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Amir's envoy hands letter on boosting ties to Chinese leader

Kuwait-China partnership essential for sustainable development

Govt accepts oil minister's resignation

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Khalil Abul yesterday said lawmakers have been informed that the Cabinet has accepted the resignation of Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rasheedi. The minister had come under fire from several MPs over alleged squandering of public funds by top oil executives. Abul, who with two other MPs had vowed to grill the minister, said the grilling will be filed against Rasheed's successor. Meanwhile, five MPs yesterday submitted a motion calling on the National Assembly to urgently vote on two draft laws stipulating scrapping hikes in the prices of fuel and electricity.



Bakheet Al-Rasheedi

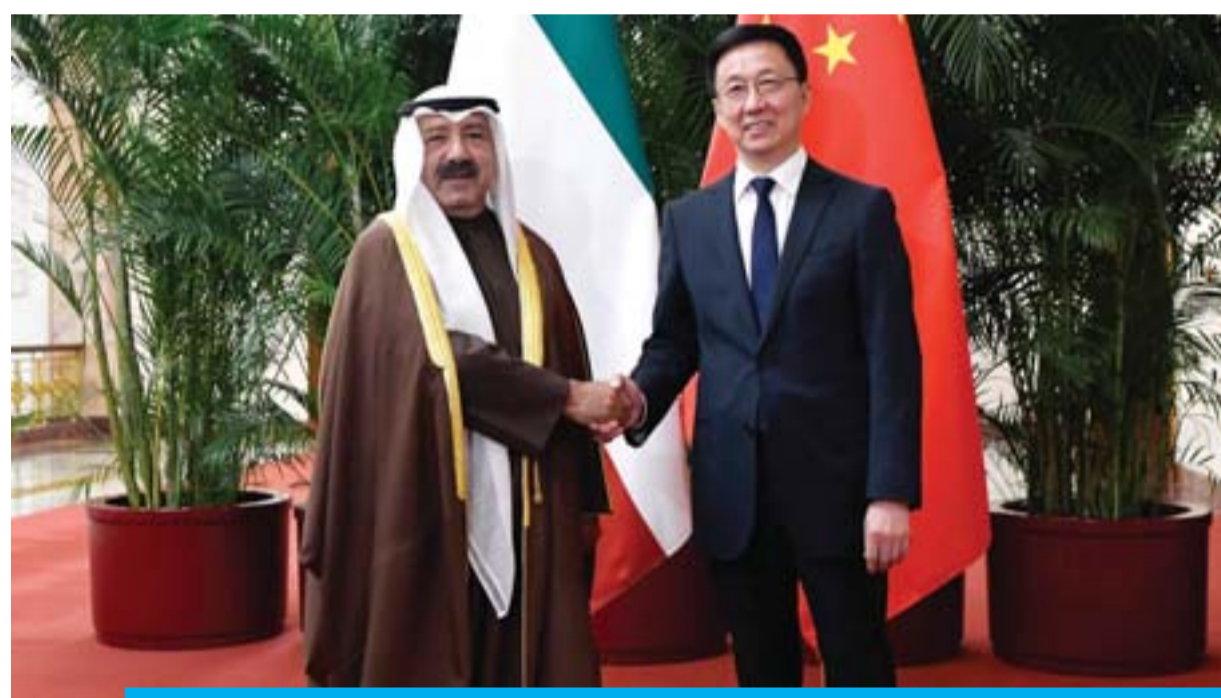
Continued on Page 24

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's envoy, First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah handed yesterday a written letter from the Amir to Chinese President Xi Jinping. The letter is related to strong bilateral relations and strengthening strategic partnership between both the countries.

Earlier yesterday, Sheikh Nasser stressed the importance of boosting the strategic partnership between Kuwait and China in an interview with China-based Phoenix TV, the Kuwaiti Embassy in China said in a statement. The two countries' partnership is like a cornerstone for attaining sustainable development in the Asian continent and a base for integrating Kuwait's "New Kuwait 2030" vision with China's "Belt and Road" initiative, he noted.

Enhancing the Kuwaiti-Chinese partnership is essential for their mutual interests and joint economic and commercial cooperation, Sheikh Nasser said, adding it will contribute to broadening cooperation prospects in other fields. Kuwait and China enjoy a close and historical friendship, he mentioned, adding such a relationship has flourished over the years in political, economic, investment, commercial and cultural fields. Kuwait was the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic ties with China, noted the top Kuwaiti official.

Sheikh Nasser said his current official visit to China aims to boost anew the Kuwaiti-Chinese strategic partnership in various fields and solidify their relationship. All MoUs and cooperation agree-



BEIJING: Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng shakes hands with Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the Great Hall of the People yesterday. — AFP

ments between the two nations, signed during HH the Amir's July visit to China, are currently in the process of implementation, he said. He also stressed the importance of maintaining communication, coordina-

tion and consultation with Chinese authorities regarding the "Belt and Road" initiative and finding ways to link it with the "New Kuwait 2030" vision.

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News in brief

No degree, no 'manager' title

KUWAIT: An official source at the manpower authority said an administrative circular no. 104/2018 was issued that allows residency renewals for those with the profession of "manager" but without a university degree, who have been working in this job before Jan 1, 2011 and the job was recorded in the work permit. The source said after this date, there will be no renewals without a university degree, adding that the work permits of all those working as "managers" before Jan 1, 2011 will be renewed automatically. — Al-Anbaa

Indian politician jailed for life

NEW DELHI: A veteran Indian politician was given a life sentence yesterday over anti-Sikh riots in 1984 that killed nearly 3,000 people following the assassination of then-premier Indira Gandhi. The Delhi High Court found Sajjan Kumar, 73, guilty of instigating mobs during the mass killings triggered by the death of Gandhi at the hands of her Sikh bodyguards. At the time Kumar was an MP with the then-ruling Congress party. He was found guilty over a case involving the murder of five members of a Sikh family in New Delhi. A two-judge bench convicted Kumar for criminal conspiracy, promoting enmity and acting against communal harmony. — AFP

Facebook blocks Bibi's son

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's eldest son Yair tweeted on Sunday that Facebook blocked his page for 24 hours over anti-Muslim posts. In a message posted Thursday on his Facebook page after deadly attacks, Yair had called for "all Muslims (to) leave" Israel. "Do you know where there are no attacks? In Iceland and in Japan where coincidentally there are no Muslims," he wrote. Facebook deleted Yair's posts, prompting him to take to Twitter to criticize the social networking giant, calling it a "dictatorship of thought". — AFP

Rouhani's son-in-law resigns

TEHRAN: Iran President Hassan Rouhani's son-in-law resigned yesterday just two days after his appointment as head of Iran's geological survey sparked accusations of nepotism, official news agency IRNA reported. Kambiz Mehdizadeh, in his early thirties, was appointed to the senior position in the industries and mining ministry on Saturday. "I thank you for finding me worthy and inviting me to work alongside you in this ministry, but I ask to be relieved of my service so that I can continue my scientific and research activities," Mehdizadeh wrote in a resignation letter, according to IRNA. — AFP

Bashir first Arab leader to visit Syria since crisis

AMMAN: Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir arrived in the Syrian capital Damascus on Sunday, the first such visit by an Arab leader since the start of the Syrian conflict, Syrian state media said. President Bashar Al-Assad welcomed him at the airport, official photos showed. Many Arab countries have shunned Assad since the conflict that began early in 2011 after protests calling for his downfall swept Syria. State news agency SANA said later the two leaders held talks in the presidential palace about developments in the region and in Syria.

Assad was quoted as saying his country would remain committed to its "Arab identity" despite the conflict in which Syria had accused some Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, of fuelling it by arming rebels seeking to overthrow Assad's rule. The two leaders dis-

cussed the "situations and crises faced by many Arab countries", the Syrian presidency said. They also stressed the need to build "new principles for inter-Arab relations based on the respect of the sovereignty of countries and non-interference in internal affairs".

The Arab League had suspended Syria's seat in Nov 2011 in response to the Syrian government's violent attacks on pro-democracy protests. Although many Arab countries have closed their embassies or downgraded their ties with Damascus, there have been growing calls in the Arab world in recent months to normalize ties with Syria and give it back its seat in the Arab League.

A Sudanese official late Sunday said that Bashir had returned to Khartoum "from an important visit" to the Syrian capital. The Sudanese president last visited the Syrian capital in 2008 for the Arab League summit which was held there that year. Syria's war has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions since it started in 2011. The International Criminal Court has issued warrants for Bashir's arrest over genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. But the Sudanese leader jetted into Jordan last year to attend an annual Arab League summit, and Amman did not arrest him. — Agencies



DAMASCUS: President Bashar Al-Assad receives his Sudanese counterpart Omar Al-Bashir upon his arrival at the airport in the Syrian capital on Sunday. — AFP

Miss Philippines wins 2018 Miss Universe crown

BANGKOK: Catriona Gray from the Philippines was crowned Miss Universe yesterday, the fourth time the Southeast Asian country has won the international beauty pageant. Gray, a 24-year-old Filipino-Australian model, won the title in the Thai capital Bangkok where the pageant included for the first time a transgender contestant. "My heart is filled with so much gratitude. There were moments of doubt where I felt overwhelmed and I felt the pressure," said Gray, who wore a red and orange dress that was inspired by Mount Mayon, a volcano that erupted this year.

Gray was asked during the contest about her views on legalizing marijuana and replied that she supported it for medical uses. After she was crowned, Gray told reporters the question was "definitely relevant" and "an active topic", in an apparent reference to the war on drugs in the Philippines that has killed thousands of Filipinos and caused international alarm. Gray said during the pageant that working in a Manila slum had taught her to find beauty in difficult situations. Miss South Africa, Tamaryn



BANGKOK: Catriona Gray of the Philippines waves to the audience after being crowned the new Miss Universe 2018 yesterday. — AFP

Green, 24 was the first runner-up, followed by Miss Venezuela, Stefany Gutierrez, 19. Miss Spain, Angela Ponce, 27, made history as the first transgender contestant in the 66-year-old pageant. — Reuters (See Page 21)

Afghan Taliban hold meeting with US officials

KABUL: Afghan Taliban representatives and US officials met in the United Arab Emirates yesterday, the Taliban said, amid diplomatic moves towards establishing the basis for talks to end the 17-year war in Afghanistan. Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid also said representatives from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the UAE would also take part in the talks, which follow at least two meetings between Taliban officials and US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Qatar.

He said the meeting, at an undisclosed location, had begun and could take some time while senior members of the Taliban in Afghanistan said the talks would continue for three days. The US embassy in Kabul would not confirm any meeting was due to take place. Diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict have intensified, although the Taliban have refused to deal directly with the internationally recognized government in Kabul, which it considers an illegitimate foreign-

imposed regime.

The Taliban, seeking to reimpose strict Islamic law after their 2001 overthrow, say the presence of international forces in Afghanistan is the main obstacle to peace. Even as the peace process gathers momentum, fighting has continued with heavy casualties on both sides. Khalilzad, an Afghan-born former US ambassador to Kabul, was named to oversee Washington's peace efforts earlier this year but the United States has insisted that any final settlement must be led by Afghans themselves.

Although the Afghan government has not taken part directly in the talks, a team from Kabul met US and Saudi officials in the UAE on Sunday to discuss the process, President Ashraf Ghani's national security adviser, Hamdullah Mohib, said. Ghani has formed a team to negotiate peace with the Taliban but the movement once again rebuffed the opening yesterday, saying that some media reports suggesting the two sides would meet were "mere propaganda".

"There is no plan of holding a meeting with representatives of the Kabul administration and neither are they present in the meeting being attended by the delegation of Islamic Emirate," Mujahid said in a statement.

Continued on Page 24



WhatsApp Safety Tips

Your privacy, security, and safety is important to WhatsApp. It's why we've also developed some additional features that can help you stay safe on WhatsApp.



Control Your Privacy Settings

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Block Unwanted Users

Stop someone from contacting you directly from a chat.



Leave a Group

Exit a group at any time.



Delete and Report Spam

Report spam from inside the app.



Turn Off Read Receipts

Choose if someone can see if you've read their message



Enable Two-Step Verification

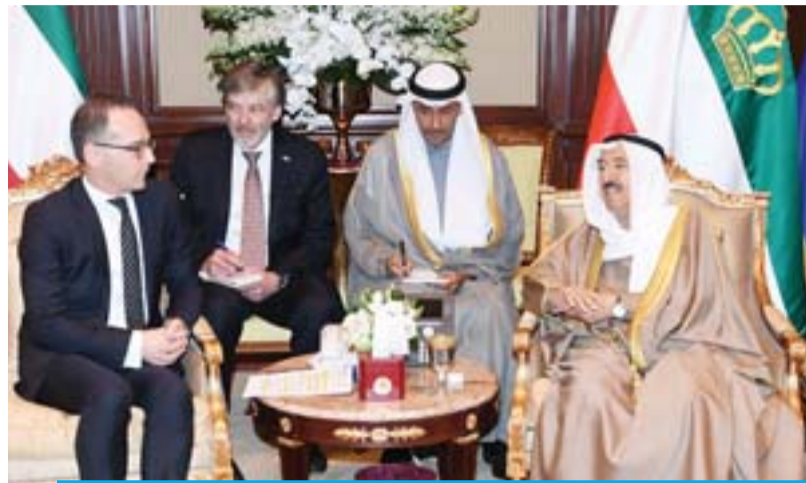
Create a six-digit pin to enable extra security.



For step by step instructions, please visit the FAQ section on [whatsapp.com](https://www.whatsapp.com)

Local

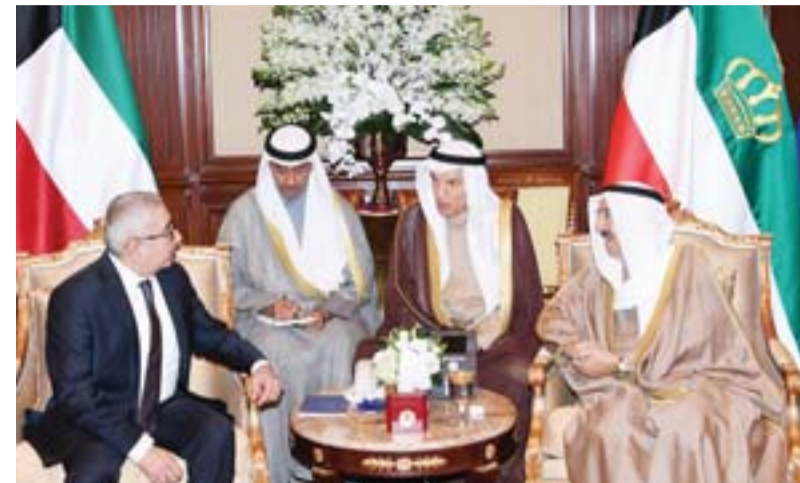
Amir meets visiting German foreign minister, newly-appointed envoys



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Sierra Leone's ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Armenian ambassador Sarmen Baghdasaryan.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Iran's ambassador Mohammad Akbar Irani.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's ambassador to Nigeria Abdulaziz Al-Bishr.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, along with his German counterpart Heiko Maas. Meanwhile, a bevy of newly-appointed envoys to Kuwait came together amid a ceremony to mark the start of their respective tenures, including Sierra Leone's ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas, Armenian ambassador Sarmen Baghdasaryan and Iran's ambas-

sador Mohammad Akbar Irani. The proceedings were attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, along with his deputy Sheikh Mohammad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, who were joined by the Amiri Diwan's Undersecretary Ahmad Al-Fahad, advisor Abdullah Abulhassan and the head of Amiri protocol Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Dhari Al-Ajran and Amiri Guard Commander Brigadier Fahad Al-Zaid were also on hand as the Kuwaiti foreign min-

ister introduced to His Highness the Amir the Gulf state's ambassador to Nigeria Abdulaziz Al-Bishr. As he swore his oath, His Highness the Amir offered some sage advice to the Kuwaiti diplomat, urging him to have the nation's best interests at heart as he kicks off his stint in the African nation. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received a letter from Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz, which contained an invitation for His Highness to attend Saudi Arabia's annual camel race. The letter was delivered by Prince Sultan bin

Saad Al-Saud. In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Kuwait's new ambassador to Nigeria, and wished him the best of luck in his duty, in serving the nation, developing bilateral relations between both friendly countries and promoting Kuwait in regional and international domains. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received outgoing UAE Ambassador in Kuwait Rahma Al-Zaabi. — KUNA

GCC states can propose council's development to address disputes: Kuwait

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said Sunday any GCC member state has the right to table proposals to develop the way the Arab Gulf bloc functioned in order to address disputes. "Every Gulf Cooperation Council member has the right to propose ideas regarding the development of work in the Council," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, also Deputy Prime Minister, told a joint news conference with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. He noted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah proposed to the Arab Gulf leaders, during the GCC summit in Kuwait in 2017, some ideas aimed at creating mechanisms to solve disputes and strengthen the statute. This mechanism, he added, would enable the six GCC countries to discuss all disputed issues. Maas reaffirmed the European Union's (EU) support for Kuwait as a mediator for the Gulf dispute. Asked about Bulgaria's call for holding a conference to solve the Gulf dispute, Maas said the conference could contribute to addressing the crisis but it was not an EU suggestion. "We should talk to the parties of the dispute in order to reach a settlement," said Maas.

Declaration of intent

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said that a declaration of intent was signed with Germany regarding development of partnership in humanitarian field. At a joint news conference with his German counterpart Heiko Maas, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the declaration of intent stipulated exploration of funding mechanisms for the humanitarian action.

The declaration, added Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, contributed to improving efficiency of international humanitarian assistance, as well as protecting relief workers.

The Kuwaiti minister said the two countries' 55-year bilateral relations are solid, describing them as a "model for success." This was outlined in Berlin's full support of Kuwait's legitimate sovereign right during its 1990 occupation by Iraq. He commended the prominent status Kuwaiti investments have assumed in the German public and private sectors, which have reached \$35 billion, encouraging German firms to benefit from entering a facilitated Kuwaiti market in return.

The two officials held extensive and fruitful negotiations, he said, which discussed several means to develop their cooperation mechanisms and partnership on numerous spectrums, particularly on the economy and trade. They both expressed a keenness to unearth fresh avenues in the sectors of renewable energy, education and environmental protection as well as in the parliamentary field.

Regarding regional and international affairs, he said both held corresponding views on many matters in relation to security and political situations and joint efforts aimed at re-establishing security and stability in the region. Their shared Security Council non-permanent status would enable both to increase this cooperation and find peaceful solutions to regional issues, he added.

He went on to praise Germany's role in resolving disputes through peaceful means and its dedication to humanitarian causes, demonstrated particularly in assistance provided during the Kuwait-hosted



KUWAIT: German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (left) speaks during a joint press conference with his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

donors conferences for Syria and the rebuilding of Iraq. In response to a question about efforts for a UN climate change accord, he said this was important, adding Kuwait is open to dialogue aimed at reaching an agreement that aids international convergence.

Preventing conflict

In the meantime, the German minister said both countries, through the recently-signed document and their non-permanent Security Council status, seek to cooperate and work together towards preventing conflict or reaching a settlement to these disputes. He said Berlin maintains a solid willingness to increase cooperation with Kuwait and stands ready to dispatch experts to the country and support Kuwaiti diplomats of both genders.

Describing Kuwait as a partner, he commended its role on the humanitarian scale and crisis management, particularly in regards to Syria and Yemen. Kuwait is undertaking a responsible humanitarian role on the Syrian crisis, he stated, revealing that Germany intends to follow in the footsteps of Sweden, which has had a leading role in efforts to resolve the crisis ahead of the looming expiry of its

Security Council status.

During the ministerial talks, both Berlin and Kuwait also agreed that the recent UN-backed peace talks between the opposing sides in Yemen, hosted by Sweden, represent a step in the right direction, underlining the need to build upon the meeting's outcomes. Moreover, in regards to global climate change efforts, he said they represent a priority which Berlin would be addressing during its recently-acquired 2019-20 Security Council non-permanent membership.

Kuwaiti, German MPs meet

Separately, Kuwait's parliamentary foreign affairs committee on Sunday discussed with German MPs the relations between Kuwait and Germany and ways to enhance cooperation in all fields, especially parliamentary ones. This came during a meeting held by the foreign affairs committee members headed by Dr Abdulkarim Al-Kandari with the German parliamentary delegation on the occasion of its official visit to the country, Al-Dustour news network said. It pointed out that the MPs discussed a number of issues of common interests in addition to the importance of exchanging experiences among parliamentarians. — KUNA

Kuwait plays integral role in global peacemaking, mediation: UK Minister

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait plays an integral role in promoting peace and security both on the regional and international levels, British Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa Alistair Burt said yesterday. Speaking in an exclusive interview, Burt commended efforts by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in mediating the crisis in the GCC region. He indicated that the UK would support all steps to resolve the dispute amongst GCC brethren and hopefully a solution would be reached by 2019. In regards to cooperation with Kuwait, the British official said that he had signed an action plan with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah during the 13th Meeting of the Kuwait-British Joint Steering Group on Sunday. During the group's meeting, the two sides agreed to beef up mutual official visits and reactivate all signed agreements, as well as address obstacles.

Meanwhile, he lauded the role played by Kuwait in addressing the crisis in Yemen especially the recent Kuwaiti efforts facilitating the presence of Yemeni parties at UN-sponsored political consultations in Stockholm, Sweden. He affirmed that Britain supports efforts by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, hoping that the meetings in Sweden would result in a solution for the crisis. In regards to Syria, the British official commended the exceptional role played by Kuwait regarding the crisis there. It is very important to vote in favor of a motion to support Syria in the upcoming meeting for the UNSC later this week, said Burt who affirmed that it was essential for the global community to support efforts by the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis. — KUNA



British Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa Alistair Burt

Amir congratulates Qatar on National Day

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. His Highness the Amir expressed his utmost congratulations to the Amir of Qatar on the occasion of his country's National Day and anniversary of its Founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin

Thani's assumption to power. His Highness lauded Qatar's distinctive accomplishments over the years, including major development growth in various vital fields, wishing Sheikh Tamim perpetual good health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for Qatar. 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 Qatari Amir, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem sent a cable to Qatar's Consultative Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Mahmud.

In other news, Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Thani on Sunday welcomed anew Kuwait's initiative to resolve the Gulf crisis as a center

for all initiatives launched by friends. In a joint press conference with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres following the signing of agreements between Qatar and the UN on the sidelines of the second day of the Doha 2018 Forum, Sheikh Mohammad said His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah made efforts during the last period, which is still valued by the Qatari people. "We in Qatar are open to a constructive dialogue based on mutual respect and a common vision of the substance of the dispute they are talking about," he said. "We appreciate the initiatives of various countries such as the United States in this context and we have always supported the solution through dialogue in any conflict that may arise," he added. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: St Paul's Anglican Church in Ahmadi held a Christmas carols by candlelight service yesterday evening. Though not an official holiday, Christmas is widely celebrated among Kuwait's expatriate community including caroling, church services, family dinners and gatherings and other social events. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Al-Babtain Group golden sponsor of Horeca Kuwait 2019

KUWAIT: Abdul Aziz Saud Al-Babtain Group, via its Consumer Goods Division announced their golden sponsorship of Horeca Kuwait 2019, which will be held from January 14 to 16 in Hall 8 at the Kuwait International Fairground - Mishref, organized by Leaders Group for Consulting and Development, the leading in the field of exhibitions, conferences and tourism in collaboration with the Lebanese company Hospitality Services.



Hani Merhi

A press statement revealed that Al-Babtain Group's Consumer Goods Division, with their golden sponsorship to Horeca Kuwait 2019, demonstrates the distinctive appreciation for this unique event, specialized in hospitality and its related sectors. The exhibition provides the most important opportunities for exchanging experiences among major companies active in local, regional and international scenes in the fields of food and beverage industry and hospitality institutions represented by restaurants, hotels and other institutions that provide personal care to guests or pioneers. More so, the exhibition runs daily high-level cooking competitions with the participation of chefs and jury committees of international standard.

Hani Merhi, Chief Executive Officer, of Al-Babtain Group - Consumer Goods Division, said: "The group will showcase the latest products and services at Horeca Kuwait 2019 that are of great interest to industry experts and will accompany the various activities and events that will take place in the exhibition, which in turn falls in line with the developmental approach known to our companies since its foundation more than 70 years ago."

"Al-Babtain Group - Consumer Goods Division offers a variety of international and regional brands such as: Kiri, Elle and Vire, Perrier and Mazola, which the Group has been distributing for more than 40 years. More so, we are honored to introduce newly acquired brands such as Sohlat water, Al-Rabie Juice, Lavazza coffee and many other brands and products within our portfolio to meet the growing needs of customers, shoppers, and consumers," added Merhi.

Merhi also emphasized on the developmental role played by the exhibition since its inception in Kuwait eight years ago, with its continuous contributions to the promotion of the hospitality and food related industries that demonstrates Kuwait's ability to develop an advanced exhibition industry that opens the way to many opportunities, especially towards the establishment of a regional and international financial and commercial center in the country and the needs of advanced services in all fields."

Finally, he highlighted that Al-Babtain Group continuously encourages every successful work related to the hospitality field, especially with the diversity of services and products our companies offer in various fields that meet, in whole or in part, with the hospitality requirements."

From its end Leaders Group welcomed Al-Babtain Group's Consumer Goods Division to the golden sponsors for the exhibition and expressed its appreciation to the Group "for its long standing presence and reputation in the market since 1948 and its keenness to provide a combined experience of passion and innovation, which represent a valuable addition to the exhibition and hospitality field in all its branches."

Zain showcases BEAM high-speed wireless internet service at Avenues

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, showcased BEAM, its new high-speed wireless Internet service that matches fiber optics speeds, through a dedicated booth at the Avenues Mall - Grand Avenue. The event, which continued throughout the entire weekend, witnessed the attendance of Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan and the company's executive management.

Zain's dedicated booth at the Avenues witnessed positive turnout from customers and mall visitors alike, who learned more about the new service and the great technological potentials it delivers. Customers and visitors also learned about Zain's latest offers for BEAM subscribers, where the company offered a free Huawei Mate 20 device for the first 17 customers who subscribed to BEAM at the booth during the weekend.

Zain showcased the capabilities of its biggest and most advanced network through which the company offers the all-new BEAM service. Zain is the first telecom company to offer this revolutionary technology in Kuwait, moving forward towards full 5G network adoption. Zain launched this all-new service as part of its strategic vision towards transforming into a fully integrated digital telecommunications provider, which represents a quantum leap in the portfolio of technologies and solutions the company offers to its individual and enterprise customers, considered the largest customer base in the Kuwaiti market.

BEAM uses the latest advanced wireless broadband technology, which offers high Internet speeds that match fiber optics speeds, reaching up to 40 Mbps (Megabits per



KUWAIT: Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan with Zain's executive management.

second). This ensures reliable and consistent speeds, enabling customers to enjoy Internet services like 4K streaming, virtual reality (VR), online gaming, and downloading heavy files easily at home.

Zain offers BEAM through two flexible postpaid plans to meet customers' different needs. The first plan includes speeds of up to 20 Mbps with unlimited capacity for KD 25 monthly (24-month commitment), while the second plan includes speeds of up to 40 Mbps with unlimited capacity for KD 40 monthly (24-month commitment).

By subscribing to any of the two plans, customers will

get a FREE BEAM Router and a complementary LTE Hotspot device with FREE 50 GBs monthly. Once subscribed to the service, BEAM technicians will visit the customer's home to install the router for FREE. The primary coverage for the service includes areas between the first and fifth ring roads, and more areas will be included soon.

Zain has always been one of the first companies interested in acquiring the latest technological applications, and attaches great interest to the convenience of the customer by providing its services to suit their different needs on personal and professional levels.

NBK welcomes 'KON' program winners

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) welcomed the winning students in the social entrepreneurship program 'KON' organized by LOYAC. This social entrepreneurship program was co-created with Babson College. It aimed at introducing young adults between the ages of 12 to 16 to the world business and to turn their ideas into action.

NBK Deputy Group CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar greeted the winners along with Fadia Al-Marzouq, LOYAC Vice Chairman and LOYAC Executive Board Member Fetouh Al-Dalali who accompanied the students. Bahar expressed her happiness towards the students' great work and the creative ideas they delivered in their recycling project. Al Bahar praised their efforts and encouraged them to continue inspiring their colleagues towards more green businesses.

It is worth mentioning that NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program is a part of its strategic partnership with Loyac. NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young people and empowering them towards achieving their goals.

The KON program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in youth and support their aspirations. Throughout the 5 weeks program, leaders from NBK along with a group of professional leaders mentors and trainers, locally and regionally encouraged the participants to create a profitable business that solves an environmental challenge.

LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



ABK pays special attention to customer protection

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has recently announced the completion of its training courses to increase the awareness of the Bank's 'Customer Protection Manual'. The courses included the explanation of the contents of the 'Customer Protection Manual' to enhance the concept of transparency and disclosure of the financial and banking transactions carried out by the banks for the various customers of all sectors, pursuant to the instructions issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait in this regard.

The Head of the Complaints and Customer Protection Unit at ABK, Ali Bu Hamad, stated that the 'Customer Protection Manual' includes an important set of guidelines and controls that create an environment suitable for the preservation of the customers' rights within the framework of a balanced relationship that maintains protection for the banking sector. ABK has further developed and updated new policies, procedures, internal controls and principles that comply with the requirements of the manual. The staff members are well trained to activate these controls and to put them into practice to enhance the employees' awareness and to provide better services to the customers. The lectures, courses and workshops organized by the bank create the proper cultural and professional environment to enhance the protection of the customers' rights, which is in compliance with the instructions and controls issued by Central Bank of Kuwait.

Local

Mubarak Hospital hosts colorectal cancer awareness campaign

People aged between 45 and 55 advised to undergo screening

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Mubarak Hospital hosted a three-day awareness campaign on colorectal cancer in preparation for the annual awareness campaign that will be held in March. The campaign is organized by the health ministry in cooperation with Central Circle Company and Johnson & Johnson.

This campaign aims to spread awareness on the benefits of early detection of colon cancer. "The idea of this campaign is to detect cancer early. The management and prognosis of the case is affected greatly if we catch it early. It's better for both the patients and surgeons if we detect it early. We are targeting people at Mubarak Hospital but the campaign involves everyone in Kuwait - both men and women of all nationalities. The campaign is being held at all public hospitals," Dr Fatemah Buhamad of the general surgery team at Mubarak Hospital told Kuwait Times yesterday.



Colonoscopy is only a 30-minute procedure

The patient can visit a general practitioner at the polyclinic to get a reference to any public hospital. "They can then book a colonoscopy appointment. Anybody experiencing any of the symptoms that are suggestive of cancer is encouraged to come and do the screening regardless of age," Buhamad explained.

"The symptoms include change in habits, whether it's diarrhea or constipation or recent weight loss that is unintentional - when people eat the same food and are not going to the gym and still lose 5-10 kg - or blood in the stool or discoloration of the stool to dark color. If anyone suffers from any of these symptoms, he should do a colonoscopy," concluded Buhamad.

Very widespread

Colorectal cancer is very widespread. "We don't have exact statistics, but colon cancer is the third most common cancer worldwide when it comes to morbidity and mortality among men and women.

It can be cured completely, especially since the past five or 10 years with the improvement of medicines used along with surgery," said Dr Bader Al-Shaban, specialist in general and colon and rectal surgery at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital/Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital.

There are different causes for colorectal cancer. "It's a genetic disease affected by the lifestyle of the patient. Other causes include consuming unhealthy food such as preservatives and processed food including hotdogs, salami, etc, and a lack of fibers and beans. The accumulation of toxins can cause polyps. Unfortunately the



KUWAIT: A group photo featuring Mubarak A-Kabeer Hospital surgeons, Johnson & Johnson representatives and Central Circle Company staff. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

patient won't feel any pain before the symptoms occur and then it's too late," explained Shaban.

The campaign focuses on the early detection of all colorectal tumors. If this disease is detected early, the rate of treatment reaches 100 percent. If we find the

polyp and remove it, this will avoid transforming it into cancer. We can avoid it by screening programs, which are free of charge for both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis," noted Mohammed Khaled, Marketing Specialist at Johnson & Johnson.

MoH utilizes human resources in managing modern facilities: Minister



KUWAIT: A group photo of participants in the 'Facilities Management' conference. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah stressed Sunday keenness to utilize human resources in managing modern health facilities. Sheikh Basel made the remarks at the opening ceremony of a two-day 'Facilities Management' conference, organized by the Kuwaiti Society of Engineers in cooperation with Kuwait University College of Engineering and Petroleum, and Sheikh Jaber Cultural Center. The minister noted that there are clear plans, strategies and programs to achieve government objectives in this

regard. He added that recommendations put forward by this conference should contribute to upgrading plans and programs to achieve continuous development of facilities in line with the State's development plans to ultimately honor UN's 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Meanwhile, the president of Kuwait Society of Engineers and the President of the Conference Faisal Al-Attel said there were around 1,000 government facilities, and "we need to address the challenge of managing the facilities in a modern fashion.

Attel noted that the renewable energy projects and calls for establishing a national center to raise energy efficiency in the country is a contribution, to make 15 percent of energy from renewable sources.

In the meantime, General Director of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation Yosef Al-Fozan said in a press release, participating in this conference was to shed light on the authority's experience in implementing modern government methods in managing operations at Kuwait International Airport. — KUNA

Businessmen remanded in real estate fraud case

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The public funds prosecution remanded two businessmen in jail for 21 days and sent them to the Central Prison pending an ongoing investigation in a major real estate fraud case. A source said more than 200 citizens complained about buying real estate inside and outside Kuwait, only to find out they were victims of a scam. The source added the total value of the fraud is nearly KD 15 million.

Seafront development
Kuwait Municipality Director

General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, when asked about seafront development in Garmata, Sulaibkhat, Doha, Jaber Al-Ahmad and Jahra, said recommendations of the third regional study set a preliminary budget for use of the land of Jahra corniche project. He said the project was presented to international consultative offices and invitations were sent, and offices desiring to participate are being followed up. As for Sulaibkhat Bay, he said the project was awarded to an international office to carry out advisory services, and documents are being completed prior to signing a contract with the winning company.

Firemen's treatment

Deputy Premier and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said firemen are treated like policemen in ranks and basic salaries, and are treated like army personnel as far as pensions are concerned, so it is right to treat firemen like policemen over leaves and not only over cash allowances.

News in brief

Kuwaiti fashionistas richest in Arab World

KUWAIT: Sources knowledgeable of social media said Kuwaiti fashionistas are the richest and charge the most among their peers in other Arab and Gulf countries, and the reason is the freedom that they enjoy that enables them to make appearances for followers and admirers. They said Kuwaitis have unprecedented courage due to the social, political and economic atmosphere that is different in Kuwait. Concerned sources said fees charged by Kuwaiti influencers are much more than what other Gulf fashionistas receive due to their dialect and boldness in dealing with body issues, cosmetics and fashion. — Al-Qabas

Govt support for e-media

Director of electronic publication at the information ministry Lafi Al-Subaei said a list of rules concerned with supporting licensed news websites and social media accounts, including e-papers, is being prepared. He said ministerial decree 100/2016 with regards to the implementation of rules of electronic information regulation no. 8/2016 stipulated that electronic sites be supported. The support will be technical and scientific to make it easier to cover conferences and official activities, in addition to material and moral support. — Al-Rai

Cable thieves send copper outside Kuwait

KUWAIT: New customs instructions revealed that thieves of Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) equipment send copper extracted from stolen cables outside Kuwait. Sources said there is cooperation between the MEW and the customs department to face the increased thefts by banning the export of copper. Customs Director General Jamal Al-Jalawi instructed that only copper in its original condition should be allowed to be exported, unless written permission is obtained.

Unfit for consumption

The airport imports department at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition destroyed a quantity of zubaidi fish weighing 560 kg. Department Director Ali Al-Khanfour said after checking the fish of Bangladeshi origin, it was found unfit for human consumption and was destroyed.

Suicide attempt

A Jordanian woman was rushed to hospital for treatment for injuries she sustained after an alleged suicide attempt. The Ahmadi prosecutor ordered the case to be registered as a suicide attempt, while waiting to hear the woman's testimony. The woman screamed for help but her children could not prevent her from falling. An eyewitness said he heard the woman calling for help. She was holding on to a piece of metal before falling. The woman suffered extensive fractures.

Fugitive caught

Farwaniya police arrested a citizen wanted to serve a six-year jail sentence. He was in an abnormal condition. The arrest was made as he was driving erratically, and did not stop at police orders. He was then chased and arrested.

Search for beggars

A citizen told police some women move in groups and knock on doors in Dhaher and beg. Detectives moved to arrest them and stop this activity. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa

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International

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2018



Powerful blast rips through restaurant in Japan; 42 injured

What next for Brexit? Four main scenarios

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SILIGURI, India : The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, also known as 'Toy Train' is pictured in Sukna on the outskirts of Siliguri yesterday. A new 'Toy Train' afternoon and evening service was launched on December 16, giving tourists the opportunity to experience the UNESCO World Heritage DHR Toy Train, local reports said. — AFP

India trafficking victims push for new law

Campaigners send postcards to PM, talks with MPs

NEW DELHI: From letters and postcard campaigns to meetings with lawmakers, modern slavery victims across India are pushing for the passage of a long-pending anti-trafficking bill amid fears it could be sidelined as general elections take center stage in parliament. Survivors from 11 states have turned campaigners in the last few months by roping in their communities to write more than 110,000 postcards to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to ensure the bill is passed by parliament in the coming months.

The Trafficking of Persons Bill was passed by India's lower house of parliament in July and is expected to be tabled in the upper house in the ongoing session that ends on January 8. Campaigners, survivors and lawmakers alike fear the proposed law will be stalled or even shelved if it is not passed soon as political attention turns to next year's general elections. "It needs to pass this time so that victims finally get all the help and facilities to start a new life," a 29-year-old who was trafficked into prostitution when she

was a teenager, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on condition of anonymity.

"It is high time traffickers pay for their crimes, they must be convicted and punished," the mother-of-one, who is part of the survivors' organization Vimukthi, said on the sidelines of a meeting in New Delhi between survivors and several lawmakers. India is home to the largest number of slaves globally, with 8 million out of a global total of 40 million, according to the Global Slavery Index by Australia-based Walk Free Foundation. Most of the 23,000 trafficking victims rescued in India in 2016 were women and girls, the latest government data shows.

The proposed law prioritizes survivors' needs and prevents victims, such as those found in brothel raids, from being arrested and jailed like traffickers, who would face prison sentences ranging from 10 years to life under the legislation. Activists and lawmakers say the bill unifies existing anti-trafficking laws and aims to make India a

leader in the fight against such crimes in South Asia - one of the world's fastest-growing regions for forced labor, begging and forced marriage. "It is sad to see how for the lust of money, people have shamed humanity. This must stop," said Akhilesh Prasad Singh, an upper house lawmaker from the main opposition Congress party. "All parties ... should discuss this bill in this winter session and pass it with necessary provisions."

Resistance

While the bill has been hailed by many campaigners, it has faced resistance from some sectors over fears that it could unfairly target consenting adults working in the sex industry. Sex workers' organizations say the proposed law does not distinguish between victims of trafficking and women doing sex work out of choice, and could lead to the latter being held in rehabilitation shelters against their will. Survivors and activists are demanding that the bill be debated in the current

session to iron out any such differences, and pave the path for its passage before political attention starts to turn towards general elections which are due in 2019. That is why unlike ever before, survivors - who often hesitate to share their stories fearing social stigma - have teamed up and stepped up efforts to drum up support for the bill during one of the final parliament sessions before elections.

While about 1,000 survivors have sent letters to state MPs, another 12,000 have signed or put their thumbprints on a petition - each accompanied with a personal story of entrapment, torture and despair - to press parties to green-light the bill. "The bill aside, what this campaign has done is to mainstream human trafficking," said Uma Chatterjee, co-founder of non-profit Sanjog that works on gender equity and justice. "The survivors have brought the issue out in the open," she said. "Suddenly, common people are stopping, listening and pledging their support. That is huge." — Reuters

1979: Pivotal year in the Arab world

PARIS: A series of dramatic events swept across the Arab and Muslim worlds in 1979, the aftershocks of which still reverberate today, 40 years later. Here is an overview.

Iran: Islamic revolution

On January 16, Iran's last monarch, the pro-Western Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, flees the country after months of protests against his regime. The spiritual leader who led the uprising from exile, Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, makes a triumphant return on February 1. The shah's government falls 10 days later when the army turns against him. The following day, public radio announces the fall of the monarchy and "the end of 2,500 years of despotism". An Islamic republic is proclaimed on April 1, its legislation based on Sharia law. On May 5, Khomeini creates the elite Revolutionary Guards who will become the regime's elite army. A drop in Iran's oil output during the revolution drives up prices, sparking an energy crisis in Western economies.

Egypt: first peace treaty

On March 26, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin sign in Washington the first ever peace treaty between the Jewish state and an Arab nation. The accord, inked in the presence of US president Jimmy Carter, ends the state of war between the neighbors and sets the terms for Egypt to recover in 1982 its Sinai Peninsula, which Israel invaded in 1967. But Arab countries slam the treaty as a betrayal and break off relations with Egypt. Sadat, also criticized at home, is assassinated in October 1981.

Syria: cadets massacred

On June 16, 80 Syrian military cadets are massacred in a hail of gunfire and grenades after being assembled at their academy in the northern city of Aleppo. The men are from the Alawite sect of the Shiite Islam minority, as is the president Hafez al-Assad, father of the current

leader, Bashar Al-Assad. The instigator of the attack is a training officer from the Sunni majority, angered by the regime's open favoritism towards Alawites. The government reacts by cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood, which undertakes an armed uprising before being crushed in the central city of Hama in 1982 at a cost of between 10,000 and 40,000 lives.

Iraq: Saddam seizes power

On July 16, Saddam Hussein becomes Iraq's president as one of the strongmen of the Baath Party in power since a 1968 coup. He goes on to rule with an iron fist, drawing Iraq into a string of conflicts, including war with Iran, until he is ousted in the US-led invasion of 2003 and executed three years later.

Iran: US embassy hostages

On November 4, Islamist students seize the US embassy in Tehran, demanding the extradition of the shah, who is receiving medical care in the United States. Fifty-two diplomats will be held for 444 days. It leads to the rupture of relations between Washington and Tehran, still in place today.

Deadly Makkah siege

On November 20, more than 400 Muslim fundamentalists storm the holiest mosque in Islam, in Makkah, western Saudi Arabia, and take hostages from among the thousands of worshippers there. They claim to have with them the new redeemer, or Mahdi, whose appearance is predicted in several hadiths to cleanse the Muslim world of "impurities" introduced from the West. Saudi forces launch an assault two weeks later in which at least 333 soldiers, rebels and civilians are killed. It is the start of the rise of Islamist extremism in Saudi Arabia.

Afghanistan: Soviet invasion

On December 27, Soviet troops invade Afghanistan to back its embattled communist government, leading to a nine-year occupation. It triggers an armed resistance by Afghan mujahedeen backed by the United States and Saudi secret services. Wealthy Saudi national Osama bin Laden plays a key role, recruiting mostly Arab volunteers to the insurgency and going on to inspire a worldwide anti-Western jihad, or holy war, as the head of Al-Qaeda. — AFP

New Maldives leader secures \$1.4bn from 'closest friend' India

NEW DELHI: The new Maldives president, seen as closer to the West and India than his predecessor, secured \$1.4 billion from New Delhi yesterday in his first visit abroad to his country's "closest friend". Ibrahim Mohamed Solih said after talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that they would also "strengthen maritime security" through patrols, aerial surveillance and exchanging information. "India is our closest neighbor and our people are bound by ties of friendship and cultural affinity," Solih told reporters. "Within those close links, trade and commerce have flourished. India is not only our closest friend, it's also one of our largest trading partners," Solih said.

The package of financial assistance is in the form of budgetary support, currency swap agreements and credit lines, Modi said, after what he called "successful talks" to build upon the two countries' "deep-rooted" friendship. "We want greater trade ties with Maldives. There are increasing opportunities for Indian companies in the island nation. This is beneficial for both the countries," Modi said. "Our security interests are interlinked. We will not allow

our countries to be used for harmful activities against each other," he said. Solih, 54, unexpectedly beat his predecessor Abdulla Yameen to the presidency of the Indian Ocean archipelago and upmarket honeymoon destination in elections in September.

Besides being accused by critics of corruption and muzzling the media, Yameen was seen as close to China, borrowing from Beijing for infrastructure projects including a new bridge and an airport expansion. China has also loaned billions to other countries around the Indian Ocean and beyond, stoking fears of a debt trap and riling both India—which has traditionally held sway in the region—and the United States. Solih's party has called for a review of the projects bankrolled by China in the strategically placed Indian Ocean country.

Former president Mohamed Nasheed, now Solih's mentor, has accused China of a land grab and condemned a free-trade agreement signed by Beijing and Yameen as one-sided. Nasheed told AFP in a recent interview that it would be "very difficult" for the Maldives to repay its Chinese debt, which he said was estimated to be at least \$3 billion. But China's ambassador told the local Avas.mv website last month that only about half of the Maldives' external debt pile of \$1.2 billion was owed to Beijing. Zhang Lizhong said the loans carried just a two-percent interest rate and a five-year grace period. "We have nothing to gain if a friendly country falls into debt," he said. "There is no single (piece of) evidence to support the so-called debt trap claim." — AFP



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) shakes hands with Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih prior to a meeting in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

International

Farmer-herder violence leaves 3,600 dead in Nigeria: Amnesty

Government's failure blamed for fuelling violence

LAGOS: More than 3,600 people have been killed in clashes between farmers and herders in Nigeria since 2016, Amnesty International said yesterday, blaming the government's failure to punish the perpetrators for fuelling the violence. The international human rights organization said more than 2,000 were killed in 2018 alone, while the bloodshed had made thousands of other people homeless.

Violence between farmers and nomadic herders is on the increase in Nigeria over access to fertile land and water, which is becoming scarce in the face of drought and rapid population growth. "The Nigerian authorities' failure to investigate communal clashes and bring perpetrators to justice has fuelled a bloody escalation in the conflict between farmers and herders across the country, resulting in at least 3,641 deaths in the past three years and the displacement of thousands more," Amnesty said in a statement.

It said that of the 310 attacks recorded between January 2016 and October 2018, 57 percent were in 2018 and were most frequent in Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Taraba and Plateau. The rights group also accused Nigerian security forces of not doing enough to stop the killings. "Security forces are often positioned close to the

attacks, which can sometimes last for days, and yet have been slow to act," it said. In some cases, forces were warned of an imminent raid but did nothing to prevent the killings, looting or burning of homes.

"The Nigerian government has displayed what can only be described as gross incompetence and has failed in its duty to protect the lives of its population," said Osai Ojigbo, Nigeria's director of Amnesty International. "Our research shows that these attacks were well planned and coordinated, with the use of weapons like machine guns and AK-47 rifles," Ojigbo said. "In some places, because of the failures of the security forces, competition over resources is used as a pretext to kill and maim along ethnic or religious lines," she said. "The conflict has been dangerously politicized by some state government officials who have inflamed tensions by embarking on a blame game along political party lines."

The Nigerian army yesterday rejected the Amnesty report, accusing the global watchdog of "unfounded allegations against the leadership of the Nigerian military". Army spokesman Sani Usman said in a statement that Nigerians should ignore the report which he said was intended to "destabilise and dismember" the country. "The Nigerian Army has no option than to call for the clo-

sure of Amnesty International offices in Nigeria, if such recklessness continues," he warned. The farmer-herder violence is putting further pressure on President Muhammadu Buhari, who is battling a nine-year insurgency by the Boko Haram jihadist group in the northeast.

The 76-year-old retired general has come under fire for his inability to end the country's security challenges as he seeks a second term in February elections. Boko Haram has stepped up attacks on farmers and loggers in recent months, accusing them of passing information about the group to the military. In the latest attack, four farmers were shot dead as they slept in rice fields in a village outside the Nigerian city of Maiduguri, survivors and local militia said yesterday. Last month, the insurgents killed nine farmers and abducted 12 others in Mammanti village, near Maiduguri.

Hundreds flee

In another development, hundreds fled late Sunday after Boko Haram burned their homes near Nigeria's northeastern city of Maiduguri, residents said. Boko Haram fighters in several trucks stormed Maiborti village, five kilometers outside Maiduguri, firing indiscriminately and setting fire to homes, they said. A military officer who did not want to be identified said troops and fighter jets

were deployed to the village and scrambled to push out the militants after "fierce battle".

It was not clear if there were casualties in the attack which once again highlighted the fragile security situation in the restive region. "They (Boko Haram) came around 5:30 pm and started firing in the village which made us abandon our homes and flee to Maiduguri," Maiborti resident Abacha Kaka said. Militia leader Babakura Kolo said the jihadists were later forced out of the village by troops with aerial support. "Unfortunately, the terrorists succeeded in setting fire to the village and burning it down completely," he added.

Boko Haram has in recent months launched attacks in a bid to capture Maiduguri, the birthplace of its founder Mohammed Yusuf. Last month, the jihadists attacked Jimmi village just outside the city, killing one person and stealing hundreds of livestock. In April, scores of Boko Haram fighters launched a gun and suicide attack on Jiddari-Polo, outside the city. The Islamist group has attacked at least 20 military bases in recent weeks, killing dozens of soldiers and carting away weapons. Boko Haram's nine-year rebellion has killed at least 27,000 and forced more than two million people to flee their homes. — Agencies

Powerful blast rips through restaurant in Japan; 42 injured

TOKYO: A powerful blast that ripped through a restaurant in northern Japan injured 42 people and caused serious damage to neighboring buildings, forcing some residents into shelters, officials said. The explosion in Sapporo on Sunday night started fires and caused the partial collapse of some surrounding buildings. Images from the scene showed large flames and plumes of smoke rising in the night air, and witnesses described hearing a terrifying boom. The cause of the blast was still under investigation, police said. One witness reportedly said he had smelled gas after the explosion. A police official for the Hokkaido region told AFP that despite the large number of injuries, there had been no fatalities.

The Jiji Press agency said one of those injured was seriously hurt, suffering burns to his face, but none of the victims had life-threatening wounds. Several children were reportedly among those hurt in the explosion. "I heard a 'bang,' which sounded like thunder, and my condo was shaken," a man in his 50s told The Japan Times. "There was an enormous sound, 'bang,' then when I looked up at the sky it was filled with plumes of smoke," an elderly woman said in footage on public broadcaster NHK. The two-story wooden building that housed the restaurant, a real estate agency and a clinic was seriously damaged, a Sapporo fire department official said.

The fire from the blast spread to neighboring



SAPPORO, Japan: Firefighters carry on rescue works after an explosion at a restaurant in Sapporo, in the northern Hokkaido prefecture yesterday. — AFP

buildings, and debris blasted out by the explosion shattered the windows of nearby apartments and restaurants, according to local reports. "We are investigating details about the damage together with police at the scene," the official said. National broadcaster NHK said it took firefighters several hours to extinguish the flames, with dozens of vehicles mobilized to deal with the accident. A 26-year-old female employee at the restaurant jumped from the first floor and broke her leg as she tried to escape the fire, media reports said. "I'm just relieved that she is alive," her sister, who rushed to the scene, told the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper.

The blast happened around 8.30 pm, and the

city government opened a shelter to house dozens of people whose homes were damaged. "The number of evacuees grew to about 60 people around midnight, but now there are 10 people still in the evacuation centre," Sapporo official Yasuhiro Ishizuka said.

The explosion also caused a temporary black-out, with 250 buildings losing electricity, but power was later restored, he said. Many small and medium-sized older buildings in Japan are built partly or entirely from wood and are vulnerable to fires. In February, 11 people were killed in Sapporo after a fire broke out at a home for elderly people with financial difficulties. — AFP

Rubble and charred cars in jihadist hub

HAJIN: Burnt-out cars, craters and collapsed buildings dot the side of a road in the Syrian village of Hajin, after US-backed forces expelled the Islamic State group. The sound of mortar fire and flying bullets resounded inside Hajin on Saturday, as huge clouds of grey smoke billowed over the outskirts of the large village in eastern Syria. The yellow flag of the Syrian Democratic Forces flew above one building, after the Kurdish-led fighters seized the village from IS jihadists on Friday. "Hajin has come under the control of our forces," SDF commander Zano Awaz said. "We are now fighting on the outskirts of Hajin and we are preparing to enter nearby villages," he said in Kurdish, a shot of white in his short black hair.

"We will finish off this terrorist group," Hajin lies on the east bank of the Euphrates in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor, about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the border with Iraq. The village's capture marks a milestone in a massive and costly operation backed by a US-led coalition to expel IS from eastern Syria. On Saturday, armored vehicles brought in SDF fighters to reinforce the front lines outside Hajin, as coalition planes and helicopters flew overhead. An SDF fighter sitting on the top of a vehicle with fellow combatants flashed a victory sign.

Tunnels and trenches

The Kurdish-led SDF launched an offensive in September to expel IS from a pocket including its main village Hajin, but their advance has been fraught with obstacles. "We've been facing a lot of difficulties: IS car bombs, suicide attackers. Most of them are foreign," Awaz said. On Saturday morning, IS launched a counterattack, but the SDF said it succeeded in repelling them with the back-

ing of coalition air strikes. Since the start of the operation on September 10, at least 930 jihadists and more than 540 SDF fighters have been killed, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said.

In addition, more than 320 civilians have lost their lives, many in coalition air strikes, according to the Observatory. The coalition has however repeatedly denied targeting civilians. But no civilians were visible in Hajin on Saturday, after thousands fled the village and nearby areas. A convoy of armored cars ferried in US soldiers, churning up dust along the way. On a hill that used to act as the village cemetery, tunnels and trenches dug by the jihadists lay covered in sheets and colorful blankets. Bullet and artillery shell casings covered the ground.

'Death is their destiny'

SDF fighter Bahouz, who did not give his last name, remembered first entering the district's hospital. He said he took pictures of the dead jihadists he saw there. "They think they'll go to paradise, but we killed them," he said, carrying a gun and hand grenades around his waist. "Death is their destiny as they destroyed everything." IS swept across large swathes of Syria and neighboring Iraq in 2014, implementing their brutal interpretation of Islamic law in areas they controlled. But they have since seen their dream of a state crumble, as they have lost most of that territory to various offensives.

In Syria, IS fighters are holding out in what remains of the pocket that once included Hajin, including the villages of Al-Shaafa and Sousa. They have also retained a presence in the vast Badia desert, but that front is managed by Russia-backed regime forces. According to the Observatory, a total of 17,000 SDF fighters are involved in the fight to seize the eastern pocket, compared to around 2,000 jihadists. Inside Hajin village, SDF fighter Mohammed al-Mohammed said his spirits were high. "There's only a bit left" to capture from IS, said the 19-year-old. "We will head on to Al-Shaafa and Sousa to liberate them and win, God willing." — AFP



HAJIN, Syria: Smoke billows after bombings in the Deir Ezzor province as a vehicle of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) stops in Hajin, in the Deir Ezzor province, eastern Syria. — AFP

Turkey revives the ghosts of Gezi protests; Elections loom

ISTANBUL: Three years after she was acquitted over her role in Turkey's Gezi Park protests, Mucella Yapici was called in last month by police to face more questions about the unrest that had posed a direct challenge to the authority of President Tayyip Erdogan. Yapici is one of dozens who were involved in demonstrations that brought millions onto Turkey's streets in 2013 to protest against the government and who are now caught up in a renewed investigation, raising concerns among Turkey's Western allies. Opposition figures say the renewed crackdown is designed to polarise public opinion and rally support for Erdogan's AK Party ahead of local elections in March, when it could face tight races in some of Turkey's largest cities.

"It is a political manoeuvre," Yapici said of her questioning two weeks ago. "We were tried in Turkish courts and acquitted. And the state did not appeal," she told Reuters, adding that authorities had produced no new evidence. The moves by prosecutors and police have been accompanied by renewed and sharp criticism of the Gezi protesters by Erdogan. Such attacks have been a hallmark of his election triumphs since he first won power 16 years ago. But they also risk alienating allies such as the

European Union and United States at a time when Turkey is trying to resolve diplomatic disputes that helped fuel a currency crisis this year.

Yapici, a 67-year-old architect whose activist group Taksim Solidarity was at the heart of the Gezi protests, was one of 26 defendants acquitted in April 2015 of charges carrying jail terms of up to 13 years. She said the investigations were an attempt to rewrite social memory of the protests. "They are trying to blacken the clear celebration of democracy that was Gezi in the minds of children, youths and society," Yapici said. She has not been charged again, but last month more than a dozen people were detained as part of an investigation into the Gezi protests and prosecutors have issued warrants for a prominent journalist and an actor, both living abroad.

"Five years later the prosecutor has suddenly remembered the Gezi resistance and started a new witch hunt," the Berlin-based journalist, Can Dundar, said after details of his arrest warrant emerged on Dec. 5. A senior Turkish official said the Gezi incidents were solely a matter for the courts. "Of course the government does not make any requests in this respect," he told Reuters. "Ultimately courts and prosecutors take various steps in cases based on the evidence which they obtain." "It is not a matter of the incidents specially being put onto the agenda five years later," he added. "Ultimately the judiciary will take up these dossiers and reach the necessary verdicts." According to government estimates, 3.6 million people took part in the Gezi protests, which began with a small demonstration against the redevelopment of a park near Istanbul's Taksim Square. — Reuters

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International

An education: MBAs with Chinese characteristics, economic system

Students learn how to navigate notoriously business world

BEIJING: At business school with Chinese characteristics, undergraduate students debating how a company should deal with striking workers get a harsh reality check from their professor. While students suggest negotiating better benefits for the strikers - a textbook answer - their lecturer presents them with a classic Chinese company tactic: Get law enforcement to break up the labor action. China's Communist Party has adapted market economics to its own system since enacting major reforms in 1978, paving the way for the rise of many companies - and creating the need for business schools to train a new class of entrepreneurs.

"Forty years ago, the idea of a business school would have been inconceivable," Mao Jiye, dean of the business school in Beijing's elite Renmin University said. "Forty years ago, we never had any business research institutions like that." On December 18, 1978, the Communist Party launched "reform and opening up" under then leader Deng Xiaoping, a series of market-oriented economic reforms aimed at attracting foreign investment. As new money flooded into the country, there came a need for an expertise in managing companies that were geared towards the market economy.

At Renmin, which claims to be the first Chinese university to offer a master's in business administration, students learn to manage human resources and work within organizational structures, but also get tips on how to navigate China's notoriously complex business world. The theories are mostly Western but the case studies discussed are all Chinese, Mao said, citing home-grown firms like electronics giant Haier and inter-

net giants Tencent and Alibaba. "There is a push to be creative (with theory application) because the market is multifaceted and very international and in the midst of change," second-year student Li Tangge told AFP.

Reading Marx

Over 2,000 post-graduate students go through Renmin's doors every year - nearly half are in the MBA program, with about 100 from outside China. "Foreign students come to Renmin University to better understand the Chinese landscape, Chinese application of Western theory," Mao said. He dismisses suggestions that the program is a study in contrasts, with entrepreneurship and private ownership diametrically opposed to Marxism, the bedrock of the Chinese government. "What we do in the day-to-day is think about how to help enterprises increase productivity, and grow wealth. I feel this is something that doesn't conflict (with Communist principles)," Mao said. State-owned companies monopolize key economic sectors in the world's second largest economy.

Yet China is also home to over 370 billionaires and a widening wealth gap between urban elite and rural poor. The trappings of capitalism - brought about by what Deng called "socialism with Chinese characteristics" - prompted some analysts to suggest the party was merely paying lip service to Marxism and that economic concerns had trumped ideology. But President Xi Jinping has sought to reverse this, making Karl Marx's seminal work, The Communist Manifesto, mandatory reading for cadres after taking charge of the party in 2012.



BEIJING: Students look at their mobile phones at a stadium in Renmin University, which claims to be the first Chinese university to offer a master's in business administration, in Beijing. — AFP

As part of changes introduced this year, all educational institutes now have Party Committees that are involved in important decisions, said Mao, quickly adding that it was still too early to say what the effect of this was. But it has also been a difficult few months for some Marxists:

since the summer, several activists fighting for the rights of workers striking in southern China have been rounded up by the police. A hot-button issue, the term "strike" has also been heavily censored on Chinese social media, with reports quickly taken down. — AFP

Dutch PM warns against copying Brexit 'chaos'

THE HAGUE: Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte warned the Netherlands yesterday against emulating the "chaos" and division of Britain's decision to leave the European Union. "I compare the Netherlands to a fragile vase, held by its 17 million citizens," Rutte said in a full-page advert, printed in the popular daily tabloid Algemeen Dagblad. In order to preserve this 'vase', "compromises often have to be made in which difficult problems are solved in a sensible way," he said. But Rutte, who has been Dutch premier since 2010 and currently leads a shaky coalition government, said there are examples in society "where the vase has been dropped."

"Look at Great Britain. There, its politicians and its people have forgotten what they've reached together," Rutte said. "Now they are caught up in chaos," he said. Rutte was the first stop on British Prime Minister Theresa May's unsuccessful tour to seek assurances for a Brexit deal from EU leaders last week. The Dutch premier was one of several leaders defending her afterwards at a summit in Brussels-or at

least in comments he made in English. In Dutch, however he warned at the summit against any move to take the Netherlands out of the EU, saying "If anyone in the Netherlands thinks Nexit is a good idea, look at England and see the enormous damage it does."

The Netherlands has been anxiously watching developments in Britain, a key trading partner and one-time ally on many European matters, as it prepares to leave the EU on March 29, 2019. Rutte himself originally invited May's predecessor David Cameron to Amsterdam give the fateful speech leading to the 2016 referendum that led to Brexit, although it ended up being postponed and shifted to London. Observers say yesterday's advert is the start of Rutte's campaign for his Liberal VVD party in the run-up to European parliament and Dutch provincial elections next year.

Known for his upbeat character and his man-of-the-people habit of riding his bicycle to work, Rutte "wants to beat his opponents with positivity and optimism," the NOS public broadcaster said. Rutte also warned about those creating division in the Netherlands-comparing them to "screaming football dads on sidelines". He referred to recent demonstrations for and against Black Pete, or "Zwarte Piet", a black-face Christmas-time character accused of being a racist stereotype. "People were so busy shouting for and against Zwarte Piet that they forgot about the children," for whom Rutte said the early December festival is organized. —AFP

Madagascar: Three presidents, three crises

ANTANANARIVO: Madagascar's past three presidents all had their terms tarnished by political crises. Two of them-Marc Ravalomanana and Andry Rajoelina-are through to tomorrow's second-round election run-off. Here is a look back at the turbulent recent history of the Indian Ocean island:

2002-2009: Ravalomanana

Marc Ravalomanana, a milkman-turned-millionaire dairy mogul is declared winner of the presidential election in 2002 after a crisis lasting nearly seven months against outgoing leader Didier Ratsiraka, who disputed the results. Ravalomanana is reelected in 2006. In 2009, Andry Rajoelina, a baby-faced ex-party planner and media boss who became mayor of the capital Antananarivo, emerges as an opposition leader. He denounces attacks on freedoms under Ravalomanana.

The government had shut down his TV channel in 2008 after it broadcast an interview with ex-president Ratsiraka, exiled since 2002. Between January 26 and February 7, 2009, protests and clashes between Rajoelina supporters and the presidential guard leave around 100 people dead. Having lost the support of the army, Ravalomanana resigns in March. He takes refuge in South Africa and a year

later is sentenced in absentia to life in prison and hard labor over protester deaths in 2009. On returning to Madagascar in 2014, he is arrested but his sentence is lifted and he is freed from house arrest the following year.

2009-2014: Rajoelina

In March 2009, Rajoelina seizes power from Ravalomanana with the backing of the military. The international community denounces what it deems a coup d'etat and for nearly four years, foreign aid and investment is frozen, driving the island deeper into poverty. In September 2011, the country's main political factions sign an accord to draw up a roadmap to guide Madagascar to elections.

2014-2018: Rajaonarimampianina

In December 2013 with the support of the outgoing regime, Hery Rajaonarimampianina wins the presidential election, taking over at the start of 2014. Neither Ravalomanana nor Rajoelina were running against him in the vote, as the international community feared their participation would reignite political turmoil on the island. But just 16 months later, parliament votes overwhelmingly to dismiss Rajaonarimampianina for alleged constitutional violations and general incompetence. He challenges the legality of the move and in mid-June the Constitutional Court throws out the impeachment demand. Protesters hit the streets of Antananarivo again in April 2018 over Rajaonarimampianina's efforts to change electoral laws that opponents say are intended to favour his party. —AFP

What next for Brexit? Four main scenarios

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May faces a dwindling number of options over Brexit after EU leaders at a summit last week rebuffed her attempts to tweak a Brexit deal she struck with them. Here are the four main scenarios facing Britain while the clock ticks down to March 29, 2019 - the day it is scheduled to depart the European project after 46 years:

Deal

This is the Brexit that the British government and EU leaders want-and one which the British parliament refuses to accept. The deal has been rejected from opposing wings of parliament for either keeping Britain tied too closely or remotely to the European Union. May aborted a vote on the deal set for last week because of its certain defeat. Brexit backers in her party then plotted an ultimately unsuccessful coup that saw more than a third back a motion to force May out. May promised them she would wring concessions from Brussels but apparently failed to do so at a summit last week. May's government intends to reintroduce the very same draft for a vote some time between January 7 and January 21. It will hope that fear of the chaos that a no-deal exit might bring will force lawmakers to put aside their reservations.

No-deal

This is billed as the doomsday scenario that threatens to trigger a recession in Britain and markedly slow the European Union's economic growth. It is the default option if the British parliament votes against the deal and there are no other solutions. May's agreement was meant to keep trade rules between the world's fifth-biggest economy and largest single market almost unchanged for a transition period running through the end of 2020. A

Thousands protest 'slave law' in Hungary's capital

BUDAPEST: Protesters threw smoke grenades at police who responded with tear gas in Budapest on Sunday as thousands of people rallied against a new "slave law" passed by the government of conservative Prime Minister Viktor Orban. More than 15,000 people, according to local press reports, joined the demonstration-the first rally since Orban returned to power in 2010 to bring together all opposition parties, from greens to the far right, under the same banner.

The protest was called by unions and opposition parties outraged at reforms that hike the annual overtime hours that employers can demand from 250 to 400 hours and allows payment to be delayed by up to three years. The government says the changes are needed by employers short of manpower and will benefit those wanting to work extra hours. Sunday's protest ended up at Parliament Square, where protesters chanting "Orban get lost!" have been gathering since the law was adopted on Wednesday. Protesters led by two opposition lawmakers later marched to



LONDON: Anti-brexit campaigners wave Union and EU flags outside the Houses of Parliament in central London, ahead of a statement by Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May in the House of Commons. — AFP

sudden shift to different standards would impact almost every economic sector-and possibly see the costs of everyday products in Britain soar. Both sides have been forced to ramp up their preparations for a disorderly Brexit over the past few weeks. UK businesses are stockpiling goods while Brussels is trying to find a way to maintain free-flowing operations involving London's massive financial services hub.

Second referendum

EU supporters have been calling for another vote ever since the first one backed Leave by a 52-48 margin in June 2016. There is no law keeping Britain from doing it all over again, but many question whether this would be democratic-and why a second attempt should take precedence over the first. It also threatens to be just as divisive with opinion polls showing the country still split over the issue. Calls for another vote have ramped up over the last few months, with former prime minister Tony Blair on Sunday saying "what seemed a few months ago unlikely is now I would say above a 50 percent likelihood."

Proponents argue that the Brexit people were promised looks nothing like the deal on

offer and that Britons never backed a no-deal scenario. Some members of May's cabinet are reported to be pushing for a second vote, but the prime minister is against the move, warning it "would do irreparable damage to the integrity of our politics." It is also unclear what options to give people in a second ballot-and what happens if Brexit wins again.

Parliament votes on options

Another possibility that has come to the fore in recent days is for several non-binding votes to be held in parliament on different Brexit options to effectively determine the government's strategy. The first would be on May's deal but others could include a no-deal Brexit, a second referendum or a "Norway deal" that would keep Britain much more closely anchored to the European single market and allow unfettered immigration. Business secretary Greg Clark appeared to hint at this on Monday, telling BBC radio that parliament should be "invited to say what it would agree with" if it votes against the draft Brexit agreement on the table. Other cabinet ministers including finance minister Philip Hammond are reportedly in favor of this solution as a democratic way to end the current limbo. —AFP



BUDAPEST: A protester holds a sign reading 'Stop Orban' as members and sympathizers of several trade unions, political parties and civil organizations march in Budapest to protest against changes to the labor code. — AFP

Hungary's public television headquarters to read a petition but were refused access.

Protesters then hurled missiles and smoke grenades prompting police to respond with tear gas, as they have done in previous days. "They don't negotiate with anyone. They just do whatever they want. They steal everything. It's intolerable. It cannot go on," said one protester. Zoli, a transport worker. Protests in the past week have been the most violent in Hungary for over a decade with dozens arrested and at least 14 police injured. Other reforms passed by parliament, which is dominated by Orban's ruling party, include a bill paving the way for new "administrative courts" to oversee

public administration cases.

The justice minister Laszlo Trocsanyi, a close Orban ally, would oversee the courts, leading some to warn the premier could have near-total political influence over the judicial system. Anger over the legislation has prompted opposition parties across the spectrum, who accuse Orban and his ruling Fidesz party of steering Hungary toward authoritarianism, to join forces. Pro-government public and commercial media have portrayed the protesters as anarchists and "mercenaries of George Soros". The Hungarian-born US billionaire Soros has long been accused by Orban of plotting to destabilize Hungary. —AFP

International

Troops lock down Kashmir city, hold leaders to stifle protests

Army warns of bid to pit civilians against security forces

SRINAGAR: Indian police detained separatist leaders in the disputed Kashmir region yesterday and sealed off roads in an effort to stifle protests against the killing of civilians on the weekend. Unrest has intensified over recent weeks in the Muslim-majority region at the heart of decades of hostility between India and Pakistan, and seven civilians were killed on Saturday when security forces opened fire at a protest over the killing of three militants.

Separatists leaders Mohammad Yasin Malik and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said they were detained as they marched towards an army headquarters in Kashmir's main city of Srinagar. Another leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, was under house arrest, police said. "Indian troops are killing Kashmiris," Malik told reporters as police in riot gear took him away in a white vehicle. "For the last many years they are on a killing spree."

A senior police official, who declined to be identified, said Malik and Farooq would be released "once the situation stabilizes". A spokesman for India's Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi said he had no comment. Police and para-military forces put up barricades in various parts of Srinagar, including on roads leading to the army headquarters, and were patrolling in force. The army warned the population against being used to make trouble. "Army advises people not to fall prey to such designs of anti-national forces," the army said in a statement late on Sunday. "It's an attempt to pit the civilian population against the security forces". One soldier was killed in the Saturday violence.

'Dialogue, not violence'

Shops, government offices and banks were closed in Srinagar and a nearby district and traffic was off the roads. Authorities have also shut down mobile internet and train

services. Pakistan, which like India, claims Kashmir in full but rules it in part, condemned the Saturday killings. "Only dialogue and not violence and killings will resolve this conflict," Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said, adding



Situation tense after seven civilians killed

that his country would raise India's "human rights violations" at the United Nations. Hindu-majority India accuses Pakistan of training and arming separatist militants operating in Kashmir. Pakistan denies that saying it only offers political support to the people of the Muslim region who are being denied their rights by India's security forces.

Indian forces say they have killed 242 militants this year in the region, while 101 civilians and 82 members of the security forces have been killed, making it the bloodiest year in more than a decade. Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said Indian authorities should investigate and prosecute those responsible for "indiscriminate use of force". "Security forces are aware that villagers gather, protest during gunfights with Kashmir militants and have responsibility to ensure civilians are not at risk," she said in a tweet. — Reuters



KASHMIR: Kashmiri Muslim men sit in front of closed shops as Indian paramilitary troopers patrol during the second day of three days strike called by Kashmiri separatists in Srinagar. — AFP

Two of a kind: China's first pet cloning service duplicates star pooch

BEIJING: Juice is a one-foot tall canine wonder who has starred in dozens of Chinese film and television productions. As he gets older and his illustrious career peaks, his Beijing-based master has one wish for the mutt - to live on. Maybe forever. A mongrel stray adopted off the streets, the nine year-old Juice-or "Guozhi" in Mandarin is unable to reproduce since he was neutered from an early age. But his master, animal trainer He Jun, wants to continue his star pooch's image by making a genetic clone. "Juice himself is a piece of intellectual property with social influence," said He. To achieve that, he went to Sinogene, China's first biotech company to provide pet cloning services. Sinogene made headlines when it successfully cloned a gene-edited beagle in May last year. A month later, it launched commercial cloning services. For at least 380,000 yuan (\$55,065), pet owners can clone their pets.

Sinogene's CEO Mi Jidong said the company's pet cloning business is in its initial stages, but he plans to expand services to eventually include gene editing. "We've discovered that more and more pet owners want their pets to accompany them for an even longer period of time," said Mi. China's biotech industry is growing rapidly and, compared with similar enterprises in the West, faces relatively few regulatory barriers. Earlier this year, a Shanghai lab produced the world's first monkey clones, two long-tailed macaques. More controversially, He Jiankui of China's Southern University of Science and Technology last month claimed he used gene-editing technology to alter the embryonic genes of twin girls.

Tin-Lap Lee, an associate professor of biomedical sciences at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said while China has regulations on the use of animals for lab research, there are no laws explicitly covering animal cloning. "On the government side, the image of this cloning industry is very high-tech, and definitely...is very supportive of those high-tech industries because of their high-profit margin," said Lee. In Juice's case, skin samples were collected from the dog's lower abdomen and within weeks, Sinogene was able to isolate his DNA and fertilize an egg. The fer-

tilised egg is then surgically inserted into the uterus of a surrogate mother dog - in this case a beagle. Juice's copy, "Little Juice"-or "Zhizhi" in Chinese-was born in mid-September and stayed with its surrogate mother in Sinogene's lab for about a month. The puppy was later given to He at a small ceremony at which the original Juice was present. While He has not committed Little Juice to show business just yet, he sees lots of potential. "We believe he'll be even better than the older Juice," He said. — Reuters

Hopes fade for 13 miners trapped in a flooded coal pit

NEW DELHI: Hope has all but faded for 13 miners trapped deep underground four days ago when an illegal "rat hole" coal pit flooded in remote northeastern India. Emergency crews have been pumping water from the site since the accident last Thursday in mineral-rich Meghalaya state, but no contact has been made with the workers believed trapped below, police say. Authorities have declined to comment on their fate, but concede the operation was fraught with difficulty. "We can't say anything now as rescue operations are still on," said Sylvester Nongtner, local police superintendent in the area, told AFP.

"The coal pit is very deep, some 350 feet. We are trying our best." An Indian court had banned coal mining in the area in 2014 after environmental activists complained it was responsible for severe water pollution. But the practice continues with locals illegally extracting coal using dangerous so-called rat hole mines. This involves digging pits on the side of hills and then burrowing small horizontal tunnels into the hill to reach a coal seam. At least 15 miners were killed after they were trapped inside a flooded rat hole mine elsewhere in Meghalaya in 2012. Their bodies were never recovered. — AFP

Chinese activists go bald in protest, demand justice

BEIJING: The wife of a detained Chinese lawyer and three supporters shaved their heads yesterday and attempted to submit to a Beijing court a petition protesting her husband's indefinite detention. The four women went to the Hongseun People's High Court in south Beijing in a symbolic protest against what they said highlighted the "lawlessness" of the country. "We can go bald, but the country cannot be lawless," the four women shouted outside the courthouse after they were prevented by police from entering the premises. The Chinese words for being completely bald and having a state of lawlessness-"wufa"-are homonyms. Their husbands were all targeted during a sweeping crackdown on activists and lawyers on July 9, 2015.

Attorney Wang Quanzhang, who defended political activists and victims of land seizures, disappeared in the sweep aimed at courtroom critics of Communist authorities. Charged in January 2016 with alleged "subversion of state power", Wang is the only one of over 200 lawyers and activists arrested in the so-called "709 crackdown" who is yet to be tried or released. "My husband is being detained incommunicado without a proper explanation," his wife Li Wenzu told AFP. "I want answers as to why the authorities aren't following due process. I want to know why they aren't allowing the family's lawyer to visit Wang," she said.

Li said over the past three years she has submitted over 30 freedom of information requests to police, which have been sent back unanswered. In April, Li attempted to march 100 kilometers (60 miles) to a detention facility in neighboring Tianjin to highlight her husband's plight before she was thwarted by police. "I want to urge the Supreme People's Court to perform its supervisory duties and investigate why the second intermediate court in Tianjin that is handling my husband's case is dragging its feet," Li said. "The court has surpassed the time limit prescribed by law for dealing with such cases," she said.

Health concerns

Liu Ermin, wife of rights activist Zhai Yanmin, said she was protesting her husband's torture while in detention. "His health has deteriorated and we are still under constant surveillance," she said. The third woman was Yuan Shanshan, wife of lawyer Xie Yanyi. Xie, who defended practitioners of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement, was released on bail pending trial in January 2017. He has since shed light on the torture of detained lawyers.

Wang Qiaoling, wife of lawyer Li Heping, also joined the protest. Li Heping was given a three-year suspended jail term in April 2017 for subverting state power. Three years after what activists say was a coordinated attempt to quash China's rights movement, most of those detained are in prison or under house arrest. Some of them made public confessions and were sentenced in what their families say were either secret or scripted trials. Some of the cases have attracted international attention. German Chancellor Angela Merkel met Li Wenzu during a May visit to Beijing—a rare show of solidarity from a world leader.— AFP

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Mauritanians face US deportation, jail

Mo had nothing but a set of jail clothes and the name of a distant cousin when he boarded the deportation flight from the United States to Mauritania, the African country he had fled. After more than 20 years he was returning to the scene of childhood trauma - an Islamic republic on the edge of the Sahara where members of black ethnic groups, like him, have suffered decades of slavery and persecution under a light-skinned elite.

The plane descended over desert, and his fears were realized. Upon arrival in the capital, Nouakchott, he was arrested and taken to jail, where he remained for two weeks until his family paid a bribe to free him. "I never thought I would come back to this life," said the 45-year-old, identified here by a nickname for his protection, from his cousin's house, where he hid for five months before fleeing the country again.

Mo had a good job in Ohio and had recently bought a house with his American wife where their children played basketball in the backyard. Now he sat in a dark room every day on his cell phone, afraid to go outside for fear of arrest. Thousands like Mo sought refuge in the United States after a 1989 conflict in which black Mauritanians were stripped of their citizenship and expelled. Longstanding U.S. policy held that even those denied refugee status could remain.

Now they are being deported as part of an immigration crackdown under President Donald Trump. Because Mauritania does not recognize their citizenship, interviews suggest dozens have been interrogated, detained and forced to hide. Mauritanian authorities and US immigration officials declined to respond to questions for this story. "I have not heard of any person deported who was not at least initially detained," said Lynn Tramont, director of the Ohio Immigrant Alliance, who has been following the cases.

Ohio is home to the United States' largest Mauritanian community, about 3,000-strong. The United States deported 98 Mauritanians in the year to October, compared to just eight in the previous 12 months, according to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The Thomson Reuters Foundation spoke with six of them, all of whom were arrested and detained immediately upon arrival and five of whom have since fled to neighboring countries in fear. Hundreds more are at risk, say lawyers and advocates, with about 25 men detained in the United States and awaiting deportation now.

Laissez-passer

Mauritania expelled up to 50,000 black citizens after clashes with Senegal over border land in 1989, forcing them to surrender ID cards and nationality documents, according to Human Rights Watch. Thousands more fled on their own. Many have since returned, but race relations are far from smooth. The country's white Moors dominate politics and business and although it is illegal, the Global Slavery Index estimates 90,000 black Mauritanians are still enslaved.

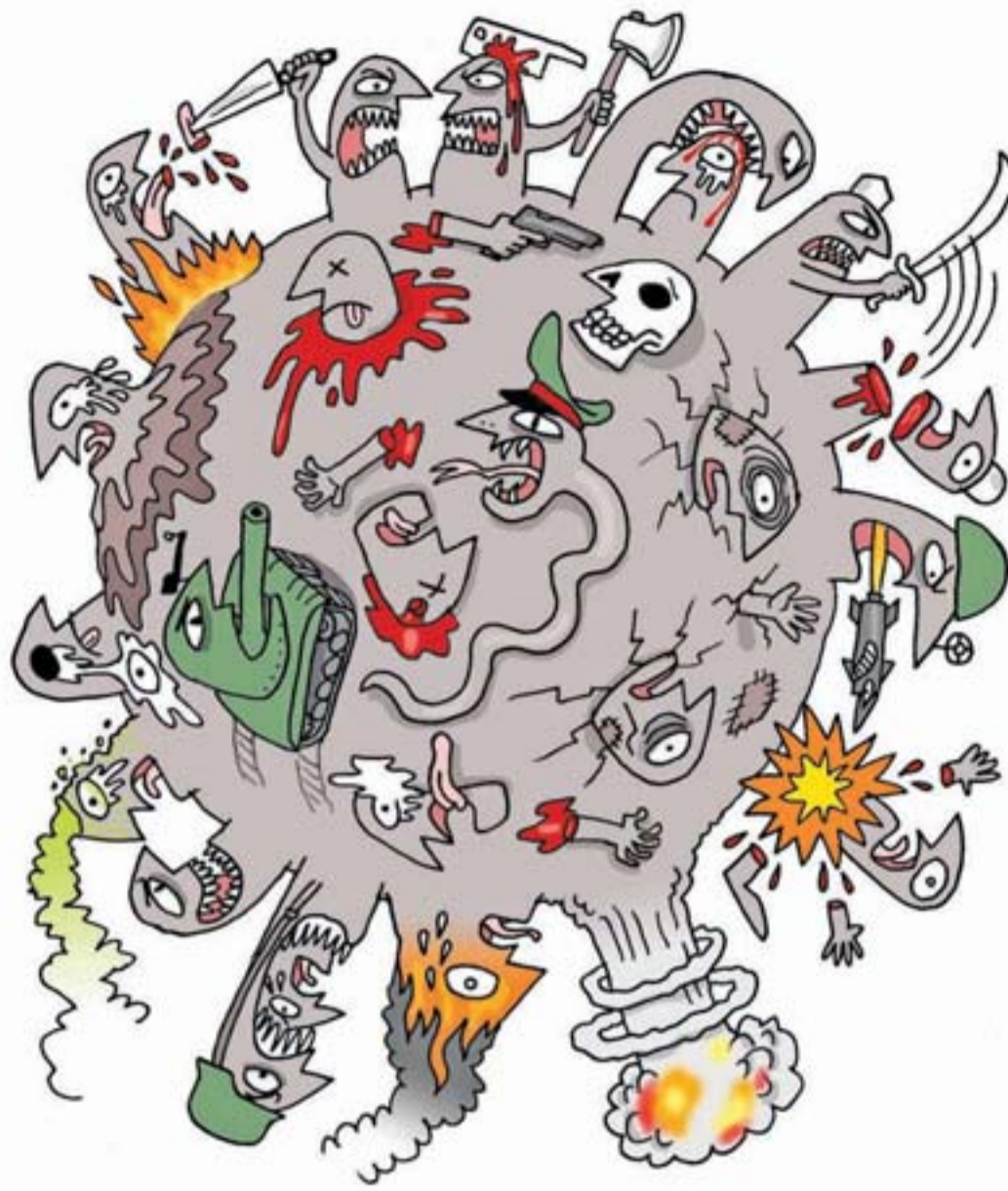
People like Mo relied on translators to file their asylum applications in the United States, and many were denied for lack of credibility or documents, lawyers said. They were allowed to stay and simply monitored by ICE - until late last year. "I knew it was coming. They were getting everybody," said Mo in October, wearing the same clothes he had put on for work the morning ICE picked him up outside his house in May.

Under pressure from the Trump administration, the Mauritanian embassy started issuing travel permits, "laissez-passeurs", so its citizens could be sent back, lawyers said. But when Mo presented his in Mauritania, he was told it was not proof of citizenship and that he had no legal rights there, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "They (the authorities) said anyone can make this," said Mo, waving the flimsy document typed up on printing paper. Mauritania's dusty streets are full of checkpoints and police, and not having papers puts one at constant risk of arrest, locals said. Stressed and afraid, in November Mo paid someone to smuggle him out.

Interrogated upon arrival, the deportees were all asked why they had gone to the United States. "When they know you applied for asylum in USA, that's a big problem, you don't want to say that," said one deportee, who made up a story about migrating for economic reasons instead. Mauritania's government says slavery and discrimination are in the past and has jailed and tortured people who challenge this narrative. The country denied entry to a group of U.S. civil rights leaders invited by anti-slavery groups last year.

Ahmed, a Mauritanian living in Nouakchott, was contacted by a family member to help a deportee get out of jail. For two weeks he negotiated with police every day. "They said we can't let him go, these people go to the US to denigrate the country, humiliate the country, things like that," Ahmed said. "There's a police officer who told me that." He eventually found the man, who had lived in the United States for 18 years, locked up with 40 people in one room. "He was in very difficult conditions," said Ahmed, whose name has been changed for his safety. "From then on, every day it was I who brought him food."

Three deportees who spoke to the Thomson Reuters Foundation said they were released after one day because they called on an influential connection. Others were held for up to two weeks and released after payment of \$200-300. — Reuters



Cartoon for the Soul



GCC march will not cease to exist

By Naif Al-Zufairi

The GCC summit held in Riyadh on Dec 9, 2018 proved that the bloc is still standing on solid ground. Leaders of the GCC are more determined than any time before to maintain, support and continue the march of the unity of the GCC. H.H. the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, out of his keenness and circumspection, asserted on the importance of stopping and banning the malicious media campaigns which aim at sowing the seeds of sedition and discord and drive a wedge into the ranks of the GCC.

The GCC, since the 39 years of its foundation, has man-

aged to live up to most of the GCC peoples' aspirations and ambitions, which were manifested by the following:

- Consolidation of social cohesion and fraternity as well as economic integration and strategic cooperation to counter the looming regional and international challenges that lie ahead.
- Facilitation of product transshipments and transactions, which contributed to financial prosperity.
- Free movement of GCC people within GCC countries without lengthy passport formalities.
- Right of ownership of real estate by GCC citizens within the GCC region.
- Establishment of a unified and highly coordinated

military command headquarters "Peninsula Shield" to defend the GCC's territorial integrity.

GCC countries are working seriously to issue a unified GCC currency, which will surely boost the GCC countries' monetary system. The people of the GCC honestly and seriously appeal to their leaders to be more cognizant of the enormity of the challenges that lie ahead, chief among them the lingering diplomatic crisis, which behooves on them to contain and tackle it seriously to remain united and work as a cohesive unit. We all pray to the Almighty God to guide our GCC leaders to the right path of achieving their peoples' desired objectives of peace, stability and economic prosperity.

Bowing out, Kabila raises prospect of a return act

A month before his scheduled departure after nearly two decades as Congo's president, Joseph Kabila received a procession of foreign reporters at his heavily guarded riverside palace for a rare series of interviews. If the timing suggested a valedictory, the 47-year-old leader's words indicated otherwise. He vowed to remain in politics and, in one interview after another, left open the possibility of running again in 2023 when the clock resets on presidential term limits.

"My role will be to make sure that we don't go back to square one, square one meaning where we found the Congo 22 years ago," he told Reuters inside an ornate reception room with high ceilings and sweeping views of the churning Congo River. "In politics, in life, you shouldn't rule out anything," he said when asked about a potential return. "There are still other chapters to write."

In the 18 years since a youthful, clean-shaven Kabila succeeded his slain father, Laurent, the now bulked-up president sporting a billowy grey beard has traced an unlikely trajectory from accidental and apparently reluctant leader to the defining Congolese figure of his time. Whether the vote due on Dec. 23 brings down the curtain on the tumultuous Kabila era, which began when Laurent seized power in 1997, or triggers a new phase in which Joseph becomes the power behind the throne of his preferred successor, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, remains unclear.

It depends in part on how the Congolese reflect on his rule. There were early accomplishments - ending a regional war and holding the first open presidential elections - but also incessant conflict, lethal crackdowns on pro-democracy protesters and corruption that the government acknowledges siphoned off billions of dollars of potential revenue. Foreign investment has propelled Democratic Republic of Congo to the status of Africa's top copper producer and the world's leading miner of cobalt, a crucial component of electric car batteries, but militia violence has persisted in the east.

Denis Mukwege, the Congolese doctor who shared this year's Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, said Kabila had a right to remain in politics but hoped voters would remember his broken promises. "None of the elements needed to install a real democracy have been made during his time in power," he told Reuters.

Pulling the Strings

Kabila's critics and some analysts say concerns about his personal security - his assassinated father's mausoleum stands below the presidential palace - and the fortune reportedly amassed by his family could account for a seeming reluctance to cede power. A report last year by a research group at New York University found his family's businesses are likely worth tens of millions of dollars. Kabila has called such reports "stupidity".

He did not specifically respond to a Reuters investigation that showed nearly a third of the purchase price of Congolese passports goes to a company in the United Arab Emirates whose owner is believed to be a close relative of the president. Even if Shadary, a former interior minister who many analysts say was chosen for his loyalty and lack of an independent political base, beats his two



In this photo taken on Dec 10, 2018, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo Joseph Kabila sits in the garden of his personal ranch in Kinshasa. — AFP

main rivals, Kabila has reason to worry about his ability to pull the strings.

He need only look next door to Angola, where President Joao Lourenco quickly marginalized Jose Eduardo dos Santos, his powerful predecessor who ruled for 38 years, by accusing family members of corruption. "Kabila saw what happened in Angola. That's why he chose the person who is the most loyal and, above all, the least threatening to his personal power," said Manya Riche, who advised Kabila from 2008 to 2011. Referring to an arrangement in which Vladimir Putin remained Russia's dominant leader as prime minister until he could run for president again, she said: "This isn't Russia. At a certain point here, it's the chief who's in the chair who is the chief."

Coming to power

Kabila was born in 1971 in eastern Congo in the bush headquarters of his father's rebellion against long-time dictator Mobutu Sese Seko but spent most of his early years in neighboring Tanzania. He returned to Congo to take part in Laurent's Rwandan and Ugandan-backed successful march on the capital Kinshasa. A period of military training in China followed and Joseph was back as army chief when a bodyguard shot his father in 2001.

The country he inherited at 29 was in disarray, fragmented between government and rebel territories, with tens of thousands of people dying each month from conflict, hunger and disease. A former US official who met Kabila during his first trip to Washington that year described the shy, awkward leader as a "deer in the headlights". With his halting French and virtually non-existent Lingala - the language of the capital and the army - he struggled to connect with many Congolese. But his political instincts were surprisingly good.

He courted Western powers such as the United States and France, which his father's anti-colonial rhetoric had alienated. He passed a liberalized mining code that attracted foreign investment. He revived a stalled peace process, leading to a 2003 power-sharing deal that kept him in the presidency even though rebels remained active in the east. "He managed to run the country, more or less," said Azarias Ruberwa, a rebel leader who joined the power-sharing administration and is now a government minister. Kabila won both rounds of voting in elections held in 2006, which were generally viewed as fair, as well as the bouts of fighting that erupted after results were announced.

Those victories, followed by another vote in 2011 marred by widespread allegations of fraud, led to changes in his leadership style, according to people close to him. "The president became less tolerant of the West," a former advisor said on condition of anonymity. "He saw them as imposing their ideas on him." — Reuters

Japan electronics firms look to re-engineer their design mojo

Akihiro Adachi, a 31-year-old audiovisual equipment designer at Panasonic Corp, longed for some personal space during his lengthy train rides from Osaka to Tokyo. So when his company set out to encourage innovation, he joined with some colleagues and came up with "Wear Space," a headset that limits noise and peripheral vision. Many at Panasonic were puzzled. "Someone said the office full of people wearing this would look weird," said Kang Hwayoung, another member of the 10-person design team.

But the prototype unexpectedly won a global design award and received positive feedback from unexpected quarters, such as sake tasters who wanted to limit sensory input. The project is among a range of efforts in the Japanese electronics industry to reinvent industrial design. After years of losing ground to design-first rivals such as Apple and Dyson, Japanese companies are now trying to recover the processes and creative flair that produced iconic products such as the Walkman.

Panasonic, Sony and Mitsubishi Electric are among those implementing practices that have been routine at many US and European companies, such as engaging designers at every step and treating packaging as part of the product. "We used to have designers involved only in final stages of our product development process, just for an aesthetic fix," Yoshiyuki Miyabe, Panasonic's technology and manufacturing chief, told reporters. "We are revamping the process so that designers can join us from the planning phase."

The Japanese government is promoting the efforts: a report in May urged corporate executives to pursue "design-driven management, whereby a company leverages design as a primary driver of competitiveness". It also called for tax incentives for design-related investments and new laws to better protect intellectual property. The government is set to revise such laws next year. "Of course, we had an argument over how much the government can do and should do with private-sector issues like this," said Daisuke Kubota, director at the government's design registration system planning office, who was involved in the panel.

"But a lot of design experts asked us for government initiatives, saying that this is really the last chance and Japan would never be able to catch up with global rivals if this opportunity is missed." Another member of the panel, Kinya Tagawa, visiting professor at the Royal College of Art and co-founder of design firm Takram, says there has been a sharp increase in major companies requesting design lectures for their executives. "I'm seeing a sign of change," he said.

All agree there is a long way to go. C-suite designers remain a rarity at most electronics companies while technologists reign supreme, company officials and industrial designers say. Japan last year received 31,961 applications for design registrations, only a fraction of China's 628,658 and half of South Korea's 67,374. In the heyday of the Japanese electronics industry in the early 1980s, Japan had nearly 60,000 applications every year. — Reuters

Business

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12 Oil price softness, OPEC cuts to impact Kuwait's growth outlook**13** Marmore reveals 'Top 30 Stocks' in GCC based on RODE Metrics'**14** Lexus tops Consumer Reports' annual list of most reliable cars

SHENZHEN: People take a selfie in front of a billboard featuring China's late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping (not seen) on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the country's "reform and opening up" policy in Shenzhen yesterday. China celebrates today the 40th anniversary of its transformative "reform and opening up" policy, which turned the world's most populous country into an economic juggernaut that now faces slowing growth and a stern US challenge. —AFP

US and China trade barbs at WTO

Washington has brought back 'the ghost of unilateralism': Beijing

GENEVA: The United States said yesterday that China's "unfair competitive practices" were harming foreign companies and workers in a way that violates World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, but vowed to lead reform efforts.

US trade ambassador Dennis Shea drew fire from Chinese envoy Zhang Xiangchen who said the Trump administration's tariffs on steel and aluminium products allowed protectionism under the guise of dubious national security concerns. The heated words, in texts seen by Reuters, were exchanged at the start of a closed-door review of US trade policies, held every two years at the WTO, which continues tomorrow.

Shea expressed concern about the WTO dispute settlement system having "strayed far from the system agreed to by members" and said that the Appellate Body had overreached in some legal interpretations. Zhang countered that by blocking the selection of judges, Washington was putting the system into paralysis.

To force reform at the WTO, Trump's team has refused to allow new appointments to the Appellate

Body, the world's top trade court, a process which requires consensus among member states. As a result, the court is running out of judges, and will be unable to issue binding rulings in disputes.

Shea described the US economy as "one of the most open and competitive economies in the world", with among the lowest tariffs globally, rejecting criticism by some of the US approach as "unilateralist and protectionist". China has pursued "non-market industrial policies and other unfair competitive practices" aimed at supporting its domestic industries while restricting or discriminating against foreign companies and their goods and services, he said.

"The WTO is not well equipped to handle the fundamental challenge posed by China, which continues to embrace a state-led, mercantilist approach to the economy and trade," Shea said.

He did not refer to the dispute on steel or automobiles which brought the two powers to the brink of a major trade war but defended the US. "Section 301" investigation that found in March that Chinese practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property

and innovation were discriminatory.

On Section 301, Zhang said the US measures vastly increased tariffs, "bringing back to life the ghost of unilateralism that has been dormant for decades". Shea said the United States was committed to working with like-minded members to address concerns on the functioning of the WTO. "Reforms are necessary for the continued viability of the institution," he said.

Zhang echoed his call, but said: "If the roof of this building is leaking, we should work together to fix it, rather than dismantling it and exposing all of us to rains and storms."

Meanwhile, the European Union said yesterday the World Trade Organization (WTO) was mired in a "deep crisis and the United States is at its epicentre", and it called on the Trump administration to put forward concrete reform proposals.

EU Ambassador Mark Vanheukelen, speaking at a WTO review of US trade policies, also criticized limitations on the US procurement market, in particular through "Buy American" legislation, and its "heavy restrictions" on maritime transport. —Agencies

Trump calls on Fed not to raise rates on eve of policy meeting

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump yesterday called on the Federal Reserve not to raise interest rates, one day before a meeting at which policymakers are widely expected to do so.

The Twitter outburst renewed the president's rock throwing at the central bank, which he accuses of undermining his economic agenda of tax cuts, slashed regulations and multi-front trade offensives.

"It is incredible that with a very strong dollar and virtually no inflation, the outside world blowing up around us, Paris is burning and China way down, the Fed is even considering yet another interest rate hike," Trump wrote, in a message sent one hour before stock markets were due to open.

"Take the Victory!" Trump has repeatedly broken with norms of recent decades, hammering the central bank this year over its moves away from the zero interest rate policy implemented during the global financial crisis.

As the US economy has recovered, the Fed has been raising the benchmark lending rate gradually since December 2015. The Fed on Tuesday opens its two-day policy meeting, and it widely expected to raise the key rate for the fourth time this year, working to get ahead of expected gains in inflation.

Policymakers have offered little reaction to Trump's string of taunts, with Chairman Jerome Powell indicating official tune out political noise.

But analysts and former Fed members say Trump's unprecedented vitriol could cause the central bank to prove its independence by raising rates even if policymakers might otherwise have paused.

Inflation is holding right around the Fed's two percent target, but if markets believe the Fed can be swayed by political pressure, inflation fears could ignite and become a more serious problem.

Amid brisk economic expansion after a decade of steady job growth, US unemployment is flirting with 50 year lows, but the US economy is expected to slow.



Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a press conference in Washington, DC. —AFP

And with global growth also weakening, there is a growing feeling the central bank will not have to raise rates as much as previously expected next year.

Powell and other officials in recent weeks have suggested they could show patience in 2019 as they study incoming economic data. Futures markets currently put the odds of a rate hike this week at about 80 percent. —AFP

Dubai's DP World seeks to quash India antitrust probe over Mumbai court filing

NEW DELHI: Dubai's DP World has approached an Indian court to quash an antitrust investigation recently ordered to probe its alleged anti-competitive behavior at the country's largest container port in Mumbai, a legal document reviewed by Reuters showed. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) last month said it suspected alleged antitrust violations by DP World and Denmark's A.P. Moller-Maersk at the terminals they operate at state-owned Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT).

The CCI's probe followed a complaint by Singapore's PSA International Pte Ltd, which had alleged that Maersk and DP World businesses created barriers to hinder the growth of PSA's terminal by colluding on certain charges they levy at JNPT. Reuters reported last month. In a filing in the High Court in Mumbai last week, the DP World unit Nhava Sheva International Container Terminal said the CCI's decision to order an investigation was "arbitrary" and "capricious".

The filing, dated Dec. 13, has been reviewed by Reuters. It has not been previously reported.

Allowing the CCI's order to stand "would lead to gross discrimination and grave economic harm" on the business, the DP World unit said in its petition, urging the court to quash the CCI's order, put it on hold, or ask the watchdog to withdraw it.

A spokeswoman for DP World in India, Heena Sharma, declined to comment, saying the matter was sub judice. PSA declined to comment. A.P. Moller-Maersk, the world's biggest container shipping group, did not respond to queries.

The CCI did not respond to Reuters questions. Handling 66 million tonnes of cargo in the last fiscal year to March, JNPT is critical to India's international trade. The port handles more than half of India's traffic of shipping containers each year. —Reuters

Business

NBK Economic Report

Oil price softness, OPEC cuts to impact Kuwait's growth outlook

Crude price plunge triggers OPEC+ policy change

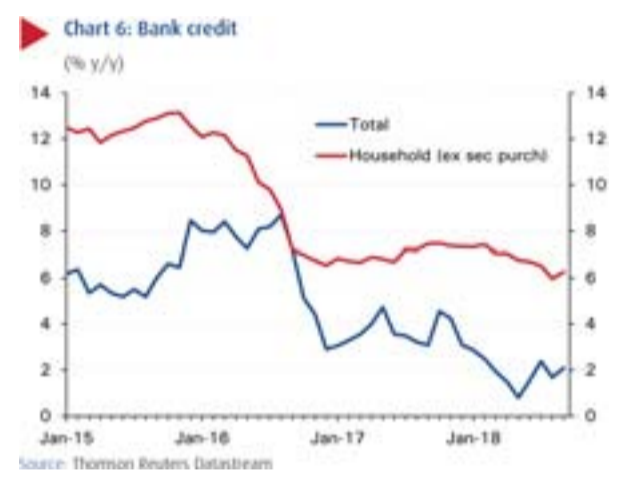
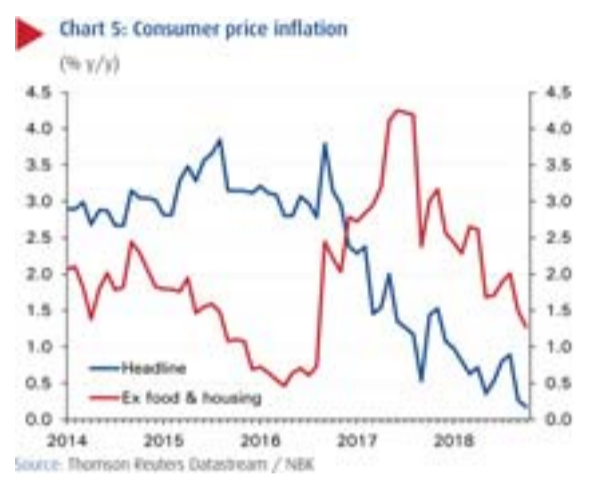
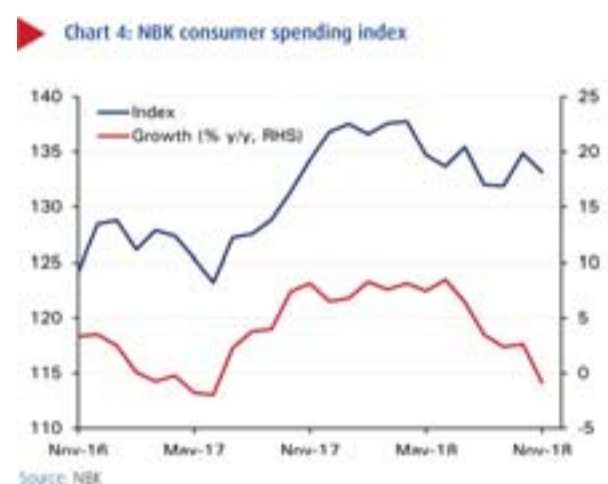
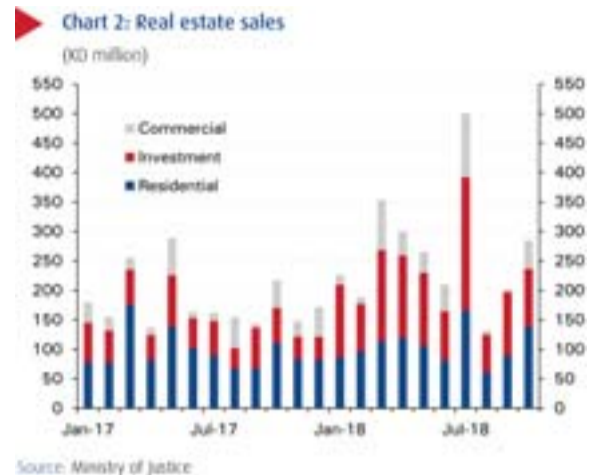
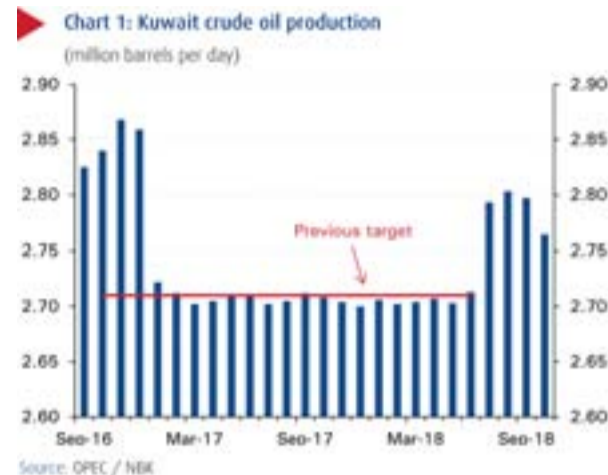
KUWAIT: November's fall in oil prices and the just-announced production cuts by OPEC (see below) will impact the growth outlook for the Kuwait economy. The oil sector accounts for around half of GDP in real terms and about 90 percent of government revenues, so recent developments - not yet captured in the forecasts presented in this document - will have a considerable impact on the outlook for both growth and the public finances next year. Meanwhile news on the non-oil economy over the past month was mixed, with real estate sales recovering to solid levels in October but consumer spending weak in November, likely affected by severe weather conditions.

Having declined 7 percent in October, the price of Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) plunged by a still-larger 22 percent in November to end the month at \$58/bbl. The fall - triggered by fears of an emerging oil glut due to a combination of higher than expected Iranian output thanks to sanctions waivers for key customers, rising US shale output, and concerns about a global economic downturn hitting oil demand - provoked a change in policy by the OPEC+ group which agreed in early-December to cut output by 1.2 million b/d for six months starting from January 2019. The decision provided some near-term support for oil prices, with the international benchmark Brent jumping 5 percent after the deal was announced before subsequently falling back on concerns that the cuts may still not be enough to prevent oversupply in the global oil market next year.

OPEC data show that Kuwait's crude oil output fell back in October to 2.76 million b/d, its second consecutive monthly fall and despite the easing of earlier OPEC production restrictions in the summer that it had been assumed would see production move higher. Although country quotas have not been assigned, OPEC's latest move to trim production could see production move lower still from October levels - which represents the base month from which the latest cuts are applied. These developments came out just before sending this report to publication and therefore we have not yet formally changed our forecasts. But it seems plausible that output could be trimmed back over coming months to the 2.7 million b/d attained before the summer. This would lower our GDP growth forecast for 2019 considerably from its current 4 percent, which was predicated on a rebound in oil output next year.

Real estate sales gain

October data showed relatively solid real estate sales, at KD 285 million, up 31 percent y/y and 42 percent m/m, and representing the second consecutive monthly rise in sales since the slump observed in August. This is well above the monthly average for 2017 (KD 181 million), and slightly above the average for 2018 (KD 265mm). Higher sales were driven by a rise in transactions in the residential sector, but more notably a strong rise in commercial sector activity. Meanwhile, investment sales declined moderately (-9 percent) from the previous month, but still remain relatively solid at just under KD 100 million. The drop in investment sales was despite transactions rising by 39 percent m/m, while the average transaction size for investment properties declined by 34 percent m/m. The latter could be due to either a drop in prices or more likely a change in the type of apartment being traded - i.e. average building size/quality.



Provisional data for the public finances show that the government recorded a fiscal surplus of KD3.1 billion in the first seven months of FY2018/19 (April to October, and before transfers to the Reserve Fund for Future Generations), a sharp turnaround from the KD1.5 billion deficit recorded for the same period a year earlier. Two main factors account for the improvement. First, oil revenues - which typically account for 90-95 percent of all budget receipts - surged 51 percent y/y due to a similar-sized rise in oil prices, while non-oil revenues fell slightly. Second, government spending saw a surprising fall of 9 percent y/y, despite the 8 percent full-year rise factored in to the official budget. Within the overall total, both current (-8 percent) and capital (-13 percent) spending recorded declines.

Although we do not dismiss the weak spending figures entirely, we suspect that the scale of the decline reflects reporting issues and that the underlying spending picture is stronger. The large recorded drop in wages and salaries - the biggest component of the budget and normally paid on time - is particularly unusual.

Consumer spending dips

Without this drop, overall spending would have risen 4 percent y/y. If we are correct and spending at the end of the year is back on track, the budget outcome will turn out to be less buoyant than the latest figures imply - especially once the fall in oil prices since October is factored in. Our current forecast projects a small deficit of around KD 0.4 billion, or 1 percent of GDP, for the year as a whole. But the deficit is likely to be revised higher this year and next once the above factors are taken into account.

Consumer spending contracted by 0.9 percent y/y in November, the first decline in 17-months, following a small pick-up in October. NBK consumer spending index

Source: NBK

The slowdown stemmed from declines across the board, with growth in the consumption of durables (mainly autos) and non-durables contracting, and spending on services easing over the month. The weaker spending figures were almost certainly affected by the restrictions to moving around and emergency public holidays in November triggered by severe weather conditions.

Inflation drops again

Consumer price inflation fell again in October, hitting a near-15-year low of 0.2 percent y/y from 0.3 percent in September. Inflation in most sub-segments of the index was flat-to-falling, with the largest downward contribution coming from the 'miscellaneous' category, where inflation fell to 0.7 percent from 1.7 percent in September. Reflecting this, one measure of 'core' inflation - which excludes food and housing costs - fell to just 1.3 percent; this is just half the rate seen as recently as April. Food inflation also edged down to 0.3 percent, though deflation in housing services (mostly rents) eased slightly to -1.4 percent. These figures highlight the continued broad-based absence of significant price pressures throughout the economy, reflecting a combination of only moderate economic growth, the strength of the dinar against many trade partners' currencies keeping import costs down, and weakness in the housing market which is pressuring rents.

Credit growth edged higher to 2.1 percent in September from 1.7 percent in August, as seasonal factors that weighed on the previous month's performance faded. The uptick was supported by faster lending to both businesses (2.0 percent) and households (6.3 percent) and the usual end-of-quarter jump in lending for the purchase of securities. The non-classified sectors and real estate were the sectors that experienced the most increases, while lending to the trade sector fell for a second consecutive month. Meanwhile, private deposits increased by a strong KD455 million, driven by gains in KD sight deposits and FC deposits. This helped push growth in the M2 money supply measure to 4.8 percent y/y, up from 4.4 percent in August.

The Boursa Kuwait All Share index logged its first increase in four months in November, up 1.3 percent m/m, buoyed by strong activity in its premier market (1.6 percent) which accounted for more than two-third of the month's average daily traded value (KD 11 million/day). The segment is benefiting from Boursa's inclusion into FTSE's Emerging Market index, which will see 11 out of the 17 premier listed companies fully join the index late in December. Sector-wise, the increase was led by telecoms, real estate, consumer services, and financial services. Overall, the improving dynamics helped grow the market capitalization by KD 475 million to KD 29.2 billion.

As the market prepares for the second tranche of the FTSE inclusion in December, another \$500 million in foreign inflows are expected. So far, the market has seen \$473 million in net foreign and GCC inflows, making up 23 percent of total traded activity during the month, up from 18 percent the previous month.

China trade steps seen as good start but leave core US demands untouched

WASHINGTON: The United States has welcomed Chinese concessions since the two declared a trade war truce in early December, but trade experts and people familiar with negotiations say Beijing needs to do far more to meet US demands for long-term change in how China does business.

US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, agreed on Dec. 1 in Buenos Aires to stop escalating tit-for-tat tariffs that have disrupted the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars of goods between the world's two biggest economies.

Since then, Beijing has resumed buying US soybeans, the single largest agricultural export between the two countries. China has also cut tariffs on imports of cars from the United States, dialed back on an industrial development plan known as "Made in China 2025," and told its state refiners to buy more US oil.

Trump took those as signs that "China wants to make a big and very comprehensive deal."

But they only start to bring Beijing and Washington back to their pre-trade-war status quo, experts said, and do little to resolve core US demands for structural changes in China to end policies that subsidize large state-owned enterprises and effectively force the transfer of American technology to Chinese firms.

"I think these are goodwill gestures, but they don't go beyond offers that were on the table before Trump launched his trade war," said Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow and trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. —Reuters

Infiniti Al-Babtain invites customers to benefit from exclusive leasing offer

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, continues to offer its loyal fans limitless opportunities to enjoy Infiniti's high performance models ranging from INFINITI Q30 to QX80.

Infiniti Al-Babtain guarantees attractive leasing prices in addition to a benefit package of free comprehensive insurance, maintenance and a replacement car that comes along with the leasing offer.

The Q30 which is Infiniti's signature design is a premium compact vehicle that is popular among the younger drivers. Q30 comes with a double-arch grille with a unique 3D mesh and is powered by 1.6L or 2.0L Turbo engines in a 2WD configuration. For enthusiasts, the 2.0L Turbo is also offered with an optional AWD drivetrain. The 2.0L Turbo engine is a power-horse as it delivers 208hp and 350Nm torque. At peak performance, the INFINITI Q30 blasts from 0-to-100kph in 7.3 seconds.

The QX70 comes with exterior enhancements, LED daytime running lights along with unique 21x9.5-inch multi-spoke premium paint-finished aluminum-alloy wheels mounted with 265/45R21 V-rated all-season tires. The QX70 is powered by a 329-horsepower 3.7-liter V6 with VVEL (Variable Valve Event & Lift). The engine is matched with a 7-speed automatic transmission featuring Adaptive Shift Control (ASC).

The QX80 has a refined and spacious cabin that features high-quality materials, a hand-crafted finish and advanced drive-assist technologies. With a taut yet comfort-oriented suspension, and ample performance from its 5.6-liter V8 engine, the QX80 gives drivers an assured feeling of control and confidence at the wheel. The rear entertainment system has also



been upgraded. Higher-resolution screens provide the interface for connectivity and entertainment devices. The system also now supports 31 languages, up from three in the outgoing QX80.

Infiniti Al-Babtain welcomes its customers to take advantage of the exclusive deal and visit the Infiniti showroom located in Al-Rai that opens every day except Fridays.

Business

Marmore reveals 'Top 30 Stocks in GCC based on RODE Metrics'

Markaz research arm and UIC hold a presentation

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre 'Markaz' research arm, Marmore MENA Intelligence, organized a presentation in collaboration with The Investment Studies Center (ISC) at Union of Investment Companies (UIC) titled "Top 30 Stock Picks in GCC based on RODE Metrics" yesterday at Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The presentation by M R Raghu, Head of Research at Markaz and Managing Director of Marmore, is based on a report by Marmore that revealed the portfolio of top 30 stocks identified using metrics such as ROIC (Return on Invested Capital) or ROE (Return on Equity), Dividend yield and Earnings yield (RODE) as stock filters/screens. It also dwelled on the back-testing results and highlighted how much an investor could have gained over the benchmark index through simple stock selection methods.

Raghu stated, "Businesses with strong fundamentals are most certain to weather the market volatility and build shareholder wealth in the long run. The scenario is no different when it comes to stock selection and building a portfolio. The stocks identified using RODE metric provide stocks with fundamentally strong businesses that could generate wealth, irrespective of the way the broader equity markets sway."

Raghu added, "In order to pick fundamentally strong stocks, it is vital that an investor is well-aware of metrics such as ROIC (Return on Invested Capital) or ROE (Return on Equity), Dividend yield and Earnings yield, that reflect the fundamental value of a company most appropriately irrespective of the direction equity markets take."

He pointed out, "Better performing businesses, in general, efficiently use their capital to generate healthy

free cash flow and they do so consistently, which is measured by the financial metric ROIC for non-banking stocks and through ROE for banking stocks. We have considered those companies, which have consistently achieved ROCI/ROE over their weighted average cost of capital, as they add economic value."

Distribution of the cash flow generated to shareholders is measured by dividend yield and earnings yield as this helps one to determine the valuation of the stock on a relative basis when compared with its peers. The companies were subjected to other stock filters such as stocks that have a dividend yield of at least two-thirds of S&P MENA bond yield and whose earnings yield are at least twice that of the S&P MENA bond yields. Thus, the 'RODE' metrics shall help the investor to filter out stocks that are involved in efficient business operations, shareholder friendly and are not overvalued.

Companies that were shortlisted were further screened based on other parameters such as the free float, turnover ratio and market capitalization to ensure that the stocks have adequate liquidity and that a potential investor could take a position in the stock without impacting its price, to arrive at the list of GCC top 30 stocks.

While Marmore report exhibits 30 stocks, one example would be Dubai Islamic Bank, a large cap bank from UAE with a free float of 64.7 percent. The stock exhibited an average ROE of 16 percent during the period of assessment, commanded an average dividend yield of 6 percent and had an earnings yield of 15 percent. A dollar of shareholder's money invested at the beginning of 2013 in the company has increased over



M R Raghu makes a presentation

three times in 5 years and is worth over 3.37 dollars at the end of 2017.

Large cap stocks

The GCC top 30 RODE group consists primarily of large cap stocks and is well diversified in terms of sector. The group of stocks consists of 11 banks followed by four capital goods and materials companies each, and three real estate companies. Further, Marmore report has also analyzed the top 30 stocks in terms of market capitalization, both at the country level as well as at the

broader industry level. The report also does a comparative analysis of the performance of a portfolio consisting of top 30 RODE stocks with that of the S&P GCC index, a widely used equity benchmark for the region. On performing a back-test, the portfolio comprising of the top 30 RODE stocks returned 11.2 percent annually for the period 2013 to 2017 as against S&P GCC Index annualized return of 1.6 percent for the same period. The objective of this comparison is to show how stock selection using specific parameters could result in substantially higher returns as compared to the benchmark.

Cambodia hails opening of country's largest dam despite opposition

STUNG TRENG: Cambodian premier Hun Sen yesterday opened the country's largest hydropower scheme, swatting aside dire warnings about the environmental impact of the \$780 million project and its effect on local communities. Backed by Chinese funding, the impoverished Southeast Asian nation has embarked on a dam-building spree in recent years, as it tries to boost its energy capacity and jump-start its economy.

But the 400 megawatt Lower Sesan 2 is one of several dams criticised by environmentalists for threatening crucial fish stocks along Mekong River waterways. An estimated 5,000 people — mostly from marginalized indigenous groups — have been resettled due to the project, according to activists, while a few hundred remain.

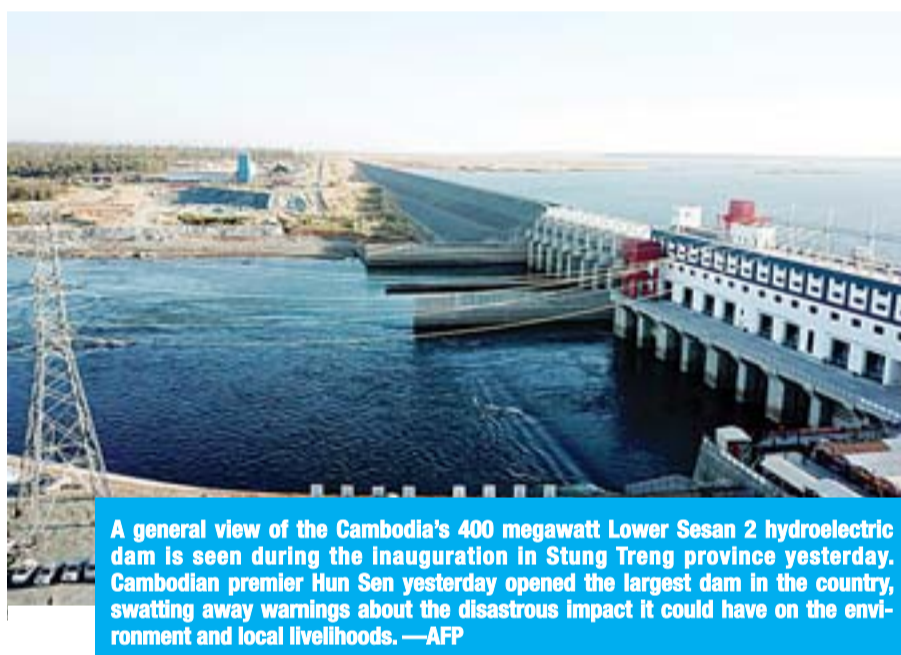
Hun Sen strongly defended the controversial scheme at the official opening in the northeastern province of Stung Treng, saying affected villagers were compensated with houses and land.

"Most people support this development project, but some villagers created a difficult situation due to incitement by some foreigners," he said, adding that the hydropower dam would help reduce electricity costs.

The United Nations has previously raised concerns about the dam while some scientists had joined calls for it to be halted over fears for the region's food supply. The NGO International Rivers has warned it will have a "costly catastrophic impact on the Mekong River's fisheries and biodiversity".

Maureen Harris, Southeast Asia program director with the group, told AFP the threat is "especially acute in Cambodia", where local people get up to 80 percent of their animal protein intake from freshwater fisheries.

Built along tributaries of the Mekong, The Lower Sesan 2 is a joint venture between Cambodia's Royal Group (39 percent), Chinese state-owned Hydropower International Energy (51 percent) and Vietnam-based EVN International (10 percent). The plant will be handed over to the Cambodian gov-



A general view of the Cambodia's 400 megawatt Lower Sesan 2 hydroelectric dam is seen during the inauguration in Stung Treng province yesterday. Cambodian premier Hun Sen yesterday opened the largest dam in the country, swatting away warnings about the disastrous impact it could have on the environment and local livelihoods. —AFP

ernment after 40 years of operation.

Cambodia has also come under fire for allowing companies to clear hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest — including in protected zones — for everything from rubber and sugar cane plantations to hydropower dams.

Rights groups say evicted villagers are often given inadequate compensa-

tion or forcibly moved in the process.

Southeast Asia's dam-building boom has come under scrutiny after a collapse in neighboring Laos in September killed dozens. Following the disaster, which sent floods of water downstream to northeastern Cambodia, Hun Sen called for more cross-border disaster management. —AFP

'Positive surprise': Investors soothed by Mexico budget

MEXICO CITY: The first budget presented by Mexico's new leftist government met with a positive initial response from financial markets on Sunday with banks describing the plans to keep a lid on spending as credible and helpful to investor sentiment. Mexico's peso rose against the dollar in Asian trading after Finance Minister Carlos Urzua unveiled

the budget on Saturday evening, pledging to find more money for both the elderly and unemployed youngsters by slimming down several government ministries, and in expectation of higher tax revenues. He also vowed to run a larger budget surplus, excluding interest payments on debt, than Mexico did last year. The budget is a major test of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's economic credibility, which was shaken when he said on Oct. 29 he was scrapping a partly-built \$13 billion new Mexico City airport on the basis of a referendum that was widely panned as illegitimate. Rating agency Fitch warned it could downgrade the country's creditworthiness after the decision.

Lopez Obrador took office on Dec 1, and much of the new spending covers pledges made during the election campaign. Still, analysts at Citigroup said the spending promises were

below consensus forecasts, calling the budget a "positive surprise" for the market.

"Rating agencies will be kept at bay for at least the next six months or so, as it would take meaningful slippage versus the plan to trigger downgrades," they said in a research note. Mexican bank Banorte echoed the sentiment, predicting markets would respond well today.

The peso strengthened by 0.8 percent against the dollar in early Asian trading. Raul Felix, an economist at the CIDE think tank in Mexico City said markets could take heart from the fact that "there's no really crazy stuff" in the budget. Due to be approved by Congress before the end of the year, the plan forecasts a slight slowdown in economic growth to about 2 percent next year from an estimated 2.3 percent in 2018. —Reuters

European stocks fall ahead of a busy week

LONDON: Europe's major stock markets fell yesterday ahead of a busy week jam-packed with central bank interest rate decisions. The London stock market, already beset with Brexit concerns, took an additional knock after British online fashion retailer ASOS issued a profits warning.

Frankfurt fell 0.5 percent and Paris slid 0.6 percent in early afternoon deals, while London was down 0.4 percent in midday trade. The European single currency bobbed higher versus the dollar.

The US Federal Reserve will conclude its rate-setting policy meeting Wednesday and while expectations are for another hike in borrowing costs, comments from chairman Jerome Powell will be closely watched for an idea of its plans for 2019. The Bank of England will follow suit on Thursday with its latest monetary policy decision. The European Central Bank last week held interest rates steady as it ended its crisis-fighting economic stimulus known as quantitative easing (QE).

Uncertainty reigns

"European stocks are in the red and uncertainty reigns ahead of a week full of central bank decisions," said IG analyst Joshua Mahony. "Meanwhile, ASOS shares have plunged after a series of deep discounts failed to garner much in the way of additional demand."

ASOS saw its share price collapse in London by about 40 percent as it warned over sales and profits after experiencing a "significant deterioration" in trade in the run-up to the key Christmas season. The news sparked alarm among retailers already struggling with sales in their physical stores. ASOS chief executive Nick Beighton said November had been the "most difficult month relative to expectations for five years" — as he blamed Brexit, weak consumer confidence and deep price discounting for the shock warning.

As a result, shares in British clothing group Next sank 3.9 percent while bellwether Marks & Spencer lost a similar amount. Asian stock markets meanwhile mostly closed higher yesterday as traders looked ahead to the Fed, and a Chinese economic policy-setting conference this week.

However, there is still caution on trading floors after Friday's sharp sell-off fuelled by concerns over China's economy, and despite a tweet from US



NEW YORK: Traders and financial professionals work at the opening bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. —AFP

President Donald Trump suggesting a trade deal could be hammered out between Washington and Beijing. While there are signs the world's top two economies are beginning to move towards a resolution in their bitter tariffs spat, there are increasing concerns about the global outlook following another set of indicators out of China. A string of below-par readings this

year have highlighted a slowdown in the Asian giant and observers are forecasting leaders will unveil fresh measures to pep up the economy, which is on course for another year of relatively weak growth. The British pound remains somewhat bogged down as Prime Minister Theresa May struggles to win concessions from EU leaders over her Brexit agreement. —AFP

As trade war bites, China advisers advocate lowering 2019 growth target

BEIJING: China should lower next year's growth target to 6.0-6.5 percent as headwinds including a trade dispute with the United States increases risks for the economy, according to government advisers' recommendations to top leaders who will meet to map out the 2019 economic agenda.

This week's annual Central Economic Work Conference, a closed-door gathering of top party leaders and policymakers, is being watched by investors for any fresh policy steps to ward off a sharper slowdown in the world's second-largest economy.

The economic conference is likely to convene tomorrow, two policy insiders said, a day after an event marking the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening up, where President Xi Jinping is due to make what the official Xinhua news agency described as an "important" speech.

The meeting will not result in any public announcement of economic targets, which are usually reserved for the opening of the parliamentary session in early March. China's trade war with the United States is spurring some Chinese entrepreneurs, government advisers and think tanks to call for faster economic reforms and the freeing up of a private sector stifled by state controls.

Government advisers and think tanks, which are influential in the decision-making process but aren't empowered to execute policies, have recommended a growth target of 6.0-6.5 percent for 2019, versus around 6.5 percent in 2018. —Reuters

UK, Switzerland hit post-Brexit aviation deal

GENEVA: Switzerland and Britain signed an agreement yesterday guaranteeing that flights between the two countries can continue uninterrupted even if London opts to leave the European Union without a deal with Brussels. "We have managed to ensure a flawless transition, which is in the interest of both our countries," Swiss Transportation Minister Doris Leuthard said in a statement after signing the deal in Zurich with her British counterpart Chris Grayling.

Switzerland is not a member of the EU, but its relations with Britain are based on a long line of bilateral agreements between Bern and the bloc.

If London and Brussels manage to reach a deal for an orderly Brexit, the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU will continue to apply to Britain through the end of 2020, the statement said.

But in the case of a "no-deal" Brexit, those agreements will no longer apply to Swiss-British relations.

Monday's deal would then kick in on March 30, allowing for a smooth transition and avoiding chaos for travellers between the two countries, it added. There are some 150 flights each day between Switzerland and Britain, mainly through the airports in Zurich, Geneva and Basel, and 25 British airports. Some 6.7 million passengers flew these routes in 2017. In September, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) raised the alarm over the impact on air travel if the Brexit negotiations failed.

IATA chief Alexandre de Juniac warned of the "extreme seriousness of what is at stake" and stressed "the huge amount of work that would be required to maintain vital air links". —AFP

Business

Lexus tops Consumer Reports' annual list of most reliable cars

Well-finished interiors, smooth engines, and fuel-efficient hybrids cited as among the brand's strengths



KUWAIT: Lexus topped the list for the sixth consecutive year in the Consumer Reports annual list of most reliable cars. Lexus took the top spot with an average reliability score of 78 out of 100. Consumer Reports cited Lexus' well-finished interiors, smooth engines, and fuel-efficient hybrids as among the brand's strengths.

"Lexus is an excellent example of how technologically advanced luxury vehicles can also be very reliable," Consumer Reports said.

The publication created the list by analyzing survey responses on more than 500,000 vehicles and used the responses to predict which cars will create the fewest problems for their owners. While the

Lexus GX SUV took the top spot, supercharged cross-over NX secured 6th place. Consumer Reports said the GX was fast and quiet for an SUV, offering a smooth ride and a comfortable cabin.

Inspired by performance vehicles, the turbocharged NX combines the expertise of racers within the engineering team and the impeccable touch of Lexus luxury through an exciting and sporty design to set a new benchmark in the automotive world.

According to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, CEO Al-Sayer Holding, "The very foundation of Lexus is to offer our loyal customers highest level of product quality and an experience beyond compare. Lexus



new design global strategy was a major success in Kuwait and the region. Additionally, the new technologies that had been introduced into the Lexus model lineup had given our customers a new feeling for the driving dynamics that had even surpassed the previous Lexus records."

Lexus brand is continuing to evolve with an

increased emphasis on technology, performance, art, fashion - to offer "experience amazing". It is successful in launching many first-time technologies in the market including active safety, car manufacturing and on-board premium features. Other innovation includes first premium cross over with the RX. Lexus has also the largest range of self-charging, industry leading hybrids which is testimony of experience amazing, selling over 1.3 million units globally.

"The quietness which was a great feature for Lexus is even better. The interior design had hit a cord with our customers because they think it has taken Lexus to a new frontier of luxury and a feeling of serenity," added Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer.

KIB announces winners of last 'Double Your Savings' campaign

KUWAIT: KIB announced winners of the last draw for its latest campaign, the 'Double Your Savings' for Savings Account customers. The first in Kuwait, the Savings Account combines both savings and investment under one account. With the campaign, customers are offered the chance to enter a monthly draw for every KD 100 deposited in their account, qualifying them to win the campaign's grand prize, doubling their savings up to KD 5,555. Additionally, the campaign offers 10 customers the opportunity to win KD 100 every month.

The lucky grand prize winner was Mohammed Atef Al-Shareef, who won up to KD 5,555. Moreover, 10 lucky customers won the KD 100 cash prize, namely: Namsha Marzouq Bokharma, Anwar Reden Al-Mutairi, Nadia Mohammed Al-

Adwani, Abdelfattah Sayed Abdelfattah, Rani Ayoub Al-Sayegh, Obaid Mardi Al-Anzi, Saad Mutlaq Al-Rashidi, Wadha Ahmed Al-Harban, Qutaiba Abdul Jabbar Al-Tumah and Eman Hadi Alwais.

Ongoing until December 12, this latest KIB campaign reflects the Bank's ongoing commitment to rewarding its customers, as well as encouraging them to increase their savings in the account, as it has the highest return in Kuwait at 1.65 percent. Additionally, each KD 100 deposited into the Savings Account will give customers the opportunity to enter the grand prize monthly draw that doubles the amount saved up to KD 5,555. This is in addition to KIB's other cash prizes which allows 10 customers to win KD 100 every month.

On this occasion, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department, Othman Tawfiqi, said: "KIB is committed to providing its customers with the best offers and most innovative products in



Othman Tawfiqi

the market. The Bank aims at meeting the diverse needs and lifestyles of all its customers. The 'Double Your Savings' campaign reflects KIB's commitment to rewarding its customers for their continued trust and loyalty in the Bank. For a limited time only, this new campaign allows new and existing customers a unique opportunity in banking. In addition to enjoying the highest return in the market at 1.65 percent, with the Savings Account, customers can save and win a grand prize, doubling savings up to KD 5,555. Savings Account customers can also enter the draw to win KD 100 for every KD 100 deposited."

KIB offers a wide range of benefits for its Savings Account customers. The Savings Account is unique in offering the benefits of both savings and investment combined into one single account. Additionally, customers are able to open the account in Kuwait Dinar or any other major foreign currency and enjoy a free debit card that can be used all over the world - all with no restriction on minimum account balance. With the Savings Account, customers can also enjoy a range of features, and comprehensive online banking solutions, such as easy money transfers and fast access to account balance and details; allowing them to fulfil all their banking needs anytime, anywhere.

Italy coalition agrees on new budget, Expects EU approval

ROME: Italy's coalition government has agreed on the "numbers and contents" of the budget it will propose to Brussels in an effort to avoid disciplinary action over its plans to hike deficit spending next year, a League party spokeswoman said yesterday.

The European Commission rejected the Italian budget in October, saying it would not lower the country's huge debt and declaring it in clear breach of EU fiscal rules. Rome submitted a revised plan last week with a lower deficit. But a final deal with Brussels has yet to be reached, and the government sat down on Sunday evening to a marathon meeting to hammer out the details of a possible compromise.

"We have found an agreement on further fiscal reductions that probably will be appreciated by the EU," Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, leader of the right-wing League party, said after the meeting, Ansa news agency reported.

He did not give any details. Italy's original budget proposal envisaged a deficit equal to 2.4 percent of gross domestic product in 2019, up from 1.8 percent this year. The revised plan presented last week lowered that to 2.04 percent.

"We are optimistic" that the EU won't open a disciplinary action, economy ministry undersecretary Massimo Garavaglia said later in an interview with state-owned radio RAI.

Time is running out to finalize the 2019 budget law, which must be passed by the end of the year. The government summit ended after more than four hours and few details were given.

Salvini and his coalition partner Luigi Di Maio, leader of the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, have agreed with Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte that any deal with Brussels must not interfere with their flagship reforms - income support for the poor and a lower retirement age.

"(There is) total agreement between Conte, Salvini and Di Maio on the numbers and contents of the proposal to send to Brussels," Salvini's spokeswoman said in a statement as the government meeting neared an end.

The spokeswoman denied tensions within the government and a media report that Conte had threatened to resign. "I can only say the atmosphere was relaxed because that's the truth. We have faced political issues and we have solved them," said Garavaglia, who is a League lawmaker.

He also said Salvini and Di Maio had agreed that savings would come from revisions to both the income support scheme and the pension reform.

"This does not cause a problem in 2019 and it allows the two measures to run for the three-year budget term," Garavaglia said. Also included in the budget are measures to raise taxes on luxury cars in order to provide incentives for electric and hybrid models, the League spokeswoman added.

An earlier version of the measure had put Salvini and Di Maio at odds over plans to raise taxes on a wider range of fuel-powered cars.

Andrea Montanino, chief economist of the business lobby Confindustria, said in a television interview with private broadcaster La7 yesterday that the revised budget "does not make Italian public accounts any better". He added that "in theory" the EU Commission should still have objections but underlined that the final decision is up to the EU political leaders.

The yield gap between Italian bonds and benchmark Germany's narrowed yesterday as chances of a rapprochement with the European Union grew. — Reuters

Hitachi to buy majority stake in ABB's power grid arm for \$6.4bn

TOKYO: Japan's Hitachi yesterday announced plans to buy a majority stake in the power grid business of Swiss-Swedish engineering giant ABB for \$6.4 billion, in what would be its biggest ever buyout.

The deal would make Hitachi the world's largest power grid company, local media said. Under the plan, ABB will spin off its power grid unit, for which Hitachi will buy an 80.1 percent stake for 704 billion yen in early 2020, the Japanese company said in a statement. "We plan to buy the remaining shares so that Hitachi can make the unit its wholly owned company," a spokesman said without disclosing, how much that would cost.

ABB's power grid unit makes and operates infrastructure including power transmission equipment and control systems in numerous countries.

The deal would also make Hitachi the world's second-largest heavy electrical equipment maker by revenue, behind only General Electric, according to local media.

The Nikkei business daily first reported the planned deal last Thursday, but Hitachi shares have since dropped 2.5 percent. Ratings agency Standard & Poor's said the power transmission and distribution business is growing globally, with service solutions a particularly promising field.

But "the business' profitability can be volatile, depending on how well a company manages projects related to equipment delivery", it added. — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's Hitachi President Toshiaki Higashihara attends a press conference in Tokyo yesterday. Hitachi yesterday announced plans to buy a majority stake in the Swiss-Swedish power grid business of engineering giant ABB for \$6.4 billion. — AFP

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

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

The lucky winners are:

1. Hassan Ibrahim Abdullatif Alkhalil
2. Mohammad Abdullah Ali
3. Abul Bashar Mohammed Ismail
4. Ammar Hussain Gholoum Hussain

5. Hadeer Saad Madi Aahi

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

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

Technology

Scientists create bee vaccine to fight off 'insect apocalypse'

More than 40% bees, butterflies face extinction

HELSINKI: Scientists in Finland have developed what they believe is the world's first vaccine to protect bees against disease, raising hopes for tackling the drastic decline in insect numbers which could cause a global food crisis. Bees are vital for growing the world's food as they help fertilize three out of four crops around the globe, by transferring pollen from male to female flowers. But in recent years bee populations around the world have been dying off from "colony collapse disorder", a mysterious scourge blamed on mites, pesticides, virus, fungus, or some combination of these factors. UN-led research in 2016 found that more than 40 percent of invertebrate pollinators, particularly bees and butterflies, are facing extinction. The study also found that 16.5 percent of vertebrate pollinators, such as birds and bats, are under threat. Scientists warn that the die-off will result in higher food prices and the risk of shortages.

Medical breakthrough

The vaccine, developed by a team at Helsinki University in Finland, works by giving bees resistance to fight off severe microbial diseases that can be fatal for pollinator communities. "If we can save even a small part of the bee population with this invention, I think we have done our good deed and saved the world a little bit," lead researcher Dalia Freitak said. "Even a two-to-three percent increase in the bee population would be humongous," she told AFP.

Vaccinating insects was previously thought to be impossible because the creatures lack antibodies, one of the key mechanisms humans and other animals use to fight disease. But a breakthrough came in 2014 when Freitak, a specialist in insects and immunology, noticed that moths who are fed certain bacteria can in fact pass on immunity

to their offspring. "They could actually convey something by eating. I just didn't know what the mechanism was," Freitak said. "I met with Heli Salmela, who was working on honey bees and a protein called vitellogenin. I heard her talk and I was like, 'OK, I could make a bet that it is your protein that takes my signal from one generation to another.'"

The pair started to collaborate and created a vaccine against American foulbrood, the most globally widespread and destructive bee bacterial disease. The treatment is administered to the queen bee via a sugar lump, similar to the way many children are given polio vaccines. The queen then passes the immunity to her offspring, spreading it through the bee community. As well as working on vaccines against further diseases, the team has also begun trying to raise funding to make the vaccine commercially available,

with "very positive" feedback so far, according to Freitak. "There are many regulatory hurdles. Four to five years until reaching the market is an optimistic estimate," she said.

Crop growth affected

Diseases are believed to be just one of a number of reasons for the loss of pollinators, alongside pesticides and intensive farming, which reduces the diversity of insects' nutrition. But the team believes that protecting bee populations against disease will make them stronger, and therefore better able to withstand the other threats.

The European Union and Canada have voted to introduce bans on insecticides based on neonicotinoids after studies showed the chemicals harmed the ability of bees to reproduce. UN-backed research in 2016 estimated that up to \$577 billion (511 billion

euros) worth of food grown every year relies directly on pollinators. The study said the volume of food produced that depends on pollinators has risen by 300 percent in the last half century.

As pollinator numbers have declined, some farmers have turned to either renting bees or pollinating by hand-as with fruit trees in some parts of China-in order to replace the processes that nature previously provided free of charge. In Helsinki the project relied on external funding, but the team has now taken up a more secure tenure at Graz University in Austria, where further research on vaccinations will begin early next year. Graz is also the previous seat of noted zoologist Karl von Frisch, whose discovery that honey bees communicate by performing the figure-of-eight "waggle dance" won him the Nobel Medicine Prize in 1973. — AFP

ITS named Critics' Choice Best Digital Banking Solution

KUWAIT: International Turnkey Systems Group (ITS) is a key player in the provision of advanced financial technology solutions (FinTech) and services that are designed to transform banks and financial institutions (Islamic & conventional) to the new digital age. The Company was named the winner of the Critics' Choice Best Digital Banking Solution 2018 for its innovative 'ETHIX' product range at the 4th Islamic Retail Banking Awards (IRBA). The award presented during a prestigious ceremony held at the JW Marriott Marquis Hotel, Dubai, on 21, November 2018.

Esam Alkhashnam, Chief Executive Officer of International Turnkey Systems Group (ITS), received the award during the grand Gala Dinner which was attended by VVIPs, CEO's from Islamic financial institutions from the GCC, the Far East, Africa and the Western hemisphere and members of the press. Winners of the Critics' Choice Awards are selected by the Critics' Choice Committee, which comprises of leading Islamic banking experts from around the world.

Commenting on the announcement, Esam Alkhashnam, said: "It is an honor to be awarded the Critics' Choice 'Best Digital Banking Solution' from IRBA. This award is a testimony to our continued success in delivering on the commitment and to continue



empowering banks and financial institutions to succeed in today's digital banking age". He added: "The ETHIX Digital Suite delivers next generation online banking services to corporate and retail banking customers and provides financial institutions with competitive advantage."

ITS ETHIX is the Company's award-winning and innovative solutions package that drives the digital transformation of Islamic financial institutions. The ETHIX suite of solutions includes ETHIX (Core, Finance, Branch, 360, Portfolio, Fund, Treasury, Trade Finance, Salary Domiciliation, FATCA, Bad Debts Collection, ETHIX Digital, and Profit Calculation and Distribution), in addition to other extensions that together create an evolved financial operation.

5G: A revolution not without risks

PARIS: The recent diplomatic dust-up over Chinese telecoms company Huawei, one of the leaders in developing equipment for fifth-generation mobile networks, has demonstrated that this technology which promises to enable an internet of things and self-driving vehicles also poses risks. What is 5G, what will it be able to do, and what are the risks?

What is 5G?

5G stands for the fifth generation of mobile network technology, which should begin to be rolled out in 2020 in Asia and the United States. Each generation has offered improvements in data transmission speed and capacity, and with 5G the networks are really set to make the transition from telephony to other objects.

What will it be able to do?

The much vaunted internet of things has so far been hobbled by the limitations of mobile networks, both in terms of transmission speeds of handsets and the fact the backbone of networks hadn't been expanded sufficiently in many cases to handle huge volumes of data. With 5G, transmission speeds should accelerate sufficiently to allow for self-driving cars to take to the roads or for doctors to conduct operations remotely. It will also cut the cord on augmented and virtual reality. The ability to connect more sensors will help make many services "intelligent", such as helping manage traffic flow and telling the sanitation department when garbage bins need to be emptied. Industry is in particular looking forward to 5G to reinvent manufacturing and allow it to monitor all sorts of processes.

Why does 5G pose security risks?

The first reason is that more data and more types of data will be travelling across 5G networks. Much of the data transmitted by sensors could be sensitive, such as information about manufacturing processes that business rivals would be interested in acquiring. Or the data from our homes that could be gleaned to determine all sorts of things about us. The treasure chest of data for hackers is getting much, much bigger.

A second reason is that an increased reliance on the mobile network means its disruption would have even more serious consequences, both in terms of safety and economic activity. A failure during a remotely guided operation could lead to the death of a patient or a crash of a self-driving car. A longer outage could disrupt an economy. This poses national security risks.

While the diplomatic spat over the arrest of Huawei's chief financial officer was based on accusations the firm violated US sanctions on Iran, the United States has long-standing concerns about Chinese telecommunications equipment being a Trojan horse for Beijing's intelligence and military. Huawei is a major manufacturer of equipment used to build 5G networks, and the US defense establishment fears it could enable it to disrupt American military communications or otherwise wage asymmetrical warfare in a confrontation. The United States has essentially barred use of Huawei equipment in domestic networks, as have Australia and New Zealand, with other countries considering following suit. The promises are always hyped, but the delivery is often a disappointment. Early buyers of 4G smartphones were often let down: their handsets could handle nippy speeds but the backbone of networks was often not yet bulked up to handle the higher data flow. Operators have now built up the capacity of their backbone networks, but if 5G is to keep its promise the number of base stations needed is enormous. — AFP

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Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant
http://www.international-clinic.com Tel: 1886677 ic_kwt

Scope of Clinical Practice:

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

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

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

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

Academic Certificates - Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

What's On



International Women's Group host Annual Seasonal Dinner

On the evening of December 9, 2018, the International Women's Group (IWG) gathered to celebrate the season with their Annual Dinner held at Al Afrah Ballroom at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Members and friends, walked into a Christmas themed ballroom where women of different cultures and backgrounds met to socialize and share general knowledge. Always a reason to celebrate, this fun-filled season

makes it ideal to welcome the new year with one heart and one wish for peace across the globe.

CletheGubler, President of IWG, welcomed the ladies and wished them well for the night and the year ahead. She also conveyed warm wishes on behalf of Honorary Chairperson of the group Sheikha Anwar Al Sabah. The evening was full of entertaining acts and games that kept the smiles on the ladies faces. A tal-

ented Middle Eastern band (arranged by the Embassy of Palestine) set the ambiance with live oriental music and a video representing the different celebration methods that Middle Eastern cultures adopt for the season.

There were also a big number of gifts that were given out. From beautiful crystals handed to everyone from Santa, lovely poinsettias, several gift vouchers

from Sears, Mais Al Ghanim and Nana Salon to a huge TV screen as the big raffle prize! The women were on their feet while they anticipated the gifts they are about to receive. A wonderful and truly 'jolly' evening that was accompanied with performance art and delicate cuisine, will be cherished and remembered as a great end to 2018 and fabulous start to 2019 for all IWG members.



GUST president presents at Cultural Development Symposium

In cooperation with the Arab Thought Foundation, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) organized the 10th Annual Arab Report on Cultural Development Symposium, titled: "Innovation and Extinction - Arab Scientific Research: Its Reality, Challenges and Perspectives." GUST President, Professor Walid Bouhamra, gave a presentation and participated in a discussion panel at the symposium that highlighted the importance of supporting the role of scientists to drive the research process and enhance the capabilities of science and technology.

Moderated by KFAS Director General, Dr Adnan Shihab Eldin, the symposium hosted many other esteemed researchers and scientists including the Arab Thought Foundation Director General Professor Henri Al-Oweit, Secretary General of the National Council of Scientific Research in Lebanon, Dr MoeenHamzah, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Dr Khaled Mahdi, Kuwait University Management Professor, Dr Moudhi Al Hmoud, Kuwait University Sociology Professor, Dr Mohammed Al Rumaihi, Kuwait University Assistant Vice President for Research, Dr Laila Maarouf, Executive President of the Energy and Construction Center in the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Dr Osama Abdullah Al Sayegh.

In his presentation, Professor Bouhamra noted that embracing methodological scientific research to address the problems and issues of modern living has become necessary and inevitable to explore the root causes of the problems and propose suitable solutions for them in order to drive the wheel of sustainable development in our Arab countries. He added that scientific research is undoubtedly the cornerstone for the progress and development of nations and in view of the challenges and political, economic, social, environmental and cultural changes that weigh heavily in today's unprecedentedly accelerating and dynamic world.

Prof Bouhamra pointed out that the symposium presented a good opportunity for debating and discussing different points of view and new ideas among Arab scholars and academics who are enthusiastic and eager to



find solutions to today's issues, and to highlight the role of scientific research, constructive thinking, creativity and innovation for the future. This entails the necessity of supporting the role of scientists, to drive the research process and enhance the capabilities of science and technology.

He stressed on the importance of supporting scientific research in the Arab societies particularly through Arab-international cooperation in joint projects with the best universities and research centers in the world. Such research ventures would culminate in notable scientific output which is a major indicator of

scientific and cultural achievements. He appreciated the KFAS experiment with international programs and agreements, particularly with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), as the best example of the importance of joint research and the resulting added value. The cooperation yielded major projects and gave the opportunity for new project suggestions in the areas of water, energy, environment and health.

Prof Bouhamra also shed light on the major challenges facing Arab researchers in international research cooperation, the most important of which are intellectual property and patents rights, defining the criteria of the rights in accordance with the performance and achievement of the research, variation of expenditure and funding rate, as well as highlighting each researcher's role when publishing the scientific research according to scholarly performance.

GUST as a university has always been keen on supporting scientific research within its faculty, and even more so today. The university aims to provide its faculty with every opportunity to strengthen and develop research collaborations through KFAS as well as annual fellowship programs with affiliated universities internationally.



McDonald's introduces Indian-inspired menu

Coming on the heels of the delightful French menu, McDonald's Kuwait's "Tastes of the World" campaign - a promotion that brings internationally inspired flavors to the McDonald's menu - is hitting another high note with an exciting and delicious Indian-inspired menu. In its commitment to always bringing something new and exciting to customers, "Tastes of the World" this year brought about a first for McDonald's Kuwait with the introduction of a full menu - burger, side item, drink, and dessert - as highlighted by the limited-time French-inspired menu released three weeks ago.

This edition of "Tastes of the World" continues with an exciting Indian-inspired menu that dishes up the diverse and fragrant flavors that India is renowned for. The Indian taste trip begins with a mouth-watering

Chicken and Chutney Burger - a tender 100 percent white meat Halal chicken patty topped with spiced onion chutney, smooth yoghurt mint mayonnaise, topped off with freshly shredded lettuce and sliced onions, all generously stacked together between a chili-dusted semolina bun.

The flavorful menu also includes the Tandoori Veg Bites side item, an irresistible combination of potatoes, vegetables, and bold seasoning, finely coated with golden crispy breadcrumbs. The menu then cools down with the Mango McFizz drink and a Mango Sundae dessert option.

"At McDonald's, we are taking bold steps to deliver quality and memorable culinary experiences to customers across Kuwait," said Sherif Coutry, Senior Marketing Director at McDonald's Kuwait. "As a modern and progressive burger company - our role is to listen, understand, and deliver what our customers want. We know our customers are quite fond of flavors and cuisines originating from the Indian subcontinent and, in light of this, we are certain they'll be thrilled by our delicious Indian-inspired menu." The Indian menu is available until January 4, 2019 at all McDonald's restaurants across Kuwait and through all available delivery services.

Greetings

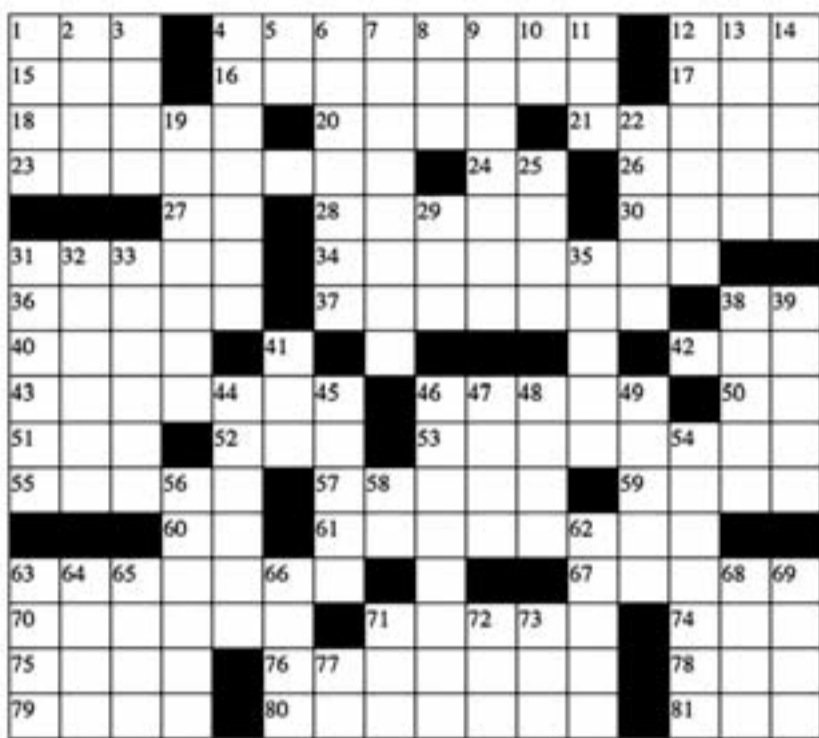
Happy 5th birthday to our dearest son Sean. We wish you all the best in life! Thank you for bringing a smile to our face every day. Best wishes to the best son in the world.

Love: Dad, mom, Alex, Aliya, family and friends



Stars

CROSSWORD 2087



ACROSS

1. A hormone secreted by the anterior pituitary gland that controls the degree of pigmentation in melanocytes.
4. Clover ferns.
12. Counting the number of white and red blood cells and the number of platelets in 1 cubic millimeter of blood.
15. (informal) Of the highest quality.
16. Relating to or demonstrating acapnia.
17. Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
18. The unit of measurement for the proportion of gold in an alloy.
20. United States educator who introduced reforms that significantly altered the system of public education (1796-1859).
21. Lighted up by or as by fire or flame.
23. Germanic barbarian leader who ended the western Roman Empire in 476 and became the first barbarian ruler of Italy (434-493).
24. Unknown god.
26. A primeval personification of air and breath.
27. A state in northwestern North America.
28. Remove gas from.
30. Give over.
31. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
34. A river in central Brazil that flows generally northward (with many falls) to join the Tocantins River.
36. (Judaism) A Jewish holy day commemorating their deliverance from massacre by Haman.
37. A republic in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea.
40. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
42. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
43. An industrial city in the Donets Basin.
50. A yellow trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
51. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
52. (used especially of commodities) In the natural unprocessed condition.
53. Marked by extreme anger.
55. Support column consisting of a steel cylinder filled with concrete.
57. Any plant of the genus Erica.
59. A tiny or scarcely detectable amount.
60. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
61. (law) The privilege of using something that is not your own (as using another's land as a right of way to your own land).
63. A member of the beat generation.
67. An association of nations dedicated to economic and political cooperation in southeastern Asia.
70. Nicaraguan statesman (born in 1945).
74. 100 pyas equal 1 kyat.
75. Originally a stronghold captured by David (the 2nd king of the Israelites).
76. Choose and follow.
78. A resource.
79. The month following August and preceding October.
80. Of legislation.
81. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.

DOWN

1. Powerful mackerel shark of the Atlantic and Pacific.
2. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
3. A man distinguished by exceptional courage and nobility and strength.
4. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
5. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
6. The ninth month of the Moslem calendar.
7. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
8. A hotel providing overnight lodging for travelers.
9. An associative relation.
10. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
11. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
12. A Ukrainian peninsula between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.
13. Having the head uncovered.
14. Comb-plate or locomotor organ consisting of a row of strong cilia whose bases are fused.
19. Reprehensible acquisitiveness.
22. A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
25. An ancient Assyrian city on the River Tigris and traditional capital of Assyria.
29. A humorous anecdote or remark.
32. A vertical cylindrical furnace for melting iron for casting.
33. Supply with battlements.
35. Having help.
38. French diplomat who in 1793 tried to draw the United States into the war between France and England (1763-1834).
39. A genus of Ploceidae.
41. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
44. Hard to endure.
45. Trailing grass native to Europe now cosmopolitan in warm regions.
46. The act of emitting.
47. (trademark) A liquid that temporarily disables a person.
48. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
49. Power to control.
54. A pad of paper for keeping notes.
56. Potentially existing but not presently evident or realized.
58. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
62. (of pain or sorrow) Made easier to bear.
64. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
65. On, to, or at the top.
66. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
68. The 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
69. A quantity of no importance.
71. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
72. Failing to detonate.
73. The compass point midway between east and southeast.
77. A gray lustrous metallic element of the rare earth group.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are one of a kind. Today all things seem to work to bring out all that is unique and special about you. A kind spirit with a soft heart. You seem to accept others as they are. This is a great day for a breakthrough concerning a new creation for you. Do not be surprised when others turn to you for advice. You are looked at as a role model. You may find much admiration and attention seem come your way today. When it comes to getting to the root of a problem, you are the person for the job. Solution oriented with a quick mind is how others may be describing you today.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You should find great pleasure in working with others today. You could find yourself being offered a new position or asked to take the lead on a new project. You seem to begin to develop a desire to start taking your health seriously. Join the gym, take the walk, or start the meal planning. You won't be able to shake this urge. You know to take care of all that you responsible for you first have to take care of yourself. You not only want to feel good about who you but how you look. This is a step in the right direction for you. The beginning of wonderful new time in your life. You have a lot to look forward to.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may not place much value on thoughts and ideas today. Something someone says or communicates to you may offend you and you may take this the wrong way. You could easily find yourself in conflict in this person. It is a day you may find yourselves called upon by friends for assistance today. Circumstances today may force you to reorganize and be more conservative today. This should go smoothly. You may find that others truly appreciate you for your giving nature. Continue to be the friend others want to have.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Get a grip and try to remain calm. You could find yourself in a situation that actually makes you angry today. Keep your emotions in check and try not to fly off the handle. This may be a very difficult time for you to remind calm. Remember, sometimes a fight just isn't worth it. You have a choice in this life. You can be right or you can be happy. Cancer. To infinity and beyond. That is exactly where you have your sights set.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are on fire. Your mind is quick but your wit is quicker. You've got snap! Others are eager to hear what you have to say. You could find that you are extremely persuasive with others. Be sure to use this power in a positive manner. Others seem to hang on every word you say and follow any advice you give. Make sure the advice is truly good advice and something you put serious thought into. Others will take your word and run with it.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today is a day of emotional overload. High energy and high emotions could find you coming across as very forceful in what you say and in the way you think. You seem to be able to really get your point across to others.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Even though you may be feeling fiercely independent today you may want to remember to keep an open mind and be receptive to the input of others. Take a step back and go with the flow when it comes to sharing your opinion today. This will help in avoiding confrontation. Today you may have a deep craving to love and be loved. Leave your door and heart open for what this day may bring your way in that area. Be bold, don't be afraid to stand out today. Wear that bright shirt hanging in your closet and face this day with a "look at me attitude". Some days it is better to let our appearance speak rather than our words. Libra, face this day with a smile on your face.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may find yourself ready to get out and about and hit the town. You are ready to add a bit of spice to your life and the social scene is what you have your mind set on. Take into careful consideration the company you chose to keep today. You may find there is a fine line between friend and foe. Choose your company wisely as to not encounter conflict. You may find yourself extremely disciplined today when it comes to a task set before you. You have a goal and you become dedicated and devoted to accomplishing this. You seem to be very productive and find things working in your favor today. You may find an extra bit of support from one of your closest friends. This gives you a boost and a sense of reassurance you have been looking for. Scorpio. Being in touch with others seems to give you a sense of peace. Harmony and peace enter your life when you feel others truly understand you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may feel as if you are being disrespected from all directions. Why is it that others seem to find it difficult to treat people as they want to be treated? You strive to treat others this way. You may find you have a great talent for organizing. You are able to focus today on organizing all that surrounds you. It seems you may be noticed in the workplace for your ability to organize people and put them in the best positions. This may make you a prime candidate for a management position. Your talents do not go unnoticed nor unappreciated today. Your hard work is paying off.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

New solutions to old problems seem as clear as the nose on your face today. You are unique. You may find that others are drawn to these qualities. Being different isn't so bad. You are drawn to the unusual and find yourself with a desire to express all that is unique about you. New solutions and inventions could come easily for you today. Your creative juices are flowing. You are starting to embrace your true inner self.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may find romance, recreation, and creativity begin to be the factors that give you inspiration. The experiences you have now can truly stir your soul. You could find someone you care about is having a hard time distinguishing the difference between reality and fantasy. You may be approached with a business deal that seems too good to be true. Chances are it is so keep your money to yourself to avoid a bad investment. You may find you have a strong urge to get out and about this evening. Conflict could be found easily so choose your company wisely.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

If you have been on a mission to find yourself, consider the job complete. Today you truly feel as if you are your true self. Your true emotions shine through. It seems as if there is an overabundance of good will and support being showered on you. This is a great time to understand those around you and spend some special time with someone you love. An all around good feeling comes over you and this is a wonderful time in your life.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Nursing Home 1

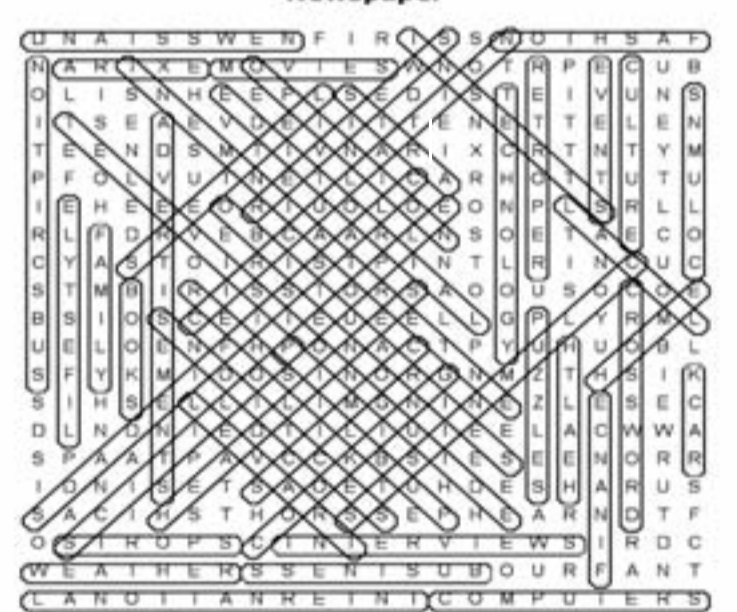
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 47 letters spell a Mother Theresa quotation.



- | | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| ACTIVITIES | COMFORT | HELP | OUTINGS | SING ALONG |
| AIDES | DENTURES | INCONTINENCE | PET THERAPY | SLEEPING PILL |
| ASPIRIN | DINING ROOM | LAUNDRY | PHYSIOTHERAPIST | STAFF MEETINGS |
| BATHROOM | DOCTOR | LINERS | PUZZLES | SUPPER |
| BEDRAIL | DRUGS | MAGAZINES | READING | TABLES |
| BEDS | EXERCISE | MEDICAL GLOVES | RESIDENTS | TELEVISION |
| BOARD GAMES | FALLS | MEMORY LOSS | ROUNDS | TRANSFER BELT |
| BULLETIN BOARD | FLU SHOT | MOSTLY | SCRAMBLE | URINAL |
| CANE | FRAIL | MUSIC | SCUBA | VOLUNTEERS |
| CASE | GLUCOSE METER | HAIRDRESSER | NEEDLE | WANDERING |
| CHARTS | HALLWAYS | NAIL CLIPPERS | NURSES | SHOWER |

Yesterday's Solution

Newspaper



- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| ADVERTISEMENTS | CULTURE | INTERNATIONAL | PUZZLES |
| ARTS | EDITORIAL | INTERVIEWS | RACK |
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Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2018



Catriona Gray, Miss Philippines 2018 poses on stage during the 2018 Miss Universe national costume presentation in Chonburi province on December 10, 2018. — AFP (See Page 21)

Tattoos still give Japan the needle as Olympics loom

When Mana Izumi got her first tattoo at 18, she wasn't trying to rebel or shatter any taboos — just copy Japanese pop diva Namie Amuro's beach-bronze "surfer chick" look. In Japan, where tattoos have for centuries been demonised for their asso-

ciation with criminals, former porn star Izumi turns heads with her copper tan, bleach-blonde bob, and an array of designs inked across half of her body.

"I wasn't really an Amuro fan but I thought her tattoos were cute," the 29-year-old told AFP. "When my mum first saw my tattoo she burst into tears and I thought my dad was going to kill me.

But I like being a bit different." Tattoos still provoke deep-rooted suspicion in Japan as the country prepares to host the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. People with body ink are refused entry to public swimming pools, bathing spots, beaches and often gyms, while visible body art can be harmful to job prospects. "It's pathetic the way people discriminate against tattoos," Izumi said while getting a \$500 Aztec skull inked onto her leg. "People might think I look a little scary," she added, taking a drag on her cigarette. "But I don't regret getting inked."

Japan has long had a prickly relationship with tattoos. In the 17th century criminals were branded as a form of punishment, while today Japan's yakuza mobsters pledge their loyalty with traditional, full-body "irezumi" tattoos. As Japan opened up to the outside world in the 1800s, tattoos were outlawed — along with snake-charming and public nudity — because the Japanese feared outsiders would think they were "primitive," according to Brian Ashcraft, author of "Japanese Tattoos: History, Culture, Design". At the same time, European royalty would come to Japan to secretly get inked, so coveted were the country's tattoo artists.

Police crackdown

The ban lasted until 1948 when the occupying American forces lifted it but the stigma remains in Japan. "They look at tattoos and they think 'yakuza' — instead of admiring the beauty of the art form," said Ashcraft. "Until that changes, tattooing will continue to exist in a grey zone." Authorities turn a blind eye to the ban for the most

part but a recent crackdown involving several police raids and fines has plunged Japan's tattoo industry into confusion.

Meanwhile, a potentially game-changing legal battle recently ended after Osaka tattooist Taiki Masuda was arrested in 2015 for violating an obscure law that dates back almost 70 years. The 30-year-old was fined 300,000 yen (\$2,600) under the Medical Practitioners' Act, which forbids anyone other than a doctor from performing medical procedures.

A 2001 Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry notice ruled that tattooing was medical work because it involves needles, technically criminalizing Masuda's job. He decided to fight the law and last month, a court overturned his previous guilty verdict after a lengthy and controversial appeal process. "There's no legal framework regulating the tattoo industry in Japan," Masuda told AFP. "Livelihoods are at stake — that's why I had to fight it, to hopefully help legalize tattooing."

Masuda's struggle polarized opinion among Japanese tattooists, estimated to number as many as 3,000. Noriyuki Katsuta, a member of "Save Tattooing in Japan", a non-profit co-founded by Masuda, called his arrest "a human rights violation". But many older artists are fiercely protective of tattooing's underground roots and resist the idea that it should become a legitimate profession.

'Like pepper on noodles'

"Tattoos should have a dash of the outlaw about them," insisted Horiyoshi III, who slammed Masuda's actions as "provocative" and unhelpful. "It's like adding pepper to noodles — if you just

ate pepper it would be too hot, but as a spice it adds flavor." Katsuta estimates between 500,000 and a million Japanese — or one in every 100 or 200 people — have tattoos.

Japan's squeamishness about tattoos will be put to the test at the Tokyo Olympics, and before that at next year's Rugby World Cup, both set to bring an influx of foreign visitors — including athletes with body art. "I don't know how much the Olympics is actually going to change opinions," said author Ashcraft, noting that Japanese television still blurs out tattoos. "When people look at foreigners with tattoos they kind of see that as foreign culture."

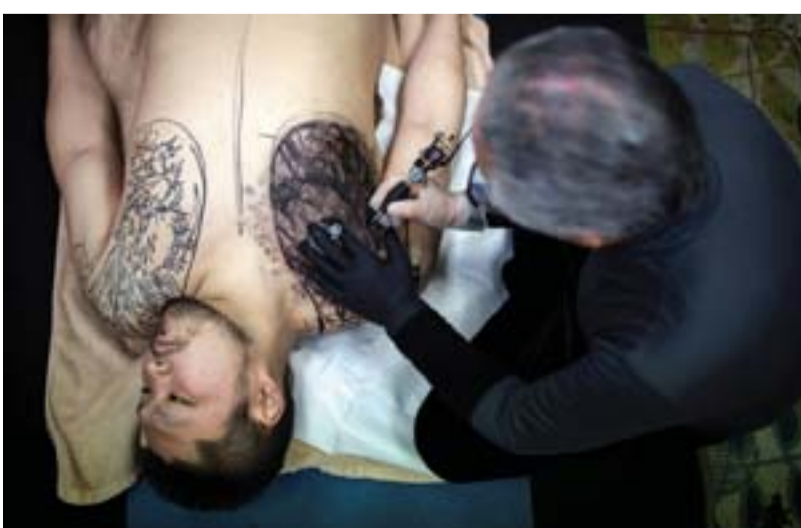
At the root of much of the prejudice towards tattoos in Japan is the ancient Confucian idea that defacing the body inherited from one's parents is disrespectful, according to Ashcraft. "I don't think people are actively thinking that it's dirty anymore," he added. "But I do think that collective consciousness still lingers." Izumi has little time for such outdated arguments. "Among my mum's generation, anyone tattooed-up like me was thought to be yakuza," she shrugged. "But when people preach about spoiling the body my parents gave me, it really makes me sick. I don't feel I have to explain myself to anyone." — AFP



In this picture taken on October 28, 2017, Japanese tattoo artist Horiyoshi III displays his tattoos as he poses for a photo at his studio in Tsurugashima, Saitama prefecture. — AFP photos

ciation with criminals, former porn star Izumi turns heads with her copper tan, bleach-blonde bob, and an array of designs inked across half of her body.

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Japanese tattoo artist Horiyoshi III works on a tattoo for his customer, Japanese "salaryman" Kyono, at his studio in Yokohama.



Japanese tattoo artist Noriyuki Katsuta, a member of "Save Tattooing in Japan", displays his tattoos as he poses for a photo at his studio in Tokyo.



Mana Izumi gets a new tattoo design on her fingers at a tattoo studio in Tsurugashima.



Opening of Mirrors Second Season at Hub Gallery

Under the patronage of Mohammed Nasser Al-Jabri, Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs, the opening of Mirrors Second Season "Creative Platform" Group Creative Show, took place at the Hub Gallery.

Pieces from Abd El Moein Saleh Egyptian sculptor, Abdullah Alawadi Kuwaiti artist & designer, Amirah Behbehani a Kuwaiti self-taught artist, Nada Alawi founded "Annada" designer on fashion-accessories, Dr Anas Alomaim professor of architecture, Beshr Koshaji Syrian artist, Hamed Ani artist, Haider Alzaem professional global Iraqi artist, Hatem Al Ahmad artist, Mohammed Al Hemd Kuwaiti native artist, Mohammed Alotaibi entrepreneur and internationally recognized business Mogul, Noura AlRashidi jewelry hand craft, Rania Abulhasan Kuwaiti artist, Sheikha Alhabshi artist, Talal Hamadah artist, Wael Alkhars artist, Yasser Dib Lebanese Artist were displayed at the gallery.

A statement from the organizers
Our goal is to continue expanding on build-

ing a platform that combines creative people to become Ambassadors of truth under one roof through their creativity and encouraging research and fact-finding. Our aim is also to eliminate media revolution towards false allegation and the respect of copywriting. Creativity is used as a tool to encourage originality in all its forms. It is a part of our social responsibility.

Over the last few decades, we have been in the throes of a quiet but desperate revolution of freedom of idea that anything can be known for certain. Today we've lost the confidence that statements of fact can be anything more than just opinion. We no longer know that anything is certain beyond our subjective preference. The word truth now means "true for me" and nothing more and we have entered an dogmatic era. By means of repetition and passive acceptance over time they take on the force of common wisdom, a "truth" that everyone knows but no one stops to examine and thus becoming a kid of intellectual urban legend. Once ideas like these take root, they become difficult to replace. Attempts to do so result in something akin to Bloom's "uncomprehending" stares.

The ideas become a major part of our emerging intellectual constitution that we have become increasingly incapable of critical self-reflection. Even if we do, we have little faith that self-questioning analysis would do any good anyway. When truth dies, all of its divergent principles, such as ethics, perish with it. If truth can't be known, then the concept of moral truth becomes incoherent. Ethics become relative, right and wrong matters according to individual opinion. This may seem as moral liberty, but it ultimately rings hollow. The freedom of our day is the freedom to devote ourselves to any values we please, on the mere condition that we do not ultimately believe them to be true. The death of truth in our society has led to moral decay, and every debate ends with the question "says who?" When we abandon the idea that one set of laws applies to every human being, all that remains is subjective, personal opinion.

Divided Cypriots unite over heritage

Residents from both sides of Cyprus are coming together to restore their ancient heritage and mend ties away from politics even as peace talks remain stalled. Over the past decade Greek and Turkish Cypriots have joined forces to rebuild and restore dozens of churches, mosques and historical monuments on the Mediterranean island, after they were damaged by conflict or neglect.

"We are cooperating, we are working together and we are bringing new hope to the people living on this island for a better future," said Turkish Cypriot Ali Tunca, who sits on a bi-communal body that oversees the work. "Some of our friends are saying that we are a mini-model for the future of Cyprus," added the member of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, John Karis, the Greek Cypriot secretary of the committee, agreed. He said the project was "vital" because it brings people together.

Alongside "restoring the buildings, we also restore our history", he said. Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkish troops invaded and occupied the northern third of the island in response to an Athens-engineered military coup, after a decade of inter-communal tension and violence between the Greek majority and the Turkish minority.

The last talks to reunify the island collapsed last year. A 12-member team oversees the conservation project that was launched in 2008, sponsored by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Six were picked by the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, and the other six by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, an entity still only recognized by Ankara.

Church and Tanners' mosque

"This is a tangible example of the important role cultural heritage can play in reinforcing a shared identity and contributing to peace and confidence building," said Tiziana Zennaro, who heads the UNDP's Cyprus office. Zennaro spoke this week during a presentation on ruins that have been restored on both sides of an UN-patrolled buffer zone which slices through Cyprus, and conservation work that is still underway. The city of Famagusta — which boasts an ancient walled city and breathtaking medieval ruins, abutting the buffer zone in north Cyprus — is at the heart of the joint restoration initiative.

Landmarks in old Famagusta — including Saint Anne's Church and Tanners' mosque — have had a makeover. Historians believe the church was built in the 4th century as part of a monastic complex, initially for the Catholic order before being given to the Maronite sect in the 14th century. A peek through the metal barriers surrounding the construction reveal the freshly painted wooden frames of stained glass windows boasting French Gothic designs. Tanners' mosque, named after tanners who worked nearby, lies across the street and was originally a small church, before the Ottomans laid siege to Famagusta. Tanners reputedly went there to avoid going to larger mosques where they feared the smell that stuck to their skin and clothes would offend other worshippers.

'Hatred is my only enemy'

Famagusta's "Land Gate" — the walled city's main entrance — and the towering Ravelin

Bastion that protected it from attack have also been restored. The bastion was originally built into natural rock by the Lusignans, before being fortified by the Venetians and later modified by the Ottomans. It reopened in June. "This project... creates communication and communication means understanding each other," said Turkish Cypriot poet and Famagusta resident Ruhsan Iskioglu.

A mosque in Deneia, inside the UN-patrolled buffer zone, is also being restored. Residents say it was originally built using stones from a church that was destroyed in 1571 during an Ottoman military campaign. Traces of an Islamic mural can be seen on a wall in the one-room house of worship, while on another wall hangs a frame inscribed with the words "Hatred is my only enemy" — the words of the Turkish poet Yunus Emre.

Christakis Panayiotou, who heads Deneia council, is proud of the conservation work and the cooperation that gave rise to it. "The most important thing... is to be able to show and to tell the world that we Greek Cypriots and Turk Cypriots must live together." For Meltem Onurkan Samani — a political advisor to northern Cyprus' president Mustafa Akinci — the restorations seek to heal "historical wounds". The EU has so far provided 14.7 million euros (\$13 million) for the project, while funds have also come from local associations and NGOs. — AFP



Moroccan laborers pick saffron flowers in a field in the Taliouine region in southwestern Morocco. — AFP photos

Moroccan saffron farmers battle knockoff spices

Saffron farmers in southern Morocco have long taken pride in the coveted spice they produce from the purple-petalled *Crocus sativus*, but some are worried knockoff versions are threatening their business. "The pure saffron of Taliouine is the best in the world, according to experts," local grower Barhim Afezzaa boasted, proudly noting his spice's designation of origin (PDO) label. But the 51-year-old is worried that "counterfeit" crops are tarnishing Taliouine's reputation and its PDO — which guarantees a product's origin and uniqueness.

In small plots below the snowy peaks of Mount Toubkal, saffron cultivation in Taliouine has remained largely unchanged for centuries. The flower requires drastic climate conditions — hot summers and cold, wet winters — and it can only be harvested during a month-long window from mid-October to mid-November. Workers start at dawn each morning, meticulously picking the delicate flowers by hand and placing them in wicker baskets. The purple blooms are picked before they fully open to ensure quality.

Once dried and sorted, the flower's crimson stigmas and styles are turned into saffron — the world's most expensive spice — popular with top chefs across the globe. Morocco is the world's fourth largest producer of saffron, behind Iran, India and Greece, according to the figures published in 2013 by FranceAgriMer, France's specialist institute of agriculture and fishing.

'From father to son'

The spice is both a source of pride and a lifeline in the Berber city of Taliouine, which, along with a neighboring town, produces 90 percent of the kingdom's saffron. Some 1,500 families in Taliouine depend on sales from the crop to survive. Knockoff versions "damage the image of this culture handed down from father to son, which is our pride", said 24-year-old Driss, a member of a local collective in the area.

Saffron's rarity and its painstaking cultivation help explain its price — it takes nearly a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of flowers to create 12 grams of the spice. In Morocco, PDO-certified saffron sells for about three euros (\$3.5) a gram, according to Dar Azaafaran, or The House of Saffron, which works with 25 local cooperatives. To maintain their PDO-label and association with Dar Azaafaran, producers submit their harvest for various tests that check for moisture content, taste, color and smell. Counterfeit saffron can sell "for less than a euro a gram at the famous Derb Omar



Workers sort and clean saffron flowers during its processing.

market in Casablanca", said Dar Azaafaran's head Ismail Boukhriss.

Local producers say counterfeiters often use chemical dyes and remains of other plants in an attempt to pass poor quality saffron off as a top-shelf spice. Boukhriss said that while authorities hold PDO-labeled producers to a high standard, "the informal market is not subjected to the same controls". The National Food Safety office told AFP that some "non-conformities" were detected in bulk sales of saffron which had not been properly packaged or labeled. It advised buyers to only purchase "products labeled and packaged by approved and authorized sellers". Some say salesmen working to sell saffron outside the PDO-approved collective networks are to blame, while other small growers sell to middlemen to avoid payment delays common to larger groups. — AFP



This picture shows the Tanner's Mosque, dating back to 15th century restored by the Technical Committee on cultural heritage in collaboration with UNDP and the European Union.



This picture shows the Saint George of The Latins Church, dating back to 14th century to be restored by the Technical Committee on cultural heritage in collaboration with UNDP and the European Union, in Famagusta, east of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). — AFP photos

Meghan Markle's dad makes plea for reconciliation

Meghan Markle's estranged father Thomas yesterday pleaded with his daughter to get in touch, saying the rift caused by her marriage to Prince Harry "can't continue forever". Markle told ITV's Good Morning Britain (GMB) that he was "hopeful something will be resolved," adding "this can't continue forever. I don't plan to be silent for the rest of my life... I would really appreciate if she just called me," he said.

Markle revealed he had not spoken to his daughter since

they fell out in the buildup to her wedding to Prince Harry last May. The 74-year-old missed the event due to heart surgery, amid a furor after he was found to have received payment for staged paparazzi photographs. He ended up watching the wedding from California, with Prince Charles taking his place and walking Meghan down the aisle.

The couple is expecting their first child next year, and soon-to-be-grandfather Markle said he was "hoping that everything goes well and I get to see a little Meghan or Harry." "There has to be a place for me, I'm her father," he added. Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, has faced a barrage of negative headlines in recent weeks over her relationship with royal staff. Her father ran to her defense, telling GMB that "she's always been very controlling, but she's never been rude... she's always been polite." — AFP



Meghan Markle



Catriona Gray of the Philippines (C) is congratulated by contestants after winning the Miss Universe 2018 on December 17, 2018 in Bangkok. — AFP



Catriona Gray (R) of the Philippines speaks while host Steve Harvey listens during the interview of top three finalists.



Manita Devkota of Nepal competes after being selected as top 10 finalists.

Miss Philippines crowned Miss Universe 2018

Miss Philippines was crowned Miss Universe yesterday in Bangkok after a trailblazing ceremony praised for featuring its first transgender candidate but marred by gaffes about the English-speaking ability of two Asian contestants. Catriona Gray, 24, finished first ahead of the South African and Venezuelan finalists in the glittering televised event hosted by American comic turned TV host Steve Harvey and supermodel Ashley Graham.

In the final round, Gray earned applause describing her work in the slums of the Philippine capital Manila. After winning she told reporters she would like to expand her work with an organization in the Philippines that promotes education on HIV and AIDS. "A few years ago I lost a close friend to health complications with HIV," she said. "So spreading awareness on that cause and encouraging people to get the simple test and knowing their status is definitely one of my first projects that I'd like to pursue."

Gray — a student of music theory — beat more than 90 contestants from around the globe in the 67th installment of Miss Universe, which was held in the Thai capital's Impact Arena. During the competition, which was broadcast live, candidates were asked questions on press freedom, legalization of marijuana, refugees and the #MeToo movement. This year's event drew positive feedback for themes of inclusivity and an all-women panel of judges made up of business leaders and former Miss Universe titleholders.

Miss Spain's Angela Ponce made history as the first transgender candidate in a competition once owned by

President Donald Trump, whose administration has attempted to block military recruitment of transgender people. "I always say: having female genitals didn't transform me into a woman. I am a woman, already before birth, because my identity is here," Ponce told AFP on Saturday, gesturing to her head.

She added she wanted her appearance to be empowering and that she hoped for a "new generation of human beings who are raised a lot better, more tolerant and respectful." But issues of tolerance and respect came centre stage during the competition when Miss USA Sarah Rose Summers appeared to poke fun at Miss Vietnam and Miss Cambodia on social media for not being able to speak English.

The comments went viral but Summers later posted an apology on Instagram, saying she did not "intend to hurt" her fellow competitors. Gray's victory was closely followed in the Philippines, where beauty pageants are hugely popular. Social media exploded with clips of fans jumping for joy and hugging each other as the Filipina contestant went through each successive round and eventually won. A spokesman for President Rodrigo Duterte in a statement praised Gray's win for putting the Philippines on the world map "for its beauty and elegance". — AFP



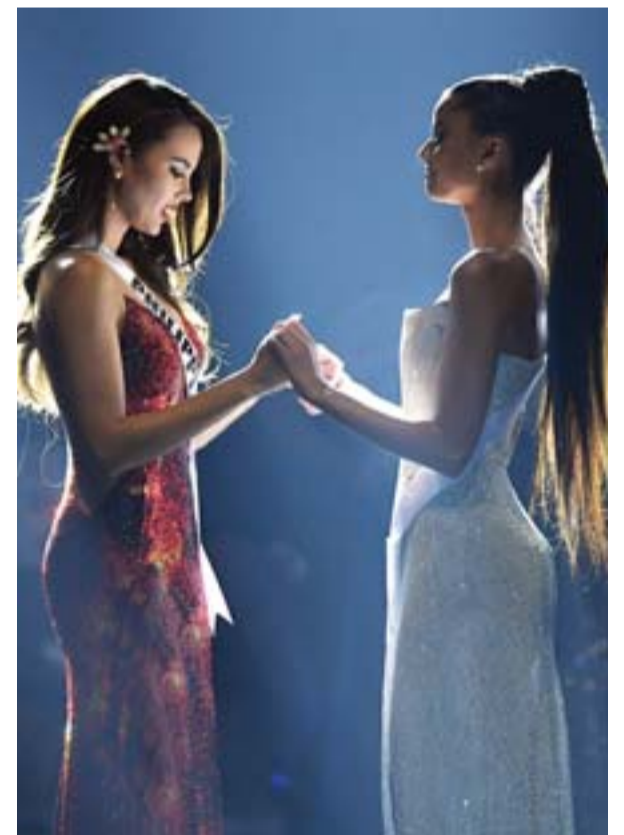
Catriona Gray of the Philippines smiles after being crowned the new Miss Universe 2018.



Miss USA 2018 Sarah Rose Summers poses on stage during the 2018 Miss Universe national costume presentation.



Tamaryn Green of South Africa competes after being selected as top 10 finalist.



Top two finalists Catriona Gray of the Philippines (L) and Tamaryn Green of South Africa hold hands while waiting for the announcement of the winner during the 2018 Miss Universe Pageant.



Marta Stepien of Canada competes after being selected as top 10 finalists.



Yulia Polyachikhina of Russia poses on stage during the 2018 Miss Universe national costume presentation.



Angela Ponce of Spain poses on stage during the 2018 Miss Universe national costume presentation.



Sthefany Gutierrez of Venezuela competes after being selected as top 10 finalist.

J.Lo releasing her own skincare line

The 49-year-old actress-and-singer has revealed that she'll be launching her own range of products so her fans can have glowing skin just like her and has admitted it's taken a long time to create the range because she "doesn't want to put just anything out". Speaking to Refinery29, she said: "I will be coming out with a skincare line; I've been working on it for a long time because I don't want to put just anything out. It's going to be something that works, that's what you can count on when my name is on something." The preventative range, which will launch next year, will stave off signs of ageing and the 'Second Act' star wants to share "all the secrets" she's learned

over the years to stay looking great. She said: "I want it to be something that encompasses all the things I've learned and all the secrets I have, and it doesn't have anything to do with needles." Although the 'Get Right' hitmaker is sharing her skincare secrets she has previously credited her youthful complexion to a healthy lifestyle and drinking lots of water. She previously said: "I don't drink or smoke or have caffeine, that really wrecks your skin as you get older." J.Lo also revealed that she is "rarely in the sun" but always wears sunscreen if she does enjoy a day in the rays, and her commitment to UV protection is another reason her skin is in such great condition.



Lily Collins says that her style is 'constantly changing'

The 29-year-old screen beauty is known for her effortless fashion choices and has revealed her wardrobe is made up of items purchased from "so many amazing vintage shops" from all over the world. Speaking to The Sunday Telegraph newspaper's Stella magazine, Lily said: "In Brussels there are so many amazing vintage shops. I found some incredible old Adidas and Fila jackets. But I'm constantly changing when it comes to fashion." Lily gets to walk numerous red carpets for her career and she always likes to give credit to the designers who have supplied her outfits for the glitzy events if she is asked what she is wearing but she'd rather talk about her work. She said: "Well, I like to give credit where credit's due, and if I'm wearing something a designer has created, they deserve the credit. One hopes there's going to be more than one question - and if it is just the one, I'd rather be asked what I'm doing there." The 'To The Bone' actress' father is music legend Phil Collins and she has revealed that he gave her some invaluable advice when she began her acting journey. She shared: "For every positive review you read you'll probably find two negative ones, so if you're proud of something, don't let anyone take that away ... I feel like I already have this armor built in, which I can use at any moment."

Kate Hudson 'focusing' on herself

The 39-year-old actress wants to start getting back into shape after the birth of her two-month-old daughter Rani Rose, who she shares with Danny Fujikawa, but admits it can be "hard" with children. She said: "It came at a perfect time for me, because at this point after having three babies it's like sense memory. You want to start getting back into shape and to get strong again and focus on your own personal health. It's hard when you have babies. Everyone comes before you, and you have to find that time to just focus on yourself." And the 'Almost Famous' star - who also has Ryder, 14, and Bingham, seven, from past relationships - has signed up to be an ambassador for Weight Watchers, which has rebranded as WW, and is looking forward to "understanding" more about food and fitness to help her weight loss journey. She added: "I don't think it's as much about changing anything, as it is about knowledge of the things that you love. That's the thing that sets it apart to me from everything else. This is about understanding your wellness. It's about understanding your fitness activity, understanding your food, understanding the things that you love. It's about how to balance."



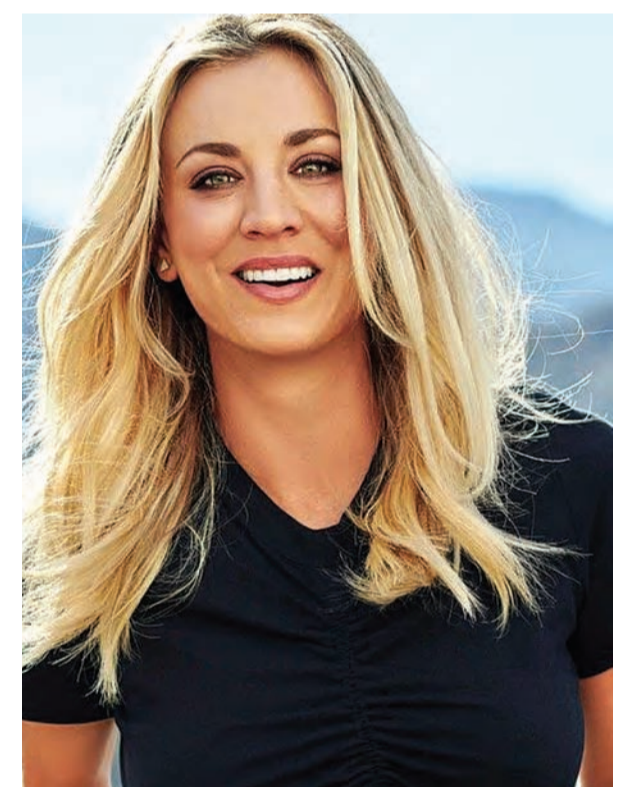
Meek Mill claims Nicki Minaj has blocked him

The 'All Eyes on You' rapper - who dated Nicki between 2015 and 2017 - was asked for his opinion on her new boyfriend Kenneth Petty and when he went to look at the rapper's new man, he found out he had been blocked. Asked about Nicki's new man during a Twitter Q&A session, he replied: "I don't feel nothing ... and I don't know that man to judge him ... I went to check him out on her page and found out I was blocked." Meek had previously admitted he was left heartbroken after he split from Nicki. He explained: "It was a win, I got Nicki when I was ... like I came up. I always wanted Nicki my whole life. I use to talk ... remember I had the rap about it. I bagged that. So

that was a win of course. Of course breaking up with anyone you love is a loss. Period. Game time. Want me to make up a lie or something? It's so easy to tell the truth now." Nicki and Meek reportedly split because they were "fighting on and off". A source said of their split at the time: "They were fighting on and off for a little while about a few topics that upset Nicki. They had a bigger fight and then called it quits. She is doing great and is just putting her mind and soul into her music at this time. She can't predict the future, so getting back with Meek could happen down the road again, because even with fights, she will always have a love for him."

Letitia Wright discovered her favorite foundation

The 25-year-old actress only started using her favorite skin product, Bareminerals Original Foundation, after borrowing it from her sister and thinks the "amazing" foundation immediately makes her "face glow" after applying it. In an interview with British Vogue, she said: "I used to steal Bareminerals products from my sister! Then a few months later I was thinking I really wanted to work with them, and they hit me up. Every day I go straight to Bareminerals Original Foundation. "I just dip into it, real quick, get it onto the brush, swipe my face. And I don't know what happens but my face starts to glow. "I don't know what they put in that thing, but it's amazing. And then I put my mascara on and some lip balm, which is also from Bareminerals, and I just go! I'm out of the house and it stays on my face all day, you don't have to worry about it." Although the 'Black Panther' star opts for a more natural look during the day, her go-to party look includes "something funky" with her eye make-up although "nothing crazy" as she wants her make-up look to enhance her natural features. She said: "For going out, I'm more of an eyes person, I like to keep everything neutral with my lips. We try to do something funky or make it pop. "You know, dark eye shadows, really big eyelashes sometimes. Nothing crazy - I always try to make everything stay in alignment with myself. I just want to enhance what's already there, you know? "



Kaley Cuoco is finally going on her honeymoon

The 'Big Bang Theory' star married Karl Cook in July but they weren't able to head out on holiday after their nuptials because she had shoulder surgery so the couple are thrilled to now be enjoying a romantic trip to Switzerland to end 2018. Sharing a picture from their holiday, she captioned it: "The Honeymooners @mrtankcook" Kaley had to undergo shoulder surgery during her honeymoon. Sharing the news on Instagram, she wrote at the time: "When your 'honeymoon' is shoulder surgery and your husband looks just as happy lol on the road to recovery - thank you for all the love and support! knowing @mrtankcook I'm sure he will be posting tons of hilarious gems ... thank god my hair color is on point (@clarissanya) (sic)" Whilst Karl shared on his own page: "Everyone has their own version of a newlywed glow.... well @normancook yours is memorable #shouldersurgeryhoneymoon ... @normancook snoring like a distressed walrus. I love you so much but wow! #shouldersurgeryhoneymoon (sic)" Whilst some thought Kaley's shoulder surgery was unexpected, she revealed she had planned to have her shoulder surgery so soon after her wedding. Explaining what happened in her Instagram story, she said: "This was a planned surgery I've had for over a year. I hurt [my shoulder] over a year ago and did not need immediate surgery so brilliantly planned it five days after our wedding. I knew I'd have a babysitter. I'm in a pretty big cast. No horsies for a minute. Time to lay low and hopefully not kill this guy [her husband]. Or him kill me." - (Bangshowbiz)



Pitbull's New Year's resolution is to educate children

The 'We Are One' hitmaker co-founded SLAM! (Sports Leadership Arts and Management) charter schools, which helps to educate young people, and he is hoping to double the number of people they help by the end of next year. Asked what his New Year resolution is, he said: "When it comes to education, we have now 10 schools with 10,000 kids in it. So I would say for next year my resolution would be to be up to 20 schools with 20,000 kids in it." And Pitbull wants to use his music to "unite people instead of divide people". He told Variety magazine: "Bottom line, my goal is always to show people the power of music and how that can unite people instead of divide people and the society that we're living in right now, everybody's about instant gratification and they're more about negative news rather than positive news. So if we can continue to put out music that brings people together instead of separating them, that to me is always the major accomplishment. Because that leads us to be able to do things like education and really help those that really need it and those that really crave and starve and take advantage of opportunities. So with that said, as always the major goal is utilizing music to the best of its ability to bring everybody together."



Classifieds

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

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DAY: Sunday 16/12/2018 Valid From 7 PM To 7 AM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

BY DAY: Mostly Sunny with light to moderate variable wind changing to south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

| WEATHER WARNING | | | No Current Warnings | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| STATION | MAX. REC. | MIN. EXP. | SFC. CHART 17 /12/2018 1200 UTC | | |
| KUWAIT CITY | 21 °C | 15 °C | | | |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 20 °C | 11 °C | | | |
| ABDALY | 20 °C | 08 °C | | | |
| BUBYAN | ** °C | ** °C | | | |
| JAHRA | 21 °C | 12 °C | | | |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 19 °C | 13 °C | | | |
| SALMIYAH | 19 °C | 15 °C | | | |
| AHMADI | 19 °C | 15 °C | | | |
| NUWAISIB | 21 °C | 12 °C | | | |
| WAFRA | 21 °C | 10 °C | | | |
| SALMY | 19 °C | 08 °C | | | |

| 4 DAYS FORECAST | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|---|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Monday | 12/17 | Mostly Sunny | 23 °C | 11 °C | VRB-SE | 08 - 30 km/h |
| Tuesday | 12/18 | Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain with a chance for fog forming at night | 22 °C | 14 °C | NE-VRB | 08 - 35 km/h |
| Wednesday | 12/19 | Mostly Sunny with a chance for fog forming at night | 22 °C | 13 °C | NW-VRB | 08 - 30 km/h |
| Thursday | 12/20 | Partly cloudy with a chance for fog forming at night | 23 °C | 12 °C | VRB-SE | 08 - 32 km/h |

| TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Fajr | 05:11 |
| Sunrise | 06:36 |
| Zuhr | 11:44 |
| Asr | 14:34 |
| Sunset | 16:52 |
| Isha | 18:15 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| MAX. Temp. | 20 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 14 °C |
| MAX. RH | 82 % |
| MIN. RH | 33 % |
| MAX. Wind | N 50 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | 0 mm |

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Santhosh Theruparambil (House), S/o. Bhaskaran, Kariyannoor, Erumappetty (PO), Thrissur, 680584, holder of Indian Passport No: J5238774, Civil ID No: 277021014999, converted to Islam and has changed my name and address to Muhammed Suhail, S/o. Bhaskaran, Theruparambil (House), Kaippuram (PO), Thiruvpegapura, Naduvattam, Palakkad, Kerala-679308, hereinafter in all my dealings and documents. (C.5438)

17-12-2018

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

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

1889988

EMERGENCY 112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

1889988

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

| Arrival Flights on Tuesday 18/12/2018 | | | | | Arrival Flights on Tuesday 18/12/2018 | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|-------------------|-------|----------|---------------------------------------|------|------------------|-------|----------|
| Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | FDB | Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | FDB |
| JZR | 406 | Kochi | 00:10 | KAC 672 | JZR | 221 | Riyadh | 12:00 | FDB 221 |
| JAI | 572 | Mumbai | 00:15 | KAC 364 | JZR | 213 | Jeddah | 12:00 | JZR 213 |
| KAC | 503 | Beirut | 00:45 | KAC 286 | JZR | 405 | Kochi | 12:45 | JZR 405 |
| KAC | 102 | London | 00:50 | GFA 221 | JZR | 1075 | Doha | 13:00 | QTR 1075 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 00:50 | KAC 618 | JZR | 702 | Damascus | 13:30 | SAW 702 |
| JZR | 722 | Alexandria | 00:55 | SVA 500 | JZR | 113 | Doha | 13:30 | JZR 113 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 00:55 | KAC 412 | JZR | 123 | Dubai | 13:40 | JZR 123 |
| JZR | 734 | Cairo | 01:25 | KNE 529 | JZR | 611 | Cairo | 14:10 | MSR 611 |
| DLH | 625 | Dammam | 01:25 | KAC 788 | JZR | 872 | Dubai | 14:15 | UAE 872 |
| RJA | 642 | Amman | 01:35 | ETD 303 | JZR | 394 | Kozhikode | 14:15 | AXB 394 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 01:45 | JZR 222 | JZR | 103 | Bahrain | 14:40 | JZR 103 |
| THY | 764 | Istanbul | 01:50 | KAC 562 | JZR | 1079 | Doha | 15:00 | QTR 1079 |
| IGO | 1757 | Kochi | 01:55 | OMA 645 | JZR | 060 | Dubai | 15:10 | FDB 060 |
| ETH | 620 | Addis Ababa | 02:15 | KAC 304 | JZR | 222 | Bahrain | 15:25 | GFA 222 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:30 | UAE 857 | JZR | 673 | Dubai | 15:40 | KAC 673 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 02:40 | JZR 732 | ETH | 501 | Jeddah | 15:45 | SAW 501 |
| JZR | 404D | Hyderabad | 02:50 | SAW 705 | ETH | 775 | Riyadh | 15:50 | KAC 775 |
| KKK | 1268 | Istanbul | 02:55 | ABY 127 | UAE | 530 | Jeddah | 15:55 | KNE 530 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 02:55 | KAC 118 | KAC | 615 | Bahrain | 16:05 | KAC 615 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:05 | KAC 118 | OMA | 563 | Amman | 16:10 | KAC 563 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:05 | JZR 212 | KAC | 619 | Doha | 16:10 | KAC 619 |
| QTR | 1076 | Doha | 04:00 | KAC 502 | THY | 304 | Abu Dhabi | 16:20 | ETD 304 |
| IGO | 1751 | Chennai | 04:10 | KAC 542 | QTR | 646 | Muscat | 16:35 | OMA 646 |
| KAC | 418 | Manila | 04:25 | QTR 1072 | ETD | 785 | Jeddah | 16:40 | KAC 785 |
| KAC | 784 | Jeddah | 04:30 | FDB 051 | JZR | 261 | Beirut | 16:40 | JZR 261 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 04:35 | JZR 114 | JZR | 128 | Sharjah | 16:45 | ABY 128 |
| FDB | 069 | Dubai | 05:00 | SVA 510 | JZR | 675 | Dubai | 17:05 | KAC 675 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 05:05 | GFA 215 | JZR | 504 | Beirut | 17:15 | KAC 504 |
| KAC | 1544 | Cairo | 05:10 | JZR 214 | JZR | 052 | Dubai | 17:40 | FDB 052 |
| JZR | 404 | Hyderabad | 05:10 | UAE 875 | JZR | 283 | Dhaka | 17:45 | KAC 283 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:10 | FDB 063 | UAE | 858 | Dubai | 17:45 | UAE 858 |
| JZR | 502 | Lahore | 05:25 | JZR 124 | KAC | 331 | Trivandrum | 18:00 | KAC 331 |
| KAC | 346 | Ahmedabad | 05:30 | QTR 1080 | JZR | 721 | Alexandria | 18:00 | JZR 721 |
| KAC | 332 | Trivandrum | 05:40 | QTR 1080 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 18:00 | QTR 1073 |
| KAC | 344 | Chennai | 05:50 | MSR 620 | KAC | 343 | Chennai | 18:00 | KAC 343 |
| JZR | 402 | Mumbai | 06:05 | KAC 744 | JZR | 733 | Cairo | 18:10 | JZR 733 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 06:10 | ABY 123 | JZR | 516 | Riyadh | 18:15 | SVA 516 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 06:10 | KAC 156 | JZR | 216 | Bahrain | 18:20 | GFA 216 |
| JZR | 254D | Amman | 06:10 | KAC 123 | JZR | 621 | Doha | 18:25 | KAC 621 |
| JZR | 112 | Doha | 06:30 | KAC 156 | JZR | 127 | Dubai | 18:35 | JZR 127 |
| KAC | 678 | Dubai | 06:55 | KAC 616 | JZR | 403 | Hyderabad | 18:40 | JZR 403 |
| KAC | 204 | Lahore | 07:10 | GFA 217 | JZR | 501 | Lahore | 18:40 | JZR 501 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 07:10 | FDB 057 | JZR | 381 | Delhi | 18:55 | KAC 381 |
| KAC | 354 | Bengaluru | 07:35 | KAC 776 | JZR | 253 | Amman | 19:15 | JZR 253 |
| FDB | 053 | Dubai | 07:50 | KNE 381 | JZR | 064 | Dubai | 19:20 | FDB 064 |
| KAC | 384 | Delhi | 08:00 | KAC 620 | BAW | 156 | Hong Kong | 19:30 | CLX 7907 |
| KAC | 358 | Kochi | 08:05 | OMA 647 | FDB | 054 | Dubai | 19:30 | FDB 054 |
| UAE | 855 | Dubai | 08:35 | DHX 172 | KAC | 501 | Beirut | 19:30 | KAC 501 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 09:05 | DHX 172 | KAC | 613 | Bahrain | 19:30 | KAC 613 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:05 | QTR 1088 | KAC | 787 | Jeddah | 19:30 | KAC 787 |
| QTR | 1070 | Doha | 09:30 | KAC 674 | KAC | 791 | Madinah | 19:30 | KAC 791 |
| FDB | 055 | Dubai | 09:40 | DLH 624 | JZR | 731 | Cairo | 19:30 | JZR 731 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 10:40 | KAC 174 | KAC | 117 | Shannon/New York | 19:30 | KAC 117 |
| AXB | 395 | Kozhikode | 10:50 | ETD 307 | KAC | 691 | Muscat | 19:30 | KAC 691 |
| JZR | 702 | Asyut | 11:05 | ALK 229 | KAC | 541 | Cairo | 19:30 | KAC 541 |
| AXB | 889 | Mangalore/Bahrain | 11:10 | MEA 402 | KAC | 561 | Amman | 19:30 | KAC 561 |
| QTR | 122 | Dubai | 11:20 | KAC 164 | KAC | 101 | London | 19:30 | KAC 101 |
| QTR | 1074 | Doha | 11:35 | KAC 168 | KAC | 741 | Dammam | 19:30 | KAC 741 |
| JZR | 216 | Jeddah | 11:45 | UAE 859 | ABY | 126 | Sharjah | 19:30 | ABY 126 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 11:55 | JZR 219 | KAC | 671 | Dubai | 19:30 | KAC 671 |
| JZR | 714 | Sohag | 12:35 | GFA 219 | UAE | 856 | Dubai | 19:30 | UAE 856 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:50 | KLM 445 | JZR | 301 | Istanbul | 19:30 | JZR 301 |
| MSR | 610 | Cairo | 13:10 | KAC 162 | ETD | 302 | Abu Dhabi | 19:30 | ETD 302 |
| QTR | 1078 | Doha | 13:35 | KAC 564 | KAC | 773 | Riyadh | 19:30 | KAC 773 |
| KAC | 774 | Riyadh | 14:00 | JAI 574 | FDB | 056 | Dubai | 19:30 | FDB 056 |
| RBG | 553 | Alexandria | 14:05 | AZQ 4565 | KAC | 617 | Doha | 19:30 | KAC 617 |
| KNE | 231 | Riyadh | 14:10 | QTR 1082 | KAC | 1754 | Ahmedabad | 19:30 | IGO 1754 |
| IRA | 667 | Esfahan | 14:10 | ETD 309 | IRA | 664 | Shiraz | 19:30 | IRA 664 |
| | | | | AIC 975 | JZR | 211 | Jeddah | 19:30 | JZR 211 |
| | | | | KAC 622 | KAC | 155 | Istanbul | 19:30 | KAC 155 |
| | | | | SVA 514 | IRC | 529 | Ahwaz | 19:30 | IRC 529 |
| | | | | JZR 128 | QTR | 1071 | Doha | 19:30 | QTR 1071 |
| | | | | FDB 071 | SVA | 513 | Riyadh | 19:30 | SVA 513 |
| | | | | | GFA | 214 | Bahrain | 19:30 | GFA 214 |
| | | | | | KAC | 515 | Tehran | 19:30 | KAC 515 |



A woman walks in a tunnel decorated with festive lights for the upcoming holidays in central Moscow yesterday. — AFP

Google joins tech move east, to invest \$1bn in New York campus

WASHINGTON: Google became the latest US tech giant to announce a major expansion plan, unveiling a \$1 billion investment yesterday to create a new campus that could double its New York City workforce to 14,000. The move by Google comes following Amazon's announcement of new headquarters sites in New York and suburban Washington DC worth some \$5 billion, and Apple's \$1 billion expansion to Texas and other areas.

Google parent Alphabet's chief financial officer Ruth Porat said it would lease large office buildings in lower Manhattan, which will become the centerpiece of a campus of more than 160,000 sq m. The new campus, which should be operational starting in 2020, will be known as Google Hudson Square and "will be the primary location for our New York-based Global Business Organization," Porat wrote in a blog post. "New York City continues to be a great source of diverse, world-class talent - that's what brought Google to the city in 2000 and that's what keeps us here," she said.

Alphabet earlier this year said it was buying the Manhattan Chelsea Market for \$2.4 billion, and planned to lease space at Pier 57 on the Hudson river. The company currently employs some 7,000 people in New York. "With these most recent investments in Google Chelsea and Google Hudson Square, we will have the capacity to more than double the number of Googlers in New York over the next 10 years," Porat said. She said the company's "investment in New York is a huge part of our commitment to grow and invest in US facili-

ties, offices and jobs." The new site is a former industrial area adjacent to the Greenwich Village and Soho districts. The expansion would make California-based Alphabet one of the city's largest commercial tenants, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Finding new workers

Alphabet, Amazon and Apple are three of the world's most valuable corporations and have been outgrowing their home bases even with new headquarters building. Google this month released an updated plan for expanding its Mountain View, California, headquarters to create a new village-type campus with more than 6,000 new homes, some of which would be available to low-income residents. Both Google and Apple handled their expansion plans quietly, while Amazon asked for municipalities across North America for proposals, prompting critics to call it a "Hunger Games" contest.

All three companies have been struggling to attract workers with technology skills, and that appears to have been a key factor in the three expansion moves. The massive growth in the tech sector has however passed over much of America's industrial heartland, creating economic and social rifts. Porat said the latest investment "is a huge part of our commitment to grow and invest in US facilities, offices and jobs," and added that "we're growing faster outside the (San Francisco) Bay Area than within it, and this year opened new offices and data centers in locations like Detroit, Boulder, Los Angeles, Tennessee and Alabama." — AFP

ally, Pakistan. In recent months Saudi Arabia has offered a \$6 billion rescue package to Islamabad as the country attempts to plug its rapidly deteriorating finances. "At this juncture, if Saudi Arabia tells Pakistan to support the Afghan peace process then there is no way that Pakistan can ignore it," a senior Western diplomat in Kabul said.

Relations between Washington and Islamabad have long been strained over accusations that Pakistan supports insurgent groups in Afghanistan, a charge it denies. But earlier this month, US President Donald Trump requested Pakistan's support to advance the Afghan peace process. Taliban officials from the movement's political headquarters in Qatar and two representatives sent by Mullah Yaqub, elder son of the Taliban's late founder Mullah Mohammad Omar, will be present. — Reuters

bolstering joint humanitarian virtues between China and Kuwait and activating a multifaceted exchange between their peoples in educational, cultural and athletic fields. Sheikh Nasser invited all Chinese people from various backgrounds to visit Kuwait, explore its urban and natural landmarks, and meet Kuwaitis directly.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Samih Johar Hayat said the Phoenix TV team showed keen interest in learning about Kuwait's regional and international status during Sheikh Nasser's interview. Most questions focused on Kuwait's role in international humanitarian action, effective and positive political initiatives, and contributions to world oil markets' stability, said Hayat. The Kuwaiti diplomat also pointed out HH the Amir's pivotal role in bringing views of Gulf states' leaders closer, affirming his country applies neutrality and moderation in its diplomacy. — KUNA

Riyadh condemns US Senate vote as 'interference'

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday slammed as "interference" US Senate resolutions over its war in Yemen and critic Jamal Khashoggi's murder, warning that the move could have repercussions on its strategic ties with Washington. "The kingdom condemns the latest position of the US Senate that was based on unsubstantiated allegations and rejects the blatant interference in its internal affairs," the foreign ministry said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The Saudi ministry warned that the kingdom would not tolerate any "disrespect" of its rulers. "This position by the US Senate sends the wrong messages to all those who want to cause a rift in Saudi-US relationship," the ministry said. "The kingdom hopes that it is not drawn into domestic political debates in the US to avoid any... significant negative impact on this important strategic relationship."

A day after the Senate vote, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo again defended US ties with Saudi Arabia on national security grounds, saying the kingdom was a bulwark against common foe Iran. The Senate resolution acknowledged the US-Saudi ties were "important" but called on Riyadh to "moderate its increasingly erratic foreign policy". The resolutions cannot be debated in the House of Representatives before January, and would likely be vetoed in any case by US President Donald Trump.

But the Senate votes send a strong message to the White House over anger on both sides of the aisle

towards Riyadh. Khashoggi, a Saudi contributor to the Washington Post, was killed on Oct 2 shortly after entering the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in what Riyadh called a "rogue" operation. UN chief Antonio Guterres on Sunday called for a "credible" probe into the murder. Anger at the human cost of the war in Yemen has also prompted a harder line in Congress about the US military's role in backing Saudi-led coalition strikes against Houthi rebels.

Meanwhile, Canada is looking into ways to cancel a giant 2014 weapons deal with Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Sunday. Trudeau had earlier said that it would be "extremely difficult" to withdraw from the contract, signed by the previous conservative administration, "without Canadians paying exorbitant penalties". Canada in late November announced sanctions against 17 Saudi nationals linked to the killing of Khashoggi.

"The murder of a journalist is absolutely unacceptable and that's why Canada from the very beginning had been demanding answers and solutions on that," Trudeau said Sunday in an interview with CTV. "We inherited actually a (Can)\$15 billion contract signed by (former prime minister) Stephen Harper to export light-armored vehicles to Saudi Arabia," he said. "We are engaged with the export permits to try and see if there is a way of no longer exporting these vehicles to Saudi Arabia," he added.

The penalty for breaking the contract could exceed Can\$1 billion, Trudeau said in an interview with CBC Radio in October. Trudeau has been criticized by political opponents and Human Rights activists for failing to cancel the contract. London, Ontario-based manufacturer General Dynamic Land Systems Canada inked the deal in 2014 to supply 928 LAV 6 armored personnel carriers to Saudi Arabia. The deal, worth US\$11.5 billion, was the largest arms deal in Canadian history. — Agencies

Afghan Taleban hold meeting...

Continued from Page 1

As well as establishing direct contacts with the Taleban, US officials have stepped up efforts to win support from countries with an interest in Afghanistan, including Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Western diplomats said the decision to move the venue of the talks from Doha to the UAE underscored efforts to involve Saudi Arabia, which is hostile to Qatar, more closely in the process and to exert influence on its

Amir's envoy hands letter on...

Continued from Page 1

Linking such important development projects would empower Kuwait to become an international economic and financial center, Sheikh Nasser Sabah affirmed. As part of its strategy to transform its economy into a diversified and sustainable force, Kuwait has invested in its geographic location in the northern Arabian Gulf by linking its safe economic and commercial passageway with the "Belt and Road" initiative, he added.

The Kuwaiti minister underlined the significance of

Govt accepts oil minister's...

Continued from Page 1

The motion was signed by lawmakers Adnan Abdulsamad, Riyadh Al-Adasani, Safa Al-Hashem, Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and Abdulkarim Al-Kandari. They demanded that the Assembly should vote on the two draft laws approved by the financial and economic affairs committee after the debate on the Amiri speech, which is expected to be completed next week.

The first bill calls for scrapping increases in fuel prices, especially that of petrol, and electricity charges, which were applied only on expatriates. The second bill seeks to restrict the government's powers in raising the cost of public services by requiring the Assembly's prior approval of any such hikes. Adasani said on Sunday the two draft laws have been approved by the financial committee since April 2017 and it is high time the Assembly approves them.

The Assembly's health and labor committee yesterday debated amendments to the labor law in the private sector with the Public Authority for Manpower. MP

Osama Al-Shaheen said the committee discussed changes to the end of service system, specifically whether to include public holidays in such calculations. The manpower authority agreed in principle to the amendment but said a final decision is linked to the opinion of the social security agency.

The legal and legislative affairs committee yesterday decided it will take a final vote on the legal status of the grilling assembly the prime minister on Sunday, its rapporteur said. MP Abul said that he expects the final report on the issue will be ready on Monday so it can be debated in the Assembly session on Tuesday. MP Muwaizri had filed to grill the prime minister over alleged government failure to face the heavy rains, but the government insisted that the grilling breached the constitution. The Assembly then asked the legal committee to see if the grilling violated the constitution.

MP Majed Al-Mutairi, who last week revived a proposal asking the government to purchase the bank loans of Kuwaiti citizens, said his proposal is getting solid support from the rest of the lawmakers. Mutairi said that the issue is very simple as the government maintains huge deposits worth tens of billions of dinars in local banks at a very low interest rate of just 1 percent, thus wasting huge returns for state coffers. He said all the government needs to do is to use part of the wasted returns on its deposits and ask local banks to forgive citizens' loans.

Sports

Simmons' rare triple-double carries Philadelphia 76ers

Fox, Hield help Kings snap Mavs' home win streak

CLEVELAND: Ben Simmons had 22 points, 14 assists and 11 rebounds to lead the visiting Philadelphia 76ers past the Cleveland Cavaliers 128-105 on Sunday. It was Simmons' third triple-double this season and the 15th of his career, and he completed it with more than four minutes remaining in the third quarter. He also had zero turnovers in his 32 minutes, becoming the fourth player in NBA history to post a triple-double with at least 22 points, 14 assists, 11 rebounds and zero turnovers. Joel Embiid added 24 points and nine rebounds, while Jimmy Butler returned from a two-game absence because of a strained groin to score 19 points. Landry Shamet scored 16 points, JJ Redick added 14 and Wilson Chandler had 11 for the Sixers, who rebounded after a home loss to the Indiana Pacers two nights earlier. Cedi Osman and Jordan Clarkson each had 18 points for the Cavaliers, who fell to 5-12 at home. Rodney Hood and Matthew Dellavedova contributed 13 points each, and Collin Sexton had 12.

WIZARDS 128, LAKERS 110
John Wall scored a season-high 40 points and had 14 assists as Washington routed visiting Los Angeles to snap a four-game losing streak. Wall converted 16 of 27 field-goal attempts, including 4 of 8 from 3-point range. Bradley Beal had 25 points and 12 rebounds for the Wizards, and Jeff Green and Sam Dekker scored 20 points each. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 25 off the bench for the Lakers, who had won three of four, and Kyle Kuzma added 20. LeBron James had 13 points, his fewest ever against Washington, on 5-of-16 shooting in 32 minutes.

KINGS 120, MAVERICKS 113
Sacramento's young backcourt of Buddy Hield and De'Aaron Fox combined for 56 points as the Kings snapped Dallas' home win streak at 11. The Mavericks, who entered the day tied for the league high with 13 home wins,

could have tied the franchise record for longest home win streak. But Dallas, playing without starting guard Dennis Smith Jr. and bench spark plug J.J. Barea, couldn't slow down the Kings' emerging dynamic duo. Hield finished with a season-high-tying 28 points on 12-of-23 shooting, while Fox also poured in 28, hitting 11 of his 19 attempts. His pretty floater with 1:21 to go gave the Kings a 114-107 lead and all but sealed the victory.

HEAT 102, PELICANS 96
Josh Richardson led a balanced attack with 22 points and Miami defeated host New Orleans as Dwyane Wade added 19. Hassan Whiteside tallied 17 points and 12 rebounds, Tyler Johnson scored 15 and Derrick Jones Jr. put in 11 for the Heat, who finished 4-2 on their road trip. Anthony Davis led the Pelicans with 27 points and 12 rebounds. Julius Randle had 17 points and 10 rebounds for New Orleans before limping to the locker room with a sprained right ankle midway through the fourth quarter.

PACERS 110, KNICKS 99
Victor Oladipo scored a game-high 26 points on a box score-stuffing night and surging Indiana pulled away from visiting New York in the fourth quarter. Oladipo also added eight rebounds, seven assists and five steals for the Pacers, who have won seven straight. It is Indiana's longest winning streak since a seven-game run from Jan. 26 through Feb. 6, 2017. Enes Kanter had 20 points and 15 rebounds for the Knicks, who have lost six of seven. Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 19 points while Emmanuel Mudiay and Kevin Knox added 18 points and 15 points, respectively.

NETS 144, HAWKS 127
D'Angelo Russell scored 32 points and Brooklyn Nets won its fifth straight, hammering visiting Atlanta. Russell



CLEVELAND: Ante Zizic #41 of the Cleveland Cavaliers dunks the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers on Sunday at Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, Ohio. —AFP

was 13 for 19 from the field and 5 for 9 on 3-pointers and added six rebounds and seven assists. He scored 18 in the first half. The Nets are in the middle of their longest winning streak since the 2014-15 season, when they won six

straight. Atlanta lost its third straight and has dropped seven of its last eight games. The Hawks were led by John Collins, who added 29 points and eight rebounds, but saw his streak of double-doubles end at six. —Reuters



Alessandro Chianese, Ahmed Al-Afasi and Saad Al-Mutairi.

KSSC to organize Mustafa Karam & Sons shooting tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sports Club (KSSC) will organize Mustafa Karam and Sons Company Shooting tournament at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Olympic Shooting Complex from Thursday Dec 20 for three days. Shooters from the club, National Guard and from the Qatari Shooting Federation will participate in the clay target events of skeet and trap for men, women and juniors.

Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi said Mustafa Karam tournament is organized annually and sees strong competition between all participants.

Al-Osaimi thanked Mustafa Karam and Sons Company for its continued support of the shooting club, and lauded both moral and material contributions to the shooters who make significant achievements in the name of Kuwait.

Al-Osaimi said that Mohammad Karam, Director General of the Company and



Obaid Al-Osaimi

Deputy Chairman of KSSC is keen on activating the local shooting program and improve the technical level of shooters.

vived, for now, despite widespread calls for change. "We are confident that Michael is the right man to lead the Wallabies to the rugby World Cup and the appointment of Scott Johnson will support Michael and his coaching team as they prepare for the tournament in Japan next September," Castle said Monday.

"Scott Johnson has built a strong reputation in the international rugby landscape over more than a decade, and since taking over as director of rugby in Scotland the national team has climbed to its highest ever world ranking of fifth."

She added that Johnson would take responsibility for the management of the Wallabies' off-field programme, which would allow Cheika "to focus on what he does best, which is coaching the team".

The fate of Cheika-world coach of the year in 2015 — has split the rugby world with some, including Wallabies legend Matt Burke, describing his position as "untenable". But others threw their support behind him as the best man for the job.

"It's a great move for Australian rugby and I know it will prove to be the best long-term structure for the game in this country," said Cheika. "I'm looking forward to working with Scott and finishing the work that I started by making Australians proud of our performance." —AFP

Cheika survives axe with powers curtailed

SYDNEY: Under-siege Wallabies coach Michael Cheika has survived the axe but will have to report to Scott Johnson who was yesterday recruited from Scotland to assume the new role of director of rugby. Governing body Rugby Australia also announced that Cheika must work with a three-man selection panel-himself, Johnson and an independent-in an overhaul to halt the team's alarming slide in form ahead of the World Cup in Japan next year.

Cheika has faced a mounting backlash from dismayed fans and former players after winning just four of Australia's 13 Tests this year—their worst campaign in decades.

Despite the dire results and a drop to sixth in the world rankings, Rugby Australia chief Raclene Castle has consistently backed him to take the Wallabies to Japan.

His coaching team of Stephen Larkham, Nathan Grey and Simon Raiwalui also sur-

Over 2,900 registrations recorded for FSHN's eighth RunKuwait race



KUWAIT: Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network (FSHN) concludes yet another successful RunKuwait race in support of children with special needs. The race which took place on Saturday, December 15, marks the biggest race in the history of RunKuwait. More than 2,900 participants had registered to the race to support one cause, raising awareness and funds towards the treatment of children with special needs.

The RunKuwait initiative in its eighth year raised more than KD 60,900 which is estimated to provide more than 1,000 treatment sessions at no cost for the children treated at the non-profit Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center (CERC). These free of charge sessions are in addition to the subsidized ones, which are offered on a case-by-case basis, where up to 90% of the costs are also covered by the center.

"The community's response to our cause and their engagement is our driving force to continue offering the utmost levels of medical care and to support raising the awareness on how to maintain an environment where a child with special needs is raised. We are proud to complete eight installations of RunKuwait, which is evidence of the tremendous support we are receiving from

our community. We deeply thank all the individual participants and companies for joining us this year and we look forward to their continuous support towards the RunKuwait initiative," commented Dr Elham Hamdan, President and CEO at FSHN.

In its early years, the RunKuwait initiative was successful in gaining community's empathy and support, which led the FSHN team to direct all the initiative's efforts and funds towards the children with special needs treated at CERC. The unit offers services for children in a number of areas which include physical therapy, speech pathology, counselling/behavior therapy and occupational therapy.

The race participants and their families, friends and supporters were welcomed with a number of fun-filled activities at the race village including warm-up exercises. All attendees were served refreshments and snacks throughout the day, offered by the event's sponsors and participating companies.

RunKuwait's race this year was supported with generous contributions from the following sponsors: Agility as the Founding Partner, INTERSPORT and ASAR Legal as the Gold sponsors and EQUATE and KDD as the Silver sponsors. The exclusive media



sponsors for the RunKuwait initiative this year were Al Anba newspaper, Kuwait Times newspaper, Bazaar magazine and 248am blog as the exclusive social media sponsor. The initiative was also supported by Mullenlowe Blu.

First, second and third place winners were awarded across different categories for the 5KM & 10KM race including, Male, Female, Youth (18years and below) & Masters (55 years and above). The serious athletes were able to complete the 10KM race distance within 36 minutes. The first place winners announced were Abdullah Rabeeba (Male), Taiba Alnouri (Female), Abdulaziz Alduaij (Youth), Robert D'Silva (Masters).

The sports enthusiasts who opted for a shorter race distance, 5KM, were also awarded within the same categories. The first place winners included, Mohammed Salman (Male), Amal Alroumi (Female), Omar Qanbar (Youth), Abdulla Al Saraf (Masters). Everyone who joined the race, whether to compete or simply support the cause, received their participation medal as they crossed the finish line and returned to the race village to join in the relaxing sports activities.

For additional information about RunKuwait and how to continue contributing to the initiative, please follow the official social media account, @RunKuwait on Instagram and Facebook.



Sports

Kohli falls to Lyon as Australia closing in on overdue victory

Set 287 to win on an unpredictable pitch

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the fourth day of the second Test against at Perth yesterday:

Australia 1st innings 326 (M. Harris 70, T. Head 58; Sharma 4-41)
India 1st innings 283 (V. Kohli 123, A. Rahane 51; Lyon 5-67)
Australia 2nd innings (overnight 132-4)

| | |
|--|-----|
| M. Harris b Bumrah | 20 |
| A. Finch c Pant b Shami | 25 |
| U. Khawaja c Pant b Shami | 72 |
| S. Marsh c Pant b Shami | 5 |
| P. Handscomb lbw Sharma | 13 |
| T. Head c Sharma b Shami | 19 |
| T. Paine c Kohli b Shami | 37 |
| P. Cummins b Bumrah | 1 |
| M. Starc b Bumrah | 14 |
| N. Lyon c Vihari b Shami | 5 |
| J. Hazlewood not out | 17 |
| Extras (b8, lb3, w4) | 15 |
| Total (all out, 93.2 overs) | 243 |
| Fall of wickets: 1-59 (Harris), 2-64 (Marsh), 3-85 (Handscomb), 4-120 (Head), 5-192 (Paine), 6-192 (Finch), 7-198 (Khawaja), 8-198 (Cummins), 9-207 (Lyon), 10-243 (Starc) | |
| Bowling: Sharma 16-1-45-1, Bumrah 25.2-10-39-3, Shami 24-8-56-6 (2w), Yadav 14-0-61-0 (2w), Vihari 14-4-31-0 | |

| | |
|---|-----|
| India 2nd innings | |
| KL. Rahul b Starc | 0 |
| M. Vijay b Lyon | 20 |
| C. Pujara c Paine b Hazlewood | 4 |
| V. Kohli c Khawaja b Lyon | 17 |
| A. Rahane c Head b Hazlewood | 30 |
| H. Vihari not out | 24 |
| R. Pant not out | 9 |
| Extras (b6, w2) | 8 |
| Total (five wickets: 41 overs) | 112 |
| Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Rahul), 2-13 (Pujara), 3-48 (Kohli), 4-55 (Vijay), 5-98 (Rahane) | |
| Bowling: Starc 10-2-28-1 (1w), Hazlewood 11-3-24-2, Cummins 8-0-24-0 (1w), Lyon 12-2-30-2 | |

PERTH: Australia is poised for their first Test match win since the ball-tampering scandal after spinner Nathan Lyon claimed the prized wicket of Indian captain Virat Kohli in the second Test in Perth yesterday.

Set 287 to win on an unpredictable pitch, India were reduced to 112 for five at stumps on the fourth day. Hanuma Vihari was 24 not out and Rishabh Pant was on nine. The visitors still needed 175 to win with just five wickets in hand as Australia seek to level the four-Test series and claim their first Test win since beating South Africa at St George's Park in March.

It was during the following Test at Newlands that Cameron Bancroft was caught using sandpaper to alter the ball. The scandal led to lengthy suspensions from Cricket Australia for Bancroft, captain Steve Smith and opener David Warner.

Australian paceman Josh Hazlewood said the home team were excited by the chance of an overdue victory on the fifth day. "It has been a bit of a long time between wins," he said.

"We're pretty excited to come back tomorrow. There is still a bit of work to be done, there is obviously enough there in the wicket and we just have to hit the right areas." India lead 1-0 after victory in Adelaide, but have never won a Test series in Australia. The loss of Kohli appeared a fatal blow to their chances of a famous win.

Lyon dismissed Kohli for the seventh time in Test cricket, two more than any other bowler, when he had him caught at slip by Usman Khawaja for 17. Kohli was unable to repeat the heroics of his first innings century, the ball catching the outside edge as he probed forward defensively.

His departure was the cause of great delight for Australian captain Tim Paine, after the pair had exchanged words at the conclusion of the third day. The Australian wicketkeeper, looking for his first win as skipper in five Tests since taking over from the disgraced Steve Smith, celebrated the dismissal with a cheeky comment to not out batsman Murali Vijay.

"Murali, I know he's your captain, but you can't seriously like him as a bloke," Paine said, in comments picked up by microphone. Just two overs later Vijay was also on his way back to the pavilion, bowled off an



PERTH: Australia's bowler Nathan Lyon (R) celebrates after dismissing India's Virat Kohli (C) during day four of the second Test cricket match between Australia and India in Perth yesterday. — AFP

inside edge by Lyon, who took two for 30.

The pair of wickets continued a fine match for Lyon, who picked up five in the Indian first innings to move into the top 25 all-time Test wicket-takers, currently on 333. After Australia lost their last six wickets for 51 runs to be dismissed for 243, with Mohammed Shami claiming a career-best 6-56, India made a disastrous start to their run chase just before tea. Opener KL. Rahul didn't survive long, falling to the fourth ball of the innings from Mitchell Starc for a duck.

Rahul attempted to pull the bat away and only succeeded in getting an inside edge onto his stumps.

Cheteshwar Pujara then feathered a short delivery from Josh Hazlewood on four, as India slumped to 13 for two.

Across the two teams, eight wickets fell for 68 runs between lunch and tea, as batting appeared to become very difficult due to variable bounce. Australian number eight Pat Cummins was the chief victim of the pitch gremlins after lunch, when he was clean bowled for one by a Jasprit Bumrah delivery that kept very low off the wicket. The home team had resumed at 190 for four after lunch, but Shami cleaned up the tail, removing Khawaja for 72 and Paine, on 37, with sharply rising deliveries. —AFP

India's Shaw out for Australia Tests, Pandya and Agarwal get call

PERTH: Indian batsman Prithvi Shaw has been ruled out of the remaining two Test matches against Australia due to an ankle injury, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) said yesterday.

The 19-year-old opener injured his ankle while fielding during a tour match against a Cricket Australia XI in Sydney last month and has missed the first two matches of the series. Indian fans had hoped that Shaw, who scored an aggressive century on debut against West Indies in October, would be fit again for the third test which begins in Melbourne on Dec. 26.

Fellow opener Mayank Agarwal, who is yet to make his Test debut, was named as Shaw's replacement. The Indian selectors also called up all-rounder Hardik Pandya who has recovered from a back injury sustained in the Asia Cup earlier this year.

Murali Vijay and Lokesh Rahul, who were paired together to open the innings following Shaw's injury, have struggled in the first two matches. The out-of-form Rahul has scored 48 runs in four innings while Vijay, who was recalled to the side after being dropped from the England series earlier this year, has managed 49.

India won the opening match in Adelaide by 31 runs to take a 1-0 series lead. Virat Kohli's side were in a precarious position in the second test in Perth after the fourth day's play on Monday, having been reduced to 112-5, 175 runs short of their target. — Reuters

Lyon humbled by Tendulkar praise

PERTH: Australian off-spinner Nathan Lyon says is humbled after Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar praised him as a "very special" bowler.

Lyon took 5-67 in India's first innings 283 during the ongoing second Test at Perth, the seventh time he has bagged a five-wicket haul against them.

It put him alongside Sri Lanka great Muttiah Muralitharan as the other bowler to achieve the feat, and it didn't go unnoticed by Tendulkar. "Australia have got a very special spinner in @NathLyon421," he tweeted.

"He has got terrific variations and uses the pace and bounce from the pitch to extract maximum value." Lyon said he was humbled by such praise from the master batsman. "That's amazing to get something like that from Sachin Tendulkar," he told reporters. "He's obviously one of the greatest of all time to ever play the game. So, to get recognised from him it's a massive honour."

Lyon, 31, said he still had plenty of gas left in tank and plans to add to his 331 Test wickets in the years ahead. "I think I've still got a lot of improvement, a lot of learning about the game and about off-spin bowling," he said. "I believe there's a lot around the corner for me if I keep working hard and keep wanting to get better." — AFP

Cottrell, Hope guide WI to crushing T20 win

SYLHET: Left-arm pacer Sheldon Cottrell delivered a career best 4-28 before Shai Hope struck a half-century as West Indies crushed Bangladesh by eight wickets in their Twenty20 series opener yesterday.

West Indies raced to 130-2 in just 10.5 overs after Cottrell and his fellow pacers bowled out Bangladesh for 129 runs in Sylhet. Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan scored 61 off 43 balls for the home side but could not stave off a thumping defeat.



SYLHET: West Indies cricketer Shai Hope (L) plays a shot as Bangladeshi cricketer Mushfiqur Rahim (R) looks on during the first Twenty20 (T20) cricket match between Bangladesh and West Indies at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet yesterday. — AFP

Sabres get best of Bruins again

BOSTON: Buffalo's Jeff Skinner scored two goals, including the go-ahead tally late in the third period, as the Sabres knocked off the host Boston Bruins 4-2 on Sunday. Skinner broke a 2-2 tie when he lifted a pass from Jack Eichel for his team-leading 24th goal to give Buffalo its third lead of the game with 3:31 remaining. Eichel put it away with an empty-net marker, his second goal of the game, with 25 seconds left. Eichel also had two assists. Sam Reinhart had three assists-all in the third period-and Rasmus Dahlin posted two helpers for the Sabres, who won for the third straight time in Boston. Steven Kampfer and Torey Krug scored for the Bruins, who lost their second straight. Krug hit the post with 90 seconds left, and Boston then pulled goalie Tuukka Rask. Buffalo's Linus Ullmark stopped 35 shots. Rask made 23 saves.

Jets 5, Lightning 4 (OT)

Mark Scheifele scored the game-winning goal with 41.4 seconds left in overtime as Winnipeg Jets moved into first place in the Central Division with a victory over visiting Tampa Bay. Scheifele, who also had two assists, slapped in a rebound of a Patrik Laine shot from the slot for his 21st goal of the season and give Winnipeg its fifth straight win. Nikolaj Ehlers had two

goals and an assist, while Brandon Tanev and Mathieu Perreault also scored goals for the Jets, who improved to 9-1-0 in their last 10 games. Connor Hellebuyck had 43 saves to pick up the win in net. Steven Stamkos had a goal and an assist, and Nikita Kucherov, Tyler Johnson and Alex Killorn also scored goals for Tampa Bay, which had an eight-game winning streak snapped. Ondrej Palat and Brayden Point each added two assists, and Andrei Vasilevskiy had 37 saves.

Sharks 7, Blackhawks 3

Evander Kane, Melker Karlsson, Tomas Hertl, Logan Couture and Kevin Labanc each had a goal and an assist as San Jose rallied past host Chicago for its fourth straight win. Five of San Jose's goals came after Blackhawks goaltender Corey Crawford was forced to leave after hitting the back of his head on the goalpost following a collision. Marcus Sorensen and Barclay Goodrow also scored for the Sharks, while Aaron Dell stopped all 16 shots he faced in relief of Martin Jones, who was chased early.

Flames 7, Blues 2

Johnny Gaudreau scored twice in a three-point game and Alan Quine had two goals as Calgary scored four first-period goals en route to a thumping of host St. Louis. David Rittich made 26 saves for the Flames, who are on a three-game winning streak and riding a 9-1-1 run. Matthew Tkachuk, who calls St. Louis his hometown, kicked off the one-sided opening frame by burying a rebound for a power-play goal at the 5:58 mark, his 15th goal of the campaign. Blues starting goalie Jake

nershops of 25 and 30 respectively with Mahmudullah Riyad and Ariful Haque to lift the side briefly.

"Everything (fell) apart from the toss. Batting failed and then the bowling also obviously went wrong," Shakib said after the match. "Was a good pitch, should have probably got about 180 on the board."

He hit eight fours and two sixes before being dismissed by Cottrell. Paul wrapped up Bangladesh's innings with 2-23. The West Indies are hoping a series win will end their Bangladesh tour on a positive note after losing their Test and one-day international series 2-0 and 2-1 respectively. "Very good win but it's only one game," skipper Carlos Brathwaite said. "We have started with a win before and then gone on to lose the series in recent times. So, it's important to be respectful of the opposition." Bangladesh and West Indies play the remaining two T20 internationals of the series in Dhaka this week. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first Twenty20 international in a three-match series between Bangladesh and West Indies at Sylhet International Stadium yesterday:

| | | |
|--|-----|---|
| Bangladesh | | Bowling: Thomas 4-0-33-1, Cottrell 4-0-28-4 (w1), Paul 4-0-23-2 (nb1), Brathwaite 3-0-13-1, Allen 3-0-19-1, Powell 1-0-7-0 |
| Tamim Iqbal c Brathwaite b Cottrell | 5 | |
| Liton Das c Brathwaite b Thomas | 6 | |
| Soumya Sarkar c Powell b Cottrell | 5 | |
| Shakib Al Hasan c&b Cottrell | 61 | |
| Mushfiqur Rahim run out | 5 | |
| Mahmudullah Riyad c Hope b Cottrell | 12 | |
| Ariful Haque c Pooran b Allen | 17 | |
| Mohammad Saifuddin c Pooran b Brathwaite | 1 | |
| Mehidy Hasan c Hope b Paul | 8 | |
| Abu Hider not out | 1 | |
| Mustafizur Rahman b Paul | 0 | |
| Extras (b4, lb2, w1, nb1) | 8 | |
| Total (all out: 19 overs) | 129 | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-11 (Tamim), 2-19 (Liton), 3-31 (Soumya), 4-48 (Mushfiqur), 5-73 (Mahmudullah), 6-103 (Ariful), 7-110 (Saifuddin), 8-122 (Shakib), 9-129 (Mehidy), 10-129 (Mustafizur) | | |
| | | West Indies |
| | | E. Lewis c Ariful b Saifuddin 18 |
| | | S. Hope c Mustafizur b Mahmudullah 55 |
| | | N. Pooran not out 23 |
| | | K. Paul not out 28 |
| | | Extras (lb 5, w1) 6 |
| | | Total (two wickets: 10.5 overs) 130 |
| | | Did not bat: S. Hetmyer, D. Bravo, R. Powell, C. Brathwaite, F. Allen, S. Cottrell, O. Thomas |
| | | Fall of wickets: 1-51 (Lewis), 2-98 (Hope) |
| | | Bowling: Shakib 3.5-0-32-0, Mehidy 2-0-37-0, Hider 1-0-15-0, Saifuddin 1-0-13-1 (w1), Mustafizur 1-0-15-0, Mahmudullah 2-0-13-1 |
| | | Result: West Indies win by eight wickets. |

Allen was pulled after the first period, the victim of four goals on 16 shots. Jordan Binnington made 10 saves in the final two periods.

Golden Knights 4, Rangers 3 (OT)

Alex Tuch scored his 12th goal of the season 2:11 into overtime, and visiting Vegas beat New York. Tuch scored by waiting for goalie Henrik Lundqvist to go down and then lifted a wrist shot under Lundqvist's left arm to finish off an odd-man rush with Paul Stastny. Tuch's fourth goal in six games gave the Golden Knights their fifth win in the last seven games (5-1-1). Vegas also improved to 10-2-1 in its last 13 games. Reilly Smith, Stastny and William Carrier scored in regulation as Vegas rebounded from blowing a three-goal lead in Friday's overtime loss at New Jersey. Chris Kreider scored the tying goal early in the third for the Rangers, but New York fell to 2-5-3 in its last 10 games and lost its third straight home game beyond regulation.

Hurricanes 3, Coyotes 0

Petr Mrazek posted his first shutout of the season with 23 saves as Carolina defeated visiting Arizona in a matchup between two struggling teams in Raleigh, N.C. Warren Foegele, Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho scored for the Hurricanes, who won for only the second time in an eight-game span (2-4-2). Mrazek picked up his second victory since late October. His most-recent shutout came last February when he was playing with the Detroit Red Wings. Arizona rookie goalie Adin Hill made 24 saves. —Reuters

Sports

Despite fan protest, Roma revive, Napoli keep pace with Juventus

Piatek scores 12th goal of the season to overtake Ronaldo as leading scorer

MILAN: Roma battled back for a 3-2 Serie A victory over Genoa to give beleaguered coach Eusebio Di Francesco a lifeline at the Stadio Olimpico on Sunday despite goalkeeper Robin Olsen's early blunder. It ended Roma's five-match winless streak dating back to a 4-1 triumph over Sampdoria on November 11, and lifted Di Francesco's side to sixth-two points behind AC Milan in the final Champions League berth.

Napoli earlier beat Cagliari 1-0 in Sardinia to pull back to within eight points of leaders Juventus, who won their derby against Torino by the same scoreline on Saturday thanks to a Cristiano Ronaldo penalty.

Roma got off to the worst possible start in a tense atmosphere among the 29,000 crowd in Rome where fans had a silent protest in the first ten minutes at the club's management and transfer strategy.

"I have to congratulate the lads for how they played in a very surreal environment, for them it was not easy," said Di Francesco. "The team is still sick, but I saw the pride and the desire to bring home the three points."

The hosts were trailing after Swedish keeper Olsen let the ball slip through his legs and hands to allow Polish striker Krzysztof Piatek pounce in the 17th minute. Piatek slid in for his 12th goal of the season to overtake Ronaldo as Serie A's leading scorer.

But goals from Federico Fazio and Justin Kluivert twice pulled Roma level before the break, with Bryan Cristante grabbing the winner just before the hour mark. Di Francesco was reported to be set for the axe if his team failed to deliver a win against Genoa, who are now 16th.

And amid an injury crisis, the 49-year-old switched things around after his side's Champions League defeat midweek with Nicolo Zaniolo in a new attacking role. "I chose above all players who were fresh, young and free of the pressure," said Di Francesco.

"My only other option in attack was Patrik Schick, I had no options off the bench in midfield, while in defence I picked Juan Jesus because he is tough and I needed that in this game. "We had a lot of technical errors, but the most important thing was a show of character."

"Genoa are in good shape and they knew that they were up against a Roma side that was a little frightened, so they tried to make the most of the situation." Roma next travel to seven-time defending champions Juventus who remain unbeaten with 46 points from 16 games.

MILIK LIFTS NAPOLI

Earlier, Polish striker Arkadiusz Milik's superb injury-time free-kick kept Carlo Ancelotti's side eight points behind Juventus. Milik scored the winner in the 91st minute with a perfectly curled effort which left Cagliari goalkeeper Alessio Cragno with no chance.

Ancelotti had rung the changes after Napoli's Champions League exit to Liverpool but the visitors struggled in attack against the well-organised Sardinians. Milik had a chance to break the deadlock on 68 minutes but his header hit the bar, with Cragno rushing to prevent Kalidou Koulibaly's attempted finish from the rebound.

But Napoli poured forward in search of a winner with Milik settling the game with his eighth goal of the season and fourth in three games. "Anfield was a big blow, but the lads immediately responded as I expected them to," said Ancelotti.

"I chose a fresher initial line-up to give us energy throughout the match. It was a mature victory with intensity." Cagliari, in 13th position, suffered their first home defeat of the season. Fiorentina ended their eight-match league winless run with a 3-1 comeback victory over Empoli, and are now four points off



ROME: (From L) Genoa's Italian forward Cristian Kouame, AS Roma Czech forward Patrik Schick and Genoa's Argentine midfielder Esteban Rolon go for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match AS Roma vs Genoa on Sunday at the Olympic stadium in Rome. —AFP

fourth-placed AC Milan who play Bologna today.

Fabio Quagliarella, meanwhile, continued his fine form, scoring in his sixth straight Serie A game to seal a 2-0 win for Sampdoria over Parma. Gianluca Caprari

scored the opener in the 66th minute in Genoa with Quagliarella further punishing Parma with a second three minutes later for his ninth goal this season and seventh in six games. —AFP

Messi hat-trick restores Barcelona La Liga lead

MADRID: Lionel Messi continued his sublime form by netting his 31st La Liga hat-trick as Barcelona thrashed Levante 5-0 on Sunday to regain their three-point lead at the top of the table.

The 31-year-old Argentinian arrived in Valencia having scored two free-kicks in last weekend's derby thumping of Espanyol. He took his goals tally for the season to 20 after a virtuoso display, while also teeing up Luis Suarez's 35th-minute opener and Gerard Pique's late fifth.

Barca were under pressure after Atletico Madrid and second-placed Sevilla had both moved level on points with the Catalan giants.

But after resting his key stars for their final Champions League group-stage match against Tottenham in midweek, coach Ernesto Valverde saw his refreshed side cruise to a third straight league win without conceding a goal.

"At the beginning it was difficult, they squeezed us and had a chance that hit the woodwork," said Valverde. Levante started the game brightly and visiting goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen was forced into an early save by Ghanaian Emmanuel Boateng.

But Barca did not take long to start moving through the gears, with Messi curling wide from long range before testing Oier Olazabal in the Levante goal with a free-kick. Just seconds after Boateng hammered a left-footed strike against the crossbar, the reigning Spanish champions broke the deadlock as Messi jinked through a mesmerised home defence and picked out Suarez who volleyed home.

But Levante, who had ended Barcelona's dreams of going through last season's La Liga campaign unbeaten with a remarkable 5-4 victory in the penultimate game, came close to a quick response as Jose Luis Morales fired over.

The match was all but ended as a contest when Messi bore down on goal two minutes before half-time and drilled low into the net. "I'm happy to have won here, because last year we came and they put five goals past us having gone the whole season unbeaten, so we knew about the danger of Levante and it was a match we had marked out," added Valverde. He wasted little time after the restart to add his second in the 47th minute, sweeping home Jordi Alba's clever cutback, before completing his treble with a simple tap-in from Arturo Vidal's square pass on the hour mark.

Messi has scored five goals in two league games since finishing only fifth in the voting for the Ballon d'Or earlier this month. A bad evening for Levante worsened with 14 minutes to play, as left-back Erick Cabaco was sent off for a reckless lunge on Ousmane Dembele.

Centre-back Pique added further gloss to the scoreline in the 88th minute, rampaging forward to collect

Messi's pass, before keeping his cool and rolling the ball home.

Sevilla reclaimed second place earlier on Sunday as second-half strikes from Ever Banega and Pablo Sarabia sealed a 2-0 win over Girona. Pablo Machin's side are unbeaten in seven league games since a 4-2 loss at Barcein October.

The hosts had to wait until the 55th minute to break the deadlock, when striker Andre Silva was tripped in the area by Girona defender Juanpe. Argentinian Banega stepped up to send visiting goalkeeper Gorca Iraizoz the wrong way from the penalty spot.

The points were wrapped up only nine minutes later, as Wissam Ben Yedder cut the ball back for the onrushing Sarabia to slide home his 14th goal of the season in all competitions.

"In the first half they (Girona) were very good," said Machin. "They were very organised and had good chances, when (Sevilla goalkeeper) Tomas Vaclik was splendid. "In the second half we were the better team."

Elsewhere, Villarreal were plunged further into crisis as Samuele Longo's 93rd-minute strike saw them held to a 2-2 draw at bottom club Huesca. Villarreal, who replaced Javier Calleja with Luis Garcia Plaza as coach in midweek, are only one point and one place above the relegation zone.

Real Betis eased to a 3-1 win at Espanyol to move into fifth place after a third successive league victory. Espanyol, who led the table earlier in the season, have lost five straight matches to slip into the bottom half. —AFP

Chelsea to face Malmo in Europa League last 32

NYON: Former champions Chelsea will face Malmo in the last 32 of the Europa League while Arsenal will lock horns again with BATE Borisov. The two sides met in the Europa League last season, the Gunners hammering the Belarussian side 6-0 at the Emirates.

Five-time champions Sevilla, currently second in La Liga, face a difficult tie against Lazio, beaten finalists in this competition in 1998, who are fifth in Serie A.

The 2004 champions Valencia will have to overcome Scottish champions Celtic while another Spanish side Villarreal, currently hovering just above the Liga relegation zone, face an Iberian battle when they take on Sporting.

Napoli, demoted to the Europa League after they were knocked out of the Champions League at the group stage, face Zurich.

Portuguese giants Benfica, three times runners-up, tackle Turkish side Galatasaray, UEFA Cup winners in 2000, and Inter Milan, another team who failed to progress to the Champions League knockout stage, will play Rapid Vienna. The ties will take place on 12-14 and 20-21 February. —AFP

Liverpool draw Bayern as United face PSG in CL last 16

NYON: Liverpool will take on fellow five-time winners Bayern Munich in the last 16 of the Champions League, while Jose Mourinho's struggling Manchester United face French giants Paris Saint-Germain.

Holders Real Madrid were paired with Ajax in yesterday's draw in Nyon as the Spaniards attempt to lift the trophy for the fifth time in six seasons, while Lionel Messi and Barcelona will play Lyon. Both Liverpool and Bayern have a rich tradition in the competition, with Jurgen Klopp returning to his homeland to face the side that beat his Borussia Dortmund team in the 2013 final.

Liverpool, defeated finalists last season, are the current form side of the two and sit top of the Premier League while Bayern have been far short of their own high standards in the Bundesliga this term. "That's the team of the hour, the league leaders in England, they are playing really good football, very physical, really stepping it up. We are looking forward to it." Bayern sporting director Hasan Alihamidzic said of the tie with Liverpool.

"A tough cookie, but that's something to look forward to as a player." Klopp said: "It will be a tough one, an interesting one, and I am looking forward to it."

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City take on German side Schalke 04 while Atletico Madrid, runners-up in 2014 and 2016, come up against Cristiano Ronaldo and Italian heavyweights Juventus. "A very difficult match, with few goals," Juve vice-president Pavel Nedved predicted.

"No doubt Cristiano is the man of the Champions League, he has always

shown that, with goals and victories. Our team is very strong and we can be calm and confident."

Bundesliga leaders Dortmund will meet Tottenham Hotspur for the second season in a row, having faced each other in last year's group stage, while Roma meet two-time former champions Porto.

"We've already met them (Tottenham) twice. A strong opponent, the chances are at 50-50. The team has top players. We are also strong, it will be interesting," Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke told Sky.

United, at a low ebb after Sunday's 3-1 defeat to Liverpool, meet PSG for the first time and a formidable task awaits against a side featuring Neymar and Kylian Mbappe—the world's two most expensive players.

"It's always difficult to play Manchester United," said PSG boss Thomas Tuchel. "They have lots of experience in this competition, they've won it numerous times. It's always difficult to play at Old Trafford, it's always a big challenge. "It's the same thing against Mourinho. He has lots of experience in this competition and you must have respect," he added. Manchester City's director of football Txiki Begiristain warned the English champions will not have it easy against a Schalke outfit languishing in 13th place in Germany following a nightmare start. "Teams that have been struggling in their leagues have still they've done very well in the Champions League," said Begiristain.

"Schalke will be difficult. After a winter break, German clubs are always very dangerous." Lyon coach Bruno Genesio says his team can draw on their group-stage displays against City—a 2-1 away win and 2-2 home draw-ahead of their clash with five-time European champions Barca.

"We'll need to pull off two big performances, in the first leg and in the return, but we can do it. We did it



NYON: (COMBO) This combination of pictures shows the slips of Liverpool FC (up) and FC Bayern München during the draw for the round of 16 of the UEFA Champions League football tournament at the UEFA headquarters in Nyon yesterday. —AFP

against City," said Genesio. "It's tough. They are a team that Lyon has already played against but never beaten. Barca are more experienced and stronger but over two matches anything is possible," Gerard Houllier, who holds an advisory role at the French club, told RMC Sport. "The first match is key and we are

playing at home. Barca are potential champions. We have nothing to lose. Everything is a bonus for Lyon." Teams that finished in second place in the group stage will host the first legs on February 12/13 and 19/20 with the return matches scheduled for March 5/6 and 12/13. —AFP

Full draw for Europa League last 32

- Rennes v Betis
 - BATE Borisov v Arsenal
 - Malmo v Chelsea
 - Viktoria Plzen v Dinamo Zagreb
 - Club Brugge v Salzburg
 - Rapid Vienna v Inter Milan
 - Slavia Prague v Genk
 - Krasnodar v Bayer Leverkusen
 - Zurich v Napoli
 - Shakhtar Donetsk v Eintracht Frankfurt
 - Celtic v Valencia
 - Olympiakos v Dynamo Kiev
 - Lazio v Sevilla
 - Fenerbahce v Zenit Saint Petersburg
 - Sporting Lisbon v Villarreal
 - Galatasaray v Benfica
- First legs to be played February 14 with return legs on February 21. —AFP

| Matches on TV (Local Timings) | |
|---|-------|
| ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE | |
| Bologna FC v AC Milan | 22:30 |
| GERMAN BUNDESLIGA | |
| Borussia Monchengladbach v FC Nuremberg | 20:30 |
| Hertha Berlin v FC Augsburg | 22:30 |
| VfL Wolfsburg v VfB Stuttgart | 22:30 |
| Fortuna Dusseldorf v BV Borussia Dortmund | 22:30 |
| FRENCH LEAGUE | |
| Caen v Toulouse FC | 21:30 |

25 Simmons' rare triple-double carries Philadelphia 76ers



26 Kohli falls to Lyon as Australia closing in on overdue victory



27 Liverpool draw Bayern as United face PSG in Champions League last 16



PITTSBURGH: Joe Haden #23 of the Pittsburgh Steelers intercepts a pass intended for Julian Edelman No 11 of the New England Patriots in the fourth quarter during the game at Heinz Field on Sunday in Pittsburgh. —AFP

Steelers knock off Brady, Patriots

Bears pick off Rodgers, take NFC North division title

PITTSBURGH: Ben Roethlisberger threw two touchdown passes, and the Pittsburgh Steelers' defense stopped Tom Brady and the visiting New England Patriots twice in the red zone in the fourth quarter to seal a 17-10 win Sunday. The Steelers (8-5-1) ended a three-game losing streak. New England (9-5) lost its second straight and missed a chance to clinch the AFC East title. It was Pittsburgh's first win against New England since October of 2011, with the Patriots winning the previous five meetings (including playoffs). Roethlisberger threw for 235 yards, with scoring passes to Vance McDonald and Antonio Brown, and was intercepted twice by Duron Harmon. Rookie Jaylen Samuels ran for 142 yards on 19 carries (7.5 average). Brady threw for 279 yards, including a touchdown to Chris Hogan, and one interception. Rob Gronkowski, who has been a Steelers-killer, was held to two catches for 21 yards.

EAGLES 30, RAMS 23

For the second time in as many seasons, Nick Foles took over as Philadelphia's quarterback at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and guided his team to a victory, leading the Eagles past the suddenly struggling Rams. Starting in place of injured Carson Wentz on Sunday night, Foles threw for 270 yards and the visiting Eagles (7-7) improved their playoff chances while Los Angeles (11-3) lost consecutive games for the first time this season. Wentz was also injured in a December game at Los Angeles last season, with Foles finishing off that victory and then guiding the Eagles to a Super Bowl title. The Rams looked out of sorts for the third consecutive week since their dynamic 54-51 Monday night victory over the Kansas City Chiefs on Nov. 19.

BEARS 24, PACKERS 17

Mitchell Trubisky completed 20 of 28 passes for 235 yards

and two touchdowns, and Chicago clinched its first NFC North division title since 2010 with a win over visiting Green Bay. Tarik Cohen and Trey Burton each hauled in touchdowns for the Bears, and Jordan Howard scored on the ground. Chicago (10-4) snapped a five-game skid against Green Bay and clinched its first division crown at home since 2006. Aaron Rodgers completed 25 of 42 passes for 274 yards, no touchdowns and one interception. Jamaal Williams scored the lone touchdown for Green Bay (5-8-1), which dropped to 1-1 under interim head coach Joe Philbin and was eliminated from post-season contention.

COLTS 23, COWBOYS 0

Marlon Mack rushed 27 times for 139 yards and two touchdowns as host Indianapolis ended Dallas' five-game winning streak in emphatic fashion with a shutout at Lucas Oil Stadium. Adam Vinatieri added three field goals for Indianapolis (8-6), which remains in contention for the AFC's second wild-card spot. The Colts, Baltimore Ravens and Tennessee Titans are tied at 8-6. Dallas (8-6) could have wrapped up the NFC East title with a win but will have to wait for a Week 16 home game with Tampa Bay. The Cowboys were shut out for the first time since Nov. 16, 2003, when they fell 12-0 at New England.

RAVENS 20, BUCCANEERS 12

Gus Edwards rushed for 104 yards and a touchdown as Baltimore topped Tampa Bay on a cold and rainy afternoon in Baltimore. The Ravens (8-6) remain in control of the second AFC wild-card spot and in contention for the AFC North crown, rushing for 242 yards to become the first team since the 1976 Steelers with five straight games with 190 or more rushing yards. Jameis Winston completed 13 of 25 passes for

157 yards and one interception for Tampa Bay (5-9). Peyton Barber rushed for 85 yards and a touchdown. Mike Evans had four catches for 121 yards.

49ERS 26, SEAHAWKS 23 (OT)

Robbie Gould's fourth field goal of the day, a 36-yard kick with 3:06 remaining in overtime, gave San Francisco the victory over Seattle in rainy Santa Clara, Calif., denying the Seahawks an opportunity to clinch a playoff spot. Doug Baldwin caught two touchdown passes for Seattle (8-6), which can clinch a playoff spot with a win against Kansas City or Arizona in the next two weeks. It would be the Seahawks' sixth playoff berth in the last seven seasons. The win was the first for the 49ers (4-10) over their NFC West rival since December of 2013, snapping a nine-game, regular-season losing streak against Seattle. San Francisco, which surprised Denver 20-14 last week, won its second straight.

TITANS 17, GIANTS 0

Derrick Henry followed up a record-setting performance with 170 yards and a pair of short touchdown runs as Tennessee eliminated New York from postseason contention with a shutout in East Rutherford, N.J. A week after setting a franchise record with 238 yards in a Thursday night game against the Jacksonville Jaguars, Henry recorded his second 100-yard game of the season and fourth of his career as the Titans (8-6) are tied for the sixth seed along with Baltimore and Indianapolis.

The Giants (5-9) had won four of their last five games but could never develop a consistent rhythm while playing without Odell Beckham Jr., who missed his second straight game with a quadriceps injury. New York was shut out at home for the first time since Dec. 15, 2013, against Seattle.

VIKINGS 41, DOLPHINS 17

Minnesota set the tone in the first quarter with a three-touchdown outburst on the way to an easy win over visiting Miami. Quarterback Kirk Cousins threw touchdown passes to Stefon Diggs and Aldrick Robinson, and Dalvin Cook rushed for two scores and Latavius Murray ran for another as the Vikings (7-6-1) set a season high in points scored. Minkah Fitzpatrick and Kalen Ballage scored touchdowns, and Jason Sanders added a 25-yard field goal for Miami (7-7), which lost for the sixth time in seven road games.

REDSKINS 16, JAGUARS 13

In a game lacking offense, visiting Washington put together two late scoring drives and got a Dustin Hopkins field goal as time expired to earn a win over disappointing Jacksonville. The win ended a four-game losing streak for Washington (7-7) and keeps the Redskins alive in the NFC playoff picture. In his first NFL start since 2011, Redskins quarterback Josh Johnson was 16-of-25 passing for 151 yards and a touchdown. Cody Kessler had just 57 yards passing as the Jaguars (4-10) lost for the ninth time in the past 10 games.

FALCONS 40, CARDINALS 14

Linebacker Deion Jones began a 26-point first-half outburst with a 41-yard interception return for a touchdown and Atlanta ended its five-game losing streak with a blowout over visiting Arizona. Atlanta (5-9) was led by quarterback Matt Ryan, who was 22 for 36 for 231 yards and two touchdowns. He also ran three times for 18 yards and one touchdown. Tailback Tevin Coleman rushed 11 times for a career-best 145 yards and one touchdown. He had a career-long 65-yard run. Rookie Josh Rosen suffered a long afternoon for the Cardinals (3-11). He was 13 for 22 for 132 yards and two interceptions, getting lifted midway in the fourth quarter for backup Mike Glennon. —Reuters

Qatar won't decide on 48-team WCup until it's seen FIFA study

DOHA: Qatar will not take a decision on whether to expand its 2022 World Cup to 48 teams from 32 until it has seen the details of a feasibility study from FIFA, an official from the country's World Cup organising com-

mittee said yesterday.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino said last week that a majority of national soccer federations were in favour of expanding the tournament and a decision is expected by March ahead of the draw for qualifying matches.

"FIFA is undergoing a feasibility study and is now in the consultation process and we don't have any details to know what the feasibility study has," said Nasser Al Khater, Assistant Secretary General for Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy.

The study is expected to include aspects of scheduling, the number of required venues, training sites, and how many games per day would be played under an expanded format, Khater said.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and

Egypt launched a diplomatic and trade boycott of Qatar in June 2017 that has complicated the prospect of sharing the tournament under an expanded format.

The countries accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism, which it denies. "We need to remember that Qatar won the right to host the World Cup with a 32-team World Cup, so at the end of the day FIFA will take the decision with Qatar and only if Qatar agrees," said Khater.

The tiny but wealthy state has pushed ahead with an ambitious scale-up of its infrastructure ahead of 2022 that includes \$6-8 billion on eight stadiums and sporting facilities, many of which will be either broken down and re-purposed after the event or donated to promote sports in developing countries.

Last week, Qatar unveiled the design for its final and

largest stadium. Lusail Stadium, an 80,000 seat venue, is expected to host the tournament's opening and closing matches and be the centrepiece of a city being developed north of Doha.

FIFA last year voted to increase the tournament to 48 teams starting from 2026 but, since then, Infantino has been mulling the possibility of bringing the change forward to 2022, saying that would likely require playing some matches outside of Qatar.

"Who actually is ready with four years to go?" Khater said of regional countries that could help host the tournament. "You have to see FIFA compliant stadiums, FIFA compliant training sites, the correct infrastructure. These are things that have to be discussed first," he said. —Reuters