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Nod to compulsory health insurance, fees for expats

Panel OKs KD 50 fuel allowance for Kuwaitis • Assembly to debate early retirement bill

Amir undergoes ‘successful’ medical examinations

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was admitted to hospital yesterday for “regular medical examinations” and they were “successful”, Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah said. Sheikh Ali prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow blessing and grace upon HH the Amir, who already left the hospital. — KUNA



HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly’s legal and legislative committee yesterday approved a draft law stipulating a mandatory health insurance scheme for expatriates living and working in the country. The committee also approved a proposal to impose charges on medical services for expatriates opting to seek treatment at public hospitals. At present, expatriates are required to pay KD 50 annually on renewal of their residence permits and also pay partial fees for most health services at public hospitals. The opinion of the government, which is crucial for the passage of the bill, was not explained.

The new bill comes even as the government and the Assembly had approved a law to establish hospitals for the treatment of expatriates only. The Assembly is expected to debate today a draft law calling to impose obligatory health insurance on foreigners who visit the country. The bill stipulates that before issuing a visit visa to a foreigner, the sponsor must attach a health insurance policy to the application. The committee also approved a draft law granting Kuwaiti employees and pensioners a KD 50 monthly allowance for fuel. The move comes a couple of years after the government raised the prices of fuel for both expatriates and Kuwaitis.

The Assembly is also expected to debate today the controversial early retirement law amid strong rejection by several lawmakers. The bill was approved by the Assembly’s financial and economic affairs committee after consultations with the government and accepting some of the government’s terms. MPs opposed to the new format say that the bill has been totally manipulated to be in line with government demands. The law, which allows Kuwaiti male and female civil servants to retire early, was passed by the Assembly in the last term but was rejected by the government. MPs want Kuwaiti employees to retire five years ahead of the legal retirement age but still enjoy full benefits.

Meanwhile, prominent opposition lawmaker Shuaib Al-Muwaizri yesterday ignored for the second time an invitation by the legal committee to discuss the constitutionality of a grilling he had submitted against the prime minister. The government claimed that the grilling violated the constitution and argued that it must be reviewed by the legal committee to see if it complies with the constitution to be debated. Opposition MPs strongly rejected the move, which was approved by pro-government lawmakers and all present Cabinet ministers.

The legal committee last week invited Muwaizri to hear his opinion on the issue but he abstained. The com-



mittee then invited Muwaizri again for yesterday’s meeting, but he again ignored the invitation. The lawmaker did not make any comment on the issue, but it is clear that he is annoyed by the Assembly’s decision to refer the grilling to the legal committee. Rapporteur of the panel MP Khalil Abul said the committee will not invite Muwaizri again but its report to the Assembly will not be ready for debate today, but for the Dec 25 session.

News in brief

Israel can overfly Sudan, Oman

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that Israeli airliners would be able to overfly Sudan en route to South America. Last month, Netanyahu and Chadian President Idriss Deby renewed relations severed by N’Djamena in 1972. Netanyahu told a briefing of diplomats his talks with Deby had helped open up a new air corridor to South America. “At this time, we can overfly Egypt. We can overfly Chad, that has already been set. And to all appearances, we can also overfly this corner of Sudan,” he said, pointing to a map. Israeli diplomats say there have been low-level contacts with Sudan in recent years, although the authorities there have been reluctant to acknowledge them publicly. In October, Netanyahu made a surprise visit to Oman, a Gulf state that does not formally recognize Israel. Netanyahu said yesterday that Omani leader Sultan Qaboos had agreed to overflights by Israeli airline El Al. — Reuters

Israeli child sex network busted

BOGOTA: Colombian police have arrested six Israelis on charges of running a sex tourism operation that exploited underage girls. After a two-year investigation, Prosecutor General Nestor Humberto Martinez said agents have broken up “an Israeli mafia that exploited and used girls, adolescents and women as sex slaves in Colombia”. Two Colombians were also arrested. Among those arrested was Israeli alleged gang leader Mor Zohar, and a Colombian police officer said to have helped protect the gang. The network was allegedly led by Israeli citizen Benyamin Mush, who has traveled in and out of Colombia and Central American countries. According to testimony obtained from victims, the minors received between \$65 and \$126 and were forced to belong to a WhatsApp group code-named after the Jewish holiday Purim. — AFP

Taj Mahal ticket hiked fivefold

NEW DELHI: Authorities have hiked fivefold ticket prices for Indian visitors to the Taj Mahal, in the latest attempt to lower tourist numbers and reduce damage at the country’s top tourist site. Indians make up the majority of the Taj Mahal’s 10,000–15,000 average daily visitors. Nearly 6.5 million people marvelled at the white marble 17th-century masterpiece in 2016. An all-inclusive ticket for Indian citizens including entry into the Taj Mahal, built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as a tomb for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, was raised from 50 rupees (\$0.70) to 250 rupees. International tourists will pay roughly \$19 to enter the UNESCO World Heritage complex in northern India, up from \$16. The latest move comes only months after Indian authorities restricted the number of tourists to 40,000 per day. Previously up to 70,000 people would throng the site at weekends. — AFP

Kuwait warns social media not for kids; screen time impacts children’s brains

KUWAIT/ WASHINGTON: Kuwait’s attorney general has called for strict guidelines to ensure that children are adequately protected from the potential dangers associated with social media. Chief among the new guidelines

UN meet adopts migration pact despite pullouts

MARRAKESH: A United Nations conference adopted a migration pact in front of leaders and representatives from around 150 countries in Morocco yesterday, despite a string of withdrawals driven by anti-immigrant populism. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – finalized at the UN in July after 18 months of talks – was formally approved with the bang of a gavel in Marrakesh at the start of a two-day conference. But the United States and 15 other countries either opted out or expressed concerns, with some claiming the pact infringes national sovereignty.

Billed as the first international document on managing migration, it lays out 23 objectives to open up legal migration and discourage illegal border crossings, as the number of people on the move globally has surged to more than 250 million. Describing it as a “roadmap to prevent suffering and chaos”, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres sought to dispel what he called a number of myths around the pact, including claims that it will allow the UN to impose migration policies on member states.

Continued on Page 24

Indian central bank gov quits; fugitive tycoon faces extradition

NEW DELHI/LONDON: The head of India’s central bank resigned yesterday following a public spat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s administration about alleged government interference. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Urjit Patel cited “personal reasons” for his decision, but media reports have said that he was annoyed by repeated government efforts to influence central bank policy. It comes after Patel’s deputy, Viral Acharya, warned the government in a strongly worded

speech in October that undermining the bank’s independence could be “potentially catastrophic”. Patel’s short statement yesterday made no mention of the rift, highlighting only what he called the RBI’s “considerable accomplishments in recent years”. “On account of personal reasons, I have decided to step down from my current position effective immediately,” Patel said in the statement which was posted on the bank’s website. The governor and finance ministry officials were reported to be at loggerheads in recent months over claims that the government was trying to influence the bank’s decision-making.

Indian business dailies reported in October and November that Modi’s government had invoked never-before-used powers to send at least three letters to Patel seeking to direct policy. Newspapers suggested that Patel was close to quitting over the issue at the time, but the tension was believed to have been diffused following clear-the-air talks three weeks ago. “The RBI and the government had numerous differences but



MARRAKESH: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (center) speaks as Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita (right) and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration Louise Arbour listen during the UN conference on migration yesterday. — AFP



Urjit Patel



Vijay Mallya

Patel’s resignation is shocking,” Sujan Hajra, an economist at Anand Rathi securities, told AFP. “There was a belief both were ironing out their differences but the resignation raises issues about the RBI’s independence,” he added. The government is believed to be unhappy with the RBI over a number of issues including interest rates, how to deploy reserves and how to respond to India’s sliding rupee.

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Local

Amir thanks Saudi King for chairing successful GCC summit

Amir attends inauguration of Al-Tareef Cultural Neighborhood District



Royal Court Advisor Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz sees off His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz (left) and His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend the inauguration of Al-Tareef Cultural District in Riyadh. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomes His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday thanked Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz for chairing the GCC summit, which contributed to positive outcome. His Highness the Amir, in a cable to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques following his return from Riyadh, said the resolutions of the one-day summit would achieve further prosperity and progress “for our countries and people.”

His Highness the Amir also expressed content for participation in the inauguration of Al-Tareef Cultural District in Riyadh. His Highness the Amir had joined the GCC leaders Sunday in the inauguration of Al-Tareef Cultural District, which supplemented the GCC summit, in a ceremony patronized and attended by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

The project aims to showcase the development of the historic neighborhood through its transformation into a globally-recognized touristic cultural center, Saudi Press Agency reported. The location has many historic, cultural, urban and environmental characteristics that would place it amongst the world's most renowned cultural sites. The neighborhood overlooks Huthaifa Valley in the Diriyah region, located at the heart of the Arabian Peninsula. Once the center of command of the First Saudi State, it consists of a fort, palaces, homes and mosques that date back to the 18th century.



Riyadh Deceleration stresses member states' unity

Unity of member states

The 39th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit concluded in Riyadh on Sunday, after which leaders of the GCC reaffirmed keenness on unity of member countries, calling for achieving full-fledge integration, and forming a “single and effective” foreign policy. Leaders of the six Arab

social, political, security and military levels, said the declaration. They called for completing programs and projects needed to honor Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz's integration vision to ultimately boost the regional and international role of the GCC. They called for addressing all obstacles to achieve economic integration by 2025 and to complete requirement for creation of the common market and custom union.

The GCC leaders appointed a commander for the joint military command to advance towards completion of the joint defense system, while underlining importance of the bloc's role in addressing extreme ideologies through promotion of moderation, tolerance, human rights, rule of law and Islamic sharia. They called for joining hands with partners within the international community to eliminate terrorism and drying its financing resources. The leaders also called for forming a “single and effective” foreign policy to be based on the statute, noted the declaration. They reiterated support for the Palestinian cause and the Yemeni people.

Upon his return to Kuwait after chairing the country's delegation to the summit, His Highness the Amir was received 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 Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as



Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah participates in a traditional dance during the inauguration of Al-Tareef Cultural District in Riyadh.

senior government officials. His Highness the Amir was seen off at the airport in Riyadh by head of the mission of honor, Royal Court Advisor Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz, and Ambassadors of the two countries.

His Highness the Amir was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf, Amiri Diwan Undersecretary and Director

of His Highness the Amir's office Ahmad Al-Fahad, Head of Amiri Protocols Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, head of Media and Culture Affairs at Amiri Diwan Yusuf Al-Roumi, Head of Amiri diwan's Political and Economic Affairs Sheikh Fawaz Saud Al-Sabah, and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah. —KUNA

Defense Minister chairs meeting to discuss ministry's budget



Kuwaiti Army Chief-of-Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khudhr meets with US Commander of the Marine Corps General Carl Mundy.



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs a meeting yesterday with senior ministry and Kuwait Army officials.

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting yesterday with senior ministry and Kuwait Army officials to discuss the ministry's budget. During the meeting, Sheikh Nasser stressed the necessity of the budget's buildup to cover the ministry's arming, maintenance

and training needs. He also called for improving the Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital, and developing the army's computer system, the Defense Ministry's Public Relations and Security Media Department said in a statement.

In other news, Kuwaiti Army Chief-of-Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khudhr met yesterday with US

Commander of the Marine Corps General Carl Mundy. Friendly talks, issues of mutual concerns, especially on the military level and ways to enhance them, were discussed during the encounter, the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Ministry of Defense said in a press release.

Amir offers condolences to Bashir over plane crash victims

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences to Sudanese President Omar Hasan Al-Bashir over the victims of a plane crash, who included several officials. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the swift recovery of those injured in the crash. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent the Sudanese leader similar cables. His Highness the Amir also sent a cable of condolences to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud over the passing away of Princess Al-Jawhara bint Faisal bin Saad bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to King Salman. — KUNA



KUWAIT: General Director of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Ali Al-Mudhaf, accompanied by Public Relations and Media Director at PAAET Fatima Al-Azmi, visited the Deputy Commander of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to congratulate him on being awarded with the French National Order of the Legion of Honor.

Cabinet commends GCC summit outcomes

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti cabinet has applauded the outcomes of the 39th GCC summit held in Riyadh on Sunday, and appreciated the relevant efforts of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other GCC leaders. This came during the cabinet's customary weekly meeting presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

During the meeting, Deputy Premier and Foreign minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed his colleagues on the findings of the GCC gathering and His Highness the Amir's speech, which stressed the significance of safeguarding the Gulf bloc amid the ongoing serious regional conditions and challenges, the deputy prime minister said following the meeting.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also kept the cabinet on the final communique of the annual Gulf event, which underlined Gulf unity, along with economic, military and security integrity, Anas Al-Saleh, who doubles as minister of state for cabinet affairs, said in a statement. The Kuwaiti cabinet voiced much hope that the Gulf leaders' great efforts would contribute to deepening cooperation and integration among the bloc's member states in all domains, ensuring Gulf unity and promoting security and stability, Saleh added.

Later, His Highness the Prime Minister expounded on the outcomes of a recent visit by Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj to Kuwait, along with the findings of his meetings with Kuwaiti officials on existing bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest. The deputy premier and foreign minister then elaborated the results of a recent visit by Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry to Kuwait to attend a joint committee meeting, which led to the signing of several deals and executive programs involving security, educational, cultural and sports realms.

Meanwhile, the cabinet gave the thumbs up to a military cooperation agreement between Kuwait and Turkey, a Kuwaiti-Ukrainian deal in military and other fields, and a maritime safety protocol. Also granted during the weekly cabinet meeting were a cooperative MoU between Kuwait and New Zealand, a Kuwait-UK air service deal, a Kuwaiti-Sino on-line trading MoU and a MoU on youth and sports cooperation between Kuwait and Ukraine. Finally, the Kuwaiti ministers looked into a set of reports germane to the latest political Arab and global developments. — KUNA

Local

Governor urges 'strict laws' to address demographic imbalance

Court sentences issued against 500 employers for visa trafficking: Minister

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah stressed the need to work on resolving the problem of Kuwait's demographic imbalance immediately in order to limit the spread of crimes and incidents that are considered 'strange' in Kuwait, especially in view of the surge of illegal and marginal laborers throughout the governorate. He hailed the efforts exerted by the Public Authority for Manpower in fighting visa traffickers through decisions such as the recent ban on residency transfer for three years from the date of the issuance of the work permit.

Sheikh Faisal also noted that he was among the first who called to fight illegal workers, as they cost state-funded public facilities considerable amounts of money and provide a perfect environment for crimes. Finally, he called for imposing strict laws on whoever takes Kuwait's safety and security lightly and setting strict measures for expats.



KD 1.37 billion spent on development projects

Visa traffickers

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and State Minister for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh said several visa traffickers were referred to the public prosecution and then to courts. Court sentences were issued against nearly 500 employers, including jail sentences and fines reaching KD 2 million. Sabeeh was speaking during the signing of a memorandum of understanding with regards to the national program for decent work jobs under her patronage at the United Nations House in the presence of the Regional Director of the International Labor Organization Dr Ruba Jaradat, Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rabah Al-Rabah and President of Kuwait Labor Union Salem Al-Ajmi.

She said that some sentences were appealed and some were not, and the ministry follows the litigation steps under the Kuwaiti judiciary, while confirming the practice of checking violating companies in cooperation with partners in the private sector and in countries that send labor to Kuwait to stop offices that abuse workers inside and outside



Sheikh Faisal Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah

Kuwait. When asked about the possibility of issuing decisions related to organization of the marketplace soon, she said: "There are many decisions to be issued soon following the meeting of the Manpower Public Authority's board of directors that was held recently, as several decisions were approved and will be announced in the coming period."

Development projects

A recently published government document showed that Kuwait spent KD 1.37 billion on development projects until Oct 2018 of the fiscal year 2018-2019, which includes a KD 3.8 billion budget for development projects, which means that 36.1 percent of the budget has been spent so far. The document also justified the reduction of the budget set by the finance ministry for development projects over the past three years by reducing the number of projects as a result of using new project selection methods.

The document added that 957 development projects had been executed during the fiscal years 2015/2016, 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 with a total cost of KD 11.5 billion, of which KD 8.7 billion had been actually spent on the projects. Further, the document showed that the fiscal year 2017/2018 witnessed executing 149 development projects with a total value of KD 2.9 billion, of which KD 2.5 billion (86.4 percent) was actually spent, while 279 projects with a total value of KD 2.9 billion were executed in 2016/2017.

In addition, the documents showed that development projects during the three fiscal years faced 538 challenges, topped by administrative problems and red tape which recurred 182 times, technical problems, legislative problems and monitoring problems.

KFSD suspends two captains over profiteering suspicions

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Director Lt Gen Khaled Rakan Al-Mekrad suspended two captains of the force over suspicions of profiteering and violating public funds, and ordered referring them to relevant judicial bodies. Mekrad had ordered an audit of the revenues at the Hawally and the Capital fire prevention departments, which also resulted in suspending three civilian employees. KFSD's public relations and media department said in a statement yesterday



Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad

trative and financial affairs Yousif Al-Husseini and assistant undersecretary for commercial control and customer protection affairs Eid Al-Rasheedi. Roudhan met vendors, owners and customers and engaged in cordial exchanges with them. The statement also noted that customer protection employees filed some violations during the tour.

Car torched

A citizen accused his brother, who was recently released from prison, of torching his car, adding that he had previously threatened to burn the house down due to his drug addiction. Police who responded to the call found firemen fighting the fire, which consumed the car completely. The suspect was arrested and faces legal action, Al-Rai reported yesterday.

Critical condition

A citizen was rushed to Adan Hospital by his brother in critical condition after he suffered several fractures when he was beaten by two unidentified persons. The medical report of the injured man was sent to Nuwaiseeb police station, and detectives are looking for the suspects, reported Al-Rai

Mubarakia tour

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan inspected Souq Mubarakia, where he toured various stores to make sure all ministry regulations are followed, said a statement issued by the ministry. The statement added that, escorted by his undersecretary Khaled Al-Fadhel, assistant undersecretary for adminis-

Turkish ambassador hails Kuwait's humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Koytak yesterday hailed Kuwait's humanitarian efforts in providing aid to countries affected by natural or man-made disasters. In a statement to the press after her meeting with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Deputy Chairman Anwar Al-Hasawi, Koytak said Kuwait was an exemplary model of charitable humanitarian work. During her meeting with Hasawi, she also tackled topics related to humanitarian and voluntary work and means of enhancing them as well as the depth of relations between the two friendly countries.

Koytak also praised the initiatives of KRCS and its continuous engagement with humanitarian issues, pointing out that KRCS is one of the leading organizations in the service of humanity. Meanwhile, Hasawi said KRCS attaches great importance to cooperation and coordination with international humanitarian



KUWAIT: Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Koytak meets with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) members yesterday. — KUNA

organizations, especially Turkey, for the benefit of humanity. Kuwait has been and will continue to help brothers and friends everywhere and that humanitarian action is a constant and genuine approach in Kuwaiti people, he added. — KUNA

Kuwait fund signs loan deals with Ivory Coast, Malawi

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt: Ivory Coast and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed Sunday a loan agreement whereby the fund will provide a loan of KD 9 million (\$30.6 million) to finance an environmental project. The loan agreement was signed by Ivory Coast's Minister of Finance Adama Kone and KFAED's Director-General Abdulwahab Al-Bader on the sidelines of the 2018 Africa Conference. The project aims to support economic and social development in the Gulf of Kokodi in particular by improving the environmental and health conditions of the population of that region. This is done through a comprehensive multispectral project including interventions in the field of wastewater treatment and transport, among other measures to restore the saline water characteristics of the Iberian lake in the Abidjan area, particularly in the project area.

The project consists of civil, electrical and mechanical works for hydraulic installations, landscaping, sewage treatment facilities, rainwater drainage and road infrastructure. The loan is for a period of 25 years, including a grace period of six years. The loan is

Water network expansion

Similarly, a loan agreement between Malawi and KFAED was signed to help finance expansion of drinking water network in Mangochi city, totaling KD 5 million (\$17 million). The signing ceremony took place on the sideline of the Africa 2018 Forum. The agreement was signed by Malawi Ambassador to Egypt Caroline Bwanali Mussa and KFAED chief Abdulwahab Al-Bader.

The project aims to meet the growing demand for drinking water, protect public health, utilize natural resources efficiently, and reduce waste by establishing a water treatment plant and water transmission and distribution networks in the city to serve the population of about 50,000 people and is expected to increase to 93,000 by 2036. The total cost of the project is estimated at KD 6.3 million. The government of Malawi will cover the remaining cost. This is KFAED's eighth loan to the Republic of Malawi. The past seven loans financed projects in the telecommunications and transport sectors with a total value of KD 24.520 million (\$83.368 million). — KUNA

New terminal fully open

KUWAIT: Full operation has started at Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 4 (T4), which opened its gates last July, Kuwait's Civil Aviation Authority said on Sunday. "Kuwait International Airport's terminal 4 has been opened in a record time of four months," the Kuwaiti Civil Aviation's chairman Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said amid a ceremony. He thanked the Kuwaiti

government for its contributions towards the "unprecedented success" of the terminal, which was built in a timely and productive manner. Full operation at international airport terminals usually takes between 12 to 18 months, but the diligence of Kuwait's aviation workforce transcended expectations, the minister said. Kuwait Airways' chairman Youssef Al-Jassem said the success of the terminal can be attributed to the close rapport between the national carrier and Kuwait's civil aviation authority. With the opening of the new terminal, Kuwait's flag carrier is in the process of putting together a comprehensive and revamped itinerary, he added. — KUNA

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Italian Air Force's Frecce Tricolori team performs during its aerial show in Kuwait recently. — Photo by Asmaa Al-Shumais (KUNA)

World's celebration of human rights declaration reaffirms its importance

Human rights' values necessary for establishing world peace

KUWAIT: The world's celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reaffirms its importance and purpose in establishing these rights regionally and internationally, a foreign ministry official said Sunday. The issuance of this declaration years following the establishment of United Nations confirms that nations and peoples agree that the values and principles derived from human rights are a vital necessity for the establishment of international peace and security, Foreign Minister's Deputy Assistant and Human Rights Office Talal Al-Mutairi said.

Mutairi added that since the declaration was issued on December 10, 1948, steps have been taken in the process of spreading and adopting human rights at the global and regional levels, through the adoption of a number of inter-

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**Kuwait is
a pioneer
in this field**

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national agreements and conventions such as the International Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the International Convention on children rights.

Mutairi noted that other conventions also included the international convention on racial discrimination, the International convention on the rights of people with disabilities, the international covenant on civil and political rights, the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, and the international convention against torture and other Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Mutairi pointed out that this is evidence that adhering to human rights has become a target for everyone to abide by, stressing that Kuwait is a pioneer in this field at the

regional and international levels, or even the work in respect human rights by including them in its constitution and laws. The official stressed that countries, international and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations, will not forget humanitarian efforts exerted by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which encouraged the UN to name him Humanitarian Leader, and Kuwait as humanitarian center.

Mutairi expressed hope that efforts will continue to uphold the values of respect for human rights derived from cultural heritage and religious values that enshrine the principles of justice, equality and tolerance and to continue efforts to promote national measures and procedures that comply with international standards in the field of human rights. — KUNA

Regional human rights network launched

AMMAN: On the 70th anniversary of World Human Rights Day, civil society organizations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) launched a network to promote the democratic process under the name of 'Regional Network for Democracy, Development and Human Rights' to exchange ideas, proposals, and deliberation on enhancing practices that support liberties and individual rights.

After a full week of discussions in the Jordanian capital Amman, participants agreed on the need to assume responsibility and strengthen the role of civil society in finding successful alternatives to promote democratic mechanisms, human rights, development and social justice in the region. The regional network was established to promote human rights and democracy through networking, lobbying, and initiating constructive proposals and recommendations to policy makers in MENA countries. The experiences among the countries participating in the network and the consolidation of solidarity in the work of civil society will contribute to the establishment of a qualitative situation of positive and effective cooperation.

The founding members selected an executive office for network management, coordinated by Hayat - Rased from Jordan, with the aim of developing general and specific strategies, objectives, and attracting organizations that wish to be part of the network. The executive office announced the following:

1. Launching a regional network dedicated for democracy, development and human rights as a reference framework for cooperation, advocacy, and solidarity in the region.
2. Our commitment to the international human rights conventions as a reference of our work.
3. We seek to strengthen democracy through mechanisms that allow freedom of expression for peoples.
4. Our defense of human rights and its universality, in a way that ensures dignity, justice and freedom.
5. Our commitment to advocacy and joint action for development and social justice.
6. Promote transparency, good governance, and support for local administrations.
7. To strengthen gender equality in order to enhance the position of women in political, economic, and social decision-making.
8. Support initiatives for dialogue that aims at enhancing democracy and community cohesion, and promoting rights and liberties.

The list of organizations that participated in launching the network include:

1. Hayat - Rased (Jordan).
2. Citizen's Alternatives movement - ALCI (Morocco).
3. Lights Rights (Algeria).
4. Iraq Observatory for Human Rights (Iraq).
5. Madarat Center - Rased (Palestine).
6. Kuwait Society for Human Rights (Kuwait).
7. Nada Network for Children's Rights (Algeria).
8. Moraqebon Network (Tunisia).
9. Liberation Association for Development (Iraq).
10. Foundation Sahel (Mauritania).

Kuwaiti female artists take part in cultural week in Italy

ROME: Kuwaiti female artists expressed their happiness on participating in the Kuwaiti cultural week in Italy to present their work of art on an international level. In statements to the press yesterday, the artists agreed that taking part in such event is a great experience for Kuwaiti women and art. Riham Al-Rughaib said it is an honor to present her work in Rome and Florence, the cities of art and culture throughout the ages. She noted that she is participating with 10 portraits representing



Artist Manal Al-Shuraian

Kuwait's culture and history. Meanwhile, artist Manal Al-Shuraian said her work includes artistic designs using Arabic letters and handwriting, aiming to showcase the Arab and Gulf culture to Europe. She added that the portraits are drawn using colors similar to that of the Arabian soil and



Artist Riham Al-Rughaib

desert environment shades. The artists took part in a fair titled 'Kuwaiti Women Artists,' held in the Egyptian Academy of Fine Arts and organized by Kuwait Embassy in Rome. The event aims at shedding light on the role of Kuwaiti women in the artistic and cultural field. — KUNA

KIB participates in 'Women Success' conference

KUWAIT: KIB participated in the 'Common Factors for Women Success Conference 2018' entitled 'Success 2,' which was organized by Safira Company for Social Responsibility. The conference was held under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and the Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh, in the presence of the Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khalid Mahdi. Held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the conference was attended by a group of prominent businesspeople and journalists.

The conference hosted a large number of women who achieved outstanding success across various fields in the GCC. At the conference, the discussion centered on successful local and regional women in diverse fields, as well as fields previously dominated by men. The conference also focused on the important factors that contribute to the success of any woman, regardless of her specialty or profession.

On this occasion, Amal Bukhamseen, Corporate Communications Officer at KIB, said: "KIB has always sought to participate in activities and events which aim at empowering women and supporting their work and efforts, thereby contributing to sustainable development. Kuwaiti



women have achieved many achievements and become active and equal players in the development of the nation." Bukhamseen also added that this commitment stems from KIB's unwavering belief in the integral role women play in the local community. The bank also remains confident that Kuwaiti women are fully capable of managing different roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, KIB continues to empower women and support their achievements, thereby helping them achieve more and contribute to nation-building. As a national financial institution and as part of its leading social responsibility program, KIB actively seeks to participate in initiatives and events that serve diverse segments of the local community.

Local

Finance Minister urges utilization of retirees' untapped potential

Prime Minister patronizes national conference on retirees

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf said yesterday that it is imperative for the society to revise its negative attitude towards the retirees, and to draw upon their experience and skills instead. The minister made the remark while giving a keynote speech during a national conference on retirees, on behalf of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the sponsor of the event. The conference seeks to attain a set of social and developmental goals by means of re-appointing retirees and capitalizing on their experience and capabilities, he said. It comes at a time when both legislative and executive authorities are putting the final touches on amendments to the social security law, eventually serving this category of society, the minister added. After months of dialogue between the government and members of parliament, changes to the law in question have been granted by both sides, Hajraf added. The National Assembly is set to convene today in order to weigh the revised act, he pointed out.

Separately, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's acting cooperative inspection manager Abdul Rahman Al-Enezi stressed that retirees form a significant sect of the Kuwaiti society and that they ought to receive utmost care in appreciation of the efforts they had exerted during their years in service. Enezi added that retirees could be re-hired to continue serving Kuwait as employees or board members in private sector establishments supervised by the government, such as co-ops.



KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf speaks during the national conference on retirees yesterday. — KUNA

alternatives for citizens to identify all new products, he added.

Meanwhile, Deputy Director General for Planning and Design at Public Authority for Housing Welfare Naser Khraibut said the participation of the Housing Welfare at this Expo comes to support the vision of development plan in planning, design and implementation of suburban and integrated housing cities. The authority seeks to develop urban communities and housing cities facilities and services through sustainable housing policies that provide the required integration between the work environment and modern living accessories, he added.

In the meantime, Executive Manager of Expo Tag Company specialized in organizing exhibitions and conferences said, the construction sector is one of the most important sectors that contribute to Kuwait's development vision. The 'New Kuwait 2035' vision requires the spirit of work and initiative to overcome all the difficulties to establish a solid economic base in the country in order to become a financial center, she noted. This Expo is also a platform for interaction with citizens to learn about the latest developments in the field of building and decorating, and latest in the construction tools industry, she added. — KUNA



Eighth construction expo opens

Construction expo

In other news, the eighth Industrial and Construction Expo kicked off yesterday with the participation of more than 70 local and international companies specializing in finishing, contracting and residential plots. This annual event is the largest local and regional gathering in the world of construction, Deputy Chairman and Managing Director of National Industries Company (NIC) Adel Khaled Al-Subeih said in a keynote speech. The four-day Expo aims to encourage local companies and factories to offer the best products to the local construction market in order to achieve high quality and cost, as well as provide a variety of

Zain sponsors first Student Excellence Program in California

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the first Student Excellence Program organized by Sema, a non-profit organization, in collaboration with the General Consulate of Kuwait in Los Angeles. The event, held in Silicon Valley - California, came under the patronage and attendance of the Consul General of the State of Kuwait in Los Angeles Faisal Al-Houli.

During the event, Chief Executive Officer of Zain Kuwait Eaman Al-Roudhan recognized a number of distinguished Kuwaiti students studying in the United States. The recognition ceremony witnessed the presence of Houli, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti.

Zain's support to the event came in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, which closely focuses on contributing to the development of the education sector and the encouragement of various student activities. The company partners with many organizations, including student bodies, to invest in education, which is considered an essential element of the further progress of national economy.

Roudhan's recognition of distinguished Kuwaiti students studying in the United States came to highlight their excellence in a number of fields, including science, arts, sports, volunteering, and more. The event also witnessed many activities, including panel discussions featuring the distinguished stu-



Chief Executive Officer of Zain Kuwait Eaman Al-Roudhan recognizes one of the students with the presence of Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

dents who shared their achievements and ideas with the attendees.

Zain's support to the first Student Excellence Program springs from the company's core Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy. The company believes that supporting initiatives such as this one provides young people with skills and tools necessary to help them highlight and develop their skills, ultimately contributing to the further progress of national economy.

As a leading national company, Zain firmly believes in the importance of contributing to the progress of the education sector, and looks to empower and prepare the nation's youth for the important roles they will play in the further progress of the country.



KUWAIT: Chief Executive Officer of Zain Kuwait Eaman Al-Roudhan with Consul General of the State of Kuwait in Los Angeles Faisal Al-Houli and Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during the event.

KD 167m for SMEs approved

KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) said yesterday it has approved projects across diverse sectors worth KD 167 million (\$551 million) since its inception five years ago. Entrepreneurs are highly encouraged to put forward their proposals over small to medium enterprises by signing up on the national register, SME's acting director general Manaf Al-Minifi said in an interview. He said the fund has been receiving requests for projects since the start of the month and entrepreneurs can get access to varied programs once they are registered on the database.

Three factors are taken into account when classifying projects as small or medium-sized, which are revenue, assets and workforce, he explained, saying such criteria are used in order to determine the scope of a project. A project is considered small-sized if the revenue generated does not exceed KD 75,000 (\$2.4 million), while the revenue for medium-sized enterprises is usually no more than KD 1.5 million (\$4.8 million), Minifi revealed. On the purpose of the national register, he said it aims to help entrepreneurs get their projects off the ground by providing them with a wide array of services. — KUNA

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IRKUTSK: Mikhail Popkov sits inside a defendants' cage during a court hearing in Irkutsk yesterday. A Siberian policeman who raped and killed women after offering them late-night rides was found guilty of dozens more murders - making him Russia's most prolific serial killer of recent times. — AFP

Serial killer convicted of 56 murders

Siberian cop raped, killed women after offering late-night rides

IRKUTSK: A Siberian policeman who raped and killed women after offering them late-night rides was found guilty of dozens more murders yesterday, making him Russia's most prolific serial killer of recent times. A court in the city of Irkutsk found Mikhail Popkov guilty of 56 murders between 1992 and 2007, sentencing him to a second life term. He was already in prison after being convicted of killing 22 women in 2015.

Popkov offered rides to women late at night, sometimes in his police car, while off-duty around his city of Angarsk near Irkutsk, 4,200 kilometers east of Moscow. His murderous spree initially went unnoticed during a period of rampant mafia killings in the crime-ridden city. He killed his victims using weapons including a hammer and an axe, then dumped their bodies in the woods, at the side of the road and in a cemetery. He was also found guilty of raping 11 of the women. Popkov described himself as a "cleaner" who was purging his home city of prostitutes.

All but one of his victims were women between the ages of 16 and 40. His one male victim was a policeman he gave a ride to late at night and killed in a forest. The grey-haired 54-year-old appeared in court in prison uniform, his head bowed. He will be sent to a prison that is exclusively for convicts serving life terms, nicknamed the "Black Dolphin". As part of his sentence—a rare case in Russia of a convicted murderer being given a second life sentence—Popkov was also deprived of his police pension. He intends to appeal against the sentence, regional prosecutor Alexander Shkinev told Russian news agencies.



Investigators had suspected a policeman because of the way the killer carefully covered his tracks. The murders took place while he was a serving police officer and after he left the force in 1998.

Popkov was caught in 2012 after investigators re-examined the case and carried out DNA testing of residents, focusing on those who drove a make of car that matched tracks found at crime scenes. In a 2017 interview with Russia's Meduza website, Popkov said he gave women lifts and targeted those who were drunk or living in a way he saw as immoral, adding that "any society condemns the behavior of a debauched woman".

While in jail, he confessed to 59 further murders but was convicted only of 56 yesterday because investigators had not managed to prove three of the crimes took place, Interfax news agency reported, citing the court's press service. Investigators said they uncovered the remains of some of the victims' bodies based on Popkov's account, as well as finding murder weapons including axes, screwdrivers and knives. The number of killings for which he has been convicted exceeds the totals of several notorious murderers in Russia and the ex-Soviet Union.

"Chessboard Killer" Alexander Pichushkin was jailed for life in 2007 for 48 murders, mostly of elderly men he met in a Moscow park. He aimed to kill one person for each of the 64 squares on the chessboard. Andrei Chikatilo was convicted of 52 Soviet-era murders that were sexually motivated. He was known as the "Butcher of Rostov" after the area of southern Russia where he was most active. He was executed in 1994, before Russia imposed a moratorium on the death penalty. Popkov reportedly boasted to cellmates that he had committed more murders than Chikatilo. —AFP

Most prolific serial killer of recent times

Covered his tracks

Prosecutors on Monday described Popkov as having "a pathological attraction to killing people" and "homicidal mania with sadistic elements," but he was

Dutch hospitals to drop US body brokers, citing ethical concerns

AMSTERDAM: Two major Dutch hospitals say they will stop importing human body parts from American firms, which they have been doing without any regulation for a decade. The hospitals told Reuters in recent weeks they made their decisions on ethical grounds. The move comes amid investigations by US law enforcement into some so-called body brokers - companies that obtain the dead, often through donation, dissect them and sell the parts for profit.

Earlier this year, Reuters reported that one broker

under scrutiny by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation - Portland, Oregon-based MedCure - has used a Dutch hub to distribute tens of thousands of kilograms of human body parts across Europe since 2012. US authorities suspect MedCure sold body parts tainted with disease to American and foreign customers, a concern triggered in part by such shipments to Canada and Hong Kong, according to people familiar with the investigation.

Reuters found that importers of US body parts included two Dutch hospitals. The news agency uncovered no evidence body parts used in the Netherlands were infected, but the Dutch hospitals said they would drop the suppliers in response to reporting by Reuters which raised questions about how the brokers acquired body donations.

The country's largest hospital, Amsterdam's Academic Medical Centre (AMC), said it bought between 300 and 500 heads from US brokers, which in the past included MedCure, to cover a shortfall. The parts, used for research and training courses, were bought as early as 2008 and as recently as Nov. 21, the hospital said. Erasmus Medical

Centre in Rotterdam said it bought knees and shoulders from a US supplier but declined to provide details. The hospital said it used the parts for research and training courses which were not designed to make profits. The health ministry declined to comment on the hospitals' decision, and said there is no specific regulatory body which oversees the use of such samples.

From 2012 to 2016, according to manifest records reviewed by Reuters, MedCure shipped body parts valued at a total of more than \$500,000 from the United States to the Netherlands. MedCure said it helps connect donors and scientific, research and medical entities. "We are an accredited and regulated institution and adhere to the best-in-class industry standards for safety ethics, and transparency," the company said in a statement to Reuters. Dutch laws govern the use of donated organs, the transportation of bodies and cremation, but there are none pertaining to body parts used for training or research, Dutch Minister for Medical Care Bruno Bruins told parliament in April. The health ministry said it saw no need to regulate the trade in body parts because hospitals take precautions.

Some of the world's worst serial killers

PARIS: Ex-Russian policeman Mikhail Popkov, found guilty yesterday of 56 murders while already in jail for 22, is one of the most prolific serial killers of recent times. Here is a recap of some of the others, starting with two more serial killers from Russia.

'Chessboard Killer'

Alexander Pichushkin was sentenced to life in prison in Moscow in 2007 for 48 murders, most between 2002 and 2006. Aged 33 at his trial, Pichushkin said he wanted to kill one person for each of the 64 squares on a chessboard, and crossed out a square for every kill, earning him his nickname. His victims were mainly elderly alcoholic men whom he met in a park outside Moscow.

'Butcher of Rostov'

In 1992 Russian Andrei Chikatilo, 56, was sentenced to death for 52 sexually motivated killings of women, children and young people between 1978 and 1990. The former teacher, known as the "Butcher of Rostov" after the area in southern Russia where he was particularly active, was executed in 1994.

America's worst?

A 78-year-old drifter in prison in Texas confessed in Nov 2018 to 90 murders and is being investigated as possibly the most prolific serial killer in US history. Samuel Little preyed mainly on drug addicts and prostitutes during a decades-long murder spree, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Law enforcement have so far verified 34 killings.

German nurse

Former hospital nurse Niels Hoegel admitted at his trial in Oct 2018 to having killed 100 patients on top of six for whose murders he had already been convicted.

Hoegel, 41, confessed to giving patients drug overdoses because he enjoyed the thrill of trying to reanimate them at the last moment. Investigators say the final toll could top 200.

US 'Green River killer'

US truck painter Gary Ridgway confessed in 2003 to the murders of 48 prostitutes and runaways from 1982-1984 but he is suspected of around 90 killings. Nicknamed the "Green River Killer" after the Seattle waterway where his first victims were found, he was 54 years old at his conviction and jailing.

England's 'Doctor Death'

Family doctor Harold Shipman was sentenced to life in 2000 after being convicted of killing 15 of his elderly patients by giving them fatal doses of morphine. He hanged himself in prison in 2004, aged 57. An inquiry found that Shipman, nicknamed "Doctor Death", had killed around 250 patients between 1971 and 1998, making him the country's worst-ever serial killer.

Travelling salesman

Luis Alfredo Garavito, a travelling salesman, was jailed for 835 years in 2000 aged 42 for murdering 189 boys over a five-year span until 1996. Known as "The Monster of Genoa" after his birthplace in Colombia, Garavito met his victims by posing as a charity worker, salesman, monk or disabled person, among other disguises.

'Monster of the Andes'

In 1980 Colombian Pedro Lopez Monsalve was arrested at a market in Ecuador after attempting to abduct a young girl. He later confessed to having strangled at least 310 children from poor backgrounds in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The "Monster of the Andes" was first sentenced to 16 years in prison, the maximum term in Ecuador, and then extradited in 1994 to Colombia where he was interned in a psychiatric hospital. Freed several years later, he disappeared and would today be aged around 70.

'Unacceptable'

In the Netherlands and much of Europe, people who bequeath their bodies to research do so as a charitable donation, with no payment involved. In the United States, many brokers offer donor families free cremation in return for donating a body - a potential saving of up to \$1,000. AMC's current supplier Science Care, one of the largest body brokers in America, is not under FBI investigation, the company said; an FBI spokeswoman said policy prevents the agency saying whether a company is or is not being scrutinized. But Science Care's business model rangles some Dutch lawmakers and doctors.

Freek Dijkers, the professor of ear, nose and throat medicine at the AMC whose department bought the heads, said it was stopping after learning that the company solicits donors at hospices and old age homes and that its former owners earned millions from the trade. Dijkers said that was "unacceptable." One frozen head from Science Care that passed through Dutch airport customs belonged to a 53-year-old who died in April 2017 after treatment to remove a brain tumor. — Reuters

International

A year after IS defeat, Iraq in throes of political crisis

Iraq’s political elites now at loggerheads

BAGHDAD: A year since Iraq announced “victory” over the Islamic State group, the country finds itself in the throes of political and economic crises left unresolved during the long battle against jihadists. Unified against the common menace of IS, Iraq’s political elites are now at loggerheads over the drawn-out formation of a cabinet as the threat of renewed popular protests looms. Iraq is no stranger to instability. It fought an eight-year war with Iran in the 1980s, then a conflict over Kuwait followed by a crippling international embargo and the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003.

A sectarian war ensued, capped in 2014 by IS’s devastating sweep across a third of the country. Backed by a US-led international coalition, Iraqi troops and paramilitary forces battled the jihadists for three years, until Baghdad finally declared it had won in December 2017. After decades of nearly back-to-back wars, Iraq’s decision-makers are now forced to face deep-rooted dilemmas left festering for years. “In Iraq you’ve seen many ‘missions accomplished’,” said Renad Mansour, senior fellow at Chatham House in London.

“But as usual, the much more challenging victory is the political victory—which has always been left for another day.” Five months after Baghdad declared its win, the country held legislative elections that did not produce a clear governing coalition. Then-prime minister Haider al-Abadi failed to hold on to his position despite claiming credit for victory, as people turned to populist parties who tapped anger over corruption. The ongoing power struggle among various parties has stymied efforts by new premier Adel Abdel Mahdi, widely seen as a weak consensus candidate, to form a government.

‘Little to celebrate’

In October, Abdel Mahdi managed to fill 14 of the cabinet’s 22 posts, but repeated efforts to hold a parliamentary vote on the remaining eight, including the key interior and defense ministries, have failed. “The distribution of power, the race to acquire as many government positions as possible under the guise of real competition between parties—that is at the root of the problem,” Iraqi political analyst Jassem Hanoun said.

“Iraq is still living in a transition period, without political stability or a clear administrative vision for the country.” As the process drags on, observers have wondered whether Abdel Mahdi could step down, further destabilizing a country just getting back on its feet. “Withdrawal is an option,” a source close to the gov-

ernment said, adding that Abdel Mahdi “has his resignation letter in his back pocket”. “Only if the political situation gets significantly worse can I see him taking it out of his pocket and using it,” the source said. But the thorny issues facing Iraq extend beyond the capital.

Much of the country remains in ruins after three years of ferocious fighting, including large swathes of one-time IS capital Mosul and the northern Sinjar region. An international summit in Kuwait in February gathered around \$30 billion in pledges for Iraq’s reconstruction—less than a third of what Baghdad hoped to receive. More than 1.8 million Iraqis are still displaced, many languishing in camps, and 8 million require humanitarian aid, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council. “If this is what ‘victory’ looks like, then there is little to celebrate for millions of Iraqis still haunted by the crimes of the IS and the long war to eliminate it,” said NRC’s head Jan Egeland.

‘Disaster’

Violence has dropped across Iraq, according to the United Nations, which recorded the lowest casualty figures in six years in November with 41 civilians killed. But the threat of hit-and-run attacks lingers. A recent study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found that while the total number of IS attacks in Iraq had dropped in 2018, those against government targets had increased compared to 2017. Observers are also worried that the bitter squabbles among Iraq’s political forces could turn violent. “Because of the divisions among the parties, anything is possible,” Hanoun said. One scenario would be a conflict among the country’s competing Shiite Muslim factions, which he said would be a “disaster”. But another major fault line divides Iraq’s entrenched politicians and an increasingly frustrated public.

Deadly protests in the summer of 2017 saw tens of thousands turn out over unemployment, a lack of public services, and accusations of corruption. Rampant power cuts mean millions of Iraqis have just a few hours of state-provided electricity per day. The country is ranked the 12th most corrupt in the world, according to the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. Protest leaders have threatened a return to the streets if these issues, as well as the political stalemate, are not resolved. “There’s certainly a conflict within the Shiite camp, but the biggest conflict will be between the people and the whole system,” said Mansour. “Summertime will be a test for Abdel Mahdi.” — AFP



BAGHDAD: A member of Iraq’s Rapid Response military shows his skills during a ceremony at a military base inside Baghdad’s International Airport, to mark the first anniversary of the country’s victory over the Islamic State (IS) group yesterday. — AFP

Israel forces hunt gunmen; victim’s baby delivered

RAMALLAH: Israeli forces entered the Palestinian city of Ramallah yesterday after gunmen opened fire on several Israelis near a West Bank settlement, as doctors prematurely delivered the baby of one of the wounded. Soldiers entered the city yesterday morning, with low-level clashes breaking out a few hundred metres from the house of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, AFP journalists said. They seized the security camera footage of a nearby building, according to employees.

At least one man was arrested, the AFP journalists said. An army spokeswoman said she could not comment on the Ramallah raid, including whether it was part of the hunt for the gunmen from Sunday night’s incident. Seven people were wounded in the drive-by shooting at a bus stop near the Ofra settlement in the occupied West Bank, including a 30-week pregnant woman taken to hospital in serious condition. Doctors at the Shaare Zedek hospital in Jerusalem delivered the baby via a caesarean section, the hospital said, adding the mother, 21, was stable yesterday but the baby had taken a turn for the worse.

“There has unfortunately been a deterioration in the baby’s condition. The family is requesting prayers for him,” a hospital spokeswoman said. The others wounded in the attack were not in life-threatening condition. The army said yesterday morning that the perpetrators had so far not been located. “IDF (Israel Defense Forces), border police and security forces commenced extensive searches in the villages in the area as part of the hunt for the terrorists who committed the attack,” a statement yesterday said.

“The IDF will continue to operate to apprehend the terrorists and ensure the security of civilians.” The Islamist Hamas movement, which runs the Gaza Strip, praised the attack, saying in a statement that it proved “resistance” was still alive in the West Bank. Palestinian attacks against Israelis occur sporadically in the West Bank. On November 26, a Palestinian rammed Israeli soldiers with a car and injured three of them. — AFP

TREASURED MOMENTS

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International

May pushes Brexit deal; EU court offers way out

EU court rules Britain can revoke Brexit unilaterally

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday began a final push to persuade parliament to back her Brexit deal as the European Court of Justice ruled Britain was free to halt withdrawal from the bloc unilaterally. The court ruling will fuel calls for a second referendum to stop Brexit and comes on the eve of a once-in-a-lifetime vote by MPs that will determine the fate of Brexit and could lead to May's downfall. Her splintered government appears to be facing a heavy defeat in parliament yesterday on the draft withdrawal agreement she signed with Brussels last month.

The text defining terms on which the island nation leaves its main trading partner after 46 years is the most important to go before the House of Commons in years. A big loss could spark immediate challenges to May from both within her Conservative Party and the opposition Labor ranks. It would also leave the tortuous Brexit process in a state of flux-and raise the prospects of a no-deal scenario-less than four months before the March 29 departure date. May is under pressure to delay the vote and attempt to negotiate more concessions ahead of a planned summit with 27 fellow EU leaders on Thursday and Friday.

But Environment Secretary Michael Gove, an influential Brexit backer, told BBC radio that the vote would go ahead and cast doubt on any major re-negotiation. He warned that "a fundamental re-opening" of the withdrawal agreement risked EU countries wanting to change it "in a way that may not necessarily be to our advantage". EU leaders have ruled out any change to the divorce deal but some EU officials have mentioned the possibility of changes to the accompanying political declaration on future trade ties between Britain and the EU after Brexit.

Gove warned fellow MPs that voting down the current Brexit deal on the table risked "either potentially no Brexit... or we could have a situation where we have the very uncomfortable circumstances of no deal". The Bank of England and the Treasury warn that Britain crashing out of the EU could trigger an economic crisis. Asked if a parliamentary defeat for May could actually strengthen her hand in any re-negotiation, he said: "No, I think it would be the equivalent of breaking the cricket bat in half before the captain went to the crease".

'Risk' of Labor in power

May spoke with EU President Donald Tusk and Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar and was reportedly meeting MPs in an attempt to win them over. May's team insists that her vision offers the cleanest break between the UK and EU that Brexit supporters could hope for at this late stage. In an interview with the Mail on Sunday, May also raised the spectre of an early election and a possible return to power of the Labour Party for the first time since 2010.

Court ruling fuels calls for a second referendum

May said the prospects of opposition leader "Jeremy Corbyn getting his hands on power is a risk we cannot afford to take."

Newspapers have identified more than six current and former ministers in May's cabinet who are also ready to run for her job should she falter over the coming days. While not ruling himself out of the race, Gove said it would be "extremely unlikely" he would be prime minister. "Talk about the leadership at the moment is a distraction from the critical question" of the Brexit deal, he said. EU supporters, meanwhile, hailed the European Court ruling spelling out that the consent of other EU member states is not required for Britain to revoke its



BRUSSELS: In this file photo, Britain's ambassador to the EU Tim Barrow (left) delivers British Prime Minister Theresa May's formal notice of the UK's intention to leave the bloc on March 29, 2017. The European Court of Justice ruled yesterday that Britain could halt withdrawal from the EU without seeking the approval of fellow member states, in a victory for anti-Brexit campaigners. —AFP

intention to leave. "The United Kingdom is free to revoke unilaterally the notification of its intention to withdraw from the EU," the court said. But Gove said: "We don't want to stay in the EU... We voted very clearly".

Token concessions

May would have a tough job securing better divorce terms acceptable to the Northern Irish DUP party that has propped up her government for more than a year.

European officials said they might be able to find a way to offer a token concession that May could take back to London. The two sides might "work on the (accompanying) protocol or clarify a point that is deemed important so that she can take it back to parliament," an informed European source told AFP on condition on anonymity. May would then be expected to submit the touched-up version for a second vote at an unspecified date in December or January. —AFP

News in brief

Cab driver burns himself

SEOUL: A South Korean taxi driver burned himself to death yesterday in protest at an Uber-like ride-sharing service being introduced by the country's largest mobile chat app, reports said. South Korean taxi drivers have angrily protested against the car-pooling service created by KakaoTalk, saying it would threaten their jobs and livelihoods. US giant Uber has only a minimal presence in the country, offering only taxi- and licensed-hire vehicle hailing after closing its main ride-sharing service in 2015 in the face of an extensive backlash from drivers. But Kakao is used by more than 80 percent of South Koreans, and in recent months tens of thousands of taxi drivers have held mass rallies in Seoul to condemn its upcoming car-pooling service, which is due to launch next week. The 57-year-old driver, surnamed Choi, set himself alight in front of the national parliament in Seoul after complaining about the carpooling service. —AFP

Funeral for 'youngest' rebel

SRINAGAR: Thousands of mourners thronged the funeral yesterday of a 14-year-old rebel shot dead by Indian troops in Kashmir, the youngest-ever fighter killed in the decades-long insurgency, police said. Mudasar Ahmad Parrey was killed alongside two other militants, one a 17-year-old, outside the city of Srinagar on Sunday. Parrey, a ninth-grade student, went missing in August before emerging in a photograph on social media brandishing an automatic assault rifle and military knife. The young militants' deaths sparked angry protests in the restive Himalayan region administered by India but also claimed in full by Pakistan. A funeral procession Monday for the slain teenagers turned violent as mourners clashed with police, who used tear gas to drive them back. Rebels fighting for Kashmiri independence or a merger with Pakistan have been warring with Indian troops in the disputed territory since the late 1980s. —AFP

Armenian PM wins vote

YEREVAN: Armenia's acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has won a landslide victory in snap parliamentary elections, results showed yesterday, cementing his authority months after sweeping to power in a peaceful revolution. Pashinyan, a 43-year-old former journalist, has pledged to root out endemic corruption and address widespread poverty in the impoverished, landlocked ex-Soviet republic of three million people. With all votes counted, the bloc led by Pashinyan's Civil Contract party had taken 70.43 percent of the vote, the central election commission said. The Prosperous Armenia party led by influential oligarch and former arm wrestler Gagik Tsarukyan came a distant second with 8.27 percent. Pashinyan hailed his victory yesterday morning, thanking the "mighty people" of Armenia. "I am proud of you... Let's be courageous," he wrote on Facebook. —AFP

Myanmar seizes heroin haul

YANGON: Myanmar has seized 370 kilograms of heroin worth \$4.7 million during a raid in the northeast, police said, the latest big bust in the world's second-largest opium producer after Afghanistan. Weak rule of law and conflict-riddled border areas allow industrial-size trade in heroin, pills and crystal methamphetamine-known as ice-to flourish, even as massive drug seizures routinely grab headlines. The most recent narcotics batch was discovered in a truck outside a monastery near the Shan state capital Taunggyi on Saturday night, police said in a statement Sunday. Two men were arrested after officers found them with "62 bags containing 170kg of white heroin and 200kg of brown heroin", it said, referring to colors indicating levels of purity. —AFP

Serbia wants baby boom, but couples not in the mood

BELGRADE: "Give birth, don't delay!", says a rousing call by the Serbian state to young couples. "Let babies' cries be heard!" is another of the baby-making slogans Serbia is busy producing - while it struggles to increase actual births. Women say they need better support not words of encouragement to grow the country's population. Massive emigration coupled with the plummeting birth rate, which at 1.5 children per family is among the lowest in Europe, has brought Serbia's population down to under seven million people. According to the United Nations, Serbia's population is expected to shrink a further 15 percent by 2050.

Desperate to reverse the trend, Serbian officials have made some head-scratching proposals, including a plan announced in June to construct "lower-storey homes" in areas with the lowest birth rates. President Aleksandar Vucic said it was based on a study that showed couples have nearly double the number of children in two-to-four storey homes than in towering apartment blocks. The comments befuddled the local press, with one newspaper going on an unsuccessful hunt to find any academic expert who had heard of such a study, discovering only "laughs". The minister in charge of demographics, Slavica Djukic Dejanovic, nevertheless defended the idea that environment can play a role.

"It is a fact that on the edge of big cities where settlements include yards where kids play and parents have a coffee... that kids' joy and cries could be heard more often," she said. In February, her ministry announced a cam-

paign to tackle the declining numbers and awarded the best pro-birth slogan in a nationwide cash-prize competition. Among the winners were: "Mum, I don't want to be alone. Dad, I want a brother" and "Love and babies are what we need first!" The ministry will also introduce an award called "The Best Family Friend" for companies that support young parents, Djukic Dejanovic said.

Paid 'to give birth'

A new maternity care law passed last year provides some additional aid for parents who have a third and a fourth child, entitling them to 10 years of 30,000 dinars (250 euros, \$280) in monthly support. That led President Vucic to proclaim: "A mother that gives birth to a third and a fourth child will have 30,000 dinars a month from the state to do nothing... just to give birth." But critics say the law excludes many would-be mothers. The full package of state aid for maternity leave is only available to women who have been working without interruption for 18 months. "What about many women who either do unregistered work in the grey economy or volunteer in public service, like doctors or lawyers, without any payment?," asked Tatjana Macura, an opposition MP who has been advocating to change the law on behalf of the NGO "Mame su zakon" (Mums Rule).

According to various estimates, more than a quarter of Serbia's working population is employed in unofficial work, with an even higher proportion among women. "These women are invisible for the system because they have worked illegally and would not receive any aid," said Macura. The law also offers minimal maternity support to unemployed women in a country where the youth jobless rate was over 30 percent in 2017. Many women are also afraid to take maternity leave because it

remains common for businesses to fire them afterwards, despite the practice being illegal, added Macura.

Italy: hostile waters

Italy is the main entryway for migrants crossing the Mediterranean, putting it under pressure from European Union rules that a migrant can only make an asylum claim in the first country they reach. In an anti-migrant backlash, a populist coalition government made up of the far-right League and anti-establishment Five Star Movement took power in April 2018. Its Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, from the anti-migrant League, has banned charity rescue boats from docking in Italy, accusing them of aiding human traffickers to bring migrants to Europe. In November Italy adopted a tough anti-migrant and security decree which makes it easier to expel migrants and limits residency permits. This year some 22,500 migrants landed on Italy's coasts, representing a drop of more than 80 percent compared to 2017.

Hungary: barbed-wire fence

In 2015 Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, claiming migration threatens the "dissolution" of Hungarian and European identity, put up a barbed-wire fence running hundreds of kilometers along the Serbian and Croatian borders to stop the arrival of refugees fleeing wars in the Middle East. Hungary has also adopted one of the most restrictive migrant legislation in Europe. Orban has rejected EU plans to relocate migrants via mandatory quotas. In 2016 he tried to have the constitution changed by referendum to bar the country from taking in migrants, but was narrowly defeated. The

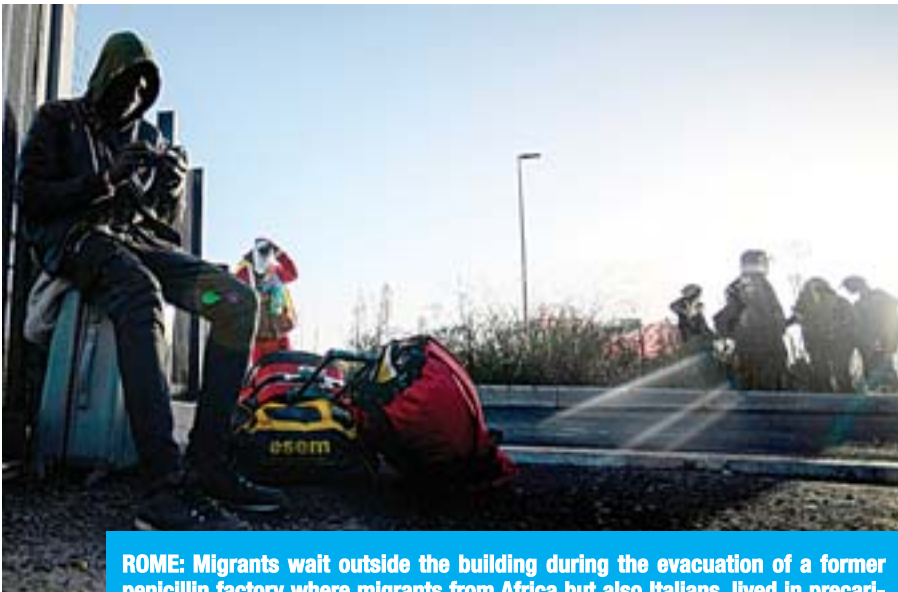


BELGRADE: A woman walks down a passage in Belgrade. Massive emigration coupled with the plummeting birth rate, which at 1.5 children per family is among the lowest in Europe, has brought Serbia's population down to under seven million people. —AFP

November, Trump had deployed thousands of military personnel to the US-Mexico border and threatened to close it completely.

Babies abroad

The new maternity law also cuts support for women earning more than 1,200 euros a month. Instead of receiving five months of salary during maternity leave as the previous law allowed, they will only receive three. Andriana Marinkovic, a 33-year-old mother affected by the change, said it made her consider raising her one-month-old baby boy abroad, such as an EU or other Western country which gives more support to family life. "Nobody makes a decision to become a parent because of state support or lack of it, but the



ROME: Migrants wait outside the building during the evacuation of a former penicillin factory where migrants from Africa but also Italians, lived in precarious conditions. —AFP

European Commission has launched several procedures against Hungary over its failure to take in refugees, including for not respecting European law regarding asylum and for a measure making it possible to prosecute those who help migrants.

Australia: off-shore camps

In 2017 the number of migrants arriving in Australia on permanent visas plummeted to 162,000, its lowest in 10 years and reflecting the results of a hardline policy aimed at only accepting what it considers the best candidates for resi-

dency. Since 2013 Canberra has frequently turned away illegal boatloads of migrants from various places like Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. Boats that do manage to get through are sent to the off-shore islands of Nauru or Manus in Papua New Guinea. Canberra claims it is saving lives by putting migrants off attempting the perilous journey. Once a near-daily occurrence, the arrival of migrant boats has radically dropped off. However conditions in its off-shore migrant detention camps-where people are sometimes held for years-have been widely criticized as extremely harsh. —AFP

International

China cracks down on 'unofficial' Christian church; pastors missing

China authorities raid homes; 80 missing

BEIJING: Dozens of members of a prominent unofficial Protestant church and their pastor have gone missing in southwest China after authorities raided their homes, churchgoers said yesterday, amid increasing restrictions on religious worship. The police sweep occurred Sunday night, according to a statement from the Early Rain Covenant Church, which is based in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province.

Several church leaders, including pastor Wang Yi, were detained, several parishioners told AFP on condition of anonymity. At least 80 people are missing, they said, but it was unclear how many are detained or unaccounted for. "Most church members were taken from their homes, and some were grabbed off the street," one churchgoer said, requesting anonymity. "Some were found via their smartphone's location and were taken away." "The police had the whole neighborhood under control, as well as the surrounding area," he continued. "They didn't let anyone get close."

Sichuan police declined to comment. Chengdu police did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment.

China's officially atheist government is wary of any organized movements outside its own control, including religious ones. Christians in the country are split between unofficial "house" or "underground" churches like the Early Rain Covenant Church, and state-sanctioned churches where Communist Party songs also feature in the order of service. Catholics are similarly divided between unofficial churches led by bishops recognized by the Vatican and those who follow official prelates.

'Massive overnight attack'

This year, underground churches, especially larger establishments like the Early Rain Covenant, which has at least 500 church members, have faced increasing pressure. In September, Beijing officials shut down Zion Church, one of China's largest unofficial Protestant churches, for operating without a licence before ordering it to pay back 1.2 million yuan (\$170,000) in rent and removal costs. In November, a bishop in eastern China belonging to the Vatican-aligned

unofficial church went missing, despite a historic accord on the appointment of bishops reached in September between Beijing and the Holy See, which broke off diplomatic ties in 1951.

According to ChinaAid, a Christian human rights NGO, Early Rain Covenant Church has been repeatedly harassed by police and community officials this year. "The massive overnight attack against members of independent renown(ed) Early Rain Covenant House Church represents a major escalation of religious persecution in China," wrote Bob Fu, founder of ChinaAid and friend of pastor Wang, on Twitter.

The Chengdu-based church has chosen not to register officially with the government because they want freedom of religion, another church member said. "Early on, we were prepared for this," he said, referring to suppression from authorities. The churchgoer added: "Following the touch of the Holy Spirit, and relying on faith and guidance from the Bible, we will move forward, one step at a time." — AFP

3 killed; schoolbus mounts pavement

HONG KONG: Three people were killed when an empty runaway schoolbus mounted a pavement in a crowded Hong Kong neighborhood yesterday, trapping passers-by underneath and injuring 11, police said. Two women-aged 80 and 70 - and an 83-year-old man were killed after the yellow bus careered out of control in the downtown North Point district. Photographs in local media showed victims sprawled on the ground while others received medical treatment at the scene. The vehicle rolled down the street after it was parked, terrifying passers-by as the driver ran towards it and tried in vain to stop it, according to the police.

"We believe he might have forgotten to pull the handbrake or hadn't properly pulled it," chief inspector of police Sun Lun-yum told reporters. The 62-year-old driver

became trapped under the bus and was dragged along for about 20 meters before falling onto the road. Police said the bus travelled for a total of 100 meters, hitting two taxis before finally crashing into a building in a narrow lane lined with shops. In addition to the driver, who suffered injuries to his head, neck and back, a further 10 pedestrians aged between 22 and 89 were taken to hospital for treatment. Several remain in a serious condition.

Hong Kong prides itself on having one of the world's best public transport systems but deadly bus accidents are not unknown. Five people were killed and 32 injured when a coach carrying Cathay Pacific staff to Hong Kong's airport collided with a taxi last month. A speeding double-decker overturned in northern Hong Kong in February, killing 19 people and leaving more than 60 injured. The bus driver was arrested for dangerous driving. And in 2003 a double-decker bus collided with a truck and plummeted off a bridge, killing 21 people and injuring 20. — AFP

Trading blows: Canada next in China's crosshairs?

BEIJING: Canada's arrest of a top executive of Chinese telecom giant Huawei has put the country in the crosshairs of Beijing, which has warned of "grave consequences" over the case. China's foreign ministry issued the warning after it summoned Canada's ambassador on Saturday and called for the release of Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, who was held on a US warrant on charges related to alleged sanctions-breaking dealings with Iran. While the ministry did not spell out what the consequences might be, Beijing has long used economic measures to punish countries that offend it. AFP takes a look at what Canada could face, and what other nations have endured in the past:

Canada trade hopes

China's state-run Global Times, a nationalist tabloid, cited experts as saying the consequences may include trade sanctions, a degradation in bilateral ties and fewer visits to Canada by Chinese tourists and businesspeople. Canada exported goods worth US\$18.2 billion to China last year, and it would be "very easy" for Beijing to shut down key energy and agricultural products with bans or boycotts, said Shaun Rein, the founder of Shanghai-based China Market Research Group. The spat could also endanger exploratory talks on a free trade agreement between Ottawa and Beijing that have been ongoing for two years. "I think the free trade agreement is definitely in a precarious situation, because Canada needs it with China more than China needs it with Canada, economically," Rein said. China could also hit back by detaining an executive from a large Canadian company, Rein added.

S Korea's tourism hit

Last year, after Seoul agreed to deploy a US missile defence system that Beijing considered a threat to its own military capability, Beijing banned Chinese tour groups from going to South Korea. South Korean retail giant Lotte Group, which provided land for the THAAD system, became a target of Chinese nationalist sentiment, as online shoppers and internet trolls launched a boycott and protestors gathered in front of stores, costing Lotte hundreds of millions of dollars. — AFP

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Lawyers on wheels: ‘Solidarity bus’ represents Kyrgyz landless women

In a cold, sparsely lit Soviet-era room, sitting close to the heater, Ainura Ibraimjanova taps at her computer. In this rural district in southern Kyrgyzstan, she is the only lawyer providing free legal aid. Just back from court in the Alai district, Ibraimjanova is attending to a stream of clients in thick coats and clutching documents. They are in need of help with alimony, divorce or family land disputes. “The laws have changed considerably since Kyrgyzstan gained its independence, because there was a real gap in legal frameworks and customs - with many people breaching laws in favor of customs,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Land, a scarce and highly-prized resource in this former communist country, is of huge social value, she said, with disputes over it particularly affecting women. “Having or not having a piece of land decides who you are ... It’s a very important matter, especially in a rural area,” said Ibraimjanova. At independence in 1991, when state property was privatized, every citizen was given an equal plot of land, but it was often registered under the name of the male household head. That meant women often missed out on claiming land rights, especially if they got married or divorced, Ibraimjanova said.

“According to Kyrgyz tradition, people treat men and women in different ways. If a girl grows up and chooses to take her share of land with her and separate from her big family, this really looks strange in accordance with local tradition and the family is usually opposed to it,” she said. Although courts often rule in favour of women and in accordance with the law, executing such judgments can be arduous and take years, Ibraimjanova said. “There are still many women who need to be supported and whose rights needs to be better protected.”

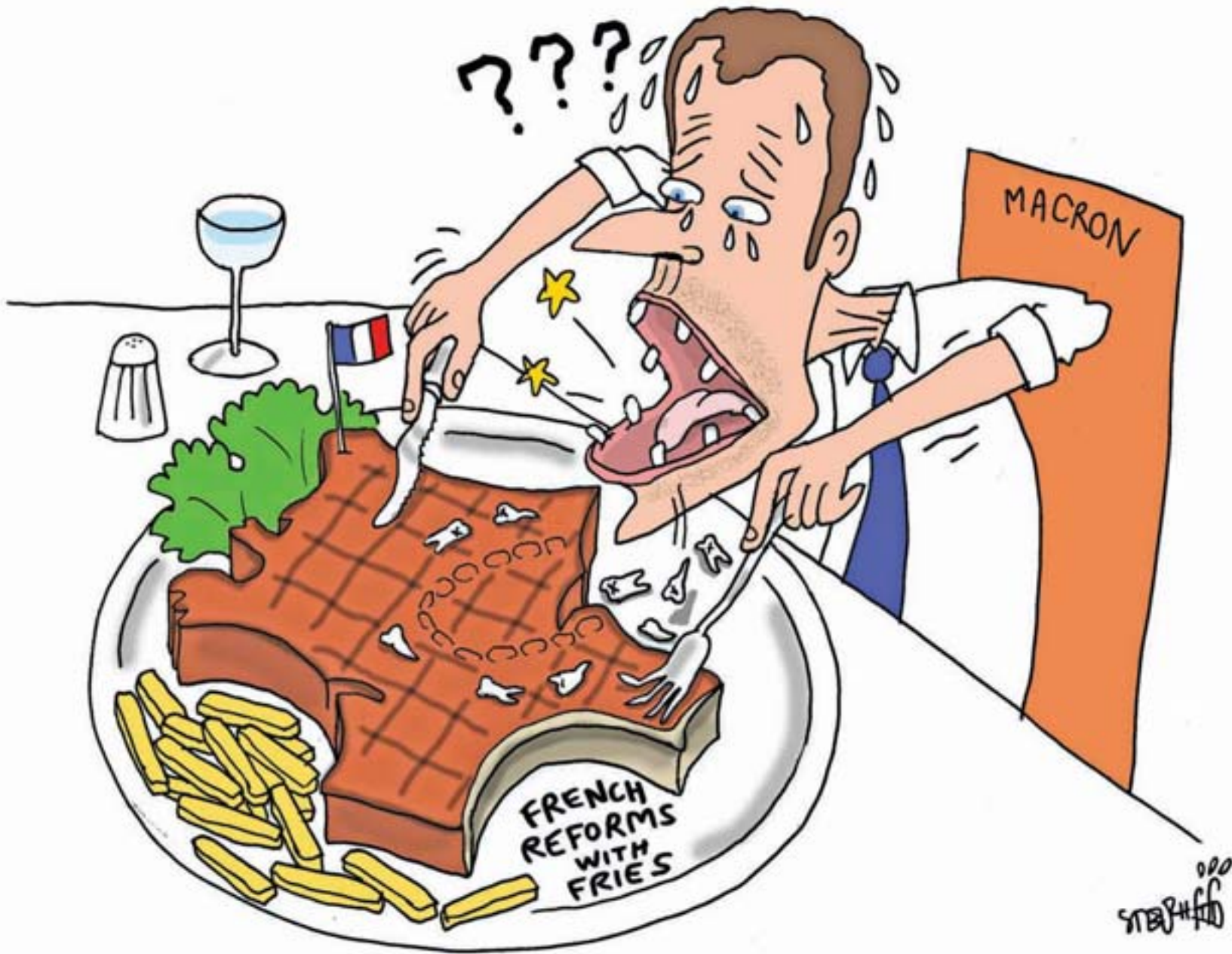
On the road

Yet change is coming, even to remote regions like Alai - in part thanks to the “Bus of Solidarity”. The small van bounds along rural roads to bring lawyers, notaries and social workers to remote parts of the country to resolve villagers’ legal quandaries - for free. It is supported by the justice ministry and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). On this day, it is headed for the craggy village of Kara-Kulja in southern Kyrgyzstan. Among those waiting in the rain for the bus to arrive was Zoora Jumabaeva. “I learned by chance that the bus was coming today,” Jumabaeva, a first-time user, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. She hoped the lawyers could resolve her complaint with the local bazaar after the new owner raised rents and forcibly removed her stall, which sells medicine for livestock, to a location outside the market. Had the bus not come, Jumabaeva would have had to make an arduous two-hour journey on poor roads to the nearest town, Osh, to seek legal services.

In previous years, she would use informal mechanisms such as a council of elders to solve her disputes. But, she said, the fact that their decisions were not legally binding was frustrating. And so, bearing the rain and cold, Jumabaeva huddled at a small desk inside a billowing blue tent to explain her dilemma. “I’m losing my regular income and my family is suffering. I came here today to get some more legal advice on protecting my interests,” she told a lawyer. “There are many other women and young families (at the market) who suffer more than me (from being evicted), as this was their only income source, so I’m trying to act on their behalf to solve a common problem.”

The lawyer, Jazgul Kolmatova, who practices in Osh, is no stranger to the Bus of Solidarity having made several journeys. Jumabaeva’s paperwork, she said, was scant. “She came to us with quite a difficult and complex problem, but her case is a fairly common one,” Kolmatova told the Thomson Reuters Foundation as she took down notes. Boarding the bus provides a chance to resolve knotty legal issues that have often been building for years, she said. “I joined the bus of solidarity because I know that the rural population - and especially women - are very poorly educated in legal issues, and I want to make my contribution to changing this situation,” she said.

Since the bus began running in 2016 it has visited about 193 villages and carried out more than 7,000 consultations, according to UNDP. But meetings are often brief, and complex cases require follow-up. With a luminous orange hijab wrapped around her hair and fighting back tears, Gulzina Ashimzhanova, 37, said she met Ibraimjanova when the Bus of Solidarity came to her village earlier this year. Ashimzhanova and her five children were made homeless when she left her alcoholic husband, who she said was violent. Ashimzhanova wanted to divorce him and secure her share of the property. “When we went to the village we saw the bus and met Ainura (Ibraimjanova). She told us about this free legal assistance, she explained everything,” she said. “We were consulted from there, then she said to bring the documents and she could help me. She said we could divide the house and get alimony via the court.” Ashimzhanova, who has been clinically depressed, tried to get her share of a house, 5,500 square metres of land and an apple orchard - all registered in her husband’s name. — Reuters



Foreign leaders seize on French crisis

The “yellow vest” protests that have made headlines around the world are garnering France some unwanted attention, particularly from foreign leaders not exactly known for their defense of liberal democracy. French officials have gone so far as to accuse other nations of “interference” in its domestic affairs over claims the crisis has laid bare the shortcomings of President Emmanuel Macron’s policies. Both Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Italy’s far-right leader Matteo Salvini have criticized Macron over the violent protests, as has his “friend” US President Donald Trump.

“Very sad day & night in Paris. Maybe it’s time to end the ridiculous and extremely expensive Paris Agreement and return money back to the people in the form of lower taxes?” Trump tweeted over the weekend. The comments earned him a stern rebuke from Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who on Sunday told the US leader to “leave our nation be”. France is also looking into claims that Russian-linked social media accounts are trying to stir up trouble by spreading misinformation designed to amplify the protests.

A source close to the inquiry told AFP that the prime minister’s security and defense directorate was coordinating the investigation of suspect accounts. But the source said it was too early to confirm a claim in Britain’s Times newspaper that hundreds of accounts linked to Russia were being used to stoke the demonstrations. Bloomberg news, citing the US-based Alliance for Securing Democracy, has also reported that #gilets-jaunes (“yellow vests”) has become the top hashtag on

600 Twitter accounts promoting Kremlin views. “That’s a pretty strong indication that there is interest in amplifying the conflict,” Bloomberg quoted the alliance’s social media analyst Bret Schafer as saying.

A Kremlin spokesman rejected the accusations yesterday as “nothing but slander”. “We have not interfered and we



Paris bristles over domestic ‘interference’

don’t plan to interfere in the domestic affairs of any country, including France,” the spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said.

‘Exploiting the situation’

Italy’s Salvini has also tried to fuel a narrative that the protests, which originated over anger at fuel tax hikes, underscore the failings of Macron’s push to reform the French economy. The “yellow vest” movement has since ballooned into a protest against declining living standards, in particular in rural and small-

town France. The government has already backed down on a hated fuel tax increase set for January, and Macron is expected to announce other measures in a televised address Monday night.

“Now those left behind are on the street, the thousands of honest people who have been massacred by the French government,” Salvini posted on Twitter on Sunday. Salvini has been a particular target of Macron, who is trying to forge an alliance of pro-European centrists to counter the populist waves in several countries ahead of European Parliament elections in May.

Steve Bannon, the architect of Trump’s nationalist-populist campaign who is now preaching a rightwing revolt across Europe, said in Brussels over the weekend that “Paris is burning”. “The yellow vests... are exactly the same type of people who elected Donald Trump... and who voted for Brexit,” Bannon said.

Turkey’s Erdogan, meanwhile, went so far as to accuse French police of “disproportionate violence” against the demonstrators. “Disorder reigns in several European countries, starting with Paris. TVs and newspapers are filled with images of burning cars, looted shops, and the violent police response against the protesters,” he said Saturday.

France’s Health Minister Agnes Buzyn denounced the comments as unacceptable “interference”. “I am furious when I hear these extremist politicians exploiting this situation,” she told LCI television Sunday. “These people are exploiting the situation to justify their own anti-climate, totalitarian policies,” she said. — AFP

Freed from jail, Cambodian surrogate mothers raise Chinese kids

Sophea was eight months pregnant when Cambodian police told her she would have to keep the baby that was never meant to be hers - and forfeit the \$10,000 she was promised for acting as a surrogate for a Chinese couple. Cambodia banned commercial surrogacy in 2016, and police in June raided two apartments where Sophea and 31 other surrogate mothers were being cared for in Cambodia’s capital, Phnom Penh. They were charged the following month with violating human trafficking laws, but authorities released them on bail last week, under the condition they raise the children themselves.

Campaigners say Cambodia’s surrogacy crackdown is unlikely to end the trade as poverty means many women will continue to risk arrest for the chance to earn life-changing sums of money. For some of the newly-freed women, keeping their baby is a burden as they struggle to get by. For others, it is a relief. Despite the financial loss, 24-year-old Sophea told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that she was happy the authorities intervened, and that her family had welcomed her baby boy.

“If not for the crackdown and my arrest, I would have been left in deep regret,” said Sophea, who did not give her real name for fear of backlash from the authorities and members of her community. “I would have given away my baby,” she said just two days after being released from police custody, settling back into village life at the end of a sandy track that winds through rice fields in Oudong, a 90 minute drive north of Phnom Penh.

Mixed blessing

Members of the other families said the babies are a mixed blessing. Instead of receiving \$10,000, the women went home with another mouth to feed, in a country where the average annual income is \$1,490, according to the International Monetary Fund. “It is a very difficult situation. I worry that my income will not support the whole family,” said Pich, a motorcycle-taxi driver whose wife is carrying what will be their third child. The 40-year-old, who also requested that his real name not be used, said

he never supported his wife’s decision to be a surrogate and that he was ashamed she had gone through with it. Another surrogate, a 24-year-old woman, went behind her husband’s back to take part in the scheme. The \$10,000 would have allowed the couple and their two children to move out of the shack they share with 12 members of their extended family, said the woman on condition of anonymity. “I agreed to give birth at the provincial hospital and look after the baby, but I don’t know how we will get the money to support and raise another child,” she said.

Ros Sopheap, director of the charity Gender and Development for Cambodia, said poverty will likely drive more women to engage in surrogacy - and that few know the practice is illegal. “Very few people are aware of what’s right, what’s wrong, what’s against the law,” she said. “The reality is that these women do this because they are living in poverty. So as long as there is a demand for surrogate mothers, they will continue.”

More arrests

Southeast Asia has long been a top destination for couples seeking surrogate mothers. Thailand banned the practice in 2015 after several high-profile cases, followed by Cambodia in 2016. In 2017, an Australian nurse and two Cambodians were jailed for 18 months for operating an illegal surrogacy clinic. In the country’s most recent surrogacy raid - just last month - 11 pregnant women and four facilitators were arrested.

Chou Bun Eng, a secretary of state at the Interior Ministry, said the 32 women were released on humanitarian grounds last week, but that the fate of the latest 11 surrogates is unclear. Each case will be judged independently and “law enforcement will become stricter” in the future, according to the official. It would be difficult, she added, for authorities to track down those who organized surrogacy rings, or the Chinese couples who paid for Cambodian women to bear their children. “Even surrogate mothers did not know nor (have) contact with the one who wanted the babies,” said Chou Bun Eng.

Sophea said she preferred not to know who the biological parents were. “I will not tell my son what happened in the past,” she said. “I won’t tell him about his actual Chinese parents.” She said her priority upon returning home was to invite a Buddhist monk to conduct a cleansing ceremony - in order to rid the family of any bad karma incurred during the ordeal. Her four-year-old daughter and extended family have also welcomed the baby, she said after the ceremony, which was attended by a dozen relatives and several village elders. — Reuters

Bug business: Millions of roaches crunch waste in China

In the near pitch-dark, you can hear them before you see them - millions of cockroaches scuttling and fluttering across stacks of wooden boards as they devour food scraps by the tonne in a novel form of urban waste disposal. The air is warm and humid - just as cockroaches like it - to ensure the colonies keep their health and voracious appetites. Expanding Chinese cities are generating more food waste than they can accommodate in landfills, and cockroaches could be a way to get rid of hills of food scraps, providing nutritious food for livestock when the bugs eventually die and, some say, cures for stomach illness and beauty treatments.

On the outskirts of Jinan, capital of eastern Shandong province, a billion cockroaches are being fed with 50 tonnes of kitchen waste a day - the equivalent in weight to seven adult elephants. The waste arrives before daybreak at the plant run by Shandong Qiaobin Agricultural Technology Co, where it is fed through pipes to cockroaches in their cells. Shandong Qiaobin plans to set up three more such plants next year, aiming to process a third of the kitchen waste produced by Jinan, home to about seven million people.

A nationwide ban on using food waste as pig feed due to African swine fever outbreaks is also spurring the growth of the cockroach industry. “Cockroaches are a bio-technological pathway for the converting and processing of kitchen waste,” said Liu Yusheng, president of Shandong Insect Industry Association. Cockroaches are also a good source of protein for pigs and other livestock. “It’s like turning trash into resources,” said Shandong Qiaobin chairwoman Li Hongyi.

‘Essence of cockroach’

In a remote village in Sichuan, Li Bingcai, 47, has similar ideas. Li, formerly a mobile phone vendor, has invested a million yuan (\$146,300) in cockroaches, which he sells to pig farms and fisheries as feed and to drug companies as medicinal ingredients. His farm now has 3.4 million cockroaches. “People think it’s strange that I do this kind of business,” Li said. “It has great economic value, and my goal is to lead other villagers to prosperity if they follow my lead.” His village has two farms. Li’s goal is to create 20.

Elsewhere in Sichuan, a company called Gooddoctor is rearing six billion cockroaches. “The essence of cockroach is good for curing oral and peptic ulcers, skin wounds and even stomach cancer,” said Wen Jianguo, manager of Gooddoctor’s cockroach facility. Researchers are also looking into using cockroach extract in beauty masks, diet pills and even hair-loss treatments. At Gooddoctor, when cockroaches reach the end of their lifespan of about six months, they are blasted by steam, washed and dried, before being sent to a huge nutrient extraction tank. Asked about the chance of the cockroaches escaping, Wen said that would be worthy of a disaster movie but that he has taken precautions. “We have a moat filled with water and fish,” he said. “If the cockroaches escape, they will fall into the moat and the fish will eat them all.” — Reuters

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PARIS: French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire (left), French Labor Minister Muriel Penicaud and French Transports Minister Elisabeth Borne leave after a meeting with trade unionists, yesterday at the Elysee palace in Paris, as part of consultations in search of a way to end the so called "Yellow vests" crisis. —AFP

‘Yellow vest’ protests stunt French growth

Macron under pressure as Q4 GDP growth seen easing

PARIS: The anti-government protests convulsing France will slow growth to close to a standstill in the final quarter, the central bank said yesterday, complicating President Emmanuel Macron's task of finding concessions to placate the "yellow vest" movement.

The Bank of France yesterday forecast the eurozone's number two economy would eke out growth of only 0.2 percent in the quarter from the previous three months, down from 0.4 percent in a previous estimate. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire declined to give an estimate for 2018 growth but forecast the nationwide tumult would trim 0.1 percent of a point off of national output. His deputy projected growth would round out "closer to 1.5 percent".

The slow-down will be worrisome for Macron, who faces huge pressure on the streets to make further cuts to taxes and social security costs to bolster household spending power, while keeping France's budget deficit below a European Union cap.

The slowdown is a "reality for our businessmen, entrepreneurs, it's the reality for those whose shops were van-

dalized, looted, in the most violent way," Le Maire told RTL. "And it's a reality too for our foreign investors." Police used tear gas, water cannon and horses to charge protesters hurling projectiles, torching cars and ransacking some shops, though they encountered less violence than the previous Saturday, when the capital encountered its worst violence since the 1968 student uprising.

Upscale department store Printemps, which shut its flagship store in Paris on Saturday, typically one of the busiest days of the year ahead of Christmas, said it had suffered a 25 to 30 percent slump in sales since the unrest began. "There has been a colossal loss in sales and they won't be recouped," Pierre Pellarrey, who runs Printemps Haussmann, told Reuters.

Nationwide, shopping centers saw a 17 fall in people passing through the doors, the CNCC grouping of mall operators said. In a sign of the perceived heightened risk of holding French debt, French government bond yields rose yesterday, pushing the French/German 10-year bond spread to its widest since May, at around 46 basis points

in early trade. On the Paris bourse, airport operator ADP fell 0.8, while retailers Casino and FNAC Darty also headed south. Hotels company Accor initially traded down 0.7 percent before paring losses.

Macron emerges into open

Macron addressed the nation later in the evening.

The president has drawn criticism for his silence in public over the violence in Paris - opponents accuse him of turning the Elysee Palace into a bunker. Ministers hope he will placate the yellow vests, whose revolt poses the most formidable challenge to his 18-month administration to date. "Our country is deeply divided, between those who see that globalization has benefited them and others who can't make ends meet, who say ... globalization is not an opportunity but a threat," Le Maire told RTL.

"It is the president's role to unify the country." The protests were born out of a backlash against the squeeze on the household budgets of hard-pressed middle class and blue-collar workers. But the movement has developed

into a broader anti-Macron rebellion.

The former investment banker is under pressure to respond to the demands of yellow vests for a higher minimum wage, lower taxes, and better retirement provisions, though more concessions will leave France in danger of breaching EU deficit rules. "The big picture is that the budget deficit will worsen and political problems will make cuts to spending hard," said Rabobank rates strategist Lyn Graham-Taylor.

The government's latest estimates are for a budget deficit of 2.8 percent in 2019, just below the EU's 3 percent cap - a target Macron has cast as critical to meet to cement his reformist credentials. Le Maire reiterated his desire to accelerate tax cuts but suggested he was not in favor of reinstating a tax on wealth-known as the 'ISF'-that Macron narrowed when he came into office, and which earned him the tag "president of the rich". "Does the ISF help reduce poverty, reduce our debts, reduce public spending? No. If you want to hunt for money, go knocking on the doors of digital tech companies," Le Maire said. — Reuters

Stock selloff snowballs as investors price in slowing economy

LONDON: Losses on global stocks snowballed yesterday, with Wall Street set to follow Europe and Asia lower as fresh signs emerged that the US-China trade spat was taking a deeper toll on world economic growth. Data from the world's biggest economies-the United States, China, Japan and Germany-have all disappointed investors in recent days, and doubts are growing that Washington and Beijing will reach agreement before a 90-day trade ceasefire expires. Markets are also on edge after reports that the British parliament's crucial vote on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal will be delayed, sending sterling and UK stocks lower. "Another day, another reason to sell risk. Equity markets remain in a world of pain with everyone in search of a very elusive silver lining," said Stephen Innes at brokerage OANDA.

MSCI's all-country index has spent four weeks in the red, despite intermittent rallies fuelled by hopes of trade war detente. The index slipped 0.5 percent, while a pan-European index fell 0.7 percent by 1200 GMT. US equity futures were down 0.3 percent, suggesting more pressure

on Wall Street later in the session.

Last week's arrest of the chief financial officer of Chinese smartphone maker Huawei for extradition to the United States was seen as putting up another hurdle to the resolution of a trade war between the world's two biggest economies. US trade representative Robert Lighthizer said Sunday there was a "hard deadline" to the 90-day trade ceasefire and without a successful end to talks by March 1, Washington would impose new tariffs on Chinese goods.

"The trade theme will preoccupy the markets through the 90-day truce period between the United States and China, waiting for any signs of concession between the parties," said Soichiro Monji, senior economist at Daiwa SB Investments in Tokyo.

Following weak trade and inflation data on the week-end, China also posted far weaker-than-expected November exports and imports, reinforcing expectations Beijing will roll out more stimulus to prevent the economy cooling too fast. However, the yuan sagged to a one-week low after the weak data.

"(The data) would suggest China woes go well beyond US tariffs, given that China trade surplus to the US was at a record level. One can only imagine the impact on China terms of trade if the US follows through with a 25 percent tariff," Innes of OANDA said. Japan posted the worst contraction in over four years in the third quarter as uncertainty over global demand and trade saw companies slashing capital spending. MSCI's index of Asian equities outside Japan earlier slid to near three-week lows, Shanghai shares retreated 0.8 percent and Japan's Nikkei shed 2.1 percent. Emerging-market stocks lost 1.5 percent.

Asia's data came after investors were spooked last

week by below-forecast industrial output numbers in Germany and US jobs data showing employers hired fewer workers than expected in November.

The slowdown signs also have pummeled oil prices, which have slumped around 30 percent since early October. Brent futures fell 1.5 percent to \$60.7 a barrel, reversing earlier modest gains triggered by a supply cut from OPEC and some non-affiliated producers.

Data and dollar

European investors were keeping their eyes on events in Britain and France. Sterling slumped to the lowest since June 2017 versus the dollar, after the BBC's political editor quoted cabinet sources said May was pulling the vote, scheduled for today. Sterling slid half a percent to \$1.2656 and extended losses versus the euro, trading down 0.7 percent at 90.18 pence - its weakest since early-September.

Britain's FTSE 250 equity index, sensitive to local economic developments tumbled 1 percent and investors scurried to buy British government bonds, with yields dropping five to seven basis points on the day.

"There is still room for short-term political risk premium to be priced into pound which is currently worth of 2 percent based on our models. The downside to sterling is hence very clear," ING Bank analysts told clients. The dollar inched off two-week lows against a basket of currencies, including sterling. Last week, the dollar posted its worst performance since August after the lacklustre jobs data convinced many that US growth has peaked and the Federal Reserve will pause its rate tightening sooner than previously thought.



NEW YORK, NY: Traders work ahead of the opening bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), yesterday in New York City. — AFP

French assets also came under pressure, with hotel and retail stocks suffering the fallout of four weekends of anti-government riots, which the finance minister said could curb economic growth by 0.1 percentage point. The yield premium investors demand to hold French bonds over German peers rose to the highest since May, before a 1900 GMT televised address by President Emmanuel Macron. Macron has been forced to row back on fuel tax increases and investors fear further concessions to placate protesters. — Reuters

Business

Ooredoo ranked number one as ‘Employer of Choice’ by LinkedIn

More than 37,500 followers on LinkedIn • More than 2,250 career page views

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced that it ranked number 1 in terms of employer of choice by LinkedIn. Ooredoo also ranked as number one in terms of followers which reached 37,500 followers to date, an increase of more than double in comparison to 2017, and with career page views reaching 2,350. Ooredoo also received a 74 percent influenced hire. The statistics were shared by LinkedIn and all are in comparison to other companies in the same industry in Kuwait and the Middle East.

Ooredoo will also launch the ‘Ooredoo Life Page’ on LinkedIn which will include more information about Ooredoo, and will portray the company’s internal culture, leaders, and employee testimonials. The ‘Ooredoo Life Page’ will allow potential candidates to understand more about Ooredoo and what it stands for and for the company to maintain its position as ‘Employer of Choice’.

Ooredoo and LinkedIn have a strategic relationship, and they both launched an event last year under the title “Ooredoo LinkedIn Day” at its headquarters in Kuwait City attended by leaders from both Ooredoo and LinkedIn. The objective of the Ooredoo



LinkedIn Day was to raise awareness of LinkedIn and guide employees on how to project the right image on their profiles. This event emphasized the importance of attracting local talent to Ooredoo through LinkedIn where the number of followers has increased to 37,503 compared to just 5000 followers during the same period of 2017.

Omar Al-Bassam, Chief Human Resources and Administration Services Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait shed the light on the achievements and highlights of the Human Resources and Administration Services Division at Ooredoo during 2018 and his outlook for 2019. He stressed that the company focuses on investing in its employees and motivating them to succeed. He further added that Ooredoo follows a unique strategy that is built on exploring the talents of its employ-

ees and works on bringing the talents to life, in addition to supporting these talents continuously. Al-Bassam reiterated on the importance of understanding of the employees of the company’s strategic objectives and working together in achieving that strategy.

Al-Bassam stated that the achievements of 2018 also include the implementation of the company strategy aimed at attracting and recruiting local talent into the Ooredoo family, in addition to providing them with the necessary development programs to further enhance their skills which will help Ooredoo utilize these skills in the right places and leverage on internal expertise and share knowledge.

Other highlights of 2018 include but are not limited to launching e-learning, the introduction of digital competencies, and succession planning. Ooredoo also

invested in executive programs for its leadership at elite universities such as Harvard Business School and Wharton. Ooredoo also participated at career fairs and performed recruitment coaching sessions at the Gulf University for Science and Technology, Australian College of Kuwait, American University of the Middle East, and the American College of the Middle East.

In conclusion, Al-Bassam stressed that dedication is the engine that drives any organization to success and he thanked the Ooredoo family for their hard work and dedication during 2018.



Omar Al-Bassam

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- Moamen Madani Hussain Mahmoud
- Ahmed Abdul-aziz Mohammed Al-Salem
- Mohammad Saleh Yaqoub Alsharhan
- Narjes Abbas Hussain Jassim
- Sarah Mohammad Abdullah and/or Aliah Mohammad Abdullah

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Turkish GDP growth fades to 1.6% as lira crisis bites

ANKARA: Turkish economic growth dwindled to 1.6 percent year-on-year in the third quarter, data showed yesterday, falling short of forecasts as a currency crisis and soaring inflation led to the worst economic performance in two years.

Turkey, a major emerging market once seen as a star performer by international investors, racked up growth of more than 7 percent last year. But this year it has been battered by a lira sell-off that has driven up the costs of food and fuel and forced the central bank to hike its main rate to 24 percent.

The construction sector - long a beneficiary of Turkey’s credit-fuelled building boom - contracted 5.3 percent year-on-year, the data showed, counter-acting a 4.5 percent expansion in services.

“The loss in growth momentum began in the third quarter with a slowdown in private consumption and investments,” said Muammer Komurcuoglu, an economist at Is Invest.

“We envisage a contraction in growth in the fourth quarter as a result of the negative impact of monetary tightening on financial conditions, a reduction in investment and consumption appetite with the loss in lira value, and high inflation.” In a Reuters poll, economists had forecast third quarter growth of 2.0 percent year-on-year. The lira eased to 5.3047 against the dollar after the data from 5.2950 beforehand.

By 0918 GMT the lira was at 5.2760 to the dollar. It was the worst quarterly performance since the third quarter of 2016 - when Turkey was shaken by an attempted coup against President Tayyip Erdogan.

Output shrank a seasonally and calendar-adjusted 1.1 percent from the previous quarter, the data showed. “The effects of August’s currency crisis caused Turkey’s economy to contract in Q3 and more timely evidence suggests that the downturn deepened in Q4,” Jason Tuvey of Capital Economics said in a note to clients. —Reuters

URC subsidiary completes full acquisition of Abdali Mall in Jordan

KUWAIT: United Real Estate Company K.S.C.P (URC), one of the leading real estate developers in the MENA region, has announced a full acquisition of Abdali Mall by 100 percent ownership under its regional subsidiary, United Real Estate Company - Jordan. The Abdali Mall full acquisition transaction included a transfer of ownership with all associated obligations before the official Jordanian authorities to become a (100 percent) full ownership by United Real Estate Company - Jordan.

The acquisition deal included an exchange of assets between United Real Estate Company - Jordan and Abdali Investment and Development Company, in which United Real Estate Company - Jordan has swapped its (40 percent) stake in Abdali Boulevard Company against full acquisition of Abdali Mall.

Commenting on this announcement, Ahmad Kasem, URC’s Acting Chief Executive Officer said: “The Abdali Mall full acquisition deal is amongst URC’s planned strategies in leveraging our MENA region investment portfolio towards a diversified sustainable growth, enhancement of operational profit and higher return on investment for our shareholders.”

Augustino Sfeir, Chief Investment Officer, added: “The Abdali Mall acquisition is part of URC’s strategy in balancing its sources of income and structuring a diversified portfolio of businesses and assets towards

Agility to invest \$100m in ‘Shipa’ digital logistics platform

DUBAI: Agility, one of the world’s largest logistics companies, said it will invest \$100 million over three years to launch Shipa.com, a digital logistics platform that lets businesses, entrepreneurs and consumers manage their freight, e-commerce, and urban deliveries online.

“Shipa.com makes life easier through technology, whether you are a small business running your supply chain with a few clicks, or a consumer getting your shopping delivered with a few taps on your phone,” Agility Chairwoman Henadi Al-Saleh said. “Shipa.com makes logistics convenient, jargon-free, trackable, accountable and accessible.”

Shipa.com’s service lines: Shipa Ecommerce gives online merchants access to some of the world’s fastest growing and most complex e-commerce markets. Shipa Ecommerce offers integrated freight, fulfilment, delivery



Abdali Mall in Jordan

increased profitability measures in line with the economic and investment environment in the targeted countries.”

Opened to the public in 2016, Abdali Mall is a fully integrated shopping mall spanning over 227,000 square meters in Amman, Jordan. The development includes a total leasable area of over 55,000 square meters and embraces a new design of merged indoor and outdoor retail spaces to provide a complete integrated retail experience through its diverse tenant mix

and returns solutions across the Arabian Gulf with additional reach into the EU and Africa planned for the near future. Customers are cross-border retailers based in the US, EU and Asia, as well as regional merchants based in the Middle East. Shipa Ecommerce solutions are underpinned by easy-to-use digital integration: APIs and web interfaces such as checkout integration with customer portals, websites and apps.

Shipa Delivery offers businesses and consumers on-demand same-day, next-day or cross-border delivery across the Arabian Gulf. Intuitive and easy-to-use, the platform is accessible by mobile or directly integrated with its business customers’ systems, and provides solutions to optimize for speed, convenience, and affordability. Hassle-free delivery is now a reality.

Shipa Freight allows small businesses to get instant and transparent freight quotes, and to book, pay and track ocean and air shipments around the world on any digital or mobile device. It is the industry’s first and most advanced fully integrated online freight service, and is available in 100+countries.

“Logistics is the backbone of commerce. But it’s complex, and that complexity is disproportionately difficult for

of international brands, dining and entertainment options, advanced cinema complex and a unique open-air food court. Abdali Mall also includes innovative sustainability design features such as water and energy conservation, natural lighting, sustainable air-conditioning systems and an intelligent parking system.

Abdali Mall was recognized for its excellence by the Cityscape Global 2016, winning ‘Best Retail Project’ for Emerging Markets in the Retail Project (Built) category.

small businesses to navigate. Small businesses often lack access to the logistics resources, tools and solutions that larger businesses have.” Al-Saleh said. “No wonder then, that we interviewed 800 small and medium-sized businesses around the world, we found that 78 percent wanted to see their logistics move online. Shipa helps close that gap, empowering small businesses to take advantage of the opportunities being created by the global digital economy.”

Shipa.com is powered by Agility’s global network and infrastructure. Agility operates in more than 100 countries with 22,000 employees, and has warehouses in strategic locations around the world. It is the largest private owner of industrial real estate in the Middle East and Africa, and a leading developer of and investor in logistics technology.

Al-Saleh described Shipa.com as “Agility’s innovation arm,” accelerating the introduction of technology, development of new digital products, and the overall pace of change in both the parent company and the industry more broadly.

“Shipa.com is the marriage of Agility’s logistics expertise and resources and the digital-first capabilities of the Shipa platform. It offers enormous value for our customers and brings new value to our company,” Al-Saleh said.

German rail strike halts trains nationwide

FRANKFURT: Germany was plunged into transport chaos yesterday as train services were halted by a railworkers’ strike over pay, affecting millions of passengers. Inter-city and regional services as well as many urban commuter trains were cancelled throughout Europe’s biggest economy by the four-hour stoppage that started at 05:00 am (0400 GMT), Deutsche Bahn (DB) said.

Although the walkout ended as planned at 09:00 am, its ripple effects will be felt for the rest of the day, particularly on long-distance lines, rail operator DB warned.

Some 1,400 trains, including cargo services, were affected, DB said, adding that both sides had agreed to return to the negotiation table today. The industrial action came after talks broke down Saturday between the DB and the EVG

railworkers’ union, which is demanding a 7.5-percent salary rise for 160,000 employees. “We believe the warning strike was a total success,” said EVG head Torsten Westphal.

“The next move is now up to Deutsche Bahn management.”

DB had earlier described the strike as a “completely unnecessary escalation” in the tortuous negotiations. DB has so far offered a pay rise of 5.1 percent in two phases, with an option for staff to take extra time off instead, and a one-off payment of 500 euros (\$570), DPA national news agency reported.

A DB spokeswoman welcomed the decision to resume talks today. “We never left the negotiating table,” she told AFP. “We have told the union that we are prepared to make another offer.”

Yellow vests

Major transport hubs like Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne and Munich were among those impacted by the walkout. DB said that purchased tickets would remain valid until next Sunday or could be refunded and urged passengers to delay travel where possible.

In the capital Berlin, where additionally the entire public announcement system broke down, frustrated morning com-



DRESDEN: Train passengers wait in front of a service counter of German railway operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) at the central station in Dresden, eastern Germany, during a warning strike of rail workers yesterday. —AFP

muters were asked to switch from S-Bahn commuter trains operated by DB to subways, buses or trams. At Nuremberg station, in the southern state of Bavaria, some 50 rail workers were seen demonstrating in yellow high-visibility vests, similar to the ones donned by anti-government protesters in France.

It is not unusual however for German rail staff to wear hi-vis jackets, and it was not immediately clear if the demonstrators intended to signal a link with the French street protests.

“One for all and all for one” read the signs held aloft by the demonstrators. —AFP

Business

Ex-Nissan chief Ghosn charged, served with fresh arrest warrant

Case represents a stunning turnaround for 64-year exec

TOKYO: Japanese prosecutors yesterday formally charged Carlos Ghosn with financial misconduct for under-reporting his salary and also served him a fresh warrant on separate allegations, meaning the tycoon will likely spend Christmas in a cell.

It represents a stunning turnaround for the 64-year-old Franco-Lebanese-Brazilian executive, a once-revered colossus of the auto sector who won wide acclaim in Japan for saving car giant Nissan.

In a move that sent shockwaves through the business world, the former Nissan chairman was arrested on November 19 on suspicion of under-declaring his income by some five billion yen (\$44 million) between 2010 and 2015.

Prosecutors yesterday pressed formal charges on Ghosn-and key aide Greg Kelly-over this allegation, which both men are said to deny.

The pair were also immediately re-arrested over fresh allegations that they conspired to under-declare Ghosn's income by a further four billion yen over the past three years.

Under Japanese law, suspects can be re-arrested several times for different allegations, allowing prosecutors to question them for prolonged periods-a system that has drawn criticism internationally. Monday was the final day prosecutors could hold Ghosn and Kelly, 62, before either charging or re-arresting them, and the fresh arrest gives them up to another 22 days of questioning. In addition to charges against Ghosn and Kelly, prosecutors also indicted Nissan itself, as the company submitted the official documents that under-reported the income.

Nissan shares dropped 2.90 percent to 945 yen in yesterday trading and the firm voiced "its deepest regret" over the affair. The manufacturer said it would "continue its efforts to strengthen its governance and compliance, including making accurate disclosures of corporate information".

The Japanese firms in the three-way alliance with

Renault-Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors-have both sacked Ghosn as chairman.

But amid reports of tension within the tie-up, which outsold all rival groups last year, the three companies last month said they were "fully committed" to the alliance.

'Combative' frame of mind

The millionaire auto sector star, who attracted some criticism for a perceived lavish lifestyle, is now alone in a spartan cell in a Tokyo detention centre, in a tiny room measuring just three tatami mats-around five square metres.

He has reportedly told embassy visitors he is being well treated but has complained of the cold, with yesterday's temperature in the Japanese capital hovering around five degrees Celsius.

He spends his time reading books and news reports and is said to be unhappy about the rice-based food. But he is in a "combative" frame of mind, according to sources at Renault, the company he still formally leads-even if the French car giant has appointed an interim chairman. According to local news agency Kyodo, he has admitted signing documents to defer part of his salary until after retirement but said this amount did not need to be declared as it has not yet been definitively fixed.

A source close to the investigation has said Ghosn and Kelly allegedly put the system in place after a new law came in obliging the highest-paid members of the firm to declare their salary.

Ghosn is suspected of deferring part of his pay to avoid criticism from staff and shareholders that his salary was too generous. Nissan is appealing to a court in Rio de Janeiro to block access by Ghosn's representatives to a luxury apartment on Copacabana Beach.

"We are closely watching if he is actually indicted and then found guilty," said Satoru Takada, an analyst at TIW, a Tokyo-based research and consulting firm.

"If he is exempted from prosecution or found inno-



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk past a television screen showing a news program featuring former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

cent, it is going to create huge confusion in Nissan's management," Takada said.

'Lebanese phoenix'

It is unclear if Ghosn will be bailed before a potential trial. In Japan, prosecutors and defendants begin a trial at a district court and can appeal to a high court and

the Supreme Court. It may take several years before reaching a final judgment.

If found guilty, Ghosn could face a 10-year prison sentence. The affair represents a staggering fall from grace for a figure celebrated for saving Nissan from the brink of bankruptcy and rebuilding it as a money-making subsidiary of Renault. —AFP

French bonds feel pain after more violent protests

LONDON: French government bond yields rose yesterday, pushing the gap over safer German peers to its widest since May, after more violent anti-government protests in France over the weekend.

The turmoil in France comes as heightened global trade tensions, a looming vote in Britain's parliament on Brexit and caution before this week's European Central Bank meeting are already bolstering demand for top-rated German debt. While higher-rated French bonds often benefit from risk aversion in world markets, turmoil in France prompted investors to stay away.

The anti-government protests will slow growth to close to a standstill in the final quarter, the central bank said yesterday, complicating President Emmanuel Macron's task of finding concessions to placate the "yellow vest" movement.

The Bank of France yesterday forecast the eurozone's number two economy would eke out growth of only 0.2 percent in the quarter from the previous three months, down from 0.4 percent in a previous estimate. "Concern about a

bit of political and fiscal capitulation is rarely good for a bond market," said Chris Bailey, European strategist at international financial services firm at Raymond James.

"In the wider scheme of things, the bond spread is pretty tight versus Germany but does show a bit of tension in the European bond fraternity."

French bond yields were up to 7 basis points higher on the day across the curve, with France standing out as the weakest performing bond market in the bloc.

Ten-year bond yields rose over 3 bps to 0.72 percent, almost 8 bps above 4 1/2-month lows hit last week. The gap between 10-year bond yields in France and Germany stood at around 46 basis points, its widest since late May, when a rout in Italian bonds rippled over into other eurozone bond markets except Germany.

Macron will make a televised address at 1900 GMT as he seeks to placate protesters, whose revolt poses his biggest challenge yet since assuming the presidency 18 months ago. Analysts said Macron is expected to announce new fiscal measures, implying some upward pressure for French yields.

"The big picture is that the budget deficit will worsen and political problems will make cuts to spending hard," said Rabobank rates strategist Lyn Graham-Taylor.

French bonds also underperformed other eurozone peers-the Spanish/French



PARIS: A yellow vest (Gilet jaune) protestor holds a placard reading "Dear bourgeois we are deeply sorry to disturb you but could we all live with dignity please?" as he arrives near the Arc de Triomphe early on December 8, 2018 in Paris, ahead of a nationwide action day to protest against rising oil prices and living costs. —AFP

10-year bond yield gap was at its tightest since October as French yields rose. Political uncertainty also put upward pressure on Belgian yields. Prime Minister Charles Michel re-launched his government on Sunday as a minority administration after the biggest party in his coalition quit in a dispute over a United Nations migration compact.

Italy's bond yields fell 4-5 bps on hopes of a compromise with the

European Union over Italian budget plans. Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is expected to meet European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker tomorrow over the 2019 budget, a source said yesterday.

"This morning, the rumors are that Italy could present another revised budget this week and that has helped push yields lower," said DZ Bank analyst Sebastian Fellechner. —Reuters

Chinese state media distance Huawei arrest from US trade talks

BEIJING: Chinese state media yesterday denounced the arrest of a top executive at tech giant Huawei, but did not link it to talks to resolve a trade dispute with the United States, an apparent effort not to undermine prospects for a deal.

Senior White House administration officials on Sunday insisted that Canada's arrest of Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou on a US extradition request was solely a law enforcement matter that would not derail talks with China.

China's Foreign Ministry criticized what it called the US "unreasonable demand" on Canada to detain Meng while she was passing through Vancouver on Dec. 1. But the commerce ministry, which is engaged in trade negotiations, has declined to comment on the matter.

"At present, it seems there has been a fragile adherence in China and the United States to not link the two," the influential Global Times newspaper said in a commentary.

In a separate commentary, the Global Times suggested that the United States would isolate itself from the world's digital economy if it shunned Huawei.

The China Daily newspaper said in an editorial on the arrest it hoped Canada would not "hold a candle while the devil does its dirty deeds". But there was scant

mention in state media of tension over Huawei issue bleeding into the trade talks, a possibility that had roiled global markets as investors worried it could torpedo attempts to ease trade tension.

Tu Xinqian, a trade expert at Beijing's University of International Business and Economics, said the commerce ministry had not mentioned the Huawei issue because it was focused on negotiations.

"The Chinese government is trying to de-link the two things," Tu said. "If you don't see any discussions in Chinese media, that's the intention of the government."

'Pride of the people'

Meng, 46, faces US accusations that she misled multinational banks about Huawei's control of a company operating in Iran. Her arrest was on the same day that US President Donald Trump met his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in Argentina to look for ways to resolve the escalating trade war.

The two sides agreed there to delay a planned Jan 1 US increase of tariffs to 25 percent from 10 percent on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods while they negotiate over China's huge bilateral trade surplus and US complaints that it steals technology.

Huawei, the world's largest supplier of telecommunications network equipment and second-biggest maker of smartphones, is at the cutting edge of fifth-generation (5G) mobile network technology.

Citing security concerns, the US government has taken a series of steps to block the company from some parts of the US market, which is widely per-



BEIJING: People walk past a Huawei store in Beijing yesterday. China yesterday protested Canada's "inhumane" treatment of an executive of telecom giant Huawei who is being held on a US extradition bid, following reports she was not getting sufficient medical care. —AFP

ceived in China as an effort to hold the company back.

Huang Jing, a senior researcher at the Chinese think-tank the Pangoal Institution, said connecting the issues "would risk making it more difficult to achieve a compromise in the talks".

But Tu warned that public anger over Meng's arrest could eventually force Beijing's hand into measures that would endanger negotiations.

"If this thing continues, it could put the Chinese government in a very difficult situation. Huawei is the national pride of the Chinese people," Tu said.

In contrast to some of China's recent disputes with other countries, there has

been little evidence of an organized campaign to stoke anti-US behavior, or that consumers have begun to shun US goods in any volume due to the trade war. The Global Times' editor-in-chief, Hu Xijin, took a conciliatory tone in a speech at the newspaper's annual forum on Saturday, arguing that foreign brands, including US phone maker Apple, should not become a target of nationalist anger in the wake of Meng's arrest.

"It is also one of China's core interests to improve China's relations with the US and the West, and not to lead Sino-US relations to the direction of a Cold War," Hu said, at one point holding up his iPhone. —Reuters

Sudan pound slides to widest over official rate since devaluation

KHARTOUM: The Sudanese currency slid to 60 pounds to the dollar on the black market yesterday, traders said, increasing the gap with the official rate of 47.5 pounds to its widest since a sharp devaluation two months ago. The growing gap indicates the pound's official value may have to weaken further, adding to the woes of citizens already suffering shortages of bread and fuel.

The government has been expanding the money supply to finance its budget deficit, spurring inflation and weakening the currency's value. "The deterioration of the Sudanese pound's real value has made everyone rush to convert their savings into dollars," economics professor and analyst Abdullah al-Ramadi told Reuters. "Bloated government spending has increased inflation."

Annual inflation edged up to 68.93 percent in November from 68.44 percent in October, the state statistics agency said on Sunday. The pound was trading at 57 to the dollar on the black market as recently as Saturday. On Oct. 7 the government weakened the official rate to 47.5 pounds to the dollar from 29 pounds. The severe shortages of fuel and bread, both subsidized by the government, have forced people in the capital to queue in front of bakeries and cars to line up in front of petrol stations.

"I have been waiting for bread for more than an hour, and I have had difficulty withdrawing my monthly salary from the bank since December," said Yassin Abdullah, 43, an employee standing outside a bakery on one of Khartoum's main streets. "With prices rising we are living in a real nightmare." —Reuters

Japan economy shrinks more than previously thought in Q3

TOKYO: Japan's economy shrank twice as much as initially thought in the three months to September, with natural disasters weighing on investment, official data showed yesterday. Gross domestic product for the July-September period contracted 0.6 percent from the previous quarter, Cabinet Office data showed, revising down the figure from the preliminary estimate of a 0.3-percent contraction. The reading comes after growth of 0.7 percent in the April-June period, and was slightly weaker than market expectations of a 0.5-percent contraction.

The main driver of the decline appeared to be private investment, which shrank 2.8 percent quarter-on-quarter, compared with an initial estimate of a 0.2-percent contraction, the data showed.

"The background to the weak corporate investment is believed to be natural disasters in July which stopped some logistics, such as setting up facilities," Takashi Miwa, senior economist at Nomura Securities, told AFP. "This is a temporary, technical contraction and given the latest economic indicators, the economy picked up in the October-December quarter," he said, though he cautioned that potential intensification of US-led trade tensions remained a risk factor. —AFP

Business

NBK-Egypt signs a cooperation protocol with Egypt's Town Gas

Bank to finance natural gas connections to New Cairo districts

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (NBK-Egypt) signed a cooperation protocol with the Egyptian Company For Natural Gas Distribution In Cities "Town Gas", a subsidiary of the Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company "EGAS" on December 4, 2018. As per the agreed upon terms, NBK will finance the cost of natural gas connection and operational activities carried out by Town Gas in New Cairo districts through extending credit facilities to Town Gas customers.

The protocol was signed by Yasser Hassan, Managing Director, NBK -Egypt, and Eng. Yasser Bahnas, Chairman and Managing Director, Town Gas, in the presence of Yasser Al-Tayeb, Deputy Managing Director, NBK-Egypt and Amr Al-Alfy, Head-Corporate & Commercial Banking at National Bank of Kuwait - Egypt, in addition to a number of NBK and Town Gas executives.

Dr Yasser Hassan described this step as part of NBK's strategy and directions during the current phase aimed at strengthening its position in the retail banking sector by providing advanced services and products tailored to the needs and requirements of its diversified retail customers, based on extensive and thorough market studies. He added that entering into this agreement reflects NBK's guidelines in that regards.

He pointed out that NBK is always striving to expand its corporate portfolio. The bank's credit portfolio includes a wide array of companies, including large corporations and SMEs. NBK has affirmed its support to the SME sector, which is of vital and prominent importance to the Egyptian market, through providing numerous competitive alternatives, as it draws on NBK-Group's extensive resources and international expertise.

Amr Al-Alfy said that this agreement is part of NBK's efforts aimed at supporting the petroleum sec-

tor, especially Egypt's direction towards extending natural gas connections throughout the country including Cairo and other governorates to replace butane gas cylinders. This also comes in line with the recent natural gas discoveries, providing Egypt with additional foreign currency resources.

Meanwhile, Eng. Yasser Fouad Bahnas, Chairman and Managing Director of Town Gas, said that this initiative is part of the national project framework sponsored by the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Resources, Eng. Tariq Al Mulla, aimed at expanding natural gas delivery to all customers to improve Egyptian citizens' living standards and to expand the customer base. Based on the Minister's directions, agreements are issued with easier terms to reduce the financial burden and to extend the reach and benefits of this unique urban service, strongly reflecting on realizing the government's objectives aimed at spreading natural gas services and reduce budget subsidies.

Town Gas has successfully provided its customers with an option to finance natural gas installation costs, allowing them to pay in installments based on the actual estimation for the applicant's residence. Financing is provided by NBK-Egypt, without setting a minimum or maximum credit limit over a period of five years. This initiative will connect over 40,000 residential units in addition to the future expansions in New Cairo district, where natural gas installation has already been completed and is considered outside the boundaries where the financing program applies to monthly natural gas consumption bill of EGP 30 per month over 6 years.

NBK-Egypt (previously known as Al-Watany Bank of Egypt) is a member of NBK Group and was established in 1980. The bank currently has 48 branches across various Egyptian governorates including Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Delta, Sinai, the Red Sea, and Upper Egypt, as well as industrial areas like Sixth of October,



and Tenth of Ramadan. The bank is also privileged to be among the elite banks within the Egyptian market that hold an Islamic banking license in addition to its conventional licensing. It has two Islamic branches, one in Cairo and the other in Alexandria, thus enabling the bank to offer a comprehensive selection of Sharia compliant products and services in addition to its traditional offerings. NBK Egypt has an extensive network of branches that are located across the country to serve its customers around the clock, in addition to NBK's various electronic services such as NBK Online, allowing customers to enjoy secure, safe and convenient banking services anytime and from anywhere.

National Bank of Kuwait was incorporated in 1952 as the first local bank and the first shareholding company in Kuwait and the Gulf region. NBK continues to

enjoy collectively one of the highest ratings among all banks in the Middle East from the three international rating agencies Moody's, Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor's. The Bank's ratings are supported by its strong financial indicators, asset quality, high capitalization in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team, as well as and its disciplined approach to risk management prudent lending policies. NBK was also named among Global Finance's list of the 50 safest banks in the world for the 13th consecutive time. NBK enjoys the widest banking presence with a local and international network of 153 branches reaching 4 continents. NBK's international presence spans many of the world's leading financial centers including the United States of America, Europe, GCC, Middle East, China as well as Singapore.

Warba Bank: Right subscription in share capital increase oversubscribed

KUWAIT: Warba Bank announced that, by blessing of Allah, the Almighty, the offering period for share capital increase was closed on 9th Dec 2018 as the total issue shares has been oversubscribed during the period designated for exercising the pre-emption right. Therefore, no public subscription will be held for non-shareholders.. The shares' allocation will be made within five business days and the paid amounts will be refunded within five business days as well. The Bank noted the strong demand for the online subscription and payment through K-net at the website <https://www.ipokw.net>, the unprecedented service exclusively offered by Warba Bank to shareholders wishing to subscribe for 16,500 shares or less. The total share capital offering amounted 90 million (KD 50 million par value + 40 million share premium) and the offer price was 180 fils, of which 100 fils par value and 80 fils share premium.



Shaheen Alghanem

Shaheen H Alghanem, Chief Executive Officer of Warba Bank, said: "Thanks to Allah, the offering period designated for the pre-emption right of the Bank's share capital increase has exceeded all expectations and witnessed a huge turnout as we have already expected. The Online IPO Service, through the website has been tremendously used, attracting a great number of shareholders saving them the time and efforts." He added: "We value our shareholders' confidence in the Bank's performance and solid position as well as we appreciate the recognition that Warba Bank enjoys today amongst both customers and investors as a result of the sustainable growth of all the Bank's operations, particularly the financing and investment portfolio."

Alghanem asserted that the Bank is keen to further boost its customers' confidence and expand operations. He stressed that the share capital increase will be utilized in strategic long-term investments, reinforcing the maximum exposure limit to a single obligor, which will provide more opportunities to increase the size of the Bank's financing portfolio, acquire new customer categories, expand business operations and cross-selling opportunities; and increasing the maximum investment limit, which will positively enhance and lead to the growth of the investment portfolio. The Capital Increase will support investment in the long-term capital expenditures thus enhancing the Bank's growth and ability to take part in financing mega development projects that further enhance the growth of the national economy.

It's worth mentioning that the Bank's staff have exerted great efforts during the subscription process, following up the subscribers' affairs and responding to their inquiries around the clock via the Bank's platforms on social media networks. In addition, throughout the subscription period, Warba Bank team was attending from 9 am to 1 pm and 4 pm to 7 pm at Kuwait Clearing Company "the subscription venue".

Flydubai relaunches flights to Chittagong

KUWAIT: Dubai-based flydubai yesterday has announced the start of flights to Chittagong in Bangladesh. The relaunched service will begin on 20 January 2019 with daily flights.

Commenting on the recommencement of flights to Chittagong, Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President Commercial (UAE, GCC, Subcontinent and Africa) at flydubai said, "We are delighted that flydubai is returning to Chittagong. It reaffirms our commitment to serving underserved destinations and with daily flights we look forward to our passengers benefiting from our direct and convenient flights to Dubai and beyond."



Emirates will codeshare on this route as part of the Emirates flydubai partnership announced in July 2017. For bookings under the codeshare, Emirates pas-

sengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Economy class. With the

partnership, passengers from Bangladesh will have an opportunity to travel via Dubai to hundreds of destinations all over the world.

Vijay Sethupathi opens Malabar Gold & Diamonds' 2nd showroom in KL

KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewelry retailers globally with a strong retail network of 250 retail outlets spread across 10 countries has launched its second store in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The grand showroom was inaugurated by Famous South Indian Actor Vijay Sethupathi on 6th December, 2018 in the presence of Shamal Ahamed, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Abdul Salam KP, Group Executive Director, Malabar Group; other directors, Management Team Members, media & well-wishers. The grand launch of the new store is witnessed by a huge gathering. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has extended its presence in the Kuala Lumpur by opening its new showroom in Jalan Bunus, Off Jalan Masjid India to cater to the increasing footfall and demand for the brand. The new

store is located opp. to May Bank. This is the second store of Malabar Gold & Diamonds at Jalan Masjid India.

The brand new outlet unveils a significantly large collection of traditional as well as contemporary designer jewelries. The exquisite range of collections in the new outlet can hold you spell-bound with their awe-inspiring beauty and classic designs.

Like all their other outlets, this outlet also will exhibit a wide range of diverse and trendy designs in gold (18K, 22K & 24K), IGI certified diamonds and precious gem jewelry from Italy, Singapore, Bahrain, India and other countries. Malabar Gold & Diamonds offers the exquisite and beautiful jewelry as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia - Gem Jewelry and Starlet - Kids Jewelry.

Special inaugural offers were announced by Malabar Gold & Diamonds on the occasion of the showroom opening. Customers will get a special gift for all the jewelry purchases until 09th Dec. Customers also get a 'Scratch & Win' coupon with every Diamond jewelry purchase for a guaran-



teed cashback or up to 100 percent cashback can be won, thus making every customer a winner. Customers also get buy their favorite gold jewelry for a making charges starting from RM 2 onwards. These offers are valid until 13th January in both stores of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Kuala Lumpur. A true shopper's delight, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled a huge collection of jewelry in gold, diamonds and precious gems from different parts of the world to enthrall the

jewelry lovers.

Malabar Group is establishing its presence known in the Far East with the second showroom in Malaysia as well as its new showroom in Singapore. The group strives to continue embarking on its journey by further expanding in the near future. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been at the forefront in gold jewelry manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing and plans on being the 'most-preferred' jewelry retailer in the market.

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah weekly draw on the 9th of December 2018 announcing the names of its winners for the week from the 2nd December till the 6th of December 2018, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

- Bassam Hashsh Abbas Al-Enezi
- Fuad Mohammad Jawad Habbab Al-Quraini
- Esahq Mandani Abdulatif

- Hameed Mansour Mohammad Hussain Al-Nasser
- Sawsan Jassim Al-Hatem

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 1st quarterly draw for KD 200,000 prize was held on 28 March, and the 2nd Al-Danah quarterly draw, for the prize of KD 250,000 was held on 27th June and the 3rd quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 was held on 26th September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1 million will be held on the 10th January 2019, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) Service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit

money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their daily, weekly and yearly chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2018 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Health & Science

Mukwege: Congo's 'Dr Miracle' heals victims of sexual atrocity

'When one does not fight against an evil, it is like a cancer'

KINSHASA: In the Democratic Republic of Congo, they call him "Doctor Miracle" for his surgical skill and dedication in helping women overcome the injuries and trauma of sexual abuse and rape. Denis Mukwege is a crusading gynecologist who has spent more than two decades treating appalling injuries inflicted on women in the DRC.

He has also emerged as an excoriating critic of President Joseph Kabila, set to be replaced in pivotal elections on December 23. A father of five, the tireless 63-year-old is an outspoken critic of the abuse of women in war and impunity for perpetrators. He has repeatedly accused the world of failing to act. "When one does not fight against an evil, it is like a cancer, it spreads and destroys the whole society," he told AFP in a weekend interview.

The 2018 Nobel Peace laureate, who shares the prize with Yazidi activist Nadia Murad, has dedicated his award to all victims of sexual violence. Mukwege's Panzi hospital has treated tens of thousands of victims of sexual violence in his war-weary native province of South Kivu, part of an eastern region riven by a conflict involving government forces and countless rebel groups. His work was the subject of an acclaimed 2015 film titled "The Man Who Mends Women".

"Denis Mukwege is the foremost, most unifying symbol, both nationally and internationally, of the struggle to end sexual violence in war and armed conflicts," Nobel committee chairwoman Berit Reiss-Andersen said when the award was announced in October. Mukwege resists talking of his work in terms of statistics, because "each woman raped is one woman too many," and he fears people have become desensitized to the swelling toll. But he said his hospital alone has treated more than 50,000 women and girls for injuries from sexual violence, while stressing that this is "just the tip of the iceberg".

'Atrocities on women's bodies'

In his French autobiography titled "Plaidoyer pour la Vie" (Plea for Life), Mukwege relates the "depths of horror" he encountered in South Kivu. Mukwege recounted how rapists had inserted a gun into a woman's vagina and

fired. "Her whole pelvis was destroyed. I thought it was the work of a madman, but the same year I treated 45 similar cases," he said of the incident in 1999 — the year he set up Panzi hospital in the provincial capital Bukavu.

"I have witnessed mass atrocities committed against women's bodies and I cannot remain with my arms folded because our common humanity calls on us to care for each other." The 450-bed Panzi hospital treats more than 3,500 women a year, though not all for sexual abuse. It provides free consultations and performs reconstructive surgery on women who have suffered serious internal injuries. Mukwege's work has also put his own life on the line. He narrowly escaped an attack in October 2012 in which his guard was killed. He now lives under the permanent protection of UN peacekeepers at his hospital.

Tireless campaigner

Aid agencies have accused all sides in the conflicts that have ravaged the eastern regions of North Kivu and South Kivu of using "systematic rape" against women as a weapon of war. Mukwege told AFP such attacks have increased since 2016 and more and more victims are children. Up to seven percent of rape victims at his hospital are now infants — up from around three percent. "I believe that in my life I have never been as disturbed, shocked, I don't have the words. When you see an innocent little baby, but bloody, with her genitals shredded, you ask yourself questions about humanity."

"How could we get to this point? What happens to humans who have no rules? It has no limit." As well as his tireless medical work, Mukwege has fronted a worldwide campaign against trade in conflict diamonds and minerals. "The products of this looting, well we all have them in our pockets," he told reporters at a press conference on Sunday. "We all have a responsibility here." He expressed concern that this month's elections could spark further violence. DR Congo has not known a peaceful transition of power since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960. After Mukwege's Nobel award was announced, DR Congo authorities congratulated him for his "very important work", but accused him of mixing humanitarian work and politics.



Many awards

Born on March 1, 1955, in Bukavu, the third of nine children, Mukwege was inspired to become a doctor by his father, a pastor who used to visit the sick. After studying medicine in neighboring Burundi, he returned to work at Lemera hospital, south of Bukavu, before pursuing specialist training in gynaecology in France.

Levi Luhiriri, who works as a doctor at the hospital, said

Mukwege was fair but tough and strived for internationally recognised standards. He has been honored by the United Nations and has received many other international awards, including the Olof Palme Prize in January 2009 and the Sakharov Prize in 2014. In September 2016, he also won the Seoul Peace Prize. Like with his other awards, Mukwege said his share of the Nobel Peace Prize money — around half a million dollars — will go to his Panzi Foundation. — AFP

France: Protests no excuse to curb climate battle

KATOWICE: France said yesterday at the UN climate talks it fears certain countries will exploit the "yellow vest" protests to curb their ambitions in the fight against global warming. The "yellow vests", clad in the luminous safety jackets carried by law in all French cars, began

slowing or blocking traffic on roads around France last month in protest against anti-pollution fuel tax hikes.

The demonstrations have snowballed, leading to calls to topple French President Emmanuel Macron, accused of favoring the rich. "It would be dangerous to blame the environment for this entire crisis. It's a broader political, economic and social problem," said Brune Poirson, French secretary of state for ecological transition. She spoke to reporters on the margins of the UN climate talks in Katowice, Poland, adding that she was notably there "to help countries decode" the situation in France.

"The 'yellow vest' movement is much broader and goes way beyond the single issue of ecological transition,

so I believe one should not conflate things," Poirson said. "The risk is that other countries... will use what happened in France and reduce it to a question of ecological transition and a poorly received carbon tax in order to also curb their ambitions regarding the climate."

Conceding the need to figure out a way to transition to clean energy "in the fairest way possible", Poirson said "the end goal remains the same, namely to get over our oil dependence and speed up the ecological transition". Officials from nearly 200 countries are meeting in Katowice until the end of the week to try to flesh out the promises agreed in the 2015 Paris climate accord.

The Paris deal saw nations agree to limit global tem-

perature rises to below two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) and under 1.5C if possible. The UN's expert climate panel in October warned that fossil fuel emissions must be halved by 2030 to have any hope of reaching the 1.5C goal by the end of the century. US President Donald Trump on Saturday cited the French protests as proof that he was right to reject the Paris agreement on fighting climate change. "Maybe it's time to end the ridiculous and extremely expensive Paris Agreement and return money back to the people in the form of lower taxes?" Trump tweeted. Polish President Andrzej Duda for his part said: "We can't enforce climate policies that go against the will of the people." — AFP

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- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Telephone: 1802 555 **@daralshifa**
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American
Board in Pediatrics-Canadian
Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368 **Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B**

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com **Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228** Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

What's On



ACIC commemorates the 2018 International Day of Persons with Disabilities at Avenues

Ahli Capital Investment Company (ACIC), the investment arm of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) celebrated International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) amidst children and members from the local non-profit organization - 'Training Gate International' at Phase 2 Avenues Mall from the 1st to 3rd December. It witnessed overwhelming participation of physically disabled people, senior citizens, and school children.

Observed globally on 3rd December every year, the 2018 theme for IDPD is 'Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'. Building on the theme, ACIC employees volunteered to work with the organizers, Training Gate International to present a variety of activities including a painting section for children, a walkathon and a remarkable musical performance by a blind pianist.

Furthermore, with the aim of removing barriers that people living with

disabilities face, the event also included a special section where ACIC employees invested time in teaching attendees to introduce themselves in sign language. The three-day event organized by Training Gate International served as an ideal platform aligning with the ABK Group's commitment to support the disabled and making a difference in the communities in which it operates. ACIC is honored to be associated with this noble cause.

AUK Arabic debate team wins second place at debate championship

The American University of Kuwait (AUK) Arabic Debate Team won second place at the National Championship for Universities and Colleges Debates in Arabic, which took place at Kuwait International Law School. Coached and trained by AUK Associate Professor of Arabic, Dr Khitam Al-Khouli, and AUK Associate Professor of Near & Middle Eastern Studies, Dr Abdulrahman Al-Farhan, the group of AUK students competed with 15 other universities and colleges from all over Kuwait in an intense 2-day event.

Some of the topics discussed included social, medicinal, economic, and environmental topics. AUK's participating students included: Mona Singer, Amal Singer, Rawan Bou Taiban, Ali Al-Qallaf,

Zahraa Mohammed, Yousef Al-Sahhaf, Sabah Al-Sabah, Ahmed Bin Sleem, and Nasser Al-Mutairi.

Dean of Student Affairs at AUK, Dr Hanan Muzaffar, attended the closing ceremony to support the AUK team; she expressed her happiness with their outstanding performance, "The success of our students is admirable, I am truly proud of their level of sportsmanship, commitment, and overall achievements throughout the 2-day debate. We look forward to future progress and wish the AUK team the best of luck at the competition in Qatar," said Dr Muzaffar. The team is among four other qualifying teams to represent Kuwait in the 5th annual International Universities Arabic Debate Competition that will take place in Qatar in March, 2019.



Conference by the Kuwaiti Surgeons Association



Surgeons participated in the activities of the second conference of the Kuwait Surgeons Association. This year's conference was established under the slogan "Safe Surgery" and was held in cooperation with the American College of Surgeons and the Association of Arab Surgeons, with the attendance of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery and the founder of the Women's Surgery Association and the recipient of the American Service Award Patrishanuman and her daughter. Several discussions were held during the conference such as promoting communication between surgeries in Kuwait and those around the world as well as addressing the experiences and attempts to support complex surgeries both locally and internationally.



LAPA concludes activities of the F.A.D Festival

The LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) concluded its four-day event F.A.D at the LOYAC headquarters from 8:30 pm to 10 pm under the auspices and presence of EU Ambassador Michael Corvin, IKEA Board of Directors member Marino Magento and the Ambassador of South Africa Mosleisa Bona. The concert was hosted by Kuwaiti artist Daffy and Lebanese artist Carole Sooky in a distinct and youthful atmosphere. The crowd consisted of people from a variety of ages and ethnicities who greatly enjoyed the performances during the festival. The activities from the festival lasted five days. Along with the performances, numerous competitions and contests were held that highlighted the importance of recycling and maintaining a clean and safe environment. The Chairman of the Board of Directors of LOYAC welcomed the attendees and thanked the jury members, the Chairman of the Organizing Committee Tenni Maten and all the organizers of the festival. They all praised the hard work and the parents for their continued support in all the activities of LAPA.



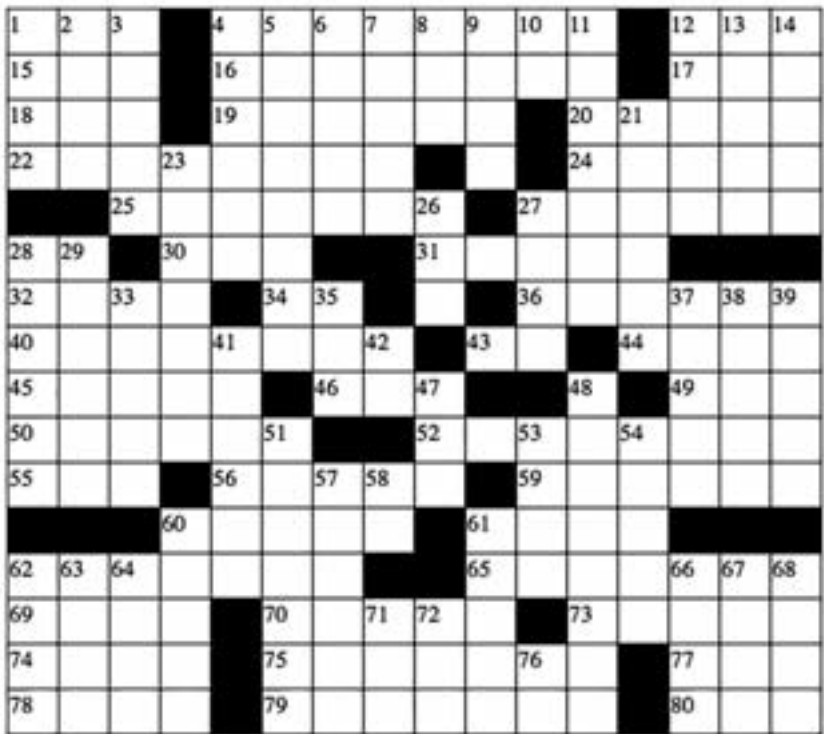
Burgan Bank sponsors the 'Kids in Action' Marathon

Burgan Bank is delighted to announce its sponsorship of the 'Kids in Action' Super Race Marathon as part of its drive to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle. As part of the partnership with 'Kids in Action' club, the first 50 BuBa Kids Account customers that register for the marathon will receive a discounted ticket of KD 10 per person. The marathon will take place on 15 December from 9:30 AM to 12 PM at Al Rashdan tracks in Kaifan.

'Kids in Action' Super Race Marathon is a Superhero themed race for kids aged 4-10 aimed at instilling a passion for sports from an early age. This year, it will attract more than 250 participants and their parents, who will also enjoy the activities held during the day. The race is divided into age groups wherein each group will compete for the top three winner's trophies.

BuBa Kids Account aims at providing creative solutions for parents who want to earn more from their savings for their children while also enjoy a wide range of benefits. The BuBa Kids Account is a savings account, with the minimum opening balance of KD 10. Children, up to 14 years old, will also enjoy special offers and promotions throughout the year as well as attractive discounts at selected merchants across Kuwait.

CROSSWORD 2081



ACROSS

- 1. Not divisible by two.
- 4. Any of several cultivated sour cherry trees bearing pale red fruit with colorless juice.
- 12. A light touch or stroke.
- 15. Liquid excretory product.
- 16. An order of monocotyledonous plants including Amaryllidaceae and Liliaceae and Iridaceae.
- 17. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
- 18. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
- 19. A full supply.
- 20. Brought from wildness into a domesticated state.
- 22. Large rattlesnakes.
- 24. A native or inhabitant of Iran.
- 25. Someone who recites from memory.
- 28. A doctor's degree in optometry.
- 30. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
- 31. Muslims collectively and their civilization.
- 32. (British) A simple board game in which players move counters according to the throw of dice.
- 34. A public promotion of some product or service.
- 36. a person who has received a degree from a school (high school or college or university).
- 40. Advancing as if in the game of leapfrog.
- 43. A hard brittle blue-white multivalent metallic element.
- 44. A city in northeastern Egypt at the head of the Gulf of Suez and at the southern end of the Suez Canal.
- 45. Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
- 46. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
- 49. A vacuum tube in which a hot cathode emits a beam of electrons that pass through a high voltage anode and are focused or deflected before hitting a phosphorescent screen.
- 50. The process of remembering (especially the process of recovering information by mental effort).
- 52. Tending to soothe or tranquilize.
- 55. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
- 56. Gracefully slender.
- 59. Conducive to peace.
- 62. Tree of the genus Catalpa with large leaves and white flowers followed by long slender pods.
- 65. The god who fathered the islands and gods of Japan with his sister Izanami.
- 69. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- 70. (Greek mythology) A giant Boeotian hunter who pursued the Pleiades and was eventually slain by Artemis.
- 73. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
- 74. Large luxurious car.
- 75. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- 77. European strong-scented perennial herb with gray-green bitter-tasting leaves.
- 78. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
- 79. A member of the Siouan people formerly inhabiting the Black Hills of western South Dakota.
- 80. A doctor's degree in education.

DOWN

- 1. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- 2. Distinguished from Bovidae by the male's having solid deciduous antlers.
- 3. Decoration consisting of the layout and furnishings of a livable interior.
- 4. Wool of the alpaca.
- 5. A unit of atmospheric pressure equal to one thousandth of a bar.
- 6. A member of the people inhabiting the Aleutian Islands and western Alaska.
- 7. A liquid preparation used on wet hair to it a tint.
- 8. Take in solid food.
- 9. (Welsh) Corresponds to Iris Ler.
- 10. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- 11. (rare) Of or occurring in summer.
- 12. Any of various hard resins from trees of the family Dipterocarpaceae and of the genus Agathis.
- 13. A particular environment or walk of life.
- 14. Make difficult to perceive by sight.
- 21. Genus of large brown long-billed wading birds found in warm swampy regions of the Western Hemisphere.
- 23. Australian evergreen shrubs.
- 26. Support resembling the rib of an animal.
- 27. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
- 29. A person who fights duels.
- 33. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- 35. A licensed medical practitioner.
- 37. A nitrogenous substance found in mucous secretions.
- 38. Italian architect who pioneered in the use of reinforced concrete (1891-1979).
- 39. A member of the Nahuatl people who established an empire in Mexico that was overthrown by Cortes in 1519.
- 41. Cheap showy jewelry or ornament or clothing.
- 42. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- 47. A fatal disease of cattle that affects the central nervous system.
- 48. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
- 51. An African river.
- 53. Portuguese explorer who in 1488 was the first European to get round the Cape of Good Hope (thus establishing a sea route from the Atlantic to Asia) (1450-1500).
- 54. The time of life between the ages of 12 and 20.
- 57. A member of a nomadic Berber people of the Sahara.
- 58. A period of time equal to 1/24th of a day.
- 60. A wealthy man (who made his fortune in the Orient).
- 63. An elaborate song for solo voice.
- 64. Russian physicist (1895-1971).
- 66. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- 67. Cheap showy jewelry or ornament or clothing.
- 68. Made agreeably cold (especially by ice).
- 71. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- 72. A slippery or viscous liquid or liquefiable substance not miscible with water.
- 76. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, this is not a great time to make changes nor decisions regarding your career. These issues are better being dealt with at a later date. This is a time of nostalgia for you. A sense of roots and where you actually came from seems to be on your mind. You desire to know more about your family history. Who were your ancestors and what adversity did they face in their lives? This is something that is on your mind and you may find yourself starting to research this. You want to feel as if you belong on an intimate and private level with those close to you. You may feel as if your actions of today could affect the future of family members yet to come. You are determined to leave a positive impression on this world.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you have friends of all ages, all walks of life, all cultures, and different races. You may find this to be a very healthy environment. It is always beneficial to try to see things from others perspectives. This evening could find you exchanging ideas and obtaining other's outlooks on life. This is a very enlightening time for you. Always keep an open mind. Knowledge is power and you can gain much seeing things through other's eyes. Enjoy your evening with friends, Taurus. You may find this to be a great time and a wonderful learning experience for you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, a great time to reflect and understand your situation and your position in life. You may find you feel good about who you are. You have come a long way. There have been obstacles and road blocks in your path. You have successfully been able to turn the stumbling blocks into stepping stones, along the way. This seems to be a time you long to surround yourself with friends and may feel as if this is where you are more comfortable. A need for change may arise. Make sure the decisions you make now are positive, and well thought out.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you may feel secure in your position in life. You may find a career opportunity comes your way. Status and stability are two things you need to take into consideration when making this decision. You have to find a comfortable balance between family and work life. You may find this opportunity is a great one, but at what cost? This is a time to rethink your finances and investments. Put deep thought into your decision and always keep your family first. Family will be your support long after a job has come and gone. Remember, Cancer, money can not buy happiness.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, when your friends think about the one person they can always depend on, they think of you. When there is a problem you are the "go to" friend to all. You are very solution oriented. You are always willing to lend a helping hand. You may find someone is very sympathetic of the situation this puts you in and reaches out to assist you today. Accept the help, Leo. No one person can do it all, nor does anyone expect them to.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, today finds you ready to take care of business. You crave organization and practicality. You have set your goals, made your list, and are ready to set out to conquer the world. There is a place for everything and everything has a place as far as you are concerned. You will not stop until you have things just where you want them. You find yourself focused on your health, also. This is a time you know you cannot achieve your goals unless you are at your best. Eat your Wheaties.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today may bring an opportunity to have a special time with a love one. This may you lead to emotion on a deeper level with this person. Feelings and emotions, you have been craving will be met and satisfied by this interaction. You have been feeling a need for an emotional connection and strong support from someone near to you. As independent as you are there is a desire to know someone has your back and will be there to support you for the long haul. Your timing is perfect, and others are drawn to your mood as today you are spontaneous and full of life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, it is ok to be different. Others seem to find you witty and eccentric. It seems many answers to problems you have been facing may come to you easily today. You grow to appreciate your responsibilities. You know you have been assigned duties because you are trusted. Your hard work is paying off. You may find the harder you work the more responsibility is placed on you. This may be a blessing and a curse in a way. Is your reward for hard work, more hard work? This will pay off in the end. You will be admired for your dedication and may be offered a new position.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, you have a lot of energy today. You may be tempted to turn it on yourself with negative conversations about you. That's counter-productive. Focus your energy on someone else you have positive feelings about, and both of you will benefit. Every encounter is an opportunity to affirm and encourage. The results may surprise you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, resist the urge to act on just a hunch. This could lead to big trouble if you do not take the time to do research and find out all of the facts. Acting with research on this one could leave you in quite a mess. You had rather be safe than sorry. You may find yourself in a situation you could be in over your head before you even realize it. If it seems to good to be true, it usually is. That is the case with something you will face today. You may feel a great desire for travel and adventure. If you stop and take time to think about this, it is really not a great time in your life right now, Capricorn. Sit back and take a deep breath and try to slow down a bit.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, today finds you a wizard of words. Through your words you may be able to bring a group together. You are persuasive and captivating. Poetry and art would be wonderful outlets for self-expression now. You may feel as you are walking in a dream. An almost trance-like feeling comes over you. This is a good evening to find an escape, a good book or staying in and watching a movie would be a great way to spend your evening. Even if a long bath is the route you choose find a way to have a relaxing evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, if it can go wrong, it will. That seems to be the way things are going today. You may feel like going back home and crawl back in bed. Today finds you very sensitive. Old habits die hard and you seem to be struggling with some bad ones today. You feel a lack of support and may find yourself clashing with someone younger. You will have to gather your strength and face each problem as they come. Find a way to relieve stress this evening. You need to relax and rejuvenate.

Wordsearch Puzzle

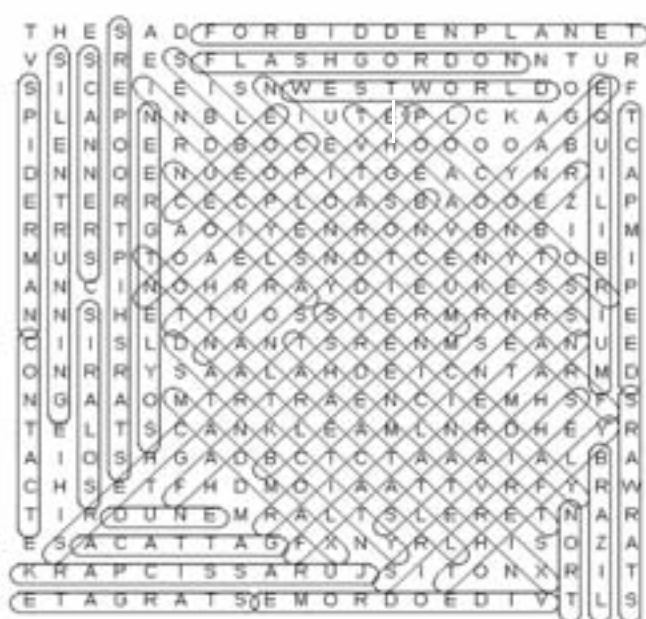
Movies: Science Fiction 2

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.



- ABON FLUX
- ALIEN NATION
- ALIENS
- ARMAGEDDON
- AVATAR
- CLOVERFIELD
- DARK STAR
- DEATH RACE
- DEJA VU
- DONNIE DARKO
- FLATLINERS
- FREEJACK
- FREQUENCY
- GAMER
- GODZILLA
- HULK
- INCEPTION
- IRON MAN
- JUMPER
- KING KONG
- KNOWING
- MEN IN BLACK
- MMSC
- MOON
- OUTBREAK
- OUTLAND
- PANDORUM
- PREDATOR
- PUSH
- RED PLANET
- ROLLERBALL
- SCANNERS
- SERENITY
- SIGNS
- SLEEPER
- SLITHER
- SPECIES
- SPHERE
- STAR TREK
- SUNSHINE
- SUPERMAN
- THE ABYSS
- TIMECOP
- TIMECRIMES
- TRANSFORMERS
- WATCHMEN
- ZARDOZ

Movies: Science Fiction



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

Hidden movie: THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKARDO BANZAI ACROSS THE EIGHTH DIMENSION

Daily SuDoku

	3				9	2
			9	6		1
					2	3
3	8					6
	5		7		6	2
2						5
8		3	2			
	9			7	5	
5	1					8

Yesterday's Solution

2	3	5	8	7	9	1	4	6
8	7	4	6	1	5	9	2	3
1	9	6	4	3	2	7	8	5
5	2	7	3	4	1	8	6	9
6	4	9	2	8	7	5	3	1
3	8	1	5	9	6	2	7	4
9	5	3	7	2	4	6	1	8
4	1	2	9	6	8	3	5	7
7	6	8	1	5	3	4	9	2

Yesterday's Solution

B	A	H	T		L	A	B	L	A	B		C	A	R	T
O	K	E	H		C	R	E	E	P	S		A	S	H	Y
L	E	A	R		D	U	R	A	L		U	L	C	E	R
T	E	P	E	E		B	E	F	O	G		L	I	A	O
	S	A	B	B	A	T		M	A	T	A	I			
S	C		D	N	A			A	B	I	E	S		B	I
H	I	S	S		C	H	A	D		A	S		U	R	N
E	C	T			K	E	B	A	B		T	E	N	I	A
B	A	O	B	A	B		A	D		B	A	T	A	A	N
A	L	P	A	C	A					H	A	C	H	U	R
T	A	S	M	A	N		P	I	N	C	E	R			
			A	D	D	L	E	D		K	A	I	S	E	R
A	W	A	K	E			S	A	N	D		L	U	B	A
C	H	R	O	M	A	T	E		A	R	A		E	L	M
T	A	G		I	C	E	W	A	G	O	N		D	I	E
H	M	O		A	T	T	A	C	A	P	A		E	S	E

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2018



This photo shows competitors taking part in a chilli pepper eating contest in a hot spring filled with chilli peppers in the Mingyue Qiangui Scenic Area in Wentang Town, Yichun City, in China's central Jiangxi Province. The winner took one minute to eat 20 peppers. — AFP



A pile of items made from bomb shrapnel by villagers in Ban Napia, Laos.



A villager fashions items from bomb shrapnel at her kiln in Ban Napia, Laos.



Toui Bounmy Sidavong, 43, holds a bomb dropped by the US Air Force planes during the Vietnam War, in the village of Ban Napia, Laos.



A man makes spoons by melting the bombs dropped by the US Air Force planes during the Vietnam War, in the village of Ban Napia in Xieng Khouang Province, Laos.

Turning bombs into bracelets, as Laos villagers wait for safe land

With a long-stemmed ladle, Vanthou pulls shiny, molten metal from a kiln and deftly pours it into a mold carved in a wooden block. Seconds later, she prises out a silver coloured dove that was once shrapnel from a bomb dropped in Ban Napia village in the north eastern province of Xieng Khouang in Laos, the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world.

Vanthou, who goes by one name, grows rice in a small plot of land a short distance away. But the ornaments and jewelry made from scrap metal in the small kiln at home provide her husband with an income. For the dozen families in the village who fashion jewelry from shrapnel for the New York-based company Article 22, it is a curious twist to the devastating war - one that helps them make a living from bombs, as they wait for their land to be cleared. "Our field has not yet been cleared of bombs, so this is our main source of income for now," said Vanthou, gesturing to a pile of finished doves.

"We have to be careful while farming, and hope that a bomb does not go off. When the land is cleared, we can farm more." The United States dropped more than two million tons of cluster bombs on Laos during the second Indochina War from 1964 to 1973, to disrupt supply routes to North Vietnam. About 30 percent of those bombs did not detonate, and still pose the risk of death or injury to villagers as they go about their daily routines, according to Mines Advisory Group (MAG), a British charity that clears unexploded ordnance (UXO).

MAG estimates that about 1,600 square km (618 square miles) of land - roughly the size of Greater London - still needs clearing in Laos, one of the world's poorest countries. Meanwhile, UXO contamination prevents Lao communities from "fully utilizing their land" and earning better incomes, according to MAG. "People have been living with the contamination for 40 years, and they have no choice but to live with the daily risk and fear of death or injury from unexploded bombs," said Greg Crowther, MAG's Southeast Asia director. UXO-impacted communities are "predominantly the poorest members of society", and the risk of bombs forces them to adopt different farming practices that often reduce the productivity of their crops, he said.

the landlocked Southeast Asian country depends on the land for a living, according to government data. Many farm small plots of land that they do not legally own. The government aims to title all land by 2025, and introduce a new law that officials say will expedite modernization of records and give greater tenure security.

The country is also luring more foreign investment to build much-needed infrastructure and generate jobs, but most villagers have few livelihood options, particularly in Xieng Khouang, where much of the land is still off-limits because of the bombs. Elizabeth Suda, founder of Article 22, first visited the province about a decade ago while exploring a sustainable weaving venture with local women. It was there that Suda, who had previously worked with a luxury brand in New York, came across villagers melting bomb shrapnel into spoons that they would use and sell in the local market. She said she had an "a-ha moment".

"I thought, why not take a weapon of destruction and turn it into a symbol of love that has a positive impact on the community?" she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "These are subsistence farmers; having their land cleared makes a big difference. But until then, they can earn a living making jewelry from shrapnel they find." Suda founded Article 22 in 2009, named for the clause in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that says every individual is entitled to the realization of "economic, social and cultural rights" indispensable for his or her dignity and personality.

After partnering with Swiss non-profit Helvetas, Suda set out on her own, selling online and through a few retail outlets, including one in Luang Prabang, Laos' former royal capital that the UN cultural agency considers a world heritage site. Suda works with about a dozen families in Xieng Khouang, sending designs for earrings, pendants and ornaments that the villagers fashion in their kilns. They are finished in capital Vientiane, then shipped to New York. Article 22 only works with shrapnel, or bombs that have already exploded, so the villagers are not at risk, Suda said. The metal has been tested for toxicity and found to be safe. Some of the profits are donated to MAG to clear UXOs.

War tourism

Unlike neighboring Vietnam, which draws millions of tourists each year keen to visit sites related to the war with the United States, Laos has few Instagram-ready war attractions. In villages

in Xieng Khouang, remnants of the "secret war" are largely articles of everyday use - mugs and buckets fashioned from shell casings, ladles from shrapnel. Article 22 received a huge boost when actor Emma Watson wore a pair of its earrings at a red carpet event in 2017. There is little glamour in Ban Napia, whose sign declares it to be the "war spoon village".

Simple wood and concrete homes sit on either side of a mud road. Some have a hand-painted sign that says "making spoon", with a name and a phone number. Demining is a slow and expensive process, and at the current pace, experts say it could be more than 100 years before Laos is safe. While waiting for their land to be cleared, villagers in Ban Napia and elsewhere in Xieng Khouang will probably continue to supplement their income with articles made from shrapnel, said Nouds Phedrasay, a tourist guide.

"In the years after the war, they had nothing, and had to make do with whatever they could find - including shell casings and shrapnel," he said. "Now, it's a business, and they are aware of the irony. But it is just a way to make some money." — Reuters

Jewelry, branded "Article22", made from bomb shrapnel are displayed in a store in Luang Prabang, Laos. — Reuters photos



Green Day working on new music

Green Day are working on new music. Frontman Billie Joe Armstrong subtly announced he's penning new tracks for his band in a response to a fan's comment on Instagram recently. He wrote: "I'm writing new songs for gd now." The 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams' hitmaker took a break from the band to work on his latest side project, The Longshot, who released their debut studio album 'Love is for Losers' April. The 46-year-old rocker has a long history of forming side projects, he's also a member of Pinhead Gunpowder, Foxboro Hot Tubs and The Network. However, he has now returned to work on the first new music from the punk rock band since 2016's 'Revolution Radio'. Last year, it was revealed the band had brought an end to their 21-year relationship with long-time manager Pat Magnarella. The 'Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)' rockers first started working with him in 1996 after the release of their now-iconic album 'Dookie',

and he was at the helm to oversee the band's career as they went from strength to strength with hit singles like 'American Idiot', 'Holiday', 'Warning' and 'Revolution Radio'. The trio - completed by Mike Dirnt and Tre Cool - are now signed with Jonathan Daniel at Crush Music, who looks after huge artists such as Lorde, Fall Out Boy and Sia. Mangarella also worked with Green Day as a producer on many of their side projects, including the official cast album for the 'American Idiot' musical. The management boss - who has worked with the likes of Goo Goo Dolls, All-American Rejects and AFI - also ran Billie's own independent record label Adeline Records. Daniel established Crush in 2003 and in the last 14 years the roster has expanded to include the likes of Courtney Love, Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness, Panic! at the Disco and many more.

Glynnne and The Human League to headline Camp Bestival 2019

Jess Glynnne and The Human League will headline Camp Bestival 2019. The 'Thursday' singer - who will have a busy summer ahead with her Spice Girls support tour - and 'Don't You Want Me' hitmakers will close the Castle Stage on July 27th and July 26th respectively, when the music extravaganza returns to the beautiful setting of Lulworth Castle in Dorset, South West England, next summer. They will be joined on the stellar line-up by the likes of Sister Sledge, Big Shaq, Vengaboys, The Wailers, Goldie, David Rodigan, Sara Cox and Melanie C's 90s Mixtape, who are performing across the jam-packed weekend. The festival's curators, Josie and Rob da Bank, said: "Step up the brave and the perilous, courageous and noble, those with superhuman powers or those powering everyday heroic deeds, "Camp Bestival is back with a bang and we're over-the-moon to announce our return with the best and biggest line-up to date in 2019. "Expect magical mania, brimmed with momentous music, phenomenal feast-worthy food and exciting experiences suited for everyone, whether you're aged eight or 80!" This year, the family-friendly event has a theme of superheroes, heroes and heroines, and there are plenty of activities to keep the young ones amused with their famous family raves and silent discos returning. Last year, Rick Astley, Simple Minds and Clean Bandit headlined across the three days of music. The festival also saw music legend Brian Wilson perform Beach Boys' biggest hits in front of a sun-kissed crowd. Further line-up announcements will be made in the coming months including Sunday's headliner.



James Arthur is taking acting lessons



James Arthur has started taking acting lessons. The 'Say You Won't Let Go' hitmaker might have made his name as a musician after winning 'The X Factor' in 2012, but he has admitted a career switch is one of his big dreams and he's already working towards it. He told the Daily Star newspaper: "I've taken a couple of acting lessons. I've had people reach out and ask me if I want to come to auditions." Although James - who is currently working on his latest record - recently teamed up with 'X Factor' winner Dalton Harris on 'The Power of Love', he hasn't made his goal a secret. He added: "When people ask me what other goals I've got and what are the ambitions I've got, it's definitely acting." It comes after the 30-year-old star landed a cameo as himself in popular Brazilian soap opera 'O Tempo nao Para' ('Time Doesn't Stop'). The surprise role came after his hit song 'Naked' played in one of the scenes of the program and proved popular with bosses. News James is taking acting lessons comes after he revealed his plans to break into movies. The British star thinks his troubled past, which saw him struggle with suicidal thoughts after being dropped from Simon Cowell's Syco label in 2013, and his battle with a drug addiction, will allow him to take on a range of different roles. He said previously: "I want to become a Hollywood film star. I genuinely would love to be in some movies. I am a massive film geek and I love movies. "I have been through, and seen so many dramas and traumas, and been in so many situations that I can probably interpret a few different characters."



Rak-Su so proud to be in Coca-Cola Christmas ad

Rak-Su admit it was a childhood dream come true when they got to create a new remix of 'Holidays Are Coming' for the annual Coca-Cola Christmas advert. The 2017 'X Factor' winners - Ashley Fongho, Jamaal Shurland, Myles Stephenson and Mustafa Rahimtulla - were chosen by the soft drinks giant to give the classic festive jingle a fresh take and they are very proud to now be part of the TV tradition. Speaking to BANG Showbiz at Capital's Jingle Bell Ball, Myles, 27, said: "I think it's because of the Coca-Cola advert means so much to so many people, and it's literally just an advert but it kind of signifies so much. It's weird growing up watching the advert and then you are actually one day doing the advert. In that term it's amazing when you see the Christmas Coca-Cola truck on the advert it's mental. I remember when I was younger

seeing that it was mad and when it came down to Watford once and I got my mum to drop me down there and look at it. It's mad in that aspect, but apart from that Ashley likes to watch himself on TV apparently!" The foursome performed at the Jingle Bell Ball at The O2 on Saturday and were part of a line-up that included the likes of Ellie Goulding, Olly Murs, Rita Ora, Liam Payne, James Arthur and Anne-Marie amongst others. And the boys sent the crowd crazy with renditions of their hits 'Dimelo', 'I'm Feeling You', 'Mamacita' and 'I Want You To Freak'. And the group can't wait for 2019 to start so they can unveil new songs. When asked what fans can expect from Rak-Su in the New Year, Myles exclaimed: "More music!"

Paul Weller: I'm a better person sober

Paul Weller thinks he's a "better person" for giving up alcohol. The 'Changingman' singer quit booze eight years ago and though he had a "great time" when he was getting drunk, he found it made him feel more depressed and he doesn't miss feeling hungover the day after a heavy night. He said: "I miss the chaos sometimes. That moment of madness where you're all off your nut and everything is brilliant and a laugh. "But not enough to make me want to go back to it. "I'm a better person for it. I used to get such bad depression, genuine depression. "I can see now how booze was making that worse. "I had 35 years of it so I can't complain, but I don't miss it. I do not miss those hangovers." And the 60-year-old star thinks his drinking had a negative effect on his music. He said: "If I'm really honest, I spent most of the 10 years prior to [2008 album] '22 Dreams' drunk. "I had a great time. "I made a bit of music in between but I don't think of it as a sort of inspired time. "And there were some rubbish records around that time I made as well." After turning 60, Paul admits he's grown more reflective and is trying to "savour" every day. He said: "I got to 60 and thought, 'that's gone quick.' "My 20s seemed to last forever. "I was like, 'When is this going to be over?' But now every year goes flashing before my eyes." Out of that, I've learnt to try and savor life as much as I can and appreciate that."



Buckingham and Fleetwood Mac settle lawsuit

Lindsey Buckingham and Fleetwood Mac have settled their lawsuit over his dismissal from the band. The guitarist was sacked from the group in January and filed a lawsuit in October alleging breach of fiduciary duty and breach of oral contract but he has now revealed that they have settled the legal matter. Speaking in an interview with 'CBS This Morning', he said: "We've all signed off on something. I'm happy enough with it. I've not out there trying to twist the knife at all. I'm trying to look at this with some level of compassion, some level of wisdom." He also admitted that he has not spoken to any of his former bandmates - Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Christine McVie, and Stevie Nicks - since he was sacked but said that Christine recently reached out to him. He said: "I have had, only in the last couple of weeks, I have gotten an email, which I expected to get, from Christine McVie. She wrote me an email and basically said, 'Dearest Lindsey, just know that I had nothing to do with any of this. Know that I miss you so much.' She said, 'I believe deep in Stevie's heart that she would like you to come home.'" The 'Chain' group enlisted Crowded House's Neil Finn and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell to replace Lindsey on their upcoming tour. Fleetwood Mac previously stopped short of saying Lindsey was fired but admitted they "hit a brick wall" with him that wouldn't allow the band to "go forward" if he stayed. Mick said: "Words like 'fired' are ugly references as far as I'm concerned. "Not to hedge around, but we arrived at the

impasse of hitting a brick wall. "This was not a happy situation for us in terms of the logistics of a functioning band. To that purpose, we made a decision that we could not go on with him. "Majority rules in term of what we need to do as a band and go forward."



Ronson says Cyrus is 'one of the greatest voices' he's worked with

Mark Ronson thinks Miley Cyrus is "one of the greatest voices" he's ever worked with. The London-born star has joined forces with Miley, 26, for the new single 'Nothing Breaks Like A Heart' and for her new album, and Mark has hailed the talents of the American singer. Mark - who has previously worked with the likes of Amy Winehouse and Bruno Mars - shared: "We both knew there was chemistry there. That led me to work on Miley's record. She's really one of the greatest voices I've ever recorded." Mark - who split from his ex-wife, actress Josephine de La Baume, in 2017 - also opened up about the process of recording 'Nothing Breaks Like A Heart', saying the hit single "started to write itself". Speaking to The Sun newspaper, he explained: "I went through some s**t that meant the song started to write itself. "It had been a while since I tried Miley, and I was like, 'whatever'. She wrote right back." Mark also revealed the new single was much more straightforward to record than 'Uptown Funk', the chart-topping hit he recorded with Bruno Mars in 2014. The British star - who is producing Miley's next album - recalled: "The first day she came in, she recorded the chorus and wrote the verses. 'Uptown Funk' took seven months to write, so that's why I was so overjoyed to have something that felt so special."





NASA responds to Marvel fans' call to save Tony Stark

NASA has given advice to Marvel after fans called on them to help Tony Stark. The first trailer for 'Avengers: Endgame' saw Iron Man's alter ego - played by Robert Downey Jr - drifting through space after the ending to 'Infinity War' left him without the heroes turned to dust by Thanos and his own tech seemingly destroyed. After fans jokingly asked the real life space agency for help, NASA responded on Twitter and said: "Hey @Marvel, we heard about Tony Stark. 'As we know, the first thing you should do is listen in mission control for '@Avengers, we have a problem.' 'But if he can't communicate, then we recommend ground teams use all resources to scan the skies for your missing man.'" The character of Stark looks to be in a dire situation going into the fourth 'Avengers' movie, and co-writer Christopher Markus has confirmed fans won't know what to expect. He

said earlier this year: "[Endgame] doesn't do what you think it does. It is a different movie than you think it is...Also...[the deaths are] real. "I just want to tell you it's real, and the sooner you accept that, the sooner you will be able to move on to the next stage of grief." His collaborator Stephen McFeely added: "Put it this way. I think ['Infinity War'] is a fairly mature movie for a blockbuster. It's got a lot of fun in it, obviously, but boy, it gets very mature. "The second one is also mature. We're going to own these choices, and hopefully surprise and delight you and get you invested. It's by the same studio, the same filmmaking team. They were written at the same time, shot at the same time. "They're clearly connected, but they are definitely two different movies, one of which is dependent on what happened previous."

Birds of Prey title 'started as a cheeky little thing'



The title for 'Birds of Prey (And the Fantabulous Emancipation of Harley Quinn)' started out as a "cheeky little thing", according to the film's writer. Christina Hodson has revealed the origin of the upcoming movie's unlikely title, revealing that it started out as something of a tongue-in-cheek suggestion. Speaking to Collider, Christina explained: "I don't know if I'm officially allowed to say, but there's no reason why not ... It was an unofficial aka, when I wrote the script. I added it about a year or so ago, almost exactly as it is, just as an aka. "I didn't think we'd ever use it. We'd always used a working title, so I just had it as a cheeky little thing, on the front cover. And then, when we were talking about a title and brainstorming, we all kept drifting back to that one." Asked whether the title says a lot about the movie's tone, Christina replied: "Exactly!" 'Birds of Prey (And the Fantabulous Emancipation of Harley Quinn)' is a 'Suicide Squad' spin-off starring Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn. And the Australian actress recently revealed the title reflects the movie's playful tone. Margot - who starred as Harley in 2016's 'Suicide Squad' - said: "It's not gonna be ... it's not a very serious movie, so we thought the title should reflect that. 'Birds of Prey' makes it sound very serious, and then that, you know, that's kinda like Harley adding her, like, 'Hey, I'm in this too.'"



Ben Stiller: Cinema is not going to die

Ben Stiller remains confident cinema is "not going to die". The 53-year-old actor concedes that the industry is currently lagging behind streaming services like Netflix, but Ben is sure that cinema will rise once again in the coming years. He said: "It's a challenge, I know, because there's so much more content now. There's video games, Instagram, it's just so much harder to get people's attention. The world has really changed. "But cinema's not going to die, just like Kodak film hasn't died. We're all going to be fine." Ben acknowledged that TV shows are currently dominating the landscape. But the American star believes the situation is "cyclical" and he's confident that the movie business will soon regain prominence. He told the National newspaper: "Netflix, Showtime, HBO, people like that are doing that now. And creative people will always go to where they can do what they want to do. "Right now that's in TV. We're very fortunate that that outlet exists. I wish the movies would go back to where they were, and honestly I think they will. I don't think anything is permanent. It's cyclical. "It's like people said film, as a physical medium, was going to go away, and ... when the Golden Globes nominations were announced, Kodak did a tweet about all the ones that were shot on film, and it was a ridiculous number. "I don't think there will ever be a lack of an audience that wants to see films shot on film on a big screen, but right now we're in a cycle where the economics don't work."

Streep hails Cooper's directing skills

Meryl Streep has heaped praise on Bradley Cooper's directorial debut 'A Star Is Born'. The Academy Award-winning actress has hailed Bradley's approach to the drama movie, saying it was made in a very "self-assured" fashion. Meryl explained: "It's so breezily shot and it's so self-assured. It's not actorly shot. [Some] actors who make the transition to directing, they give the actors too much air. They don't cut as brutally as you need to in order to move the story. "To them, the character is more interesting than the forward movement of the story, the narrative. The movie's the thing. You're helping but the movie has to keep going. And Bradley ... he gave himself the stuff he needed and then he'd move off. ... kept it moving." He was on his own back a lot. I liked that. Made you in the thing. You were in the thing. Brilliant." Bradley - who also starred in the film - cast pop star Lady Gaga in the role of Ally Maine, a nightclub singer. And Meryl, 69, told The Hollywood Reporter that "nobody but Gaga" could have fulfilled the role. Meanwhile, Bradley recently admitted he relished the challenge of balancing acting and directing. Reflecting on the experience of making 'A Star Is Born', the Hollywood star said: "I've never been more fulfilled and have it feel more natural. I love acting, and I love acting and directing."



Rosamund Pike praised for war correspondent portrayal

Rosamund Pike "inherited Marie Colvin's body and spirit" in new movie 'A Private War'. The 39-year-old actress plays the lead role in the drama - based on the life of celebrated war correspondent Marie Colvin - and war photographer Paul Conroy, who worked with Colvin for many years, has praised the actress for her portrayal. He told The Hollywood Reporter: "Every step, look and gesture she made brought back, in cascading waves of familiarity, the Marie I had known and shared battlefields and bars with over the years. "Still reeling from the shock of the physical transformation of Rosamund, I was handed a pair of headphones by a producer and stood, transfixed, in front of a monitor and prepared to watch the dialogue scene. What happened next will stay with me forever. Rosamund was gone, transformed into someone I had known and loved for many years and my reaction was intensely physical, the hairs on my arms and neck rose, the tears welled in my eyes. Every note in her gravelly voice, the cadence, the rhythm of her American drawl, brought Marie back to me in ways too intangible for mere words to describe. "Rosamund inherited Marie's body and spirit, catching her ever so human traits of frailty and self-doubt, her ruthless determination to bear witness and act as a conduit for the voiceless, to a world often unprepared to listen." Paul - who spent time on the set of the Matthew Heineman-directed movie - also praised Jamie Dornan for his "wonderful" portrayal of him. He said: "Over the next two months of shooting Rosamund, and actor Jamie Dornan, who played my character (wonderfully I must add), offered me snapshots of our lives from a perspective rarely granted to many."



John Krasinski: Deaf actress was non-negotiable in A Quiet Place

John Krasinski wouldn't have filmed 'A Quiet Place' without using a deaf actress. The 39-year-old star says it was "non-negotiable" having someone with the disability in real life portraying Regan Abbott in the horror movie because they could be his "guide". Millicent Simmonds played the daughter of John and his wife Emily Blunt's characters Lee and Evelyn Abbott in the film, which follows the married couple who must protect their children - including son Marcus (Noah Jupe) - from monsters who are blind but have an acute sense of hearing. In an interview with Variety, he admitted: "It was a non-negotiable thing for me. "The more important reason to me was I needed a guide. "I was writing a movie about a family who had a deaf child, and I know nothing about that. "I needed someone to walk me through, 'What do you feel when you wake up in the morning to be the only person who can't hear in your family?'" One of the most rewarding experiences for Krasinski - who has daughters Hazel, four and two-year-old Violet with Emily - was filming in silence from the perspective of Simmonds', which made her mother burst into tears because it allowed her to experience just what it's like for her daughter to not hear. He admitted: "To see her mom come up to me crying as hard as she was, was the most moving experience. "She said, 'I've always wanted to know what the experience was with my daughter and I finally have it.'" The 'Office' actor previously admitted he doesn't think a film will ever have the same effect on him again. He said: "This movie has changed my life in every single way, not just my career; I've not given my total sense to anything before, and I don't mean that I've been lazy, but there was something extremely personal about this movie. I said to my wife, 'I don't think it ever will be like this again'. And my wife, who is a brilliant sage, said, 'Of course there won't. This is special and we did it together and there was something about it for your daughters.'



Egerton nervous around horses after set mishap



Taron Egerton is "quite nervous" around horses and was thrown by one of the beasts on the set of 'Robin Hood'. The 29-year-old actor had to learn to ride for his title role in 'Robin Hood' and he found it very "challenging", especially after being thrown off one of the creatures at the beginning of his lessons. He shared with Empire magazine: "Learning to ride was probably the most challenging thing. I'm actually quite nervous of horses and they sense that. I like things that I'm perched on the top of to be reliable and solid. I was thrown off the horse in the first couple of weeks, which was pretty intense. "But that's the joy of being an actor - having these new challenges to mount. Quite literally in this case." Taron also endured more "challenging" preparations in the form of archery. He said: "I trained in traditional Saracen archery with a recurve bow. You load alternating arrows on the opposite side of the bow, which allows you to hold another four in your hand at any one time, fire them, grab another four and repeat fire. "I was taught by a Danish guy, Lars Anderson - he's quite a stern taskmaster. "We spent quite a few hours together. It was very challenging." Taron had a slightly easier time with the fight scenes, thanks to his role in spy franchise 'Kingsman', but he still got accidentally hit on a few occasions. He said: "There's quite a lot of hand-to-hand combat in the film. "It's something I've done a lot of with 'Kingsman'. It's essentially choreography, the trick is making it edgy and like it's the first time you've done it - that involves a lot of rehearsal beforehand to make sure you can do it safely and also make it look real. I've been hit in the face many times." — Bang Showbiz



This picture shows spectators gathering outside Fred Brophy's boxing troupe tent in the Queensland town of Birdsville. — AFP photos



This picture shows Fred Brophy (right), owner of a boxing troupe, declaring the winner of a bout in his tent in the Queensland town of Birdsville.



A competitor getting ready for a fight in Fred Brophy's boxing troupe tent in the Queensland town of Birdsville.

Rumble in the Outback: Aussie boxing troupe keeps on swinging

When Fred Brophy bangs a drum on the floodlit stage outside his boxing tent, the large crowd gathered in front of him falls silent in rapt attention. Sporting a cowboy hat and a silky bright-red shirt, the tall and weathered 67-year-old looks every bit the showman. Brophy runs a boxing troupe—the last in Australia and one of the few left worldwide—travelling to outback towns where someone's always up for a fight. “I’ve been doing it since I’ve been five years of age. I was born into it,” Brophy tells AFP in a broad Australian accent in Birdsville, a remote town in the vast continent’s dry, dusty interior, around 1,500 kilometers (900 miles) west of Brisbane.

Having his own troupe is something of a family tradition, he explains. “Me father had one. Me grandfather had one. Me great-grandfather had one. So I’ve got one.” Brophy and his touring pugilists are on their annual pilgrimage to the Queensland outback spot where more than 6,000 people travel for days and weeks across Australia to attend the centuries-old two-day Birdsville Races. Racegoers, clutching beer cans while buffeted by dust and flies during the day, flock to Brophy’s big tent at night, eager for more action.

Lords of the ring

Back in the 1930s to 1950s, such tents were a fixture at county fairs and agricultural shows in the major cities, says Australian boxing author Grantlee Kieza. It gave aspiring boxers, particularly those from poor backgrounds, a chance to hone their skills in front of intimate yet boisterous crowds, pocket some money, and become the hometown hero. The troupes provided a foundation for some top Aboriginal boxers including Jack Hassen, George Bracken and Tony Mundine. One of the best-known tents was Jimmy Sharman’s troupe, which attracted young indigenous boys keen to earn some cash. But other forms of entertainment have since seduced spectators away from the ring.

“The great traditions of being outdoors on the frontiers of Australia changed to a more bohemian way I guess, and those sorts of manly rough sports began to decline in popularity,” author Kieza tells AFP. Health and safety concerns led most states and territories to ban the travelling show,

apart from Queensland and the Northern Territory. Brophy has refused to throw in the towel, and his endangered status has meant his show attracts many fans and brawler wannabes when he visits the Queensland countryside, drum in hand.



Brettlyn Neal “The Beaver” (center) fighting two women who jointly challenged her for a round in Fred Brophy’s boxing troupe tent.

Boxing’s ‘Wild West’

“It’s sort of like a carryover from the Wild West days, isn’t it, the idea of tent boxing. It suits the Wild West image of rural Queensland,” Kieza says. Brophy for one is happy to play up the image of the knockabout Australian outback maverick, immortalized in the “Crocodile Dundee” Hollywood films. He says he’s been wounded by a shotgun, had his fingers cut off and his teeth knocked out, but keeps going. “It’s 100 percent Australian. This is what Australians do. This is our entertainment,” he tells AFP. “If you’ve got a sheila who’s watching you, you fight better,” he adds, using a slang term for a woman. “You win the fight, you win the

sheila.” His tent is a political correctness-free zone. One Asian fighter is called Chopsticks. Another—not a small man—is named Tiny Tim. Popular tunes like “Down Under”—“where women glow and men plunder”—are blasted through speakers, and cowboy hat-wearing spectators

ness. Despite the tough image the tent serves up, its primary role remains entertainment, she says. “The number one thing is to make sure we put on a show—whether the crowd is cheering or booing.

Then we’ve done our job,” Neal tells AFP after two



This picture shows Fred Brophy (center right), who owns a boxing troupe, declaring the winner of a bout in his tent in the Queensland town of Birdsville.

squeeze onto long benches pressed up against the canvas. Anti-immigration politician Pauline Hanson is a recent Birdsville regular, and she was invited by Brophy to be the card girl this year to raucous cheers.

Irreverent spirit

And then there are “The B**ch” and “The Beaver”. When then 25-year-old Brettlyn Neal put her hand up to fight one of Brophy’s female boxers nicknamed “The B**ch” in 2010, he was so impressed by her performance she was offered a job. Neal took on the moniker “The Beaver” and now uses the visits to remote communities to help disadvantaged youth by promoting education and fit-

young women jointly challenged her, sending the packed tent into a frenzy. For another challenger, Leonie Hurst, the fight was one experience she’d wanted to tick off on her bucket list. In the irreverent spirit of the tent, Hurst wore a bright green floral T-shirt bearing an expletive-laden message while fighting “The Beaver”. “It’s really cool to be a part of—very nerve-wracking though. You sort of get in the ring and forget everything you’ve ever been trained to do, but it was still awesome,” she told AFP. “We’ll see about the headache tomorrow.” — AFP



On an otherwise quiet movie weekend, ‘Ralph’ wrecks it again

Disney’s “Ralph Breaks the Internet” has again topped North American box offices, taking in an estimated \$16.1 million for the weekend to narrowly edge out another family-oriented animation, Universal’s “The Grinch,” industry tracker Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. On a last quiet weekend before the coming crush of holiday films, the order of the top five films on this three-day weekend was, remarkably, exactly the same as last weekend.

“Ralph,” a family-friendly sequel to 2012’s “Wreck It Ralph” with the title character voiced by John C. Reilly, came in just ahead of “Grinch,” which sold \$15.7 million in tickets. Benedict Cumberbatch voices the grouchy Seuss-inspired title character in that film. In third spot again was MGM’s boxing drama “Creed II,” at \$10.3 million. This latest in the long-running “Rocky” series stars Michael B. Jordan as Adonis Creed as he-coached by the aging Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) — takes on the son of the boxer who killed his father.

Fourth place went to “Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald” from Warner Bros, with a take of \$6.8 million. The Harry Potter prequel stars Eddie Redmayne, Jude Law and Johnny Depp. And in fifth was Fox’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” at \$6 million. Rami Malek has drawn rave reviews for his portrayal of rock group Queen’s talented singer Freddie Mercury.

The coming weeks will see the release of some expected blockbusters, including “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse,” “The Mule,” “Mary Poppins Returns” and “Aquaman,” which scored a huge \$93.6 million over the weekend in China. Rounding out the weekend’s top 5 were:

- “Instant Family” (\$5.6 million)
- “Green Book” (\$3.9 million)
- “Robin Hood” (\$3.6 million)
- “The Possession of Hannah Grace” (\$3.2 million)
- “Widows” (\$3.1 million) — AFP

CENA SAYS BUMBLEBEE REACTION HAS BEEN ‘EXTRAORDINARILY SPECIAL’

John Cena says the reaction to ‘Bumblebee’ has been “extraordinarily special”. The 41-year-old actor - who stars as evil government Sector 7 agent Jack Burns tasked with capturing the giant robots in disguise in the ‘Transformers’ spin-off prequel - was in fantastic spirits and praised director Travis Knight’s “vision” after watching the movie at the world premiere in Los Angeles on Sunday night. He tweeted after the event: “He’s real! Amazing time watching #BumblebeeMovie at the world premiere @ChineseTheatres in L.A.

“Seeing Travis’ vision, @HaileeSteinfeld and Jorge’s performances and most importantly the audience’s reaction was extraordinarily special. “Excited for you to see [‘Bumblebee’] this holiday season!” Steinfeld and Jorge Lendeborg Jr - who played Charlie Watson and her coworker Memo respectively - were also at the star-studded screening this weekend. Cena - who has appeared in comedies like ‘Blockers’ and ‘Daddy’s Home 2’ - was thrilled to get the chance to join such a massive blockbuster franchise. He recently told BANG

Showbiz: “Being part of a franchise is great, and being in a group that gets to change the face of it, I think that’s pretty fun.”

The WWE superstar - who is currently taking a break from wrestling to focus on his Hollywood career - also added that he plans to make his return before ‘WrestleMania 35’ in April. He said: “First of all, let’s get ‘Bumblebee’ out on Christmas Eve and after that I’m returning to WWE for some live events which I’m very excited about.” Meanwhile, his co-star Steinfeld was delighted to be part of the cast, but she found it tough to choose a standout moment from the shoot.

She previously added: “Well, I don’t know if I could pick a favorite part but it was one of my favorite experiences of working on a film. “There was never a dull moment. Obviously this film is packed with so much action and so much emotion, it was a ride. The whole thing was a ride.” — Bang Showbiz



John Cena attends Premiere Of Paramount Pictures’ “Bumblebee” at TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California.



Jessica Vanessa attends Premiere Of Paramount Pictures’ “Bumblebee” at TCL Chinese Theatre.



Angela Bassett attends Premiere Of Paramount Pictures’ “Bumblebee”.



Hailee Steinfeld attends Premiere Of Paramount Pictures’ “Bumblebee”. — AFP photos

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a slight chance for scattered light rain over southern areas with a chance for light fog forming

BY DAY: Sunny with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	<div>SFC. CHART10/12/2018 1200 UTC</div>	
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	18 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	14 °C		
ABDALY	25 °C	14 °C		
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C		
JAHRA	23 °C	16 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	22 °C	18 °C		
SALMIYAH	21 °C	19 °C		
AHMADI	21 °C	19 °C		
NUWAISIB	23 °C	18 °C		
WAFRA	22 °C	15 °C		
SALMY	21 °C	13 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	12/11	Sunny	23 °C	14 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	12/12	Sunny	24 °C	12 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 26 km/h
Thursday	12/13	Clouds will increase gradually with a chance for scattered light rain later on.	24 °C	11 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	12/14	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	25 °C	13 °C	VRB-NE	08 - 30 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:07
Sunrise	06:32
Zuhr	11:41
Asr	14:31
Sunset	16:50
Isha	18:12

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	24 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	100 %
MIN. RH	45 %
MAX. Wind	SE 18 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I, YENAMADALA ANANTHA LAKSHMI S/o. SURI BABU holder of Indian Passport No. L3848064 & Civil ID No. 263011008467 has changed my name from YENAMADALA ANANTHA LAKSHMI to GADDAM SURYA KUMARI hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of GADDAM SURYA KUMARI. (C 5436)

11-12-2018

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL
HOTLINE 128

Embassy of India Kuwait

Purchase of Desktop Computers, Laser Printers, Document Scanners and Barcode readers.

Embassy of India, Kuwait invites bids from interested companies for replacement and purchase of desktop computers, laser printers, document scanners and barcode readers at the Indian Embassy by 7th January, 2019. Details of items, requirements, eligibility criteria etc. are available on Embassy's website: (URL : <http://www.indembkwt.gov.in/PurchaseofComputers.pdf>)

All offers should be in two separate sealed covers marked " Technical Bid" To be opened by addressee only and "Financial Bid" – To be opened by addressee only" and addressed to the "Head of Chancery", Embassy of India, Daeya, Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Safat 13015, Kuwait.

The offer must be delivered at the Embassy on or before 1200 hrs. on 7th January, 2019.
Embassy of India, Kuwait

Airlines	
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

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• In front of the grand mosque – behind the old central bank building – 2nd commerce area – block 5, office 116, Starts 9th - 20 th December
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Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 11/12/2018							Departure Flights on Tuesday 11/12/2018								
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	JZR	405	Kochi	12:45
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	AZQ	4566	Baku	00:05	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
JZR	406	Kochi	00:10	GFA	221	Dhaka	14:30	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	KAC	618	Bahrain	14:40	AIC	976	Alexandria	00:05	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SVA	500	Doha	14:40	MSC	502	Dubai	00:05	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	692	Jeddah	14:45	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40	MSC	412	Asyut	13:30
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	KNE	529	Muscat	14:55	JZR	707	Luxor	01:00	KAC	545	Cairo	13:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:05	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:15	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:25	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
DLH	625	Dammam	01:20	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	JZR	111	Doha	01:45	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
RJA	642	Amman	01:25	FEG	441	Asyut	15:25	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:35	KMA	562	Amman	15:35	KAC	417	Manila	02:00	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
THY	764	Istanbul	01:45	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25	QTR	8512	Doha	15:25
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:50	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:40	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:55	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:15	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	SYR	341	Damascus	16:00	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:40	KAC	118	New York	16:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	KAC	743	Dammam	15:55
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:05	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	02:55	KAC	516	Tehran	16:20	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:05	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
KAC	414	Bangkok	03:15	KAC	542	Cairo	16:30	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	502	Beirut	16:30	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	FEG	342	Sohag	16:25
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:00	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40	LMU	5511	Cairo	05:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
KAC	418	Manila	04:10	JZR	612	Tbilisi	16:45	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	JZR	114	Doha	17:10	JZR	101	Bahrain	05:20	JZR	105	Bahrain	16:55
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:30	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	SYR	342	Damascus	17:00
FDB	069	Dubai	04:35	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	DHX	173	Bahrain	05:30	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
KAC	382	Delhi	05:00	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	FDB	070	Dubai	05:50	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:05	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	JZR	215	Jeddah	06:00	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:45
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:10	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20	JZR	713	Sohag	06:15	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:10	CLX	7202	Luxembourg	18:25	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:25	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	THY	771	Istanbul	06:40	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:30	MSR	2620	Cairo	18:30	KAC	623	Doha	06:50	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	402	Mumbai	05:40	KAC	744	Dammam	19:00	KAC	167	Paris	07:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:05	RJA	640	Amman	19:00	RJA	643	Amman	07:15	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25	JZR	115	Doha	07:30	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
THY	6376	Istanbul	06:30	NIA	0161	Cairo	19:30	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:10	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC	165	Rome	08:20	JZR	254	Amman	19:15
BAW	157	London	06:55	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:30	THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	08:35	JZR	721	Alexandria	19:20
KAC	204	Lahore	07:05	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30	FEG	442	Asyut	08:40	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
JZR	708	Luxor	07:10	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:50	FDB	054	Dubai	08:50	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	358	Kochi	07:15	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50	BAW	156	London	08:55	MSR	2621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	JZR	106	Bahrain	20:00	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
FEG	241	Alexandria	07:35	KAC	166	Rome	20:10	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:05	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:40	KAC	620	Doha	20:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	384	Delhi	07:50	DHX	172	Bahrain	20:20	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:25	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	117	Shannon/New York	09:15	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	546	Cairo	20:30	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20	NIA	0162	Cairo	20:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	QTR	1088	Doha	20:35	KAC	541	Cairo	09:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	674	Dubai	20:35	KAC	561	Amman	09:40	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:55
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	ICV	675	Luxembourg	21:15	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:15	KAC	101	London	09:45	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	KAC	741	Dammam	09:45	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
IRC	6507	Shiraz	10:30	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	JZR	151	Mashhad	09:50	DLH	624	Dammam	21:30
KAC	624	Doha	10:40	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	168	Paris	21:30	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	UAE	859	Dubai	21:35	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:35	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	KAC	617	Doha	10:35	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15
MEA	404	Beirut	11:45	KAC	564	Amman	21:55	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	AZQ	565	Baku	22:00	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	JAI	574	Mumbai	22:00	IRA	674	Lar	10:40	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
MSC	411	Asyut	12:30	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:45	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	JZR	611	Tbilisi	10:45	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:45	IRC	6508	Shiraz	11:20	JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	JZR	128	Dubai	23:15	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10
QTR	8511	Doha	13:55	MSC	405	Sohag	23:30	KAC	515	Tehran	12:00	KAC	795	Madinah	23:15
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20

Nobel laureates urge world to help rape victims in conflict

OSLO: Nobel laureates Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad called on the world to protect victims of wartime sexual violence in their Peace Prize acceptance speeches yesterday, slamming indifference to the plight of women and children in conflict. Congolese gynecologist Mukwege, whose work has made him a global expert on rape in conflict, and Yazidi activist Murad, a survivor of IS sexual slavery, both said victims were sometimes valued less than commercial interests.

In an emotional ceremony in Oslo, which saw the laureates cheered and given standing ovations, Mukwege and Murad called on the world to do more. "If there is a war to be waged, it is the war against the indifference which is eating away at our societies," Mukwege said. His Panzi hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo's war-torn east has treated the wounds of tens of thousands of women and children after sexual assaults that have become a "new reality" in the country. The 63-year-old said the violence "shames our common humanity".

In her speech, Murad, 25, implored the global community to help free hundreds of women and girls still held by jihadists, saying the world must protect her people and other vulnerable communities. "It is my view that all victims deserve a safe haven until justice is done for them," she said. Nobel committee chairwoman Berit Reiss-Andersen said the pair had received the Peace Prize "for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict". She described them as "two of the strongest voices in the world today". They received the Peace Prize gold medals, diplomas and nine million Swedish Krona (a million dollars), which they will share.

Mukwege lay much of the blame for the horrific violence unleashed on civilians on those in power in his troubled country. "For

twenty years now, day after day, at Panzi hospital, I have seen the harrowing consequences of the country's gross mismanagement," said the doctor, a critic of DR Congo President Joseph Kabila, who is set to be replaced in elections this month. "Babies, girls, young women, mothers, grandmothers, and also men and boys, cruelly raped, often publicly and collectively, by inserting burning plastic or sharp objects in their genitals."

Mukwege said the trade in the country's abundant natural resources helped fuel the violence while profits "end up in the pockets of a predatory oligarchy". "We love nice cars, jewelry and gadgets. I have a smartphone myself. These items contain minerals found in our country. Often mined in inhuman conditions by young children, victims of intimidation and sexual violence," he said. "It's not just perpetrators of violence who are responsible for their crimes, it is also those who choose to look the other way," Mukwege added, calling for a global fund to provide reparation for victims and economic and political sanctions for those behind the violence.

Murad survived the horrors of captivity under the Islamic State group, which targeted her Kurdish-speaking community as it seized parts of Iraq and Syria. Older women and men faced summary execution during the IS assault, which the United Nations has described as a possible genocide. Captured in 2014, Murad suffered beatings and gang-rape before she was able to escape.

In her Nobel acceptance address yesterday, Murad said more than 6,500 women and girls from her community had been kidnapped, raped and traded "in the 21st century, in the age of globalization and human rights". The fate of some 3,000 women and girls is still unknown. "Young



OSLO: Nobel Peace Prize laureates Yazidi activist Nadia Murad and Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege pose with their Nobel Peace Prizes during the award ceremony yesterday at the City Hall. — AFP

girls at the prime of life are sold, bought, held captive and raped every day. It is inconceivable that the conscience of the leaders of 195 countries around the world is not mobilized to liberate these girls," she said. "What if they were a commercial deal, an oil field or a shipment of weapons? Most certainly, no efforts would be spared to liberate them."

Murad, whose mother and six of her brothers were killed, said on Sunday that "steps towards justice" had given her some hope. A UN team authorized to investigate the massacre of the Yazidi minority is due to finally start fieldwork in Iraq next year. Murad has been supported in her campaign for justice for Yazidis by Lebanese-British lawyer and rights activist Amal

Clooney, who was in the audience in Oslo. No militant has yet faced trial over the atrocities against the Yazidis. Murad is the first Iraqi to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She said she was thankful for the honor, but added: "The fact remains that the only prize in the world that can restore our dignity is justice and the prosecution of criminals." — AFP

'I can't breathe' were Khashoggi's final words: CNN

ISTANBUL: Journalist Jamal Khashoggi repeatedly told his killers "I can't breathe" during his final moments in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, CNN reported yesterday. Quoting a source who said they had read the full translated transcript of an audio recording, CNN said that Khashoggi recognized one of the men, General Maher Muteb, who told him: "You are coming back". Khashoggi replied: "You can't do that...people are waiting outside."

His Turkish fiancée Hatice Cengiz waited for hours outside the consulate on Oct 2 and, when he did not return, contacted Turkish authorities about his disappearance. There was no further dialogue in the relatively short transcript, prepared by Turkish authorities, CNN's source said. As people set upon Khashoggi, he started fighting for air, repeating, "I can't breathe" at least three times. The transcript then used singular words to describe the noises, including "scream", "gasping", "saw", and "cutting". Turkish sources told Reuters a bone saw was used to dismember the journalist.

The transcript included no further mention of returning Khashoggi to Saudi Arabia, and no indication that he had been drugged - as Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor said in November. One of the voices was identified in the transcript by Turkish authorities as Dr Salah Al-Tubaigy, a forensic expert specialized in autopsies

attached to the Saudi Ministry of Interior, CNN reported. Tubaigy tells others to put in earphones or listen to music like him, the CNN source said.

Muteb, a senior intelligence officer who is part of the security team of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, called officials and gave step-by-step details of the operation, CNN reported, finally saying: "Tell yours, the thing is done, it's done". Turkish officials said last week that the Istanbul prosecutor's office had concluded there was "strong suspicion" that Saud Al-Qahtani, a top aide to Prince Mohammed, and General Ahmed Al-Asiri, who served as deputy head of foreign intelligence, were among the planners of Khashoggi's killing.

Saudi Arabia has said the prince had no prior knowledge of the murder. After offering numerous contradictory explanations, Riyadh later said Khashoggi had been killed and his body dismembered when negotiations to

persuade him to return to Saudi Arabia failed. The kingdom has come under scrutiny as details of his killing came to light. Making some of their strongest accusations so far, both US Republicans and Democrats said last week they want to pass legislation to send a message to Saudi Arabia that the United States condemns the death of Khashoggi, a Washington Post columnist.

A Turkish official said that by extraditing all suspects to Turkey, the Saudi authorities can address the international community's concerns. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir on Sunday ruled out their extradition. "We don't extradite our citizens," he said at a Gulf Arab summit in Riyadh. Last month, Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor's office said is seeking the death penalty for five individuals, and that 11 of 21 suspects have been indicted and will be referred to court in Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

Kuwait warns social media not for kids...

Continued from Page 1

"We don't know if it's being caused by the screen time. We don't know yet if it's a bad thing," said Gaya Dowling, an NIH doctor working on the project, explaining the preliminary findings in an interview with the CBS news program 60 Minutes. "What we can say is that this is what the brains look like of kids who spend a lot of time on screens. And it's not just one pattern," Dowling said. The NIH data reported on CBS also showed that

kids who spend more than two hours a day on screens score worse on language and reasoning tests.

The study - which involves scanning the brains of 4,500 children - eventually aims to show whether screen time is additive, but researchers need several years to understand such long-term outcomes. "In many ways, the concern that investigators like I have is, that we're sort of in the midst of a natural kind of uncontrolled experiment on the next generation of children," Dimitri Christakis, a lead author of the American Academy of Pediatrics' most recent guidelines on screen time, told 60 Minutes. Initial data from the study will begin to be released in early 2019. The academy now recommends parents "avoid digital media use - except video chatting - in children younger than 18 to 24 months". — Agencies

years. US President Donald Trump has pledged to build a wall on the US-Mexico border and has focused his recent ire on a migrant caravan from Central America, while a populist coalition government in Italy has clamped down on boats rescuing migrants at sea.

Belgium's liberal premier Charles Michel attended the conference after winning the support of parliament to back the accord, but was left leading a minority government after a Flemish nationalist party said it will quit his coalition over the pact. "This model of cooperation is complex, sometimes including steps forwards and sometimes banana skins," Michel told delegates. "But it is the only way forwards for those who want a better world".

The pact has been welcomed by the Catholic Church as an important step towards addressing migrants' needs and reducing their vulnerability. "The Holy See is convinced that the enormous challenges that migration poses are best faced through multilateral processes rather than isolationist policies," said papal envoy Cardinal Piero Parolin.

The UN's children's agency said the pact could help provide better access to education and health for migrant children and offer "them stronger protection from exploitation and violence". Other organizations, including Amnesty International and the International Federation of the Red Cross, see the accord as just a first step towards protecting migrants. "We have heard repeatedly that this compact is not legally binding and does not impact on state sovereignty," said IFRC president Francesco Rocca at a press conference on the sidelines of the main dialogue. "But if we are serious about fixing this problem, it should at the very least be ethically binding," he implored. After the Marrakesh conference, the UN General Assembly is set to adopt a resolution formally endorsing the deal on Dec 19. — AFP

Indian central bank gov quits...

Continued from Page 1

The rupee has been one of Asia's worst performing currencies this year, although it has bounced back in the past fortnight, while economic growth slowed to under eight percent in the last quarter. It is understood the government is pressuring the bank to enact policies to help spur growth ahead of next year's elections, when Modi will run for a second term. The government would like the RBI to lower interest rates and free up more of its cash reserves to invest in Asia's third-largest economy, analysts say.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley in October hit out at the RBI over a multibillion-dollar bank loan crisis that is hampering India's corporate sector. Jaitley accused the RBI of failing to stop indiscriminate lending from 2008 to 2014, saying it had "looked the other way" while banks issued loans that turned sour. The rift flared up again when economic hardliners from a powerful Hindu nationalist group linked to Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) told Patel to fall in line with the government or quit.

Patel served as a deputy governor at the bank for three years before succeeding Raghuram Rajan in the top job in Aug 2016. His term at the helm was due to end in Sept 2019. Jaitley tweeted yesterday that the government "acknowledges with deep sense of appreciation" Patel's time at the bank. "It was a pleasure for me to deal with him and benefit from his scholarship. I wish Dr Patel all the very best and many more years of public service," he wrote. Modi described Patel as a "thorough professional with impeccable integrity". "He leaves behind a great legacy. We will miss him immensely," he wrote on Twitter.

"Quite clearly the resignation of Urjit Patel shows that nothing has changed," Yashwant Sinha, a former finance minister and member of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, told CNBC-TV18. "The resignation is a clear sign of the government trying to interfere with the working of the RBI," he added.

Meanwhile, a British court yesterday ruled Indian tycoon Vijay Mallya, the owner of Kingfisher beer and head of the Force India Formula One team, can be extradited to his homeland to face fraud charges. Mallya has been fighting to remain in Britain but judge Emma Arbuthnot said he had misrepresented how loans received from banks would be used and therefore had a case to answer. She said bankers had been "charmed" by a "glamorous, flashy, famous, bejewelled, body-guarded, ostensibly billionaire playboy" into losing their common sense.

Mallya will be able to make a final appeal against the

ruling to Home Secretary Sajid Javid. Mallya left India in March 2016 owing more than \$1 billion after defaulting on loan payments to a state-owned bank and allegedly misusing the funds. The loans from the state-owned IDBI bank were intended to bail out his failed carrier Kingfisher Airlines. Arbuthnot said Mallya had used the loans, among other things, for "vanity projects" such as Force India, which had received payments at a time when it was struggling in 2010.

"I have found that on the face of it, (Mallya) was doing everything he could by using honest or dishonest means to keep the company going," she told Westminster Magistrates' Court. Arbuthnot rejected his defense team's argument that the case was motivated by political considerations or that he would not receive a fair trial in India. She said the cell where he would be held was large and would be able to cater for his medical needs, dismissing claims extradition would infringe his human rights. "A spell in custody is likely to help him cut down on alcohol," she added.

An extradition would be a huge win for Modi months before an election, after opposition parties said the government had given a "free passage" to Mallya to flee, an accusation it denies. Modi has faced pressure from political opponents to bring to justice several people who have fled India in recent years to escape prosecution in an array of cases, many of them loan defaults.

Mallya said in July that he had made an "unconditional offer" to an Indian court in a bid to settle the charges, but denies that was an admission of guilt. "I cannot understand how my extradition decision... and my settlement offer are linked in any way," he wrote on Twitter on Thursday. "Wherever I am physically, my appeal is 'please take the money'. I want to stop the narrative that I stole money," he added.

Lawyer Mark Summers, representing the Indian authorities, said during an earlier hearing, that "the focus of our case is on his conduct, how he misused the banks". He told the court that Kingfisher Airlines had been incurring losses and was forced to defer payments to its creditors. It sought loans in Oct 2009 and hoped to emerge from the global financial crisis as a profitable venture. "This was an airline in trouble at this stage, which is why it was seeking financial assistance from a large number of banks," for large amounts of money, Summers said.

Known for his lavish lifestyle, Mallya made Kingfisher beer a global brand. He stepped down as the director of the Indian Premier League cricket team Royal Challengers Bangalore last year. His financial dealings are being investigated by the federal Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate, a financial crimes agency. Mallya was once known as the "King of Good Times" but dropped off India's most wealthy list in 2014, engulfed by Kingfisher Airlines' massive debts. He has been living in a sprawling \$15 million mansion in southeast England but has denied absconding. — Agencies

UN meet adopts migration pact...

Continued from Page 1

The pact "is not legally binding", he said. "It is a framework for international cooperation."

"We must not succumb to fear and false narratives", he told an audience that included German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela, Greek premier Alexis Tsipras, Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen and Spain's premier Pedro Sanchez. Merkel launched an impassioned defence of the pact and multilateralism, saying her country "through Nazism brought incredible pain to humanity". "The answer to pure nationalism was the foundation of the United Nations and the commitment to jointly searching for answers to our common problems," she said. She insisted the pact seeks to prevent, rather than encourage, illegal migration. "This is about safe, orderly and regular migration - it says (this) clearly in the title."

On Friday, the US hit out at the pact, labelling it "an effort by the United Nations to advance global governance at the expense of the sovereign right of states". It was the first country to disavow the negotiations late last year, and since then Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia have pulled out of the process. Rows over the accord have erupted in several European Union nations, hobbling Belgium's coalition government and pushing Slovakia's foreign minister to tender his resignation.

From the United States to Europe and beyond, rightwing and populist leaders have taken increasingly draconian measures to shut out migrants in recent

Sports

Milwaukee Bucks muscle past Toronto Raptors 104-99 again

DeRozan, Gay lead Spurs to victory over Jazz

NBA results/standings				
New York 107, Charlotte 119; Toronto 99, Milwaukee 104; San Antonio 110, Utah 97; Detroit 108, New Orleans 116.				
Eastern Conference				
	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	21	7	0.750	-
Milwaukee	17	8	0.680	2.5
Philadelphia	18	9	0.667	2.5
Indiana	16	10	0.615	4
Boston	15	10	0.600	4.5
Detroit	13	11	0.542	6
Charlotte	13	13	0.500	7
Orlando	12	14	0.462	8
Miami	11	14	0.440	8.5
Washington	11	15	0.423	9
Brooklyn	10	18	0.357	11
New York	8	20	0.286	13
Cleveland	6	20	0.231	14
Atlanta	6	20	0.231	14
Chicago	6	21	0.222	14.5
Western Conference				
Oklahoma City	16	8	0.667	-
Golden State	18	9	0.667	1.5
Denver	17	9	0.654	1
LA Clippers	16	9	0.640	0.5
LA Lakers	16	10	0.615	1
Memphis	15	10	0.600	1.5
Portland	15	11	0.577	2
Dallas	13	11	0.542	3
Sacramento	13	12	0.520	3.5
Minnesota	13	13	0.500	4
New Orleans	14	14	0.500	4
Utah	13	14	0.481	4.5
San Antonio	13	14	0.481	4.5
Houston	11	14	0.440	5.5
Phoenix	4	22	0.154	13

TORONTO: Malcom Brogdon made two 3-pointers late in the fourth quarter, including the one for the go-ahead points with 40.7 seconds to play, and the visiting Milwaukee Bucks defeated the Toronto Raptors 104-99 on Sunday night. Brogdon finished with 18 points for the Bucks, who have twice defeated the Raptors this season. Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 19 points and grabbed 19 rebounds for the Bucks and Brook Lopez also had 19 points while Khris Middleton and Tony Snell scored 10 each. Serge Ibaka scored 22 points, Kawhi Leonard had 20, Fred VanVleet scored 19 and Pascal Siakam added 17 for the Raptors, who have lost two in a row. Kyle Lowry did not score a point for the Raptors for the first time since March 17, 2013, against the Miami Heat.

Spurs 110, Jazz 97

DeMar DeRozan scored 26 points and Rudy Gay added 23 points and a career-high-tying 15 rebounds, as host San Antonio pulled away late to beat Utah. The win was the second straight for the Spurs and gave them consecutive victories for the first time since winning four straight in an eight-day span Oct. 27-Nov. 3. Donovan Mitchell led the Jazz with 27 points, while Ricky Rubio scored 26 and Rudy Gobert added 12 for Utah, which had a two-game winning streak snapped.

Pelicans 116, Pistons 108

Jrue Holiday and Julius Randle combined to score 65 points to overcome a limited performance from Anthony Davis as New Orleans Pelicans edged host Detroit. Holiday had 37 points and Randle had 28 while Davis was limited to six points in 26 minutes as he played through an injured hip suffered in the first quarter. Tim Frazier added 14 points and Nikola Mirotic scored 12 off the bench as the Pelicans won for the third time in five games. Blake Griffin scored 35 points, backup Langston Galloway added 24 and Andre Drummond had 23 points and 19 rebounds to



TORONTO: Serge Ibaka #9 of the Toronto Raptors dunks the ball during the game against the Milwaukee Bucks on Sunday at the Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

lead the Pistons, who lost their fourth straight after a five-game winning streak.

Hornets 119, Knicks 107

Kemba Walker scored 25 points before sitting out the entire fourth quarter and Charlotte rolled to an easy victory over host New York. Walker, a native New Yorker, turned his only scheduled appearance in

Madison Square Garden this season into another great performance. He finished 8 of 20 from the field, hit four 3-pointers, and added six rebounds, six assists and four steals. The Hornets (13-13) won their second straight, following up an impressive home win over Denver on Friday night. Kevin Knox led the Knicks with 26 points off the bench. The Knicks also got 21 points from Tim Hardaway Jr. and 18 from Frank Ntilikina. — Reuters

Koskinen, red-hot Oilers shut out Calgary Flames

EDMONTON: Connor McDavid scored the game's lone goal midway through the first period and Mikko Koskinen collected a 24-save shutout as the host Edmonton Oilers held on for a 1-0 victory over the Calgary Flames on Sunday. The Oilers have won three straight games, and posted a 7-2-1 record since Ken Hitchcock took over as head coach on Nov. 20, to pull themselves to within striking distance of the playoff picture. Koskinen has won all six starts on home ice this season, three of them with shutouts. McDavid's winning goal came at 12:18 of the first period by finishing a pretty tic-tac-toe passing play. At the other end, Flames goalie David Rittich stopped 29 shots in the loss that snaps his team's five-game winning streak. McDavid started the odd-man rush up the ice before moving the puck to Leon Draisaitl, who put it over to Alex Chiasson. Chiasson sent a cross-ice pass that McDavid one-timed for the tally, his 11th goal in 14 career games against Calgary.

Ducks 6, Devils 5

Daniel Sprong and Ryan Getzlaf scored in the shootout as host Anaheim outlasted New Jersey in a wild game that started fast as the two teams combined for six goals, three apiece, in the first 14 minutes of the first period. The goals by Sprong and Getzlaf were the only tallies in the shootout, which came after 65 minutes in which there were three lead changes and five ties. The Devils' Brett Seney scored the lone goal of the second period before chaos reigned again in the third, when the Ducks scored twice-on a pair of "own goals" by New Jersey-before Marcus Johansson forced overtime by scoring while the Devils had an extra attacker with less than 58 seconds left in regulation.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 4, STARS 2

Marc-Andre Fleury had 22 saves to pick up his league-leading 17th victory of the season to help lead Vegas over visiting Dallas in Las Vegas. William Karlsson, Reilly Smith, Alex Tuch and Ryan Carpenter each scored goals for Vegas, which improved to 8-2 in its last 10 games, won its fifth straight home contest, and bounced back from a 5-1 loss at Los Angeles on Saturday afternoon. Colin Miller added two assists. Martin Hanzal and Esa Lindell each scored power-play goals for Dallas, which had a four-game winning streak snapped. Miro Heiskanen added two assists and Ben Bishop had 24 saves for the Stars, who lost for the first time in regulation in 11 games (9-1-1) against Pacific Division teams this season.

CANADIENS 3, BLACKHAWKS 2

Carey Price made 37 saves and Tomas Tatar scored the winning goal with 1:17 remaining in the third period as Montreal overcame numerous trips to the penalty box to beat host Chicago, whose losing streak reached seven games. Price was forced to make numerous time-ly saves as Montreal allowed five of its season-high eight power plays in the third period. The Canadiens got the winner after the Blackhawks failed to clear Shea Weber's long wrist shot from the point. The puck bounced to Jesperi Kotkaniemi, who whipped a pass to Jeff Petry near the right point. Petry fired a rising shot and Tatar lifted his stick in time for the deflection.

BRUINS 2, SENATORS 1 (OT)

Boston's Torey Krug scored the game-winning goal in overtime as the Bruins beat host Ottawa thanks in large part to goalie Tuukka Rask's 27-save effort. In the



ANAHEIM: Damon Severson #28 of the New Jersey Devils and Ondrej Kase #25 of the Anaheim Ducks reach for the puck at Honda Center on Sunday in Anaheim, California. — AFP

3-on-3 overtime session, David Krejci skated around the Ottawa net and slid a pass back through the crease to Krug, who buried his second goal of the season at 3:07 for the victory. Mark Stone scored for the Senators, and backup goalie Mike McKenna recorded 42 saves. Krug also had an assist, giving him five points in his last two games. Brad Marchand had a goal and an assist for the Bruins, who improved to 3-4 in overtime and 5-0-1 in the second game of back-to-backs this season.

JETS 7, FLYERS 1

Connor Hellebuyck made 36 saves, and Mark Scheifele collected three assists in the second period as Winnipeg cruised past visiting Philadelphia. Hellebuyck became the fourth goaltender to reach 13 wins and did his best work during a scoreless game in the opening minutes. Hellebuyck made 10 saves before Winnipeg scored and stopped 16 overall in the opening 20 minutes. Kyle Connor and Josh Morrissey scored in a span of 2:57 in the first period after Philadelphia registered 10 of the game's first 11 shots. The Jets took a one-goal lead into the second and broke it open with three goals in a span of 8:28.

CANUCKS 6, BLUES 1

Brock Boeser scored three goals and Elias Pettersson had a goal and four assists as visiting Vancouver ripped St. Louis as Bo Horvat and Nikolay Goldobin also scored for the Canucks, who gained their second straight victory after having won just once in their previous 13 games. Goaltender Jacob Markstrom made 21 saves, losing a bid for his first shutout of the season in the third period when Jordan Kyrour scored his first career goal for the Blues, who lost by the same score Dec. 1 at Arizona. St. Louis goalie Jake Allen, who passed Glenn Hall to move into third place in franchise history with his 17th career shutout Friday in a 1-0 victory against Winnipeg, was pulled in the first period after allowing three goals on six shots. — Reuters

Kizzire, Harman win golf QBE Shootout

MIAMI: Patton Kizzire and Brian Harman eagled the par-five 17th on Sunday to seize victory in the QBE Shootout in Naples, Florida, ahead of Graeme McDowell and Emiliano Grillo. Harman and Kizzire were one behind McDowell and Grillo when they arrived at Tiburon Golf Club's 17th in the fourball final round of the unofficial team event founded by Greg Norman.

Both hit iron shots close and when Kizzire holed his eagle putt they leapfrogged McDowell and Grillo, who had pulled one ahead with their seventh straight birdie at 17. "We knew we needed at least birdie and eagle was a bonus," Kizzire said. "He had a great iron shot in there close and freed me up, and I hit a good one, too. We both had looks at it. I putted first and made it." Kizzire and Harman carded an 11-under final round of 61 for a 30-under total of 186.

McDowell and Grillo had a total of 10 birdies-three on the front nine before their streak of seven from the 11th through the 17th-in a 10-under 62 for 187. It was McDowell's second straight runner-up finish in the event, after finishing tied for second with partner Shane Lowry last year. — AFP

Australia to decide on Cheika's future as coach by Christmas

SYDNEY: Rugby Australia will decide the fate of under-fire Michael Cheika and his coaching staff "ahead of Christmas", chairman Cameron Clyne said yesterday after an end-of-season review, following a disappointing year for the team.

Cheika has been under growing pressure after a poor season, with recent losses to England and Wales, and an uninspiring win over Italy. In a brief statement that lasted less than one minute to reporters after the meeting in Sydney, Clyne said the board would conduct a review before making a decision in the next two weeks.

"We've had a presentation from Michael, we've had some data gathered from him, from his coaching staff, from his players and from our high performance unit and we need to go through a fairly thorough review process," he said, without taking questions.

"We've got all the information we need and we'll be going through that process. "I know people are very keen to know what's going on but I felt it was important to at least let you know where we are in that process and obviously we'll have more to say and have that process wrapped up ahead of Christmas."

A source told The Sydney Morning Herald that player feedback was "mixed", with support for Michael Hooper as Test captain but concerns over the team's culture, communication and organisation. Cheika's contract is due to run out in a year and he had previously received the backing of Rugby Australia chief executive Raelene Castle to take the Wallabies to the World Cup in Japan.

Earlier in Paris, Racing 92 took a big step towards the Champions Cup quarter-finals with a 36-26 win over Leicester Tigers on Sunday, while two-time winners Munster hammered French champions Castres.

Saracens joined France's Racing in making it three wins from three with an astonishing second-half revival to thrash Cardiff Blues 51-25. Racing claimed a bonus points within 35 minutes as international backs Virimi Vakatawa, Juan Imhoff and Simon Zebo crossed as well as inexperienced back-rower Baptiste Chouzenoux.

Scotland fly-half Finn Russell was instrumental as his side played an expansive brand of rugby which produced a fifth and final try to secure victory ten minutes from time. France prop Eddy Ben Arous left the field on a stretcher with a neck injury and went to a nearby hospital for further assessments.

Coach Laurent Travers was impressed by his team's ability with ball in hand but expected more from his side. "Our attack was very good so we're not going to be fussy but we left three tries out there," he said.

"Sometimes we have to be more clear in our thinking to know when to play and when to keep it tight," he added. Tigers left the French capital with their own bonus point, which pleased coach Geordan Murphy.—AFP



Michael Cheika

India end 10-year Australia drought in first-Test thriller

Pant helps India win with world record 11 catches

SCOREBOARD	
Scoreboard of the first 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 307 (Pujara 71, Rahane 70; Lyon 6-122, Starc 3-40)	
Australia 2nd innings (overnight 104-4)	
A. Finch c Pant b Ashwin	11
M. Harris c Pant b Shami	26
U. Khawaja c Sharma b Ashwin	8
S. Marsh c Pant b Bumrah	60
P. Handscomb c Pujara b Shami	14
T. Head c Rahane b Sharma	14
T. Paine c Pant b Bumrah	41
P. Cummins c Kohli b Bumrah	28
M. Starc c Pant b Shami	28
N. Lyon not out	38
J. Hazlewood c Rahul b Ashwin	13
Extras (lb6, b1, nb3)	10
Total: (10 wickets, 119.5 overs)	291
Fall of wickets: 1-28 (Finch), 2-44 (Harris), 3-60 (Khawaja), 4-84 (Handscomb), 5-115 (Head), 6-156 (Marsh), 7-187 (Paine), 8-228 (Starc), 9-259 (Cummins), 10-291 (Hazlewood)	
Bowling: Sharma 19-4-48-1, Bumrah 24-8-68-3, Ashwin 52.5-13-92-3, Shami 20-4-65-3 (3nb), Vijay 4-0-11-0.	
Result: India win by 31 runs.	

ADELAIDE: India won their first Test on Australian soil in a decade yesterday, bowling out the home side in a nail-biting finale to clinch the opening match and raise hopes of their first ever series victory Down Under.

Wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant pouched a world record-equalling 11 catches for the match as India, after setting an improbable target of 323, finally dismissed Australia to win by 31 runs on day five at Adelaide Oval.

Australia, attempting what would have been a record chase at the ground, gallantly battled to 291 before Josh Hazlewood became the last man to fall to Ravichandran Ashwin, who finished with 3-92. Shaun Marsh made 62 and Tim Paine 41.

It was a huge breakthrough for captain Virat Kohli's men, who went 1-0 up with three Tests to go after becoming the first Indian team to win the opening match of a Test series in Australia. Pant took the plaudits after matching the record of 11 catches in a Test held by England's Jack Russell and South Africa's AB de Villiers.

India's last Test success in Australia was at the WACA Ground in Perth in 2008, and the previous one in Adelaide was 2003. They have now won just six times in Australia in more than 70 years. But with the home team missing banned batsmen Steve Smith and David Warner, Kohli and his team sensed ahead of the tour that this could be their opportunity to make history by winning the series.

They now take the momentum into the second Test in Perth starting Friday, with Melbourne and Sydney to follow. "The odds were stacked against them. They fought really well but we executed our plans well and got that last wicket which we were intending to get," said Kohli.

"I'm super-proud of the bowlers, to have four bowlers and take 20 wickets is a great achievement and something that we haven't done in the past. "It shows us that if the batsmen step up regularly, we will be gunning for a win in every Test match."

"SHATTERING"

Paine, who fell to a rash shot after lunch, said the defeat was "shattering" but he was proud of the way the team took it to the wire. "We thought we could win, no doubt about that. We saw how the pitch is playing and told ourselves we are going to dig deep, but unfortunately, myself, Travis (Head) and Shaun couldn't bat long as long as we should have."

Australia resumed the final day needing another 219 for



ADELAIDE: India's captain Virat Kohli (L) celebrates with spin bowler Ravichandran Ashwin (R) after beating Australia on day five of the first Test cricket match at the Adelaide Oval yesterday. — AFP

victory with four wickets down, but lost their last two specialist batsmen before lunch, shifting the odds heavily in India's favour.

Marsh and Head had started cautiously, grinding out 11 runs in the opening seven overs before seamer Ishant Sharma struck with the score on 115, bowling a bouncer that caught Head's bat as he tried to fend it off and Ajinkya Rahane took the catch at gully.

Paine joined Marsh and they upped the ante, capitalising on some loose balls from Shami to chip away steadily and close the gap. Marsh brought up a valuable 50 — his 10th in Tests—with a boundary from a pull shot off spinner Ashwin.

It was a much-needed knock for the left-hander, who was on a run of six consecutive single-figure Test scores, although he has been in scintillating form in domestic cricket. But Marsh didn't last much longer with Jasprit

Bumrah getting the big breakthrough as he pushed at a perfectly angled delivery, getting a faint edge to Pant behind the stumps.

By lunch Australia had fought to 186 for six, still needing a further 137 runs for victory, with Paine not out 40 and Pat Cummins on five. But in the second over after they resumed Paine top-edged a pull shot from Bumrah and Pant easily took a catch.

Cummins, who survived two big reviews within four balls, with the technology both times going in his favour, showed gritty application with Mitchell Starc in a 41-run eighth wicket stand.

And when the target dropped below 100, the crowd dared to dream before Starc fell to Shami for 28. It brought Nathan Lyon to the crease and he got the pulses racing with a quick 38 to set up a tense finale, before Hazlewood departed to end the match. —AFP

S Africa among potential hosts for 2019 Africa Cup of Nations

PARIS: South Africa could step in as hosts of the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations, according to the president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Ahmad Ahmad in an interview with AFP yesterday.

CAF has been studying alternative solutions for the staging of the June 15 to July 13 event after Cameroon were withdrawn as hosts due to delays with preparations and security concerns. A final decision on who will host next summer's football showpiece will be announced on January 9, Ahmad said. He added that for now "two or three" candidates had shown an interest in taking over from Cameroon, the Madagascar naming South Africa as having filed a letter of intent. "According to my information, two or three letters of intent have arrived," the CAF president told AFP in an interview yesterMonday.

"South Africa is one of the countries to have sent a letter of intention. Two or three countries have made serious inquiries." The decision to ditch Cameroon for 2019 has created a confusing merry-go-round. Cameroon will now host the 2021 edition, originally given to Ivory Coast, who are now being asked to host the tournament in 2023.

The hosts for 2019, meanwhile, will be chosen from a short-list whose submission deadline is December 14. "Everything will be finalised by December 25 to create a short-list of candidates who have been evaluated and noted," Ahmad said.

"The executive committee (of the CAF) will meet in Dakar on January 9, when we will make a decision." In 2014, then CAF president Issa Hayatou of Cameroon announced the hosts of three successive editions of the biennial tournament: Cameroon (2019), Ivory Coast (2021) and Guinea (2023). Ahmad confirmed earlier reports claiming Cameroon would now host the tournament in 2021. Cameroon has "agreed" to be hosts in 2021, Ahmad told AFP. "I have the letter, I'm in contact with the president of the republic. We are in agreement for 2021."

However the CAF chief is still waiting for Ivory Coast to confirm it would be happy to forego hosting the 2021 tournament and wait a further two years to play hosts in 2023. "We're waiting," added Ahmad. "We took the same steps (as with Cameroon), we've sent the letter."

"On Monday or Tuesday there will be a meeting between the Prime Minister and the people who organise the CAN, so we will see." Congo Brazzaville last week was named by the CAF as a serious candidate to host the 2019 event, although the country's sports minister subsequently played down those reports. Ahmad would neither confirm nor deny the country's interest.

"I can't comment on a country's internal problems," he said. "You would have to ask their federation or government." — AFP



Ajaz Patel

NZ's Ajaz Patel wins battle for spinner's role against S Lanka

WELLINGTON: New Zealand left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel's form against Pakistan in the UAE has earned him the chance to impress in local conditions after selectors yesterday named him as the only slow bowler in the squad for two Tests against Sri Lanka.

The 30-year-old produced a man-of-the-match performance on debut in their four-run win over Pakistan in the first test in Abu Dhabi last month. He also finished with 13 wickets in the series, the most by a New Zealand bowler.

Despite his impressive performances, he had been in competition with offspinner Will Somerville and legspinner Ish Sodhi for the one slow bowling position in the squad with New Zealand returning to play on pitches less conducive to turn.

Coach Gary Stead had said on the team's return home on Sunday that he would need to drop two of the spinners as they resorted to a three-pronged pace attack for the first Test starting on Saturday at the Basin Reserve.

"Ajaz certainly grabbed his opportunity on the UAE

tour and he's a proven performer in New Zealand conditions," team selector Gavin Larsen said. "There's a real swell of support for the test team following their efforts in the UAE, so were hoping to transition that momentum into a big home summer."

Somerville, who took seven wickets on debut in the third Test victory in Abu Dhabi, and Sodhi were released to play first-class cricket. "Will Somerville was an obvious stand-out on debut in the Abu Dhabi decider and it's great to know we've got quality spin bowlers who can create competition for places," Larsen added.

Uncapped batsman Will Young has also been added to the squad as batting cover after strong performances in domestic cricket and for the New Zealand 'A' side.

He has scored 664 runs, including three centuries and a half century, at an average of 60.36 in 12 innings across all forms of cricket for the 'A' side in the last six weeks, including a century in their one-day clash with India 'A' on Sunday.

"I'm over the moon to be part of the test squad but nothing changes," Young said. "I'm just keep enjoying my cricket and hopefully the chance will come."

"I've had a few 'A' chances before and it didn't go to plan ... but I have managed to put together some performances and the selectors have taken notice of that."

Squad: Kane Williamson (captain), Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Jeet Raval, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner, BJ Watling, Will Young. — Reuters

Dananjaya suspended from bowling over illegal action: ICC

DUBAI: Sri Lanka off-spinner Akila Dananjaya has been suspended from bowling in international cricket over an illegal action, the International Cricket Council announced yesterday. Dananjaya was reported over a suspect bowling action during last month's first Test of the England series in Sri Lanka, which the tourists won by 211 runs on their way to a 3-0 whitewash.

He underwent an independent assessment of his

bowling action on November 23 in Brisbane which revealed his deliveries exceeded the 15-degrees level of tolerance permitted under the regulations. "The International Cricket Council today announced that an independent assessment has found the bowling action of Sri Lanka's off-spinner Akila Dananjaya to be illegal and, as such he has been suspended from bowling in international cricket with immediate effect," the ICC said in a statement.

Dananjaya's suspension will be also enforced by all national cricket federations for domestic matches, though he may be able to play domestically in Sri Lanka with the permission of Sri Lanka Cricket. The 25-year-old, who has played five Tests since making his debut against Bangladesh in February, must now modify his action before applying for further testing and possible reinstatement. —AFP

England keep faith with Test squad for West Indies tour

LONDON: England kept faith yesterday with the squad that delivered a Test whitewash in Sri Lanka, naming the same 16 players who finished that tour for the series against the West Indies. That means no place for Surrey's Ollie Pope, who was initially selected for Sri Lanka but left early to get game time with the second-tier Lions side, and a reprieve for Kent's Joe Denly.

The uncapped 32-year-old was not required during the 3-0 win but will once again travel as batting cover for the three Tests, ahead of Pope and his overlooked county colleague Jason Roy. Wicketkeeper Ben Foakes was a late addition in Sri Lanka after an injury to Jonny Bairstow and takes his place as a first-choice pick after collecting man-of-the-series honours.

The 15-man one-day squad also has a familiar look as the countdown to next summer's World Cup continues. Left-armed David Willey returns and Mark Wood is included ahead of Olly Stone, who made his bow in Sri Lanka.

England are due to play three Tests, five one-day internationals and three Twenty20 internationals on their tour of the West Indies, which starts next month. The T20 squad will be announced at a later date.

Test squad: Joe Root (Yorkshire, capt), Moeen Ali (Worcestershire), Jimmy Anderson (Lancashire), Jonny Bairstow (Yorkshire), Stuart Broad (Nottinghamshire), Rory Burns (Surrey), Jos Buttler (Lancashire), Sam Curran (Surrey), Joe Denly (Kent), Ben Foakes (Surrey), Keaton Jennings (Lancashire), Jack Leach (Somerset), Adil Rashid (Yorkshire), Ben Stokes (Durham), Olly Stone (Warwickshire), Chris Woakes (Warwickshire)

One-day squad: Eoin Morgan (Middlesex, capt), Moeen Ali (Worcestershire), Jonny Bairstow (Yorkshire), Jos Buttler (Lancashire), Tom Curran (Surrey), Joe Denly (Kent), Alex Hales (Nottinghamshire), Liam Plunkett (Surrey), Adil Rashid (Yorkshire), Joe Root (Yorkshire), Jason Roy (Surrey), Ben Stokes (Durham), David Willey (Yorkshire), Chris Woakes (Warwickshire), Mark Wood (Durham). — AFP



Akila Dananjaya

Sports

Chicago Bears beat Los Angeles Rams, shake up playoff picture

Dolphins shock Patriots, Chiefs and Saints win

CHICAGO: In a marquee matchup of flashy offense against tough defense, it was all defense. The Chicago Bears held the Los Angeles Rams to 214 total yards and kept them out of the end zone Sunday night, logging a 15-6 win at Soldier Field that might play a major role in shaping the NFC playoffs when they start next month. Chicago (9-4) moved another step closer to the NFC North title. If Minnesota (6-5-1) loses on Monday night in Seattle, the Bears can wrap up the division crown next week at home against Green Bay. Los Angeles (11-2), meanwhile, sealed the NFC West last week but fell out of the No. 1 seed in the conference on Sunday. New Orleans (11-2) won earlier Sunday in Tampa Bay, and owns the top seed by virtue of a 45-35 win over the Rams on Nov. 4 in the Superdome.

DOLPHINS 34, PATRIOTS 33

Kenyan Drake scored to complete a two-lateral miracle final play as host Miami scored from 69 yards out and stunned New England. With seven seconds left on the clock, Dolphins quarterback Ryan Tannehill completed a 14-yard pass to Kenny Stills, who lateraled to DeVante Parker, who then found Drake. Drake ran the final 51 yards, scooting past stumbling tight end Rob Gronkowski, whom the Patriots had inserted into the game to stop a "Hail Mary" pass. Tannehill finished 14-of-19 passing for 265 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions. He battled a sore ankle after he got stepped on in the second quarter, but returned and kept the Dolphins (7-6) in playoff contention with the win. New England (9-4) had a chance to clinch its division for the 10th straight year but instead lost for the fifth time in its last six trips to Miami.

CHIEFS 27, RAVENS 24 (OT)

Quarterback Patrick Mahomes converted two fourth downs on a game-tying drive in regulation and kicker Harrison Butker atoned for a missed field goal with a 35-yarder in overtime as host Kansas City edged Baltimore. Mahomes finished with 377 yards passing, going 35 of 53 with two touchdowns and an interception against the NFL's top-ranked defense. With the win, the Chiefs (11-2) clinched a berth in the playoffs while retaining the best record in the AFC. Starting quarterback Lamar Jackson was injured in overtime after getting sacked by Kansas City linebackers Justin Houston and Dee Ford. Faced with two snaps and 22 yards to gain from the Baltimore 41-yard line, backup quarterback Robert Griffin III could not engineer a first down,

throwing two incompletions as the Ravens fell to 7-6.

SAINTS 28, BUCCANEERS 14

Special teams ace Taysom Hill flipped the momentum with a blocked punt and Drew Brees converted second-half touchdowns with a short pass and a fourth-down leap to lift New Orleans to a comeback victory over host Tampa Bay and claim the Saints' second consecutive NFC South title. The Saints (11-2), who won back-to-back division titles for the first time in franchise history, looked sluggish, falling behind 14-3 at halftime, but they scored 25 unanswered points with three second-half touchdown drives and a 36-yard field goal by Will Lutz to put the game away. The Bucs (5-8) dominated the Saints in the first half, taking a 14-3 lead, and it could have been even more lopsided because kicker Cairo Santos missed a 46-yard field goal after Tampa Bay had driven to a first-and-10 at the New Orleans 22.

CHARGERS 26, BENGALS 21

Darius Philon's sack on a two-point conversion attempt with less than two minutes remaining sealed Los Angeles' victory over visiting Cincinnati and helped to solidify the Chargers' playoff chances. The Chargers (10-3), the top wild-card team in the AFC, remain behind the Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC West standings. The Chargers and Chiefs are set for a showdown at Kansas City on Thursday night. Bengals quarterback Jeff Driskel was 18 of 27 for 170 yards and a touchdown in his second career start as Cincinnati (5-8) lost its fifth consecutive game and dropped to 5-8 after opening the season with a 4-1 record.

COWBOYS 29, EAGLES 23 (OT)

Quarterback Dak Prescott threw a 15-yard touchdown pass to Amari Cooper with 1:55 remaining in overtime to lift Dallas past visiting Philadelphia. The pass was deflected by Rasul Douglas and into Cooper's hands before he raced in for the winning score and the fifth straight win for the Cowboys, who never let the Eagles touch the ball in overtime. Prescott was 42 of 54 for a career-high 455 yards, two interceptions and three touchdowns, all to Cooper, who caught 10 passes for 217 yards. The Cowboys improved to 8-5, two games ahead of the Eagles (6-7) and Washington Redskins (6-7) in the NFC East with three games to play.

PACKERS 34, FALCONS 20

Aaron Rodgers broke Tom Brady's NFL record for



CHICAGO: Mitchell Trubisky #10 of the Chicago Bears avoids a sack by Dante Fowler #56 of the Los Angeles Rams at Soldier Field on Sunday in Chicago, Illinois. —AFP

RAIDERS 24, STEELERS 21

Derek Carr hit Derek Carrier for a 6-yard touchdown pass on fourth-and-goal with 21 seconds remaining to give host Oakland an upset of Pittsburgh. In a seesaw game, Carr was 5 of 7 for 74 yards on the winning drive. For the game, he threw for 322 yards and also had a scoring pass to Lee Smith. Doug Martin ran for a touchdown for the Raiders (3-10). Chris Boswell slipped and shanked a 40-yard field-goal attempt as time expired, leaving Pittsburgh (7-5-1) with a three-game losing streak. Ben Roethlisberger missed most of the second half, apparently injured on a second-quarter sack, but returned to lead the Steelers to a go-ahead score with 2:55 remaining. — Reuters

Tottenham face make-or-break Barcelona clash

LONDON: Tottenham are sitting pretty in the Premier League but face a potentially season-defining match against Barcelona in the Champions League today. Mauricio Pochettino's men have amassed 36 points from 16 Premier League matches, with 12 wins, leaving them in third place behind Liverpool and Manchester City. That they have managed that despite playing in their temporary home of Wembley and after a World Cup in which so many of their players featured until the final weekend, makes their achievement all the more impressive.

However, with City and Liverpool in such rampant form, few expect Spurs to win the Premier League, putting increased emphasis on their match against the Spanish league leaders in Group B.

Pochettino must somehow find a way past Lionel Messi's Barcelona to reach the knockout stages but he remains positive ahead of the daunting trip to the Camp Nou to face the five-time European champions.

"It will be a massive game. They have qualified for the next stage but in the Champions League no one is going to give a present," said the Argentine, who left Harry Kane out of the starting line-up for the 2-0 win away to Leicester on Saturday.

"We need to win and deserve to win. The mentality is going to be 200 percent to try to win. We are going to arrive in the best condition, Barcelona are one of the best teams in Europe," Spurs took just one point from their first three games in Group B, losing to Inter Milan and Barcelona and drawing with PSV.

But they beat PSV at home and then scored late through Christian Eriksen to beat Inter 1-0 at Wembley, leaving them in second place on seven points, the same as the Italians.

With Barcelona already guaranteed to top the group, Spurs must match Inter's result to guarantee progress. Pochettino has in the past talked about how



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Portuguese defender Nelson Semedo (C) and Barcelona's French forward Ousmane Dembele (R) attend a training session at the Joan Gamper Sports Center in Sant Joan Despi, near Barcelona, yesterday on the eve of the UEFA Champions League group B football match FC Barcelona against Tottenham Hotspur. — AFP

only the Premier League or Champions League title will take the club to the "next level", even though the trophy cabinet has been empty since 2008.

Spurs have played in the Champions League for the past three seasons but they cannot boast the pedigree or history of Manchester United or Liverpool in Europe's top club competition. They have only progressed beyond the Champions League group stage twice, reaching the quarter-finals in 2011.

Barcelona, who beat Spurs 4-2 at Wembley, have already made sure of winning their Champions League group for a record 12th successive season. Dauntingly for Spurs, Barca are unbeaten in 28 Champions League home matches and the Londoners will not be encouraged by the fact that the Spaniards have only lost two

home matches in 33 against English opponents.

But Spurs themselves, with a vibrant collection of attacking players including Kane, Eriksen, Dele Alli and Son Heung-min, have won eight out of their past nine fixtures in all competitions and will be hoping that Ernesto Valverde's side take their foot off the gas.

Beating the Catalan club would be particularly sweet for Pochettino, a former player and coach at Barcelona's city rivals Espanyol. The Argentine earned his first win as a manager in a derby at the Camp Nou in 2009.

"Espanyol were bottom and Barcelona were top," he recalled. "All the people were saying Espanyol were dead and had no chance. It was a special victory and an unbelievable memory." —AFP



Arjen Robben

teams are through to the last 16 and Bayern need only a point in Amsterdam to win Group E.

Robben also missed Saturday's 3-0 league win at home to Nuremberg which left Bayern third in the table and nine points behind Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund. Bayern's senior bosses are planning a squad clear-out for next season and Robben says now is the right time to go, despite two stunning goals in the 5-1 thrashing of Benfica a fortnight ago. "The game against Benfica was a nice confirmation that I can play at the highest level," he added. "On the other side, the club wants to change the face of the team and I want to prepare my future.

"I am simply happy and grateful that there is clarity for both parties." However, Robben says he currently has no plans past the end of the season. "That's not entirely clear, perhaps I will stop playing - it's about waiting and seeing what possibilities there are," he said.

"If offers come in, I'll really consider them 100 percent and if it's something nice, I'll play on, but if no ideal offers come, then that could be it. "I have three children and they also must be happy, so it's not just about offers from China or places in the desert." — AFP

Retiring an option as Robben confirms imminent Bayern exit

BERLIN: Arjen Robben says he may retire in June after confirming he will quit Bayern Munich when his contract with the defending Bundesliga champions expires. Robben, who turns 35 in January, confirmed in yesterday's edition of magazine Kicker that he will quit the Bavarian giants at the end of the season: "that's a fact".

"Of course it's a big step, which you don't just make in one day. "I thought about it a lot and it feels good that it's now out, also for the fans and the club. "It was the right point in time." Having missed the last two games with a thigh injury, Robben could make his return when Bayern face Ajax away in the Champions League tomorrow. Both



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	
Galatasaray Spor Kulübü v FC Porto	20:55
beIN SPORTS	
Schalke 04 v Lokomotiv Moscow	20:55
beIN SPORTS	
Club Brugge KV v Atlético de Madrid	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 5	
AS Monaco FC v BV Borussia Dortmund	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6	
FC Barcelona v Tottenham Hotspur	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Internazionale Milano v PSV Eindhoven	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Liverpool v SSC Napoli	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1	
Crvena Zvezda v Paris Saint-Germain	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD	

Liverpool turn to Salah to summon Gerrard's spirit for Napoli showdown

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool must again rely on fortress Anfield to inflict Napoli's first Champions League defeat of the season if they are to avoid the disappointment of a group stage exit just over six months since appearing in last season's final.

The five-time European champions will most likely even have to win by two goals if they concede due to Napoli's 1-0 triumph when the sides last met in September. Yet, such a scenario is nothing new for Liverpool and even rekindles fond memories of similar permutations when they hosted Olympiakos in the final Champions League group game of the 2004/05 season.

Brazilian legend Rivaldo's early free-kick left the hosts needing three goals, which they got in dramatic fashion in the second half as Steven Gerrard's spectacular strike sealed a famous 3-1 win four minutes from time.

Inspired by Gerrard, the Reds went on to win their last Champions League title that season with a far inferior squad to the one that is off to a club record unbeaten start and top of the Premier League after 16 games.

Overcome the huge challenge facing them in midweek and Liverpool will again be among the favourites to lift the Champions League in Madrid next June. However, in stark contrast to their consistency in the Premier League, Jurgen Klopp's men have lost three of their five European encounters in Group C to put their chances of reaching the last 16 in serious peril.

There is some comfort for Klopp that all three defeats came on the road to Napoli, Red Star Belgrade and Paris Saint-Germain, while Liverpool haven't lost in 18 European games at Anfield. The German coach also isn't as reliant on an individual figure for inspiration as Rafael Benitez's vintage 14 years ago were on Gerrard. —AFP

25 Milwaukee Bucks muscle past Toronto Raptors 104-99 again



26 India end 10-year Australia drought in first-Test thriller



27 Retiring an option as Robben confirms imminent Bayern exit



River Plate win Copa Libertadores

River prevailed 5-3 on aggregate after first leg finished 2-2



MADRID: Players of River Plate celebrate with the trophy after winning the second leg match of the all-Argentine Copa Libertadores final against Boca Juniors, at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, on Sunday. River Plate came from behind to beat bitter Argentine rivals Boca Juniors 3-1 in extra time. — AFP

MADRID: River Plate won the Copa Libertadores by beating their fiercest rivals Boca Juniors 3-1 after extra time on Sunday, bringing an end to a final tainted by violence and moved more than six thousand miles away from Argentina.

Boca took the lead through Dario Benedetto but Lucas Pratto equalised before Juan Quintero and Gonzalo Martinez scored in extra time, aided by Wilmar Barrios being sent off, to win a fittingly dramatic contest for River.

It means River prevailed 5-3 on aggregate after the first leg finished 2-2 and reclaim the trophy they had last won in 2015, lifting it for the fourth time in their history. "We have shown we are superior," River's Leonardo Ponzio said. "After trying to stay quiet about everything that happened, we showed on the pitch we were better."

"The only thing I feel is sadness for not winning the cup and giving it to the people of Boca," Boca coach Guillermo Barros Schelotto said. Postponed on three occasions and then relocated from Buenos Aires to Madrid, the supporters of these two great clubs showed in the Santiago Bernabeu why this fixture had

been billed as one of football's greatest ever.

Lionel Messi, Antoine Griezmann and Diego Godin were among the 62,200 in attendance. But, despite the bouncing huddles in the streets, the plumes of blue and red smoke, the swinging scarves, fluttering flags and fans that were chanting in their seats three hours before kick-off, there was nothing to extinguish the lingering sense of regret.

There was no repeat of the scenes that cast a shadow over Argentinian football and saw the original game at River's El Monumental on November 24 postponed, when around 50 fans attacked Boca's team bus and left some of their players injured.

Madrid, which will also host the Champions League final in June, was chosen in part because of its record of hosting major events and the security, which included around 2,500 police officers, did its job before kick-off.

Fans were separated into zones either side of the stadium and had to go through checks even to enter the area immediately surrounding it. The shame was only that the operation was not as thorough 15 days ago and that a minority decided to take advantage.

Both clubs were allocated 25,000 tickets, with 5,000 of those reserved for residents of Argentina. The fear had been most of those buying would be tourists and neutrals, but the atmosphere suggested different.

Both teams had initially refused to play in Spain's capital but as the losers, Boca's sense of grievance will now become more entrenched. They felt River were responsible for the chaos two weeks ago and should have forfeited the trophy. They took their case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, but the appeal was rejected on Saturday.

When the players shuffled out two hours before kick-off to inspect the pitch, they held up their phones to capture the thousands already inside and the view of a stadium most of them had never played in before.

The cheers grew louder when they came out for kick-off. Then there were whistles as the teams swapped ends and each were greeted by their opponent's fans behind the goal. Jonatan Maidana was playing for Boca when they last won the Copa Libertadores 11 years ago and, now in the red and white of River, he almost gave his former club an early lead, slicing just over his own crossbar.

The game lacked quality but came alive one minute before half-time. Nahitan Nandez's superb pass split two River defenders and Benedetto kept a cool head, guiding into the corner, before taunting the beaten Gonzalo Montiel. River had been inferior but improved. Their first real attacking move was also a brilliant one as Leonardo Ponzio and Quintero exchanged passes before the latter pulled back for Pratto to sweep home.

The game meandered towards full-time and seemed destined for penalties until Barrios was shown a second yellow card for a tackle on Exequiel Palacios and soon after, Quintero struck.

It was a goal worthy of winning the tournament, as he collected 25 yards out, glanced up and whipped the ball in off the underside of the crossbar. Leonard Jara almost snatched a late Boca goal but his shot nicked the outside of the post. Then, with Boca's goalkeeper Esteban Andrada up for a corner, River added the final touch.

Martinez ran the ball into the empty net and River's substitutes and staff were already pouring onto the pitch to begin the celebrations. — AFP

'Try something new, come to Italy,' Ronaldo urges Messi

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo has urged long-time rival Lionel Messi to be more like him and push his limits by challenging himself in another league than Spain. "I'd like him to come to Italy one day. I hope he accepts the challenge like me, but if he's happy there then I respect that," Ronaldo told the Italian press yesterday.

The two strikers have been rivals for the past decade winning five Ballon d'Or trophies each before their domination was broken by World Cup runner-up Luka Modric last week. Asked if he missed the 31-year-old Argentinian, who has spent his entire senior career at Barcelona, Ronaldo replied: "No, maybe it's him who misses me ...

"I've played in England, Spain, Italy, Portugal and

for my national team, while he's still in Spain. "Maybe he needs me more... For me, life is a challenge, I like it and I like to make people happy. "He's a fantastic player and a good guy, but I don't miss anything here. This is my new life and I'm happy.

"I left my comfort zone and took on this challenge here in Turin, everything has gone well, I've proven I'm still an incredible player," said Ronaldo. Ronaldo joined Juventus for 100 million euros (\$114 million) last summer as the Turin giants bid to lift the Champions League trophy after two runners-up finishes in the past four seasons.

To mark his 150 days in Italy he gave interviews yesterday to three leading sports dailies: La Gazzetta dello Sport, Corriere dello Sport and Tuttosport. "I had different options. I won't say which but I had them. Juventus is a solid club. It has a long history," he said of his decision.

"I knew the atmosphere in the stadium. I'd played several times in Italy. I like the city, the people and the club. I knew it could work. "I couldn't be 100 percent sure I was joining the best club in the world. After nine years at Real Madrid it was difficult to compare. "Now I'm 100 percent sure it was the right option."

Ronaldo has scored 11 goals this season, bringing his career total to 584. Finishing second in Ballon d'Or voting to Modric, said Ronaldo, just motivates him even more. "Of course I'm disappointed, but life goes on and I will continue to work hard," said the 33-year-old.

"On the pitch I've done everything to win the Ballon d'Or, numbers do not lie, but I'm no less happy if I do not win, I have wonderful friends and a family, I play in one of the best clubs. "Congratulations to Modric, who has earned the award, but next year we will meet again and I will do everything to win the prize again. "Do you think I'm going home and crying?"

Juventus play Young Boys in their final Champions League group game in Switzerland tomorrow, having already booked their place in the knockout rounds. And Ronaldo is hoping his experience of winning the trophy five times can serve his new team.

"The Champions League cannot be an obsession, you have to think about it calmly," he warned. "Yes we all want it but we have to get there step by step. "Look at the game against Manchester United (2-1 defeat), if it had been a quarter-final we would have gone out. You need a little luck." — AFP



Cristiano Ronaldo