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Qatar relying on Kuwait's role to resolve Gulf crisis

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Foreign investors can own, trade in local bank shares

KUWAIT: The ministry of commerce and industry has issued a decision allowing foreign investors to own and trade Kuwaiti banks' shares. But the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) should be obtained, if ownership exceeds five percent of the bank's capital, the ministry in a press statement yesterday. The latest move comes in accordance with decree 694/2018, which notes that non-Kuwaiti investors shall be allowed to own and trade in Kuwaiti banks' shares.

The decision stated that ownership of a foreign investor shall not exceed five percent in any Kuwaiti bank, whether directly or indirectly. The ministry added that the Capital Markets Authority said that its promotional tours in many countries and with many international investors generated inquiries about the ease of investing in the Kuwaiti market. — KUNA



DOHA: Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani yesterday said his country is counting on Kuwait's role in resolving the Gulf crisis. "We still believe that dialogue can restore the relationship under the sovereignty of countries," he said during a debate following the opening of the 2018 Doha Forum. "We continue to rely heavily on the role of Kuwait and the role of other countries in the region to overcome the crisis," he added.

Sheikh Mohammed said that the boycott imposed on the emirate by Saudi Arabia and its allies had irreparably damaged the existing six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council set up at the height of the Iran-Iraq war in 1981. "The regional alliance has been undermined by the crisis," he told policymakers at the two-day forum. "Therefore the alliance that existed needs to be reshaped and redesigned to ensure future stability and security of the region."

The minister said the GCC had "no teeth" to resolve any dispute. "They have mechanisms in place and never trigger them because some countries believe they are non-binding." He said that despite the failings of the GCC, he still expected a regional solution. Kuwait has been leading diplomatic efforts but has so far been

unable to resolve the crisis. Sheikh Mohammed lashed out at the reasons advanced by Saudi Arabia and its allies Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates for imposing their sweeping boycott. "It was based on lies, it was based on crimes... it was based on creating propaganda to create fear among the people," he said.

Riyadh and its allies accused Doha of supporting "terrorist groups", including the Muslim Brotherhood which they blacklist but with which Qatar has longstanding ties. They also accused the emirate of advocating improved relations with Saudi archrival Iran, with which Qatar shares important offshore gas fields. They set out their complaints in a 13-point list of demands that has been rejected by Doha as an assault on its sovereignty and its right to conduct an independent foreign policy.

In his opening remarks to the forum, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani said Qatar's Gulf partners needed to show respect for the country's independence. "Our position has not changed on how to solve the Gulf crisis," the Qatari leader said. "This can be achieved by lifting the siege and resolving differences through dialogue and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs."

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DOHA: Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani delivers a speech during the Doha Forum yesterday. — AFP

Ordeal of 79 stranded Indian nurses ends

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The ordeal of 79 Indian nurses stranded in Kuwait for the last two years without jobs or iqamas has ended after the government legalized their residence and completed the formalities for employment at health ministry hospitals. "It is like a new lease of life

for us. We are getting our residencies stamped. We have also been offered jobs in MoH hospitals," a visibly joyful nurse told Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity. The nurses sounded optimistic that they will be able to move on, putting two years of traumatic experiences behind them.

They also visited the Indian Embassy and expressed their gratitude to the officials for helping them in redressing their grievances. "Out of 79 nurses, 70 will be joining various health ministry hospitals in the coming week. The employment of the others is in different stages of processing," said an Indian embassy official. The aggrieved nurses had raised the issue with Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj during her visit to Kuwait in October. The minister discussed the matter with top authorities in Kuwait including Foreign

Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. After talks with the officials, Swaraj had said she expected a speedy resolution to this "compassionate and serious" issue.

The health ministry had signed a contract with 80 nurses from India in 2015, who reached Kuwait in early 2016. Although, they were assigned to various hospitals, the Civil Service Commission cancelled their appointments over alleged financial irregularities in recruitment. Since then, 79 nurses remained virtually in limbo without jobs or residencies, while one managed to leave the country. "We took the matter very seriously and pursued it relentlessly to find an early solution to the problem. We held several rounds of discussions with officials in the foreign, social affairs and labor and interior ministries before reaching a solution," the embassy official added.

Australia recognizes west Jerusalem as capital of Israel

SYDNEY: Australia now recognizes west Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said yesterday, but a contentious embassy shift from Tel Aviv will not occur until a peace settlement is achieved. Canberra became one of just a few governments around the world to follow US President Donald Trump's lead and recognize the contested city as Israel's capital, but Morrison also committed to recognizing a future state of Palestine with east Jerusalem as its capital.

"Australia now recognizes west Jerusalem - being the seat of the Knesset and many of the institutions of government - is the capital of Israel," Morrison said in a speech in Sydney. Both Israel and the Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their capital.



Scott Morrison

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Qout Market reopens after sudden closure

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Two weeks after it was abruptly shut down by the Municipality, the Qout Market was back yesterday at Safat Square in Kuwait City. It is one of Kuwait's most popular, well-known, locally-created urban markets, and focuses on encouraging support for local businesses, farmers, entrepreneurs and artisans. Organizers declined to

comment on the market's closure hours before its opening in the parking lot of Discovery Mall on Dec 1, but vendors yesterday told Kuwait Times about its impact on their small businesses.

"I had prepared products for the market, so the closure by the Municipality resulted in some material losses. But we understand the sudden circumstances," said Um Talal, founder of 'Figs and Olives', who mixes Jordanian olives with a host of Kuwaiti ingredients. She started her business three years ago from home and participated in Qout Market for the second time.

Hessa Al-Habshi, founder of 'Elate Tearoom', said she found other ways to sell what she had already prepared.

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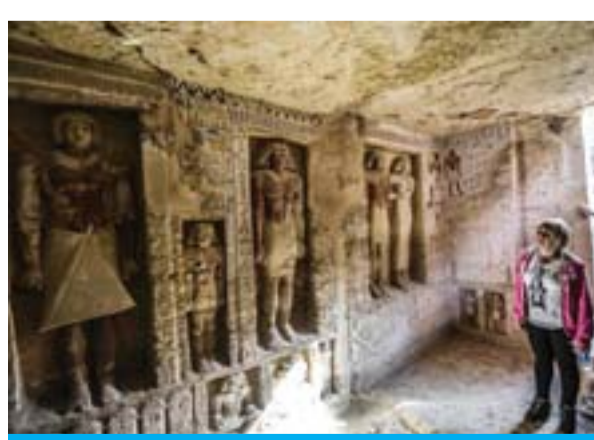


KUWAIT: Stalls of the pop up Qout Market are seen in Safat Square yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Egypt unveils 'one of a kind' ancient tomb

SAQQARA, Egypt: Egypt unveiled a well-preserved 4,400-year-old tomb decorated with hieroglyphs and statues south of Cairo yesterday, and officials expect more discoveries when archaeologists excavate the site further in coming months. The tomb was found in a buried ridge at the ancient necropolis of Saqqara. It was untouched and unlooted, Mostafa Waziri, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters at the site. He described the find as "one of a kind in the last decades". The tomb dates from the rule of Neferirkare Kakai, the third king of the Fifth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom.

Archaeologists removed a last layer of debris from the tomb on Thursday and found five shafts inside, Waziri said. One of the shafts was unsealed with nothing inside, but the other four were sealed. They are expecting to make discoveries when they excavate those shafts starting today, he said. He was hopeful about one shaft in particular. "I can imagine that all of the objects can be found in this area," he said, pointing



SAQQARA, Egypt: Guests enter a newly-discovered tomb at the Saqqara necropolis yesterday. — AFP

at one of the sealed shafts. "This shaft should lead to a coffin or a sarcophagus of the owner of the tomb."

The tomb is 10 metres long, three metres wide and just under three metres high, Waziri said. The walls are decorated with hieroglyphs and statues of pharaohs. Waziri said the tomb was unique because of the statues and its near perfect condition. "The color is almost intact even though the tomb is almost 4,400 years old," he said.

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Western tourists trickle into Saudi as it opens up

RIYADH: Western tourists, a rarity in Saudi Arabia, visited this weekend under a new visa system, as one of the world's most inaccessible countries tries to open up its society and diversify its economy away from oil. Thousands of fans flocked to Riyadh's historic Diriyah district for Formula E, a motor sports tournament using electric vehicles, and concerts including by David Guetta and Black Eyed Peas.

Most were Saudis still unaccustomed to such entertainment in their own country, where cinemas and public concerts were banned until changes by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the past two years. Despite an international outcry over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the Saudi-led war in Yemen, some Westerners also seized the opportunity to visit a country that still largely restricts foreigners to resident workers and their dependents, business visitors, and Muslim pilgrims.

An American named Jason is spending a week here with his German wife, riding quad bikes in the desert and visiting heritage sites in Ushaiger, 200 km northwest of the



RIYADH: People chat prior to the 2018 Saudia Ad Diriyah E-Prix Formula E Championship yesterday. — AFP

capital. "The race sounds interesting but to be honest it was a means to see the country. We're happy to be here," he said. "I've always wanted to come for many, many years... I'm so happy to be here and that they're letting us be here."

Aaron, a 40-year-old software engineer, travelled from New York for two days. He and a few dozen other adventure travellers seeking to visit every country in the world checked the desert kingdom off their list this weekend.

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Kuwait affirms support to peaceful efforts in solving Yemeni crisis

Kuwait welcomes agreement between Yemeni parties in Sweden peace talks

NEW YORK/KUWAIT: Kuwait affirmed its support to resolve the crisis in Yemen through peaceful mediation efforts, especially if the United Nations is its facilitator. This came in the speech delivered by its Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during a Security Council session Friday to discuss the situation in Yemen.

Otaibi said that this stems from Kuwait's belief in the growing importance of this organization and its decisions taken by its various vital organs, especially the Security Council as the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. He noted that in his belief that the solution to the crisis in Yemen is a political solution, Kuwait has provided a private plane that took the majority of the delegation from Sanaa to Sweden to participate in the last round of consultations.

The Ambassador expressed his hope that all Yemeni parties would invest their results and complete the steps outlined in them to reach a comprehensive agreement that will lead in its outcome to a halt to the catastrophic effects of the crisis facing Yemen. Otaibi affirmed that "the relative progress observed in this round of consultations is a great success if we take into account the circumstances of the crisis," adding that this progress "could not have been achieved only through the availability of the main factors represented by the unity of the Security Council towards the Yemeni file." He pointed out to the great role played by the countries of the coalition to support the legitimacy in overcoming all obstacles to

the holding of that round.

Otaibi said, "although the round of Stockholm consultations did not come out with understandings on all the issues dealt with there, the agreement reached on the cities and ports of Hodeidah and the Declaration of Understanding on the city of Taiz will contribute to the difficult humanitarian impact of the Yemeni people". The city of Hodeidah and its ports represented "an address for the aggravation of the difficult humanitarian impact. We see here that this agreement, specified in stages of implementation, will, in the event of its implementation, lead to a ceasefire and joint redeployment of forces to locations outside cities and ports," he added.



Kuwait hails agreement on Hodeidah

Otaibi stressed that the agreement would allow for a large margin of freedom of movement and safe access to humanitarian assistance and ensure that it is not subjected to obstruction or looting as was the case in the past. This will contribute to support the exchange rate of the national currency, which has seen a significant improvement in recent times, he added. On the other hand, Otaibi

expressed hope that the understandings agreed upon by the Yemeni parties would end the negative effects of the siege imposed on Taiz city and prevent their inhabitants from facing the dangers of the humanitarian crisis. He also expressed his hope that the Yemeni parties would seriously commit themselves to the outcome of the Swedish consultations, which, if implemented, would be a key factor in alleviating the suffering of humanity and would translate the efforts of the international community and major donors in support of the humanitarian situation.

Last Thursday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said parties involved in Yemen reached an agreement regarding the exchange of more than 16,000 prisoners and another agreement on Hodeidah includes a cease-fire throughout the province and the withdrawal of all combat forces from the port. The parties involved also reached a mutual understanding to calm the situation in Taiz with the possibility of opening humanitarian corridors to allow the safe passage of goods and people across the front lines and reduce fighting in the province and the deployment of demining operations and the release and exchange of prisoners. The two sides agreed to form a joint committee headed by the UN to implement this and the committee is due to meet soon and agree on a plan for the establishment of interim peace in Taiz.

Important step

Kuwait has welcomed the agreement reached between Yemeni parties on several key issues at the conclusion of the week-long



NEW YORK: Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi addresses a UN Security Council session to discuss the situation in Yemen. — KUNA

peace talks in Sweden. This agreement is considered an important and positive step to find a comprehensive solution to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, a source at Kuwait's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Thursday. The deal is in line with the three references: The Gulf initiative and its executive mechanisms, the outcomes of the national dialogue and the UN Security Council Resolution 2216, the source stated. It underlined the importance of abiding by this deal in order to stop the bloodshed and ending suffering of the Yemeni people.

The source extolled the huge efforts, which were highly appreciated, by Sweden and the UN so as to reach such an accord. The conciliation talks in Sweden between the Yemeni parties concluded earlier in the day after agreeing on some key issues, mainly

Hodeidah, Taiz and prisoners' swap. On Hodeidah, the agreement stipulates that Houthis withdraw from the ports of Hodeidah, al-Salif and Raas Issa toward north of Sanaa within 14 days, and the government redeploy its troops south. It stipulates also that Houthis withdraw fully from Hodeidah city in the second phase to sites outside their northern borders within 21 days.

The two sides further agreed on ceasefire in Hodeidah and its ports, enhance the UN efforts, commitment not to making any military reinforcement of both parties, opening corridors for humanitarian aid as well as deposit all revenues of the ports at the country's central bank. The talks had kicked off in an attempt to contain the crisis and reach a settlement through discussing building confidence and curbing violence and others. — KUNA

Kuwait concerned about conflicts in Central Africa

NEW YORK: Kuwait expressed deep concerns over violence and armed conflicts witnessed in the Central Africa region, stressing the need for a solutions to stop these acts and hold perpetrators accountable. This came during a speech by the permanent representative of Kuwait to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, during a special UN session to discuss latest developments in Central Africa.

Otaibi strongly condemned "criminal acts, suicide bombings, repeated armed attacks, robberies and kidnappings carried out by the Boko Haram and The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) groups in the region," adding that such acts "hinder any political, security, developmental or even social and humanitarian progress". He stressed the importance of all parties involved in these conflicts to cooperate with the United Nations Security Council, regional organizations, and all central African states, to counter these attacks and

reach solutions to stop them.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reports in this regard showed a full explanation of the political, economic, social developments in the region and its impacts on the security and peace process in Central Africa and neighboring countries, Otaibi explained. On the political level, despite security instability, many countries in the region had elections without any violence attacks, such as Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, and Cameroon, he stated.

As for the situation in the Cameroon, Otaibi said he shared with the Secretary-General his deep concern over the deterioration of the security and human rights situation in the north-western and south-western regions of Cameroon, and called on the Cameroonian government to cooperate with regional organizations to reduce human suffering, armed conflict and violence, and to stop the flow of refugees in compliance with the international law.

As for the Congo, Otaibi expressed the hope that upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic, will be held with comprehensive, transparent and safe participation." Free and credible elections in any State in Central Africa is importance to maintain peace and security," he added. "Through our monitoring of the political and security developments in the countries

mentioned in the report, we stress the importance of the continuous efforts by regional organizations and the United Nations peacekeeping missions in the region, to establish inclusive dialogue processes between governments and all community groups especially those who will soon have elections," Otaibi said. He regretted the bad humanitarian situation in the region, with the increase of people in need for humanitarian relief, refugees, and forced displacement due to violence and the spread of epidemics and diseases such as cholera and Ebola.

In his speech, Ambassador Otaibi praised the Economic Community of Central African States for adopting a strategy to prevent and combat terrorism in the region and their decision to carry out a comprehensive reform presented by the Peace and Security Council in Central Africa. He also praised the "fruitful cooperation" between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which he described as "effectively translated" by holding a summit last July in Togo's capital. He stressed the importance of cooperation between governments in the region, economic allies, and regional organizations in order to achieve stability and security of the peoples of Central Africa. — KUNA

Kuwait lauds brotherly ties with Bahrain

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulation yesterday to Bahraini King Hamad bin Issa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, expressing his best wishes for the kingdom on its 47th national day anniversary. In the cable, His Highness the Amir lauded the numerous achievements, development, and prosperity in the kingdom in various fields under the wise leadership of Bahraini king, 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 sent similar cables on the occasion.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah lauded his country's deep relationship with Bahrain, and described it as "historical" and "role model." Sheikh Azzam made his remarks in a press statement yesterday while congratulating the Bahraini political leadership on the country's 47th National Day and 19th anniversary of King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa's assumption to power. He expressed his joy of taking part in the Kingdom's national celebrations, affirming that the Kuwaiti-Bahraini relationship enjoys substantial support by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Bahraini monarch.

The two countries are closely tied together when it comes to development and prosperity, Sheikh Azzam added, pointing out the Kingdom's brave and supportive stand by Kuwait during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of the country, in which the Bahraini armed forces were at the forefront of Kuwait's liberation. The Kuwaiti diplomat also affirmed his country's grand and permanent support of Bahrain's development march, reiterating Kuwait's keenness to preserve the Kingdom's security, as well as safety of its people. Furthermore, he prayed to Allah Almighty to perpetuate the grace of security, safety, welfare, and love on Bahrain under the wise leadership of King Hamad and his reformation vision, which had a significant impact on his country's growth and development. Sheikh Azzam also wished the Kingdom further success and development. — KUNA

Kuwait hosts two disabled GCC sailors

KUWAIT: Mohammad Al-Shahwani, a Qatari of special needs, personally designed a traditional 'Al-Sanbook' boat and voyaged to Kuwait aboard it, along with his Omani companion of identical condition, Abdullah Al-Bloushi. The pair, who challenged and overcame their disability, arrived in the country on Saturday, capping a three-day trip across the Gulf waters, bearing a message of compassion and peace to the Kuwaiti people and proving in action that, certainly, once there is a will, there is a way.

Upon arrival at Al-Kout Mall dock in Fahaheel, Al-Shahwani told a gathering of journalists and cameramen that he had personally designed the boat and supervised its construction to be a means of interaction with "the brothers and friends" in countries he plans to visit. Shahwani said he would meet, during his stay in Kuwait, with members of Kuwait Disabled Sport Club (KDSC), adding that he would

also attend inauguration of the ninth Gulf wheelchair basketball tournament, also admiring the warm welcome of the club members. His companion, Bloushi, has advised persons of disabilities to equip themselves with resolve, perseverance, strong will and patience so that they can be effective members in their communities. Disability should be a motive for excellence and creativity, he stresses.

Meanwhile, Nasser Al-Ajmi, the deputy chairman of the Kuwaiti club, said the voyage by Shahwani and Bloushi constituted a new affirmation that the disabled could overcome his (her) condition and interact with others. The club has worked out a schedule for the pair, including visits to welfare societies, specialized in disabilities.

Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Bandar Al-Attiya and members of the club were among the crowd that welcomed the brave sea men. 'Al-Sanbook' is a of boats that was common during the pre-oil era in Gulf countries, including Kuwait. It was used to be built from wood and other materials available at those times. The boat was relatively small and largely used for pearl diving and fishing. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Members of the Kuwait Disabled Sport Club welcome two disabled Gulf sailors upon their arrival to Kuwait yesterday.

News in brief

Amir congratulates Nobel laureate

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable to Nadia Murad, the UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, to congratulate her on winning the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize. In his message, His Highness the Amir wished that Murad's winning of the prestigious prize would shed more light on humanitarian issues that became a matter of concern to everybody. He thanked Murad for her recognition of Kuwait's contributions to the reconstruction of Iraq and expressed his best wishes for the Nobel Prize laureate. 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 sent similar cables to Murad. — KUNA

Amir congratulates fencing team

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent congratulatory cables to members of the Kuwaiti fencing team after winning the Arab Fencing Championship which concluded in Tunisia Friday. In his cables, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere congratulations to the Kuwaiti fencers for winning the Arab title and bagging the biggest number of gold medals. His Highness Sheikh Sabah lauded the team's achievement, and wished them more future successes to elevate the flag of Kuwait at regional and international sports events. 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 sent similar cables to the members of the Kuwaiti fencing team. — KUNA

Mongolia awards Kuwait's ambassador

KUWAIT: Mongolian President Khaltmaa Battulga awarded the Medal of Friendship to Kuwait's Ambassador to Poland and former Ambassador to Mongolia Khaled Al-Fadhli, in recognition of his efforts in the service of good relations between Kuwait and Mongolia. The Mongolian Ambassador to Poland, Bata Nemekh, and with the instructions of his Government, handed over the award to Al-Fadhli on behalf of the Mongolian President. During their meeting, the Mongolian ambassador praised the efforts made by Ambassador Al-Fadhli for five years in the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar, which had a great impact on strengthening the relations of the two friendly countries in various fields. — KUNA

Embassy warns nationals in France

PARIS: The Kuwaiti Embassy in Paris yesterday warned nationals present in Paris and other French cities to avoid sites with demonstrations during the day because these protests turned violent over the past month. Yesterday's protests involve the so-called 'Yellow Vests' who have been protesting living conditions and extra taxes, but these protests have also been infiltrated by violent extremist groups seeking clashes with police and also to damage property and pillage stores. The embassy told citizens "to stay away from places of demonstrations and stay at home and only leave in necessary cases and comply with the instructions and guidance of local authorities." The embassy also communicated two emergency numbers for nationals encountering problems during the demonstrations: 0033147235425 and 0033670673834. — KUNA

Local

Amir congratulates Foreign Minister on adoption of UNSCR 2449 on aid to Syrians

Amir hopes resolution would ensure unimpeded access of aid to millions

KUWAIT/NEW YORK: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Friday to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the approval of the Kuwait and Sweden-drafted UN Security Council resolution no. 2449 on cross-border aid to Syrians. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations over Kuwait's successful diplomacy, along with Sweden, in handling the Syrian humanitarian file that led to the adoption of the UNSC resolution no 2449.

The resolution authorizes a one-year extension of cross-border aid deliveries to Syria. His Highness the Amir applauded the strenuous efforts made by Sheikh Sabah Khaled, the ministry's staff as well as Kuwait's permanent mission in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi and mission's staff during discussions and consultations as well as listening to the views of different sides that culminated in the approval of the resolution. His Highness the Amir expressed his hope that the newly adopted resolution would be implemented soon to ensure unimpeded access of humanitarian aid to millions of needy people in Syria. His Highness the Amir also stressed the necessity of doubling efforts of UN so as to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis.

His Highness the Amir, finally, wished every success to all Kuwaitis in order to serve the dear homeland and raise its status on different international arenas. Moreover, 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 sent similar cables to the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled.

Kuwait welcomes resolution

Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had welcomed the UN Security Council Resolution 2449 approved on Thursday to extend for one year the mandate for delivery of aid to Syrians across the borders and conflict lines. The resolution, tabled by Kuwait and Sweden, renews the mechanism specified in the Resolution 2165, an official of the Ministry said. He thanked the Council members for backing this vital humanitarian initiative in the vote. "The State of Kuwait believes that this resolution will contribute to alleviation of the suffering of millions of Syrians trapped in the conflict," he said, noting that the mechanism in the resolution continues to be

the best shortcut to humanitarian response. The Kuwaiti diplomat also thanked the field aid workers for their life-saving efforts.

Thirteen of the 15 members of the UN Security Council had voted for the draft, sponsored by Kuwait and Sweden, with Russia and China abstaining. On behalf of the two sponsors of the Syrian humanitarian dossier, Ambassador Otaibi briefed the Council following the vote on the consultations with the main players in Syria over the last few weeks. "The consultations were very fruitful and encouraged Sweden and Kuwait to table this balanced and purely humanitarian draft," he said.

Ambassador Otaibi thanked the representatives of the Council members for their constructive contribution and positive response to the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in this regard. "The cross-border humanitarian assistance continue to be a lifeline for more than 663,000 people across Syria

who cannot be supported by any other means," he said, noting that additional 13 million Syrians are in need of aid. He also appreciated the efforts made by Mark Lowcock, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to address the challenging situation in Syria.

Crucial step

The resolution is a crucial step towards sustained response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, Otaibi said. The resolution authorizes extension, for 12 months, of the mandate for cross-border delivery of aid to the Syrians as per the mechanism specified in the Resolution 2165 of July 2014.

Speaking to the press on Friday, Ambassador Otaibi said the adoption of the resolution marks a new success for Kuwait's humanitarian policy and leading role in the relief efforts particularly in Syria. "At the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah the State of Kuwait launched several humanitarian initiatives to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Syria since 2013," he said.

"Kuwait hosted the first international humanitarian pledging conference for Syria in that year and two similar conferences in the two following years," Ambassador Otaibi recalled. "In continuation of such humanitarian initiatives, the Kuwaiti mission to the UN worked with the Swedish mission and our coordination led to the passing of the UNSC Resolution 2401 and



AL-BAB: A Syrian displaced child poses inside a basement in the city of Al-Bab the northern Aleppo province on the border with Turkey. — AFP

yesterday's resolution," he pointed out. The Resolution 2401, unanimously adopted on February 24, 2018, calls for a ceasefire across Syria for 30 days. The Resolution 2449 was passed by 13 UNSC members, and it authorizes the UN aid agencies and their partners to use routes across conflict lines and the border crossings of Bab al-Salam, Bab al-Hawa, Al Yarubiyah and Al-Ramtha, in addition to those already in use, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, reaches people in need throughout Syria through the most direct routes. It allows, with the consent of the relevant neighboring countries of Syria, the loading of all humanitarian relief consignments at the relevant UN facilities, Ambassador Otaibi added.

Millions in need

Adopting the resolution is quite necessary to ensure arrival of the humanitarian supplies at locations of millions in need in Syria. Ambassador Otaibi said during a UNSG session during which the voting was held. He also noted that with this move, the international community re-asserted necessity of distributing the supplies rapidly and without any obstacles.

Otaibi regretted that this year witnessed continuity of the strife in Syria, remaining a threat to regional and international peace and security, "amid the Security Council inability to resolve the crisis." Recent escalation of violence in Deir Ezzor, Idlib and Aleppo proved that security in the country remained fragile and might deteriorate further, particularly in Idlib, populated by three million people, warned the senior Kuwaiti envoy, who also noted in this respect necessity of maintaining the Turkish-Russian accord to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in Idlib.

Parties of the strife must honor their obligations toward international humanitarian rights' laws and those who perpetrated serious breaches of the human rights laws must be brought to account, the Kuwaiti representative said. Turning to the plight of the refugees and the displaced, he stated that their return to their homes must be voluntary, honorable and according to relevant international criteria. Urging the UNSG member states to act collectively, Ambassador Otaibi has warned humanitarian conditions in Syrian will continue deteriorating unless a political settlement is reached in line with UNSG Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Declaration. — KUNA

Kuwaiti, Swedish FM's discuss Syria, Yemen developments

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah initiated a phone call to his Swedish counterpart Margot Wallstrom on Friday to discuss the Resolution 2449 passed by the UN Security Council. The resolution, sponsored by Kuwait and Sweden, authorizes extension, for 12 months, of the mandate for cross-border delivery of aid to the Syrians.

During the conversation, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled congratulated Wallstrom on Sweden's successful hosting of the first round of intra-Yemeni consultation, according to a statement by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He appreciated Sweden's contributions to the international efforts to resolve the Syrian and Yemeni crises. In the meantime, the Swedish minister thanked Kuwait for its outstanding role to promote security and



Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

peace across the Middle East and beyond, the statement added.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem applauded the successful diplomacy of Kuwait and Sweden shown in the adoption last night of the UN Security Council Resolution 2449. The resolution extends for one year the mandate for delivery of aid to Syrians across the borders and conflict lines. In a cable to Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Ghanem said, "the efforts of the Ministry and of Kuwait mission to the UN bore fruit and led to the passing of the Resolution 2449 in collaboration with the

friends in Sweden."

"The success of the Kuwaiti diplomacy in the adoption of this vital resolution is a continuation of Kuwait's policy of humanitarian intervention, particularly in relation to the Syrian dossier sponsored by Kuwait over the last six years," he said, citing Kuwait hosting of a series of international humanitarian pledging conferences for Syria. Ghanem underscored the need to continue working with the international community to reach a durable political solution to the Syrian crisis and end the suffering of the Syrian people. — KUNA

German FM visits Kuwait today to tackle bolstering ties

BERLIN: German Foreign Minister Heiko Josef Maas, will begin his official visit to Kuwait today, the first of his kind since he took office in March. During the two-day visit, Maas will meet with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to discuss means of enhancing bilateral relations and to go over the latest developments in the international arena.

In a statement to the press, Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najib Al-Bader welcomed the visit and stressed importance on boosting bilateral relations in all fields. Choosing Kuwait as the first country to visit in the region since Maas took office "reflects on the position the German side places for the role played by Kuwait in promoting regional and international security and peace," Bader said. The visit talks will also focus on a number of regional and

international issues, as well as discuss enhancing coordination and cooperation in international humanitarian affairs, he added. Bader said that the visit also comes within the framework of seeking further strategic partnership between Kuwait and Germany, pointing out that Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid will hold political, economic, trade, health and education talks with Maas.

Ambassador Bader also referred to the "advanced stage" witnessed in the bilateral relations, describing Germany as "an important strategic partner" of Kuwait. He also stressed the importance of Germany to Kuwait's investment activity, as Germany is the first destination for Kuwait investments in the public and private sectors in Europe. Adding Kuwait is the first Arab country to invest in Germany since the 1970s. Kuwait now is one of the most prominent investors in Germany in the public and private sectors, Bader said. Adding the volume of investments reached 35 billion euros, making Kuwait in first place of the size of investments in the European Union. Bader expressed hope that Germany will contribute to the success of the 'New Kuwait 2035' vision, through its active and direct participation in the projects to be launched in Kuwait via its leading companies. — KUNA

Amir's envoy arrives in China for official visit

BEIJING: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's envoy, First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, arrived in Beijing yesterday for an official visit. Kuwait's ambassador to the People's Republic of China Samih Hayat said in a statement to the press that Sheikh Nasser will deliver a written message from His Highness the Amir to Chinese President Xi Jinping on deepening bilateral cooperation and strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries.

The 'New Kuwait Vision 2035' and the Chinese 'Belt and Road' initiative are compatible with each other, Hayat said, adding that the two countries' leaders are ready to speed up their cooperation through implementing agreements and memorandums of understanding signed during the state visit to China by His Highness the Amir last July. "Our bilateral relations with China are being strengthened day by day with conscious care, great interest and high-level and unrivaled communication between the two countries' leaders," he added.

He said that the two countries have taken great and carefully-studied steps, as the visit of Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah to China comes in a timely and pivotal time, a matter which will push bilateral relations to a broader perspective and promote the integration of existing developmental strategies.

Sheikh Nasser was received by Ambassador Hayat, Chinese



BEIJING: First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chinese government's representative and Assistant Foreign Minister for West Asian and North African Affairs Wang Di after arriving in Beijing yesterday. — KUNA

government's representative and Assistant Foreign Minister for West Asian and North African Affairs Wang Di, senior officials of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Kuwait's embassy members and heads of the Kuwaiti accredited offices in China. The delegation accompanying Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah includes Ambassador Hayat, Executive Director of the Development of Silk City (Subbia) and Boubyan Island, Faisal Al-Madali, Lulua Al-Na'ma, Sheikhha Al-Anoud Ibrahim Al-Sabah, Abdulwahab Al-Rashid and Sheikh Jaber Fahd Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Kuwait examines others' experience at Doha Forum: Minister

DOHA: Kuwait is partaking in the Doha Forum to benefit from experience of other states participating in the annual event, the country's finance minister says. Dr Navef Al-Hajraf, in a statement to the press yesterday, indicated that examining other nations' expertise could be helpful in implementation of development strategies. This event, which has been held annually for 18 years, is a significant platform for exchanging views on various issues, said Dr Hajraf.

Issues related to global politics, economy, environment, backing the youth and women empowerment and technology feature high in agenda of the speakers at the parley and lecturers at sideline seminars. Some axes of

Kuwait Vision 2035 are also adopted by other GCC states, minister Hajraf said, also indicating that the topics on the table deal with various social, scientific and economic topics as well as boosting the youth role.

On his meeting with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Thani, on the forum margins, minister Al-Hajraf said that he conveyed "during the brotherly meeting greetings from His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah," also indicating that "multiple objectives that bond the two sisterly countries."

Dr Hajraf revealed that he had also held talks with his Qatari counterpart, Ali Al-Imadi, on issues of common interest. Kuwait seeks to exchange views and notions with "the brothers particularly at such a forum," he said. Earlier yesterday, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani inaugurated the forum's 18th edition, themed "making policies in an intertwined world." The forum's agenda includes key topics, namely security, peace, policymaking and economic development. — KUNA

Local

Australian livestock shipments resume after summer months' suspension: Envoy

Australian exporting company violated animal welfare conditions: Ambassador

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: After a few months of suspension during summer, live sheep shipments to Kuwait have resumed, the Australian ambassador to Kuwait announced during a roundtable with local reporters on Thursday. Ambassador Jonathan Gilbert said the demand for Australian beef and lamb continues to grow and Australia is committed to fulfill the demand. "We want you to know that it was not the Kuwaiti side that violated animal welfare conditions - it was the Australian exporting company, which subsequently lost its license to operate," said Gilbert.

"During the suspension, we worked hard to place additional measures to strengthen the regulations and we are back to normal now. We are now working with the new company to comply fully with the government's standards and regulations, especially regarding animal welfare. We place independent observers too to make sure we are complying with the regulations; they are tasked to monitor the live sheep shipments," he said, adding total food and agricultural exports in 2017-18 was around \$300 million.

Gilbert noted that despite the absence of live Australian sheep, large volumes of chilled Australian beef and lamb are still coming in from Australia. "Just one local company in Salmiya sells more than 20 tons

of Australian beef every month. The demand is really huge for Australian meat," he said. At the same roundtable, Gilbert introduced Dr Neil Lazarow, Research Group Leader - Land and Water at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO). CSIRO is

“ Demand is really huge for Australian meat ”

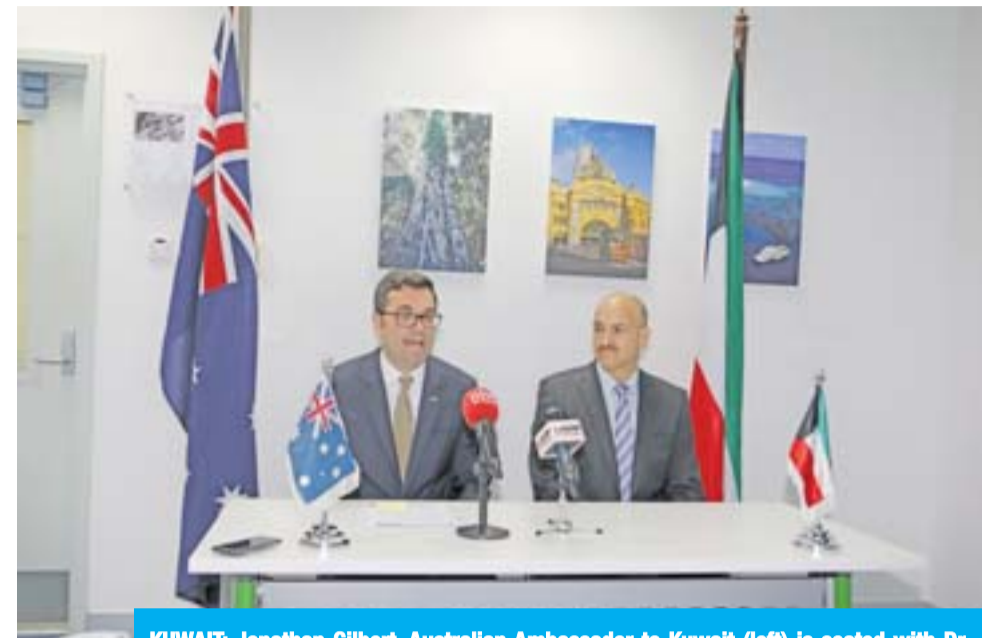
Australia's national science agency and one of the largest and most diverse research agencies in the world. "In October, CSIRO signed a memorandum of understanding with Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR). Dr Lazarow is visiting Kuwait at the invitation of KISR for talks on the effects of extreme weather events on infrastructure and possible scientific solutions," Gilbert noted.

He told reporters that Lazarow's visit comes at a very relevant time in Kuwait - after the recent heavy rainfall and volatile weather. "Australia like Kuwait has seen an

increase in extreme weather events in recent years - storms and flooding have sadly caused considerable damage to infrastructure and loss of life," he said. KISR's seminar raised a number of important questions faced by both Australia and Kuwait, including: How do you improve preparedness for and recovery from extreme events? How do you better predict extreme weather? How can you build infrastructure so that it can better withstand extreme weather events?

On science and technology, Australia and Kuwait have a lot to learn from each other. "I look forward to seeing further exchanges of CSIRO and KISR scientists. Australia is a natural partner of Kuwait with regards to a number of areas including water management, renewable energy, dry land agriculture and aquaculture. We have world-leading expertise and technologies in these areas that I encourage Kuwait to look at closely, especially as it embarks on the implementation of its New Kuwait 2035 vision. Australia and Kuwait continue to have a close defense relationship underpinned by our involvement in the coalition during the 1991 liberation of Kuwait and current cooperation in the international coalition to defeat IS. We have a shared commitment to promote regional security and cooperation," Gilbert said.

On investment, Gilbert said that Australia continues to see strong Kuwaiti interest in



KUWAIT: Jonathan Gilbert, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait (left) is seated with Dr Neil Lazarow during a roundtable with local reporters. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Australia given its world-beating economy, strong governance, strategic location in the Asia-Pacific and world-class infrastructure. "Large Kuwaiti investments in the oil and gas sector in Australia as well as energy infrastructure and real estate are generating good returns for Kuwaiti investors," he said.

On education, there are just under a 1,000 Kuwaiti students studying in Australia. "We hope this can grow further given the positive experiences of young Kuwaitis who chose Australia because of its high quality universities and friendly and safe multicultural cities," he added.

Burgan Bank staff participated in 'productivity' conference

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank staff recently completed its active participation in the final event of the year by the widely popular educational platform - Knowledge Club on December 11. The bank's middle and senior level employees learned about leading management practices and cutting-edge research to substantiate the importance of employee engagement.

Entitled 'Productivity, Engagement and Peak Performance', the conference addressed the art of boosting employee's engagement levels and productivity to improve business results. During the intensive session, participants interacted with best-selling authors, international keynote speakers, and globally sought-after trainers to gain insights into the trends that affect businesses today, hands-on strategies to enhance employee engagement at a time when disengagement has become a global challenge.

The conference is part of Burgan Bank's one-year sponsorship of Vigor Events, founder of the Knowledge Club. Through

this partnership, the bank aims to drive better outcomes and deliver excellence through its new generation of leaders. The bank is keen on meeting evolving market trends through the adoption of best practices to positively impact its operational performance and create a dynamic and progressive corporate culture.

Burgan Bank employees have recently participated in a number of other high level educational programs by Knowledge Club in 2018, including workshops on 'Decision Making Skills' and 'Leadership Skills.' These modules, held in October, aimed to improve motivation, employee engagement, productivity and job satisfaction. In November, Burgan Bank attended a one-day seminar on the 'Productive Leader' followed by a two-day workshop on 'Building Skills and Knowledge in Leadership Business Acumen' that addressed all aspects of running a successful business and the impact of decisions on the overall financial results. The program is ongoing and followed by a wide range of activities throughout 2019.

Knowledge Club was founded in 2013 by Vigor Events, to facilitate access to reputed and well-known speakers, trainers, and authors from diverse industries around the globe. It delivers high level seminars, conferences, and experiential workshops featuring real-world perspectives and case studies, new age principles and guidelines that guarantee success in the long run.

Zain inaugurates all-new branch at Avenues Phase 4

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the inauguration of its all-new retail branch in the Avenues Mall, Phase 4 - The Forum, featuring the latest Customer Service innovations. The inauguration ceremony witnessed the attendance of Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan, Avenues Mall Director Waleed Al-Fahad, and Zain's executive management.

The opening of Zain's latest branch comes under the umbrella of its expansion strategy, through which the company is committed to becoming closer to its customers - who are considered Kuwait's largest family of subscribers - wherever they are. The opening also came to reflect Zain's leadership position in the Kuwaiti market.

Zain launched a number of exclusive offers for a limited time in celebration of the opening of the new branch, which is strategically located in the latest phase of the Avenues mall called The Forum. The new branch features more employees to serve visitors all week long, especially on weekends when the mall witnesses high traffics of visitors. With this latest opening, Zain is continuing the expansion of its largest branches network distributed all around the country.

Zain's new branch features an all-new Smart Mall screen, considered the first of its kind in Kuwait. The Smart Mall is an interactive touch-

screen that uses the latest and most advanced technologies, offering customers the opportunity to virtually shop without the need for branch staff to be present. Customers can simply touch the screen and interact with the 3D modeled products, select the desired items, complete the transaction using their bank card, and specify the delivery location to get their order delivered wherever they need. The Smart Mall features a wide range of the latest electronics, smart devices, accessories, and more from Kuwait's leading providers.

The branch also features a dedicated section for Zain LIFE's innovative home security solutions, including smart cameras, motion sensors, and smart smoke detectors. The branch also features Zain's latest solutions for digital entertainment through the PlayStation VR device for virtual reality gaming.

The newly opened branch also includes the Zain Smart Branch, which is considered the first digital self-service touchscreen of its kind launched by a telecom company in Kuwait. The Smart Branch offers Zain's customers with new service options that were previously not available through a traditional self-service machine, and works automatically through advanced technology without the need of the presence of branch staff.

Equipped with a smart interface, the Smart Branch recognizes a customer's identity through the advanced face recognition feature, where the branch scans the customer's civil ID and matches their photo with their face on-the-spot. Of the many new services offered by Zain's Smart Branch, the most notable is the SIM card replacement feature, which is the first service of its kind provided by a self-service machine. Customers can order a replacement for their

lost or ineffective SIM cards and receive a new one immediately without the need of visiting a traditional branch. The Smart Branch also offers a variety of other services including recharging lines, bill payment, managing accounts, and purchasing devices from Zain's Online Store.

Zain's new branch, the company's third in the Avenues mall, offers an exceptional concept of the retail experience. The branch features the latest smart devices, high-tech touchscreens, telecommunication services, accessories, and more. The branch is equipped with the latest tech solutions that offer a rich customer experience and transform the idea of the traditional branch into a digital one. This concept comes as part of Zain's digital transformation journey into becoming an integrated digital services provider.

The Smart Homes sector is one of the main elements of the digital transformation journey undertaken by telecoms around the world, particularly with respect to securing homes and protecting them against theft with the use of modern technology. Zain is working on designing new plans to match these transformation processes to be included in Zain LIFE in addition to its existing portfolio of smart solutions.

Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all services it offers to its customers. Through the opening of this new branch, Zain affirms its continuous efforts in meeting its customers' needs and aspirations, and deliver its promise to offering the best services and latest technologies. The company constantly looks at ways to improve the retail experience for its customers, including providing them with the latest solutions to better serve their needs through the biggest network of branches in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan and Avenues Mall Director Waleed Al-Fahad with Zain's executive management during the inauguration of the new branch.



The all-new Smart Mall touchscreen inside the branch.



Dedicated section for Zain LIFE's innovative solutions in the branch.

Crowne Plaza co-sponsors Horeca 2019

KUWAIT: Preparations for the Horeca Kuwait 2019 exhibition are steadily progressing as the event continues to attract companies to participate in the gathering that provides them with an opportunity to exchange their expertise and further help meet the local market's needs and future expansion plans. The exhibition is due to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref in the period of January 14-16, 2019.

In this regard, the Crown Plaza Kuwait Hotel recently signed an agreement to sponsor Horeca Kuwait 2019, in addition to hosting participants and foreign competitions jury members as well as the cooking competition, providing them all with special facilities

and discounts during their stay in Kuwait. Notably, Crowne Plaza's location is considered ideal for participants as it is close to the exhibition's halls as well as Kuwait city's commercial and financial center. It also provides comfortable stay and a long list of services including restaurants serving a diversity of cuisines and various types of stores.

Commenting on this agreement, Antoine Flouty, the regional manager of Intercontinental Hotels international,

stressed the strong bond between Horeca Kuwait, Kuwaiti hotels and business tourism over the years. "Some studies predict a five percent annual growth for the business until 2025," he underlined, noting that the percentage might increase with more commercial and financial openness, execution of mega project, expansion of Kuwait international airport and the growth of GCC family tourism. "For the first time in years, business and family tourism have increased hotel occupancy to over 70 percent during weekends and official vacation," he remarked, adding that this led to building many new hotels and expansion of existing ones.



Antoine Flouty

Local

Parliament committee discusses proposed amendments on pensioners' indemnities

Minister attends rain investigations committee's meeting

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee is scheduled to discuss during its meeting today morning the proposed amendments on the Amiri law number 61/1976 and law number 110/2014 pertaining indemnities of those covered by the social security, pension and military personnel pension laws, which were initially approved last Tuesday. The recent rain investigations committee will also resume its discussions today in the presence of Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi, as well as the acting head of the State Audit Bureau and Kuwait Engineers Society chairman.

quarterly follow-up reports to the parliament after having them reviewed by the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and approved by the Cabinet," Sabeeh added that following up the medium-term and annual development plans relies on an

for Planning and Development about providing citizens with housing welfare showed that the plan aims at reducing the number of citizens on housing waiting lists as well as reducing the waiting period as much as possible. The report added that five mega housing projects are being executed in the long run through building integrated cities and providing them with infrastructure, supplies, energy and services.

The report also showed that 84 percent of Jaber Al-Ahmad City has been completed, while the South Saad Al-Abdullah and South Sabah Al-Ahmad projects are still in the preliminary stages. The Mutlaa residential city project is facing some technical obstacles such as high voltage towers and military leftovers from the Iraqi invasion, added the report.



The National Assembly.

70 percent of energy saved in various mosques

automated system the planning council constantly develops in collaboration with various participating bodies.

Mega housing projects

A government report issued by the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council

70 percent

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) recently honored the engineering department of the Ministry of Awqaf's mosque sector for their efforts and cooperation with MEW in cutting power and water consumption in various mosques. In

this regard, MEW's energy and conservation manager Iqbal Al-Tayyar said switching off all air conditioners and unnecessary electric devices in various mosques started on Nov 1 and this helped save around 70 percent of the energy used. Tayyar added

air-conditioners will be switched on by the beginning of March when temperatures increase. She noted that all mosques maintenance contracts condition the use of LED lights to save power and advanced pipelittings to save water.

Follow-up reports
Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh said the biannual report on the 2018-2019 development plan is fully committed to article 10 of law number 7/2016 pertaining development planning, which states that "relevant ministers will submit

News in brief

Unemployment drops to 2.4 percent

KUWAIT: Kuwaitis' unemployment rate has dropped to 2.4 percent for the first time in the country's history after being stuck at the 4 percent benchmark, a government official said, adding that there are 6,424 citizens of both genders waiting for a job, including 120 who rejected jobs they were offered. The number used to vary between 15,000 and 19,000 jobseekers in the past, he added. Furthermore, the source found it strange that some MPs shirk their duties with regards to Kuwaitization, adding that the most vocal and controversial MPs on this issue neglected writing their reports on replacement in the last term despite providing them with all government data as requested, and this is considered as laxity over this important issue. — Al-Qabas

Drainage system

KUWAIT: Kuwait's rain drainage network received 600,000 cubic meters above its capacity of rainwater, sources said. The parliamentary investigation committee on the rains will discuss today encroachments on the rain drainage and sewer systems with Ministry of Public Works officials. Sources said the connection between the drains of both networks has led to polluting the Arabian Gulf waters, as contaminated water is dumped in the sea without being treated. — Al-Jarida

Power tariffs

KUWAIT: MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said it is necessary to pass a number of laws including the cancellation of increased power and water tariffs and reverting to the old prices, and cancel the fuel price increase. He said the government is using unacceptable justifications such as that of a budget deficit. He said it should not make excuses of low oil prices and deficits when requests are made to discuss and pass laws that reduce financial burdens and high costs on citizens. He said canceling the hikes is not enough, but it should be followed by passing related laws that were submitted by most sitting MPs, including reverting to the previous fuel prices, adding the price should not increase except through the National Assembly, and the same goes for power and water. — Al-Jarida

Crimes

Police impersonator arrested

KUWAIT: Detectives arrested a citizen who mugged several expats after claiming to be a policeman. The expats informed police that the imposter robbed them of their expensive belongings, phones and money. Detectives caught him when he was beaten a delivery man, who told them the man claimed he was a policeman and asked him for money. Detectives found the suspect has a criminal record. He denied charges at first, but then confessed to his crimes.

Embezzlement

Detectives prevented an Indian man from leaving the country with KD 15,000 he embezzled from the company, besides foodstuff worth KD 5,000 he sold for half the price. The company owner told police an Indian working for him was dishonest and had been absent for three days. Detectives were able to locate and arrest him, who confessed to the charges. Separately, a citizen reported the theft of electric equipment worth KD 800 from a building under construction in Farwaniya. Detectives are investigating.

Loud music

Residents of a Hawally building sought police's help as a neighbor was disturbing them with loud music after midnight, after they failed to do so in a friendly manner. When police knocked at his door and opened it, they found him drunk. He was charged with drunkenness and disturbance of the peace. — Translated from the Arabic press

No injuries in Salmiya, Jabriya fires

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Fire broke out in a Salmiya building yesterday, so Bidaa, Salmiya and technical rescue fire stations responded and found the fire was on 12th floor. Power was cut from the building, residents were evacuated and the fire was put out. No injuries were reported. Meanwhile, firemen from the Hawally and Salmiya fire stations responded to a fire in a Jabriya house. The fire was in a tent located in the house's yard, and spread to a room on the first floor. The fire was put out and no injuries were reported.



KUWAIT: Firefighters tackle a blaze reported in Jabriya yesterday.

Charity society dissolved for breaking regulations

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's (MSAL) assistant undersecretary for social development affairs Hana Al-Hajeri said dissolving Al-Salam Society came within the ministry's role in protecting and regulating charity work. Hajeri added that despite repeated verbal and written warnings to the society, it committed several violations and broke many regulations.

Hajeri explained that the violations included launching a fundraising campaign without getting prior approvals, collecting donations in non-designated locations, collecting cash donations, using a voluntary team without getting the ministry's approval and collecting donations without a license. She added that the violations included projects abroad that had been suspended by the foreign ministry, the travel of its members without registering with the foreign ministry's electronic safe travel system and distributing zakat money outside Kuwait.

In addition, Hajeri said the total number of charity organizations in Kuwait increased from 12 in 2014 to 42 presently, which indicates that the ministry does not aim to close or dissolve charities. "The ministry is keen on charitable practices that protect and enhance Kuwait's image," she underlined.

New recruits join military service

KUWAIT: The National Military Service Authority received yesterday the second batch of newly recruits

to the state's conscription program, after they passed their physical and medical tests. The recruits will complete a one-year compulsory military service, divided into four months of academic and military skill learning, and eight months of field service in military camps, the Defense Ministry's Moral Guidance Department said in a statement yesterday.



local spotlight

Longtime expats



By Muna Al-Fuzai

Muna@kuwaittimes.net

According to statistics issued by the Public Authority for Civil Information, the population of Kuwait on Dec 15, 2018 was 4,674,044 (1,401,854 Kuwaitis and 3,272,190 non-Kuwaitis). In September, the General Department of Residency Affairs revealed the total number of expatriates who have valid residence in the country is 2,861,380.

So expatriates make up two-thirds of the population. This is normal in the Gulf states, and governments are aware of the imbalance and deal with it in different ways. But in Kuwait, it does not appear that there are real solutions that could be beneficial for all parties, simply because the status of all expats is not alike. Some are new here while others have spent all their lives here - Kuwait is home for them.

Also, I believe that the increase in the number of expatriates is not the reason for the imbalance in demographics, but other reasons such as the spread of visa trading over the years and failure to confront this matter firmly. This is the first and most important reason, so it is necessary to distinguish between expatriates and their length of stay here with a clear criminal record - some have spent 30 years in Kuwait and maybe more - because this category deserves recognition by the state.

Longtime expats who have been working for many years in Kuwait and have practical experience are a silent group of people and don't appear in the media. They deserve a thank you gesture by the state. This topic was discussed last year between MPs and some statements were made in this regard, but I don't know where it ended. At that time, it was said that Kuwait is considering granting permanent residency to expatriates who have spent more than 30 years here under certain conditions. I am in favor of honoring those who contributed to the development of the country, especially if their criminal record is clean.

Also, those expats often have long years of experience that can be used for training and consultation, as in Western countries. It is known that some expats can sponsor themselves under specific conditions of the interior ministry, but the residency law still needs to be followed, especially if it involves expats who are old and cannot work anymore but Kuwait is their home with their kids living here. I think they should get an exemption from yearly renewal of residency.

The ministry allows residency law violators to leave the country without paying penalties or adjust their status every year at a certain time. These initiatives are important, because some of the people who are staying in the country want to change their residency status, but do not have the money to pay fines. They are cut off from new jobs and their livelihoods and families are affected. Therefore, Arab and foreign embassies must raise awareness and warn their citizens against violating the laws of the country.

MP Mohammed Al-Huwaila made a clear statement on the subject of granting longtime expats lifetime residency. "It is necessary to study the jobs and people that the country needs," he said, adding that developed countries attract residents to ensure their stability and strengthen their economy. MP Salah Khorshid said "permanent residency is now available for expatriates according to the laws of the interior ministry," adding that residency should not be granted based on the duration of the expatriate's residence, but it must be dependent on the condition that the expatriate can provide for this country.

I support the permanent residence of every expatriate who has spent 30 years or more in Kuwait. Most longtime expats also have their families here, so they should not stand in long queues to renew their residencies every year or two.

International

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2018



Gunfight sparks protests in India Kashmir; 11 dead

Kosovo votes to create its army, enraging Serbia

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Photo shows members of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) with a flag of the Islamic State held upside-down, outside the destroyed Al-Nuri Mosque in the Old City of Mosul, after the area was retaken from IS. Even as the last pockets of resistance in eastern Syria hold their ground, the Islamic State group is shapeshifting into a new, but no less dangerous, underground form, experts warn. — AFP

War on jihadists ‘never-ending battle’

Western powers urged to tackle the root causes

WASHINGTON: Western powers fighting Islamist groups around the globe are condemned to a never-ending battle if they only tackle the symptoms and not the underlying causes of jihadist insurgency, experts say. “Beyond the tactical victories on the ground, the current strategy is failing,” said Katherine Zimmerman, who wrote a recent report for the American Enterprise Institute entitled “Terrorism, Tactics and Transformation: The West vs the Salafi-Jihadi Movement.”

“Every soldier and intelligence analyst that has worked on this problem understands what is happening,” Zimmerman said. “They understand that what they are doing is a temporary solution. It’s ending the immediate threat but not stabilizing or moving us forward. The problem comes down to policy and politics,” she noted. “It’s easy to say, ‘We’re going to kill the person responsible for making the bomb.’ It is much more difficult to say that our partner government has disenfranchised this group and it’s one of the reasons why this person joins the terrorist group. And now he is the bomb maker.”

Driven from lands it once held sway over in Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State group has returned to its origins as an underground jihadist outfit because the conditions that



Islamic State group returns to its origins

spawned it—a deep discontent among most Iraqis and Syrians—have persisted, experts say. “The West is on the road to winning all the battles and losing the war,” warned Zimmerman.

‘Development problems’

In a report last month on the resurgence of IS as a clandestine guerrilla group, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said that “while the United States and allied governments have weakened some groups like the Islamic State, many of the underlying causes have not been adequately addressed.” Those root causes include a “fragile state with weak or ineffective governing institutions” in areas affected by jihadist activity, where the Islamists can establish a sanctuary, the CSIS experts said.

They took maps showing areas where Al-Qaeda and IS were active and compared them to maps displaying “government effectiveness,” based on World Bank statistics. The result was clear: most of the countries where the insurgents are active—Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia—are also in the bottom 10 percent for government effectiveness.

At a conference this week in Washington, retired Marine general John Allen—who once commanded US forces in Afghanistan and now heads the prestigious

Brookings Institution—said the West had to get ahead of the issue and ask, “Where should we be looking for the next problems?” “We should spend a great deal more time looking at those areas that are in fragile or failing states,” said Allen, who also served as presidential envoy to the international coalition battling IS. “We have to recognize the hotspots where the human condition prompts the radicalization of large sectors of the population,” he added. “Often we join the conversation when the process of radicalization has been in place for quite a long time.”

Allen noted that the problem is “a development issue, much more than a counter-terrorism issue.” At the annual conference on terrorism, organized by the Jamestown Foundation, many experts noted that in Iraq, the grievances of the Sunnis—the branch of Islam that gave rise to Al-Qaeda and IS—were compounded by the involvement of powerful Shiite militias both in the Baghdad government and in areas recovered from Islamist insurgents. If those grievances were not taken into account, they warned, the jihadist groups were sure to be back. — AFP

Thousands of ‘yellow vests’ protesters hit French streets

PARIS: Thousands of protesters took to the streets of French cities yesterday in the fifth weekend of nationwide demonstrations against Emmanuel Macron’s government, despite calls to hold off after a gun attack in Strasbourg earlier this week. In Paris, police were out in force to contain possible outbursts of violence. But several major stores, such as the Galeries Lafayette, were open to welcome Christmas shoppers. Numbers were down compared to Saturday last week, a police source said. Teargas was fired at small groups of protesters in brief clashes with riot police near the Champs-Élysées. Close by, a handful of topless activists from the feminist protest group Femen faced security forces a few meters away from the Elysee Palace, the president’s residence. The ‘yellow vest’ movement started in mid-November with protests at junctions and roundabouts against fuel tax increases, but quickly became a wider mobilization against Macron’s economic policies. Successive weekends of protests in Paris have led to vandalism and violent clashes with security forces. Loic Bollay, 44, marching on the Champs-Élysées in a yellow

vest, said the protests were more subdued than in previous weeks but the movement would go on until the demonstrators’ grievances were addressed. “Since the Strasbourg attack, it is calmer, but I think next Saturday and the following Saturdays...it will come back.” The Interior Minister said around 69,000 police were active yesterday with a reinforced presence in the cities of Toulouse, Bordeaux and Saint-Etienne.

A police source told Reuters some 16,000 protesters had been counted in France, excluding Paris, by 1100 GMT, compared to 22,000 at the same time on Dec 8. In Paris, where groups of hundreds of protesters marched in splintered groups in several neighborhoods, 85 had been arrested by around midday, according to a Paris police official. On Friday, President Macron called for a return to calm in France after nearly a month of protests by the so-called ‘yellow vest’ movement against his government’s policies. The demonstrations have hit growth and caused widespread disruption. “France needs calm, order and a return to normal,” Macron said, after a meeting of European Union leaders in Brussels. In a televised address to the nation on Monday, Macron announced wage rises for the poorest workers and tax cuts for pensioners in further concessions meant to end the movement but many said they would maintain pressure. The government, as well as several unions and opposition politicians called on protesters to stay off the streets yesterday, after four people were killed in a gun attack at a Christmas market in the historic city of Strasbourg. — Reuters

Trump taps budget head Mulvaney as acting chief of staff

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump announced Friday that his budget director Mick Mulvaney will step in as acting chief of staff to replace John Kelly—amid indications the president is struggling to fill the key post. Trump, whose presidency is increasingly embroiled in legal troubles, announced earlier this month that Kelly, a former Marine Corps general, was leaving. Kelly, who reportedly fell out with other close Trump aides, is only the latest in a long string of high-ranking officials to quit the embattled White House. “Mick has done an outstanding job while in the Administration,” Trump wrote on Twitter. “I look forward to working with him in this new capacity as we continue to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!”

“John will be staying until the end of the year. He is a GREAT PATRIOT and I want to personally thank him for his service!” Kelly agreed to stay on until at least January 2 to avoid leaving the president in the lurch. A senior administration official said “there’s no time limit” to Mulvaney’s stint. “He got picked because the president liked him they get along,” the official added, citing Mulvaney’s experience as a former US representative for South Carolina. “He knows Congress. He knows Capitol Hill,” the official said, saying that Mulvaney is “fiscally responsible.”

Difficulty in finding replacement

Even with several weeks’ notice, Trump appears to be having difficulty in finding the right replacement. “For the record, there were MANY people who wanted to be the White House Chief of Staff. Mick M will do a GREAT job!” Trump wrote. His widely reported first choice, Nick Ayres, announced last weekend that he did not want the post. Ayres, a 36-year-old Republican consultant currently serving as chief of staff to Vice President Mike Pence, was seen as a good fit for Trump’s plan to start focusing on his 2020 re-election. With Democrats taking over the House of Representatives in January and special prosecutor Robert Mueller near the end of an explosive probe into the Trump campaign’s contacts with Russia during the 2016 election, the president is believed to be seeking a sharp political operator.



Mick Mulvaney, Director of the Office of Management and Budget

A major Republican figure, former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, announced Friday that he too was pulling out from consideration. It was not immediately clear where Mulvaney fits into those longer-term plans. Mulvaney is currently head of the White House Office of Management and Budget, which oversees federal spending and administers the federal budget. His replacement is his deputy at the OMB, Russ Vought. Mulvaney was also previously acting head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which protects consumers when they take loans and use credit cards.

While in the job, Mulvaney - a conservative Republican - provoked anger in the Democratic Party with his campaign to downgrade the agency. His new appointment appears to give Trump some breathing space ahead of the holidays, which the president will spend mostly at his Florida resort. But a question still hangs on who can do the difficult job in the long term. Kelly was often described as “the adult in the room” during the turbulent period since his appointment in July 2017. In an interview with Fox News this week, Trump said that his ideal candidate was “somebody that’s strong, but I want somebody that thinks like I do.” — AFP

International

Rajapakse bows out, ending Sri Lanka's power struggle

Ex-president vows to make a comeback

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's crisis looked over yesterday as strongman Mahinda Rajapakse bowed out of a power battle that had crippled the island nation for seven weeks and sent it heading for a possible debt default. Rajapakse held a multi-religious service at his home where he signed a letter backing down from the post of prime minister controversially conferred on him on October 26. Hours after the receiving blessings from the clergy, the 73-year-old ex-president sounded bitter and vowed to make a comeback at local council elections.

"There is no doubt at all that the people who stood by us since 2015 will continue to support us in the future as well," he said addressing his close associates. "We will bring the forces opposed to the country down to their knees by organizing the people." His aides said he was returning a fleet of limousines he had used since his disputed appointment. President Maithripala Sirisena triggered the political turmoil by sacking premier Ranil Wickremesinghe and replacing him with his flamboyant former foe Rajapakse.

But Wickremesinghe refused to step down insisting that his sacking was illegal, leaving the Indian Ocean nation of 21 million people with two men claiming the premiership. Rajapakse was then defeated in a no-confidence motion on November 14. However, the following day, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya ruled that he would recognize neither man as prime minister, leaving Sri Lanka effectively without a government.

Risked sovereign default

The country was then heading for a government shutdown as parliament failed to approve spending for 2019 and credit rating agencies downgraded its debt amid fears of a sovereign default. There were doubts about the coun-

try's ability to repay \$1.5 billion due to bond holders by January 10 without a legally constituted administration. Rajapakse's son Namal had announced Friday that his father - who as president ended Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009 amid allegations of grave rights abuses - would throw in the towel "to ensure stability". Rajapakse's decision came after the Supreme Court confirmed that he could not exercise the powers of a prime minister until he proved his legitimacy, which without enough support in parliament was impossible.

In a major climbdown, Sirisena agreed on Friday to reinstate Wickremesinghe today despite previously insisting he would never in his lifetime reappoint him as prime minister. There was no immediate comment from Sirisena or his office yesterday. But an MP from his party, Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena, told reporters on Friday night that the president agreed to the latest measures to avoid a government shutdown after December 31. "If the stalemate continued, we would have ended up without a budget for 2019 and the government would not have been able to function," Abeywardena said. On Wednesday, the legislature had voted overwhelmingly to demand the reinstatement of Wickremesinghe. The leftist JVP, or the People's Liberation Front, insists that Sirisena should be investigated for orchestrating what they call a coup and that there should also be an impeachment process. On Thursday Sirisena suffered a major blow when the Supreme Court ruled that he had breached the constitution on November 9 by dissolving parliament and calling early elections. His sacking of parliament had earlier been suspended, but the legislature descended into farce on multiple occasions with MPs throwing punches, hurling projectiles and chili powder and boycotting proceedings. — AFP



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's former president Mahinda Rajapakse gestures during a ceremony before signing a document backing down from his controversial appointment as prime minister in Colombo yesterday. — AFP

Eleven die after eating 'toxic' rice at Indian temple

NEW DELHI: Eleven people have died after eating rice that had likely been contaminated with a toxic substance at a Hindu temple ceremony, a health official said yesterday. Another 29 people were critically ill and undergoing emergency treatment across various hospitals in Mysore, a city in the state of Karnataka. "11 people have died so far and 93 others are hospitalized. Out of them, 29 are on ventilator support," said KH Prasad, the health officer for Chamraj Nagar district where the temple is located.

"It is likely that some toxic substance got mixed with the rice. The samples have been sent for forensic testing," Prasad said. The patients were being treated for vomiting, diarrhoea and respiratory distress, Prasad added. According to the police, devotees had gathered in large numbers at the Kicchukatti Maramma temple for the consecration ceremony on Friday, after which rice was served as a sanctified offering. Murugappa, a devotee who was present at the temple, said they were offered tomato rice and flavored water.

"A foul smell was emanating from the food, but those at the head of the queue consumed the food nonetheless," he was quoted as saying by the NDTV news network. "A little while later they started vomiting and frothing at the mouth." State Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy expressed grief over the incident and announced a compensation of 500,000 rupees (around \$7,000) each to the families of the victims. India's religious festivals are often badly managed with police and volunteer stewards overwhelmed by the sheer size of the crowds. A stampede in eastern West Bengal state last year killed six women and 24 people died in a similar incident in Uttar Pradesh state in 2016. — AFP

Jordan arrests 17 protesters

AMMAN: Seventeen Jordanians were arrested over protests against a controversial fiscal reform, a judicial source in Amman said yesterday. The attorney general in the capital decided to "arrest 17 people who he accused of participating the previous day in a protest near the prime minister's office and of provoking trouble which resulted in police and members of the security forces being wounded", the source said. Those arrested would be kept in custody for a week, the judicial source said, without specifying how many police had been wounded.

A thousand Jordanians had taken to the streets of Amman on Thursday to protest against an income tax law adopted in November under an austerity program aimed at reducing public debt. The protesters gathered near Prime Minister Omar Al-Razzaz's office, which was cordoned off by security forces. "Down with the tax law," read one sign, held aloft by demonstrators calling for "reforms and change". "We want a government of patriots, not a gang of thieves," the protestors said.

Jordanian lawmakers on November 18 approved an IMF-backed income tax bill after making amendments to a controversial draft law that sparked a week of angry protests in June. The original bill, which the government approved in June, raised taxes for employees by at least five percent, and on companies by between 20 and 40 percent. These measures were left unchanged in the amended version. But in a concession, the revised bill raises the 2019 threshold for households to pay income tax to 20,000 Jordanian dinars (28,000 dollars, 24,750 euros) from a previous ceiling of 18,000.

The amended legislation also introduced exemptions of up to 2,000 dinars per family for basic expenses such as education and health, and 1,000 dinars per single person, if receipts are provided. The demonstrators on Thursday chanted for the release of 24 activists local media said had been detained in smaller scale protests over the last two weeks. With a lack of natural resources to boost state coffers, Jordan relies heavily on foreign aid and has an unemployment rate of 18.5 percent. — AFP

Kosovo votes to create its army, enraging Serbia

PRISTINA: Kosovo on Friday passed laws to build an army, asserting its statehood in a US-backed move that prompted outrage in Serbia, which does not recognize its former province's independence. Kosovo has been guarded by NATO-led peacekeeping troops since it broke away from Belgrade in a bloody separatist war in 1998-99. Now, new legislation will transform a small crisis-response outfit, the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), into a defense army with 5,000 troops. "This vote today begins a new era for our country," parliamentary speaker Kadri Veseli announced as MPs embraced each other after the session, boycotted by minority Serb politicians.

The vote has delighted many Kosovo Albanians, with several hundred gathering in the main street of capital Pristina to celebrate the army as a new pillar of their independence, declared in 2008. "This is an enormous emotion, we are happy that the creation of our country is being completed," Vlora Rexhepi, a 23-year-old student, told AFP as a group of musicians dressed in traditional costumes played for the crowd. Kosovo's President Hashim Thaci hailed it as "the best gift for the end of the year season". "We are finally closing down the state-building process," he wrote on Facebook.

'Crossed the line'

While it will take years for the troops to be fully trained, Serbia has cast the move as a dire threat to regional stability. NATO and the European Union have also criticized the move as hasty. But Kosovo felt free to move ahead with strong backing from the United States, its most important ally. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic lashed out at the move.

It is "absolutely clear that behind everything that (ethnic) Albanians have been doing are the United States, Great Britain and, in the case of creating the army, Germany as well," Vucic said in a televised public address. "They do not understand that they all crossed the line," said Vucic, who called for an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council on the issue. In particular, Belgrade has been sounding the alarm over the safety of 120,000 Serbs still living in enclaves across Albanian-majority Kosovo, mainly in the north near their contested border.

Those Serb communities are loyal to Belgrade and also broadly against the army plan. Several hundred students protested Friday in the Serb-half of the divided city of Mitrovica, which was decorated with Serbian flags in response to the American stars-and-stripes draped across much of the rest of Kosovo in a sign of gratitude for

Ethiopian ethnic violence kills 21

ADDIS ABABA: At least 21 people have been killed in two days of fighting between ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia, the state-affiliated Fana radio reported Friday. The violence broke out near the town of Moyale, on the border with Kenya, in a region claimed by both the Oromo, the largest ethnic group in the country, and the Somali ethnic group. On top of the fatalities, 61 people were injured in the fighting, Fana reported, citing the Oromia regional state communication office. Many more were displaced by the fighting in the region which has regularly been the scene of intercommunal violence.

Last year fighting between members of the two ethnic groups left more than a million people displaced. While Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has received international praise for his reformist agenda, since coming to power in April, a wave of intercommunal violence in several parts of the country—mostly over land issues—has marred the first few months of his rule. Three Ethiopian students were also killed and 34 others injured after a fight on a campus escalated into deadly ethnic clashes in the west of the Horn of Africa country, the government said on Wednesday. — AFP

Washington's support. Goran Rakic, a Serb political leader in the flashpoint city, called Pristina's decision "a gunshot into peace". But he urged local Serbs to exercise restraint.

President Vucic vowed that Belgrade would protect them if needed. "If they attack you, the state of Serbia will have strength to protect you," he said. NATO, which had warned the move was "ill-timed", said the alliance would now "re-examine" its relationship with the KSF, which it helped train. The alliance nevertheless remains committed to securing Kosovo's safety through KFOR, the peacekeeping force it has led since the war with Serbia, said NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg. The EU echoed the regret, saying "the mandate of the KSF should only be changed through an inclusive and gradual process in accordance with Kosovo's Constitution".

And the UN said Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had taken note of the adoption "with concern" and called for restraint. "The Secretary-General calls on all parties concerned to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that could raise tensions and cause a further setback in the European Union-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina," it said in a statement. Kosovo's government circumvented having to make constitutional changes to create the army, which would have required support from Serb MPs, by voting on a package of laws that kept the name of the KSF but changed its mandate. The US Embassy was quick to welcome the news but also urged Kosovo and Serbia to take "immediate steps to lower tensions" and make progress in their ongoing dialogue. — AFP

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International

US and Canada meet amid a showdown with Beijing

China voices fury over the arrest of an executive

WASHINGTON: The United States and Canada met Friday for high-level talks amid a showdown with China, which has voiced fury over the arrest of an executive in Vancouver on a US request. The meeting comes as Canada looks like collateral damage in the US-China rift, with Beijing detaining two Canadians yet still moving forward with the United States on easing trade tensions. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo opened the previously scheduled dialogue in Washington with Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland alongside US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and his Canadian counterpart Harjit Sajjan.

China has demanded the release of Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of telecoms behemoth Huawei whom Washington wants extradited for allegedly violating US sanctions on Iran. Pompeo is seeking to squeeze Iran's economy over the Islamic republic's involvement around the Middle East and has vowed to press all countries, friend or rival, to join. Canada complied with the request from its giant neighbor to arrest Meng, who was changing planes in Vancouver, despite worries of repercussions.

The fears turned out to be well-founded as China has detained two Canadians on suspicion of "harm to national security" — a phrase often used by Beijing when alleging espionage. The Canadians were Michael Spavor, a China-based consultant who arranges visits for foreigners including NBA star Dennis Rodman to North Korea, and Michael Kovrig, a Mandarin-speak-

ing former Canadian diplomat who works for the International Crisis Group, a think tank that looks for peaceful solutions to global conflicts. Freeland has said that Canada is working to ascertain the two citizens' whereabouts and is raising their cases with Chinese authorities. Meng is out on bail of Can\$10 million (US\$7.5 million).

Movement on US-China trade

Even as China is seen as punishing Canada, it has appeared to pull its punches with the United States and moved ahead with a trade truce negotiated by President Donald Trump. China said Friday it would suspend extra tariffs on US-made cars and auto parts for three months from January 1 — freezing a measure taken in retaliation to tariffs imposed by Trump. Meng's arrest came on the very day that Trump was meeting with his Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of a summit in Buenos Aires to find a way

out of months of trade tensions. In an agreement hailed by Trump as "amazing," he agreed to hold off on a new round of tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese exports that were set to go into effect with the new year. Instead, the world's two largest economies set up talks to address US trade concerns, particularly what US officials say is China's rampant theft of US technology to prop up its own firms.

The additional auto tariffs were one of the retaliatory measures taken by China and were sure to gain the



BEIJING: Chinese police patrol in front of the Canadian embassy in Beijing. A second Canadian who had gone missing in China is under investigation on suspicion of 'engaging in activities that harm China's national security', state media reported. —AFP

attention of Trump, who has put a major focus on manufacturing. Canada has also been on the receiving end of Trump's unorthodox approach on trade. In June, Trump publicly criticized Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as "very dishonest and weak" for his statements on tar-

iffs as the Canadian leader hosted a Group of Seven summit in Quebec. The two countries have also found their own truce, recently signing a rebranded version of the North American Free Trade Agreement along with Mexico at Trump's insistence. —AFP



Beijing detains two Canadians

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US judge rules 'Obamacare' is unconstitutional

WASHINGTON: A federal judge in Texas has ruled that the US health care law known as Obamacare is unconstitutional—a ruling that opposition Democrats condemned Saturday and vowed to appeal. US District Judge Reed O'Connor's ruling came on the eve of the yesterday deadline to sign up for 2019 coverage in the federal health care program, known officially as the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The White House expects the case to be appealed to the Supreme Court, saying in a statement that "pending the appeal process, the law remains in place." At the US Supreme Court, five justices in the nine-judge court who voted to uphold Obamacare in a separate case in 2012 are still on the bench. Conservative Republicans have long opposed former president Barack Obama's landmark health care plan, which he signed into law in 2010.

President Donald Trump made abolishing the program one of his main campaign pledges. The Texas-based judge said that the full Obamacare program was unconstitutional because in last year's tax overhaul, Congress eliminated a penalty for people who failed to sign up for the program if they did not already have their own health insurance. The 2012 case was over whether such a penalty was legal—but now that it is gone, O'Connor says the whole ACA

should be stricken down because that provision is "the keystone" of the program.

Trump lost no time in tweeting his delight at the court's ruling on a complaint brought by several Republican attorneys general and two Republican governors. "Wow, but not surprisingly, ObamaCare was just ruled UNCONSTITUTIONAL by a highly respected judge in Texas. Great news for America!" Trump wrote on Twitter. "As I predicted all along, Obamacare has been struck down as an UNCONSTITUTIONAL disaster!" he said. Trump urged the Republican Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, and the House of Representatives speaker-designate, Democrat Nancy Pelosi, to "pass a STRONG law that provides GREAT healthcare."

'Monstrous endgame'

Angry Democrats vowed to fight back as they blamed Republicans for what they see as a debacle that will leave millions of Americans without health care. Polls consistently show strong public support for the ACA guarantee of coverage regardless of pre-existing health conditions—an issue Democrats used with great success in last month's midterm elections as they won control of the House of Representatives.

"#AffordableCareAct is a political stunt, but a dangerous one that puts health coverage and vital health protections for millions of Americans at risk," Democratic Senator Sheldon Whitehouse tweeted yesterday. "They found one judge to agree, and now Medicaid expansion could be gone, pre-existing condition protections could be wiped out, prices skyrocket and millions lose insurance. And they call that



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, US ex-President Barack Obama pauses during his final press conference at the White House. A federal judge in Texas ruled on December 14, 2018, that the US health care law known as Obamacare is unconstitutional. —AFP

success," Democratic congressman Joe Kennedy wrote on the social media site.

O'Connor's late Friday ruling "exposes the monstrous endgame of Republicans' all-out assault on people with pre-existing conditions and Americans' access to affordable health care," Pelosi said in a statement. While the court's "absurd ruling will be immediately appealed, Republicans are fully responsible for this cruel decision," she said. She vowed that when Democrats take control of the House in January, lawmakers "will move swiftly to formally intervene in the appeals process" to uphold Obamacare. Opposing the Republican lawsuit were 17 Democratic attorneys general led by Xavier Becerra of California. —AFP

Exiting US governor signs laws limiting successor's power

CHICAGO: The Republican governor of Wisconsin signed into law Friday a package of bills that limit the powers of his Democratic successor, who promised a court challenge. The measures were passed by Republicans during a lame-duck session of the Midwestern US state's legislature last week, in what they said was an effort to level the power balance with the Democrat who will take over the governor's office in January.

Tony Evers defeated incumbent Governor Scott Walker in the November midterm elections — a stinging loss for the GOP in a key swing state that helped Donald Trump win the presidency in 2016. The new laws will, among other things, curtail the incoming governor's ability to set certain rules and policies after he is sworn into office. Critics said the bills were part of a concerted effort by Republicans in a handful of states where they control the legislature but have lost executive offices to deny power to incoming Democrats.

"Despite all the hype and hysteria out there, these bills do nothing to fundamentally diminish executive authority," Walker said in a statement. Governor-elect Tony Evers vowed to fight the new laws in court, criticizing Republicans for "petty, political fights." "Governor Walker chose to ignore and override the will of the people of Wisconsin. This will no doubt be his legacy," Evers said in a statement. Hundreds of protesters descended on the Wisconsin capitol last week as the legislature debated the measures. A similar scene played out in Michigan this week when the Republican-controlled legislature also passed limits on the incoming Democratic governor. —AFP

Protesters, police clash in Hungary

BUDAPEST: Anti-government demonstrations in Budapest on Friday ended in clashes for a consecutive third night between police and protesters angry at Prime Minister Viktor Orban's controversial new laws on workers rights and the judicial system. Some of the 2,000 protesters outside the Hungarian parliament threw bottles and smokebombs at riot police who responded with tear gas. During this week's disturbances, the most violent in Hungary for over a decade, police said more than 50 people had been arrested and at least 14 police injured. Demonstrators also marched along main roads and across bridges temporarily blocking traffic. "Orban get lost! Viktor! Viktor!" they shouted.

The unrest was sparked after opposition parties blew sirens and whistles inside parliament Wednesday in an unsuccessful effort to prevent the adoption of two controversial bills. A labor code change dubbed the 'slave law' by its critics hikes the maximum annual overtime hours for workers and extends the time period for calculating and paying overtime to three years. Trade unions say the changes were made at the behest of large international manufacturing companies and could expose workers to exploitation as well as delay overtime payments.

According to the government the law will benefit both those wanting to work more hours and employers who need more manpower as the economy struggles with labor shortages. Also passed by parliament, which is dominated by Orban's ruling party, was a bill paving the way for new "administrative courts" to oversee public administration cases like public procurements or election procedures. The justice minister Laszlo Trocsanyi, a close Orban ally, would oversee the courts, leading some to warn of near-total political influence over the judicial system. —AFP

Death of migrant girl in US custody sparks furor

WASHINGTON: The death of a seven-year-old Guatemalan girl last week in the custody of US border agents sparked furor Friday and raised new pressure on the Trump administration's efforts to halt the migration of Central American families. The Department of Homeland Security confirmed

the December 8 death of the girl, saying she died in an El Paso, Texas hospital less than 24 hours after being detained as part of a group of 163 illegal border crossers in a remote New Mexico border area.

A Guatemalan official identified her as Jacqueline Caal, who was traveling with her father Nery Caal, 29. White House deputy spokesman Hogan Gidley called Caal's death "a horrific, tragic situation," but also said it was avoidable. "It's a needless death and it's 100 percent preventable," he told reporters. "If we could just come together and pass some common-sense laws to disincentivize people from coming up to the border and encourage them to do it the right way, the legal way, then those types of deaths, those types of assaults, those types of rapes, the

child smuggling, the human trafficking that would all come to an end."

But Democrats in Congress assailed the administration's get-tough policies on immigrants attempting to cross the border illegally. "This could be my daughter or yours, let that sink in America," said newly elected Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, herself a refugee from Somalia. Senator Kamala Harris condemned the "tragic" death. "We need a thorough account of what happened before this 7-year-old girl died of dehydration and exhaustion in CBP custody," she tweeted.

The child's death came as President Donald Trump struggles to deter a tide of migrants fleeing poverty and violence in Central America — and battles with Congress for a budget to build a massive wall across much of

the US-Mexico Frontier. Migrants from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have been heading northward by the tens of thousands for the past three years, with an increasing number of families with small children and unaccompanied children making the trek and hoping to gain asylum inside the United States.

Those that get across face arrest. Children are separated from their families and, along with unaccompanied children who enter the country illegally, are sent off to a web of special camps where they are held until a family member or sponsor already residing in the United States agrees to take care of them. The sheer volume of undocumented immigrants — which topped 520,000 in fiscal 2018 — has pushed the number of children in the camps to nearly 15,000 currently. —AFP

Trump's Interior Secretary Zinke to step down

WASHINGTON: US Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who has sought to open US offshore waters to oil and gas drilling despite environmental protests, will be leaving his post at the end of the year, President Donald Trump tweeted yesterday, the latest high-profile departure from his administration. Trump did not give a reason for Zinke's departure. However, the former Navy Seal and ex-congressman from Montana has faced multiple probes into his use of security details, chartered flights and a real estate deal.

"Ryan has accomplished much during his tenure and I want to thank him for his service to our Nation," Trump said on Twitter. "The Trump administration will be announcing the new secretary of the Interior next week," he added. Zinke has run the Interior Department overseeing America's vast public lands since early 2017. He has pursued Trump's agenda to promote oil drilling and coal mining by expanding federal leasing, cutting royalty rates, and easing land protections.

Zinke, 51, was among Trump's most active Cabinet members, cutting huge wilderness national monuments in Utah to a fraction of their size and proposing offshore oil drilling in the Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic. He became a darling of the US energy and mining industries and a prime target for conservationists and environmental groups. Critics also questioned Zinke's ethics and some of his moves triggered government investigations. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer applauded Zinke's departure in a tweet: "Ryan Zinke was one of the most toxic members of the cabinet in the way he treated our environment, our precious public lands, and the way he treated the govt like it was his personal honey pot."

"The swamp cabinet will be a little less foul without him," Schumer said. In July, the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General began investigating a Montana land deal between a foundation Zinke set up and a development group backed by the chairman of oil service company Halliburton Co, which has business with the Interior Department. In late October, that investigation was referred to the US Justice Department for a possible criminal investigation, according to multiple media reports. The Department of Justice and the Interior Department have declined to comment.

There are two other continuing investigations of Zinke's conduct. Interior's watchdog is examining



US Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke

whether the department purposefully redrew the boundaries of Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in a way that would benefit a state lawmaker who owns adjoining property. The watchdog also is investigating Zinke's decision to block casinos proposed by two Connecticut Native American tribes. Critics allege he made that move, overruling his staff's recommendation, shortly after he met with lobbyists for MGM Resorts International, which owns a new casino in the region. Zinke has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing. —Reuters

International

11 dead as gunfight sparks protests in Indian Kashmir

Troops lay siege to militants' hideout

SRINAGAR: Seven civilians were killed as Indian troops fired on protesters yesterday after a gunfight left three armed rebels and a soldier dead in the disputed region of Kashmir, police and hospital officials said. The fighting erupted soon after troops laid siege to a house in the southern Pulwama area in Indian-administered Kashmir where the militants were hiding, a police officer said. Three armed militants - including a former soldier who had joined the rebels - then jumped out of the house into an orchard to fight the soldiers and were killed.

The fighting also left a soldier of the Indian army dead, senior police officer Swayam Prakash Pani told AFP. While the gunfight was in progress, hundreds of villagers poured out on to the streets in freezing cold and marched towards the orchard, shouting slogans in support of the militants and throwing stones at the troops, witnesses said. "It was mayhem. Six protesters died in the ensuing firing by soldiers," a police officer told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Hospital officials said a seventh man died later of gunshot wounds. Dozens of protesters were also injured in the clashes with government forces, another police officer said. Authorities suspended mobile internet services in many areas of the restive territory, including in the main city of Srinagar. A large number of students also held protests against the killings. Protests spread to the old quarters of Srinagar and the northwestern town of Sopore. Yesterday's

bloodshed capped the deadliest year in the region since 2009, with nearly 550 killed so far including some 150 civilians, according to a monitoring group.

Support for rebels on rise

Security officials say some 230 militants have been killed this year, most of them locals from the Kashmir valley, but rebel groups have recruited new members at a matching pace. Popular support for the rebels and their cause has increased since the killing of a charismatic militant leader in 2016.

Villagers, sometimes in their thousands, have been swarming sites of gun battles with government forces to help militants escape from military cordons. Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule over the subcontinent in 1947. Both claim the disputed Himalayan territory in full. Rebel groups have fought for decades about 500,000 Indian soldiers deployed in the territory New Delhi controls, seeking Kashmir's independence or its merger with Pakistan. More than 70,000 people have died in the fighting since 1989, mostly civilians. New Delhi regularly accuses Pakistan of arming and training rebels to launch attacks on Indian forces, an allegation Islamabad denies saying it only provides political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris fighting for the right to self-determination. — AFP



KASHMIR: Indian army soldiers walk near the site of a gun-battle site between militants and government forces in Srinoo Pulwama south of Srinagar yesterday. —AFP

Bishop from China's underground Catholic Church steps down

BEIJING: A bishop from China's underground Catholic Church will step down at the request of the Vatican to make way for a candidate recognized by Beijing, state-run media reported, amid a thaw in relations. There are an estimated 12 million Catholics in China, divided between a government-run association whose clergy are chosen by the Communist Party and the unofficial church which swears allegiance to the Vatican.

An agreement struck in September on the appointment of bishops paved the way for a rapprochement between the Holy See and Beijing, establishing diplomatic ties for the first time since 1951. Guo Xijin, bishop of the underground church in eastern Fujian province was appointed by the Pope, but his title was never recognized by Chinese authorities, who have detained and questioned him several times in the past. His decision to step aside follows a rare visit this week by an official Vatican delegation to the Chinese capital, the state-run daily Global Times said on its website on Friday. The religious leader was at the centre of this week's negotiations between China and the Vatican, who have been asking him to leave his post since 2017 to allow for talks aimed at normalizing relations with Beijing. "I will become the auxiliary bishop, and bishop Zhan Silu will be the diocesan bishop in Mindong," Guo told the Global Times, adding that the underground and official churches of the diocese will merge. — AFP

China pledges to help Afghanistan, Pakistan overcome their suspicions

KABUL: China pledged to help Afghanistan and Pakistan overcome long-standing suspicions, as officials from the three nations met yesterday in the latest round of diplomacy aimed at opening talks with the Taliban to end the Afghan war. China, a close ally of Pakistan, has lately deepened its economic and political ties with Kabul and is using its influence to try to bring the two uneasy South Asian neighbors closer, at a time when the United States has sought Pakistan's help with faltering Afghan peace talks.

The Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councilor Wang Yi, met the foreign ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan in Kabul to put into effect a memorandum of understanding on security cooperation and support for Afghanistan's efforts to open talks with the Taliban. "China approves of this, and is willing to provide support and help for Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve their ties," Wang told reporters after the meeting. The meeting, which followed initial talks between the three countries a year ago, is the latest sign of China's increasing engagement in the region, where it has invested massively in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a central part of its global Belt and Road initiative.

Direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban collapsed in 2015, and the Taliban, fighting to drive out international forces and re-establish their version of strict Islamic law, have repeatedly rejected the direct peace talks offered by the Western-backed Afghan government. However, they have opened contacts with the United States to prepare for possible talks to end a war that has killed and maimed tens of thousands in the 17 years since a US-backed campaign overthrew the Taliban in 2001.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani recently formed a 12-strong team to negotiate with the Taliban, but has said any deal could take at least five years to implement. "We support Afghanistan and Pakistan efforts for peace and we call on the Taliban to join the peace process," said Wang, adding that both countries have agreed to resolve disputes through "friendly consultations." Political tensions, coupled with allegations that security agencies in both countries support militant groups that bring deadly attacks against one another continue to strain relations between Kabul and Islamabad.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Islamabad was committed to stability and peace in Afghanistan. "By blaming, no one moves ahead, we have to stop pointing fingers at each other that why I am here to build mutual political trusts and facilitate the peace process of Afghanistan," he said. Earlier this month US President Donald Trump requested Pakistan's support for the US effort to advance the Afghan peace process. The officials also signed agreements to enable the expansion of CPEC to Afghanistan through road and rail links. — Reuters

Father who fled Afghanistan die in Strasbourg

STRASBOURG: Hundreds of people turned for the funeral of Kamal Naghchband, a father-of-three who fled violence in Afghanistan only to be gunned down and killed in this week's Strasbourg Christmas market attack. Naghchband, 45, had fled strife in Afghanistan to build a new life in France but became one of four people killed when a jihadist gunman attacked the market in the northeastern French city on Tuesday.

"He was going to see the Christmas market and in front of his children-he took a bullet," one of his cousins told AFP. Described by relatives as friendly and something of a joker, Naghchband survived a day in hospital in a coma before succumbing to his wounds. He was the joint manager of a garage near the Strasbourg mosque where he would go to pray and where his funeral was held on Friday.

"Our brother martyr Kamal tells us 'enjoy the moments you have in this world to do good'", Imam Eyup Sahin said, standing before a coffin covered with a green cloth and a smiling portrait of Naghchband. "Do you think that Allah allows us to kill someone? It is impossible! Islam is a religion of peace (which) no act of terrorism can represent," he said. "The Prophet says 'he who kills a person, it is as if he had killed all humanity,'" continued the Imam. "The best human being," he added, is not "the one who is most helpful for Muslims, for Jews, Christians or atheists, but for all humanity".

Naghchband had lived in France for around 20 years. According to his Facebook page, he was from Kabul and studied in Mazar-i-Sharif, in the north of the country. "He was charismatic, kind, and joked with everyone. People didn't go to his garage just to have their car repaired but to have coffee with him," said one relative. "He was very welcoming." After prayers, held in the courtyard of the mosque, Naghchband's body was covered with a French flag and carried before a large crowd of mourners to a cemetery in the south of the city. One unnamed mourner described Naghchband as a force for good, whatever ills befell him. "Whatever bad things were done to him, he only ever did good." —AFP

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Analysis

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WASHINGTON WATCH

The torture of Theresa May

Now is the time for all good citizens to put their elected politicians on the rack. Torture is what tyrants visited - and, often, still visit - upon real or presumed enemies among their own people. But subjecting their leaders to prolonged public humiliation has come to be a default position among democracies. None knows this better than the United Kingdom's Prime Minister, Theresa May.

The rack was an invention popular in Europe among rulers and their enforcers, in use from antiquity to the 18th century. It stretched the victim's limbs, causing excruciating pain and at an extreme dislocated or even tore them from the body. Its use was declared illegal in Britain in the early 17th century but it is now being practiced (in a non-physical form) on the British prime minister as competing factions in her own party seek to stretch her this way and that. Now the stretching is exerted by the ardent Brexiters, including some in her own cabinet, who wish to crash out of the European Union even with no deal, now by the Remainers who wish her to craft a Brexit as near as possible to the position the UK enjoyed when a member.

It's of little comfort, I guess, though it is now the case, that other leaders have their own experience of being intolerably stretched. French President Emmanuel Macron has probably seen off the worst of France's recent street violence though not, more lastingly, the economic costs that the "gilets jaunes" (yellow vests) loosed on France during their protests against fuel prices. But the reduction of his authority was manifest in his repentant speech televised earlier this week, in which he both accepted his "share of responsibility" and that he had "hurt some of you" - and announced a substantial rise in the minimum wage, among other aids to the "left behinds" of a France once apparently entranced by him, now apparently disgusted. He remains stretched between his plan to decrease French carbon emissions and reduce the budget deficit by trying to make fuel more expensive - and the need to placate the still-seething masses.

Angela Merkel is still chancellor of Germany and has seen her preferred successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, backed by a majority of the ruling Christian Democratic Union. But Merkel has lost both popularity and power, has seen her party split on right-liberal lines and is in no shape for major initiatives at home or abroad. The European Union, which she and Macron were united in strengthening, now drifts.

Earlier victims of public torture, who suffered much and are now all but forgotten - including Matteo Renzi, Italy's former prime minister and leader of the center-left, and Mariano Rajoy, former prime minister of Spain. Both lost office - the first in an election in March which saw two populist parties take over government, the second losing a no confidence vote in June in the Spanish parliament, leaving a fragile minority government to limp on. Europe is now shorn of strong leaders.

None, though, has been so stretched as the British prime minister. Her enemies on the Brexit side forced a party vote of confidence on her on Wednesday evening. She won, with 200 parliamentarians supporting her, but with 117 against - a "significant" number, as she acknowledged. She then set off for Brussels, yet again, to plead for more concessions to allow her to get her Brexit plan through parliament - a challenge she balked at this past week, knowing it would fail. Her plea to her fellow leaders fell on deaf ears. There is a faint hope of further clarifications, but it appears that the EU's firm position is no more negotiations. A "no-deal" Brexit, widely seen as a disaster, is now clearly possible - even likely.

The Remainers, though in some disarray, believe the country is swinging their way and, according to some polls, Britain would vote to stay in the EU in a second referendum. On Wednesday, I attended a lecture, organized by the British Academy, where the most passionate Remainder, Andrew Adonis, a Labour peer and head of policy for former Prime Minister Tony Blair, lambasted his fellow politicians, the press and even British citizens for their lack of enthusiasm for the EU - comparing this deficit of zeal with the steady approval Americans have in their democracy, the iconic figures such as Abraham Lincoln and the founders of the republic. He was opposed by the writer and academic Timothy Garton Ash, who though a Europhile, believes skepticism on the Union's democratic credentials and efficacy is necessary to make a convincing case to an already skeptical electorate.

It seems to me - I said as much during the debate - that Garton Ash is right. The British, especially the English political temper, simply cannot rise to an enthusiastic, Macron-style embrace of the EU. The most Britons would tolerate would be the continuation of a relationship which allowed opt-outs of membership of the euro, the Schengen no-passport zone and much else. — Reuters



Temple University owes Hill an apology

By Dr James J Zogby

Because I have a long and complicated history with Temple University, I have closely followed the story of the backlash against Temple Professor Marc Lamont Hill for the speech he delivered at the United Nations' "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People". I've never met Dr Hill, but I have read his speech and was moved by his careful cataloging of the violations of human rights endured by Palestinians and his passionate embrace of justice and equality for all who live "between the river and the sea" in the land of Israel/Palestine.

Because, in my work, I have experienced much the same hostility, it didn't surprise me that his appeal for justice and his efforts to humanize the Palestinian experience would rankle hardline supporters of Israel. Nor did it surprise me that some would deliberately distort the meaning of his words and claim that he was threatening the very existence of the Israeli people.

For his efforts, Dr Hill was denounced as an "Israel-hating, anti-Semite". His speech was termed "malicious", "ignorant", and "an incitement to violence." That much I expected. But what confounded and irked me were the reactions of some American Jews who said that they found his words "threatening." Based on my own experiences, however, I expected these expressions of feigned "outrage".

I must say that I was surprised that CNN acted as precipitously as they did in firing Dr. Hill as a network commentator. I was also troubled by the denunciations that came from the Chair of Temple University's Board of Trustees who termed Dr. Hill's remarks "hate speech" and the university's president who said that he would explore the possibility of terminating Hill's contract. It appeared that they either hadn't actually read Dr. Hill's remarks or were reading talking points from those who deliberately overreacted in order to snuff out any and all criticism of Israel.

After deliberations, the Board of Trustees issued a statement expressing their "disappointment, displeasure, and disagreement" with Dr Hill's UN speech, while at the same time begrudgingly acknowledging that since he was a tenured professor it would be difficult to fire him. I am proud that in reaction to this uproar, Dr Hill has remained firm and has received the support of many of his colleagues. In a beautifully written response to the

attacks, he made clear his absolute rejection of anti-Semitism, reaffirmed his criticism of Israeli policies and his commitment to Palestinian rights, and apologized for words in his speech that may have served as "a dangerous and harmful distraction from my political analysis."

Despite his strong stance, I can imagine how unsettling this entire experience must be for Hill. Five decades ago, as a doctoral candidate in Temple University's Department of Religion, I experienced some of the same intolerance and threats - but, in my case, without the protection of tenure. It was the late summer of 1967 when I first arrived at Temple University to begin my graduate studies. I was greeted on campus by a large banner hanging in front of a fraternity house screaming, in capital letters, "GO ISRAEL, BEAT ARABS." No one in Temple University's Administration appeared to object to the banner since it was not removed for quite some time.

A few years later, while I was speaking at a campus Vietnam antiwar rally, someone shouted out "Why are they letting the Arab speak?" Shortly thereafter, I received a note at my apartment that began "Arab dog, you will die if you set foot on campus again." I brought the letter to the attention of the Administration and the campus police and was disturbed that my concerns were shrugged off as "boys will be boys." When, a few days later, a group of shouting Jewish Defense League activists attempted to storm the classroom where I was teaching - there were no campus police around to make arrests or offer me protection. I was blessed that a group of four African American students who were taking my class rose to my defense and confronted the demonstrators, who beat a hasty retreat.

Troubling

These events were threatening. But troubling in a different way was what happened in 1971 after a series of articles I had written appeared in Philadelphia's African American newspaper "The Philadelphia Tribune". In the summer of 1971, I had traveled to Lebanon on a University grant to interview Palestinian refugees as part of my dissertation research. When I returned to Philadelphia, I decided to share my experiences with a larger audience and so I excerpted some of my research notes into a series of columns which I titled "Three Days in Palestine."

In the articles, I told the stories of people whom I had

met: reported their recollections of having been expelled from their homes; detailed the life they had built for themselves and their families in the camps; and told of their passionate desire to return to their homes (many had showed me treasured photographs of the homes they had left and the actual keys to their homes in Palestine).

I was pleased with the with initial reaction to the articles from the Tribune's readers, but was stunned a few weeks later when my academic department's director of graduate studies published a letter in the Tribune, denouncing my work and, using bizarrely intemperate language, described me as a "neo-Bolshevik, neo-Nazi, anti-Semite." Reading his harsh letter which sought to dissociate the university from my writings, I felt as though my graduate career might be over. Thankfully, it was not. My advisor, Dr Ismail Al-Faruqi defended me as did other faculty members.

After a year as an NDEA Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, I returned to Temple, later finished my dissertation, and was awarded my doctorate in 1975. I was able to feel somewhat vindicated when, three decades later, the College of Liberal Arts named me a Distinguished Alumni Fellow in recognition of my life's work. Given this personal history, I feel that I not only have some understanding of what Marc Lamont Hill might have experienced when he was attacked and not defended by the administration of his own university.

I find it incomprehensible that anyone would have felt threatened by Hill's thoughtful criticism of Israel's behavior or his fervent wish for a society "between the river and sea" where there is justice and equality for all. His words echo the warnings of the prophets of old and today's courageous Israeli human rights activists who are themselves threatened in the increasingly repressive environment that currently exists in Israel.

Someday, Temple University will recognize the prophetic words of Marc Lamont Hill and they will be embarrassed that they did not come to his defense. They will realize that he was right and courageous to speak out in support of human rights and to call for equality for all peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, who live "between the river and the sea." I hope this recognition and their apology doesn't take three decades. He deserves it now.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

Garbage oceans prompt war on plastics

Faced with images of turtles smothered by plastic bags, beaches carpeted with garbage and islands of trash floating in the oceans, environmentalists say the world is waking up to the need to tackle plastic pollution at the source. Stories on social media of giant seas of floating waste or a beached whale found in Indonesia with six kilos of plastic in its stomach are bringing plastic pollution into the spotlight. "There is no question plastic is having a moment," said George Leonard, chief scientist at Ocean Conservancy. "We are in a moment in time where we are starting to stare the problem in the face, and we're quite optimistic and hopeful that we can solve it."

Leonard and other environmental experts are optimistic the exposure will make the problem of plastics hard to ignore and focus attention on how best to deal with such waste. Eight million tonnes of plastic is dumped into the oceans each year, according to a study in the Science journal. But that is only what comes from the land, said Francois Galgani, researcher with the French institute Ifremer, estimating another two million tonnes could come from ships especially fishing vessels.

As a consequence more than 700 species are impacted, including turtles who confuse plastic bags with the jellyfish they eat, Galgani said. More than 5 billion plastic bags are used every year, and a ban step by step, country by country is underway, the first phase towards a possible general ban. Bags could be followed by bans on plastic straws and cotton swabs. The European Union

wants to ban certain single-use plastics by the end of 2021. For Galgani, that would be good news, as it would represent around 30 to 40 percent of the plastic that ends up in the oceans. "Everyone is working for the good cause, even industries," he said.

Cleaning up?

But according to a study in Science Advances review, from the 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic produced between 1950 and 2015, 6.3 billion tonnes became garbage that was not very biodegradable material and only 9 percent was recycled. For Greenpeace's Mirjam Kopp, though, recycling is not enough. "We cannot continue this business as usual, we need to change the throw-away culture we have developed," Kopp said. "We need to tackle the problem at the source. "Industries are putting the blame on the consumers, saying they should recycle more, but we don't think it will help. They are responsible for the single-use plastics they put on the market."

The UN Environment agency has already declared war on plastics in the oceans and made it the environmental theme of 2018. "We need stop treating plastic as something that we can just throw away after we have used it, and start treating it as a material that has real value," said Petter Malvik, campaign manager for the Clean Seas campaign launched by UN-Environment in 2017. Already around 60 countries have joined in the campaign started in 2017 to ban non-reusable plastics. "Although bans alone won't solve the problem, they are definitely more than just a drop in the bucket," Malvik said.

Another problem is so called "ghost nets" - fishing nets lost at sea or left intentionally and which continue to catch fish for months after. When it comes to cleaning the oceans, though, experts say the task may be far more complex. Scientists, for example, have doubts for over a giant floating clean-up device proposed by Ocean Cleanup foundation, which aims to clear half of a huge



A rubbish collector retrieves plastic bottles from debris and rubbish washed up by the tide on Kuta beach on Indonesian tourism island of Bali on Dec 9, 2018. — AFP

waste deposit floating in the Pacific in the next five years. Dubbed the "Great Pacific garbage patch", the abnormal mass of floating debris caused by marine turbulence has now reached 80,000 tonnes spread over an area three times the size of France, according to a study in Scientific Reports. And if you want to clean up the ocean, Leonard says, then the surface is not the place to start. What floats on the surface - particles of microplastics and larger objects - is nothing compared to what ends up on the ocean floor, experts say. So what is the solution? "Degradation," says Galgani of France's Ifremer institute, referring to the breakdown of plastics. But for some plastics that means a process that may take "hundreds of years". — AFP

Business

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12 ABK wins The Asian Banker Credit Risk Management Award for 2018**13** AUB wins the Best Premium Banking in Kuwait 2018 award**14** Easa Husain Al-Yousifi opens Kuwait Global Steel Services Factory

DETROIT: In this file photo, people visit the Ford exhibit during the press preview at the 2018 North American International Auto Show in Detroit. China has agreed to cut tariffs on autos imported from the US, and resume soybean purchases, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said. —AFP

Trump says 'big' China trade deal possible

Huawei CFO arrest in Canada strains relations further

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Friday predicted a major US-China trade deal in the near future, saying that Beijing's negotiating position had been weakened by the impact of the tariffs war between the world's top two economies.

"China wants to make a big and very comprehensive deal. It could happen, and rather soon!" Trump tweeted. His optimism followed China's decision earlier Friday to back off from extra punitive duties that had been imposed this summer on US-made cars and auto parts.

The move was seen as the first concrete result of the US leader's G20 talks with his counterpart Xi Jinping earlier this month. Those tariffs now fall from 40 percent to 15 percent—the same rate imposed on all foreign-made vehicles. The relief will last for three months from January 1.

"Suspension of the tariffs is a concrete measure to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state," said the announcement by the State Council's Tariff Commission Office, noting it applied to 211 product codes.

Trump said the climbdown showed that China had been forced to blink in their on-off spat, after months of heavy US tariffs on Chinese imports.

"China just announced that their economy is grow-

ing much slower than anticipated because of our Trade War with them. They have just suspended US Tariff Hikes. US is doing very well," Trump said.

Beijing's move also demonstrated that talks to resolve the trade conflict have survived the tension sparked by Canada's arrest of a top Chinese telecom executive at the behest of US law enforcement.

Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of telecoms behemoth Huawei, has been released on bail in Canada. China wants her unconditional release. Washington wants her extradited for allegedly violating US sanctions on Iran. China apparently retaliated by detaining two Canadians on suspicion of "harm to national security"—a phrase often used by Beijing when alleging espionage. Washington insists that the case is driven purely by the US Justice Department, rather than anything to do with the trade dispute, but Trump has muddied the waters by suggesting he might intervene if that would help the trade talks.

Tit-for-tat

Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Buenos Aires on December 1 to a 90-day truce while they tried to find a solution to the escalating trade dispute. Confusion and

unease over what agreement the two sides reached in Argentina has roiled stock markets.

But trade negotiators talked on the phone this week to discuss a timetable for talks. Friday's announcement in Beijing also confirms what Trump said on December 2 about China acting on the auto tariffs. "We hope that both sides will—in accordance with the consensus reached by the two heads of state, on the premise of mutual respect, mutual equality, faithfulness, words and actions-intensity consultations in the direction of cancelling all of the extra tariff increases," the State Council's statement said.

Stand to benefit

The tariff suspension will benefit US carmakers like Tesla and Ford which have seen China sales tumble. "It is essential that governments work together to advance balanced and fair trade. We look forward to learning more," a spokesman for Ford said after Trump announced China would cut car tariffs.

International automakers Daimler, maker of the Mercedes-Benz, and BMW have also exported American-made SUVs to China. US exports to China fell 25 percent on-year in November as the higher tariffs on hundreds of American goods hurt demand.

In another signal that China may move to satisfy Trump, the country's top legislature announced Friday that it would hold a session from December 23-29 to discuss legislation on foreign investment and a draft revisions to the patent law.

The United States has long complained of a lack of fair access for foreign companies in China and rampant theft of intellectual property.

For now, the National People's Congress Standing Committee has not provided details about the draft legislation. Maintaining and resolving the trade truce could help stabilize sentiment in China, where confidence in the economy has been hurt by the trade frictions with Washington.

Earlier on Friday, economic data showed Chinese consumer spending grew at its slowest pace in 15 years and factories eased up in November, raising the prospect that Beijing could turn to fresh stimulus measures to help the sputtering economy.

China's top officials on the Politburo said in a statement Thursday that major economic indicators will be kept within a reasonable range next year.

"The meeting also signalled further market opening," economists at Trivium Research wrote in a newsletter. —AFP

J&J shares plunge after report on asbestos in baby powder

NEW YORK: US pharmaceutical and cosmetics group Johnson & Johnson saw its shares plunge Friday after a media report alleged the group had deliberately concealed for decades that its baby powder sometimes contained asbestos.

A lengthy investigation by the Reuters news agency, which reviewed thousands of company documents, showed the company marketed talc-based products that, at least between 1971 and the beginning in the 2000s, sometimes contained asbestos. The company's executives, researchers, doctors and lawyers were aware but deliberately chose not to disclose this information and not to refer it to the authorities, according to the report.

Johnson & Johnson strenuously rejected the claims made in the article, calling it "one-sided, false and inflammatory." "Simply put, the Reuters story is an absurd conspiracy theory," the company said in a statement. "Johnson & Johnson's baby powder is safe and asbestos-free."



In this file, Johnson's baby powder remains stocked at a supermarket shelf in Alhambra, California. —AFP

J&J stock closed down more than 10 percent at \$133 on the New York Stock Exchange, its worst one-day fall in 16 years. The controversy has long dogged the company, which has been facing a wave of several thousand court cases claiming the baby powder is causing cancer.

In July, Johnson & Johnson was ordered to pay \$4.7 billion in damages to a group of 22 women claiming to have developed ovarian cancer following the use of the powder. The company said Friday there were rigorous tests showing the talc did not contain the cancer-causing mineral. In addition, "J&J has cooperated fully and openly with the US FDA and other global regulators, providing them with all the information they requested over decades." —AFP

Russia CB raises rates, plans to resume FX buying

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank hiked its main interest rate on Friday, seeking to keep a lid on rising inflation and offset pressure on an already weak ruble after it said it would resume foreign currency purchases for state reserves. The bank raised the rate by 25 basis points to 7.75 percent, and Governor Elvira Nabiullina flagged further possible hikes next year. Most economists and analysts in a Reuters poll had expected no change in borrowing costs, though a significant minority forecast an increase.

"The decision taken is proactive in nature and is aimed at limiting inflation risks that remain elevated, especially over the short-term horizon," the central bank said in a statement.

Friday's hike was the second since September, when a slump in the ruble forced the central bank to reverse a monetary easing cycle and raise rates for the first time since 2014. The currency has taken a hit from a global pressure on emerging market currencies and US sanctions against Russia, losing 14 percent against the dollar this year and contributing to upward pressure on inflation, which hit an annual 3.8 percent in November. The central bank said inflation would exceed its 4 percent target in the near future and was likely to peak at around 6 percent in March or April. It

would "assess the feasibility of further increases in the key rate, taking into account inflation and economic dynamics against the forecast, as well as risks posed by external conditions and financial markets' reaction to them," Nabiullina said.

The bank expects GDP to rise between 1.5 and 2.0 percent this year and just 1.2-1.7 percent in 2019. Research firm Capital Economic predicted the bank, which holds its next rate-setting meeting on Feb. 8, would raise the rate to 8.00 percent early next year. "The tone of today's communications make clear that it wouldn't take much to trigger another hike," it said in a note. Vladimir Tikhomirov, economist at BCS brokerage, said a further hike would be needed soon if inflation topped 5 percent by early February. In tandem with Friday's rate hike the bank announced a resumption of daily buying of foreign currency from Jan. 15, which sent the ruble tumbling. The central bank started buying foreign currency on the open market for the finance ministry's reserves in 2017 as a means of shielding Russia from fluctuations in prices for oil, its key export. It halted the purchases in August to ease pressure on the ruble. Nabiullina said the central bank would resume FX buying "in full amount" and decide next year how to carry out purchases it postponed in 2018.

The ruble fell to its weakest since Dec. 7 after her comments, trading down 0.8 percent at 66.80 versus the dollar. Anna Zadorozhnikova, economist at UBS, said a high current account surplus in the first quarter, when Russian energy exports are usually strong, could help prop up the Russian currency. "But as the current account surplus starts to roll over from the second quarter onwards, we expect the FX purchases to become a drag on the ruble exchange rate once again," she said. —Reuters

Business

ABK wins The Asian Banker Credit Risk Management Award for 2018

Award ceremony held during MEA International Finance Dialogue 2018

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), recently listed as one of the top 10 safest banks in the Middle East by Global Finance, was conferred the prestigious 'Achievement in Credit Risk Management in the Middle East and Africa' award by The Asian Banker. The award ceremony was held in conjunction with the Middle East & Africa International Finance Dialogue 2018 on 29th November in Dubai.

The award acknowledges ABK's Risk management expertise and recognizes the reinforcement of its Credit Risk Management department in order to pursue strategies that build long-term value. As a result of ABK's healthy capital position and credit strengths, which is fully aligned with the Central Bank of Kuwait's robust regulations, the Bank continues to maintain positive ratings on both Fitch and Moody's, receiving A+ and A2 ratings respectively.

Jamal Ahmad, Group Chief Risk Officer - ABK said, "Asset quality is one of the key success factors of a financial institution and hence Credit Risk management assumes increased importance, positioning it at the heart of decision making. We are

delighted to be honored with the 'Achievement in Credit Risk Management in the Middle East and Africa' award by The Asian Banker, as it reflects our sound risk management practices. The award manifests the Group CEO's approach towards a balanced credit strategy and a prudent policy towards simplification of business activities and processes. It also reflects sound guidance from our Board Credit & Risk Committees, driving the credit decision-making, promoting the independence of the Risk Management function, and defining the bank's overall risk appetite through active engagement with Risk Management and Business lines."

The Asian Banker is one of Asia's leading consulting companies in financial services research, benchmarking and intelligence. The Asian Banker Risk Management Awards is a landmark recognition program that identifies and benchmarks the best practices and achievements across a stringent set of criteria. ABK's risk management strategy and framework was carefully assessed against other banks by a panel of industry experts and judges prior to receiving the award.



Ooredoo launches Shamel Home basic plan



KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced the launch of a new internet bundle under the name Shamel Home basic plan, the plan offers fiber internet service at home powered by FASTelco and a portable internet on the go from Ooredoo. Customers can now get 10Mbps unlimited fiber connection from FASTelco, a subsidiary of Ooredoo Kuwait, and an Ooredoo 500GB data SIM with 4G portable router, starting from KD12. Customers looking for speed boosts can upgrade the unlimited fiber service to speeds of up to 100Mbps. FASTelco fiber optics are now available in 35 residential areas which include Mishref, Bayan, Sabah Al Salem, South Surra, Mangaf, Mahboula, and Jaber Al Ahmad. These residential areas can now benefit from this premium internet solution. This internet bundle was tailored to match the needs of users looking for high speed internet with unlimited capacities, consistency, and reliability.

With the launch of Shamel Home basic plan, Ooredoo continues to prove its commitment to embracing digitalization and leads the way in meeting the growing demands for online digital services in Kuwait, especially in the fast-paced telecom industry. This service gives Ooredoo customers all their internet needs in one great plan, at a crucial time when digital entertainment content is witnessing substantial growth in the region due to the rising popularity of smart devices.

This move complements the company's core values of caring, connecting and challenging, while also upholding its commitment to providing customers with services and plans that match their expectations and lifestyle, be it at home or outdoors.

The Shamel Home basic plan, and all other Shamel Home pre-launched plans and offers from Ooredoo are available in any of Ooredoo's branches and official dealers, and on its online store.

Portugal's tourist arrivals dip

LISBON: The number of foreign tourists visiting Portugal edged lower in the first 10 months of this year, the first cumulative decline after years of record figures, data showed on Friday, with Britons accounting for a large part of the drop. The National Statistics Institute, which monitors hotel stays, said total arrivals were 0.1 percent lower than a year earlier at just below 11.4 million. In the same period of 2017, arrivals were up by almost 12 percent to exceed 11.4 million.

Seven years of booming tourism have hugely benefited Portugal's economy as it recovered from a debt crisis and economic recession of 2011-14, but its hopes for another record year after 2017's 12.7 million tourists look set to fall flat.

Hotel revenues were still 6 percent higher in the period, helped by growing domestic travel and higher room rates, but the growth is about a third what it was a year ago, since when dozens of new hotels have opened.

Arrivals started to decline at the height of the summer season in July, but it was not until October's 2 percent drop that the cumulative number for the year became smaller than at the same point of 2017. — Reuters

Special Report

J&J knew for decades that asbestos lurked in its Baby Powder

LOS ANGELES: Darlene Coker knew she was dying. She just wanted to know why. She knew that her cancer, mesothelioma, arose in the delicate membrane surrounding her lungs and other organs. She knew it was as rare as it was deadly, a signature of exposure to asbestos. And she knew it afflicted mostly men who inhaled asbestos dust in mines and industries such as shipbuilding that used the carcinogen before its risks were understood.

Coker, 52 years old, had raised two daughters and was running a massage school in Lumberton, a small town in eastern Texas. How had she been exposed to asbestos? "She wanted answers," her daughter Cady Evans said. Fighting for every breath and in crippling pain, Coker hired Herschel Hobson, a personal-injury lawyer. He homed in on a suspect: the Johnson's Baby Powder that Coker had used on her infant children and sprinkled on herself all her life. Hobson knew that talc and asbestos often occurred together in the earth, and that mined talc could be contaminated with the carcinogen. Coker sued Johnson & Johnson, alleging that "poisonous talc" in the company's beloved product was her killer. J&J denied the claim. Baby Powder was asbestos-free, it said. As the case proceeded, J&J was able to avoid handing over talc test results and other internal company records Hobson had requested to make the case against Baby Powder.

Coker had no choice but to drop her lawsuit, Hobson said. "When you are the plaintiff, you have the burden of proof," he said. "We didn't have it."

That was in 1999. Two decades later, the material Coker and her lawyer sought is emerging as J&J has been compelled to share thousands of pages of company memos, internal reports and other confidential documents with lawyers for some of the 11,700 plaintiffs now claiming that the company's talc caused their cancers - including thousands of women with ovarian cancer.

A Reuters examination of many of those documents, as well as deposition and trial testimony, shows that from at least 1971 to the early 2000s, the company's raw talc and finished powders sometimes tested positive for small amounts of asbestos, and that company executives, mine managers, scientists, doctors and lawyers fretted over the problem and how to address it while failing to disclose it to regulators or the public. The documents also depict successful efforts to influence US regulators' plans to limit asbestos in cosmetic talc products and scientific research on the health effects of talc.

A small portion of the documents have been produced at trial and cited in media reports. Many were shielded from public view by court orders that allowed J&J to turn over thousands of documents it designated as confidential. Much of their contents is reported here for the first time.

"Rather high"

The earliest mentions of tainted J&J talc that Reuters found come from 1957 and 1958 reports by a consulting lab. They describe contaminants in talc from J&J's Italian supplier as fibrous and "acicular," or needle-like, tremolite. That's one of the six minerals that in their naturally occurring fibrous form are classified as asbestos.

At various times from then into the early 2000s, reports by scientists at J&J, outside labs and J&J's supplier yielded similar findings. The reports identify contaminants in talc and finished powder products as asbestos or describe them in terms typically applied to asbestos, such as "fiberform" and "rods." In 1976, as the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was weighing limits on asbestos in cosmetic talc products, J&J assured the regulator that no asbestos was "detected in any sample" of talc produced between December 1972 and October 1973. It didn't tell the agency that at least three tests by three different labs from 1972 to 1975 had found asbestos in its talc - in one case at levels reported as "rather high."

Most internal J&J asbestos test reports Reuters reviewed do not find asbestos. However, while J&J's testing methods improved over time, they have always had limitations that allow trace contaminants to go undetected - and only a tiny fraction of the company's talc is tested.

The World Health Organization and other authorities recognize no safe level of exposure to asbestos. While most people exposed never develop cancer, for some, even small

amounts of asbestos are enough to trigger the disease years later. Just how small hasn't been established. Many plaintiffs allege that the amounts they inhaled when they dusted themselves with tainted talcum powder were enough.

The evidence of what J&J knew has surfaced after people who suspected that talc caused their cancers hired lawyers experienced in the decades-long deluge of litigation involving workers exposed to asbestos. Some of the lawyers knew from those earlier cases that talc producers tested for asbestos, and they began demanding J&J's testing documentation. What J&J produced in response to those demands has allowed plaintiffs' lawyers to refine their argument: The culprit wasn't necessarily talc itself, but also asbestos in the talc. That assertion, backed by decades of solid science showing that asbestos causes mesothelioma and is associated with ovarian and other cancers, has had mixed success in court.

In two cases earlier this year - in New Jersey and California - juries awarded big sums to plaintiffs who, like Coker, blamed asbestos-tainted J&J talc products for their mesothelioma.

A third verdict, in St. Louis, was a watershed, broadening J&J's potential liability: The 22 plaintiffs were the first to succeed with a claim that asbestos-tainted Baby Powder and Shower to Shower talc, a longtime brand the company sold in 2012, caused ovarian cancer, which is much more common than mesothelioma. The jury awarded them \$4.69 billion in damages. Most of the talc cases have been brought by women with ovarian cancer who say they regularly used J&J talc products as a perineal antiperspirant and deodorant.

At the same time, at least three juries have rejected claims that Baby Powder was tainted with asbestos or caused plaintiffs' mesothelioma. Others have failed to reach verdicts, resulting in mistrials.

"Junk" science

J&J has said it will appeal the recent verdicts against it. It has maintained in public statements that its talc is safe, as shown for years by the best tests available, and that the information it has been required to divulge in recent litigation shows the care the company takes to ensure its products are asbestos-free. It has blamed its losses on juror confusion, "junk" science, unfair court rules and overzealous lawyers looking for a fresh pool of asbestos plaintiffs.

"Plaintiffs' attorneys out for personal financial gain are distorting historical documents and intentionally creating confusion in the courtroom and in the media," Ernie Knewitz, J&J's vice president of global media relations, wrote in an emailed response to Reuters' findings. "This is all a calculated attempt to distract from the fact that thousands of independent tests prove our talc does not contain asbestos or cause cancer. Any suggestion that Johnson & Johnson knew or hid information about the safety of talc is false."

J&J declined to comment further for this article. For more than two months, it turned down repeated requests for an interview with J&J executives. On Dec. 8, the company offered to make an expert available. It had not done so as of Thursday evening. The company referred all inquiries to its outside litigation counsel, Peter Bicks. In emailed responses, Bicks rejected Reuters' findings as "false and misleading." "The scientific consensus is that the talc used in talc-based body powders does not cause cancer, regardless of what is in that talc," Bicks wrote. "This is true even if - and it does not - Johnson & Johnson's cosmetic talc had ever contained minute, undetectable amounts of asbestos." He dismissed tests cited in this article as "outlier" results.

In court, J&J lawyers have told jurors that company records showing that asbestos was detected in its talc referred to talc intended for industrial use. Other records, they have argued, referred to non-asbestos forms of the same minerals that their experts say are harmless. J&J has also argued that some tests picked up "background" asbestos - stray fibers that could have contaminated samples after floating into a mill or lab from a vehicle clutch or fraying insulation.

The company has made some of the same arguments about lab tests conducted by experts hired by plaintiffs. One of those labs found asbestos in Shower to Shower talc from the 1990s, according to an Aug. 11, 2017, court report. Another lab found asbestos in more than half of multiple samples of Baby Powder from past decades - in bottles from plaintiffs' cupboards and acquired from eBay, and even a 1978 bottle held in J&J's corporate museum. The concentrations were great enough that the users "would have, more likely than not, been exposed," the plaintiffs' lab report presented in several cases this year concluded.

Matthew Sanchez, a geologist with consultants RJ Lee Group Inc and a frequent expert witness for J&J, dismissed those findings in testimony in the St. Louis trial. "I have not found asbestos in any of the current or modern, what I consider modern, Johnson & Johnson talc products," Sanchez



In this photo illustration, a container of Johnson's baby powder made by Johnson and Johnson sits on a table in San Francisco, California. —AFP

told the jury. Sanchez did not return calls seeking comment. RJ Lee said it does not comment on the work it does for clients.

Since 2003, talc in Baby Powder sold in the United States has come from China through supplier Imerys Talc America, a unit of Paris-based Imerys SA and a co-defendant in most of the talc litigation. Imerys and J&J said the Chinese talc is safe. An Imerys spokesman said the company's tests "consistently show no asbestos. Talc's safe use has been confirmed by multiple regulatory and scientific bodies."

J&J, based in New Brunswick, New Jersey, has dominated the talc powder market for more than 100 years, its sales outpacing those of all competitors combined, according to Euromonitor International data. And while talc products contributed just \$420 million to J&J's \$76.5 billion in revenue last year, Baby Powder is considered an essential facet of the healthcare-products maker's carefully tended image as a caring company - a "sacred cow," as one 2003 internal email put it.

"When people really understand what's going on, I think it increases J&J's exposure a thousand-fold," said Mark Lanier, one of the lawyers for the women in the St. Louis case.

The mounting controversy surrounding J&J talc hasn't shaken investors. The share price is up about 6 percent so far this year. Talc cases make up fewer than 10 percent of all personal injury lawsuits pending against J&J, based on the company's Aug. 2 quarterly report, in which the company said it believed it had "strong grounds on appeal."

J&J Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alex Gorsky has pledged to fight on, telling analysts in July: "We remain confident that our products do not contain asbestos."

Gorsky's comment, echoed in countless J&J statements, misses a crucial point. Asbestos, like many environmental carcinogens, has a long latency period. Diagnosis usually comes years after initial exposure - 20 years or longer for mesothelioma. J&J talc products today may be safe, but the talc at issue in thousands of lawsuits was sold and used over the past 60 years.

"Safety first"

In 1886, Robert Wood Johnson enlisted his younger brothers in an eponymous startup built around the "Safety First" motto. Johnson's Baby Powder grew out of a line of medicated plasters, sticky rubber strips loaded with mustard and other home remedies. When customers complained of skin irritation, the brothers sent packets of talc.

Soon, mothers began applying the talc to infants' diaper-chafed skin. The Johnsons took note. They added a fragrance that would become one of the most recognizable in the world, sifted the talc into tin boxes and, in 1893, began selling it as Johnson's Baby Powder.

In the late 1950s, J&J discovered that talc from its chief source mine for the US market in the Italian Alps contained tremolite. That's one of six minerals - along with chrysotile, actinolite, amosite, anthophyllite and crocidolite - that occur in nature as crystalline fibers known as asbestos, a recognized carcinogen. Some of them, including tremolite, also occur as unremarkable "non-asbestiform" rocks. Both forms often occur together and in talc deposits.

J&J's worry at the time was that contaminants made the company's powder abrasive. It sent tons of its Italian talc to a private lab in Columbus, Ohio, to find ways to improve the appearance, feel and purity of the powder by removing as much "grit" as possible. In a pair of reports from 1957 and 1958, the lab said the talc contained "from less than 1 percent to about 3 percent of contaminants," described as mostly fibrous and "acicular" tremolite. —Reuters

Business

KFH role in fostering economic ties between Kuwait and Turkey hailed

Al-Marzouq heads KFH's delegation in official business visit of DEiK

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) received the Turkey-Kuwait Business Council under Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEiK) delegation, in an official business visit hosted at Sheraton Kuwait to discuss the current and potential business opportunities between Turkey and Kuwait.

KFH delegation was headed by KFH Chairman, Hamad Al-Marzouq and included Group CEO, Mazin Al-Nahedh and the upper management.

Al-Marzouq welcomed the distinguished guests, praising the economic relations between Kuwait and Turkey, which witnessed remarkable progress in the past years. Meanwhile, the DEiK delegation was comprised of 25 business people operating in various sectors such as construction, defense, finance and real estate. The delegation was headed by Ozdemir who is the Chairperson of DEiK Turkish Kuwait Business Council, in presence of Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Kuwait. Turkish Embassy in Kuwait supports the Turkey-Kuwait Business Council in every field.

Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Ayse Koytak praised the role of KFH in fostering the economic ties between Kuwait and Turkey, indicating "Kuveyt Turk Bank, working in Islamic banking, is

also one of the newest members of DEiK Business Council. KFH, the largest shareholder of Kuveyt Turk, has also supported the Business Council in every activity done so far," she added.

Ambassador continued "I was highly honored by the presence of the top management team of KFH during this networking lunch and by the support they showed to the Business Council. We are aware of the importance of Kuveyt Turk Bank for the economy of Turkey. It is the largest bank, working in Islamic banking in Turkey with around 40 percent market share, 400 branches and 5,800 employees. This is a great success story belongs not only to KFH but also to Turkey and Kuwait."

She added "I would like to extend my thanks once again to Hamad Al-Marzouq, Chairman of KFH, Mazin Al-Nahedh, Group CEO and the rest of the top management of KFH for their hospitality during the networking lunch and for their support to Turkey-Kuwait Business Council."

DEiK's Turkey-Kuwait Business Council, established in 2006, aims to improve bilateral business and trade relations between Turkey and Kuwait. The Business Council operates under DEiK, Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board working in close coordination with the Turkish Ministry of Trade.



(From left) Al-Marzouq, Turkish Ambassador, Al-Nahedh, Ozdemir and Mohamad Alomar

AUB wins the Best Premium Banking in Kuwait 2018 award

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced yesterday that it has won the "Best Premium Banking in Kuwait 2018" award from the prominent Islamic Business & Finance International Magazine. The award is provided on an annual basis under the supervision of CPI Financial, publisher of the magazine.

The winners of the 13th Islamic Business & Finance Awards were announced at a gala dinner held at Emirates Towers Hotel, Dubai on 6 December 2018, attended by more than 200 Islamic bankers and financiers from around the world. A total of nearly 8,000 votes were cast across 34 voted-for categories in the online poll held on www.cpifinancial.net, in addition to two categories based purely on results and three individual Awards that were chosen by an expert panel of judges.

Hayat Al-Khader AUB's Executive Head of Business Development received the award on behalf of the Bank. According to CPI Financial, the Bank's recent accolade reflects its ability to provide a special range of banking products. Recently, AUB has been able to deliver on its clients' expectations on multiple fronts, who are also at the core of the Bank's priorities. Moreover, AUB's commitment is reflective of its underlying objective of providing the highest standards of excellence across its banking operations. In addition, the Bank ensures to provide exclusive banking services that are Shari'ah compliant for its Premium customers, along with competitive prices that have been developed for personal and auto-finance as well as other financial services. Furthermore, the Bank provides safe and secure digital banking solutions through smartphones and the internet. In addition, the Awards are designed to identify and reward excellence in and celebrate the achievements of the global Islamic



Hayat Al-Khader receiving the award

finance industry. In its 13th year now, this annual Awards program is directly associated with Islamic Business & Finance and its global audience of senior Islamic banking and finance executives.

Hayat Al-Khader added, "We are honored to have won this prestigious award which is a testament to the strength of our exceptional range of services that are sharia-compliant. Premium Banking has always been at the core of our strategic objectives, and will continue to be a part of the Bank's success in the future. At AUB, we are committed to provide the best financial solutions that have been designed specifically to accommodate clients' needs."

"In addition, the award reaffirms the strength of the

Bank's products and services that have been developed in accordance with our clients' discerning financial needs. AUB is committed to providing an exceptional banking experience by delivering a diversified range of products to its customers," added Al-Khader.

CPI Financial was established in 1999, and is headquartered in Dubai. The publishing house manages a number of top tier publications including the Banker Middle East Magazine, as well as Islamic Business and Finance Magazine. In addition, it further provides a robust analysis of financial news on banks and corporates across the Middle East and beyond, and is committed to transparency when preparing economic reports.

India CB board seeks more discussion on governance

MUMBAI: The board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday it had deliberated on the central bank's governance framework and decided the matter requires "further examination".

The governance issue was a key part of the board meeting's agenda as the government wanted to have a greater say in the bank's regulatory decisions through its board nominees.

The meeting, which wrapped up in less than four hours on Friday, compared with the previous two meetings that lasted nine hours, indicated a likely smoother ride ahead for the central bank and the government under new RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das.

"The board deliberated on the gover-

nance framework of the Reserve Bank and it was decided that the matter required further examination," the RBI said in a statement. The governance agenda included re-constituting or reviewing the sub-committees of the board which make regulatory decisions, in a bid to curb the RBI's unilateral decision-making powers.

Currently, the RBI decides the regulatory and operational issues of banks and the board is informed later. Das, who took charge on Wednesday, sought more time from the board to go through actual data before deciding on the need for more steps on government demands, including further liquidity for weak shadow banks, easy lending rules and a greater share in the RBI's excess reserves, a source at the meeting said.

"He assured that decisions would be taken based on ground level data and discussion with all stakeholders," said the source, who declined to be identified. It was mostly pending administrative issues, including the design of currency notes, that were discussed, the source said. Das, who has emphasized being consultative since he walked into the RBI in Mumbai, also assured board members

of more involvement of the central bank's regional boards, the source said.

Das' bureaucratic links are expected to heal a rift between the government and the central bank that had widened sharply under his predecessor, Urjit Patel, but the pressure to have greater control over the RBI's regulatory power through the board is likely to continue.

Election boost?

The board also reviewed global and domestic challenges, liquidity and credit delivery and currency management, the RBI said in the release without giving details. There were some expectations that the RBI might come up with measures to ease liquidity further following the government's demands.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is keen to boost the economy ahead of general elections that must be held by May. Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's need for support from the RBI has become more imperative after the government lost five state elections, relinquishing power in three of them, in results announced this week. —Reuters



MUMBAI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das speaks to the media after taking charge at the bank's head office in Mumbai on Dec 12. —AFP

Fitch downgrades Pakistan citing fiscal 'deterioration'

ISLAMABAD: Global credit rating agency Fitch downgraded Pakistan's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating to 'B-' from 'B', citing a rise in external financing risk from low reserves and high external debt repayments, along with a continued deterioration in the

economy's fiscal position. Pakistan's rating outlook is stable, Fitch Ratings said on Friday. Inflation in the country has risen due to a significant rupee depreciation and higher energy prices, Fitch noted.

Last month, Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund failed to agree on a bailout package during a visit by an IMF delegation. Pakistani officials had set mid-January as the target date for the IMF to sign off on the country's second bailout since 2013, when Islamabad was loaned \$6.7 billion.

The rating agency said successful talks on IMF support could help in stabilizing Pakistan's external finances but added that the program will face a signifi-

cant implementation risk. Finance minister Asad Umar had said in October that Pakistan would seek an IMF funding package, its 13th since the late 1980s.

In the same month, Pakistan also announced that Saudi Arabia had offered \$3 billion in foreign currency support to the country's central bank and a further loan worth \$3 billion in deferred payments for oil.

Fitch said financial commitments given to the country by Saudi Arabia, China and the United Arab Emirates have helped the economy plug its near-term financing gap. However, it also remarked that Pakistan's tensions with neighboring countries pose a geopolitical risk. —Reuters

Somali-American Amazon workers demand better conditions

SHAKOPEE, US: A group of Amazon workers in Minnesota who are Somali refugees resettled in the Midwestern US state demanded better working conditions Friday during a protest outside one of the retailer's warehouses.

Hundreds braved frigid temperatures to demonstrate outside of the Amazon warehouse in the Minneapolis suburb of Shakopee-home to a sizable Somali immigrant population from which Amazon has heavily recruited. The protest was the latest effort by the workers, who say East African immigrants make up a majority of the workforce at the massive warehouse but go unheard.

"We don't have rights in the company," worker Abdulkadir Ahmad, 30, said. The workers, many of whom are practicing Muslims, say the required productivity rate is too high, the company is unconcerned about worker injuries and that the conditions don't allow practicing Muslims to pray as they otherwise would. "We do not have enough time to pray. There is a lot of pressure. They say your rate is too low," Ahmad said. The workers timed their protest during the busy holiday shopping season, hoping to force the online retailer to make changes.

Amazon's accommodations

They already have had some success. Amazon says it has offered accommodations such as providing prayer mats for workers, converting a conference room into prayer space during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and approving shift transfers for fasting workers. "Additionally, we've continued to hire and develop East African employees. We're a leader in this space and we feel really good about our record here," Amazon spokeswoman Shevaun Brown said via email. The company previously agreed to meet with workers to hear their concerns. The New York Times reported that it was the first known instance of any group succeeding in forcing Amazon to negotiate.

But workers say Amazon's efforts so far have fallen short. "We are appreciative they've sat down and talked with us, but we are not seeing real action," activist Abdi Muse said. Muse is the executive director of the Awood Center, a union-backed non-profit that organized the protest and helps East African workers in the state.

Protesters decry 'hurt and harm'

Demonstrating workers and community leaders who joined them in support on Friday say conditions at the warehouse are leaving people with serious ailments.

"When workers leave Amazon, they still live with the back pain, chronic illness, and hurt and harm caused during their employment," said Ahmed Anshur, the imam at the Al-Ihsan Islamic Center in the nearby state capital of Saint Paul.

Protesters said they want the multibillion-dollar company to give back to the struggling community that has been a major source of its workforce in the Minneapolis area by giving money to a community fund to help struggling immigrant families. "It's not a handout or a donation," said Mohamed Omar, imam at another Minneapolis suburban mosque. "This is so Amazon can give back into the community a portion of what they have taken so much of."

The retail giant has faced past complaints from warehouse employees about working conditions.

It has more than 100 "fulfillment centers" across the country where purchased merchandise is packaged and shipped. The centers employ more than 125,000 full-time employees, according to Amazon. Bloomberg reported this week that warehouse workers in New York have announced plans to unionize. —AFP

Business

Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Real Estate opens Kuwait Global Steel Services Factory

Facility is specialized in cutting, shaping and bending steel



KUWAIT: Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Real Estate Company announced the opening of Kuwait Global Steel Services Factory (KGSS) at a ceremony held on December 5th, in the factory location in Amghara Industrial area with the presence of large number of the company's officials and managers and guests from contracting and engineering consultation companies. This ceremony was also attended by a group of officials of governmental bodies and number of journalists and media professionals.

This facility is the first in the State of Kuwait and the only one of its type that is specialized in cutting, shaping and bending steel. Moreover, it is the only facility that uses computers and electronic machines in its operations to protect and preserve the environment through reducing the pollution and ferrous waste and scrap resulting from the provision of these services.

This factory is one of the new vital projects in the State of Kuwait that will supplement the other industrial projects. Its production capacity will be more than one hundred and twenty thousand tons of steel a year. Dr Adel Easa Al-Yousifi, Senior Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, delivered a speech in which he welcomed the attendees



Dr Adel Al-Yousifi



Carlo Micoli



Dr Abdullah Al-Yousifi, Dr Adel Al-Yousifi and Aref Al-Yousifi

and informed them on the strategic objectives for the establishment of such facility and his future vision for the industry in Kuwait. Moreover, Managing Partner of the factory, Carlo Micoli made a statement explaining the importance and advantages of state-of-the-art technologies used by this facility that would contribute to the expeditious completion and reeducation of costs and

accuracy of work.

In the Conclusion, the attendees of the ceremony made a tour in the factory to get insight on how modern machineries are working. The gathering was impressed by the organization of the factory and the expeditious completion of the works that will contribute to the development of industrial and construction sector in Kuwait.

EQUATE Group completes its facilities' amendment and extension exercise

KUWAIT: The EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals, announced the successful completion of an amendment and extension exercise on its \$1.9 billion Term Loan and \$1 billion Revolving Credit Facility ("RCF").

The Group worked with its existing relationship banks to extend the tenor on its Term Loan and RCF by two years. The Term Loan maturity has been extended from June 2021 to June 2023 and the RCF maturity has been extended from June 2020 to June 2022. The RCF has two further extension options. The EQUATE Group CFO Dawood Al-Abduljalil said, "We are very pleased to successfully and efficiently complete this amendment and extension exercise. We are especially proud of our great banking relationships and the EQUATERS without whom this exercise would not have completed".

Through this tenor extension exercise, the Group has been able to take advantage of strong bank market conditions to optimize its maturity profile. Furthermore, the Group has also been able to achieve considerable pricing reduction. The EQUATE Group appointed Citii and SMBC as Coordinators to assist in running the amendment and extension exercise.



EQUATE CFO Dawood Al-Abduljalil

KIB receives 'Best Branding in Kuwait' 2018 award

KUWAIT: KIB was awarded 'Best Branding in Kuwait' for the year 2018 by CPI Financial at the annual Islamic Business and Finance Awards ceremony. Held recently in Dubai, the awards ceremony gathered a group of experts and representatives from banks and Islamic finance institutions from across the globe.

Receiving the award on behalf of KIB was the Bank's Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen. KIB received this award based on a poll vote by readers and specialists across the banking sector, where the Bank received the highest number of votes recognizing its new logo, as well as its new customer-centric strategy that promises to deliver an exceptional customer banking experience.

KIB received this award based on several key criteria, as it recognized the excellence of the Bank's new branding and logo compared to its competitors as well as its public appeal, which reflected the Bank's innovative approach in the banking sector. Additionally, the Bank was also recognized for its remarkable ability to build customer loyalty by offering a unique banking experience through utilizing high-quality products and cutting-edge services that meet the needs of all customer segments. KIB was also awarded for the notable increase in its customer base after the successful launch of its new brand, underscoring the Bank's success in attracting new segments within the community.

On this occasion, Bukhamseen said: "We are extremely honored to have received this prestigious award from one of the longest standing Islamic business and finance awarding bodies in the world. This



award is a testament to our outstanding performance within a highly competitive arena, as well as the success of our new strategy and our new corporate identity."

Bukhamseen pointed out that KIB's new award-winning logo was designed to symbolize modern Kuwait; inspired by the warmth and light of the country and utilizing shades of blue and turquoise representing Kuwait's water. KIB's new logo is based on the letter 'K', where the curved fold of the mark represents a bank that cares for all the people of Kuwait, with the overall arrow shape pointing towards a positive future marked by KIB's commitment to offer exceptional,

innovative offerings to customers.

Established in Dubai in 1999, CPI Financial is the Middle East's leading financial and business publishing house with several magazines, including Banker Middle East and Islamic Business and Finance. CPI Financial is committed to delivering the most relevant financial news, features and analysis to bankers and businesses throughout the Middle East and beyond. Additionally, it commits itself to the utmost standards of transparency, ensuring accurate reporting of the current economic situation, the factors determining the future of the banking and finance community and relevant business deals.

Growth worries, Brexit fog send global stocks lower

NEW YORK: Wall Street led stock markets lower across the globe on Friday after data showed weakness in the Chinese and eurozone economies, despite further indications Beijing and Washington might be moving to end their trade war.

Signs of easing tensions had helped propel equities higher earlier this week,

with both China and the United States seeming to give key concessions, fueling hopes they can eventually resolve their differences. But data showing that the trade war is already having an impact on China-consumer spending grew at its slowest pace in 15 years and factories eased up in November-prompted equities investors there to take their gains off the table.

Rosier US retail and industrial data could not assuage fears that growth and the trade spat with Beijing will drag on sentiment. In New York, a sell-off extended recent losses and drove all three major indices into correction-a 10 percent fall from recent peaks in October.

"The fears around slower growth rate globally have been confirmed by the fact

that the Chinese data were weak," Nate Thoof of Manulife Asset Management said. But, he said, "I still think the market is reading way too much in it."

Weakness in Europe, China

In Europe, a survey showed that global trade war fears and disruptions caused by anti-government protests in France pushed business growth in the eurozone to a four-year low in December.

The slide in IHS Markit's composite eurozone PMI, to 51.3 points from 52.7 points in November, came just a day after the European Central Bank pulled its massive stimulus program that has stoked growth in the single currency area for the past three years.

The survey for France showed business

there had flipped into reverse, as the index plunged to 49.3 in December from 54.2 in November. Tokyo finished two percent lower following a survey of confidence among Japan's big businesses showed they remain cautious about the global outlook and Hong Kong and Shanghai both lost around 1.5 percent.

"Weak data from both China and Europe overnight provided a stark reminder that global growth remains challenging to find, and 2019 outlook remains faint," said Stephen Innes, head of Asia-Pacific trade at financial analysts OANDA.

On the wider impact of recent popular protests in France against President Emmanuel Macron, he noted that "even if you discount the impact of the yellow vest protests, the underlying story is one of

economic weakness in Europe. The euro, pound and yen all weakened against the dollar, a day after the European Central Bank said it was ending its program of asset purchases which had propped up eurozone growth for the past three years.

The decision came despite ECB boss Mario Draghi's assessment that there were increasing risks to the economy of the single currency bloc.

In Europe, traders continued in vain to tease out clarity on Britain's path out of the European Union as Prime Minister Theresa May denied reports that EU leaders had refused her plea for reassurances on her Brexit plan, saying simply that "there is work still to do". Oil prices fell, with traders also worried about the impact of slower growth, analysts said. —AFP

Health & Science

Kaspersky Lab shares financial insights, predictions for 2019

META witnesses 17% increase in banking malware attack

KUWAIT: The past year has been extremely eventful in terms of the digital threats faced by financial institutions: cybercrime groups have used new infiltration techniques, and the geography of attacks has become more extensive. According to the KSN statistics by Kaspersky Lab, the META region witnessed 17 percent increase in banking malware attack to reach almost half a million attacks in 2018.

Cryptocurrencies have also become an established part of many people's lives, and a more attractive target for cybercriminals across the world, which resulted in a rapid increase in malicious mining of cryptocurrencies. Kaspersky Lab recorded a 4 fold increase in cryptomining attacks in the META region from 3.5 million in 2017 to 13 million in 2018.

"The META region is becoming more appealing to cybercriminals, with financial and malicious cryptomining attacks taking center stage. We discovered six new ATM malware families in 2018. On the other hand, illegal mining of cryptocurrencies has increased dramatically to overtake the main threat of the last few years: ransomware. We believe the reason behind this is that mining is silent and cause less impact that ransomware, making it less noticeable," said Fabio Assolini, Senior Security Researcher at Kaspersky Lab.

Cybercriminals are not showing any signs of stopping and attacks will continue to evolve. Below are predictions by Kaspersky Lab experts on how these trends could affect our lives in the coming year.

Financial cyber threats

- 2019 could see the first attacks through the theft and use of biometric data

Biometric systems for user identification and authentication are being gradually implemented by various financial institutions. Several major leaks of biometric data have already occurred. These two facts lay the foundation for the first POC (proof-of-concept) attacks on financial services using leaked biometric data.



- The emergence of new, local groups attacking financial institutions in the Indo-Pakistan region, South-East Asia and Central Europe

The activity of cybercriminals in these regions is constantly growing: the immaturity of protective solutions in the financial sector and the rapid spread of various electronic means of payment among the population and companies in these regions are contributing to this. Now, all the prerequisites exist for the emergence of a new center for financial threats in Asia, in addition to the three that exist already in Latin America, the Korean peninsula and the former-USSR.

- Attacks on mobile banking for business users

Mobile applications for business are gaining popularity, which is likely to lead to the first attacks on their users. There are enough tools for this, and the possible losses that businesses incur would be much higher than the losses incurred when individuals are attacked.

The future of cryptocurrency

- Excessive expectations about the use of blockchain beyond the cryptocurrency sphere will disappear

In the end, this trend will be driven by people rather



than the technology's capability, as organizations and industries come to the conclusion that blockchain has a rather narrow scope of application, and most attempts to use in different ways are not justified. The reliable application of blockchain beyond cryptocurrency has been explored and experimented with for years, but there is little evidence of achievement. 2019 will be the year people stop trying.

- Cryptocurrencies as a means of payment will decline further

In 2017 a number of suppliers of goods and services announced that they would accept cryptocurrencies as a form of payment. However, in the face of huge commis-

sions (an acute problem in December 2017), slow transfers, a large price for integration, and, most importantly, a small number of customers, its use as a method of payment declined steadily. In the end, the use of cryptocurrencies by a legitimate business simply does not make much sense.

Until January 2018, there were immense highs and lows in the price of Bitcoin. These are not expected to return as the value of cryptocurrencies levels out to reflect their popularity. There is a finite audience for whom cryptocurrencies are of interest, and once that limit is reached, the price will not rise further.

Kaspersky Lab shares META 2018 Financial Insights and Predictions for 2019.

Made in Vietnam: Vingroup launches first smartphones

HANOI: Vietnam's largest private conglomerate Vingroup unveiled its first made-in-Vietnam mobile phones on Friday in the fast-growing country where it will face tough competition from tech giants like Samsung, Oppo and Apple. The company, run by Vietnam's richest man, has built its core business in the real estate and retail sectors but has branched out to include car manufacturing, gene decoding and now

mobile phones. The company's mobile phone subsidiary, Vinsmart, launched four phone models on Friday, priced between \$120 and \$280. "(We are) aiming to bring to our clients the opportunity to experience high-quality, made-in-Vietnam products," Nguyen Viet Quang, deputy chairman of Vingroup, said at the launch event in Ho Chi Minh City. The company said its factory in the port city of Hai Phong has the capacity to produce five million phones per year and could expand to smart TVs and smart homes.

Vingroup acquired a 51 percent stake in Spanish consumer electronics maker BQ earlier this year, which will help with product development. On Friday Vinsmart announced a patent licensing agreement with US chipmaker Qualcomm for mobile phone terminals. Vinsmart will face tough competition in fast-growing Vietnam where middle-

class consumers with burgeoning budgets are buying Samsung and Apple phones. Several smaller Vietnamese firms already make their own mobile phones, but none have taken off in the country where about a third of the country's 93 million people are smartphone users. Samsung held 37 percent of the market in the second quarter of this year, while Oppo had 22 percent and Apple had about five percent, according to Counterpoint analysis firm.

Vinsmart's phones are unlikely to be directly competing with expensive Apple models, and the company will struggle to unseat Samsung right away, said Kenny Liew, a telecommunications analyst at Fitch Solutions. "We don't think it will carve out a very significant market share, but will likely be able to produce enough scale to generate a profit on its investment," he said. One major leg up for Vinsmart will be easy access to retail space: the company

already has over 1,200 supermarkets and convenience stores all over the country. Vingroup is owned by Pham Nhat Vuong, a press-shy billionaire who started his career selling dried noodles in Ukraine. He is worth an estimated \$6.7 billion, according to Forbes. His Vingroup cradle-to-the-grave empire includes housing, resorts, farms, schools, hospitals, shopping malls and cars. Vietnam is one of Asia's fastest growing economies, with GDP growth hitting above five percent for the past five years.

That growth has largely been driven by exporting cheaply manufactured goods, from Nike shoes and H&M T-shirts and, increasingly, tech products like Samsung phones and Intel processors as it moves up the value chain. Around 60 percent of Samsung's phones are made in Vietnam, and last year Samsung products accounted for about 20 percent of Vietnam's exports. — AFP

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PAGE

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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
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- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
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What's On



Kuwait's idyllic resort Jumeirah receives five prestigious awards

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa's General Manager, Savino Leone, has received five esteemed awards from Haute Grandeur. The awards received were in recognition of Kuwait's idyllic resort's thoughtfully personalized services provided holistically as a hotel and in the amenities available. The awards were specifically in recognition of Jumeriah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa as the best luxury hotel in Kuwait, while its Talise Spa was recognized as the best spa in Kuwait.

Salt restaurant received the best seafood/international cuisine award, whereas Pepper restaurant received the award of best steakhouse in Middle East, Kuwait, and Olio restaurant received the award for best Italian cuisine in Kuwait. "The awards we constantly receive

are merely a reflection of the dedication our team invests in maintaining a 'stay different' feel for all our guests with our luxurious offerings and services," shared a delighted Georges Akar, Director of Sales and Marketing. Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa has been and continues to be a consistent award-winning hotel through its personalized services to all its guests with open arms.

Jumeirah Group opens an eco-conscious Resort in Abu Dhabi

Jumeirah Group today announces the opening of Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort, the group's first luxury "eco-conscious" Resort, nestled on the pristine shores of Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi. The luxury beachfront Resort overlooks 400 meters of beautiful white sand on the Arabian Gulf and offers a front-row seat to breathtakingly beautiful scenery and undisturbed wildlife. Depending on the season, guests may catch a glimpse of Indo-pacific humpback and bottle nose dolphins, green or hawksbill turtles and dugongs, which live in the Saadiyat Mangroves. More inland, gazelles, socotra cormorants, grey herons and greater flamingos are known to visit.

"This Resort is a place like no other. Located next to one of the most spectacular beaches in the Arabian Gulf, every aspect of the resort's design has been influenced by the beauty of this location," said Linda Griffin, Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort, General Manager. Eco-conscious practices at the Resort go beyond preserving the island's protected sand dunes - Jumeirah has partnered with Dubai-based water treatment company Trust Your Water to reduce single-use plastics.

Guests are offered locally-sourced filtered still and sparkling water in their own personal reusable bottles that can be refilled at the resort's water stations. The resort has also eliminated the use of plastic straws, favoring straws made from recycled material. "Our commitment to protecting the natural sand dunes and sea around this hotel means that we are also continuously trying to minimize the impact that guests have on this environment by bringing in our own environmentally-friendly solutions and working with partners who are dedicated to employing sustainable, ethical practices in their businesses," said Linda Griffin.

Just a 10 minute drive from Abu Dhabi city centre, guests can explore the island's 9kms of mesmerizing white beach and the crystal clear waters of the Arabian Gulf which provide a feeling of relaxation and harmony. Golf aficionados can enjoy the close proximity to Saadiyat Beach Golf Club, the Arabian Gulf's first beachfront course. Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort provides a luxurious and environmentally-sensitive holiday, perfect for honeymooners and families looking for an island escape.

The beautifully designed modern, sunlit rooms overlook the Arabian Gulf and the panoramic suites offer floor-to-ceiling windows and private balconies. The Resort also offers three outdoor infinity pools, a kids' pool and fitness fanatics will love the Bodyism Wellness Centre, the very first to open in the United Arab Emirates. For an even more luxurious experience, there's a choice of private 2, 3 and 4-bedroom duplex



villas with private pools.

The expansive Spa means there's no limit to relaxation. The lavish 2,700 square meter haven of tranquility and quiet sophistication features a grand Moroccan hammam, 15 treatment rooms with male and female facilities, saunas, hydrotherapy pools, steam rooms, salt rooms, experience showers and a traditional Arabic rasul room - a cleansing ritual which promises to leave spa lovers feeling relaxed with beautifully exfoliated skin. Guests staying in the Spa Villas can even enjoy pampering experiences in the privacy on their own room.

Jose Silva, Chief Executive Officer, Jumeirah Group, said: "We are proud to bring Jumeirah to Saadiyat Island and to open our second luxury hotel in Abu Dhabi. The opening is a significant landmark in achieving our strategic expansion goals worldwide and is our sixth Jumeirah hotel to open this year. We are confident that Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort will further enhance Abu Dhabi as a distinct and diverse tourist destination, and we look forward to welcoming guests from the local community as well as international travelers. We anticipate it will be a very popular and welcome addition to Saadiyat."

The Resort offers restaurants and lounges with a diverse, yet refined selection of dining

options. Guests can try traditional Arabic flavors at Levantine-inspired TEAN, take long poolside lunches with refreshing drinks at the pool bar and dine al fresco at Mare Mare which serves the finest Italian cuisine. White, the resort's chic all day dining restaurant offers local and international dishes alongside live cooking stations, for a remarkable dining experience. Guests looking for a more authentic experience can dine in Majlis Saadiyat which offers the warmth of Arab hospitality and a premium selection of refreshments, tea, coffee and delicious pastries.

Saadiyat Island is undergoing a remarkable transformation into a world-class leisure, culturally connected and residential destination. The Louvre Abu Dhabi, also located on the island, opened last year to international acclaim and has since received over a million visitors. It will be joined by the Zayed National Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi making the island a hub for global culture, arts and entertainment. The resort is also only 10 minutes away from Yas Island, famous for hosting the annual Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Yas Mall (the second largest mall in the UAE) and world-class theme parks including YasWaterworld, Ferrari World and the recently opened Warner Bros. World.

Al-Tamayouz Toastmaster Club celebrates advanced rank

Al-Tamayouz Toastmaster Club, a subsidiary of Toastmaster International in Kuwait, recently celebrated being ranked as an advanced club only four months after its establishment. The ceremony, which was attended by fifteen of the

club members including PR manager, Naseema Khan and area managers and over 26 guests, also included honoring members who had finished the first level of the Pathways system by awarding them the Pathways trophies and shields.



LAIF organizes annual convention

It was an awesome moment at the National Evangelical Church Kuwait (NECK) as the Life Abundant International Fountain Church (LAIF) held their annual convention themed 'Next Level'. The four-day power packed event featured bible teachings, counseling and praise worship as Christians from different nationalities and denominations praised God in different languages.



Delivering his sermon, the Guest Speaker Pastor Harry Dreher (from Canada) praised the Kuwait government for promoting religious tolerance and peace in the region. He urged Christians to be good ambassadors of Christ.



Greetings

Congratulations to Mr/Mrs Abraham on the arrival of your baby boy Ethan. May God guide and protect Ethan as he continues to be a blessing to the family. Greetings from LAIF Church, family friends and well-wishers.



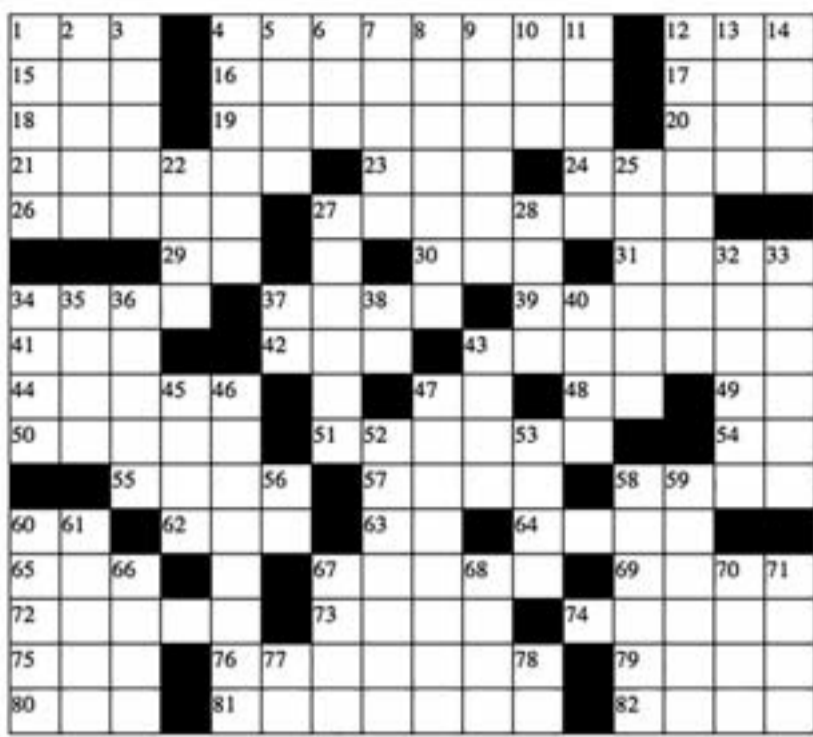
NOTICE

On the occasion of Christmas and New Year, the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa will be closed from December 24, 2018 to January 1, 2019 and will reopen on January 2, 2019 with its official office hours from 8 am to 4 pm and the Consular Section operation hours will be from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm. For emergency calls please contact: 94924895

"On behalf of the South African Embassy, we wish you a happy Festive Season and a Prosperous New Year."

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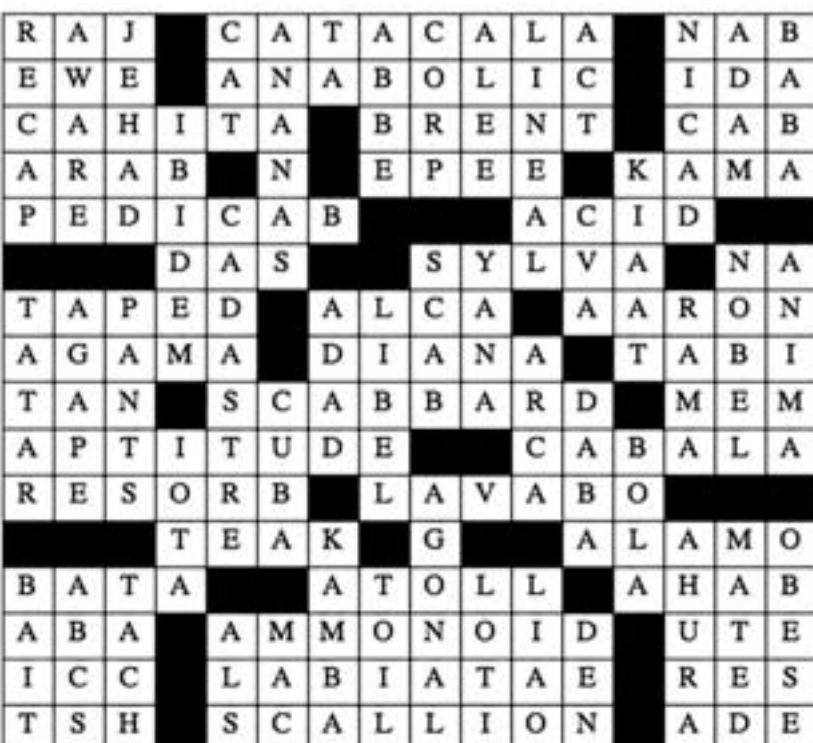
ACROSS

1. The unit of frequency.
4. Breed of sled dog developed in Alaska.
12. The month following September and preceding November.
15. The syllable naming the sixth (submedian) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
16. An orange-red crystalline compound used in making red pigments and in dyeing.
17. The 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet.
18. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
19. Temperamentally disinclined to talk.
20. The longest division of geological time.
21. Coins collectively.
23. A barrier constructed to contain the flow of water or to keep out the sea.
24. A blow from a flat object (as an open hand).
26. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
29. A hard brittle gray polyvalent metallic element that resembles iron but is not magnetic.
30. The cry made by sheep.
31. Actually being performed (or--for the audience--present) at the time of viewing.
34. Knock unconscious or senseless.
39. Small winged insect living on the bark and leaves of trees and feeding on e.g. fungi and decaying plant matter.
41. Being one more than two.
42. A chronic skin disease occurring primarily in women between the ages of 20 and 40.
44. Causing fear or dread or terror.
48. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
49. A period of time equal to 1/24th of a day.
50. A city in north-central India.
51. A city of northern Poland near the mouth of the Vistula River on a gulf of the Baltic Sea.
54. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
55. Fallow deer.
57. (prefix) Within.
60. A state in midwestern United States.
62. Call upon in supplication.
63. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
64. A television system that has more than the usual number of lines per frame so its pictures show more detail.
65. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
69. A fastener for a door or lid.
72. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
73. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
74. The Jewish rite of circumcision performed on a male child on the eighth day of his life.
75. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
76. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
79. A quantity of no importance.
80. A piece of furniture that provides a place to sleep.
81. A defeat of the Persian army by the Greeks in 479 BC.
82. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.

DOWN

1. People having the same social or economic status.
2. An informal term for a father.
3. The visual property of something that shines with reflected light.
4. Of or relating to or venerating the Virgin Mary.
5. On or toward the lee.
6. Provided with artificial light.
7. (chemistry) Relating to or containing the azido group N₃.
8. Tropical American feather palm having a swollen spiny trunk and edible nuts.
9. Accumulation in the blood of nitrogen-bearing waste products (urea) that are usually excreted in the urine.
10. A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
11. The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
12. A large group of islands in the south Pacific including Melanesia and Micronesia and Polynesia (and sometimes Australasia and the Malay Archipelago).
13. Colloquial British abbreviation.
14. Make or emit a high tinkling sound.
22. Fabric dyed with splotches of green and brown and black and tan.
25. A tyrannical power to be propitiated by human subservience or sacrifice.
27. Angle that resembles the hind leg of a dog.
28. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
32. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir.
33. United States swimmer who in 1926 became the first woman to swim the English Channel (1903-).
35. A river in northern England that flows southeast through West Yorkshire.
36. Production of a certain amount.
37. A public promotion of some product or service.
38. A very light colorless element that is one of the six inert gasses.
40. The clock time given by a clock carried on board a spacecraft.
43. An unofficial association of people or groups.
45. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
46. Trade name for a drug containing an antihistamine and a decongestant.
47. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
52. Determine the essential quality of.
53. A district in southwestern Manhattan noted for its shops and restaurants and galleries and artist's lofts.
56. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
58. (Greek mythology) Goddess of wisdom and useful arts and prudent warfare.
59. Evergreen Indian shrub with vivid yellow flowers whose bark is used in tanning.
61. Showing deterioration from age.
66. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
67. English monk and scholar (672-735).
68. (Scotland) A slope or hillside.
70. Large genus of tropical shrubs or herbs some of which yield fibers of mucilaginous substances.
71. A major god.
77. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
78. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You seem to work best today when exchanging ideas with others. You may find yourself in a group who is able to throw ideas back and forth until problems are conquered and much progress is made. This is an ideal situation for you today. You may find this to be an extremely productive day in the workplace. Later this even you may find you have a deep desire to connect with friends, neighbors, and love ones. Great connections can be made, and fences can be mended with little effort. You exude a sincerity to those you love and are met with open arms. Aries. This is a time of grace and happiness in your world.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may feel as if someone is cutting you off today. They may be making it difficult for you to express yourself. This may put you in a mood to shut down and keep to yourself. Know any obstacle you face today will be short-lived and temporary. Frustration may come over you. Time will eliminate these obstacles. You will be back to your old self shortly. Keep a positive attitude today.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Just because it is easy doesn't make it right. You may be very tempted today to take a shortcut. If you can not tell yourself this is the right thing to do, you should steer clear of making the wrong decision. Doing the right thing never goes unnoticed. In the long run, you will be rewarded for going the extra mile and doing the right thing. You may find this gives you a grasp for all that is spiritual. Your ideas are more of a spiritual sense and you will be able to really get your point across when you share your ideas and life lessons with others today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have an appreciation for your responsibilities. What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. This is a motto for you. This way of thinking has brought you a long way on your path towards success. You are focused and driven and most of all...honest. By not cutting corners nor taking the easy way out, you have developed a good reputation for having an excellent work ethic. You have a lot to proud of and you may find many opportunities beginning to come your way.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Make time for your loved ones. Don't wait for a holiday or special event. What is a little thing to you can make a big difference in the life of someone you care about. You are creative enough to turn a small act into a big memory. Take the time. Make the effort. You will find it rewarding.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You have the ability to find beauty in everything and everyone surrounding you. In a way you may find this as a weakness because this can cause you to over indulge. This may include material things or involve your investing too much of yourself into others. Resist that urge at this time. You may find a child or someone younger who is close to you as a disappointment and find yourself at odds with them. This is temporary, and you should resist the urge to make permanent decisions that affect your living situation or theirs at this time. You may feel as if your level of authority is being challenged today and find it difficult to react. Virgo, see this as a positive and know that now is just not the time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may have never put much thought into how you love. It has always just been an emotion or feeling that came natural to you. You may have an experience that leads you to see things in a different light. You may experience a sense of awakening that opens your eyes not only to the way you express love but to the way others close to you need to be loved. This may develop stronger bonds and relationships in your life and bring much harmony and passion into your world. To love and to be loved has always been a strong desire for you and you are entering a time and learning a lesson that will bring you to new levels in your close relationships. Libra, enjoy the peace and harmony this brings into your world.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Make sure to spend some time outdoors today. This is a day the beauty of creation will be filled with special meaning for you. It seems everything may take on a more special meaning in your life now. A positive attitude and an open mind seem to take you far in this world. You have both. When you choose to be happy, you will be happy. You have an attitude that no one nor anything can steal your joy. This is the answer. This is the way to face your day and conquer the world.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

You may feel as if you are on the outside looking in today. Difficulty getting your point across to others could find you frustrated. Group situations may be the thing to avoid for you today. This day would be best spent taking some time to yourself. Step outside and take a breath of fresh air. Find a way to have a little escape and clear your mind. You will be back to your old self in no time.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may feel torn between two worlds. You may find conflict when delegating your time between family life and home. You will have to get your priorities straight and try to find a balance between the two. You may find that you feel led to pass up a career opportunity because of the effect it will have on your personal life. Remember, family is forever. The tie that binds. Not everything in life revolves around money. This is a time you may come to realize, money can not buy happiness.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You can really get your thoughts and ideas across. Your communication skills are on point today. You may find yourself being especially kind to a friend and feeling a desire to share the love in your heart with all who surround you. You may find others admire the kindness you show to others and are drawn to you. You could enjoy being the recipient of many compliments today. Others seem to notice your belongings, your good taste, and the way you treat those around you. Your goodness and emotions seem to be accented today and you should expect much support from your friends and family.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are hungry for knowledge. Eager to see what all this world has to offer you. You are at your best when visiting with siblings or neighbors today. A great time to sit and express your views and feelings about some situations that have bothering you. Getting things off of your chest will help you regain focus. You are getting back on track.

Wordsearch Puzzle

New York City 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

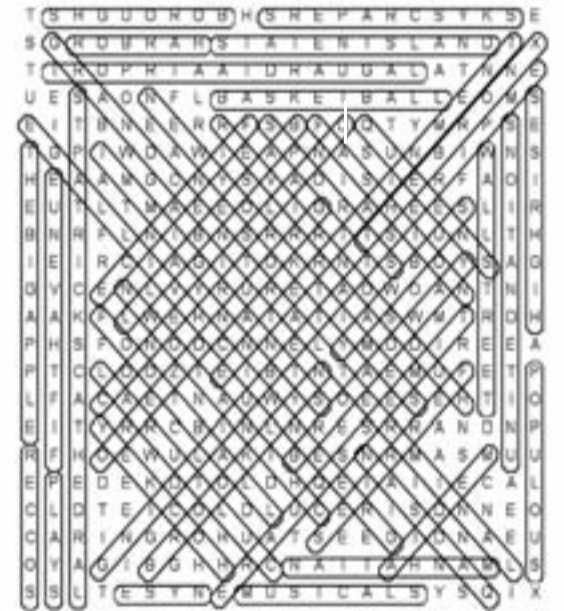


- | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| APOLLO THEATER | FDNY | NETS | SILICON ALLEY |
| BALLET | HIGH LINE | NEWSPAPERS | STATEN ISLAND FERRY |
| BROOKLYN ZOO | LINCOLN TUNNEL | NYFD | STATUE OF LIBERTY |
| BROOKLYN BRIDGE | MADISON AVENUE | OPERA | THE CYCLOPE |
| CARNEGIE HALL | MEMORIALS | PARADES | TOURISTS |
| CENTRAL PARK | METS | PIERS | TV NETWORKS |
| CHRISTLER BUILDING | MONUMENTS | PORT | UNIVERSITIES |
| COLLEGES | MUSEUM MILE | PROSPECT PARK | VENDORS |
| DIVERSE | MUSEUMS | RANGERS | WAVE HILL |
| ELLIS ISLAND | | ROCKEFELLER CENTER | YANKEES |
| ENTERTAINMENT | | | |

Friday's Solution

New York City 1

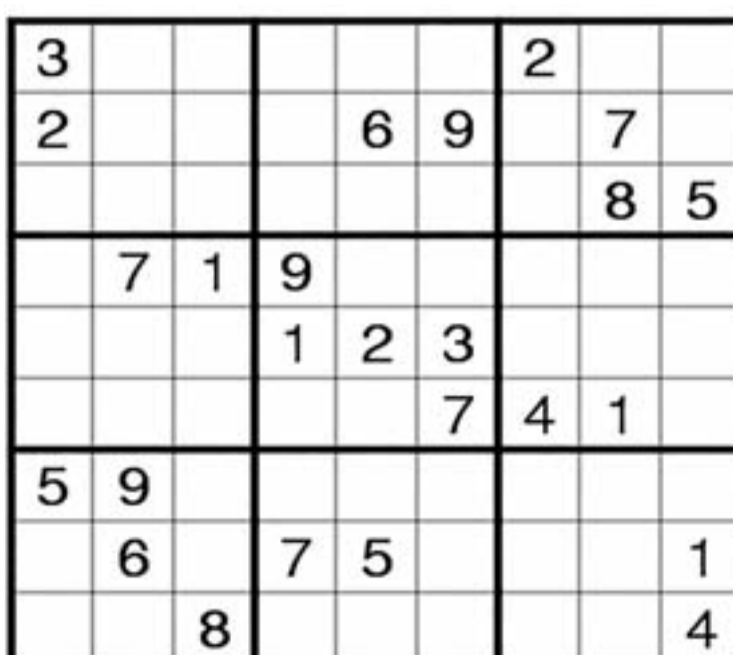
This is the solution to the puzzle located here.



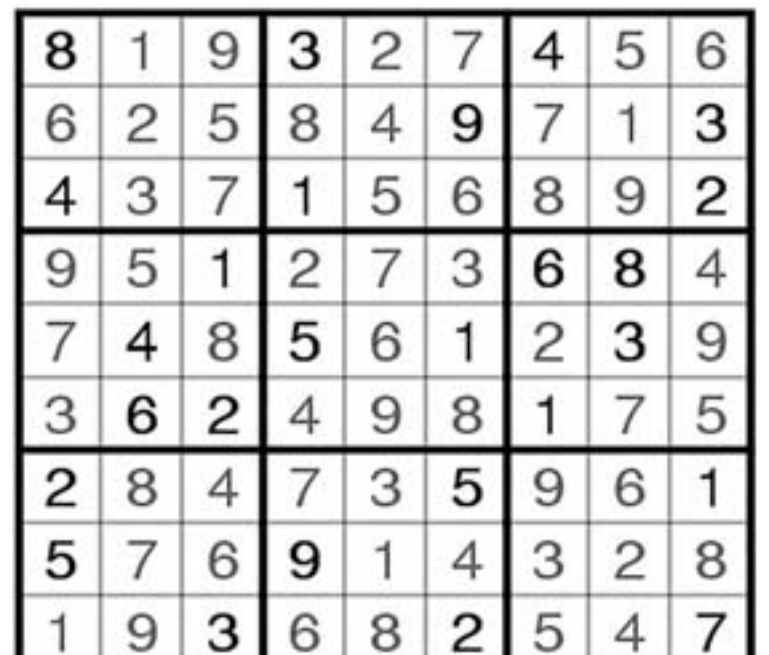
- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| BASKETBALL | FERRIS | PRISMAITS | SKYSCRAPERS |
| BOROUGH | FIFTH AVENUE | LAGUARDIA AIRPORT | SOCCER |
| BROADWAY | FINANCY | MANHATTAN | SPORTS |
| BROOKLYN | FOOTBALL | MEDIA | STATEN ISLAND |
| CHATEAUX | GRAND CENTRAL | MUSICALS | ST PATRICKS CATHEDRAL |
| CONY ISLAND | TERMINAL | NASCAR | SUBWAY |
| CULTURAL | GREENWICH VILLAGE | NEW YORK TIMES | THE BIG APPLE |
| EMPIRE STATE BUILDING | GROUND ZERO | WVSE | THE BRONX |
| ENTERTAINMENT | HARBOR | PLAYS | TIMES SQUARE |
| FASHION | HIGHRISES | POPULOUS | UNITED NATIONS |
| | HOCKEY | QUEENS | WALL STREET |
| | HUDSON RIVER | | |

The hidden message is: THE STATUE OF LIBERTY WAS A GIFT FROM FRANCE AND WAS DEDICATED IN EIGHTEEN-EIGHTY-SIX

Daily SuDoku

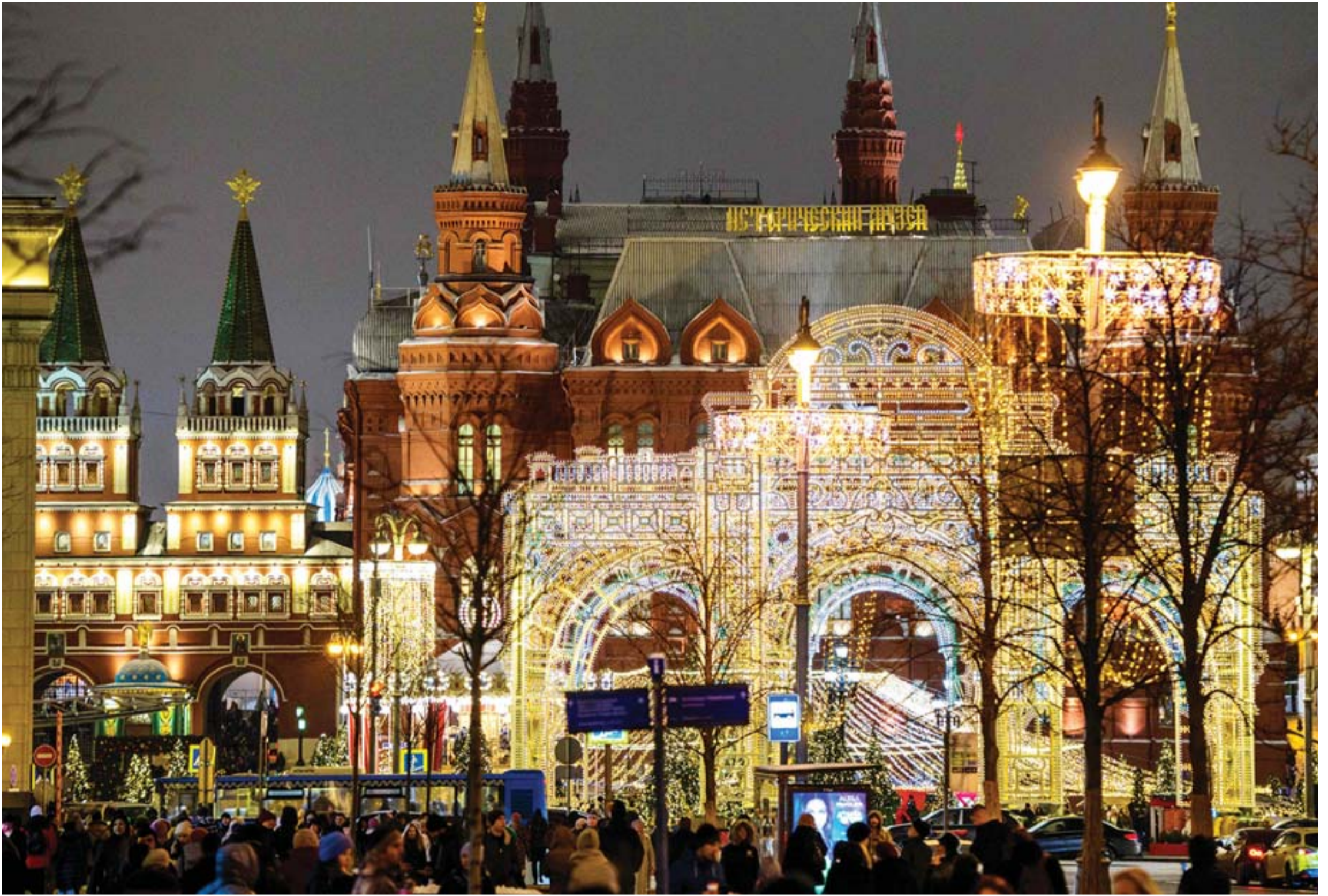


Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2018



This picture shows a general view of the Manege square outside the Kremlin in Moscow decorated with festive lights for the upcoming holidays. — AFP

Young Russian fashion designers take inspiration from history

In her workshop in a Moscow attic, Maria Andrianova is using a sewing technique she learnt from elderly women in the forested Karelia region of northwestern Russia. "For me, sewing is a way to learn about my origins," said the 31-year-old designer. She describes her "Masha Andrianova" fashion line as "for the modern world" but uses some sewing techniques dating back to the Tsarist era. Her flowing dresses, high-necked blouses and pleated skirts are made of natural materials in pale or autumnal colors.

"In Karelia, the locals showed me a way of sewing that I didn't know about. They had learned it from their mothers, it was like a family secret," she said, lightly braiding two threads together. More and more young Russian fashion designers like Andrianova are finding inspiration in traditional sewing methods that have fallen into disuse, seeing them as a way to stand out from the Western brands that poured into the country after the fall of the USSR. "We don't want to look any more at what the others are doing in the West," she said. "We want to find our own methods, because we also have many traditions and a very rich culture."

Learning about such traditions could be a way for young Russians to explore further back into their country's past than the relatively familiar Bolshevik revolution, she said. Andrianova has taken inspiration from sketches by an ancestor who owned a weaving factory as well as from the life story of her great-grandmother, who headed a dressmaking business. She also learnt techniques from her grandmother, who was born in the Soviet era. "But I'm

not restoring period clothing," she said. "I'm creating modern clothes that carry Russian history in them."

'Natural process'

At 35, Yukhann Nikadimus decided to devote himself entirely to making kokoshniki-traditional women's high headdresses that were particularly popular in the 19th century. Working in a factory that dates back to the 16th century but was renamed after Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin in the Soviet era, the tall bearded man carefully embroiders pearl patterns on to canvas stretched on a wooden frame.

While he gets his ideas from period photographs, he insists that his kokoshniki can work in any contemporary wardrobe. "You could wear a kokoshnik with a modern wedding dress, for example," he said. "National dress shouldn't be something that is fixed," he insists. "It changes all the time—new techniques appear, you have to incorporate them, it's a natural process."

'Time of introspection'

For cultural commentator Ilya Oskolkov-Tsentsiper, founder of Moscow's Strelka design institute, such a revival of interest in pre-revolutionary dress among young designers was "almost inevitable." "During Perestroika (in the 1980s) and the following decades, Russians were fascinated by the West and everything that came from there," he said. "Back then we underestimated the value of what we had (in Russia) and overestimated the beauty of everything outside."



"Now though we are living in a time of introspection, we are trying to figure out who we are, what shapes our identity and what makes us unique." "This isn't just about fashion—it goes a lot deeper. It is connected to design, music and film. It goes beyond politics." In the city of Ivanovo, Russia's centre for textile production, 28-year-old Maxim Krylov wants to help young designers learn about their heritage.

He has founded an annual festival called Textile Capital in the town, 300 kilometers (186 miles) north-east of Moscow, aimed at encouraging designers to use traditional fabrics. "This is our duty," he said. "We want to preserve this heritage to be an inspiration for Russian design, to show the globalised industry that we have our own world, a world that's Russian and local."

In July, some designers worked with fabrics printed with Soviet propaganda designs found in the archives of Ivanovo factories, Krylov said.

Wearing such clothes does not mean looking old-fashioned. Vasilina Kharlamova, a 29-year-old from Moscow, says she likes clothes that are "linked to (Russian) culture" and has just ordered a dress from Maria Andrianova that she plans "to wear with sneakers in everyday life." Such clothes are not to everyone's taste, she admits, however. "You have to learn to love these clothes and understand... the past." — AFP



Yukhann Nikadimus making a Russian traditional kokoshnik headdress at a workshop in Moscow. — AFP photos



Michael Buble had no choice to take break

Michael Buble had "no choice" in putting his career on hold when his son was diagnosed with cancer. The 43-year-old singer and his wife Luisana Lopilato - who have children Noah, five, Elias, two, and Vida, five months, together - were left devastated when they were told their eldest child had liver cancer in 2016 and instantly put all their other commitments on hold, though the 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town' hitmaker doesn't think they made a "conscious decision" to do that. Speaking to Tracy Smith for an upcoming interview on 'CBS Sunday Morning', he said: "There was no choice. No family has that choice. There is no choice. It was take care of business-and there was never any conscious decision ever. There was just, you know, come together as a family, put your head down, you know, pray lots and just survive." But though Michael wasn't performing in public, it didn't mean he turned his back on music altogether during his hiatus. He said: "I never stopped singing, ever. Ever." Elsewhere in the interview, the 'Feeling Good' hitmaker joked he met his 31-year-old wife at exactly the right time in his career. He quipped: "There's a part of me

that's really happy that, that I'm a famous person because my wife is so beautiful. "I know that if I wasn't and I would walk into rooms with her that they would just assume that I was really wealthy." The Canadian crooner recently admitted his son's cancer battle had put his worries into perspective and now he no longer cares how his records fare. He said: "I don't care if things sell one or 10 million, I don't care where I play, if it is at a club or a stadium. My kids are good, that's all I care about. Making music is this bonus, the bonus of the happiness of life. I couldn't even think about it. "I don't read anything, don't have social media anymore and my poor manager cannot tell me what the chart positions are because he knows I will cut the call. "I don't need to know that. I don't have control over that. "Every second I get to promise myself to be the nicest, kindest person I can be. Everything else has gone out of the window - I can't control them."

Van Morrison performs with The Pretty Things

The Pretty Things were joined on stage by Van Morrison and Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour on Thursday evening. After 55 years of rocking the world with their raw and rebellious music, the group are hanging up their electric guitars and were able to ensure their last-ever show at indigo at The O2 in London ended on a high thanks to having their old friends share the spotlight with them. The concert was divided into three parts - the first and last consisting mainly of their raucous R&B songs while the middle part was mainly devoted to their more psychedelic period including their album 'SF Sorrow', during which Gilmour weaved and spun out mesmerizing notes on his spellbinding guitar. The final part brought Van Morrison, who Pretty Things lead singer Phil May introduced as a good friend and one of the greatest singers of all time. It showed how much respect the Pretty Things have among fellow musicians that they could summon up such big names for their last encore. The Pretty Things began at the same time as the band who were their closest rivals in the early sixties, The Rolling Stones, but while The Stones have become the biggest band in the world, the Pretty Things have eked out a living playing small clubs and festivals in far flung corners of the world. Part of this is due to the mayhem and wildness that has always been at the center of their lives, which has resulted in their career going haywire at many points. It is therefore all the remarkable that despite all this, they have managed to carry on for 55 years - unlike The Stones who have royally reaped the riches and luxuries that the rock world can offer. The Pretty Things put their all into this show - despite 72-year-old May suffering from emphysema and their brilliant lead guitarist Dick Taylor looking rather fragile at 75 years of age. Stand out songs included early hits 'Rosalyne' and 'Don't Bring Me Down', a selection of songs from their concept album 'SF Sorrow' including Trust and a homage to R&B icon Bo Diddley, which featured 'Mona', 'Pretty Thing', 'You Can't Judge A Book' and 'Roadrunner'.



Slash: Rock got boring

Slash thinks rock music has been "dull and boring" for the last decade. The Guns n' Roses guitarist believes commercial forces had a negative impact on the genre as bands were pressured into making their songs radio friendly rather than doing something new and exciting, prompting fans to find what they're looking for in other genres such as rap and hip-hop. He told Billboard Radio China: "When Velvet Revolver came out, there was definitely a movement that started in the early to mid-'90s that held up all the way through the end of that decade and went into the millennium. And so we came out and there was tons of new rock and roll bands. And they weren't 'nu metal' and they weren't indie bands, but there was definitely this kind of indie-esque feel to them. "And I think one of the reasons that Velvet Revolver was as successful as it was had a lot to do with [singer] Scott Weiland, because he was still a holdover from that kind of thing, with Stone Temple Pilots, that came from the '90s and blah blah blah. Anyway, but it was all cool. "And then, as we got down the line, it seemed that rock sort of got... More than anything, the commercial approach to rock and roll that the industry forces on bands, or forces people to think that this is how they have to go about it to succeed, and it just turns into this generic mishmash that manages to get on the radio but doesn't really turn anybody on, and it's just dull and boring and people start looking elsewhere." However, the 53-year-old rocker thinks things are starting to change and he's excited to see how some new "hungry, young" bands fare in the coming years. He added: "And I think that was, really, what happened to the industry, as far as rock and roll is concerned, after 2006 up until just recently. But it seems to be turning over a new leaf right now. So I'm really interested to see where it goes over the next few years, 'cause there's a lot of really hungry, young, rock and roll bands getting together right now that I'm aware of. "And, obviously, Greta Van Fleet have done amazingly well and made everybody perk up and go, 'Oh, wow!' Now there's people out there looking for young, teenage rock and roll bands to sign. So it's interesting. "If you watch everything as it develops in real time, it's really, really boring and s**t takes what seems like forever. But if you're not paying attention, all of sudden, you'll turn around and go, 'Oh my God! Something just changed.' And it's just a constant state of ebbs and flows of rock and roll in this business."



Gallagher dusts off Cast No Shadow for Shelter gig

Liam Gallagher performed 'Cast No Shadow' for the first time in 16 years at his Union Chapel gig for Shelter on Thursday night. The former Oasis frontman hadn't sung the song live since the band's Florida gig in 2002, a rare performance of the track from the Manchester group's 1996 LP '(What's the Story) Morning Glory?', and prior to that the acoustic number hadn't been performed by Liam since 1998. The 'Bald' singer's brother and rival ex-bandmate Noel Gallagher has added the song to his solo setlist and his shows with his High Flying Birds on occasions, most recently in 2015. The intimate gig in Islington, London, also saw the 'Wall of Glass' hitmaker treat the crowd to a rendition of 'I'm Outta Time', for his eighth only time as a solo artist, from the Britpop group's final record, 2008's 'Dig Out Your Soul'. Liam delved back to his Beady Eye days, performing 2013's 'Soul Love' by the side project he started following Oasis split in 2009. The rest of the 16-song set was comprised of solo songs from his debut solo LP, 'As You Were', including the live debut of the album track 'I Never Wanna Be Like You', and Oasis classics 'Champagne Supernova', 'Live Forever', 'Wonderwall' and 'Some Might Say'. The star-studded gig in aid of the homeless charity saw Liam's formerly estranged daughter Molly Moorish, 21 - whom he has with ex-girlfriend Lisa Moorish - in attendance, and she hailed her dad's performance as "biblical" - a regular word in Liam's vocabulary. Sharing a picture of the 46-year-old rocker on stage, she simply wrote: "Biblical."



Blossoms close tour with scintillating sold-out show

Blossoms concluded their tour with a scintillating sold-out show at London's O2 Brixton Academy on Thursday night. The indie five-piece - made up of Tom Ogden, Charlie Salt, Josh Dewhurst, Joe Donovan and Myles Kellock - wowed the crowd with a selection of hits from their first two albums, and geared up for Christmas in style by leading the near 5,000-strong audience in a rendition of Wham!'s 'Last Christmas'. The band achieved a lifelong dream by playing at the Academy - which has previously staged gigs from the likes of Prince and Madonna - and lead singer Tom thanked fans for their huge support on the night. He said: "We've wanted to headline this venue for a long time, so thanks for being a part of it." Blossoms had the crowd bouncing with their opener, 'I Can't Stand It', and were in full flow as they made their way through favorites 'Unfaithful', 'Honey Sweet', 'Cool Like You', and 'Blow' before stepping things up a notch with 'How Long Will This Last?'. The Stockport stars wound back the year to 2016 as they played a selection of tunes from their self-titled debut album, including 'Getaway' and 'My Favorite Room', and later launched into a mini medley of crowd-pleasing covers. Tom began the mixture by singing the chorus to Babybird's 'You're Gorgeous', which really got the audience fired up, before moving into 'Last Christmas' and then a double treat of Oasis in the shape of 'Half the World Away' and 'Don't Look Back in Anger'. Blossoms revved things up again on the return from their encore with 'At Most a Kiss' before one of the surprises of the night when they launched into a pulsating performance of The Smiths' 1986 hit 'Bigmouth Strikes Again'. Saving the best until last, they stunned supporters with 'There's a Reason Why (I Never Returned Your Calls)' - from their second studio album 'Cool Like You' - and concluded their capital carnage with mega tune 'Charlemagne'. The group will return to London on June 30th for a gig at Finsbury Park, and will also perform at the Reading and Leeds Festival over the summer, as well as Edgely Park in Stockport.



Jonas Blue wants to make unique music

Jonas Blue wants to make "unique" music. The 'Polaroid' hitmaker says his main focus is creating music which is a little different from everything out there and admits it was a "magic moment" when his track 'Perfect Strangers' was well received. He said: "I always strive to make my music unique. I think when 'Perfect Strangers' landed and was so well received, it was a magic moment." And Jonas is "happy" with how his whole album went down with his fans. He added to DNA India: "People seem to like different tracks. It's different with an album as you're not focused on one single specific track but I'm happy with how it all went down." Meanwhile, Jonas previously heaped praise on 2015 'X Factor' champion Louisa Johnson, and revealed they have been working hard plotting her next big move. He recently said: "I have worked with Louisa, she's the most incredibly talented singer. I honestly got chills when she came in the studio and she messaged me last week about getting some more studio time together, so we'll do that. Her voice is incredible but it is a hard business, it really is, you have to make sure you find your sound and you're able to stick to it, and people believe it. Honestly, I don't really know how to explain it but it is really hard, but she deserves so much success."

Marina and the Diamonds to release new music in January



Marina and the Diamonds will be releasing new music in January. The 'How to Be a Heartbreaker' singer has confirmed she will drop new music in the new year, which will be followed by an album in April time. She said: "I want to tell people details all the time but I can't because I have been planning it for ages. It's not really conceptual in ways like Electra Heart was but there is a looser ... there is a concept in terms of how it's going to be released that you will find out in April but I am going to release a new song in January." And Marina says the first songs are "really different" to what she's released before. She shared to Pop Buzz: "It's really different to the singles we're going to select for the album. The production of this album is very different [to the other albums]." Meanwhile, Marina previously admitted she found it a struggle to work on new music, following the release of 2015's 'FROOT'. Asked how the album was coming along, she said: "Really, really well. I've kind of been writing more than I ever have before which was unexpected because I thought I wasn't going to do this anymore for a while. I'm really excited to put something out soon because it's been three years."





Sarah Paulson cried over Glass casting

Sarah Paulson "burst into tears" when she was cast in 'Glass'. The 'American Horror Story' actress was a huge fan of M. Night Shyamalan's 'Unbreakable' and agreed to play psychiatrist Dr. Ellie Staple in the saga's upcoming third instalment without having read the script and with "no idea" what she was signing up for. She said: "That's how willing I was to do it. 'When he finally called me and said, 'I want you to do the movie', I burst into tears. 'For all I knew, I was bursting into tears about a movie I was going to have one scene in.' Bruce Willis - who starred in 'Glass' and made a surprise cameo in 'Split', which revealed the movie was a sequel - also signed up for the third film without reading a script. He told Total Film magazine: "When Night told me that he had an idea for a script for me, which was

'Unbreakable', I immediately said, 'OK, I'm in.' "I didn't even know what the subject matter was going to be. "Similarly, when he approached me about 'Glass', I agreed immediately. I didn't have to read the script." Sarah was excited to share screen time with both Bruce and Samuel L. Jackson and hoped they'd have an impact on her. She said: "I remember thinking, 'I know what I'm looking at is iconic, do I get to be iconic by osmosis?' " James McAvoy was equally in awe of his co-stars. He said: "Sam is an absolute bloody genius of an actor and Bruce is just this icon of my childhood. "I never thought when I was watching 'Die Hard' and 'Moonlighting' that I would ever be sharing the scene with him."

Dick Van Dyke had Mary Poppins Returns doubts



Dick Van Dyke had "some misgivings" about 'Mary Poppins Returns'. The 93-year-old actor has reprised his role as Bert, 54 years after the original movie was released, and he admitted he wasn't initially sure a sequel was a good idea because they usually "don't work" and can't compare to the original. However, he's delighted with the new film - which sees Emily Blunt take over from Dame Julie Andrews as the magical nanny - and thinks it's a fitting tribute to the original Walt Disney movie. He said: "I had some misgivings, because almost traditionally sequels don't work. They're never quite as good as the original. "[But] this is an homage to Walt and the original movie. I was so impressed that their heart was in the right place. They wanted to pay respect to the original. And I was so tickled when they asked me, because it was kind of like bookends for me." The veteran actor was "surprised" at how well he got to grips with his song-and-dance num-

ber in the new movie and he had a great time shooting the scene. He told People magazine: "The minute I heard I was going to do a little number, that sold me. "And I thought I could contribute by just being a little bit of a reminder of the original. And I think it turned out well. "I got to jump up on a desk and do a dance number. It surprised everybody, but nobody was as surprised as I was. We did several takes of it, and I was just amazed. And I enjoyed it, of course." Despite his lengthy career, Dick thinks 'Mary Poppins' is what he'll always be remembered for. He said: "I would imagine it would be the thing I would be remembered for. "I get a lot of mail today from kids who have just discovered 'Mary Poppins'. So it's on its third generation and holding up very well. I'm sure that if I'm remembered for anything it'll be 'Mary Poppins'."



Winslet and Ronan to play lovers

Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan will play lovers in a new movie. The 'Titanic' star and the 'Mary Queen of Scots' actress have signed up to star in 'God's Own Country' writer-and-director Francis Lee's upcoming romantic drama 'Ammonite', Deadline reports. The movie is set in an 1840s coastal town and follows the unlikely romance between palaeontologist Mary Anning and a wealthy London woman, to whom she unexpectedly becomes a nursemaid. Production on the movie, which will be produced by Iain Canning, Emile Sherman, and Fodhla Cronin O'Reilly, is scheduled to begin in March. Kate is currently filming 'Blackbird' and recently finished working on 'Avatar 2', while Saoirse can be seen on screen opposite Margot Robbie in 'Mary Queen of Scots'. Saoirse's casting may have come as a surprise because she recently revealed she planned to take a long break after her challenging lead role in 'Mary Queen of Scots'. She said: "I'm going to take most of the year off and travel, do a bit of writing and work with my friends on something small. We're all around the same age, which is unusual for me because I'd always been the young person working on my own." The most challenging part of her role in the drama - based on Mary's real-life attempt to overthrow her cousin Queen Elizabeth I, resulting in years of imprisonment before facing execution - was wearing four skirts, as she couldn't sit down properly. Asked about the costumes, she said: "Oh, corsets every day. "We had, like, four skirts to wear at a time so you couldn't sit in a chair because you might crease the dress. We had to sit on these little swivel stools. You'd lift up your skirt and just drop it down over the stool so wouldn't even see it."

Rosamund Pike wants a break

Rosamund Pike is ready to "sit back" and take a break. The 39-year-old actress can next be seen as late war correspondent Marie Colvin in 'A Perfect War' and then famed scientist Marie Curie in 'Radioactive' and she now wants some time to just be herself. Asked what's next for her, she said: "I just want to sit back for a bit. Pretending to be someone else is quite fragmentary, so it's important to just be you for a while." But the 'Gone Girl' star is also keen to work with directors she's impressed by - but admitted they may think she's "awful". She added: "And I want to work with the directors who have blown me away this year. 'Roma' by Alfonso Cuaron is the most beautiful piece of work. I'd love to work with him. Why not say it? He might think I'm awful but if you never say it, you never find out. You have to speak your truth." The actress admitted she often felt "at a loss" while preparing for 'A Perfect War' because there was so much about her character she had to learn and develop. She said: "At the end of the film, Marie says, 'Fear comes later when it's all over.' And now I've done it, sometimes I think, 'How did I have the audacity?' "There were definitely times I felt at a loss in the preparation: that it was too big, that there was too much to change. The voice, the smoking, the head gestures, her laugh, her walk, her brain... everything, really." As part of her preparations, Rosamund spoke with some of Marie's friends, including journalist Rosie Boycott and politician Jane Bonham-Carter and though she had a "horrible fear" about what they'd think of her portrayal, she was able to put her worries aside because she's proud of the project. She told Britain's Marie Claire magazine: "Rosie lent me a sweater that was Marie's [to wear in the film], which was very moving. There's a horrible fear that you've dared to tread in their dear friend's shoes, and that can make you feel quite apologetic at times, although in this case, I'm not apologetic because we've made the film with the fiercest integrity. "Gradually, people trusted that Matt [Heinemann, the director] and I were committed to depicting their friend truthfully and not for any Hollywood-isation."

Lin-Manuel Miranda won't release Hamilton movie yet



Lin-Manuel Miranda has no plans to release his 'Hamilton' movie in the near future. The 38-year-old star revealed the original cast of the Broadway show spent three days making a film of the production in 2016, which was edited by the musical's cast Thomas Kail, but it's currently "locked away in a vault" and won't be made public until as many people as possible have seen the saga in the theatre. Lin-Manuel told the Daily Mail newspaper: "Our goal is to let as many people see Hamilton as a stage show in theatres, in as many cities around the world, as we can find. And when we feel the time is right, the idea is to get the film out of the vault and put it in cinemas." And while a movie version of another of his productions, 'In the Heights' will be made next year, Lin-Manuel has "no plans" for a big screen adaptation of 'Hamilton' "any time soon". Meanwhile, the actor can next be seen starring as Jack in 'Mary Poppins Returns' and his character opens the production with a musical number called 'Underneath the Lovely London Sky'. He said: "It didn't start with a big bang and a line of chorus girls. It lets the audience breathe and relax." The film - which also features Emily Blunt as the magical nanny - is set in the 1930s during the "Great Slump" and Lin-Manuel understands why movie musicals such as 'La La Land', 'A Star is Born' and 'Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again' have been such a hit in recent times. He said: "[It's no accident] given the state of the world. They perform a cathartic function for us." 'Mary Poppins Returns' is released later this month.



Portman fulfilled childhood dream by singing in Vox Lux

Natalie Portman's role in 'Vox Lux' is a "dream come true". The 37-year-old actress portrays Celeste - the survivor of a school shooting who becomes a pop superstar thanks to a song she wrote about the tragedy - in the upcoming film and admitted she's always wanted to sing on screen. She told Deadline: "She's an incredible character and sometimes says nonsense, and sometimes says really insightful things all mixed together. "It was a childhood dream come true to get to sing, like singing with a brush in front of the mirror, but I wouldn't categorize this movie as a musical." Meanwhile, Natalie - who has been a vocal supporter of the Time's Up and #MeToo movements - thinks equality is still a "challenge" in Hollywood and believes the movie industry still only tells a narrow spectrum of stories, though things are beginning to change. When asked whether she felt that roles for women had improved since she first entered the business 24 years ago, she said: "I think it's still really challenging, there's a lot of tropes that are repeated and revisited. "Also for women of color, it's extremely difficult to be represented. "However, this year, we saw the first Asian-American female story to be told by a studio in 25 years. ('Crazy Rich Asians') "But white women are the most represented of all the women and it's a challenging thing to show a full humanity. "So, I think there's a lot to be done when it comes to giving more opportunities to other people, and allowing people from all types of experiences to tell their stories."

Boyens was 'worried' fans wouldn't get Mortal Engines

Mortal Engines' screenwriter Philippa Boyens "worried" if fans would "understand" the flick. The Academy Award-winning producer has confessed that the blockbuster "was not an easy day at the office" because the project took a lot of time to get just right. Speaking to Collider about the adaptation process, Philippa said: "Any work of such vast imagination is not an easy day at the office, it's a puzzle and you've got to make the pieces work and you can't overwhelm the story just because of the great visuals and vice versa, and the main thing I worried about was if people would understand this world. It's little things like that of how you're going to get people into the world." Philippa worked on the movie adaptation of the sci-fi fantasy book that sees the protagonist of the story, Tom Natsworthy - played by Robert Sheehan - join forces with a young woman (Hera Hilmer) from an area known as the Outlands, to discover a mystery that could change the world they live in. And Philippa is no stranger to the adaptation of fantasy novels as the screenwriter worked on 'The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey', 'The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug', and 'The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies' in 2012, 2013, and 2014 respectively. She added: "These books first came to us about ten or twelve years ago actually, and they ended up being shelved because of the rights to The Hobbit becoming free, so we ended up doing that. When it came time to do this and finally think 'Do we want to do it? Are we gonna do it? If we don't do it we've got to do it now.' What was interest-

ing was, it felt like it was the right time to do it, and it was like fate had played a hand somehow. We never set out to write films that are issue spaced or sending some kind of message, so to speak because we wrote the scripts three years ago. What you find in the process of making films is they become more and more relevant naturally because they're being made in that moment and there become moments where you want to reflect what's going on in the world. The whole notion that mankind can destroy itself, I mean that is a theme that's run through in the history of mankind forever." — Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Blunt puts spoonful of British class into Mary Poppins

Emily Blunt was more than a little nervous about stepping into Julie Andrews' laced-up boots when all the world knows her Mary Poppins was supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. But just like the miracle-working nanny, the British actress who takes up Poppins' talking umbrella in the new Disney sequel to the children's classic, comes equipped with an unwavering stiff upper lip. "I was a bit trepidatious," Blunt told AFP, using a word that might have escaped from a Poppins' song. So much so that she tried to put Andrews' Oscar-winning 1965 performance out of her mind entirely by refusing to watch the original film.

"I had seen it as a child, so I do have a pretty lasting memory of the impact it had on me—how spellbinding and beautiful it was," said the actress who went to the same upper-crust English boarding school as Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan. "But I decided not to rewatch it so as not to get intimidated and too influenced by what Julie did. I just thought, 'If I'm going to play Mary Poppins, I've got to play my version of her. Otherwise, there's no point doing it,'" she said.

'Eccentric and very funny'

So Blunt went back to P. L. Travers original books where Poppins is "very different, more eccentric, more rude actually and very funny and weird." After reading the books I found her so delicious to play because she is

so mysterious as well," said Blunt, who is best known for "The Devil Wears Prada" and "Salmon Fishing in the Yemen". "Mary Poppins doesn't reveal her inner workings to anybody. She doesn't want to," said the actress, who ramps up the nanny's buttoned-down Britishness in the new film, "Mary Poppins Returns", which is set in the 1930s, two decades after the original.

For Blunt, Poppins is not only "superhuman" and super-capable but also full of contradictions—kind yet aloof, strict and yet free-spirited, she is "an adrenaline junkie going into all these adventures. She loves it". But you also see "these private moments of compassion and empathy and where you see just a little crack in the armour of her stern" rather prim exterior, Blunt said. Blunt believes Poppins is a mystery wrapped in an enigma who lets people believe that she is some kind of distressed gentlewoman to "keep everyone guessing".

Childhood stutter

The actress, who had a stutter as a child, made her breakthrough in the acclaimed British indie movie "My Summer of Love" by the Oscar-winning Polish-born director Pawel Pawlikowski. Her own personal Mary Poppins was a school teacher who helped her overcome the impediment. The magic worked so well that she made her stage debut in London's West End opposite Dame Judi Dench at 18. Since then she has scaled the heights of

Hollywood, co-starring in blockbusters like "Edge of Tomorrow" with Tom Cruise and comedies such as "The Five-Year Engagement".

But even action thrillers like "Sicario" never prepared her for the stunts she had to do as Mary Poppins. Director Rob Marshall said he wanted Mary Poppins to really drop out of the sky and fly away again at the end of the film with her umbrella. "I didn't want it to be some green screen movie," he told AFP. "Emily Blunt really flies out of the sky, that's her! "We did that on location, she was up there, 50 feet (15 meters) in the air. She was terrified. But I wanted to do it as real as possible. Because I think you can feel it when it is phoney. I wanted to create a real world where magic is brought into it," he added.

Blunt admitted that she was "not amazing with heights and it was one of those things where they winch you up there and you just think it is going to go on forever," she said. Marshall said Blunt was his "first and only choice" to play Poppins in his film, which is released in Europe and North America next week. "I honestly feel she's the only person on the planet that can play the part. She's so warm, accessible, but also she's smart and she can sing and dance, and she's British. There was no one else for me." —AFP



British-US actor Emily Blunt poses upon arrival to attend the European premiere of the film "Mary Poppins Returns" at The Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP



In this file photo Ryan Gosling speaks onstage during the 22nd Annual Hollywood Film Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos



An AFP journalist reads the 'Congo Stories' book by John Prendergast and Fidel Bafilemba with pictures by Ryan Gosling in Washington DC.

Gosling goes behind the camera for DR Congo book

Actor Ryan Gosling is best known for films as diverse as "La La Land" and "First Man" but he recently moved behind the lens for a passion project—taking photos in the crisis-hit Democratic Republic of Congo. The 38-year-old Gosling, who is Canadian, is no stranger to advocacy in Africa—for a decade, he's been working with the Enough Project, which aims to end mass atrocities in the continent's conflict hotspots. On the DRC, he teamed up with the Enough Project's founding director John Prendergast and Congolese activist Fidel Bafilemba to draw attention to the brutal colonization of the central African country.

In "Congo Stories: Battling Five Centuries of Exploitation and Greed," the pair unpack the tortuous history of the mineral-rich DRC and how its residents are looking to the future—with photos by Gosling. "It was just this theme of an unwavering resilience and an unwillingness to be broken, and these expressions of hope," the actor said at a book event on Thursday at George Washington University in the US capital. "It is hope that is generated from people like Fidel and Chouchou," the two-time Oscar nominee added, referring to journalist and rights activist Chouchou Namegabe, who also contributed to the project. Following a trip to northern Uganda in 2008, Gosling and Prendergast decided to head to the eastern DRC in 2010, to travel alongside Bafilemba. "At the time, Ryan was just taking photos like he was some guy who'd never been to a place before and wanted to document what he was seeing," Prendergast told AFP in an interview. After mulling over a second trip years later, the pair decided instead to take Gosling's photos, Prendergast's research and

Bafilemba's interviews with Congolese "upstanders"—in other words, primarily young citizens working toward change—to create the book.

Consistent exploitation

"Congo Stories" guides readers from pre-colonial days through Belgian rule to independence in 1960, and the current situation under President Joseph Kabila—whose successor will be chosen December 23 in what is already proving a turbulent election. It details everything from the sale of slaves to work on US plantations to the vast exploitation of the gutting of the country's remarkable array of resources. From rubber and ivory at the turn of the 20th century, to uranium to develop the atomic bomb, and now the "three Ts"—tin, tantalum and tungsten—vital to mobile phones and laptops or cobalt, which is key to electric car batteries.

Conflict persists notably in North Kivu province on DRC's eastern border, which has been subject to waves of bloodshed involving militias, rebel groups and government forces for more than 20 years. The country, also ravaged by sexual violence, has not known a peaceful transition of power since gaining independence. For Prendergast, the book not only "calls for solidarity" with the DRC, but asks readers "to challenge... those economic arrangements that have led to this extraordinary situation of human suffering." Bafilemba said he would like to see Americans place more pressure on their lawmakers to act.

"They need to pressure the administration, their Congress, their Senate to hold Congolese corrupt leaders to account by keeping them... on sanctions lists, freezing their assets, banning their travels into this country," he said. Bafilemba also called upon US students to pressure their universities—big buyers of mineral-packed electronics—to source conflict-free products. "I'm not asking you (for) your dollars. Just be demanding that your companies stop (what) they have been doing back in Africa, and particularly in Congo," he added. — AFP

CBS paid 'Bull' actress Eliza Dushku \$9.5 mn to settle harassment claims



In this file photo Eliza Dushku attends the 'Mapplethorpe' premiere during the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival at SVA Theatre in New York City. — AFP

US television network CBS paid \$9.5 million to Eliza Dushku, an actress on primetime drama "Bull," and wrote her off the show after she claimed the lead actor had harassed her. Michael Weatherly made several lewd comments or jokes in front of the production team referring to Dushku's physique, with sexual connotations, according to The New York Times, which first reported the development. The actor acknowledged having made most of the comments, but insisted that they were not sexual advances.

Dushku shared her discomfort at the remarks with the production team before speaking with Weatherly, and the situation did not improve. Several days later, the actress learned that she had been written off the show even though the production team had previously told her it was planning to give her character a recurring role in the series. After weighing taking legal action against CBS, the 37-year-old actress turned to mediation, which led to an agreement. The settlement amount corresponds to the payment she would have received had she fulfilled the entire term of her contract.

The network is reeling from having had to fire its CEO Les Moonves in September over sexual harassment and assault claims. Last year, star host Charlie Rose was fired after eight women accused him of sexual harassment. "The allegations in Ms Dushku's claims are an example that, while we remain committed to a culture defined by a safe, inclusive and respectful workplace, our work is far from done," CBS said. But no action was taken against the man who since 2016 plays the role of Jason Bull, a psychologist who counsels lawyers during trial.

"During the course of taping our show, I made some jokes mocking some lines in the script," Weatherly, who was a star of the network's leading drama NCIS for 13 seasons, told the Times. "When Eliza told me that she wasn't comfortable with my language and attempt at humor, I was mortified to have offended her and immediately apologized. "After reflecting on this further, I better understand that what I said was both not funny and not appropriate, and I am sorry and regret the pain this caused Eliza." — AFP

'Blurred Lines' legal saga ends in \$5mn ruling favoring Marvin Gaye family

A long-running copyright dispute over the smash hit "Blurred Lines" has ended with the family of Motown legend Marvin Gaye winning a nearly \$5 million judgment against Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams. Thicke and Williams had been accused by Gaye's estate of copyright infringement for their 2013 hit because of similarities with the late singer's "Got to Give It Up." In 2015, the estate was awarded more than \$7 million but the amount was later reduced to \$5.3 million.

Thicke and Pharrell appealed that judgment and a California judge earlier this year overall upheld the jury's decision. In a December 6 final ruling in the case made public on Thursday, US District Judge John Kronstadt

ordered Thicke, Williams and Williams' publishing company to pay Gaye's estate \$2.9 million in damages, US media reported. Thicke was ordered to pay an additional \$1.76 million. Williams and his publishing company must also separately pay Gaye's estate nearly \$360,000.

Gaye's family was also rewarded 50 percent of the song's royalties. The verdict caps a long-drawn legal battle that was closely watched by the music industry. The initial award in the case had triggered an angry response from many songwriters, who argued that there were major differences between the two songs at the center of the legal battle, including the melodies and lyrics. Williams, a popular songwriter who had another smash hit with "Happy," said in an interview in 2015 that all creative people had inspirations.

"The verdict handicaps any creator out there who is making something that might be inspired by something else," he said at the time. "If we lose our freedom to be inspired, we're going to look up one day and the entertainment industry as we know it will be frozen in litigation." Representatives of both Williams and Thicke could not be immediately reached for comment. — AFP



A combination of file photos shows (from left) US-Canadian singer Robin Thicke at the MTV European Music Awards (EMA) 2013 at the Ziggo Dome on November 10, 2013 in Amsterdam, US singer Marvin Gaye at London's Heathrow airport in June 1980, and US recording artist Pharrell Williams posing upon his arrival for the 86th Oscar's Nominee's Luncheon at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California, on February 10, 2014. — AFP

Apple to roll out new Snoopy, Peanuts cartoon series

Apple will produce a new animated series starring Snoopy and the Peanuts gang, created by the late American cartoonist Charles Schulz, for its video platform, a source close to the deal said Friday, confirming press reports. The agreement was reached with Apple, "in a highly competitive environment" and at the expense of other candidates, with the Canadian group DHX Media, which holds 80% of the rights of Snoopy and Peanuts, said the source. DHX bought this stake, as well as rights to Peanuts gang member Peppermint Patty, for \$345 million in 2017.

The commitment is for DHX to produce a new animated series, specials and short programs around the Peanuts gang, a bunch of kids with the dog Snoopy. The Canadian group will also create educational programs including the Peanuts gang, exclusively for Apple, around space and the conquest of space.

The agreement between Apple and DHX Media is another example of the Apple brand's ambition, given the launch, announced by several media in 2019, of its own video-on-demand service offering exclusive content. Until now, the video content available on the iTunes platform was produced by third parties and accessible one by one, not as a subscription. Schulz wrote and illustrated the Peanuts cartoon strip starting in 1950. The final strip ran in newspapers one day after his death in February 2000, according to the Charles M. Schulz Museum. — AFP

Hard-partying Keith Richards says he's virtually quit drinking

Keith Richards, the Rolling Stones guitarist whose name is synonymous with excess, says he has virtually given up drinking. "It was time to quit," the 74-year-old Richards told Rolling Stone magazine in an interview. "It's been about a year now," he said. "I pulled the plug on it. I got fed up with it." Richards, who has been arrested several times for drug possession during his legendary hard-partying career, said he still has the occasional glass of wine or a beer but has mostly given up alcohol.

"I don't notice any difference really—except for I don't drink," Richards said. Fellow guitarist Ronnie Wood said Richards is "much more mellow" now that he's given up booze. "He's a pleasure to work with," Wood told Rolling Stone. "He's open to more ideas." "If he's gonna keep it up, I'll be there, full support," Wood said. The Rolling Stones are scheduled to launch a US tour in Miami in April. — AFP



In this file photo Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones performs during a concert at The Velodrome Stadium in Marseille, as part of their 'No Filter' tour. — AFP

Classifieds

Sunday, December 16, 2018

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DAY: Saturday 15/12/2018 Valid From 7 AM To 7 PM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Sunny with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 35 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind to wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h with a chance for mist forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 15/12/2018 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	16 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	15 °C			
ABDALY	23 °C	11 °C			
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C			
JAHRA	22 °C	15 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	21 °C	15 °C			
SALMIYAH	21 °C	16 °C			
AHMADI	21 °C	16 °C			
NUWAISIB	23 °C	15 °C			
WAFRA	22 °C	14 °C			
SALMY	20 °C	11 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	12/16	Sunny	21 °C	12 °C	VRB	08 - 22 km/h
Monday	12/17	Sunny and some high clouds will appear	24 °C	14 °C	SE	12 - 42 km/h
Tuesday	12/18	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	22 °C	15 °C	SE-NW	12 - 38 km/h
Wednesday	12/19	Mostly Sunny	24 °C	14 °C	NW	12 - 32 km/h

PRAYER TIMES		RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
Fajr	05:10	MAX. Temp.	23 °C
Sunrise	06:35	MIN. Temp.	12 °C
Zuhr	11:43	MAX. RH	100 %
Asr	14:33	MIN. RH	52 %
Sunset	16:51	MAX. Wind	N 32 km/h
Isha	18:14	TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP0 2018/12/15 02:55 UTC VL00 T2.4 ق.م.ع.ج. 1-2

CHANGE OF NAME

I. Roque Pedro Souza, holder of Indian Passport No: H1831444 and Civil ID no. 256022900498, has changed my name to Roque Souza.

12-12-2018

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

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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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Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 16/12/2018				Departure Flights on Sunday 16/12/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00
JZR	254	Amman	00:40	JZR	405	Kochi	12:45
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:40	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KAC	102	London	01:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	JZR	261	Beirut	16:40
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
BAW	157	London	07:10	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	KAC	675	Dubai	17:05
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	504	Beirut	17:15
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:35	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:45
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	KAC	621	Doha	18:25
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	624	Doha	10:40	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:50	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	JZR	253	Amman	19:15
TUP	8586	Delhi	11:30	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
JZR	252	Amman	12:30	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	SYR	342	Damascus	20:00
ABY	121	Sharjah	12:55	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
IAW	157	Al Najaf	13:25	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KIS	6032	Mashhad	13:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:55
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
JZR	602	Baku	14:10	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:20	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	DLH	624	Dammam	21:30
IRC	526	Mashhad	14:30	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
KAC	286	Dhaka	14:30	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
KAC	618	Doha	14:40	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
KAC	512	Mashhad	14:40	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
KAC	412	Bangkok	15:00	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KAC	562	Amman	15:10	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00
				KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20

Sports

Indiana Pacers muscle past 76ers 113-101 for big road win

Celtics ride blistering start to easy win over Hawks

PHILADELPHIA: Thaddeus Young had 26 points and 10 rebounds to carry the visiting Indiana Pacers past the Philadelphia 76ers 113-101 on Friday for their sixth straight win. Bojan Bogdanovic added 18 points and Victor Oladipo had 14 in just his second game back from a sore knee that sidelined him for 11 games. Domantas Sabonis contributed 14 points and 16 rebounds. Joel Embiid led the Sixers with 40 points and 21 rebounds, while JJ Redick scored 22 points and Ben Simmons had 18 points and nine rebounds. Sixers guard Jimmy Butler missed his second straight game with a strained groin and was replaced in the starting lineup by Furkan Korkmaz. The Sixers fell to 14-3 at home and dropped back-to-back home games for the first time all season.

WARRIORS 130, KINGS 125

Golden State countered a 10-0 Sacramento run with a 17-2 game-ending flurry, allowing the two-time defending NBA champions to escape with a victory over the host Kings. Stephen Curry poured in a game-high 35 points, Kevin Durant had 33 and Klay Thompson 27, helping the Warriors bounce back from a 113-93 embarrassment at home against the Toronto Raptors on Wednesday night with a second consecutive narrow victory over their Northern California rival. Buddy Hield had 27 points, De'Aaron Fox 25 and Willie Cauley-Stein 22 for the Kings, who had a two-game winning streak snapped.

KNICKS 126, HORNETS 124 (OT)

Emmanuel Mudiay scored a career-high 34 points, and visiting New York rallied from a 21-point deficit to beat Charlotte in overtime. Mudiay hit a layup for a 126-121 lead with 17 seconds remaining, and the Knicks held on from there although the Hornets had a chance to tie at the buzzer, when Kemba Walker missed a drive in traffic. It was a shocker after the Hornets led 72-53 at halftime and 93-78 going into the fourth quarter. It was payback, as well, after the Hornets rolled to a 119-107 victory in New York last Sunday.

NUGGETS 109, THUNDER 98

Nikola Jokic had 24 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists, Jamal Murray had 19 points and nine rebounds,

and host Denver held off Oklahoma City. Juan Hernangomez had 16 points and Torrey Craig scored 15 for the Nuggets, who kept the top spot in the Western Conference with the win. Paul George scored a game-high 32 points, Steven Adams had 26 and Russell Westbrook finished with 13 points and 14 rebounds for the Thunder. Oklahoma City went only 17 of 29 from the foul line.

BUCKS 114, CAVALIERS 102

Giannis Antetokounmpo matched a career-high 44 points, grabbed 14 rebounds and had eight assists as visiting Milwaukee led wire-to-wire and beat Cleveland. Antetokounmpo was coming off his lowest-scoring game of the season — 12 in a loss Wednesday to Indiana. On Friday, he went 14-for-19 from the field and made 16 of 21 free-throw attempts. Brook Lopez scored 19 and Eric Bledsoe added 16 points for the Bucks. Jordan Clarkson led the Cavaliers with 23 points off the bench. Rodney Hood added 19 for Cleveland.

TRAIL BLAZERS 128, RAPTORS 122

Damian Lillard scored 24 points as host Portland took care of Toronto with eight Trail Blazers scoring in double figures, including Zach Collins with 16 and Seth Curry with 13, both season highs and both coming off the bench. Kawhi Leonard scored 28 points and Fred VanVleet added a season-high 21 for the Raptors, who had won two in a row to begin their four-game road trip. Portland's bench totaled 58 points, its season high. Toronto was without center Jonas Valanciunas, who dislocated a thumb in Wednesday's victory at Golden State, and point guard Kyle Lowry, who had a thigh bruise.

HEAT 100, GRIZZLIES 97

Josh Richardson and Kelly Olynyk scored 18 points each to lead Miami to a win over host Memphis as the Heat snapped a two-game losing streak. Heat center Hassan Whiteside, who missed the past four games due to the birth of his son, produced six points, seven rebounds and two blocks in 22 minutes. Memphis, which has lost three of its past four games, was led by point guard Mike Conley, who scored a game-high 22 points and dished out eight assists.



PHILADELPHIA: Thaddeus Young #21 of the Indiana Pacers shoots the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers on Friday at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. —AFP

CELTICS 129, HAWKS 108

Kyrie Irving scored 12 of his 24 points in a 42-point first quarter to spark Boston to its eighth straight win in defeating visiting Atlanta. Irving was 8-for-15 from the floor and 4-for-5 on 3-pointers, with five rebounds, five assists and four steals and has shown no lingering effects from the right shoulder soreness that caused him to miss the Dec. 10 game against New Orleans. In his last two games, Irving has scored 62 points. The Hawks got a career-high-matching 19 points from Kevin Huerter for his second straight outing. Forward John Collins posted his sixth consecutive double-double, scoring 11 points and pulling down 14 rebounds for

Atlanta, which has dropped two straight and six of its last seven.

NETS 125, WIZARDS 118

Spencer Dinwiddie scored 27 points in 32 minutes off the bench and Brooklyn defeated visiting Washington for its season-high fourth straight win. Joe Harris scored 19 points and Rondae Kurucs and Rondae Hollis-Jefferson had 15 each for the Nets. Bradley Beal led the Wizards with 31 points on 13-for-22 shooting and added nine assists. John Wall had 17 points and a game-high 13 assists for Washington, which has lost four straight. — Reuters

Netherlands to face Belgium in hockey World Cup final

BHUBANESWAR: Goalkeeper Pirmin Blaak helped the Netherlands set up a title clash with Belgium in the field hockey World Cup after edging out Australia 4-3 on penalties in Bhubaneswar yesterday.

Blaak was on top of his game throughout the semifinal, producing a match-winning save in sudden death to deny Australia a chance of clinching their third successive title after they won in 2010 and 2014.

The match was level at 2-2 after world number one Australia claimed an equaliser 26 seconds from full time at the Kalinga Stadium in the east Indian state of Odisha. Both teams scored three goals each in the penalty shoot out but as the match went to sudden death, the Netherlands—shooting first—scored while the Kookaburras missed the goal after Blaak got the ball away with his stick. It will be the Netherlands' record seventh final and they have the chance to claim their fourth World Cup title. "Really happy that we won... When it came down to the final one I had to make a decision and got the sweep," said Blaak. "Conceding a goal 26 seconds before the end of the game is something really terrible and but (we) turned it back," he said.

In the first semifinal Belgium thrashed England 6-0, with Simon Gougnard scoring a goal after his father died on the eve of the crucial clash. Olympic silver medalists Belgium, who had beaten two-time champions Germany in the quarter-finals, came out all guns blazing with Tom Boon giving them an early lead in the eighth minute of the match. In an emotional moment for Gougnard, he doubled his team's ear-



BHUBANESWAR: Belgium's Loick Luypaert (C) fights for the ball with England's Will Calman (2L) during the field hockey semi-final match between England and Belgium at the 2018 Hockey World Cup in Bhubaneswar yesterday. — AFP

ly lead in the 19th minute with a penalty corner conversion. Alexander Hendrickx also got two, helping him to a lead in the tournament top scorers list with seven goals so far.

"We are just really proud at what happened. We played in the honour of (the) father of Simon who suddenly passed

away yesterday," Boon, who was named man of the match, said after the win. "We did it again today and in the quarter-finals and it is going to be one more step in tomorrow's game. We just have to put another great performance and hope we can win." —AFP

Sindhu hoping for gold in badminton finale

SHANGHAI: Olympic silver medalist P.V. Sindhu hopes to finally get her hands on gold when the nearly woman of badminton faces Japan's Nozomi Okuhara in today's decider at the World Tour Finals.

In the men's final of the season-ending \$1.5 million tournament in the Chinese city of Guangzhou, home player and number two in the world Shi Yuqi plays top-ranked Kento Momota of Japan in a mouthwatering showdown.

The sixth-ranked Indian Sindhu has been in imperious form all week and made it a fourth victory with a bruising defeat of Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon yesterday. The 23-year-old player, renowned for her never-say-die attitude, needed all her resolve to finally see off Ratchanok 21-16, 25-23 in a captivating semi-final.

Sindhu has suffered a series of finals disappointments in recent years—as well as silver at Rio 2016, she also took silver at the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games this year.

Likewise, she has twice lost in the final of the World Championships and was runner-up in last year's season finale. "I hope that ending the season, I can win gold, definitely it would mean a lot," said the Indian.

"I would not call it pressure. I will just play freely, like how I have played these last four matches. "And, if I



P.V. Sindhu

win it, it will be very important for me." In the other last-four clash in the women's draw, Okuhara, a place above Sindhu at five in the world, emerged from an all-Japanese clash against Akane Yamaguchi, winning 21-17, 21-14.

The men's championship match promises to be a cracker between Momota, the world champion, and Shi. The 22-year-old Shi, who has taken over from the likes of Olympic champions Chen Long and Lin Dan as China's best men's player, came back from a slow start to beat Indian underdog Sameer Verma 12-21, 22-20, 21-17. Momota, 24, had it comparatively easy against Son Wan-ho, defeating the South Korean 21-14, 21-12 to underline his status as the tournament favourite. — AFP

Salt Lake City selected for 2030 Winter games bid

RALEIGH: Salt Lake City has been selected by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) for a potential bid to host the Winter Olympics in 2030. The USOC board of directors has expressed interest in bidding for future Winter Games but has not determined when a formal bid might be submitted, the USOC said in a statement on Friday.

Salt Lake City, which hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics, was preferred to the Colorado city of Denver. "We are truly humbled and honored to be the USOC's choice to bid for a future Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games," said Salt Lake City Mayor Jackie Biskupski.

USOC chief Larry Probst said Salt Lake City gave the US the best chance to bring the Winter Olympics to the country for the fifth time. Chief executive officer Sarah Hirshland, in a conference call following the executive board meeting, said the decision to identify Salt Lake as the candidate city would give any bid the best chance of success.

"It's worth noting there is no 2030 bid process open with the IOC at this stage but work we will do is to continue to refine the possibility, refine the plan for a possible bid but at this point there is no determination, nor is there an active process for bidding that will take place," she said.

"So we have the luxury of some time to ensure with have a very thoughtful plan and collaborative approach." "There is incredible support from the community at large," she added of Utah's most populous city. "They have some very unique advantages and certainly the venues and the existence of those venues and the proximity of those venues is one of those advantages."

US Ski & Snowboard welcomed the decision. "The possibility of having a future Olympic Winter Games in the USA is incredibly exciting," said chief executive Tiger Shaw. "Colorado and Utah have created many of the world's best athletes in our sports and both have been very supportive in hosting world class events."

The decision comes at a time when the International Olympic Committee has seen interest in hosting Olympic Games fall dramatically as the size and cost of staging the multi-sport event has skyrocketed.

Residents in Calgary recently resoundingly voted against the western Canadian city's plan to bid for the 2026 Games. The vote left Sweden's Stockholm and an Italian bid involving Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo as the only candidates left in the race.

Swiss city St. Gallen, Japan's Sapporo and Graz in Austria all withdrew earlier this year, while Turkey's Erzurum was eliminated from the bidding process by the IOC, which will elect the winning bid in June 2019.

With Asia hosting back-to-back Games after Pyeongchang this year and Beijing in 2022, and Europe likely to host the 2026 gathering, any bid from the United States for the 2030 Winter Olympics would be a strong favourite. — Reuters

Da Costa wins Formula E season-opener in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: Portuguese Antonio Felix da Costa held off a late charge from defending world champion Jean-Eric Vergne to win the opening race of the Formula E season in Saudi Arabia yesterday.

DS Techeetah's Vergne snatched the lead at the halfway stage of the Ad Diriyah ePrix but a drive-through penalty meant he finished second behind BMW Andretti's Da Costa, with Jerome D'Ambrosio completing the podium for Mahindra Racing. The city-based single-seater series began its fifth season with a first-ever race in Saudi Arabia, which also saw the debut of the Gen2 car that can hit a top speed of 280 kph and will have sufficient battery power to last an entire race.

Previously, drivers have had to stop and change cars. Pole sitter Da Costa overcame an indifferent start after misjudging his grid spot and had to position his car at an angle pointing towards the barriers. At the halfway stage, Vergne passed Da Costa to snatch the lead, going around the outside of the Turn 18 right-hander. Vergne's team mate Andre Lotterer also went past Da Costa into second spot before both DS Techeetah drivers were handed drive-through penalties for technical infringements.—Reuters

Sports

One-club Mueller makes it 300 games for Bayern Munich

Made 463 appearances for Bayern in all competitions, scoring 181 goals

BERLIN: Thomas Mueller made his 300th Bundesliga appearance for Bayern Munich yesterday, cementing his status as one of a dying breed to have only ever played for just one professional club.

The 29-year-old attacking midfielder reached the milestone in Bayern's 4-0 demolition of Hanover 96. Of all the statistics surrounding Mueller's career, the most eye-catching is that Bayern are unbeaten in the 84 league games in which he has scored.

Although he failed to find the net against Hanover, he did set up the opening goal for Joshua Kimmich. He picked up the first straight red card of any otherwise well-behaved career in Wednesday's thrilling 3-3 Champions League draw at Ajax after being sent off for accidentally kicking Nicholas Tagliafico in the head. Although Mueller argued about the decision in the immediate aftermath, he was later quick to apologise.

His golden reputation was tarnished by poor displays in Germany's woeful World Cup performances, but he has fought his way back into Niko Kovac's starting line-up with Bayern after a spell on the bench last month following a dip in form for the club.

He has now made 463 appearances for Bayern in all competitions, scoring 181 goals and creating 157 more, since joining in 2000 at the age of 10. Born in the Bavarian town of Paechl, south of Munich, Mueller rose steadily through Bayern's youth set-up and caught the eye of then head coach Jurgen Klinsmann in 2007-08 after scoring 18 goals in 26 games for the Under-19s.

Mueller made his Bundesliga debut a month before his 19th birthday, coming off the bench on the opening day of the 2008-09 season. Klinsmann was sacked in April 2009, but one of his successors, Louis van Gaal, propelled Mueller into Bayern's first team.

"He threw me in at the deep end," Mueller said. "I made my debut before he arrived, but he then relied on me continually. "I would say that my biggest influence was Louis van Gaal, because I was at the best age to be influenced."

Van Gaal's faith was rewarded with 13 goals and 10 assists as Bayern won the Bundesliga and German Cup in 2009-10. "Even if Franck Ribery and Arjen Robben are available, Mueller will always play in my team," Van Gaal famously declared.

Having been mistaken for a ball boy by Diego Maradona after making his Germany debut in March 2010, Mueller made his international breakthrough at that year's World Cup, winning the Golden Boot as top-scorer in South Africa with five goals and three assists, earning him the best young player award, aged just 20.

He continued to flourish for Bayern, but suffered Champions League heartbreak in the final on home turf at the Allianz Arena in May 2012. Mueller scored a header to put Bayern 1-0 up seven minutes from time in the final against Chelsea, only for Didier Drogba to equalise minutes later. The English side won on penalties.

Bayern and Mueller finally won their third Champions League final in four years by beating Borussia Dortmund 2-1 at Wembley in 2013, but the pinnacle of Mueller's career came a year later as Germany won the World Cup in Brazil. Mueller again scored five goals, including a hat-trick in the opening 4-0 rout of Portugal and the first goal in the unforgettable 7-1 semi-final thrashing of Brazil.

He was also a key component in Bayern winning consecutive Bundesliga titles in each of the last six seasons under Jupp Heynckes, Pep Guardiola and Carlo Ancelotti.

His most prolific season was in 2015/16 when he hit 20 league goals and 32 in all competitions as Mueller and Robert Lewandowski contributed 74 goals towards Bayern's league and cup double.

Mueller was benched by Ancelotti for the first time last season, then by Kovac this campaign, but each time he has played himself back into his coach's favour.

Now his goal is to stay with Bayern and break the joint record of eight Bundesliga titles held by club greats Oliver Kahn, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Philipp Lahm, Franck Ribery and Mehmet Scholl. — AFP



HANOVER: Bayern Munich's German forward Thomas Mueller (C) and Hanover's Swiss midfielder Pirmir Schwegler vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match Hannover 96 v Bayern Munich at the HDI arena in Hanover, central Germany yesterday. — AFP

Vietnam beat Malaysia to claim Suzuki Cup

HANOI: An early goal by Nguyen Anh Duc proved decisive as Vietnam beat Malaysia 1-0 at My Dinh National Stadium yesterday to lift the AFF Suzuki Cup for the second time. The Vietnamese had allowed a two-goal lead to slip in a 2-2 draw in the first leg in Kuala Lumpur last Tuesday but Anh Duc restored their advantage when he volleyed home from close range after only six minutes.

Goalkeeper Dang Van Lam made a series of fine saves to preserve the home side's advantage as they won 3-2 on aggregate and claimed the ASEAN regional title for the first time since 2008. Vietnam had the benefit of two away goals from the first leg and they made an excellent start in Hanoi, taking the lead when Nguyen Quang Hai's chip from the left found Anh Duc, whose left-footed volley was too powerful for goalkeeper Farizal Marlias to keep out of his net.

Mohamadou Sumareh went close to levelling for Malaysia in the 11th minute with a clever back-heel which went narrowly wide, while Do Hung Dung should have done better for the hosts in the 33rd minute after he received the ball unmarked on the edge of the box but shot wastefully wide. Van Lam was called into action just before half-time to tip Syahmi Safari's first-time effort over his crossbar and he showed fine reflexes again early in the second to bat Sumareh's header clear before making another fine save to keep out Safawi Rasid's free-kick.

Meanwhile, in Al Ain, Japan's



HANOI: Vietnam's players hold the trophy as they celebrate after winning the AFF Suzuki Cup 2018 final football match between Vietnam and Malaysia at the My Dinh Stadium in Hanoi yesterday. — AFP

Kashima Antlers recovered from a goal down to beat Mexico's Chivas Guadalajara 3-2 in their Club World Cup quarter-final in the United Arab Emirates yesterday. Substitute Hiroki Abe sealed the comeback with the third goal in the 84th minute, setting up a semi-final against European champions Real Madrid on Wednesday.

Kashima's Ryota Nagaki cancelled out Angel Zaldivar's early opener soon after the break before Serginho made it 2-1 with a penalty and Abe extended the lead before a late own goal. Guadalajara,

the CONCACAF champions, took the lead in the third minute when forward Zaldivar headed a Javier Lopez cross into the top corner of the net.

Kashima goalkeeper Kwoun Suntae saved a close-range Zaldivar strike in the 40th minute after the Asian champions failed to clear the penalty area from a deep Guadalajara throw-in. The Mexicans had another chance to go to two goals up moments later when midfielder Orbelin Pineda hit the bar with a shot from outside the box in the 45th minute.

Kashima started with greater inten-

sity in the second half, levelling in the 49th when Nagaki put away Shoma Doi's pass. Brazilian Serginho sent Guadalajara goalkeeper Raul Gudino the wrong way from the penalty spot to put the Asian champions ahead in the 69th minute. Abe's strike from the left-hand side of the box into the top corner made the score more comfortable for the Asian champions.

Guadalajara got back to 3-2 in the dying minutes when Kashima's Leo Silva put the ball into his own net after Suntae had saved an Alan Pulido penalty awarded by VAR. — Agencies



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Southampton FC v Arsenal FC	beIN SPORTS HD 2	16:30
Brighton & Hove Albion v Chelsea FC	beIN SPORTS HD 1	16:30
Liverpool v Manchester United	beIN SPORTS HD 2	19:00
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Sevilla FC v Girona	beIN SPORTS HD 3	14:00
RCD Espanyol v Real Betis	beIN SPORTS HD 3	18:15
Huesca v Villarreal CF	beIN SPORTS HD 3	20:30
Levante v FC Barcelona	beIN SPORTS HD 3	22:45
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
spal v AC Chievo Verona	beIN SPORTS	14:30
ACF Fiorentina v Empoli	beIN SPORTS	17:00
UC Sampdoria v Parma Calcio 1913	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Frosinone Calcio v US Sassuolo Calcio	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Cagliari Calcio v SSC Napoli	beIN SPORTS	20:00
AS Roma v Genoa CFC	beIN SPORTS	22:30

Modric criticises Ballon d'Or gala snub by Messi, Ronaldo

MADRID: Ballon d'Or winner Luka Modric has criticised Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi for choosing not to attend this month's ceremony where he was given the award, saying their decision was unfair to fellow players and voters.

Croatian captain Modric, who broke Messi and Ronaldo's decade-long stranglehold on the prestigious prize last month, said in a newspaper interview on Saturday the pair's absence from the gala in Paris on Dec. 3 did not make sense.

"I cannot speak about why someone didn't turn up at an award ceremony, it's their choice. It doesn't make sense, does it? It seems these votes and awards are only significant when they win," the Real Madrid midfielder told Croatian newspaper Sportske Novosti.

"It's unfair to fellow players and voters who have nominated them in the past 10 years, as well as to football and the fans. However, people will act the way they think they should."

Juventus forward Ronaldo came second in the 2018 Ballon d'Or vote behind his old Real team mate Modric, while Messi was fifth, a ranking met with some consternation at both the Argentine's club Barcelona and in the Catalan media.

Modric, who lifted a third successive Champions League title with Real last season and led Croatia to a first-ever World Cup final, said Ronaldo and Messi were still the best two players around but added that it did not mean they should always be named best player each season.

"In my opinion, things are very simple: Ronaldo and Messi are phenomenons who have been dominant in the past 10 years or so. They've been in a league of their own," Modric said. — Reuters

Morata injury may make Sarri enter January sales

LONDON: Chelsea coach Maurizio Sarri is likely to assess the attacking talent on offer in the January transfer window after Alvaro Morata suffered an injury this week. The Spanish striker was forced out of the Europa League draw at Hungarian club Vidi just before half-time after injuring his knee while shooting and will almost certainly miss Chelsea's Premier League trip to Brighton today.

His misfortune allowed Olivier Giroud to enter the action and the France international responded with a superb late free-kick that secured a 2-2 draw and ensured Chelsea remained unbeaten throughout the group stage as they progressed to the last 32.

Sarri must now decide whether Giroud should start at the Amex Stadium or whether he again employs Eden Hazard in a central role as part of a less physical, more mobile forward line.

Given his frequent tactical changes so far, the Italian does not appear fully convinced that either approach is ideal. Neither Morata nor Giroud have

fully impressed this season. Morata has outscored his rival for the centre-forward role with five Premier League goals to Giroud's one but has again proved inconsistent, mirroring last season's form when he was bought as a replacement for Diego Costa.

Giroud told the Guardian this week he had no problem with biding his time at Chelsea because the prospect of winning a Premier League title kept him motivated. "Alvaro (had) a great pre-season, so it was normal not to take him off the team even to put in a world champion. Let's be patient, work in training and come back stronger," he told the paper.

"I prefer to be at a big club rather than playing every week in a less prestigious team and I still have targets. "To win a Premier League is my last dream as a footballer, maybe more than winning a Champions League, because I know how tough it is to win this league."

"I have teammates here who have won it, so I'm a bit jealous." Former Real Madrid striker Alvaro made a promising start to his Chelsea career, scoring freely and demonstrating his strength in the air.

Recurring injuries and difficulty adapting to the physical demands of the Premier League have taken their toll, however, and Morata has rarely looked entirely comfortable since. The man bought for £60 million (\$75.5 million, 66.8 million euros) has never achieved the popularity at Stamford Bridge enjoyed by the abrasive Costa, whose willingness to confront

defenders made him a supporters' favourite before his relationship with Sarri's predecessor Antonio Conte turned sour.

Reports this week that Barcelona could make Morata a target in January suggest he could leave sooner rather than later. However, Sarri could not allow Morata to go without lining up a replacement—furthermore, Morata's injury this week has highlighted the risk of relying on just two principal strikers.

Giroud has given good service since he arrived from Arsenal last January but his return of four goals from 26 league appearances, 15 of those as a substitute, is not prolific. His role for Chelsea mirrors that for France—he has an ability to bring team-mates into play in and around the opposition penalty area. To this effect, he has proved an encouraging presence for Hazard who has made it clear he prefers to operate coming in from wide areas.

Hazard's relationship with Conte suffered when the Italian used him in a more central role and having been again asked to switch, the goals have dried up for the Belgian. He scored eight goals in the opening ten games but has now failed to find the net in eight games.

Chelsea's hopes of winning the title rest on Sarri getting the Belgian scoring again and finding a more consistent central striker—and the solution to both problems is likely to be found in the January transfer market. — AFP

25 Netherlands to face Belgium in hockey World Cup final



26 Kohli leads Indian fightback on day two against Australia



27 One-club Mueller makes it 300 games for Bayern Munich



LONDON: Manchester City's French defender Aymeric Laporte (center) and Everton's English defender Michael Keane (center R) clash with Manchester City's Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson (L) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Everton at the Etihad Stadium yesterday. — AFP

Jesus double sinks Everton

City back on top ahead of Liverpool's clash with United

LONDON: Gabriel Jesus scored twice as Manchester City beat Everton 3-1 at The Etihad Stadium yesterday to pile the pressure on Premier League title rivals Liverpool, who host Manchester United today.

The win takes Pep Guardiola's side, who lost for the first time in the league this season with a 2-0 loss at Chelsea last week, back to the top with a two-point advantage over Liverpool.

It was not a vintage performance but City avoided a second straight slip-up, silencing any suggestion that they may be about to stutter in their title defence. "The players responded in a marvellous way. Everton have top players and today was tricky, a dangerous, dangerous game," said Guardiola.

It is two years since City lost consecutive league games, and they have never gone successive league matches without scoring under the Spaniard.

A midweek win over Hoffenheim in the Champions League should have dealt with any lingering hangover from the Stamford Bridge defeat but City started poorly yesterday. Their passing was unusually imprecise, the movement a little disjointed and Everton, set up for a counter-attacking game, should have taken the lead in the 15th minute when Lucas Digne skinned City full-back Kyle Walker and curled in a cross from the left but Richarlison's attempted volley was off target.

Seven minutes later and City showed that even when they are off-rhythm they can still punish any sloppiness. A poor clearance from Yerry Mina, Everton's Colombia defender, gifted City possession and Leroy Sane, chosen ahead of Raheem Sterling, slipped in Jesus who confidently slotted past Jordan Pickford.

As so often at the Etihad the opening goal changed the match with Everton on the back foot from then on.

"Until the moment they scored the game was what we expected we were blocking them and they didn't create one chance," said Everton manager Marco Silva.

"The biggest chance was our chance with Richarlison. Against these teams we have to be effective when we create opportunities to score.

"We made a mistake with the first goal. They scored and after that they were more comfortable," he said. Sane was the creator again when Jesus doubled City's lead five minutes after the break, with a header from a pinpoint cross by the Germany winger.

Silva was clearly disappointed that, despite playing with three central defenders, Jesus was left unchallenged to convert a goal that put City in firm control. Everton showed some resilience though, fighting back with a fine header from Dominic Calvert-Lewin in the 65th but the hosts restored a two-goal cushion when substitute Sterling was left unmarked to head in a Fernandinho cross with his first touch.

City have won their last 10 home league matches scoring a total of 36 goals and Guardiola, while aware of his team's slow start, was pleased with the reaction to the Chelsea defeat. "It was a tricky game with less than three days recovery after a Champions League game and it was in our minds we were going to suffer today and we did," added Guardiola. "The game was not over until the end. "But we have fantastic players, human beings, and they made a fantastic effort to win the game," he said. — Reuters

Eriksen strikes late to rescue Spurs

LONDON: Christian Eriksen came off the bench to score the stoppage-time goal that earned Mauricio Pochettino his 100th Premier League victory as Tottenham manager in a hard fought 1-0 win over Burnley.

The struggling Claretts had been seconds away from leaving Wembley with a precious point against hosts who had clinched qualification for the last 16 of the Champions League by drawing 1-1 at Barcelona in midweek.

Now, Spurs can look forward to Monday's last 16 draw in the knowledge that third place in the Premier League table will still be theirs whatever top-four rivals Chelsea and Arsenal do today.

It was perhaps inevitable that Pochettino would make changes to the starting line up, especially as centre-back Jan Vertonghen was ruled out by a thigh problem and Eric Dier was unavailable because of a virus.

Oliver Skipp was the chief beneficiary, with the 18-year-old midfielder handed a first Premier League start after a couple of cameos off the bench. Yet, the feel-good factor from a famous night at the Camp Nou on Tuesday wasn't in evidence in the stands with vast swaths of empty seats as patience over the wait for the club's new stadium seems to be running out.

Burnley were buoyed by last week's 1-0 win over Brighton, which ended a barren run that had seen them add just one point from a possible 21. The visitors had the best chance of a lacklustre first-half when Hugo Lloris's misplaced clearance went straight to Phil Bardsley,



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Danish midfielder Christian Eriksen (L) takes on Burnley's English midfielder Jack Cork (R) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Burnley at Wembley Stadium in London yesterday. — AFP

who teed up Ashley Barnes to head wastefully over the bar.

Burnley almost broke the deadlock three minutes into the second half from a free-kick move when ex-Spurs winger Aaron Lennon's cross was met on the volley by Barnes only for a combination of Toby Alderweireld and Harry Kane to block.

Joe Hart has rediscovered some of his best form since joining Burnley in the summer after a few lean years out on loan from Manchester City. The former England number one produced a top-quality stop to deny Erik Lamela from Danny Rose's cross.

Skipp, Tottenham's fourth-youngest ever Premier League starter, was replaced by Heung-min Son for the last 15 minutes, with centre forward Fernando Llorente soon coming on for Lamela.

The newcomers fashioned a clear chance when Llorente chested Kieran Trippier's cross into the South Korean's path only for Son to fire across goal and wide. Dele Alli also scuffed wide at the back post as the pressure built. It finally paid off when Kane held the ball up and played Eriksen in for a finish high into the net to leave Spurs just five points off the top of the table. — AFP