is also interior minister, wins national popularity by his crackdown on immigration, his core constituency of family entrepreneurs, from the self-employed to rich industrialists, fear the economy is already in recession and the government's spending plans will make things worse.

Salvini is stretching the League's brand, winning new voters but straying somewhat from his northern base. He is basically holding firm for now and the League is ready only to make a minor cut to the 2019 budget deficit target of 2.4 percent of GDP, senior party sources said.

But dissent in League heartlands adds to the intense pressure on him to give ground on the budget in a confrontation that the European Commission and investors believe could undermine the euro zone.

The deficit target is three times the amount

pencil in by the previous administration, and has been rejected by the Commission as a breach of EU rules requiring Rome to steadily reduce its public debt burden.

Italian bond yields exceed those on safe-haven German bonds by almost 3 percentage points, double the spread that prevailed before the government was sworn in. That has prompted lenders to raise interest rates and fanned fears of financial instability, since banks are large holders of government bonds.

Milan's stock index has fallen by a fifth since mid-May. Growth fell 0.1 percent in the third quarter, with some economists predicting another contraction in the fourth as consumption and investment weaken. Last month, consumer and business confidence touched two-year lows.

Feeling abandoned

Alberto Bombassei, co-founder and chairman of auto-parts maker Brembo, based in Lombardy, notes that his firm has lost almost a quarter of its value since the new government was sworn in.

"For many, the problem is 5-Star but even our good chap Salvini has agreed on measures he shouldn't have agreed on. Both have abandoned the business community," said Bombassei, whose company employs more than 3,000 in Italy.

Vincenzo Boccia, head of Italy's biggest business lobby Confindustria, once held high hopes for the League, telling a meeting of industrialists in the northern city of Vicenza in September: "The League is close to the working class and to the entrepreneurs. We have very high expectations."

Now, he voices deep disappointment at the way the coalition is managing the euro-zone's second-biggest manufacturer.

"The budget does very little for growth and Italy could tumble into recession. A consistent part of our members have voted for the League but 100 percent of those I have met are against this fiscal plan," Boccia said in a TV interview.

Confindustria wants Rome to boost infrastructure investment and says the budget instead focuses spending on welfare measures: a League promise to ease retirement rules and a 5-Star pledge to introduce a kind of universal income to fight poverty.

On Monday, Confindustria joined other employers' groups representing 65 percent of GDP to demand the government change course and boost investment. League politicians deny they are under pressure from their supporters to change course on the budget, saying the unhappiness is directed at 5-Star rather than Salvini. —Reuters

Wall Street Week Ahead

Licking their wounds, fund managers prep for rally in 2019

NEW YORK: With bond and equity markets from the United States to emerging markets all on pace to lose money this year, investors have not seen this much red on their screens since 1972, the last time no asset class returned at least 5 percent.

Yet fund managers are finding things to like despite the recent market volatility, which sent the Dow Jones Industrial Average down more than two percent this week. As they start to position their portfolios for 2019, fund managers, from firms including ValueWorks, Sierra Investment Management and Federated Investors, say they are looking at sectors that could snap back next year thanks to a combination of more attractive valuations and a decline in the dollar.

Such a rally in both fixed income and equities markets would not be unprecedented. A 20 percent decline in the value of the dollar pushed the S&P 500 up nearly 38 percent in 1995, while the US bond market returned nearly 17 percent the same year following one of the worst fixed-income bear markets in memory. "If you look out at the broader picture, a lot of things are going right," said Terri Spath,

chief investment officer at Sierra Investment Management, citing strong consumer confidence and other economic indicators. "It's easy to make a bull case because the economy is humming along just fine, but the market is nervous because the headlines are really loud and no one likes the unknown," she said.

Part of the yield curve inverted this week when yields on 5-year Treasuries dropped below those on both the 2- and 3-year securities, a signal that has preceded every US recession in recent memory by between 15 months and 2 years. Yet the long delay between a yield curve inversion and a full recession can still be a profitable time to invest, said Charles Lemonides, founder of New York-based hedge fund ValueWorks.

"I don't buy the thesis that the economy is slowing, but I do believe we are late in the cycle. We're going into a period where investors are getting a little fooled by the headlines and avoiding names that have excitement," he said. As a result, Lemonides has increased his long exposure to companies that have sold off, including battered semiconductor maker Micron Technology Inc, whose shares are down 37 percent over the last six months, and iPhone maker Apple Inc, whose shares are down nearly 23 percent over the last 3 months. At the same time, Lemonides has increased his short position on defensive stocks like consumer staples companies Clorox Co and Church & Dwight Co Inc, which have benefited from the market volatility.

Chad Oviatt, director of investment



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) before the Closing Bell on Friday in New York City. —AFP

management at Huntington National Bank, said his firm has been increasing its allocation to U.S. large-cap stocks in anticipation that declining bond buying by the European Central Bank and a resolution of US-China trade tensions will derail the rally in the dollar this year. That should improve margins for US exporters.

A Reuters poll of 60 currency analysts that ended Dec. 5 forecast that the dollar will be weaker against major currencies next year, with most of the declines coming in the second half of 2019.

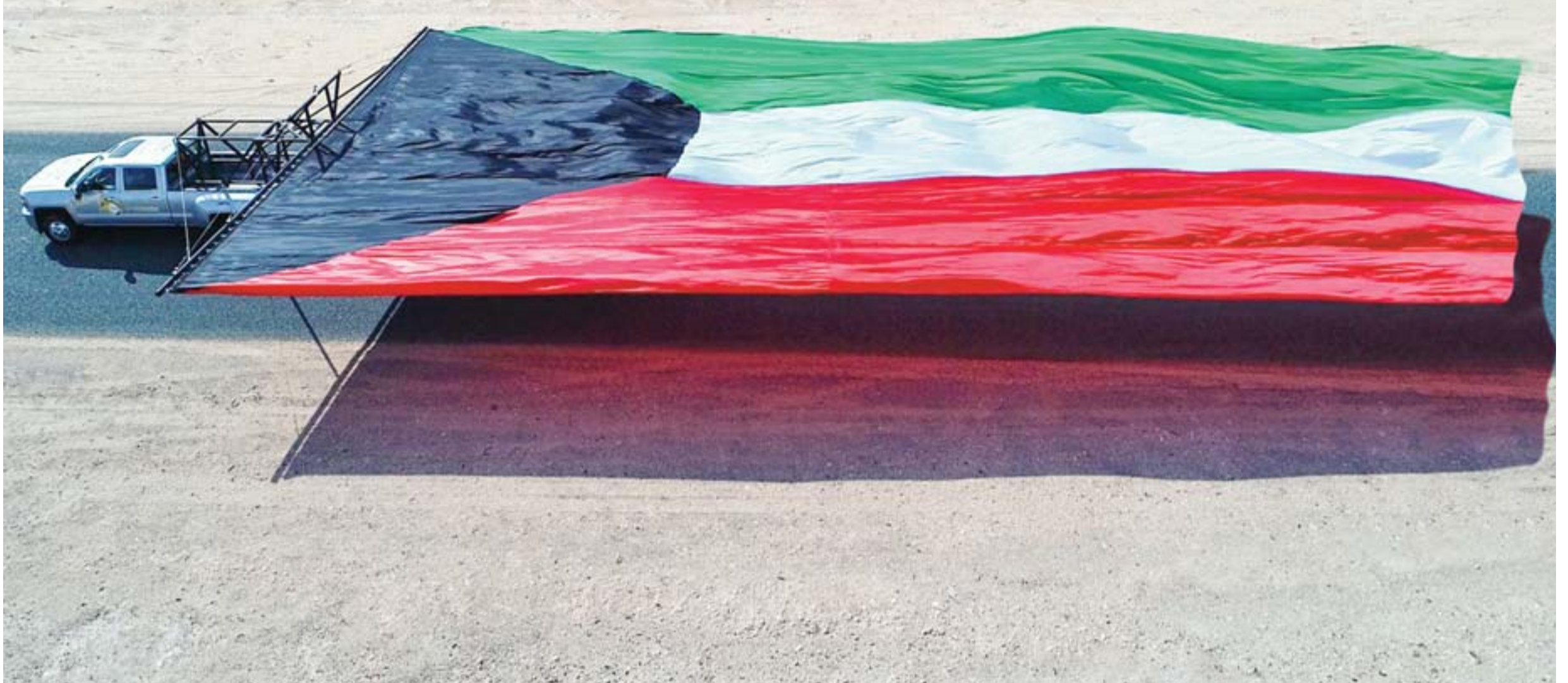
Linda Bakhshian, a portfolio manager of

several value-oriented funds at Federated, said the recent stock market volatility has made stocks, including Apple, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Walmart Inc and Microsoft Corp more attractive at a time when the US economy continues to look stronger than either Europe's or China's. Low oil prices, continued job growth and strong consumer spending will likely prolong the US economic expansion well past next year, she said.

"If the markets were to close for the year today, people would go into 2019 thinking that there are more opportunities given the valuations," she said. —Reuters

Chevrolet Alghanim sets a Guinness World Records title for largest flag flown by a vehicle

Part of company's celebrations of its 70th anniversary of partnership with GM and Chevrolet's Celebration of '100 years of Trucks'



KUWAIT: Chevrolet has consistently achieved success over the past years through participating in various challenges and competitions, aiming to break more records and attain new achievements. This time, the challenge happened in Kuwait. Chevrolet Alghanim registered another remarkable success and achieved a Guinness World Records title for the largest flag flown by a vehicle after a Silverado 3500HD pulled Kuwait's flag measuring 433 square meters for more than 100 meters without any part of it touching the ground.

This event is part of Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons Automotive's celebrations on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of its long-standing partnership with General Motors, which also coincided with the 100th anniversary of the launch of Chevrolet pickups.

Director of Corporate Communications of Alghanim Industries, Abdullateef Al-Sharikh said: "We'd like to dedicate this achievement to all Chevrolet Alghanim customers for their loyalty and trust. For more than 70 years, generations of customers in Kuwait have welcomed Chevrolet into their homes. Since the beginning of our relationship with General Motors, we have worked together to enrich our customers' experiences. We look

forward to achieving more milestones together."

Senior General Manager of Chevrolet Alghanim, Abdallah Mouazzen said: "The strong Silverado 3500HD, which is also known as "King of Pickups", has been able to demonstrate its strong performance and ability through setting a new record with Guinness World Records. We are proud at Chevrolet Alghanim of the performance that all Chevrolet vehicles offer to our customers, and this year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Chevrolet pickups".

The powerful Silverado 3500HD has a 6.0-liter VortecV8 engine with a powerful 360hp at 5,400 rpm and a torque of 515 Nm at 4200 rpm, which made pulling a flag of this big possible.

An adjudicator from Guinness World Records was present during the official attempt to make sure of the measurements and a successful execution has taken place before announcing the new record achievement. The activity was also attended by many Kuwaiti young volunteers who took part of this activity by raising their national flag right before the kickoff, and they were filled with the feeling of pride and happiness, especially after the announcement of the success of the attempt officially.

2018 is considered an exciting and eventful year for Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons, whereby the celebration of a long standing partnership is considered a critical and prominent milestone in the company's journey; it commemorates the passing of 70 years of partnership with General Motors. 70 years ago, Yusuf Ahmad Alghanim signed the partnership agreement with General Motors to set a solid foundation for a partnership that is considered today the longest lasting on a regional level. Afterwards, Chairman of the Board Kutayba Yusuf Alghanim reinforced this partnership and took it to higher grounds, establishing the company's distinction and pioneering position.

Since 1948, Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons, alongside General Motors, has ensured the delivery of high quality vehicles and services. And it has managed to win the GrandMasters award 13 times, an award that is presented to General Motors distributors that successfully and comprehensively elevate customer service on all fronts. This partnership between the two companies continues to grow and evolve through continuous investment in enhancing the customer experience starting from the point of sale, leading up to after sales services. Chevrolet

Alghanim's service center is one such example whereby it is the largest and most advanced in the world, providing its customers with a holistic car service experience, and the peace of mind and satisfaction that come with it.

Celebrating 100 years of Legends!
Since its inception, Chevrolet Pickups have focused on creating the best vehicle possible to meet the needs of all its customers. And after manufacturing pickups specifically for its own establishments, Chevrolet produced its first customer-targeted pickup in 1918. And the pickup lineup at the time included two lightweight delivery pickups: the half-ton and the 1 ton. Both pickups were equipped with an open chassis behind the windshield, allowing customers to either purchase or design the chassis that best suits their needs.

A century and 95 million pickups later, customer needs remain the main driver behind the production of Chevrolet pickups. The Silverado specifically offers a wide variety of options in terms of truck body and trim designs, in addition to a full range of limited editions, enabling customers to choose from an array of options, leading up to the ideal vehicle that matches their needs and lifestyle.



Business

Mazda named 'Best Car Brand' by US News & World report

Mazda's premium features secure top spot for the fourth year in a row

KUWAIT: For the fourth year in a row, Mazda has been awarded the "Best Car Brand" by US News & World Report. Mazda's line-up was praised for offering entertaining performance, intuitive infotainment systems, and upscale interiors.

"Mazda's car lineup continues to set the standard by which other brands should be judged," said Jamie Page Deaton, executive editor of US News & World Report. "From the practical Mazda6 to the sporty MX-5, engaging driving dynamics and upscale interiors make any Mazda car a pleasure to own."

To determine the award winners, US News & World Report averaged the overall score of all the given brand's products in each award class. The brand with the highest overall average score was named the winner in the category. The overall scores come directly from the US News Best Cars rankings, which are based on a combination of the consensus of the automotive press, safety scores and reliability data.

Every car in Mazda's line-up has elegant KODO design and advanced safety technology to give the driver more confidence behind the wheel. Meticulously engineered and artfully crafted, Mazda's line-up of award-winning cars are a study in what happens when an automaker obsesses over the minute details, constantly seeking to refine the industry's standard of excellence. From body construction and engine technology, to the chassis and transmission, Mazda's innovative, lightweight SKY-ACTIV Technology provides more performance with more efficiency, deriving greater enjoyment from driving.

"We are grateful that US News & World Report



has recognized the innovative design and intuitive interior features of Mazda cars," said Masahiro Moro, CEO of Mazda North American Operations and senior managing executive officer of Mazda Motor Corporation. "Mazda's goal is to create premium vehicles incorporating cutting edge technology that enriches people's lives as well as society. This award affirms the hard work of the men and women

at Mazda Motor Corporation."

Ashish Tendon, general manager of Kuwait Automotive Imports Company, the exclusive distributor of Mazda vehicles in Kuwait, added "Mazda's dedication to the automotive industry can be witnessed through their innovative technology in all aspects of the car. And these technologies reflect on the comfort and satisfaction of the drivers."

The all-new Mazda3 will make its world premiere at the Los Angeles Auto Show, leading the next generation of Mazda products that will deliver new dimensions of driving pleasure. The Mazda3 will go on sale in early 2019.

Kuwait Automotive Imports Company, Al-Shaya & Al-Sagar, is the exclusive dealer of Mazda vehicles in Kuwait since 1969.

US trade deficit hits 10-year high; job growth slowing

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit jumped to a 10-year high in October as soybean exports dropped further and imports of consumer goods rose to a record high, suggesting the Trump administration's tariff-related measures to shrink the trade gap likely have been ineffective.

Other data showed private employers hired fewer workers than expected in November, pointing to a moderation in the pace of job growth. That was reinforced by another report showing a small decline in the number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits last week.

The reports added to weak housing and business spending on equipment data in signaling a slowdown in economic growth. Concerns over the health of the economy have roiled financial markets in recent days. The Commerce Department said the trade deficit increased 1.7 percent to \$55.5 billion, the highest level since October 2008. The trade gap has now widened for five straight months. Data for September was revised to show the deficit rising to \$54.6 billion instead of the previously reported \$54.0 billion.

The politically sensitive goods trade deficit with China surged 7.1 percent to a record \$43.1 billion in October. The United States is locked in a bitter trade war with China. Washington has imposed tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese imports to force concessions on a list of demands that would change the terms of trade between the two countries.

China has responded with import tariffs on US goods, including soybeans. President Donald Trump has long railed against China's trade surplus with the United States, and accuses Beijing of not playing fairly on trade. In addition to the duties on Chinese goods, Washington has slapped tariffs on steel and aluminum imports into the United States this year. On Saturday, Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to hold off on imposing more tariffs for 90 days while they negotiate a deal to end the trade dispute.

The truce appeared to be in doubt on Thursday following the arrest in Canada for extradition to the United States of Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Chinese technology giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd and the daughter of its founder.

"We remain skeptical of a substantial trade deal," said Jake McRobie, a US economist at Oxford Economics in New York. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the overall trade deficit rising to \$55.0 billion in October. When adjusted for inflation, the goods trade deficit increased to \$87.9 billion in October from \$87.2 billion in September. The so-called real trade deficit is above the average for the third quarter.

Trade subtracted 1.91 percentage points from GDP growth in the July-September quarter. Growth estimates for the fourth quarter are around a 2.8 percent annualized rate. The economy grew at a 3.5 percent pace in the third quarter.

US stocks were trading sharply lower as Wanzhou's arrest sparked fears of a flare-up in Sino-US tensions. Prices of US Treasuries were trading higher while the dollar was weaker against a basket of currencies. In October, exports of goods and services slipped 0.1 percent to \$211.0 billion. Soybean exports, which have been targeted by China in the trade dispute and have been dropping for the last several months, fell \$0.8 billion. Exports of civilian aircraft and engines also fell. —Reuters

Oil helps FTSE 100 end turbulent week firmer, but Brexit weighs

LONDON: Britain's top stock index rose on Friday after a tumultuous week, supported by a rally in oil stocks after OPEC and Russia agreed to cut output, but investors also fretted about next Tuesday's key parliamentary vote on Brexit.

The FTSE 100 rebounded from Thursday's plunge to gain 1.1 percent, but put in its worst weekly performance in two months as jitters over Britain's divorce from the European Union, the US-China trade war and worries about global growth sapped confidence in the UK market.

The British parliament is due to vote next Tuesday on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal amid expectations that it will be rejected, prolonging the uncertainty over Britain's future relations with its biggest trading partner.

Financials, consumer stocks and oil majors boosted the index. Oil stocks rallied after OPEC and its Russia-led allies agreed to slash output by more than the market had expected even as Washington ramps up pressure to

reduce the price of crude.

BP rose 2.3 percent, Shell was up 3 percent for its best day since June, while mid-caps Premier Oil had its biggest daily gain since July 2017 and Tullow Oil jumped 7.4 percent.

Still, many investors and analysts remained unconvinced that the gains represented a change in sentiment. "Are people going to put new cash to work convincingly now, thinking this is the low? I can't see there's any urgency to do that now really," said Ian Williams, analyst at Peel Hunt.

"It does look like a bounce from an extreme technical oversold level, but I don't think it means we're out of the woods yet by any means," he said.

Shares in Associated British Foods fell 4.6 percent after the Primark owner said trading at its budget fashion chain was challenging in November.

"The next three weeks will be critical, and there may be a chance to reverse the trend if the weather normalizes," Credit Suisse analysts said. Marks & Spencer shares also eased 0.3 percent, as traders said Primark's weaker performance reflected broader challenges for retail.

Shire fell 1.6 percent, among the worst-performing FTSE 100 stocks. Japan's Takeda Pharmaceutical, the company acquiring Shire, suffered a 5 percent slide in its shares overnight.

Mid-caps saw some big moves.

Plane lessor Avolon signs \$11.5bn deal for 100 Airbus jets

BEIJING/PARIS: Chinese-owned Irish leasing company Avolon firmed up its largest ever purchase on Friday with an order for 100 Airbus jets worth \$11.5 billion at list prices, lifting the covers off a deal struck in the face of global trade tensions. Reuters reported in July that Chinese financial firms had placed large orders at the Farnborough Airshow without initially being identified, including Avolon's preliminary order for 100 jets that has now been finalized and made public.

China's factory gate inflation eases in Nov

BEIJING: China's factory inflation slowed in November, a sign demand remains weak amid Beijing's ongoing trade war with the United States, while consumer inflation also flagged, official data showed yesterday. The producer price index—an important barometer of the industrial sector that measures the cost of goods at the factory gate—climbed 2.7 percent on-year in November.

It ticked down from 3.3 percent the previous month, recording its weakest growth since October 2016, while remaining in line with the forecast in a Bloomberg News survey. A slowdown in factory gate inflation reflects sluggish demand. The consumer price index (CPI) — a key measure of retail

inflation—rose 2.2 percent on-year, compared with 2.5 percent in October.

Food prices, up 2.5 percent, rose quicker than non-food prices, which were up 2.1 percent. Energy prices fell over the month. "The broad moderation in inflationary pressures appears to be a reflection of weaker demand growth over the past half a year and should alleviate concerns about possible stagflation," said Goldman Sachs Economic Research in a report.

The weak figures come as China's trade war with the US continues to bite and its economy shows signs of slowing. The Asian giant recorded GDP growth of 6.5 percent in the third quarter—its weakest in nine years. The growth of China's trade with the rest of the world slowed last month, with exports up 5.4 percent and imports up 3 percent on-year—compared with 15.6 percent and 21.4 percent respectively in October.

Washington and Beijing announced a tariff truce at the start of December, to allow for trade negotiations by



Intellectual-property investment firm IP Group's shares fell 5.4 percent after Jefferies cut its rating on the stock to "underperform" from "hold".

"Against our earlier hopes for second-tier portfolio companies to step up to diversify dependence on Oxford Nanopore, hopefuls have largely failed to deliver, the listed portfolio drags and the market remains largely uninterested — ominously with the next significant funding beginning to loom," Jefferies analysts

said. Real estate company Daejan Holdings sank 5.6 percent after its first-half results. Shares in tour operator Thomas Cook fell a further 5.4 percent, having suffered sharp falls this week.

Genus fell 5.9 percent after the company announced a placing of 3 million new shares. On their first day of trading, shares in retail investment platform AJ Bell surged 37.5 percent. The firm's IPO valued it at 651 million pounds. — Reuters

despite financial difficulties faced by the HNA group of companies. Avolon has been forced to put distance between itself and its ultimate parent, telling investors earlier this year that it would be impossible to milk the aircraft leasing firm for cash to prop up the cash-pinch Chinese conglomerate.

In August, Japanese financial services group Orix Corp struck a \$2.2 billion deal to buy a 30 percent stake in Avolon Holdings as HNA Group trimmed holdings in core assets.

Avolon's founder and chief executive, Dombnall Slattery, said in Friday's statement that the scale of the Airbus order reflected the "long-term commitment and strategic perspective of our shareholders."

Asked last week whether HNA's Bohai intended to sell more shares in Avolon or whether Avolon would seek to open its capital further, Slattery told Reuters "not at the moment". —Reuters



BEIJING: China's factory inflation slowed in November, a sign demand remains weak amid Beijing's ongoing trade war with the United States, while consumer inflation also flagged, official data showed yesterday.

delaying a hike in new duties by 90 days. The US suspended its plans to raise tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese

imports to 25 percent beginning January 1, leaving them at the current 10 percent rate. —AFP

Technology

Kuwait launches new Apple Watch-Series4 with the eSIM 'exclusively' from Ooredoo

Al Thani: Historical achievement for Kuwait and the telecommunications sector

KUWAIT: Just a few days after announcing the introduction of the eSIM for the first time in Kuwait and exclusively on the new Apple Watch-Series4 GPS + Cellular, Ooredoo Kuwait has announced a remarkable success and proudly presented Kuwait with an unprecedented achievement. Kuwait is now listed amongst 23 countries from around the world to have been granted the right to launch the new Apple Watch with eSIM exclusively through Ooredoo in Kuwait. The company also recorded another milestone as it offers this exclusive service with another operator in the Gulf. This achievement adds to the country's ongoing strategic plan towards 'New Kuwait-2035' which focuses on the digital transformation across all sectors.

Commenting on the achievement, Chief Executive Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani said "We are very proud to see, all plans and the efforts, done by everyone in the Gulf, which eventually resulted in great success. This is genuinely presented from Ooredoo to Kuwait and to all our customers. We are also delighted that we have been chosen by Apple to have this exclusive privilege, and is a historic achievement for Kuwait and to the telecommunications sector in Kuwait".

"We continue to support Kuwait's new state strategy and vision of 2035 - Kuwait, which is based primarily on digital transformation and the promotion of information technology. Our achievement in Ooredoo Kuwait and our role as a private sector, is a testament to our pursuit and



Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani



Mijbil Alayoub

support for this strategy: positioning Kuwait as leader in this sector on the global map. We will continue to provide the latest products and services in the ICT world," Al Thani concluded.

In his words, Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said "We are glad to have witnessed all this massive demand from customers on activating the eSIM on the new Apple Watch. There was a big turnout in our branches and on eShop since Friday last week. Customers are keen to acquire the new Watch and benefit from activating the eSIM service exclusively on Ooredoo network"

Alayoub continued saying "Today, we are proud to be



one of the few companies in the world to provide this service with Apple's new Watch. We have been the pioneers in launching the eSIM technology since September of this year and eventually launching it successfully last October to all our customers. This achievement is a tribute to all of our customers today, as we promise them to continue introducing the latest innovations from the smart devices' industry".

The new Apple Watch has been launched exclusively with eSIM from Ooredoo in a number of branches since last Friday. Customers can activate the service on the new watch using the same number and receiving calls and text messages too. This service works on all versions of iPhone 6 and later on iOS.12.1.1, and is also available to prepaid & postpaid subscribers. eSIM is available free of charge for customers for the first 6 months.

Qualitynet launches cloud customer engagement solutions in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Qualitynet, Kuwait's #1 ICT, Data Communications & Internet Services provider has selected Altitude Software to launch the first Cloud Customer Engagement Solution in Kuwait - Altitude Xperience Proactive. Altitude Software delivers a robust, modular contact center solution that handles all customer interactions and unifies all touch points throughout the organization. The two companies jointly participated in the Kuwait Digital Transformation Conference, the premier event for the customer experience industry in Kuwait, held from November 28 to 29, 2018 under the patronage of Qusai Al-Shatti, Director General - Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT).

The highlight of Qualitynet's participation at the event is the partnership announcement with Altitude Software and the introduction of their latest release of the award-

winning Altitude Xperience customer interaction management suite. Altitude Xperience helps contact centers execute business strategies in real time and deliver maximum value in a wide range of operational situations. It brings to market significant innovations to support next generation customer service, intelligent business campaigns, advanced contact centre management tools and AI-powered digital customer engagement.

Essa Al-Kooheji, Chief Commercial Officer at Qualitynet, stated "A vast majority of Contact Centers in Kuwait today are internal, especially those organizations that are unwilling to outsource their customer relationships and prefer to keep control of it, while not managing a contact center's administrative constraints. Our cloud-based solution can substantially help these types of organizations, offering the same quality of service, performance and control of their customer relationships. Qualitynet's expertise both in IT and Telephony, combined with our Data Centre expertise allows us to master all the components of this offer".

"We are honored that the Altitude solution was chosen to power Qualitynet's Cloud Customer Engagement offering," said Riadh Boukhris, Altitude Software MENA President. "We bring companies more freedom of choice to benefit from a customizable, flexible technology offer. Altitude Xperience has a great track record in reducing operating costs and investments while achieving true customer engagement."



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- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
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What's On

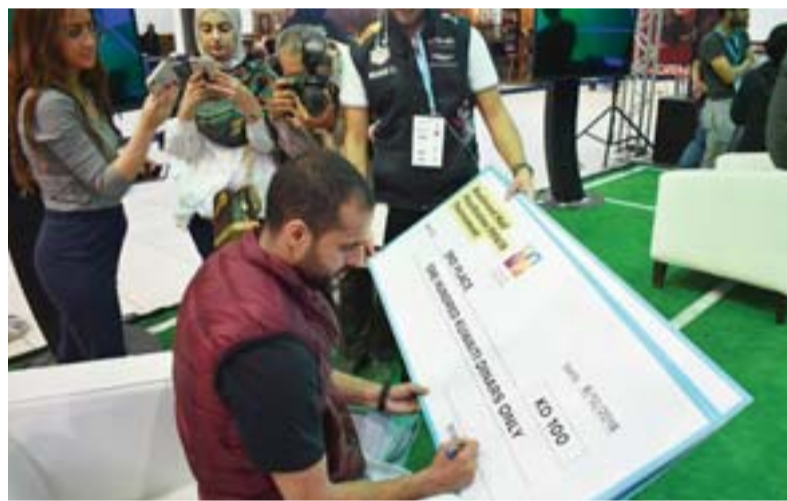


FIFA 2019 e-sports tournament held at Boulevard with Kuwait's captain

Boulevard mall held a FIFA 2019 tournament on the PS4 with the participation of 64 players who competed for two days in the presence of the legendary Bader Al Mutawa, the national team captain, who presented the prizes for the first 3 winners.

The 1st place winner, Mohammed Ali, received a cash prize of 300 Kuwaiti Dinar presented by Sultan Center. The 2nd place winner, Faisal Morad, received a cash prize of 200 Kuwaiti Dinar while the 3rd place winner, Mansour Faraj, received a cash prize of 100 Kuwaiti Dinar. Finally, the 4th place winner, Nayef Al Enzi, received a 50 KD voucher from Best Al Yousifi in addition to other valuable gifts to all winners.

The event included various side activities and competitions that helped increase the interaction with the audience, especially the children who participated in many games and received valuable prizes provided by Fantasy World, Best Yousifi, OnTime, Beverly Hills Polo Club, Abjad, Costa, Pizza Hut, Burger King, and Crepe Cafe. The Marketing & Communication team at Boulevard expressed their pride and joy with the huge success of this event and thanked all participants, audience, and sponsors who contributed to this success.



VIVA receives GUST's students



VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, extended a warm welcome to the students of the Gulf University for Science and Technology, Department of Computer Sciences (Networks). Under the supervision of Esraa Omran, who initiated and organized the initiative, students were given the opportunity to visit VIVA's Headquarters located in Olympia Tower.

On this occasion, Abdulrazaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "We are eager at VIVA to support the Education Sector and students inside and outside Kuwait,

in different specializations, in line with VIVA's CSR plan. We believe that those students are the promising future of Kuwait, thus the professionals at the Technology sector at VIVA shared their expertise and skills with GUST's students to help them understand better the industry."

Upon arrival, students were received by VIVA's Technology Sector Team, then taken on a tour of the company's divisions, IT servers, offices and sites. Executives at VIVA explained for the students VIVA's exclusive products and services and the strategy to support technology and networks.

AUK students showcase recycled designs at Re.Create

Thirteen students from the Department of Arts & Graphic Design at the American University of Kuwait participated in Re.Create, a recycling art competition and exhibition. The exhibition was held at Promenade Cultural Center, and was attended by a number of AUK students and their families, given that a majority of thirteen out of thirty selected projects on display were submissions from AUK students.

Using a range of recycled materials, students created furniture units, interior décor, product designs, lighting designs, accessories, and sculptures. One of the participating students Munira Al Majdali describes her design, Salai (Sadu-Sarai-Light), a light fixture and a backpack is inspired by cultural objects that were used in Kuwait's history.

The overall form represents a traditional Kuwaiti lantern, contrasted with a modern Sadu pattern at the bottom. Three Mihrab arches (found in center of mosques where people meet for prayers) are structured from



recycled steel rods to create the lamp's form, which is wrapped with faux leather which represents leather water bottles 'Jirba' that were used to keep water cool. The finished product is multifunctional, serving as a light piece and a backpack, thereby paying homage to the travelers and nomads who settled in Al Kout (fort) and who made the Kuwait we know today." Aside from contextual ingenuity of concept, 'Salai' is made completely from

recycled metal, fabric, and faux leather. Students agree that events such as Re.Create provide them with opportunities to experience the relevance of their ideas in the public eye. It also encourages them to narrate their ideas critically before a jury panel, thereby developing communication skills, while at the same time raising public awareness on the critical environmental issue of creative recycling and recreating.

Summary of DWC meeting

On Tuesday 4th December 2018, the executive members of DWC held a preparatory meeting regarding the upcoming Lunch Event slated for 15 December, 2018 and other related activities. The meeting was chaired by Counselor of the Committee, Madam Narges Al Shatti. The purpose of the event was to brief the wives of Ambassadors and female Diplomats in Kuwait, about the objectives and activities of DWC in Kuwait and to encourage invited guests to become members of the Committee. Among other things, the following were discussed and agreed upon:

1. Location: Location of the venue to be approved by Madam Al Shatti
2. Speech: The Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan is to deliver a speech on behalf of DWC on the following subject: Kuwait and Diplomatic Relations; and Discover Kuwait
3. Media: Fouzia was put in charge of media to display the logo and application of DWC on the screen
4. Entertainment: Oman Air has proposed to assist the Committee with a raffle draw followed by a presentation by Najdah on tourism
5. Registration for Membership: Applications for membership are to be distributed to guests during the program and be collected
6. Invitations: Invitation cards for the program are to be sent by email to all Embassies in Kuwait and follow-up should be made.



South African Embassy holiday notice

On the occasion of Christmas and New Year, the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa will be closed from Monday,

24 December 2018 to Tuesday, 1 January 2019 and will reopen on Wednesday, 2 January 2019 with its official office hours from 8h00 to 16h00 & the Consular Section operation hours will be from 8h30 to 12h30. For Emergency calls please contact: 94924895. "On the behalf of the South African Embassy, we wish you a happy Festive Season and a Prosperous New Year".

Stars

CROSSWORD 2080



ACROSS

- The basic unit of money in Thailand.
- 1 species.
- A heavy open wagon usually having two wheels and drawn by an animal.
- An endorsement.
- A disease of cattle and sheep attributed to a dietary deficiency.
- Pale gray.
- British artist and writer of nonsense verse (1812-1888).
- Of or relating to the dura mater.
- A circumscribed inflammatory and often suppurating lesion on the skin or an internal mucous surface resulting in necrosis of tissue.
- A native American tent.
- Make less visible or unclear.
- The dynasty that ruled much of Manchuria and northeastern China from 947 to 1125.
- A midnight meeting of witches to practice witchcraft and sorcery.
- New Zealand conifer.
- A white trivalent metallic element.
- A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
- A fricative sound (especially as an expression of disapproval).
- Of or relating to or characteristic of the Republic of Chad or its people or language.
- A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
- The administration of a strong electric current that passes through the brain to induce convulsions and coma.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- A narrow headband or strip of ribbon worn as a headband.
- African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- Wool of the alpaca.
- Dutch navigator who was the first European to discover Tasmania and New Zealand (1603-1659).
- (of eggs) No longer edible.
- The Holy Roman Emperors or the Emperors of Austria or Germany until 1918.
- Not in a state of sleep.
- A loose material consisting of grains of rock or coral.
- A Bantu language spoken in southern Zaire.
- Any salt or ester of chromic acid.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- Any of various trees of the genus Ulmus.
- A label made of cardboard or plastic or metal.
- (formerly) A horse-drawn wagon that delivered ice door to door.
- Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
- Group insurance that entitles members to services of participating hospitals and clinics and physicians.
- A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
- The compass point midway between east and southeast.

DOWN

- A discharge of lightning accompanied by thunder.
- Widely cultivated in tropical and subtropical regions for its fragrant flowers and colorful fruits.
- A large number or amount.
- Informal terms for clothing.
- A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.
- A popular island resort in the Netherlands Antilles.
- A cap with no brim or bill.
- The main organ of photosynthesis and transpiration in higher plants.
- Great coolness and composure under strain.
- A bachelor's degree in science.
- Greek coloratura soprano (born in the United States) known for her dramatic intensity in operatic roles (1923-1977).
- (computer science) American Standard Code for Information Interchange.
- Fertility goddess in ancient Greek mythology.
- Someone new to a field or activity.
- The compass point that is one point north of due east.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- A broad band that passes over the back of a horse and supports the shafts of a vehicle.
- Testacean rhizopods.
- Stout-bodied insect with large membranous wings.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- Eurasian rose with prickly stems and fragrant leaves and bright pink flowers followed by scarlet hips.
- Complacently or inately foolish.
- A gambling card game in which chips are placed on the ace and king and queen and jack of separate suits (taken from a separate deck).
- A very light colorless element that is one of the six inert gases.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Relatively small fast-moving sloth.
- An antibiotic (trade name Erythrocin or E-Mycin or Ethril or Ilosone or Peditamycin) obtained from the actinomycete Streptomyces erythreus.
- The capital of Mali.
- The academic world.
- Scenery hung at back of stage.
- A colorless explosive liquid that is volatile and poisonous and foul-smelling.
- 100 pesewas equal 1 cedi.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- Leather with a napped surface.
- The principal evil jinni in Islamic mythology.
- Tall perennial herb of tropical Asia with dark green leaves.
- Hit hard.
- Formerly a large constellation in the southern hemisphere between Canis Major and the Southern Cross.
- Kamarupan languages spoken in north-eastern India and western Burma.
- A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
- Vietnamese New Year.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Now that your life is calming down, take the opportunity to evaluate some recent developments. Measure the wins and the losses and get perspective on where you really are. Someone from your past wants to get back into your good graces, and they might hit you with the hard sell to get there. Don't let your guilt or sense of obligation put you in a subservient position.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are in the middle of quite a tango today -- this dance between you and a relatively new person in your life is fun, but is it going anywhere? For today, one of your goals should be to find out. If you can advance things inch by inch, you will get closer to this person by the end of the day. Do not be afraid to step on their toes once or twice. Coming across as forceful or aggressive isn't necessarily a bad thing. It can be a very efficient use of your time.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today, you will experience something you have never experienced before -- but will you even notice? Sometimes, the human race is so busy looking for huge revelations that we all forget to notice the smaller things that happen all around us. Walk a little bit slower, and use your neck for its intended purpose: To look around! Wander in and out of intriguing situations and go try that mystery restaurant you have been wondering about. Take a walk on the unexpected side.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Are you getting sucked into the misconception that bigger is better? This could be a big mistake right now. Your energy is better suited for smaller places, quieter sounds, and lower expectations. Instead of ordering a complicated cup of fancy coffee that takes ten minutes to make, opt for a plain, old cup of black coffee. Turn down your music, open a window and listen to the birds sing. Get back to the basics and remember that sometimes, less is more.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Are you growing impatient with someone? If by this point certain milestones that should have been achieved aren't, then today is the day to speak up about it. Chances are, this person is completely unaware of your frustration. Step outside of yourself and realize that all your internal dialogue is muted -- no one else can hear it unless you voice it. Have the courage to speak your mind and try to speed them along. They're more willing than you realize.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

The achievements of the people around you should serve as inspiration today -- it seems that the excuses you've been giving yourself don't hold much water anymore, do they? Get started on that thing you've been meaning to do for so long. Now that you are in a comfortable situation, try for something that might be out of your reach. The suspense isn't going to kill you, though -- it will only motivate you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Time is definitely going to be on your side today, so use it wisely. Your romantic relationship is getting stronger, and today the two of you will finally have all the time you need to have that conversation you've been waiting to have. Be honest and trust them with your feelings -- the good, the bad and the vulnerable. This is an important opportunity to get everything out on the table and determine what you are dealing with. Make plans for the future.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today will be another breezy day -- and fresh air is again prescribed. You need to be out in wide-open spaces to open up your mind more. Openness will enable new ideas, new people and even a few new adventures to enter your life and inject it with the excitement you have been eager to find. If you spend more time with less conventional people, you'll be giving your mind the stimulation it needs. So say 'hello' to the folks you meet while you are out exploring the world.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

As you are certainly going to find out today, making a new beginning in an old situation is not always easy to accomplish. Well, if all you're trying to do is get back to the good old days, that is your first mistake ... and don't let overlooking someone's resistance be your second mistake. Open up a dialogue and ask the people you're trying to connect with how they are feeling about the situation. Easy solutions will pop up, and things should get smoother soon.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today your inner force will be out in full force, and you'll be fixing all sorts of problems with your own creativity. From dealing with something as minor as a broken zipper to handling something as major as work fallout from a missed deadline, you will master every little (unpleasant) surprise that comes your way. This is not to say that you should go out and seek controversy, however. Be sure to keep your eyes on your own paper and mind your manners.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You cannot hit a home run every time, so why are you holding yourself to impossible standards? Even the biggest Hollywood stars churn out a cinematic bomb every once and a while, and then, a few months later, they're back on all the magazine covers. Take a lesson from that. If you are down right now, that doesn't mean you have to stay down. Your successes are not based on luck -- they are based on your abilities. You are ready, willing and able.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Emotionally, you should be feeling more independent today ... you are heading toward a major turning point where you can just let go of old grudges and move beyond the fear of not being a perfect person. You are making the best choices you can, and you should not dwell on missteps you have made. Your personal dramas will be taking a back seat to other, more challenging projects or activities. Focus more on those today and you will forget about insecurities.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Movies: Science Fiction

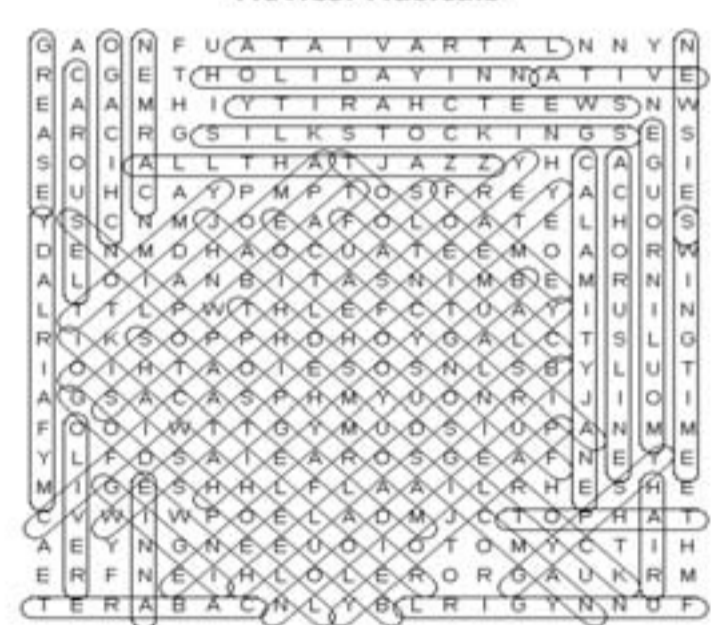
Find and circle all of the Science Fiction movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the title of an additional Science Fiction movie.



- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| ALIEN | FANTASTIC VOYAGE | ROBOCOP | TERMINATOR |
| BLADE RUNNER | FLASH GORDON | SCANNERS | THE ABYSS |
| BODY SNATCHERS | FLATLINERS | SHIVERS | THE FLY |
| BRAZIL | FORBIDDEN PLANET | SILENT RUNNING | THE MATRIX |
| COCOON | FRANKENSTEIN | SOLARIS | THEY LIVE |
| CONTACT | GATTACA | SOYLENT GREEN | TOTAL RECALL |
| CUBE | INDEPENDENCE DAY | SPIDER-MAN | TRANCERS |
| DARK CITY | JURASSIC PARK | STAR WARS | TRON |
| DEEP IMPACT | LOGAN'S RUN | STARGATE | VIDEODROME |
| DUNE | MAD MAX | STARMAN | WESTWORLD |
| EQUILIBRIUM | METROPOLIS | STARSHIP TROOPERS | |

Yesterday's Solution

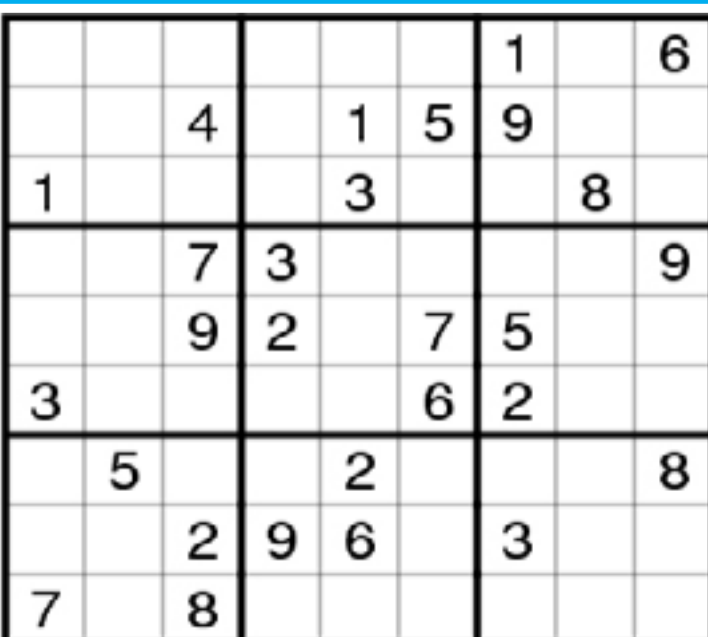
Movies: Musicals



- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A CHORUS LINE | CHICAGO | HELLO, DOLLY! | PAL JOEY |
| ALL THAT JAZZ | EVITA | HIGH SOCIETY | SHOW BOAT |
| ANNIE | FAME | HOLIDAY INN | SILK STOCKINGS |
| BLUE HAWAII | FANTASIA | JAILHOUSE ROCK | SOUTH PACIFIC |
| BRIGADOON | FUNNY FACE | LA TRAVIATA | STATE FAIR |
| BUGSY MALONE | FUNNY GIRL | MARY POPPINS | SWEET CHARITY |
| CABARET | GIGI | MOULIN ROUGE | SWING TIME |
| CALAMITY JANE | GODSPELL | MY FAIR LADY | THE MUSIC MAN |
| CAMELOT | GREASE | NEWSIES | TOMMY |
| CARMEN | GYPSY | OKLAHOMA! | TOP HAT |
| CAROUSEL | HAIR | OLIVER! | WEST SIDE STORY |

The hidden movie is: A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM

Daily SuDoku



medium

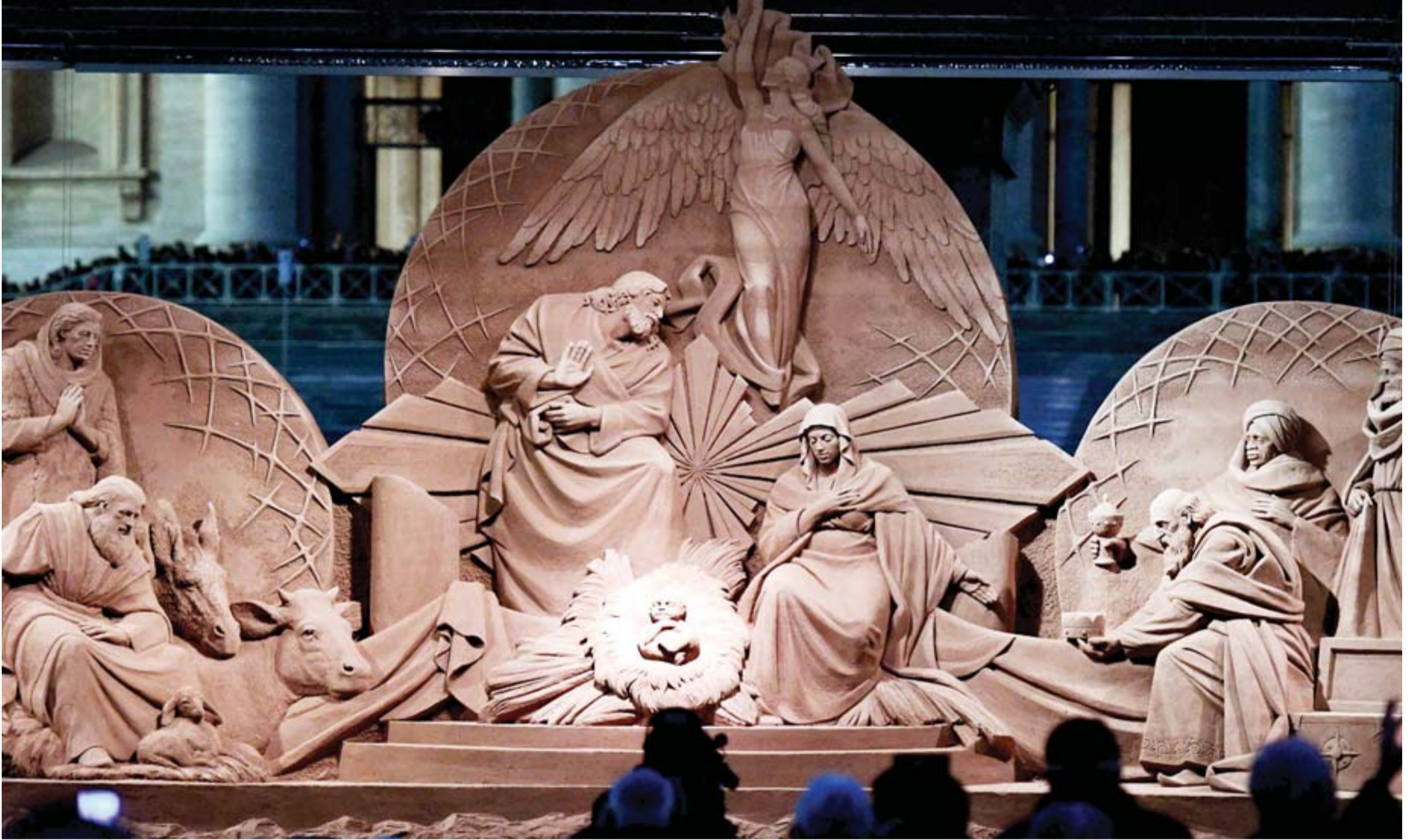
Yesterday's Solution



hard

Lifestyle

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2018



People look at the sand nativity scene after it was unveiled in St Peter's square at the Vatican. — AFP

Vatican's St. Peter's Square gets 720-ton sand nativity scene

The traditional nativity scene in St. Peter's Square won't be so traditional this year. For the first time, it is made of sand - 720 tons of it. For the past two weeks, Rich Varano, a professional sand artist, has been guiding three sculptors from the Netherlands, Russia and the Czech Republic, to craft the work, which measures about 5.5 meters high by 16 meters wide. Varano, 60, the artistic director of the massive work, doesn't mind if you call him "Mr Sandman". Sand is his life and love. The American from Florida divides his time between the United States and Italy.

"It's very special to be making one here in a place

with so much history, so much culture, so much art and in the shadow of such masters," he told Reuters on Thursday as his team worked quietly to finish ahead of Friday's unveiling to the public. "It is an incredibly humbling experience to be here," he said. Heavy trucks brought the sand, of a type particularly suited for sculpting, from the northern Italian seaside city of Jesolo, near Venice, in mid-November.

It was compacted into a large rectangle and the artists started sculpting away from the top down with tools including sticks, trowels, and even dental utensils for the finer parts. "What separates us professionals

and the average person playing on the beach is that we understand how to make sand stick together well," the white-bearded Varano said, wearing a yellow hard hat. The scene consists of Joseph, Mary, the infant Jesus, angels, shepherds, animals and the three wise men, kings the Bible says followed a star in the east that led them to Bethlehem.

Varano said beach sand is not suitable, partly because it is not very compactable. The sand is taken from more inland areas and is similar to river sand. A large overhead canopy will protect the scene from any heavy rain and plastic curtains will be lowered in case

of storms or strong winds before it is dismantled in January. "It's an ephemeral art in the sense that it is not intended to last forever," he said, "even though we could make it last indefinitely if we wanted to".

Varano said he expected some criticism from conservatives who think nativity scenes should be made up of traditional statues. "I would not be surprised if there were some people who had concerns, but there are so many more who will enjoy it and that makes me happy," he said. Once the Christmas season is over, it will be returned there and used for other sand sculptures. —Reuters

VIPs arrive at pre-wedding bash for daughter of India's richest man

Dozens of chartered planes carrying celebrities, including former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton, flew into a sleepy airport in western India for the lavish pre-wedding festivities for the daughter of India's richest man. Isha Ambani, 27, daughter of Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, will marry Anand Piramal, 33, in the financial capital of Mumbai next Wednesday, but the celebrations began this weekend in the desert city of Udaipur, with feasts, singing and dancing, and other pre-wedding rituals.

Security was beefed up as the high-profile guests started arriving at Udaipur's airport, said a source at the scene, who asked not to be identified. Outside, they were awaited by luxury sedans driven by chauffeurs wearing white uniforms and colorful Rajasthani turbans. The Clintons and the Ambanis have an association that goes back more than 18 years and have met several times both in India and abroad, according to Indian media reports.

Then President Bill Clinton held meetings in India with the Ambanis, including deceased founder and Mukesh's father Dhirubhai Ambani, just before and after he left the presidency in 2000-2001. In March this year, when Hillary Clinton visited India to deliver a keynote speech at a conference in Mumbai, she dined with the Ambanis at their 27-floor Antilia residence - one of the world's most expensive homes, according to local media. Many other top industrialists, politicians, sports and Bollywood stars descended in Udaipur on Saturday to join what has been dubbed locally "the big, fat Indian wedding."

Indian steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar and newly-weds, actress Priyanka Chopra and singer Nick Jonas were among the guests joining the bash. Former head of advertising giant WPP, Martin Sorrell, BP Group CEO Bob Dudley, Huffington Post founder Arianna Huffington, 21st Century Fox CEO James Murdoch and Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih are also invited. The wedding will bring together two of India's most influential families.

Ambani, the chairman of Reliance Industries, has a net worth of \$47 billion, Forbes magazine says. The Piramals have interests in pharmaceuticals and real estate, and according to a report in the news magazine India Today, have given the couple a 50,000-sq-foot sea-facing home in Mumbai. Many in India, where millions live in dire poverty, have closely followed the preparations, including the couple's engagement at the luxury Villa D'Este hotel on Italy's



This handout photograph shows Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, right, and his wife Nita receiving former US first lady Hillary Clinton, center, who arrived for the pre-wedding function of Mukesh's daughter Isha Ambani with Anand Piramal, in Udaipur. — AFP photos

Lake Como, attended by more than 600 guests, and featuring a private performance by singer John Legend.

Newspapers and websites have been full of details about the ceremonies, the designer jewellery and clothes, with some of India's top designers dressing the wedding party. The wedding invitation includes necklaces and precious stones stacked in a two-tier floral box, at a cost of 300,000 rupees each, India Today said. The wedding is the latest in a series of high-profile marriages that began last year, when cricket captain Virat Kohli tied the knot with Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma. Just last week, actress Priyanka Chopra and US singer Nick Jonas had a two-day wedding at one of India's most ostentatious royal palaces. —Reuters



Isha Ambani, right, daughter of Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, serves food to guests during an 'Anna Seva' ritual.



Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, 2nd left, and his wife Nita, left, serves food to guests during an 'Anna Seva' ritual.



General view during the presentation of the Youth Symphonic Orchestra of Chulumani - where Bolivian coca grower Mariel Chura, 21, plays the viola - in Chulumani, some 120 km north of La Paz. — AFP photos

Bolivian youth orchestra plays for the future

When Mariel Chura joined a youth orchestra at age 14, she did not even know what a viola was. Seven years later, she loves the instrument, which has offered her an escape from the hardships of everyday life in Bolivia's biggest coca-producing area. The Chulumani Youth Symphony Orchestra has helped teens avoid the usual pitfalls plaguing the region: drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and family drama, according to the group's director and conductor Erik Castro.

Instead, they learn the discipline of classical music, forge lasting friendships and dream of a future career in the arts. Bright-eyed and slender, Chura grew up picking coca leaves on her parents' land in the Cocayapu region, near Chulumani in the Yungas valley, about 120 kilometers east of the capital La Paz. When she received visitors on a suffocatingly hot and humid day, she took out her instrument and filled the family home with music, as her mother Lidia turned the pages of her sheet music.

"I feel calm (playing the viola). It's like you forget everything—you're focused on playing, you forget your problems," Chura said. A fan of German Baroque composer Georg Philipp Telemann—but also Vivaldi, Mozart and Bach—Chura says she dreams of playing in a symphony orchestra like Venezuela's Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra, founded in the 1970s by Jose Antonio Abreu, who developed the country's El Sistema music education program.

She is not alone—many of the 80 or so children and young adults in the Chulumani Symphony hope their love of music can turn into a lifelong occupation. Chura's foray into music wasn't easy. She was picked on by classmates. The boys in the group were the targets of homophobic slurs for playing in the orchestra. At age 18, Chura used her income from the coca fields to buy her own viola for \$115 - a significant amount of money for her.

Now, she is studying engineering at the Higher University of San Andres in La Paz, where she lives



Bolivian coca grower Mariel Chura, center, 21, plays the viola.

during the week. On weekends, she goes home to teach viola to two little boys and continue rehearsing with her fellow orchestra members.

Orchestra is a 'sanctuary'

The Chulumani Symphony welcomes children from ages four to 22 who are hoping to learn about music and invest in their futures. "The orchestra has become like a sanctuary, where kids come and feel like they're free from those problems" that usually mark adolescence, Castro told AFP. Like other Bolivian kids, these young musicians "have a lot of social problems (around them). These days, it's not just drugs and alcohol; instead, there's violence, the issue of family abandonment, lack of affection," he said.

"We've been a kind of prevention program" against drug and alcohol use by default, said Castro, who has become a role model for his music students. The orchestra was founded in 2011 with a combination of support from the city of Chulumani and private organizations.

Since then, several students have been awarded scholarships to universities at home and abroad, as well as to conservatories in Peru and Costa Rica, Castro says. The conductor agreed with Chura that they need to combat the stigma about young boys playing in the orchestra, and the bullying they are suffering, as it resulted in fewer young boys wanting to join. —AFP



Mariel Chura, 21, harvests coca leaves in her lot.

UK's Prince Harry attends 'Bat out of Hell' musical in London

Britain's Prince Harry made a solo appearance at a gala performance of the rock musical "Bat out of Hell" on Thursday in aid of his Invictus Games Foundation. Harry met several of the wounded servicemen and women helped by the foundation and addressed the audience on stage at the Dominion Theatre. The musical, written by composer Jim Steinman, is based on the "Bat out of Hell" rock album trilogy by Meat Loaf and follows a love story set in a post-apocalyptic Manhattan.

The show began a partnership with the Invictus foundation earlier this year and offers free tickets, theatre workshops and private tours to wounded service people and their families. Harry and his wife Meghan Markle - officially known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex - are expecting their first child in the spring. In August, they both attended a special performance of the musical "Hamilton" at the Victoria Palace Theatre in London. —Reuters

Belgium's Africa Museum reopens to confront its colonial demons

Belgium's Africa Museum will reopen to the public on Sunday after five years of renovations designed to modernize the museum from an exhibition of pro-colonial propaganda to one that is critical of Belgium's imperialist past. The museum, full of artifacts and stuffed wildlife, was often criticized for ignoring the brutalities of King Leopold II's fiefdom, whose troops collected the hands of those who resisted slave labor at a time when millions of Congolese people are estimated to have died.

Many of the artifacts remain, but there is more commentary from African people on video screens, displays by Congolese artists, one including a 120-member family tree, in a bid to centralize Africans rather than Europeans. Colonial history is now concentrated in one gallery, rather than dominating the whole museum, which also deals with current issues facing Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and its diaspora.

"We also assume our responsibility that for more than 60 years, we've diffused, we've disseminated an image of a superior, western way of thinking to African cultures," said museum Director Guido Gryseels. In the large rotunda, a statue remains of a European missionary with an African boy clutching his robes with a plaque that reads: "Belgium brings civilization to Congo". But now the room is dominated by a giant wooden sculpture of an African man's head, sculptured by an artist born in DRC. The museum also features a new entry pavilion.

Many Belgians remain ignorant of their country's harsh rule in what is now Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the late 19th century. It became the setting for Joseph Conrad's influential 1899 novella "Heart of Darkness". Belgium's colonial past made the small European country one of the world's most successful trading economies. The 66 million euros renovation to the Africa museum, set in a palatial, neoclassical building in a landscaped park just outside the capital Brussels, hopes to confront Belgians with their colonial past.

But activists says that by containing stolen artefacts it represents a continuation of colonialism. "There is no decolonisa-



A journalist visits Belgium's Africa Museum before its reopening to the public in Tervuren, Belgium. — Reuters

tion without restitution," said Mireille-Tsheusi Robert, who was born in the DRC before moving to Belgium, where she authored a book on racism. The debate about whether colonial-era art should be returned home has intensified after French President Emmanuel Macron promised to return some African art to the continent and Germany this year published guidelines for considering repatriation.

Gryseels said the museum was open to returning some artefacts. King Philippe declined an invitation to attend the museum's inauguration on Saturday, but Prime Minister Charles Michel and some ministers will attend. Activists will hold a separate ceremony nearby at the graves of seven Congolese who died of influenza when they were imported for exhibition in a human zoo. The group is demanding Belgium erect a plaque in remembrance. — Reuters

Cuba defends controversial arts decree but seeks consensus on norms

Cuba's Communist government defended on Friday a controversial new decree tightening control on the cultural sector but said it would seek artists' backing for how it will be implemented, a move those who had protested against the decree hailed as a victory. Culture Minister Alpidio Alonso Grau said during a roundtable discussion broadcast on state TV that the government, which has promoted local artists since Cuba's 1959 revolution, was targeting vulgar, offensive and mediocre content with the legislation.

Decree 349, which was published in July and theoretically came into force on Friday, gives government inspectors the right to shut down exhibits and performances deemed to violate Cuba's revolutionary values and to confiscate artists' belongings. Alonso Grau said the authorities would meet with artists nationwide over the coming days to seek their consensus on how enforcement of the decree would work in practice.

Except in the most extreme cases, the minister said, the decision to shut down a cultural event could only be made by a group of officials, and not a single inspector. "The enemies of the revolution have tried to present the decree as an instrument for censorship and to ignore what cultural policy signifies," he said on a show that also featured well-known local artists who voiced support for the decree.

When decree 349 was first announced, only a small group of artists working outside state institutions and most affected by the legislation spoken out against it. Such artists had gained greater autonomy in the wake of Cuba's market reforms by exhibiting or performing in newly opened private venues. — Reuters



Mexican film director Lila Aviles awarded Prize of the Jury. — AFP photos



Austrian film director Sudabeh Mortezaei, awarded Etoile D'or during the closing ceremony of the 17th Marrakech International Film Festival in Marrakech.



German actress Aenne Schwarz poses with her award for Best Performance.

'Joy' snags Etoile d'Or at Marrakesh film festival



Tunisian actor Nidhal Saadi poses with his award for Best Actor.



Spanish actress Rossy de Palma

Austrian filmmaker Sudabeh Mortezaei's "Joy", an unflinching look at migrant sex workers in Europe, won top prize Saturday at the Marrakesh film festival in Morocco. Italian actress Monica Bellucci presented the trophy for the film, which tells the story of a young Nigerian forced into prostitution in Vienna. Marrakesh's 17th annual festival was attended by top cinema stars like US director Martin Scorsese and actor Robert de Niro.

Tunisian Nidhal Saadi won Best Actor for his role in the film "Regarde moi" (Look at me), directed by Nejib Belkadi. And German Aenne Schwarz won Best Actress for her role in "Alles is gut" (All is good), directed by Eva Trobisch. Tribute evenings honored the careers of visionary French filmmaker Agnes Varda and her co-director, French street artist JR, who teamed up to produce the road documentary "Faces Places". The festival also hailed the career of Moroccan filmmaker Jilali Ferhati, whose films were shown in a new "panorama of Moroccan cinema" sidebar. —AFP



Italian actress Monica Bellucci



French/Moroccan stylist Nawel Debbouze



Serbian film director Ognjen Glavonic poses with his Best Director award.



(L-R) Jury members Scottish director Lynne Ramsay and her daughter, French director Laurent Cantet, Indian actress Ileana D'Cruz, British director Tala Hadid, Mexican director Michel Franco, Lebanese director Joana Hadjithomas, president of the jury US director James Gray, jury members US actress Dakota Johnson and German/ Spanish actor Daniel Bruhl attend the 17th Marrakech International Film Festival.



Recipients pose with their trophies during the closing ceremony of the 17th Marrakesh International Film Festival.

'Miracle' doughnuts emerge as Israel celebrates Hanukkah

Consider the doughnut. Good, right? Now consider that doughnut made with gourmet ingredients like creme de cassis, stuffed with fresh fruit or topped with chocolate pearls. Really good, right? At this time of year in Israel, that and more can be found. Israeli chefs are giving the traditionally basic Hanukkah doughnut-called "sufganiyot" in Hebrew-a higher purpose as Jews indulge in the sweet, doughy treat for the holiday.

"Not only do we use the best products, but we have a secret," said Yitzhak Kadosh, chef at his family's Jerusalem cafe Kadosh, known for its high-quality sufganiyot at Hanukkah time. There is a story behind the doughnuts and the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah, or Festival of Lights, which began on Sunday night. The holiday commemorates one of the great victories in Jewish history, when in the 2nd century BC, after defeating the Seleucids ruling the Holy Land, a small group of Jews led by Judah Maccabee reconsecrated the desecrated Temple of Jerusalem.

Tradition says that when they sought to relight the temple's menorah, only one day's worth of undefiled oil remained. It miraculously burned for eight days, allowing time to prepare more oil. To mark the holiday, Jews light one candle on a hanukiah candelabra each night. The

traditional hanukiah includes nine branches, with one serving to kindle the others. Here's where the doughnuts come in. It is also part of the holiday tradition to eat foods fried in oil, including sufganiyot.

The basic jelly-filled sufganiyot and variations on it can be found all over this time of year, with colorful rows of them set out on tables at cafes, shopping malls and market stalls. But some have sought to turn the doughnuts into a product if not as miraculous as the miracle Hanukkah celebrates, then at least something that's really worth savoring.

For Kadosh, a regular doughnut just won't do—at least not when it's time to celebrate Hanukkah. The 46-year-old who has studied in Paris and Vienna won't give away his secret, but explained that it involves a way of keeping his doughnuts from becoming too greasy.

A French touch

Last year, Kadosh cafe celebrated its 50 years in business by offering 50 different versions of sufganiyot. Among its most original creations have been doughnuts made with creme de cassis liqueur, salted caramel, pistachio and pastry cream. Kadosh sells between 2,000 and 3,000 doughnuts per day during the Hanukkah season—though with the higher quality comes a

higher price. They run from seven shekels for the classic doughnut filled with strawberry jam to 16 shekels for the more sophisticated.

Elsewhere, most sell for between five and 12 shekels. In total, around 20 million sufganiyot will be sold in Israel during Hanukkah, according to an industry association.

The doughnut tradition has been written about since the Middle Ages, but dates much further back than that. They would be recognizable to much of the world-cousins of the American "donut" and the German "Berliner", for example. After stores begin stocking them in the run up to Hanukkah, Israeli newspapers start rolling out their annual lists of the best, the least fattening and the most original.

At Jerusalem's Franck Delights, whose chef arrived from France 22 years ago, fewer than 10 different doughnuts are offered, but the bakery highlights its French roots. "We offer light doughnuts that allow several to be eaten—real pastries with a French touch that Israelis appreciate," said Samantha Assuli, the store manager and wife of Chef Franck. The gourmet examples have become numerous: raspberry, mango, lemon, hazelnut, almond, vanilla cream—even baba au rhum. Some even offer vegan donuts, while others have gone in a completely different direction with cheese or meat. —AFP



Hanukkah doughnuts, called 'sufganiyot' in Hebrew, are seen for sale at a market in Jerusalem. — AFP

Thousands dressed as Santa Claus race through Madrid for charity



People dressed as Santa Claus take part in the Santa Claus run in Madrid. — AFP photos

More than 7,000 people dressed as Santa Claus ran through central Madrid yesterday in a charity race to raise money for cancer care. Many children dressed as elves in green robes also took part in the 5km race along Madrid's Paseo de la Castellana avenue. Organizers say the Santa-themed race is the largest of its kind in the world. Part of the entry-fee paid by each participant in the race will be donated to the cancer care non-profit organization, Fundacion Intheos. — Reuters



Santa 'Jaws' is coming to Budapest aquarium

As if delivering presents to all the world's 2 billion children while in charge of nine reindeer and a flying vehicle, squeezing down chimneys and entering strangers' houses weren't enough, Santa Claus has to contend with a new risk - feeding sharks. The Tropicarium Aquarium in Budapest prepared a festive surprise for its seven sharks and other fish, sending divers dressed as Santa into the 1.4 million liter aquarium to set up a Christmas tree, which they decorated with shells.

Biologist and diver David Derbak said the sharks enjoyed Santa Day, showing a lot of interest in the divers' brightly colored clothing. "They are interested in our hats and clothes, and are surprised because it is not every day they see people dressed like this going down to them," he said. Dec. 6 is the feast day of St Nicholas, whose story is the foundation for Santa Claus. Countries across Europe mark the day when small presents are given to children. —Reuters



FESTIVE FUN OR FESTIVE FAIL? CHRISTMAS CLASSICS CAUSE OFFENCE

Music is as much a part of the Christmas season as nativity scenes, snow and Santa grottos. But some seasonal songs are now associated more with causing offence than festive cheer, and last week a US radio station pulled "Baby It's Cold Outside" from its playlist after objections from listeners. Here are three festive classics that have proved contentious.

'Fairytale of New York'

The irreverent Pogues and Kirsty MacColl classic regularly tops lists of favorite Christmas songs, but there have been calls for it to be banned over the word "faggot", a derogatory term for gay men. In the original recording Kirsty MacColl sings, "You scumbag, you maggot / You cheap lousy faggot," at The Pogues' frontman Shane MacGowan, in reply to him calling her "an old slut on junk".

In December 2007, one of Britain's biggest radio stations BBC Radio 1 briefly edited out the words "slut" and "faggot", which is also an Irish colloquial word for a lazy person. The BBC later backed down after protests and its stations now play the original. But Magic Radio Network, whose private stations have 4.1 million weekly listeners, plays a version where MacColl sings "you're cheap and you're haggard" and also mutes "slut".

"The word still has power, sharp cruel fangs, and is still used to demean and destroy lives of young people up and down the UK," Justin Myers, an openly gay writer, said in his blog last month. "For certain members of the LGBT community, that one word might have screwed over their entire coming out process," Tom Haynes, the assistant editor of British student publication The Tab, wrote in an article on Tuesday.

'Baby its Cold Outside'

Written in 1944, the catchy duet about the efforts of a man to dissuade a woman from leaving has been recorded by such musical greats as Dean Martin, Ray Charles and Dolly Parton. But some feel that lyrics such as "say, what's in this drink?" and the responses - "beautiful what's your hurry" and "baby don't hold out" - are inappropriate in the post-#MeToo era. "When the song was written in 1944, it was a different time, but now while reading it, it seems very manipulative and wrong," DJ Glenn Anderson posted on the website of WDOK, the US radio station that decided not to play the song. However, some feminists have defended it. "It's a joke about how she's perfectly sober and about to have awesome consensual sex and use the drink for plausible deniability," an anonymous user wrote on the social media site Tumblr. "Because she's living in a society where women aren't supposed to have sexual agency."

'Do they know it's Christmas'

This plea to help Africa by Band Aid, a star-studded ensemble that included Bono, Paul McCartney and George Michael, raised millions of pounds for famine relief in Ethiopia in 1984. But many commentators said lyrics such as "there won't be snow in Africa this Christmas" and "where the only water flowing/ is the bitter sting of tears" paternalistically stereotyped a continent. "Yes, they do know it's Christmas time in Africa, because huge swaths of that vast continent are Christian," journalist Bim Adewunmi wrote in Britain's Guardian newspaper on the song's 30th anniversary in 2014. Singer Bob Geldof hit back at the critics. "It's a pop song, it's not a doctoral thesis," he told the Telegraph newspaper. —Reuters

News



SERJILLA, Syria: (Left) Syrian Maya Merhi poses for a picture next to her prosthetic legs that are decorated with the Turkish flag inside a tent at this Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in northwestern Syria yesterday. (Right) Maya poses for a picture with the support of crutches next to her brother and disabled father. - AFP



Large crowds call on Modi...

Continued from Page 1

ground capable of holding more than 50,000 people, and filled the surrounding streets. Some carried maces and tridents - weapons traditionally wielded by Hindu gods - and travelled great distances by train and bus to reach the rally. "We have come here to protect our religion and Hindu pride. We want a temple for our Lord Ram," Hitesh Bharadwaj, a teacher from Delhi's satellite city Noida, told AFP.

The headline VHP has applied pressure on Modi in recent weeks, staging a huge show of force in Ayodhya itself last month. A close ally of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the group is spearheading a push to raise the Ram temple, and is calling for more protests as the premier prepares to go to the polls by May. The BJP was on the margins until the 1980s when its top leaders, including Modi, backed a growing movement for the construction of the Ram temple.

Its advocates want parliament to introduce a law bypassing legal hurdles blocking the temple before Modi's term ends. The Supreme Court has delayed hearings into the disputed site but hardliners have vowed to lay a foundation stone next year regardless. "We don't care about the courts,

A grand temple will be constructed in 2019," Sushil Chawdhary, a VHP leader, told AFP. Exhorting the crowd to take a vow to build a temple in Ayodhya, Hindu monk Avdhesanand Giri ji Maharaj, said: "The government and the Supreme Court must realize that it is a matter of religious sentiment for Hindus who have been waiting to see a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya."

As millions of Hindus believe that the mosque stood at the birthplace of Ram, one of their most revered deities, the dispute remains at the core of tensions between the Hindus majority and India's minority Muslims who constitute 14 percent of the country's 1.3 billion people. Hindu groups insist that there was a temple at the site before the mosque was built in 1528 by a Muslim ruler. "I've come here to attend the religious congregation as a Hindu woman; not as a politician, as I believe that the issue of Ram temple is linked with the faith of India's 80 percent people," said Meenakashi Lekhi, a lawmaker from the BJP.

Ahead of yesterday's rally, police stepped up security in the city. Anti-Muslim slogans reverberated on roads leading to the gathering near the old part of the city, where many Muslim families live. On their way to attend the religious meeting, some youths brandished swords. In the run-up to a general election due by May 2019, the BJP and other Hindu groups have ratcheted up their demand for a new temple at the disputed site. Most analysts expect Modi's BJP to fare worse than it did in the 2014 general election, and critics often accuse the party of using communal issues to whip up support. — Agencies

Syrian girl born without legs walks on new prosthetics

SERJILLA, Syria: Eight-year-old Maya Merhi had to struggle around a Syrian displaced persons camp on artificial limbs made of plastic tubing and tin cans. But now the girl, who was born with no legs due to a congenital condition, is walking on new prosthetics after undergoing treatment in Turkey. Pictures of her plight, including those taken by AFP in Syria, were seen around the world in June, and she was taken to Istanbul for the life-changing procedure.

Dressed in a pink sweater and matching shoes, Maya on Saturday was able for the first time to walk along the rutted roads of the Serjilla camp after arriving back. Finally she joined in the games and dancing with the other children. "I was so happy when I saw her walking," says her father Mohammed, sitting in their makeshift tent. "The whole family and all our loved ones were so happy."

Mohammed suffers the same condition as his daughter, known as congenital amputation which means the

person is born without lower limbs. He cobbled together the homemade prosthetics on which she used to shuffle around the camp. Originally from Aleppo region, the father and daughter had to move to rebel-held Idlib province as fighting from Syria's civil war began to rage around their home.

After the pictures of Maya's difficulties sparked attention across the globe, the Turkish Red Crescent intervened. The father and daughter were evacuated from Syria by the Turkish authorities and brought to Istanbul for treatment at a specialized clinic. Mohammed received prosthetic limbs as well, but admits that he isn't yet as steady on them as his daughter.

Sitting on a foam mattress, his daughter unwraps the artificial legs and attaches them. "To begin with there were difficulties getting used to them," says her uncle Hussein, who accompanied his brother and niece to Turkey. "All of a sudden she found herself up high on the new prosthetics." — AFP

Empty flats raise fears of...

Continued from Page 1

owner Hussein Abdallah, who had hoped to make lucrative sales. Instead, the businessman had to hand over ownership of eight flats in the building to the bank to pay off his debt.

Other entrepreneurs have decided to halt building altogether. A road back from the Beirut seafont, the construction of another tower grinded to a halt two years ago, with only the concrete outer shell completed. "We only sold a single apartment off plan," its owner said, asking to remain anonymous. He reduced the price by 20 percent, "but it didn't help," he added.

Near the capital's iconic Martyrs' Square, the foundations of another high-brow project - "Beb Beirut" - stand frozen in time, concrete pillars jutting out from the ground, and rusty rebar rods protruding from them. Still cranes loom overhead, while all around the stunted construction site sparkling new apartment blocks appear completely empty. Owner Mireille Choufany decided to stop building two years ago. "Demand is almost non-existent," she said.

Outside the capital, real estate sales have also dwindled. Sales dropped by 19 percent during the first ten months of the year in southern Lebanon, and by the same percentage in the north, according to the country's real estate registry. Multi-confessional Lebanon has been without a government since May, threatening to derail an already fragile economy. The deadlock is the latest in a series of political crises that make Lebanese reluctant to invest in apartments - both luxury and smaller-scale.

Amir calls for end to media campaigns...

Continued from Page 1

"Qatar's amir should have accepted the fair demands (of the boycotting states) and attended the summit," Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa said in a tweet. In response, Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Rumaihi, director of the information office at Qatar's foreign ministry, said: "Qatar can make its own decisions and had attended (last year's) Kuwait summit while the leaders of the boycotting countries did not." Saudi Arabia had invited Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to attend the summit, but the foreign ministry in Doha said he would not go. Instead Qatar was represented by minister of state for foreign affairs Sultan Al-Muraikhi.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman opened the gathering, urging fellow member states Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, the UAE and Qatar to maintain a united front against Iran and terrorism. "This requires all of us to maintain our countries' gains and to work with our partners to preserve security and stability in the region and the world," he said in a speech. King Salman defended the intervention by a military coalition led by Riyadh and the UAE in Yemen and called for a "political solution" in the impoverished country.

To make matters worse, at the start of the year, the central bank suspended a subsidy to real estate loans for less well-off Lebanese. Among them, 33-year-old bank employee Marwan, who signed a contract to buy a flat in January. "The next day, I learnt that the subsidized loans had been suspended," he said, asking that his family name be withheld. Marwan paid 20 percent of the apartment's cost when he signed, but "I was counting on the loan to pay the rest", he said. "Now I risk losing the amount I already paid, without even getting a flat."

To avoid a devaluation of the Lebanese pound - which has been trading at a fixed rate of 1,500 against the dollar since the mid-1990s - banks increased deposit rates, causing lending rates to jump more than 10 percent, which further discourages buyers from taking out loans. A banking source said they feared any collapse of the real estate sector could have repercussions on the banking sector. Builders and home buyers owe \$24 billion to banks, which is equivalent to more than a third of credits to the private sector, the source told AFP.

To avoid disaster, bank and real estate companies launched an investment platform in October that aims to raise \$250 million to purchase some of the unsold properties. "The aim is to buy up more than 200 flats in greater Beirut and sell them on the foreign market," focusing on Lebanese expatriates, said Massaad Fares, head of the Legacy One platform. But Wael El-Zein, chief of Lucid Investment Bank which is taking part in the project, says that it will not even cover 10 percent of unsold dwellings. "It's a lifebuoy to avoid drowning, while waiting for political respite," he said. Jihad Hokayem, a real estate investment expert at the Lebanese American University, agreed such initiatives were only temporary fixes. "These measures cover up existing or potential bankruptcies. It's the beginning of a total collapse" of the real estate sector, he said. — AFP

The closed-door session was expected to focus on oil politics, security issues including the Yemen war and the row with Qatar, which says the trade and transport boycott aims to curtail its sovereignty. GCC Secretary General Abdullah Al-Zayani had said the summit would review ties with Iran after the US re-imposed an oil embargo and other sanctions on Tehran following Washington's withdrawal from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal. Saudi Arabia, along with allies the UAE and Bahrain, accuses Tehran of fomenting unrest among Shiites in the Gulf, and has backed the US in piling pressure on Iran. This contrasts with Kuwait and Oman which prefer normalizing ties with the Islamic republic.

A US State Department official yesterday urged Gulf states to mend fences to confront Iran and help enable a proposed new Middle East security alliance that would include the Gulf bloc, Egypt and Jordan. "We'd like to see that unity restored, not on our terms, but on terms of the countries that are involved," Timothy Lenderking, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Arabian Gulf Affairs, told reporters at a security forum in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi.

While the boycotting states insist the row is not a priority for them and that the GCC remains valid, Doha has said the dispute harms regional security by weakening the bloc. Kuwait's ties with Riyadh are also strained over control of shared oilfields in the so-called Neutral Zone, further weakening unity of the GCC which was set up in 1980 as a bulwark against larger neighbors Iran and Iraq. — Agencies

Trump tries again to reset...

Continued from Page 1

Kelly won credit for imposing some degree of order on the White House but he struggled with Trump's habit of throwing the focus off-course with rogue tweets and personal attacks, including against members of his own administration and party. "The question is going to be whether a new chief of staff can have the same kind of gravitas that John (Kelly) did, which is the ability to stop the wrong decision from being made," said Leon Panetta, who was chief of staff for former President Bill Clinton from 1994 to 1997, and later became CIA director and Secretary of Defense in the Obama administration.

Even the best counsel will matter little unless Trump trusts his new chief of staff and will listen to frank advice, said Panetta. "You're not going to be a good chief of staff if you can't speak truth to power ... I don't get the impression that this president particularly likes people speaking truth to him." Trump said on Saturday his next chief might be in place only for "an interim basis" and that he would announce his pick in coming days. A White House official said that Trump had wanted a two-year commitment from Ayers, who was unsure that he could stay that long. Ayers has young children, and had been planning to leave the White House in December, the official said.

Strategic skills

Ayers notched his first political win at age 19, when he left college to join Sonny Perdue's successful gubernatorial campaign in Georgia. Perdue, now Trump's agriculture secretary and a key link to his rural supporters, introduced Ayers to his future wife, Jamie Floyd, a second cousin of Perdue. The Ayers are parents to five-year-old triplets. Ayers went on to work with other Republican governors, and overhauled the Republican Governors Association (RGA) when he ran it from 2007

to 2010, boosting the group's coffers and making it more politically powerful.

Bill Palatucci, a national committee official of the Republican Party and senior advisor to former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, credits Ayers' work at the RGA with helping Christie get elected in an overwhelmingly liberal state. "His strategic skills are unsurpassed," Palatucci said. "He understands both the policy and politics of the big issues."

As a political consultant, Ayers became wealthy, his White House financial disclosure forms show. He divested ownership of his previous company, C5 Creative, after he entered the government, a sale valued between \$5 million and \$25 million, and he also holds valuable farmland in Georgia worth between \$1.5 million and \$11 million. A string of wins was broken in 2012, when he managed the short-lived presidential campaign of Tim Pawlenty, a former Republican governor of Minnesota.

Pence tapped Ayers to help him with his 2016 Indiana gubernatorial reelection, and kept him on as adviser when he became Trump's vice presidential running mate. After the campaign, Ayers helped found America First Policies, a combative political group that advocates for Trump's policies. Ayers, an evangelical Christian, has developed a close relationship with Trump during his time as Pence's chief of staff. A rare flashpoint came in April, when Pence upset Trump by hiring an aide who had been deemed a "Never Trumper" - a term that describes anti-Trump Republicans. Two days later, the aide was gone.

Ayers was not a universally popular candidate among other White House staff. Some Trump advisers argued against elevating him out of concern that he might not necessarily have the president's best interests at heart, given his loyalty to Pence and lack of personal history with Trump himself. Trump was told directly about these concerns, one source said. Other advisers, however, have told Trump that Ayers' political experience would come in handy as Trump embarks on his re-election campaign, strategically choosing what events Trump should attend and how much time he should spend campaigning. Kelly's inexperience on matters of politics had been glaringly obvious to Trump, officials said. — Reuters

Assembly to discuss obligatory health...

Continued from Page 1

Saleh said that he had submitted the draft law in the previous term and it was approved by the health committee, which has already submitted its report on the issue to the Assembly. He said that there is a consensus among the government and lawmakers on the importance of the draft law, and it is expected to be passed during tomorrow's session. The lawmaker said preparing the draft law took a long time and it was reviewed by experts, adding that the economic situation requires approving the legislation.

Meanwhile, MP Majed Al-Mutairi asked the health minister about the awarding process of the contract for the registration of resident expatriates for the health insurance scheme, which was recently disrupted. Mutairi asked the minister to provide him with the date of announcing the tender, the closing date and the

awarding date. He also demanded the names of bidding companies and the names of their owners. He also asked if the ministry has awarded the contract to the highest bidder and if the Audit Bureau has been informed of the procedures.

MP Rakan Al-Nasef also asked the health minister if the ministry has signed contracts with foreign companies through Kuwait's health offices in Britain, France, Germany, Egypt and Jordan to provide services to Kuwaiti patients in those countries against a commission. He asked the minister to supply those contracts, if available, signed this year and also in the previous three years, and demanded the pre-approval of the Audit Bureau, the government's legal department and the Central Tenders Committee of such contracts. He also demanded a list of the amounts paid to those companies.

Head of the Assembly's human rights panel MP Adel Al-Damkhi yesterday called on the interior minister to investigate the case of stateless man Mohammad Al-Enezi who was illegally detained for 25 days for allegedly attempting to assassinate the head of the stateless agency Saleh Al-Fadhlah. Enezi was later released without bail after the prosecution found the accusation was false.

Sports

Australia lose four wickets, face defeat in record India run chase

Aussies need another 219 runs to make history to win

SCOREBOARD

Scorecard at stumps on day four of the opening Test between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval yesterday:

India 1st innings 250 (Pujara 123; Hazlewood 3-52)
Australia 1st innings 235 (Head 72; Bumrah 3-47, Ashwin 3-57)

India 2nd innings (overnight 151-3)

C. Pujara c Finch b Lyon	71
A. Rahane c Starc b Lyon	70
R. Sharma c Handscomb b Lyon	1
R. Pant c Finch b Lyon	28
R. Ashwin c Harris b Starc	5
M. Shami c Harris b Lyon	0
I. Sharma c Finch b Starc	0
J. Bumrah not out	0
Extras (b21, lb13, w2)	36
Total: (10 wickets, 106.5 overs)	307

Fall of wickets: 1-63 (Vijay), 2-76 (Rahul), 3-147 (Kohli), 4-234 (Pujara), 5-248 (Sharma), 6-282 (Pant), 7-303 (Ashwin), 8-303 (Rahane), 9-303 (Shami), 10-307 (Sharma)

Bowling: Starc 21.5-7-40-3, Hazlewood 23-13-43-1, Cummins 18-4-55-0, Lyon 42-7-122-6, Head 2-0-13-0.

Australia 2nd innings

A. Finch c Pant b Ashwin	11
M. Harris c Pant b Shami	26
U. Khawaja c Sharma b Ashwin	8
S. Marsh not out	31
P. Handscomb c Pujara b Shami	14
T. Head not out	11
Extras (lb1, nb1)	3
Total: (four wickets, 49 overs)	104

To bat: Tim Paine, Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Starc

Fall of wickets: 1-28 (Finch), 2-44 (Harris), 3-60 (Khawaja), 4-84 (Handscomb)

Bowling: Sharma 8-3-19-0, Bumrah 11-5-17-0, Ashwin 19-4-44-2, Shami 9-3-15-2, Vijay 2-0-7-0.

ADELAIDE: Australia were staring at defeat in the first Test yesterday, losing four wickets in their record run chase at the Adelaide Oval after being set a target 323 to win by India. At stumps they were 104 for 4, needing another 219 for an unlikely victory with their fate resting on the shoulders of Shaun Marsh, who was not out 31, and local boy Travis Head who remained unbeaten on 11. India amassed 307 in their second innings with vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane smashing 70 and first innings century-maker Cheteshwar Pujara a composed 71. A late collapse got the crowd on their feet and gave Australia a flicker of hope, with India's last four wickets falling for just four runs.

Spinner Nathan Lyon was the pick of the bowlers, taking six wickets for 122 runs off 42 overs. It was his 13th five-wicket haul in Tests. Mitchell Starc snared 3 for 40. Australia need to make history to win. The only successful fourth innings Test run chase of more than 300 at Adelaide came in 1902, when the hosts made 315 to beat England, with the biggest in modern times the 239 West Indies managed in 1982.

The home side can take some comfort, though, by Western Australia in a domestic match last month scoring 313 to beat South Australia here when Marsh was 163 not out. "We definitely still believe we can win this. It's just about coming out tomorrow, winning the first ball, the first over, the first hour," said Lyon.

"Just simple cricket, we need to not complicate things and just go out there and enjoy ourselves and compete hard and fight our backsides off." India's assistant coach Sanjay Bangar said he was disappointed his team's tailenders couldn't add more runs, but praised Pujara and Rahane.

"There was a lot of resistance shown by Pujara and he was well supported by Rahane. We managed to scrape through to that total, and then bowlers were brilliant," he said. "Pujara and Rahane are two of our best Test players and whenever they have done well, they have put us in a good position."

Australian opener Aaron Finch—who survived being given out lbw second ball when a review showed Ishant Sharma had overstepped the crease—made just 11 in his second failure of the match.

He was caught behind off spinner Ravichandran Ashwin when the ball whistled past his glove. He chose not to review the decision, which was a mistake.



ADELAIDE: India's Ajinkya Rahane plays a shot in front of Australia's captain Tim Paine during day four of the first Test cricket match at the Adelaide Oval yesterday. — AFP

Replays showed the third umpire would have overturned it. Debutant Marcus Harris matched his first innings score of 26, hitting three crunching boundaries before he was caught by Rishabh Pant off Mohammed Shami, getting an edge on an attempted cut shot.

Australia desperately needed the experienced Usman Khawaja to stick around but he decided to run down the pitch to an Ashwin delivery on eight and sliced it to Rohit Sharma, who took a difficult catch.

And when Handscomb miscued a pull shot off Shami on 14 to Pujara, they were in deep trouble. Play had started 30 minutes early to make up for rain disruptions on Saturday, with Australia needing an early breakthrough to build on the momentum after Virat Kohli fell to Lyon near the close on day three.

But two fours from Pujara off Josh Hazlewood in the second over of the day set the tone. The right-hander brought up 50 — his 20th in Tests—with a three off Lyon and hardly looked troubled until the off-spinner fooled him half an hour before lunch and Finch caught him off bat and pad.

It was a crucial 87-run partnership with Rahane, who brought up his 16th half-century with a boundary. He was eventually out going for a needless reverse sweep off Lyon, with Starc picking up the catch. The aggressive Pant went in search of quick runs as India's lead approached 300, whacking three fours and a six in succession off one Lyon over. But when he went for another big hit and fell for a quick-fire 28, it prompted a collapse from 282 for 5 to 307 all out. — AFP

Mushfiqur steers Bangladesh to easy win against Windies

DHAKA: Mushfiqur Rahim top scored with an unbeaten 55 as Bangladesh defeated West Indies by five wickets in the first one-day international in Dhaka yesterday. Set a modest target after three wickets each from Mashrafe Mortaza and Mustafizur Rahman helped Bangladesh restrict West Indies to 195-9, the hosts sailed to 196-5 in 35.1 overs for a comprehensive win to kick off the three-match series.

Mushfiqur shared 57 runs with Shakib Al Hasan for the fourth wicket to steady Bangladesh's innings after West Indies had reduced the home side to 89-3 on a slow pitch at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Rovman Powell dismissed Shakib for 30 to break the stand but Soumya Sarkar killed off the visitors' hopes with a brief cameo of 19 from 13 balls, which included two fours and a six. Mushfiqur, who hit five boundaries in his patient knock, pushed Roston Chase for a single to complete his 31st fifty in ODIs before an outside edge to leg spinner Devendra flew to third man for two runs to wrap up the victory.

Earlier, opener Liton Das scored 41 off 57 balls with five fours for the home side, but not before he was reprimanded on five off a no-ball by Kemar Roach. West Indies owed their total to 43 off 59 balls by opener Shai Hope and contributions from lower order batsmen Roston Chase and Keemo Paul, who made 32 and 36 runs respectively. The visitors, who opted to bat first, had been restricted to 127-6 after 40 overs despite Hope's effort, but Chase and Paul put on 51 runs for the seventh wicket to give their bowlers something to fight for.

Paul hit two sixes and a four in his 28-ball innings before he was dismissed by Mustafizur in the final over. Left-arm pacer Mustafizur finished with 3-35 after fellow fast bowler Mashrafe grabbed 3-30 playing his 200th ODI—the first Bangladeshi to do so.

Mashrafe was named man of the match for his effort. "The West Indies are very dangerous in this format but our bowlers were brilliant," Mashrafe said after the match.

West Indies' Powell blamed his side's batting for their defeat. "We just didn't bat as well as we wanted to and that brought about our downfall. The players who got starts on such a hard wicket should have carried on," he said. The second match of the series will be held at the same venue on Tuesday. —AFP



DHAKA: Bangladesh cricketer Liton Das (L) plays a shot as the West Indies cricketer Shai Hope (C) and Darren Bravo (R) looks on during the first One Day International (ODI) between Bangladesh and West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between Bangladesh and West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday:

West Indies innings		Bangladesh innings	
K. Powell c Rubel b Shakib	10	Tamim Iqbal c Bishoo b Chase	12
S. Hope c Mehidy b Mashrafe	43	Liton Das b Paul	41
D. Bravo c Tamim b Mashrafe	19	Imrul Kayes b Thomas	4
M. Samuels c Liton b Rubel	25	Mushfiqur Rahim not out	55
S. Hetmyer b Mehidy	6	Shakib Al Hasan c Hope b Powell	30
R. Powell c Liton b Mashrafe	14	Soumya Sarkar c Powell b Chase	19
R. Chase c Mehidy b Mustafizur	32	Mahmudullah Riyad not out	14
K. Paul c Mehidy b Mustafizur	36	Extras (lb 6, w13, nb2)	21
K. Roach not out	5	Total (five wickets: 35.1 overs)	196
D. Bishoo c & b Mustafizur	0	Did not bat: Mehidy Hasan, Mashrafe Mortaza, Mustafizur Rahman, Rubel Hossain	
O. Thomas not out	0	Fall of wickets: 1-37 (Tamim), 2-42 (Imrul), 3-89 (Liton Das), 4-146 (Sakib), 5-175 (Soumya)	
Extras (lb 3, w2)	5	Bowling: Roach 6-0-35-0 (w5, nb1), Chase 9-1-47-2 (w2), Thomas 5-0-34-1 (w3, nb1), Paul 8-0-37-1 (w3), Bishoo 6.1-0-30-0, Powell 1-0-7-1.	
Total (nine wickets: 50 overs)	195	Result: Bangladesh won by five wickets	

Japan's Kihira upsets Oly champ Zagitova to win Grand Prix gold

LOS ANGELES: Japan's rising star Rika Kihira won the battle of the 16-year olds, upsetting reigning Olympic champ Alina Zagitova to claim ladies' gold at the ISU Grand Prix Figure Skating Final on Saturday.

Skating her free programme 'Beautiful Storm' by Jennifer Thomas, Kihira missed her first triple Axel but skated clean the rest of the way, including nailing her triple Lutz-toeloop.

"I made a mistake early but got to go out there and finish. I am really happy to perform that way on this stage," said Kihira. Kihira, who also won the short programme, finished with a personal best total score of 233.12 points to beat runner-up Zagitova by more than six points.

European champion Zagitova, skating to "Carmen" in her free programme, earned a total of 226.53 points while her Russian compatriot Elizaveta Tuktamysheva grabbed the third spot on the podium with 215.32 points.

The women's competition was a Japan-Russia affair as Japan's Kaori Sakamoto placed fourth, Russia's Sofia Samodurova finished fifth and Japan's Satoko Miyahara was sixth. Kihira earned \$25,000 for finishing first while Zagitova collected \$18,000.

Kihira's victory continued a breakthrough season in 2018. She won two prior grand prix events—the Internationaux de France in Grenoble and the NHK Trophy in Hiroshima where she posted her previous best score of 224.31. She is the first woman to land a triple Axel-triple toeloop in competition when she did it at the junior grand prix finals last year. Zagitova started the 2018 season several centimetres taller after going through a growth spurt over the summer. —AFP



VANCOUVER: Ladies free program gold medalist Japan's Rika Kihira poses with her medal at the ISU Grand Prix Of Figure Skating Final 2018-19 on Saturday, at the Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre. — AFP

Oosthuizen ends 33-month winless run by lifting SA Open trophy

JOHANNESBURG: Louis Oosthuizen ended a 33-month winless run by lifting the South African Open trophy for the first time yesterday after a six-shot victory at Randpark Golf Club in Johannesburg.

The 2010 British Open champion last triumphed on the European Tour in 2016 when he won the Perth International in western Australia. The 36-year-old South African closed with a four-under-par 67, shrugging off a poor start to eagle 14 and finish well clear of runner-up Romain Langasque from France.

Schedule clashes meant Oosthuizen was playing in the South African Open for the first time since 2010 and he wept after clinching an ultimately comfortable victory. "This is a very special victory for me as I become only the sixth golfer to win the two oldest national golf championships, the British Open and the South African Open."

Fellow South Africans Ernie Els, Bobby Locke and Gary Player, Swede Henrik Stenson and New Zealander Bob Charles previously achieved the 'double'. "I did not start well today, scrambling a par at one and dropping shots at two and three before recovering with four birdies to turn two under for the round," said Oosthuizen.

"For the second successive round I struggled off the tee early on and had to bite the bullet before coming good as the round progressed. "While realising that I was building a good lead, it was not until 14 that I could relax a little bit.

"My nine-iron second at that par-five hole was a perfect shot, leaving me with a short putt for an eagle." Oosthuizen opened with a 62 for the first-round lead, but trailed fellow South African Charl Schwartzel by two shots at the halfway mark having carded a 70.

A third-round 67 gave him a three-stroke advantage and the expected final-round challenges from Schwartzel and in-form Matt Wallace of England never materialised.

Instead, Langasque, who trailed Oosthuizen by seven shots after three rounds, fired a five-under 66 that included an eagle and five birdies to surge into second spot.

Major winner Schwartzel closed with a 72 to share third place with compatriots Thomas Aiken (67) and Bruce Easton (66) and Oliver Wilson (67) from England. —AFP

Sports

Messi's free-kick magic keeps Barcelona top of La Liga

Atleti and Sevilla had moved level on 28 points

MADRID: Lionel Messi stole the show with two free-kick goals in a blistering display as Barcelona maintained their lead at the top of La Liga with a thumping 4-0 derby win over Catalan rivals Espanyol.

The Argentine superstar curled home two sensational set-pieces and set up another goal as he and his teammates romped to victory at the RCDE Stadium and made sure Barca kept chasing Atletico Madrid and Sevilla at bay.

Atleti and Sevilla had moved level on 28 points with Barca on Saturday after Diego Simeone's side defeated Alaves 3-0 and the Andalusians drew 1-1 at Valencia. However Messi made sure that Ernesto Valverde's team kept their place at the top of the pile with a mesmerising display alongside front-three partners Luis Suarez and Ousmane Dembele that left Espanyol dead and buried by half-time.

"He is extraordinary," said Valverde. "The free-kicks, the chances on goal that he creates, what he brings us and what he take from the opponent..."

"It is still very early, La Liga is very tight, but the idea is to be solid away from home, knowing that winning is very difficult against every team."

Messi began the rout in the 17th minute with a perfectly placed free-kick that arched past a desperate Diego Lopez, and followed that up by keeping posses-

sion under intense pressure before providing the pass for Dembele from which the French attacker curled in a fine second.

It was then Dembele's turn to become provider a minute before the break, slipping in a super through ball that Suarez somehow took on and squeezed home from near the byline.

Messi capped a dominant team and individual display with his second free-kick of the night, which this time whipped past Lopez which such venom the Spanish goalkeeper could barely move towards it.

Nikola Kalinic opened his league account for Atletico Madrid with the opener against Alaves earlier on Saturday, before Antoine Griezmann and midfielder Rodri sealed all three points at the Wanda Metropolitano with goals in the final 10 minutes.

The only negative note for Simeone was World Cup winner Lucas Hernandez leaving the field with a knee injury in the first half.

Mouctar Diakhaby's header in second half stoppage time for Valencia meant Sevilla missed the opportunity to stay just a point behind Barca. Pablo Sarabia had put the visitors into the lead nine minutes into the second half and Sevilla had chances to seal the points at the Mestalla with Ever Banega and Andre Silva hitting the post. — AFP



MADRID: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi scores during the Spanish league football match RCD Espanyol against FC Barcelona at the RCDE Stadium in Cornellà de Llobregat on Saturday. — AFP

Pochettino urges Spurs to fight for title and CL

LEICESTER: Mauricio Pochettino challenged his Tottenham squad to fight for silverware on two fronts after seeing his team thrust themselves back into the Premier League title race with a 2-0 victory at Leicester City ahead of a Champions League trip to Barcelona in midweek.

The Tottenham manager saw his side brush the Foxes aside despite Harry Kane and Christian Eriksen, two of his most potent attacking players, playing only cameo roles off the bench. The pair will now be fresh for Tuesday's crucial Champions League trip to Catalonia with Spurs needing to win at the Camp Nou to guarantee progress to the last 16.

And Pochettino believes all of his players will have a role in the hectic weeks ahead. "To show the belief you have in the squad is massive," said Pochettino. "There's no point players playing every three days. It's not healthy, they need to rest and need some time to breathe."

"For some teams it's so difficult to manage. The most important thing is being genuine in the trust you have in the squad. "We are showing we trust all the players. In this busy period everybody needs to be focused." Victory in the East Midlands moved Tottenham back into third, just six points off the top of the Premier League, now headed by Liverpool following Manchester City's first defeat of the season at Chelsea. By staying in the race despite a host of injury problems and delays over moving into the club's new stadium, Pochettino now believes his players can keep pace with the league leaders. "The three points are massive to keep our position in the table," he added.

"It's a massive win for us. The reality is we are there, fighting Liverpool, City, Chelsea and Arsenal - that's the reality. "It was a tough place so I'm very happy with the performance. I am so pleased and it allows us to start thinking about Barcelona."

In the absence of Kane and Eriksen, Son Heung-min came to the fore by opening the scoring with a left-footed rocket from the edge of the penalty area before crossing for Dele Alli to head home Spurs' second just before the hour mark.

Son's impact in the first few months of the season was limited by his participation in the Asian Games, but the South Korean has been in fine form in recent weeks after skipping international duty last month.

"The first few months of the season I was a little bit disappointed because he travelled a lot, but after a rest and not going with the national team he was so focused on trying to improve," added Pochettino.

"Today he improved a lot from (the) Chelsea (game) and we're so happy with his contribution and performance and that is the player we want." The only blight on a bright night for Pochettino was an injury to right-back Serge Aurier that could rule the Ivorian out for the Barcelona match.

However, Pochettino is confident Spurs can produce on the biggest stage to cap a remarkable comeback after picking up just one point from their opening three Champions League games. "It will be a massive game. They are qualified for the next stage but in the Champions League nobody gives you a present.—AFP

England boss Neville excited by Japan test at women's World Cup

BOULOGNE-BILLANCOURT: England manager Phil Neville admitted that a "great generation" of Japan players will pose a major threat to his team at the 2019 women's World Cup after Saturday's draw for the tournament placed them in the same group.

Napoli coast before Liverpool clash, Roma suffer 'absurd' collapse

MILAN: Napoli boss Carlo Ancelotti said his side were "ready for Liverpool" after warming up for next week's Champions League clash at Anfield with a 4-0 win over Frosinone in Serie A on Saturday, but Roma threw away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with nine-man Cagliari in a chaotic final ten minutes in Sardinia.

Piotr Zielinski opened the scoring after just seven minutes at the Stadio San Paolo for Napoli with Algerian Adam Ounas adding a stunning second five minutes prior to the break, before Arkadiusz Milik's second-half double.

Ancelotti's team closed the gap on Juventus to eight points after the seven-time reigning champions continued their unbeaten run with a 1-0 win over Inter Milan on Friday. Napoli are six points ahead of third-placed Inter. "Games like today have all the ingredients of a trap, especially ahead of a Champions League game," said former Chelsea boss Ancelotti.

"We can start thinking about Liverpool now."

Goalkeeper Alex Meret got his first start after breaking his arm following his move from Udinese, with midfielder Amin Younes also making his debut off the bench. Algerian international Faouzi Ghoulam—playing his first game in over a year after a knee injury—set up both Milik's goals after 69 and 85 minutes.

"The new entrants have done well," said Ancelotti. "I've had positive feedback from everyone and I think the team is ready to face the challenge tomorrow. "I have fond memories of Anfield, as I won the Premier League there with Chelsea."

But amid chaos in Sardinia, Roma, who had led with first-half goals from Bryan Cristante and Aleksandar Kolarov, were caught as the clock ticked down. "I'm really angry and upset at this draw, because it's just absurd. You can't let it happen, conceding an equaliser against nine men in stoppages," said under-pressure

England have aspirations of winning the World Cup after reaching the semi-finals in 2015, only to lose 2-1 to Japan. They also reached the last four of Euro 2017, but their hopes of progressing far in France next year could be complicated by the presence of the 2011 world champions in the same Group D, which will also feature Scotland and Argentina.

However, Neville and his staff will see up close how his team compare to Japan when the nations meet in the SheBelieves Cup in the United States in March. "That will be an interesting game but they are a team that we know a lot about," Neville said after Saturday's draw in Boulogne-Billancourt, just outside Paris.

"They have a great generation of footballers coming

through and they are approaching the World Cup probably in the same mindset as us. "They want to win the World Cup so that tells you what type of team we are coming up against in the third group game."

Both teams will hope to come into that match in Nice on June 19 with maximum points, which would make it a potentially crucial shoot-out for top spot. The winners of Group D will face a third-placed team in the last 16, while the runners-up will face the winners of Group E, which could be Canada or the Netherlands.

England will start their campaign against old rivals Scotland in Nice on June 9, a match which will hold no fears for them given they beat Scotland 6-0 in their opening game at Euro 2017. —AFP



NAPLES: Napoli's Italian forward Lorenzo Insigne (R) vies with Frosinone's Italian goalkeeper Marco Sportiello during the Italian Serie A football match between Napoli and Frosinone at the San Paolo stadium in Naples on Saturday. — AFP

Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco.

Roma are already through to the Champions League last 16 before next week's game against Viktoria Plzen. But they have a long injury list with captain Daniele De Rossi sidelined along with Edin Dzeko, Stephan El Shaarawy and Lorenzo Pellegrini.

Cristante opened after 14 minutes off a Justin Kluivert cross, as Kolarov got the second five minutes before the break with a free-kick which took a big deflection. But the hosts broke through late when Joao Pedro nodded a corner on to Artur Ionita who blasted into the Roma goal four minutes from time.

Luca Ceperelli and Darijo Srna were sent off for arguing with the referee in injury time, with Cagliari coach Roberto Maran also banished. But Marco Sau came off the bench to score five minutes into injury

time and maintain 13th-placed Cagliari's unbeaten home record. Roma, third last season, remain seventh, 22 points behind leaders Juventus.

Roma's city rivals Lazio were also held 2-2 after Riccardo Saponara snatched a point for ten-man Sampdoria nine minutes into injury time in another thriller at the Stadio Olimpico.

Lazio had trailed for much of the game after veteran Fabio Quagliarella scored for the fifth consecutive game. Sampdoria defender Bartosz Bereszynski was sent off in injury time for a second yellow card with Ciro Immobile pulling a goal back from the spot four minutes later.

But Saponara fired in a dramatic last-gasp equaliser to leave Lazio fifth after their fourth consecutive draw, with Sampdoria 10th.—AFP

Australia calls for 'immediate return' of Bahrain footballer

SYDNEY: A former Bahrain national footballer held in Thailand on an extradition request and who has refugee status in Australia should be allowed to return home, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said yesterday.

Hakeem Alaraibi, who plays for a semi-professional football club in Melbourne, was stopped by Thai immigration on November 27 after arriving in Bangkok for a vacation with his wife. He is being held in detention, with a Thai court to rule next week on his fate.

Payne called for the 25-year-old's "immediate

return" and said she had spoken to her Thai counterpart Don Pramudwinai. "Australia is concerned by the ongoing detention of Mr Hakeem Ali Alaraibi and calls for his immediate return to Australia," she said in a statement.

"Australia has made, and will continue to make, high-level diplomatic representations seeking Mr Alaraibi's safe return." The footballer said he was arrested and beaten at the start of the Arab Spring protests in the Gulf state in 2012. He was granted refugee status in Australia five years later.

Alaraibi was convicted in absentia on charges of vandalising a police station in Bahrain, but says he was out of the country playing in a match at the time of the alleged offence. The office of Thailand's attorney-general on Friday submitted an extradition case to the criminal court on Bahrain's behalf as the Gulf state has an outstanding arrest warrant for Alaraibi. Rights groups as well as FIFA, the international governing body for football, have called for his release. — AFP



Hakeem Alaraibi



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Everton FC v Watford 23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2

SPANISH LEAGUE

Athletic de Bilbao v Girona 23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3

NBK's 24th annual Walkathon kicks off with blast



The 24th annual National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) walkathon kicked off Saturday 8th December morning from the Green Island with a new record of the 11 kilometers' race. Thousands of cheering supporters, spectators and media people lined the racing route on the Arabian Gulf street to the finish line at the Shuwaikh Beach Park where the hugely successful conclusion of this event and the award ceremony were marked with a variety of entertaining activities.

More than 9000 participants were walking for strength and health awareness. The Walkathon culminated with a prize giving ceremony where NBK awarded the top 100 participants, 10 winners from each of the 10 categories for both male and female and gave away many valuable prizes alongside the two brand new Nissan cars from Al Babbain Group.

Governor of Central Bank of Kuwait Mohammad Al-Hashel took part in the walk along with NBK Group Chief Executive Officer, Isam Jaseem Al Sager, Group CEO, Al-Babbain Group, Saleh A. Al-Babbain and NBK Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, Shaikha Khaled Al Bahar attended the awarding ceremony along with NBK-

Kuwait Chief Executive Officer, Salah Yousef Al Fulaij, NBK- Kuwait Deputy CEO and NBK General Manager, Treasury Group, Sulaiman Barrak al Marzouq, NBK General Manager Consumer Banking Group Mohammad Al Othman, NBK General Manager Group Human Resources Imad Al Ablani and NBK General Manager Operations Group Mohammed Al Kharafi.

Speaking in front of thousands of contestants, spectators and guests who gathered at the end of the walkathon to celebrate the awarding of the first-place winners and enjoy the carnival, NBK Public Relations Assistant General Manager, Manal Al Mattar said that the huge participation from the various age categories at the 24th version of NBK's Annual Walkathon had by far exceeded all expectations, providing yet another testament of the great community confidence in this mega event which has become one of the much awaited NBK public activities.

Al Mattar commended the great collaboration exhibited by different ministries and governmental institutions, headed by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior, in addition to the Kuwaiti

Association of Athletics Federations, Al Babbain Group and Kuwait Municipality, Circuit+, Local Flavor, Provision and many others for showing great cooperation to ensure the event's success.

Al Mattar added "NBK strongly supports sporting events and encourages sporting activities as means to promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for members of the community. NBK's 2018 Walkathon aimed to encourage each individual to believe in their ability towards making a change."

NBK's Social Media team broadcasted the Walkathon live on NBK's Official Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram Pages, posting the updates throughout the day.

Race Preparations

Multiple communication points were set up along the race route between the Green Island and Shuwaikh Beach Park. By the early morning hours, organizers ensured the full readiness of the site to receive the participants. The event started after NBK volunteers finalized all required organizational and preventive measures to ensure the

safety of the contestants. Children's activities at Shuwaikh Beach Park

This year's event included organizing events dedicated to children aged 5 to 11 years old, set up a Shuwaikh Beach Park. The children participated in several fun-filled contests and games, organized by circuit+ and supervised by NBK's team.

Special Needs and Elderlies

NBK dedicates an annual special competition within the race for people with special needs, as part of the bank's beliefs of the utmost importance of involving all members of society and their ability to prove their active and vital role in various areas and fields, particularly sports. Also, NBK opened a racing category for participants aged 60 years old and above to encourage a healthier lifestyle among all members of the society.

Two NBK Walkathon Grand Prize Winners of Nissan Cars

Yasmine Al Banna and Roman Ladaran were the lucky winners of two brand new Nissan Maxima and XTrail cars. The prizes were presented by Al Babbain

Group during NBK's 24th Walkathon grand prize draw that supervised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The winners were among thousands of participants who were entitled to the draw automatically after their online registration.

Additionally, NBK presented a large number of prizes and surprises, in response to the public great interaction with the bank's social mission, which receives overwhelming response each year from all age groups, particularly young people.

NBK Announced Al Jawhara Monthly and weekly Draw Winners of KD 125,000 and KD 5,000

Al Jawhara KD 125,000 November's draw and Al Jawhara weekly KD 5,000 draw took place during the Walkathon 2018 event and Issa AbdulReda Suliman was announced as the winner of the monthly prize while Thamer Ali Arab was the winner of the weekly draw. The fun-filled event was supervised by representatives from Ministry of Commerce and Industry and was attended by local media.



25 Japan's Kihira upsets Oly champ Zagitova to win Grand Prix gold

26 Messi's free-kick magic keeps Barcelona top of La Liga

27 NBK's 24th annual Walkathon kicks off with blast



Celtics make history with Bulls

Lakers use long ball to crush Grizzlies by 23



LOS ANGELES: Boban Marjanovic #51 of the LA Clippers shoots the ball against the Miami Heat on Saturday at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

CHICAGO: Daniel Theis scored a career-high 22 points, and the Boston Celtics opened the game with 17 consecutive points while rolling to an easy 133-77 victory over the host Chicago Bulls on Saturday night. It was the Celtics' largest margin of victory in franchise history. Jaylen Brown scored a team-best 23 points off the bench, and Jayson Tatum made all four 3-point attempts while scoring 18 points as the Celtics won their season-best fifth straight contest. Terry Rozier added 15 points, Kyrie Irving and Semi Ojeleye each scored 13 and Marcus Morris tallied 12 for Boston. Shaquille Harrison scored a career-best 20 points, Zach LaVine added 11 and Cameron Payne had 10 for the Bulls, who have lost eight of their last nine. The franchise-worst 56-point defeat occurred in Jim Boylen's third game as coach after replacing the fired Fred Hoiberg. Boston was 22 of 43 from 3-point range as Brown, Ojeleye and Rozier each knocked down three. The Celtics shot 53.8 percent overall.

HEAT 121, CLIPPERS 98

Dwyane Wade scored 25 points in his 1,000th career game and Justise Winslow added 21 as short-handed Miami used a huge fourth-quarter run on the second night of back-to-back games on the road to earn a victory over Los Angeles. The Heat played with eight players for most of the game after guard Tyler Johnson left in the first quarter and did not return because of a left hip contusion. Guard Josh Richardson was a late scratch with a shoulder impingement. Tobias Harris scored 20 points as the Clippers failed to move back into sole possession of the top spot in the Western Conference. Lou Williams added 18 off the bench for Los Angeles, as its NBA-best

nine-game home winning streak came to an end.

MAVERICKS 107, ROCKETS 104

Rookie forward Luka Doncic authored a late-game comeback with an individual scoring surge, and Dallas extended its home-court winning streak to nine games with a victory over Houston. Doncic finished with 21 points and seven rebounds, scoring 11 consecutive points down the stretch after the Rockets secured their largest lead of the game at 102-94. Doncic converted all three of his 3-point attempts plus a driving layup during the outburst, his final trey providing the Mavericks the lead for good at 105-102 with 57.5 seconds remaining. Rookie point guard Jalen Brunson, making his second career start in place of injured guard Dennis Smith Jr. (wrist), added a late layup while producing 14 points, three assists and three steals.

LAKERS 111, GRIZZLIES 88

LeBron James scored 20 points, and Josh Hart and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope each made four 3-pointers as Los Angeles built a big lead early and cruised to a road victory over Memphis. James finished with eight rebounds, nine assists and a thunderous third-period dunk that halted any hopes the Grizzlies might have had about making a big comeback. The Lakers connected on 16 3-pointers.

HAWKS 106, NUGGETS 98

John Collins scored a career-high 30 points and helped Atlanta break its four-game losing streak by defeating visiting Denver. Collins was 12-for-20 from the

field, including three 3-pointers, and added 12 rebounds and five assists. Atlanta's DeAndre' Bembry also contributed 18 points and five assists, while Vince Carter added 13 points, including three 3-pointers. Dewayne Dedmon added 11 rebounds.

The Nuggets were led by center Nikola Jokic, who had 24 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists. Denver also got 17 points and 10 rebounds from Juancho Hernangomez, and Malik Beasley came off the bench to score 19 points.

NETS 112, KNICKS 104

Reserve Spencer Dinwiddie scored 17 of his 25 points after halftime as Brooklyn ended a dubious road losing streak with a victory over New York. Dinwiddie constantly reached the rim unimpeded and shot 10-for-17 from the field. His latest productive outing helped the Nets get a road win on the second night of a back-to-back, ending a 33-game skid in that department that tied an NBA record and dated back to Dec. 21, 2015, at Chicago. Rondae Hollis-Jefferson scored 20 points, and his second 20-point game of the season helped the Nets get consecutive wins for the first time since winning at Phoenix and Denver on Nov. 6 and Nov. 9. He also provided several key defensive plays, including a block on Allonzo Trier's layup attempt with 35 seconds left to preserve a six-point lead.

PACERS 107, KINGS 97

Doug McDermott thwarted two Sacramento challenges in the fourth quarter with 3-pointers, and host Indiana finished with the most energy between two teams

playing the second night of back-to-backs to earn a victory. Thaddeus Young had a game-high-tying 20 points to lead seven players in double figures for the Pacers, who backed up Friday's 112-90 romp at Orlando with a third straight win. Buddy Hield equaled Young's point total with 20 for the Kings, whose three-game winning streak came to an end, one that included a 129-110 triumph at Cleveland on Friday.

CAVALIERS 116, WIZARDS 101

Collin Sexton scored 29 points, Tristan Thompson had 23 points and 19 rebounds and Cleveland routed visiting Washington. Alec Burks scored 14 points for the Cavaliers, who were playing the second of back-to-backs. Bradley Beal scored 27 points, reserve Jeff Green had 17 and Otto Porter Jr. added 15 for the Wizards, who had won three straight. John Wall returned after missing Wednesday's game in Atlanta for personal reasons. He went 0-for-5 from the field and scored one point in 26 minutes.

TRAIL BLAZERS 113, TIMBERWOLVES 105

Damian Lillard scored 28 points, grabbed eight rebounds and dished out six assists as Portland downed visiting Minnesota. Jusuf Nurkic contributed 22 points, 11 rebounds, four blocks, four assists and three steals as the Trail Blazers, who scored the final 10 points after trailing 105-103, won their second straight game. Andrew Wiggins scored 20 points, Karl-Anthony Towns collected 19 points and 10 rebounds and Derrick Rose added 18 points and nine assists for the Timberwolves, who had won nine of their previous 12 outings. — Reuters

Atlanta beat Portland 2-0 to win MLS Cup

ATLANTA: Atlanta United won the Major League Soccer title in its second season of existence, defeating the Portland Timbers 2-0 in the MLS Cup final on Saturday. Atlanta's MLS Most Valuable Player Josef Martinez led the way in front of a league-record crowd of 73,019 at Mercedes Benz Stadium, opening the scoring in the 39th minute with his 35th goal of the 2018 campaign.

Argentine defender Franco Escobar doubled the score in the 54th minute as Atlanta made coach Gerardo "Tata"

Martino's last match at the helm a victory before he departs to take over as coach of Mexico.

"If I had to choose a way to leave somewhere, this is the best way," a beaming Martino said. "We won it, it feels good," added Martino, who endured bitter Copa America disappointments with Argentina in 2015 and 16.

Atlanta pressed from the beginning. Martinez was sent tumbling by a challenge from Larrys Mabiala in the penalty area but play was waved on and VAR backed up the call. Atlanta's Miguel Almiron had a clear chance in the 29th minute from a cross from Greg Garza but Portland goalkeeper Jeff Attinella dived right to swat the shot away.

Ten minutes later Atlanta seized the lead as a sliding Michael Parkhurst sent the ball toward the penalty area and Martinez beat Liam Ridgewell at the top of the box then rounded Attinella to slot the ball into an empty net.

Four minutes later Atlanta keeper Brad Guzan denied Portland's first real chance, set up by Sebastian Blanco's cross to Jeremy Ebobisse. Ebobisse's close-range header

was pushed away by Guzan to keep it 1-0 at the interval.

The Timbers pushed forward early in the second half, but found themselves 2-0 down after 54 minutes. Martinez won a free kick, then appeared at the near post to flick on Almiron's service into the path of Franco Escobar, who fired into the bottom corner.

The contest boasted a distinctly South American flavor. Martino's opposite number at Portland was former Venezuelan international Giovanni Savarese. Atlanta's squad featured eight players from South American and Portland's nine.

Savarese said he was proud of his side. "It was not just Josef Martinez's game, it was a good game for his team, it was also a good game for us, I think everyone in the stadium has seen a good match today," Savarese said.

"I would not change anything, I think we did a good job, I think we did not have the fortune to score at the right moments, I think our second half was fantastic, we fought a lot to try to achieve the result we wanted." — AFP



ATLANTA: Josef Martinez #7 of Atlanta United celebrates with the MLS Cup after their 2-0 win over the Portland Timbers. — AFP