



6 Two held over London airport drone chaos as flights resume



27 Man City stunned by Palace, trail Liverpool by four points



Partial US govt shutdown over Trump border wall showdown

Closure over budget impasse grips Washington

Prince Talal passes away

RIYADH: Saudi Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz, a half-brother of King Salman, died yesterday at the age of 87, his billionaire son said. "Prince Talal was called by God on Saturday," Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal wrote on Twitter. The family will receive condolences today, tomorrow and Tuesday at home in Riyadh, he added. The senior member of the royal family had been ill for several years. He lived in exile abroad in the 1960s after urging a transition to constitutional monarchy, but later returned to Saudi Arabia.



Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz

Defiantly liberal and dubbed the "Red Prince", Talal was known as a tireless advocate of reform, sometimes in defiance of the royal family. He was a long-standing advocate of allowing Saudi women to drive, a right that was finally granted to female citizens this year. Born in 1931, the prince headed the Arab Gulf Fund for Development, a UN body that promotes education and health in developing countries. Under the influence of Egyptian president and champion of pan-Arab socialism Gamal Abdel Nasser, he set up the "Free Princes Movement" in the early 1960s, calling for substantive political change in Saudi Arabia. — Agencies

WASHINGTON: An air of chaos enveloped Washington yesterday as the US government kicked off the holidays by partially shutting down, following the failure of leaders to pass a federal spending bill as negotiations stalled over Donald Trump's demand for money to build a US-Mexico border wall. Operations for several key agencies ceased at 12:01 am yesterday (0501 GMT), despite last-ditch talks that continued on Capitol Hill between White House officials and congressional leaders in both parties.

Most critical security functions remain operational but 800,000 federal workers are impacted, with many furloughed just days before Christmas while others deemed essential are working unpaid. And as many other Americans and tourists began vacations head of end-of-the year holidays some national parks have shuttered completely, while others remain open but without any visitor services including restrooms and maintenance. New York's governor provided funding to the Statue of Liberty monument and Ellis Island so those key attractions could remain open.

The budget wrangling and subsequent shutdown - the third in a year - cast a dark cloud over the US capital already reeling from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' resignation announcement Thursday. The uncertainty pushed Wall Street into a third straight rout on Friday, to end its worst week since late 2008 at the start of the global financial crisis. "President Trump threw a temper tantrum and convinced House Republicans to push our nation into a destructive Trump Shutdown," Chuck Schumer, the top opposition Democrat in the Senate, and his House counterpart, fellow Democrat Nancy Pelosi, said in a joint statement.

Trump has dug in on his demand for \$5 billion for construction of a wall to curb illegal immigration on the US border with Mexico. Democrats are staunchly opposed, and the absence of an elusive deal means fed-



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump receives applause after signing the "First Step Act" and the "Juvenile Justice Reform Act" at the White House on Friday. — AFP

eral funds for dozens of agencies lapsed at midnight Friday. The House of Representatives and the Senate were due back in session at noon yesterday. But it remains unclear how long the shutdown will last, with Washington unable to accomplish one of its most basic tasks - keeping the government up and running.

"This is a dereliction of duty by Congress and the president," said David Cox, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees. Trump voiced hope late Friday that it "will not last long" - after earlier saying he was ready for just that.

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News in brief

Kuwaitis urged to avoid Sudan

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Embassy in Sudan yesterday urged citizens to leave Sudan for their safety. In a statement, the mission also called on the nationals to abstain from travelling to the country. Kuwaitis currently in Sudan should adhere to security authorities' instructions and refrain from approaching protest sites. They must take precautions throughout the nation. A government decision to raise the price of a loaf of bread from one Sudanese pound to three (from about two to six US cents) has sparked demonstrations across the country since Wednesday. — KUNA (See Page 7)

Automatic trademark registration

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan has approved a decision for the automatic registration of trademarks. According to a statement by the ministry, decree 774/2018 will be put into effect from today. The decision is in line with the ministry's integrated electronic services aimed at facilitating procedures for business owners, companies and individuals, added the statement, revealing that the process can be done online via the ifta.gov.kw portal. The registered trademark, available as a QR code, is certified and there will be no need for physical stamps or signatures. — KUNA



Khaled Al-Roudhan

Latecomers punished

KUWAIT: The justice ministry's implementation department has taken disciplinary action against 450 employees and they will not be promoted for several violations, most notably being late to work. Concerned sources said lists of employees' names were prepared and punishments were approved for being late to work and leaving without permission. The source said nearly a third of the implementation department staff was punished based on the decision, ie 450 out of 1,500 employees. Three cases of bribery were referred to the public prosecution, and the employees who were involved were detained at the central prison. — Al-Qabas

Iran Guards hold war games as US carrier enters Gulf

DUBAI: Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards launched war games in the Gulf yesterday, state television reported, after a US aircraft carrier entered the waterway amid rising tension with Washington over reimposed US sanctions. Television showed amphibious forces landing on Iran's Gulf island of Qeshm during the exercises, in which naval vessels, helicopters, drones, rocket launchers and commando units also took part. "Hopefully, with these exercises, our enemies

will realize more than ever how devastating our response would be to any move by them," said Guards chief Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, state news agency IRNA reported.

Qeshm, the largest island in the Gulf, is located near the Strait of Hormuz through which a third of the world's seaborne oil passes. The US aircraft carrier John C Stennis entered the Gulf on Friday and was shadowed by Revolutionary Guards speedboats. Reuters witnesses also saw an Iranian drone flying nearby. Guards speedboats fired rockets but a US Navy spokeswoman said they were pointed away from US vessels. "We believe it was part of their naval exercise," Lieutenant Chloe Morgan, a spokeswoman for the Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet, said.

Iranian officials have made apparent threats to disrupt other countries' oil shipments through the Gulf if

Washington presses ahead with efforts to halt Iranian oil exports as part of US sanctions against Tehran. "We certainly strive to support our Gulf allies and let them know that we are going to continue to be committed to this area and to (ensure) equal access to international waters," said Captain Randy Peck, commander of the carrier Stennis.

In an apparent comment on the arrival of the Stennis, Jafari told state television: "They've come, pretending to ensure the Persian Gulf states' security ... But it is Iran which has to provide security for the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf and our friends and brotherly countries on its southern coast". Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia welcomed President Donald Trump's decision in May to withdraw the United States from the international nuclear agreement with Iran and to reimpose economic sanctions on Tehran. — Reuters

India empowers agencies to spy on computers

NEW DELHI: India has authorized 10 federal government agencies to intercept and monitor information from any computer, a move opposition parties said on Friday risked creating a "surveillance state". The interior ministry said late on Thursday the agencies could "intercept, monitor and decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer" under an Information Technology Act.

"For the nation's security, these agencies have been made accountable so that no one else can do these activities," Ravi Shankar Prasad, minister for law and justice and information technology, told reporters on Friday. The agencies given the powers include the Research and Analysis Wing, the main foreign-intelligence gathering body, the Intelligence Bureau, which focuses on internal operations, the National Investigation Agency, responsible for anti-militant activity, the financial crime fighting Enforcement Directorate, the Narcotics Control Bureau and tax investigators. They would need approval from the senior-most civil servant in the interior ministry to carry out such surveillance.

But opposition parties led by the Congress party, which governed before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in 2014, said the government had introduced the powers "by stealth", without a debate in parliament. The government was attacking citizens' right to privacy, they said. "The BJP government is converting India into a surveillance state," former federal minister and Congress leader

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KARACHI: Girls wearing Santa Claus costumes wave from a bus on a street on Friday as part of Christmas celebrations. — AFP

Pakistan plans to relax visa policy to revive tourism

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is planning to ease visa restrictions for visitors from 55 countries, including most European nations, in a bid to revive tourism that

was devastated by Islamist violence in the fallout from the 9/11 attacks in the United States. "We are reviewing our visa policies. We are trying to bring 55 countries into a visa-free region, which includes most of the European countries," Pakistan's information minister, Fawad Chaudhry, told Reuters. That comes after Portugal this month declared Pakistan safe for travel, while France has also relaxed its advisory on travel to the South Asian nation "I'm happy our (travel) advisories are changing," said Chaudhry.

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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

Set your profile photo, last seen, and about, to be seen by everyone, contacts only, or no one.



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

Kuwait welcomes UN Security Council's approval of resolution 2451 on Yemen

Saudi Arabia thanks Kuwait, US for helping adoption of UN resolution

NEW YORK: Kuwait Friday welcomed the UN Security Council's unanimous approval of resolution 2451, and thanked Britain, sponsor of resolution, for showing flexibility during negotiations over the draft text. "Our vote in favor of the resolution today, although it was not addressing some concerns raised during negotiations, was due to our keenness to maintain unity of the Security Council over Yemen," Mansour Al-Otaibi, Kuwait's Permanent representative to the UN, told a UNSC session after adoption of resolution 2451. Kuwait, he added, wanted to maintain this unity among the council members and to apply it on other files.

Otaibi said Kuwait's support of the resolution was amidst "a genuine chance as well as a hope of a peaceful resolution of the crisis that devastated an Arab country with rich history and heritage, and is still threatening unity of Yemen, as well as regional security and stability." Kuwait, he said, also supported the UN Secretary General and his envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths, who sponsored the agreement between the Yemeni parties in Sweden.

Otaibi hoped the Yemeni parties would abide by the agreement to pave way for a second round of negotiations in order to reach a political solution based on the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, outcome of national dialogue and UNSC resolution 2216. Otaibi also welcomed UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' intention to hold an international donor conference, in Geneva on February 26, to support the 2019 humanitarian response plan. Kuwait, he added, was keen on participating in the conference to alleviate suffering of the Yemeni people.

Kuwait's Foreign Ministry said meanwhile that the unanimous support of the resolution at the Security Council clearly shows the international community's support for a peaceful solution to the crisis in Yemen. A

ministry source hoped the Yemeni parties comply with the Stockholm agreement, and wished the unity of the Security Council would continue until end of the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Saudi Arabia thanks Kuwait

In the meantime, Saudi Arabia welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of British-proposed resolution 2451 over Yemen, and thanked the US and Kuwait for contribution to reaching a final text that would be of benefit for the Yemeni people, and maintain international peace and security. Resolution 2451 affirms Saudi Arabia's diplomacy and its 'direct impact' on UN resolutions, the Kingdom's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Dr Khaled Manzalawi said in a statement. The resolution reaffirmed support for an agreement between the Yemeni parties that was reached in Stockholm, Sweden, and in line with GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, outcome of national dialogue and UNSC resolution 2216, he said. Resolution 2451, said Manzalawi, showed how military and diplomatic pressure forced the Houthis to withdraw from Hodeida.

Ground-breaking agreement

The ground-breaking agreement, following the first talks between the warring parties in more than two years, includes a ceasefire in and around the vital port city of Hodeida - the conduit for nearly 80 per cent of Yemen's life-saving food, medical aid and fuel. The truce entered into force on 18 December. The council 'insisted' that all parties fully respect the ceasefire agreed for Hudaydah governorate as well as the commitment to redeploying their forces away from Hodeida city and the port areas, to agreed locations outside, "within 21 days of the ceasefire coming into force."

The draft, penned by the United Kingdom, also urged the parties to continue to "engage constructively,



NEW YORK: Mansour Al-Otaibi, Kuwait's Permanent representative to the UN, participates in voting on resolution 2451 during a UN Security Council session. — KUNA

in good faith and without preconditions" with Martin Griffiths, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, including by working to stabilize the war-battered economy and reopening Sana'a airport, as well as committing to another round of peace talks in January 2019. Further in the resolution, the 15-member Council authorized the Secretary-General to establish and deploy, "for an initial period of 30 days," an advance monitoring team on the ground, to support and facilitate the immediate implementation of the Stockholm Agreement.

The council also expressed 'deep regret' at the loss of life and injuries in the conflict, the use of children on the battlefield, and stressed that all those fighting need

to ensure that civilians are protected and allowed safe passage. It also called on all warring parties to comply with applicable international law, including humanitarian law to respect and protect medical facilities and personnel allowing them safe transit; protect civilian infrastructure including schools; reliable food distribution networks; processing and storage, and to withdraw any military personnel from civilian buildings and areas. The council also underlined the need to allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian and medical personnel to all those in need, and reiterated that "aid should be disbursed on the basis of need and be gender and age sensitive." — KUNA



Kuwait hopes Yemeni parties abide by agreement

Tunisian president underlines special relationship with Amir

TUNIS: Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi on Friday lauded the close cooperation with Kuwait, underlining his special relationship with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The presidency, in a statement, quoted the president as affirming the special, brotherly and solid relationship that bonds him with His Highness the Amir, also noting the fruitful cooperation between the two countries and the strong bonds between the two brotherly peoples. President Essebsi was speaking during a reception for Dr Saud Hilal Al-Harbi, the outgoing Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). He underscored ALECSO's noticeable role, cementing the inter-Arab ties at the cultural and intellectual levels. — KUNA



TUNIS: Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi meets Director-General of ALECSO Dr Saud Hilal Al-Harbi. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert visited Kuwait Times recently and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Ooredoo celebrates Qatar National Day with Embassy of Qatar



KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait participated in the Qatar National Day Celebration that was held on Monday 17th December in Al-Raya Ballroom, in which thousands of people attended to congratulate the Qatari people on this special day. The reception was held by the Qatari Embassy with the attendance of his Excellency the Ambassador of Qatar Bandar Al-Attiyah and his retinue.

The reception was attended by Ooredoo Kuwait CEO Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani and

members of Management, where Al Thani congratulated his excellency the Ambassador of Qatar on this special day, he also congratulated the Prince of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Al Thani said in an interview during the celebration: "We are more than pleased to see the bond of Kuwaiti and Qatari brothers as one family and our participation in this celebration as two brethren countries is quite heartening. We pray to Allah to perpetuate the grace of safety and secu-



urity of all Gulf countries.

Ooredoo's Al-Nukhba booth was present in Al-Raya Ballroom during the celebration to welcome the guests and present them with the latest VIP offers. It is worth mentioning that all Nukhba clients get Nojoom rewards worth up to KD 500, which can be redeemed from Ooredoo's selection of exclusive partners who offer the best in class services in a variety of industries, ranging from retail to hospitality and travel.

News in brief

Kuwait asserts Syria resolutions' importance

NEW YORK: Kuwait asserted importance Friday on implementing United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2254 to enable Syrians reach a political solution agreed upon by all parties involved and to simultaneously preserve Syria's independence and unity. Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi made the remarks during a UN security council session to discuss Syria. The international community and the Security Council failed Syrians, Al-Mansour said, stressing on the need to implement decisions of the international community and to enable Syrians achieve their wishes. The Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2254 three years ago for a just political settlement in Syria, he said. Parties involved also agreed in the Russian city of Sochi last January on the formation of a Syrian constitutional committee, the ambassador said, adding, however efforts in this regard did not seem to go well. Otaibi also expressed deep appreciation to efforts exerted by UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura, affirming on Kuwait's relentless support to ensure success of his mission in this regard. — KUNA

Iraqi hunting laws

BAGHDAD: The Kuwaiti embassy in Baghdad called on citizens yesterday to abide by Iraqi laws concerning bird hunting in Muthanna Governorate of Iraq and the southern region of the fellow Arab country. The embassy stressed that it was paramount for Kuwaiti visitors to abide by the law to protect themselves from harm and legal prosecution. — KUNA

Banking leadership program

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Institute of Banking Studies (IBS) said yesterday it is putting together a program next month aiming to refine leadership skills in banks and other financial institutions in the region. The program, a joint endeavor with Harvard Business School, will be held on January 26-31, 2019 the chairman of the government body Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said in a statement. Leadership strategies in the financial services industry will form the crux of this year's edition, Hashel, who also serves as Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), added. He hailed the success of the program over the past decade, which is held each year in a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member state on a rotating basis, saying it has proven beneficial to financial institutions from across the region. Hashel went on to say that the course meets Harvard Business School's lofty standards, based on extensive scientific studies over existential conditions in the global banking sector. He underlined such "significant initiatives" offer the opportunity for knowledge sharing and the chance to build crucial skills. — KUNA

Local

Amir's envoy underlines importance of economic cooperation with China

Sheikh Nasser meets Shanghai Mayor Yang Xiong



BEIJING: First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks during his meeting with Shanghai Mayor Yang Xiong. — KUNA photos



First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Shanghai Mayor Yang Xiong.

BEIJING: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's envoy First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed importance Friday on supporting strategic economic cooperation with China. The remarks were made during a meeting between Shanghai Mayor Yang Xiong and Sheikh Nasser and his accompanying delegation at the Palace of Government on the occasion of his official visit to China, according to a statement issued by the Kuwaiti embassy in China. Shanghai mayor held an official banquet on Thursday at the Palace of Government

in honor of Sheikh Nasser, during which the two sides affirmed the strong historical ties of friendship between Kuwait and China and stressed the importance of enhancing the prospects of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The two sides discussed a number of common interests, the possibility of enhancing relations and exchange of experiences and cooperation between Kuwait and China.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sameeh Johar Hayat praised the prospects of strategic cooperation and bilateral coordination between the two countries at all levels,

especially the economic, investment, trade and cultural aspects in order to achieve common interests, the statement said. He pointed out that in the light of the strengthening of strategic relations between the two countries, it was agreed during the talks on the opening of a consulate general of Kuwait in Shanghai soon to follow up the achievements of this city in every field, which are laying the course of the history of the renaissance of relations between the two countries. The Ambassador noted to the importance of increasing communication between the two countries in a way that deepens bilateral relations and

develops it in various fields, especially in the economic aspect, and enriches the cooperation that achieves common interests.

Sheikh Nasser called on the mayor of Shanghai to visit Kuwait, stressing the importance of bilateral meetings and exchanges of visits between senior officials and businessmen. Shanghai has a population of 25 million, with 76 consulates and twinning agreements with 89 cities in the world. It has a distinct geographical location, making it an important trade port, a global financial and trade center and one of China's largest cities. — KUNA

Horeca Kuwait 2019 to be held under Minister Sabeeh auspices

KUWAIT: The Horeca Kuwait 2019 exhibition opens on January 14, 2019 at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref under auspices of Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for

Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh. The three-day event, organized by the Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company, features participation of companies specialized in hospitality, catering and hotel equipment.



Hind Al-Sabeeh

In this regard, Sabeeh stated that the hotels and restaurants' sector in Kuwait is rich with thousands of job and investment opportunities including major, medium and small projects "which are gaining momentum the closer we conclude mega projects related to the New Kuwait 2035 vision."

Sabeeh added that the government fully supports all efforts that would help achieve this vision, namely in terms of the private sector's contributions. "Hence comes Horeca's significance," she underlined, pointing to the importance of exploring all sectors that are capable of creating more job opportunities for citizens and improving work environments for small and medium projects.

"Tourism and hospitality services tops those sectors, especially after the cabinet decided to put the Civil Service Commission (CSC) under the minister of state for economic affairs, and combining all bodies entrusted with employment under one umbrella to set a clear strategy for labor markets," Sabeeh elaborated, expressing hopes that local products would help the industrial sector, namely food industries, flourish.

KRCS distributes bags filled with winter clothing to laborers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced yesterday a campaign, at its headquarters, of distributing 3,300 bags containing winter clothing for workers of the industrial and commercial sectors. KRCS's Manager of Local Aid Department Maryam Al-Adsani said in a statement to the press that the KRCS aims to benefit the needy people of its humanitarian services as it chose low-income workers for this campaign. Adsani affirmed KRCS's keenness on playing its social role in serving all parts of the society, especially those hard workers who need support and appreciation.

She also said this campaign aims to lay cooperation and unity values among members of society; as such attention would help in raising their performance and potentials. Adsani expressed her gratitude towards all donors, emphasizing KRCS's belief in humanitarian work as a leading quality in Kuwait. — KUNA

Zain receives four titles at Advertising Creativity Award 2018

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, proudly received four titles as part of the Advertising Creativity Award 2018. The award, organized by the Arab Media Forum, came for the sixth year under the patronage and attendance of the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, as well as the attendance of Director of the Arab Media Forum Madhi Al-Khamees.

During the awards ceremony, Zain received four titles: Special Award for Zain LIFE 2018 TVC, National Campaigns Award for Zain's Kuwait National Day 2018 TVC, Corporate Sustainability Creativity Award which recognized Zain's various social and humanitarian campaigns launched throughout the year 2018 in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, as well as the Creativity in Public Relations Award (PR Star) presented to Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti.

In the National Campaigns category, Zain won for its Kuwait National Day 2018 TVC, which was released on the occasion of Kuwait's National Day celebrations in February. For this TVC, the company utilized 300 drones in a spectacular aerial show for the first time in Kuwait, which was held in collaboration with Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC). It is worth noting that Zain, represented by Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, participated in a Public Relations and Marketing panel discussion that came as part of the Advertising Creativity Award 2018 organized by the Arab Media Forum. The event featured a number of prominent experts, academics, and specialists in the fields of public relations, marketing, and advertising.

This awarding comes in light of Zain's distinguished advertising and media involvement, and it further showcases the company's role as a leading private sector company launching several marketing and advertising campaigns all year round. Zain will continue supporting this very important field which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole, whether through traditional or modern media tools. The Advertising Creativity Award



KUWAIT: Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri awards Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti and Zain's team with the presence of Director of the Arab Media Forum Madhi Al-Khamees.



Jabri and Khashti pose for a group photo with the winners.

2018 was organized for the sixth year by the Arab Media Forum, which has proven itself to be one of the region's most prominent events that attend to Arab Media. The

event brought together many ministers, media executives, journalists, academics, authors, actors, businessmen, and social figures from all around the Arab world.

Burgan Bank staff attend 'Planning for Impact' workshop

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently participated in a high-impact workshop named 'Planning for Impact - Frameworks for CSR Initiatives.' Dedicated to fostering social development and civic engagement in the Middle East, the event brought together regional and international CSR experts who shared innovative CSR strategies to create positive multidimensional impact. The workshop was delivered by En.v and Pearl Initiative, a non-profit organization focused on enhancing corporate governance, accountability and transparency in the private sector.

The two-day workshop aimed to upgrade the capabilities of CSR managers across Kuwait. Drawing particular attention to impact measurement, experts emphasized the importance of designing a results-based program that frequently monitors and evaluates success.

The workshop provided unique insights by utilizing a large set of data on governance practices in the philanthropic and CSR sector from leading organizations in the GCC. Collected through a series of interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys by Pearl initiative, the data revealed the need for every organization to be results-driven and introduce defined systems or stan-



dards to better monitor the outcomes of their initiatives and measure their impact.

The workshop was led by Lisa Philp, Senior Advisor at the Foundation Center and Siham Nuseibeh, External Relations Office at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide that connects donors with data, research, and technology to encourage more strategic and collaborative giving. UNFPA's work focuses on issues pertaining to human rights, sexual reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence and harmful practices.

This event builds on the three-day festival titled 'AWAKEN', held recently to bolster civil society organi-

zations as catalysts for societal progress. These initiatives are part of Burgan Bank's strategic long-term partnership with En.v, which will run till March 2020 as part of its commitment to strengthen social networks and raise the standards of social responsibility in Kuwait.

Falling in line with its community program, 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change, Burgan Bank sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.

Local

2,799 expatriates terminated in first year of replacement plan

59,802 citizens working in the private sector and receive labor allowances

KUWAIT: An informed source at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) said results of the first year of implementation of the government's replacement plan resulted in terminating the contracts of 2,799 expatriates from various ministries and state departments. These results were to evaluate the first year of the plan in implementation of the CSC decision. Al-Anbaa reported yesterday, quoting the source. He revealed that the education ministry topped the list of ministries in implementing this policy by terminating 1,507 expats during the first year - 54 percent of the total of 2,799. The awqaf and Islamic affairs ministry was second by terminating 436 expats at 16 percent.

The source said the replacement plan requires the termination of 41,741 expats who are still at work, adding that the number of expats in ministries varies, as there are 31,171 expats in the education ministry and the number goes down gradually until it ends with four expats at the secretariat general of the awqaf ministry. The oil ministry is 100 percent 'Kuwaitized' as no expats are working there.

The number of non-Kuwaitis working in the government whose contracts ended on July 1, 2018 in implementation of the replacement policy 2017/2018 are as follows: Education Ministry: 1,507; Awqaf Ministry: 436; Health Ministry: 273; Ministry of Electric Water: 158; Interior Ministry: 155; Justice Ministry: 62; Council of Ministers: 50; Public Works Ministry: 40; Information Ministry: 35; Civil Service Commission: 20; Social Affairs Ministry: 14; Finance Ministry: 11; Foreign Ministry:

11; Defense Ministry: 6; Higher Education Ministry: 4; Services Ministry: 3; Fatwa and Legislation Department: 3; National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters: 2; State Ministry for Youth: 2; Central Statistical Bureau: 2; General Secretariat of Supreme Council for Planning and Development: 2; General Customs Department: 2; Commerce and Industry Ministry: 1.

According to Central Service Commission (CSC) statistics, the total number of unemployed citizens is 13,523 - 3,540 males (26.18 percent) and 9,983 females (73.82 percent), reported Al-Anbaa daily, noting that 45.66 percent have been jobless for over 12 months, while only 10.31 percent have been unemployed for 6 to 12 months, which strongly indicates a drop in unemployment compared to previous years.

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh told Al-Qabas daily that the total number of citizens working for the private sector and receiving national labor support allowances is 59,802 until last September.

Sabeeh added that according to the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program, citizens working for the private sector include 8,716 managers, 3,059 heads of departments, 2,562 supervisors, 2,310 secretaries, 415 mandoubes (representatives), 218 in safety and security, 205 storekeepers, 167 mechanics, 165 electricians, 155 light vehicle drivers, 128 security guards, 78 cashiers, 62 electrical technicians, 38 hairdressers, 31 maintenance technicians and 20 operators.



The Civil Service Commission.



13,523 citizens on unemployment list

local spotlight

2019 wishes



By Muna Al-Fuzal
Muna@kuwaittimes.net

We have started counting down to a new year in our life, thinking of all what we have done or did not do in 2018. While we are preparing for the New Year, there are things we surely either regretted or forgot doing, but there are things we hope will come true next year. I would like to share my wishes for the New Year.

First, I wish that by now I have learned from all the mistakes I made last year. There is no doubt to me that mistakes are the best and biggest lessons in life for all of us. Unfortunately, we humans have a short memory and tend to forget or sometimes ignore our instincts, so we repeat our wrong actions, leading us to tears later. My first wish is to be wise and rational to filter all my behaviors before I do them.

Another wish for 2019 is to find happiness. We all want to be happy in this short life. Some of us find happiness in making money and some by finding the right partner in life or getting a promotion at work, but I find happiness in satisfaction for all the blessings that were given to us by our Creator Allah, including good health - a blessing that we ignore most, and only miss it when we lose it.

This year I went through several medical operations that forced me to stay in bed for several months with long hours of therapy sessions. I am fine now, but I recall the difficult times in which I could not move out of bed and needed an assistant all the time. I don't need help anymore, but the little things like jumping out of bed early in the morning or at least having a good night's sleep can be hard sometimes in case of illness. Health is a blessing indeed that I wish for all my family, friends, Kuwait Times staff and readers to enjoy and thank Allah for it.

True friendship - another wish for 2019. We are surrounded by many people - family members, colleagues etc. Some may claim to be your true friend, but only in crises the masks can fall to reveal who your true friend is. I believe that maintaining a friend for life is not easy. It is the same as any marriage - one needs to work on it. It means that you have to accept others as they are and not try to change them or prejudge their actions and words. If you have a shoulder of a friend in bad and good times, then that is a friend who you deserve to keep, not only in 2019, but forever.

Money - I know this is a great wish most of us make: for success that brings a good amount of money to secure our future as well as our family. But this could be a dangerous wish. The question remains - how do you plan to make money? Do you have a special talent? Are you ready to work more or even start a new job with a better salary? Are you ready to sacrifice the things you know for the unknown? Are you an adventurer? I believe that making little money is possible easily, but if you want to make a fortune, then you need a plan, and this can take years of hard work and determination. So be ready for the challenge, if you have not started yet. A small tip - never break the law for quick wealth.

We all have many wishes and I have tried to sum some up from my own diary. I hope 2019 will be the year of success, happiness and peace for all of you.

Alghanim Industries supports KRCS campaign to keep Syrian refugees warm

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest privately owned companies in the region, restated its commitment towards aiding displaced Syrian families in refugee camps by supporting a recent Kuwait Red Crescent Society relief campaign. This collaboration further underscores both entities' commitment to help the underprivileged.

The company supported the campaign with funds to cover the costs of thousands of blankets and fuel needed for heaters. The supplies are distributed to thousands of families braving the sub-zero temperatures in the region of Bekaa valley in the east of Lebanon. Further supporting



Kutayba Yusuf Alghanim

the cause, Alghanim Industries promoted this campaign to thousands of its followers on social media channels. Commenting on this recent collaboration with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Chairman of Alghanim Industries, Kutayba Yusuf Alghanim said: "This winter, thousands of refugees face severe weather conditions. Partnering with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, we are eager to address some of the many difficulties endured by these families. Through this campaign, we hope to have positive impact on their lives, and make a difference in this protracted crisis. We thank the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for their noble efforts, and the continued aid they provide to people in need."

Alghanim Industries is committed to its strategy of giving forward to the community by empowering underprivi-

leged people, supporting education and encouraging entrepreneurship as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility program. The company was previously named 'Diamond Partner' by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in recognition of its efforts to support KRCS by facilitating treatment for needy patients in Kuwait. The company also covered the expenses of restoring houses for the Children's Home - an orphanage launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Social Welfare Sector for all orphans in Kuwait.

Faulty wiring caused store basement fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Fire broke out in a store's basement in Souq Mubarakia, prompting firefighters respond and put out the blaze. An investigation revealed that faulty wiring caused the fire. No injuries were reported.

Fatal crash

A citizen was killed and three were injured during a collision between a dump truck and a car on Rehayya road in Jahra, Al-Rai reported. Police, paramedics and firemen responded and worked on freeing the deceased, as the injured were taken to hospital. The body was recovered by the coroner.

Theft

An alleged thief deployed a new method to steal phones and computers from the cars of company representatives he contacted online to deliver goods he ordered, and gave them addresses that do not belong to him. He opened their cars without having to break in, and used phone numbers registered in the names of deported expats. The affected companies complained to police and said that cars' contents were stolen without any signs of breaking in, reported Al-Rai.

Detectives found the thief used to select buildings in suitable locations, then gave the building's number, floor and flat number and to companies who take orders online and accept payment on delivery. He then waited for the deliveryman to go inside the building. He then opened the delivery vehicle and stole its contents. They found he stole 12 mobile phones and two computers. Investigations are ongoing to arrest him.

Rapid growth expected for education market

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kane Research group expects the value of the education market in Kuwait to reach KD 917 million, as well as a 3 percent rise in schools to reach 600 by 2022. Kane Research also stressed the education market is rapidly growing in Kuwait, with an increasing demand for high



KUWAIT: Faulty wiring at the store's basement where the fire was reported.

Abnormal condition

Firemen and policemen brought a citizen, who was in an abnormal condition, under control after he set his family house on fire and locked them in. Police received a call about a fire in a Saad Al-Abdullah house, so firemen were dispatched there. A man appeared with a knife, and when asked to make way to put out the fire, especially since the family was locked inside, he refused in a manner that showed he was not in a normal condition. He was brought under control and the fire was put out without injuries, Al-Rai reported.

quality education and the number of scholarships abroad. "The government's constant calls to focus on craft skills and Kuwaitizing some jobs will surely enhance the role played by schools, educational centers and technical institutions," the report said.

The report stressed the education ministry's plans, allocating KD 2 billion in the state budget for education in 2016, the integrated educational reform program 2011-2019 and the project of improving the quality of education all go hand-in-hand to improve school curriculums and educational output and encourage effective teaching and improve it.

The study also predicted that the government's educational policies will help develop the educational system and that over 40 percent of students in Kuwait go to private schools.

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SERVICE ADVISORS

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- Writing Service Orders & Description of Problems / Repairs
- Scheduling / Explaining Job done / Pricing
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- Sell Franchise Spare Parts / Accessories; use up Selling Techniques
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Protests erupt in Sudan over rising cost of bread

Drone threat a steep learning curve for aviation chiefs



LUGCA: A seagull flies past a drone equipped with a thermal camera used by Carabinieri to secure the area during the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) industrialized countries. London's Gatwick Airport, paralyzed for more than two days after dozens of drone sightings reopened on December 21, 2018 for a 'limited number' of flights. — AFP

2 arrested over airport drone chaos

'Criminal use of drones' at London's Gatwick Airport

GATWICK AIRPORT: Two people have been arrested in connection with the "criminal use of drones" at London's Gatwick Airport, police said yesterday, after three days of disruption affected tens of thousands of passengers during the pre-Christmas getaway. Drones were first sighted buzzing around Britain's second-busiest air hub on Wednesday, forcing the runway to close and causing chaos for more than 140,000 people. "As part of our ongoing investigations into the criminal use of drones which has severely disrupted flights in and out of Gatwick Airport, Sussex Police made two arrests just after 10:00pm on December 21," the force's Superintendent James Collis said. "Every line of enquiry will remain open to us until we are confident that we have mitigated further threats to the safety of passengers." A Gatwick spokesman said the airport planned to run a full schedule of 757 flights carrying 124,484 passengers yesterday. But he warned that passengers should expect some delays and cancellations "as we continue to recover our operations following three days of disruption".

Police urged passengers and the public to remain vigilant around the airport, south of London, and report any further drone sightings. Flights resumed on Friday but were briefly halted after a new drone sighting forced planes to be grounded as a precautionary measure. Sussex Police said officers had been using "a range of tactics" to hunt for the mystery drone operators and "build resilience to detect and mitigate further incursions". The dangers posed by drones include the possibility of a device smashing into a passenger plane or being sucked up into an engine where its highly flammable lithium battery could cause a catastrophe.

Widespread disruption
The army was called in on Thursday to offer support, with the defense ministry deploying what was described only as specialist equipment. "There are a range of measures which are there today which should give passengers confidence that they are safe to fly," Transport Secretary Chris Grayling told the BBC on Friday. Government officials held an emergency meeting to discuss the situation. The Times newspaper yesterday reported Grayling had

shelved plans earlier this year to introduce laws regulating drone use despite being warned about the risk they posed to airports.

"We were promised a new legislation back in 2017," Andy McDonald, the main Labor Party's transport spokesman, told BBC radio. "There's been a lack of attention to this." Aviation minister Elizabeth Sugg said the government planned to "introduce new laws to ensure that drones are used safely and responsibly", according to The Daily Telegraph newspaper. Under a new British law, drones cannot be flown near aircraft or within a kilometer (about half a mile) of an airport, or at an altitude of over 400 feet (122 meters). Violators face up to five years in prison for endangering an aircraft.



Disruption affects tens of thousands of passengers

Cat and mouse chase
There had been more than 50 sightings of the device

or devices since the first reports at 9:00 pm (2100 GMT) on Wednesday and shooting down the drone had been considered as an option. Justin Burtenshaw, head of armed policing for Sussex and Surrey said on Thursday: "Each time we believe we get close to the operator, the drone disappears. When we look to reopen the airfield the drone reappears." Before Friday's sighting at 5:10 pm (1710 GMT), a drone had last been spotted at around 10:00 pm (2200 GMT) on Thursday. Mike, from London, had his flight cancelled on Friday and will miss his connection to Ghana. "We're in limbo. We don't actually know when we'll be flying out at all because we haven't been promised a rescheduled flight, we haven't been promised any further information, any compensation. Nothing at all." Darcis, 32, who was supposed to arrive from Milan on Thursday and had to sleep at the airport, said: "I cannot understand why such a small thing can cause an international airport like Gatwick (to close). They should be ready for these things. I really don't understand what we can do." Gatwick, around 30 miles south of the British capital, is the eighth-busiest airport in Europe and sits behind Mumbai as the world's busiest single-runway air hub. — AFP

'Radical' young men suspects in Morocco tourist murders

MARRAKESH: One key suspect in the murder of two Scandinavian hikers in Morocco was a plumber and another was a carpenter who enjoyed drinking alcohol before embracing radical Islam, friends and neighbors said. Abderrahim Khayali, the plumber, was the first to be arrested Monday by Moroccan authorities in the tourist hub of Marrakesh, hours after the bodies of the two women were found in the High Atlas mountains. On Thursday authorities said they had also taken into custody Younes Ouaziyaad, the carpenter, as well as street vendors Rachid Afati and Abdessamad Ejjoud—all suspects in a "terrorist act".

The Rabat prosecutor said the four men, aged between 25 and 33, appeared in a video pledging allegiance to the jihadist Islamic State group before the grisly murder. On Friday Moroccan authorities announced nine new arrests over the killing of Danish student Louisa Vesperager Jespersen, 24, and 28-year-old Norwegian Maren Ueland. One of them was beheaded, according to a source close to the investigation. Khayali's arrest has shocked friends and relatives in Al-Azzouzia, an impoverished neighborhood of Marrakesh. "I cannot believe it," said his aunt Fatima Khayali, 46, wearing a black niqab veil revealing only her eyes.

The 33-year-old suspect "worked as a plumber for a hotel" but resigned because the establishment served alcohol which is proscribed by strict Islamic practice, she said. Khayali embraced salafism—a form of radical Islam that has taken root in many impoverished



MARRAKESH: Ali, the father of Ouaziyaad, one of the suspects who were arrested following the murder of two Scandinavian hikers in Morocco's High Atlas mountains, enters his house in the neighborhood of Azzouzia in the city of Marrakesh. —AFP

areas of Morocco—three years ago, she said. After his conversion to salafism he refused to shake hands with women or have them present when men were around, according to a woman who gave her name as Atika and described herself as Khayali's "childhood friend". Morocco has long been considered among the most liberal of nations in the Arab world, although Islam is the state religion.

Social inequalities
The country, which relies heavily on income from tourism, had been spared jihadist attacks since 2011, when a bomb blast at a cafe in Marrakesh's famed Jamaa El Fna Square killed 17 people, mostly European tourists. But Morocco is marked by glaring social and economic inequalities, against a backdrop of high unemployment among young people. Al-Azzouzia's unsightly building projects contrast sharply with the opulent palm-tree dotted avenues and luxury hotels of Marrakesh. Ouaziyaad, the 27-year-old carpenter, also lived in the neighborhood where unemployed young

men can be seen loitering in the streets. He was an "ordinary man", said greengrocer Abdelaati. Relatives, who declined to be named, said that Ouaziyaad became a salafist a little more than a year ago, letting his beard grow and opting to wear the long white qamis tunic that radical Islamists prefer. "He used to press us to say our (five daily) prayers but before he became a salafist he used to drink alcohol and smoke," said Noureddine, a relative of Ouaziyaad who declined to give his full name. Ouaziyaad's father refused to talk to the media about his son's suspected involvement in the murders, saying he was "shattered". The two other suspects, Afati, 33, and 25-year-old Ejjoud, lived in the impoverished village of Harbil some 20 kilometers away from Marrakesh. Both eked out livings as street vendors. "People feel shame to see their village linked to this crime," said a resident who declined to be named. Mohammed Masbah, an expert on Islamist groups, said all four suspects had one thing in common: "They are socially marginalized". — AFP

British drugs kingpin jailed

PARIS: A Briton accused of being one of Europe's biggest drug traffickers was jailed for 22 years on Friday for smuggling over a ton of cocaine into France in suitcases stashed on an Air France flight. The court said Robert Dawes, 46, would have to serve at least 15 years with no possibility of parole over the brazen 2013 drugs shipment from Venezuela to Paris. Dawes, who had denied the charges, was arrested at his luxury villa on the Spanish Costa del Sol in 2015 following a lengthy investigation by authorities in Britain, France, Spain and South America. "I continue to claim my innocence," he said Friday morning in his final statement to the special non-jury court.

The case was tried by five judges who ordered Dawes and four accomplices - three Italians and one Briton - to pay a 30-million-euro (\$34.2 million) fine. "Far from a small-time fall guy, today we are judging men in the highest ranks of organized crime who supplied European networks," prosecutor Isabelle Raynaud told the court during the week. Hailing the verdict, the deputy director of Britain's National Crime Agency, Matt Horne, describe Dawes as "one of the most significant organized criminals in Europe with a network that literally spanned the globe."

"Dawes was prepared to use extreme levels of violence in order to further his reputation and take retribution against those who crossed him. Members or associates of his criminal group are known to have been involved in intimidation, shootings and murders," Horne added in a statement. The noose tightened on Dawes after Spanish police secured a video showing him bragging to a member of a Colombian drugs cartel about his ownership of the cocaine found stuffed in 30 suitcases registered to ghost travelers. Spain extradited him to France shortly after his arrest. Dawes had hoped to get the video dismissed on legal grounds, but a document submitted by his defense team in support of that claim turned out to be a forgery.

Dawes himself then surprised the court - and evidently his lawyers - by saying his claims in the video were "just a made-up story" intended to provoke the police into arresting him so that he could prove his innocence. The court also passed jail terms ranging from five to 13 years on four accomplices: Britain's Nathan Wheat, and Vincenzo Aprea, Carmine Russo and Marco Panetta of Italy. The four were arrested after undercover officers tricked them into trying to transport some of the cocaine to Italy shortly after its arrival at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport in September 2013. A sixth defendant, Britain's Kane Price, was acquitted. — AFP

International

Deadly clashes, protests erupt in Sudan over rising cost of bread

‘The people want the fall of the regime’

KHARTOUM: Fresh protests over the rising cost of bread broke out in Sudan yesterday, witnesses said, as troops deployed after two days of deadly clashes that left eight protesters dead. A government decision to raise the price of a loaf of bread this week from one Sudanese pound to three (from about two to six US cents) sparked protests across the country.

In the capital's twin city Omdurman, a witness who declined to be named said demonstrations erupted as worshippers emerged from a mosque frequented by followers of the Al-Ansar sect, which is linked to the Umma Party, Sudan's main opposition group. Protesters chanted "the people want the fall of the regime" and "freedom, freedom," said the witness. "Riot police fired tear gas at the demonstrators," the witness added. The Umma Party overnight Thursday issued a statement calling on its members to join the protest movement.

Dozens also demonstrated on Road 60, a main artery in eastern Khartoum that links the city centre to the south of the capital, another witness said. They demanded the government's ouster, the witness said on condition of anonymity, adding that the protesters were dispersed by riot police. Protests were reported in other cities, including in El Obeid, southwest of Khartoum, and in Rabak, south of the capital. In Rabak, the capital of Sudan's White Nile state, protesters torched the local headquarters of President Omar al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) and a government charity, witnesses told AFP.

White Nile authorities on Friday declared a state of emergency and announced a curfew until the following morning. The protests first erupted in the eastern city of Atbara before spreading to Al-Qadiriya, also in eastern Sudan, and then to the capital. Two demonstrators were killed in Atbara and six others in Al-

Qadiriya, officials said on Thursday, as protesters torched an NCP offices. Government spokesman Bashar Jumaa warned that the government "will not be lenient" with those who set state buildings on fire or caused other damage to public property.

Schools ordered to close

The state-run SUNA news agency said the protest had initially been "peaceful", but later drifted off course. Sudan's education ministry on Friday announced in a statement that schools across Khartoum would be closed and classes suspended "indefinitely from Sunday". Rights group Amnesty International called on the government to stop firing on protesters and open up a probe into the deaths. "These killings must stop," Amnesty's Deputy Director for East Africa Seif Magango said. "Opening fire on unarmed protesters cannot be justified and what is clearly needed now is an independent, efficient investigation," he added. Friday, the weekly day of rest, had started with calm returning to Khartoum, Al-Qadiriya and Atbara, witnesses said.

While traffic returned to normal, police patrolled some streets in Khartoum, and soldiers deployed around petrol stations and banks in the north of the capital. Police in patrol cars were seen carrying clubs and tear gas canisters while the troops held Kalashnikov assault rifles, the witnesses said. An AFP reporter said lines formed outside bakeries in north Khartoum as residents waited to buy bread. Residents in Al-Qadiriya and Atbara also reported that security forces had deployed to secure government buildings and banks. "Today the city is calm and most of the shops in the main market have reopened," Mohammed Sharif Omar said in a telephone interview from Al-Qadiriya.



OMDURMAN, Sudan: Supporters of Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Sudan's ex-prime minister and leader of the opposition Umma Party gather as he addresses them in a mosque in the capital Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman. —AFP

Economic woes

The Umma Party's call for members to join the protest movement came after its leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi returned home Wednesday from almost a year in exile. Sudan has been facing a mounting economic crisis over the past year. The cost of some commodities has more than doubled,

inflation is running at close to 70 percent and the pound has plunged in value. Shortages have been reported for the past three weeks across several cities, including Khartoum. Protests broke out in January over the rising cost of food, but they were soon brought under control with the arrest of opposition leaders and activists. —AFP

At least 13 die in Somalia bombing

MOGADISHU: At least 13 people were killed and 17 wounded in a car bomb attack claimed by Al Qaeda-linked group al Shabaab close to the president's residence in the Somali capital Mogadishu, police said yesterday. A second explosion followed nearby. Al Shabaab, in comments broadcast on its Radio Andalus, claimed responsibility for both blasts and said the second was also a car bomb. "The death toll has risen to 13 people including civilians and soldiers. Seventeen others were injured. The casualties are from the two blasts," Major Mohamed Hussein, a police officer, told Reuters.

Among those killed were a journalist, two security personnel and a driver working for local station Universal TV, whose car was passing the checkpoint at which the first blast went off, another reporter working for the station said. "My colleague Awil Dahir Salad died in the blast together with the driver and two security guards. They were killed by the first blast as they drove. May Allah rest their souls," journalist Abdiasis Ibrahim who works for Universal TV, told Reuters.

Police had earlier said the first car bomb at the checkpoint killed five, mostly soldiers. A Reuters witness at the scene of the second blast said he saw at least two bodies. Ahmed Abdi, another police officer, said the first car bomb exploded at a checkpoint some



MOGADISHU: People stand next to destroyed walls at the scene of a car bombing attack in Mogadishu, Somalia yesterday. —AFP

400 meters from the president's residence. Al Shabaab carries out frequent attacks in Mogadishu. Its members want to dislodge the government and impose its rule based on its own strict interpretation of Islam's sharia

law. The group was forced from Mogadishu in 2011 but maintains a foothold in some regions. It has killed thousands of Somalis and hundreds of civilians across East Africa in a decade-long insurgency. —Reuters

Ethiopian rebels fire verbal volley over peace deal

ADDIS ABABA: A rebel group popular with Ethiopia's largest ethnic community has accused the government of breaching a historic peace deal aimed at encouraging the organization to return to the political fold. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) said the authorities had failed to meet key provisions under the agreement. In July, reformist Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed removed the OLF from a list of terror organizations, and two months later its exiled leadership made a triumphant return home.

The two sides also concluded a deal in August aimed at opening the way for the OLF to return to the political arena. However, the accord has run into snags. The government has called for OLF fighters to immediately lay down their arms, and says some of them have been carrying out crimes. The OLF denies this, and on Friday charged the government with failing to meet its promise of integrating its combatants into the armed forces. "The OLF had agreed with the Ethiopian government on the formation of impartial security forces, inclusion of our fighters to security forces and the truth about our fighters and other Oromos who disappeared over the last 27 years," OLF chairman Dawud Ibsa said at a press conference in Addis Ababa.

"None of the points have been respected." - "Some of our fighters who have already entered into disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation camps have not been given the proper care, and we are prevented from seeing

our fighters," he added. The Oromos are the largest of Ethiopia's some 80 ethnic groups, with 35 percent of the nation's nearly 80 million inhabitants. After the fall of Ethiopia's Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991, the OLF was part of the country's transitional government.

But after numerous disputes with the leadership it quit and demanded the creation of the independent state of Oromia. In 1992, the OLF broke away from the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and then began an armed campaign against it. The government's heavy response spurred unrest in Oromia, leading in 2015 to the biggest wave of protests in a quarter of a century and eventually to the resignation of Abiy's predecessor. Ibsa has previously said that the OLF has around 2,000 fighters, in the south and east of the country. —AFP

The battle for Yemen's port

DUBAI: Yemeni forces backed by a Saudi-led coalition launched operations in June to retake the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, through which the bulk of the destitute country's aid arrives. Here is an overview of the battle for Hodeida, where a fragile truce is in place:

Offensive launched

Government forces launch their offensive on June 13 after receiving a green light from the Saudi-led coalition that provides them with essential air and ground support. The coalition, which includes the United Arab Emirates (UAE), carries out more than a dozen air strikes on Houthi positions on the outskirts of Hodeida. Rebel chief Abdulmalik Al-Houthi vows to resist, urging his fighters to "confront the forces of tyranny". The UN Security Council calls for the Hodeida port to be kept open for deliveries of vital food and humanitarian supplies.

Rebel airport base seized

On June 19, government forces enter the disused Hodeida airport, announcing a day later they control it completely. They withdraw several days later after intense rebel

bombardment. After a pause in the offensive, there is heavy bombing south of Hodeida which sources say on July 3 killed more than 50 people, including civilians, over two days. Witnesses in the city say the rebels have dug dozens of trenches and established defensive positions, blocking the roads with concrete and containers.

Peace bid fails

On August 2 UN envoy Martin Griffiths announces talks between the warring sides in Geneva on September 6. They would be the first since fruitless negotiations held in Kuwait in 2016. The same day there are air strikes on the city that kill 55 civilians and wound dozens of others. By September 8 the peace effort is declared a failure with the rebels refusing to make the journey to Geneva without guarantees of their return to Sanaa. On September 18 the coalition formally announces its offensive has resumed.

Appeal to spare civilians

As fighting nears hospitals in the city, international aid groups on November 7 appeal for the warring parties to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure. The rebel chief, Houthi, meanwhile vows in a television address that his forces will never surrender.

Street clashes

On November 9 the rebels launch bar-



ABS, Yemen: Bassem Mohamed Hassan, a two-year-old Yemeni boy suffering from malnutrition, has his weight measured at a hospital in the northern district of Abs in the northwestern Hajjah province. —AFP

rages of mortar fire to slow an advance by pro-government forces. But loyalist forces press deeper into the city on November 10, taking control of its main May 22 Hospital from which the rebels had forced out staff and

set up sniper positions. On November 11 the first street clashes break out in a residential neighborhood to the east of Hodeida. Washington and London step up pressure on Riyadh to end the conflict. —AFP

Trump's foreign policy in spotlight after withdrawals

WASHINGTON: US politicians and international allies scrambled Friday to make sense of President Donald Trump's momentous foreign policy decisions for Syria and Afghanistan-epic reversals that prompted Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to quit. Trump's historic moves to pull out of Syria and slash troop numbers in Afghanistan run counter to years of US doctrine in the region, and set the stage for a cascading series of events that could well result in more bloodshed across a scared region.

While many Americans-and not just his supporters-lauded Trump's decision, fed up after years of costly and spiraling conflicts, politicians of every stripe were tripping over each other to voice their condemnation. "Reducing the American presence in Afghanistan and removing our presence in Syria will reverse... progress, encourage our adversaries, and make America less safe," said Republican Congressman Mac Thornberry, a Trump ally who heads the House Armed Services Committee.

In the Pentagon, no one seemed to know what comes next. "We are referring all questions to the White House," one spokeswoman said, when asked about the momentous Afghanistan withdrawal. Mattis, who was seen as a voice of moderation and widely trusted by allies, resigned Thursday after telling Trump he could not abide the Syria decision. It leaves vulnerable to a Turkish attack thousands of Kurdish fighters the Pentagon has spent years training and arming to fight the Islamic State group.

'No surprise'

In Afghanistan, the Taliban welcomed Trump's partial pull out, with a spokesman saying the group was "more than happy." Bill Roggio, an Afghanistan expert and senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told AFP the Trump administration's Middle East policy is in disarray. "I do not know what its policy is, specifically with respect to what was known as the War on Terror," he said. "Until Trump articulates a policy, it appears isolationism has won the day." Trump campaigned on a pledge of "America First" and vowed to limit US engagement overseas, so his action on Afghanistan and Syria aren't bolts from the blue, and many observers were pleased with his actions.

Just weeks before Mattis announced a surge of troops in Afghanistan in August 2017, polls showed Americans were weary of war and lacked confidence that Washington had any winning strategy. A Morning Consult-Politicopoll at the time showed only 23 percent of people thought the US was "winning" in Afghanistan; 38 percent thought it was "losing." "Trump ran on a platform of non-intervention, 'no more stupid wars,' and promised to get out of the nation-building business," Daniel Davis, a retired army lieutenant colonel and senior fellow at the Defense Priorities military think tank, told AFP.

"That, in general terms, is his policy, which is fundamentally sound." In March, Trump said he wanted to bring troops home "soon" from Syria and last year, when he agreed to boost the US troop presence in Afghanistan, he said he was doing so against his own instincts. "Getting out of Syria was no surprise," Trump tweeted on Thursday. "I've been campaigning on it for years, and six months ago, when I very publicly wanted to do it, I agreed to stay longer," he added, noting that it was "time to come home" and "time for others to finally fight." —AFP

International

Rescued migrants face Xmas at sea after Italy closes ports

Nearly 300 migrants rescued off Libya

ROME: Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said yesterday Italian ports were closed to hundreds of migrants rescued off Libya after a mother and newborn baby were evacuated to Malta. The anti-immigration minister said that the Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms had asked to allow the men, women, children and babies rescued on Friday to disembark in Italy after Malta turned them away.

"My answer is clear: Italian ports are closed!" Salvini tweeted. "For the traffickers of human beings and for those who help them, the fun is over." The NGO said a Maltese coastguard helicopter had taken a woman and her baby born on a Libyan beach three days ago who were among those rescued at sea. "We continue with 311 people on board, without port and in need of supplies," the NGO tweeted. Proactiva Open Arms said on Friday that it had rescued more than 300 migrants from three vessels in difficulty, including men, women-some of them pregnant-children and babies.

The NGO posted a video of some of those rescued "from a certain death at sea. If you could feel the cold in the images, it would be easier to understand the emergency. No port to disembark and Malta's refusal to give us food. This isn't Christmas." The vessel started patrolling the Mediterranean with two other boats run by migrant aid groups off the Libyan coast in late November. This area of the Mediterranean has been the most deadly for migrants attempting the crossing to Europe. More than 1,300 migrants have perished trying to reach Italy or Malta since the beginning of the year, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Aid groups have been sending rescue vessels into these waters despite vocal opposition from Salvini. Accusing the groups of acting as a "taxi service" for

migrants, he has denied them access to Italy's ports. Malta too has been increasingly unwilling to host rescue vessels. Another aid group meanwhile, Sea-Eye from Germany, announced Friday that one of its vessels was setting off from the southern Spanish port of Algeciras. The 18-strong crew includes former volunteers who were on board the Aquarius, a rescue boat run by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and SOS Mediterranee. The two groups said they had to halt activities earlier this month because of obstruction by some European countries.

300 migrants rescued

Meanwhile, a migrant group said it had rescued nearly 300 migrants off the coast of Libya over the previous 24 hours. "More than 300 people safe on board the #OpenArms," the Proactiva Open Arms organization tweeted. The organization added that it had rescued people on board three vessels in difficulty in a single day. The vessel started patrolling the Mediterranean with two other boats run by migrant aid groups off the Libyan coast in late November.

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A member of the Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms rescues a woman (Cameroonian Josepha, 40-years-old) from a sinking boat as another lies dead on what is left of the deck in the Mediterranean Sea about 85 miles off the Libyan coast. _ AFP

from Germany, announced Friday that one of its vessels was setting off from the southern Spanish port of Algeciras. The 18-strong crew includes former volunteers who were on board the Aquarius, a rescue boat run

by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and SOS Mediterranee. The two groups said they had to halt activities earlier this month because of obstruction by some European countries.—AFP

News in brief

23 dead in bus crash

KATHMANDU: Twenty-three people died in western Nepal when a bus carrying school students and teachers back from a botanical field trip plunged into a gorge, police said. The students were aged mostly between 16 and 20. Two teachers and the driver also died in the accident early evening on Friday in a remote area. The vehicle was carrying 37 people, with 22 killed at the scene and another in a nearby hospital. Fourteen people were treated for injuries. "Our preliminary investigation shows the cause of the incident was speed," police officer Bel Bahadur Pandey said. Road accidents are relatively common in Nepal because of poor roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving. The latest comes a week after a truck accident in central Nepal killed 20 mourners returning from a funeral ritual.—AFP

Stealing company secrets

WASHINGTON: The US Justice Department announced Friday the arrest of a Chinese national who allegedly stole trade secrets from a US oil company he worked for. Tan Hongjin, 35, was arrested on Thursday in Oklahoma where he lived as a permanent resident. The Justice Department said he stole trade secrets "related to a product worth more than \$1 billion." Tan, who lived in the United States for 12 years and has a PhD from California Institute of Technology, allegedly illegally downloaded hundreds of company files which included intellectual property related to the manufacture of the "downstream energy market product." The department said he took the files for the benefit of a Chinese company that had offered him a job. The employer was not identified, but a LinkedIn page identifies a materials scientist named Tan Hongjin as working for the Bartlesville, Oklahoma research center of Phillips 66, and Oklahoma media also linked him to the company.—AFP

Three Palestinians killed

GAZA: Three Palestinians, including a 16-year-old, were killed on Friday by Israeli fire during protests and clashes along the Gaza border, health officials in the Hamas-run enclave said. Teenager Mohammed Al-Jahjuh was "hit in the neck by a bullet (fired) by Israeli soldiers", ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said. Abdelaziz Abu Sharia, 28, and Naher Yasin, 40, died from their wounds after being shot in separate incidents along the heavily fortified frontier with Israel. Qudra and a hospital official said. The Israeli army said around 8,000 Palestinians had gathered at spots along the border, burning tyres and launching an incendiary device at soldiers that did not reach the troops. Israel's military said it had opened fire "according to operational procedures" in place, without elaborating. Forty six Palestinians-including two journalists and four first aid responders-were wounded, Qudra said.—AFP

Boko Haram leader nabbed

KANO: A top Boko Haram leader accused of organizing deadly twin blasts in the Nigerian capital Abuja that killed 18 people has been arrested, police said yesterday. A police statement said Umar Abdulmalik and seven other jihadists were arrested, without giving details. Forty-one people were also injured in the October 2, 2015 blasts which simultaneously ripped through the suburbs of Kuje and Nyanya outlying the federal capital. The explosions happened near a police station in Kuje and at a bus stop in Nyanya. Kuje, near Abuja's airport, is 40 kilometers west of the city centre and seat of government. Its prison at the time held dozens of Boko Haram prisoners captured by troops. The same bus station in Nyanya, to the east, was hit twice in 2014.—AFP

Drone threat a steep learning curve for aviation chiefs

LONDON: Aviation chiefs are going to be on a steep learning curve to counter the security threat posed by drones after a costly and humiliating shutdown of London's Gatwick airport. "This kind of incident is unprecedented anywhere in the world, the disruption of an airport in this way," Britain's Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said Friday. Flights were suspended again at Gatwick on Friday by a drone alert, just hours after being reopened following the original unmanned drone sightings which caused travel chaos that left tens of thousands of passengers stranded over three days.

"We're going to have to learn very quickly from what's happened," Grayling told the BBC. "There certainly isn't a straightforward commercial off-the-shelf solution that automatically solves all problems." In fact, drone disruption at airports is not quite unprecedented. In 2016, Dubai International Airport closed three times because of drones being used for leisure nearby. The delayed and

rerouted flights cost millions of dollars. In February 2016, an Airbus A320 flying the Barcelona-Paris route reported a near miss with a drone at 1,600 altitude (one mile up) as it approached Charles de Gaulle airport.

Potential catastrophe

The fear is that if a drone smashed into a passenger plane or was sucked up into one of its engines, its highly flammable lithium battery could cause a catastrophe. Gatwick chief executive Stewart Wingate wants to see swift, coordinated action. "These events obviously highlight a wider strategic challenge for aviation in this country which we need to address together with speed-the aviation industry, Government and all the other relevant authorities," he said. In 2016, the European Aviation Safety Agency logged 1,400 drone incidents in Europe, up from 606 between 2011 and 2015.

Deputies in the European Parliament approved EU-wide regulations on the use of drones, but still need formal approval from European ministers before taking effect. Until then, it's up to individual member states to set their own rules. In France, civil aviation chiefs have drawn up an interactive map of zones where drones are either restricted or banned. Airports, of course, are off limits. Charles de Gaulle airport just north of Paris is looking at a long-distance protection system to tackle hostile drones.

Protesters return to streets as Hungary's leader Orban digs in

BUDAPEST: At least 5,000 demonstrators took to the streets of the Hungarian capital Budapest late Friday, as rightwing nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban dismissed a wave of protests against a new labour reform as "hysterical shouting". Protesters marched from outside parliament to the presidential palace on the other side of the Danube in temperatures close to freezing.

'New opposition'

Many shouted angry slogans against the government but no clashes were reported with police. The current series of protests was sparked on December 12 when MPs passed a measure-dubbed the "slave law" by opponents-which hikes the amount of overtime that employers can demand from 250 to 400 hours per year. Friday evening's demonstration is expected to be the last before the Christmas holidays, but unions and opposition parties announced they would hold a new protest on 5 January to keep up the momentum of the movement into the new year.

Burundi declares Gitega as capital

NAIROBI: Burundi declared the small central city of Gitega the country's new political capital yesterday, in line with a presidential promise made a decade ago. A government spokesman named Gitega while also stating that the previous capital Bujumbura, on the north-eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, would in future function solely as the country's economic centre. The government "has just adopted an historic bill making Gitega the political capital and making Bujumbura the economic

capital," tweeted Jean-Claude Karerwa Ndenzako, spokesman for President Pierre Nkurunziza. "Cabinet meetings will henceforth be held in Gitega, where five ministries will also be established from the start of 2019," he added, notably the interior, education and agriculture ministries. Parliament, dominated by the ruling party, must still approve the move.

Nkurunziza promised in 2007 the move would go ahead, citing Gitega's central position compared to Bujumbura, although the former's population is barely 30,000 to Bujumbura's 1.2 million. The new choice was once the capital of the Burundian monarchy and the opposition accuse Nkurunziza of attempting a symbolic restoration. Bujumbura is today considered an opposition stronghold where the president spends less and less time. One activist who requested



LANDES: A royal eagle catches a drone during flight during a military exercise at the Mont-de-Marsan airbase, southwestern France. London's Gatwick Airport, paralyzed for more than two days after dozens of drone sightings, said it planned to reopen for a 'limited number' of flights. —AFP

But finding high-tech solutions to the drone threat in airport presents particular challenges, says Lucas Le Bell, founder of the start-up Cerbair that specializes in tackling the drone problem.

The noise levels at airports, the security requirements and the saturated level of communications make the task much harder. His team is working on isolating the frequencies used to control drones, so they can not only detect and locate

the devices but take control of them. Elsewhere in France meanwhile, Mont-de Marsan airbase in the southwest has been working on a more low-tech solution. The airforce, inspired by a similar experiment in the Netherlands, has been training golden eagles to search and destroy the intruders. But that system still needs work: earlier this year, one of the eagles attacked a girl after mistaking her vest for the enemy.—AFP



BUDAPEST: Participants march in Budapest downtown during a demonstration, organized by non-parliamentary parties, Momentum Movement and the 'Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party' to protest against the dubbed 'slave law'. —AFP

Friday's protest, MSZP president Bertalan Toth alluded to possible protest action against businesses with ties to Orban's Fidesz party, as well as the big employers who stand to benefit from the overtime law. "We will target those that the Fidesz regime caters to with their laws," Toth said. However, Orban used a weekly interview with public radio to

double down on his defence of the law, saying that his government "simply wants to get rid of silly rules so that those who want to earn more can work more". Orban said in the interview that employees will be paid for overtime at the end of each month, but the text of the law allows employers to delay payment by up to three years.—AFP

'Hysterical shouting'
Speaking at a press conference before

anonymity said Gitega was not ready to assume the mantle of capital. "There are practically no offices to let, few hotels or restaurants - it's an irrational decision," he said of the move much derided on social media.

"The country is deep in economic crisis and does not have the means to move and instal five ministries in Gitega." In addition, China only recently constructed a \$20 million presidential palace in Bujumbura. A 2015 announcement by Nkurunziza, re-elected that year and president since 2005, that he wanted to stand for a third term sparked huge controversy. Outbreaks of violence since then have cost at least 1,200 lives with more than 400,000 people displaced between April 2015 and May 2017, according to the International Criminal Court, which is investigating the unrest.—AFP

International

China's arrests fuel anxieties among Canadian expatriates

Canadian Sarah McIver arrested for 'working illegally'

BEIJING: The arrest of a third Canadian in China has heightened anxiety even in an expatriate community accustomed to some level of fear and uncertainty. Beijing has confirmed it arrested Canadian Sarah McIver for "working illegally" in the country, following the detention of two other Canadians on national security grounds. While Canadian authorities said the latest detention appears to be a routine visa case, it has nonetheless exacerbated concerns among Canadian expatriates in China-fearful that they too might be detained over a legal technicality.

"I think most Canadians that are here are living in fear at some level, a fear of losing what they have here, a fear of getting arrested, fear of retribution," said Ricky Ng-Adam, founder of CoderBunker, a community of international software developers, who regularly travels to Shanghai for work. "It's a constant fear," he said, adding that some of his compatriots self-censor their social media postings and try to keep a low profile. Former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and China-based business consultant Michael Spavor were detained on December 10 and accused of

engaging in activities that "endanger China's national security". Kovrig is a senior advisor at the International Crisis Group think tank, while Spavor facilitates trips to North Korea, including visits by former NBA star Dennis Rodman. Though no link has officially been made between the three detentions, suspicions are mounting that China is holding at least two of the Canadian nationals in retaliation of Canada's arrest of Meng Wanzhou, a top executive at Chinese telecom giant Huawei. The ambiguity surrounding the arrests has also added to the unease, said Canadian Adrian Wu, who frequently travels to China for both work and leisure.

"Even though the third person arrested is not related to the cases of the first two, people see the headlines and immediately think 'a Canadian got taken'," he said. Ottawa has repeatedly said Meng's arrest was not political but rather part of a judicial process in keeping with an extradition treaty with Washington. Meng was released on bail last week in Vancouver pending her US extradition hearing on fraud charges related to sanctions-breaking business dealings with Iran. Ottawa and Washington

on Friday stepped up pressure on Beijing and called for the immediate release of Kovrig and Spavor.

Collateral damage

Observers say Canada is increasingly looking like collateral damage in a simmering US-China trade war, with Beijing at the same time working to ease trade tensions with Washington. "Canada is really just caught in between the US and China, we're like a scapegoat," a businesswoman in education told AFP, requesting anonymity for fear of reprisals. Like a number of Canadian expats, she is using the holidays as an excuse to stay out of the country. "At least I can remain in North America to see how the situation will play out from a safe distance", she said. Others in the Canadian community, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they are making contingency plans to leave the country "just in case" the situation takes a turn for the worse.

It is now up to China to decide how much they want to escalate the situation, said Hugh Stephens, distinguished fel-

low at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. "The Chinese aren't going to influence the Canadian court system by whatever they do but there could be a lot of collateral damage, which could seriously potentially damage relationships in the long term," he said. Despite the volume of business between Canada and China, people might "start wondering whether or not they'd be targeted" and consider a "long Christmas holiday", he added.

'China's way'

The fallout from the arrests could have implications beyond the immediate Canadian expat community, including researchers who visit China. On Thursday, representatives of six Berlin-based institutions, which included the European Council for Foreign Relations and the German Marshall Fund, expressed concern about the spate of Canadians detained. "Developments such as these increase uncertainty and distrust among foreign scholars who regularly conduct research within China, as they fear for their safety," the joint statement said. —AFP

Bangladesh's oppn website shut down

DHAKA: Bangladesh's main opposition website has been shut down, the party said yesterday, amid accusation the government is muzzling dissent ahead of next week's general election. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) said authorities had closed the site since last week when they shut 54 news portals and websites for what they claimed were security reasons. "We've written to the Election Commission to open the website. But it has not been opened yet," BNP spokesman Nazrul Islam Khan told AFP. The shutdown has hit the party's election campaign just days before the December 30 polls. "We cannot communicate with our supporters," he said.

The BNP is part of the opposition National Unity Front alliance, which is contesting the polls after boycotting the 2014 election. It has emerged as the main challenger to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's bid for record fourth term in office. Hasina's government has been accused by civil society and rights groups of drifting towards authoritarianism, silencing dissent and the press by using an onerous digital-security law. At least six people have been killed in election campaign clashes between supporters of Hasina's ruling Awami League and the BNP, whose incarcerated veteran leader Khaleda Zia was last month handed another stiff jail term.

The Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission could not confirm whether the BNP website was among the 54 sites it blocked last week. But commission chairman Jahurul Haque accused the website of bad taste. "It is obscene and indecent," he said. In an email to the Election Commission, the BTRC, however, said the website was closed following orders from two intelligence agencies for containing "outlawed" materials, according to a report by the online edition of the mass circulation Bengali daily Jugantor. BNP spokesman Khan rejected allegations



DHAKA: Ferdousi Khan (2nd right), the wife of Bangladesh Awami League election candidate Sadek Khan, distributes leaflets to voters during the general election campaign in Dhaka. —AFP

that the website contained obscene materials.

Last week the government blocked more than 50 websites and news portals for what it said were security reasons, prompting an outcry from rights advocates. BTRC spokesman Zakir Khan said the websites were "spreading propaganda" and "destabilizing the state". A BNP spokesman has said 18 of its online activists have been detained in recent months, including a former air force officer who was arrested on Thursday. Human Rights Watch said the arrests and the crackdown on free speech including widespread surveillance contributed to "a widely described climate of fear" ahead of the election.

"The authorities have used a number of broadly worded laws arbitrarily to constrain journalists, restrict the free speech of ordinary citizens, and target the government's opponents and critics," the New York-based group said. "The government has ordered several units and agencies to censor the internet, monitor online communications, and detain users accused of 'spreading rumors' or 'anti-state activity,'" it said. This week Facebook said it had suspended nine pages and six accounts it had linked to "individuals associated with the Bangladesh government" and which posted anti-opposition content while masquerading as independent news sources. —AFP

Philippine MP shot dead at a Xmas event

MANILA: A Philippine congressman was gunned down at a Christmas celebration yesterday, police said, the latest violence in a country notorious for deadly political rivalries. Rodel Batocabe had just finished handing out presents in the central

town of Daraga when the lawmaker and his police bodyguard were shot dead by a gunman hiding in the crowd, regional police official Arnel Escobel said.

The motive was not immediately clear, but authorities said they were looking into whether the killing could be politically motivated. Batocabe had announced plans to run for mayor in Daraga in midterm elections due in May, when the Philippines will choose local, regional and national representatives. Philippine polls are frequently marred by violence as politicians resort to force and intimidation to win positions that will give them power and influence in a nation where nearly a quarter of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.

Escobel said Batocabe, who was elected to the lower House of Representatives in 2010, had recently voiced concern that rivals in the mayoral race were using armed groups to influence the vote. Over the years, several Philippine congress members have been attacked or murdered by suspected rivals. The most recent case was legislator Wahab Akbar who was killed along with two aides when a bomb exploded outside the House of Representatives building in November 2007. A year earlier, Congressman Luis Bersamin was shot dead outside a church in a Manila suburb. Grace Poe, a member of the Senate, denounced the latest killing, saying: "This sorry history in our nation of political violence must stop." —AFP

Indian anti-Vedanta protesters killed by shots to head, chest

THOOTHUKUDI: Twelve of the 13 protesters killed when police opened fire on a demonstration against Vedanta's copper smelter in southern India in May were hit by bullets in the head or chest, and half of those were shot from behind, autopsy reports show. Two others died after bullets pierced the sides of their heads, according to the reports produced by forensic medicine experts from several government hospitals and reviewed by Reuters. They have not been previously published.

In the case of the youngest to be killed, a bullet entered the back of 17-year-old J Snowlin's head and exited through her mouth, the autopsy found. "The deceased would appear to have died of cardio-pulmonary arrest due to firearm bullet injury to the back of the neck," forensic medicine experts who examined Snowlin's body wrote. When Reuters visited her family, they said they had not collected the teenager's autopsy report. "We are continuing to exist, that's it," said her mother.

Indian police rules allow the use of live ammunition to quell civil unrest, but stipulate the response should be proportionate and officers should not shoot to kill. Police Standing Orders for Tamil Nadu, the state where the shootings took place, say that, when using firearms, "aim should be kept low, preferably well below the waist level, and directed against the most threatening part of the mob". The incident was the deadliest at an environmental protest in India in a decade. A working group of United Nations' human rights experts in May condemned the "apparent excessive and disproportionate use of lethal force by police".

Federal police are investigating the shootings, which took place as protesters were marching to the local government headquarters in the port city of Thoothukudi, demanding that a copper smelter controlled by London-headquartered Vedanta Resources be shut for allegedly polluting the environment. No police officers have been arrested or charged in connection with the killings. In a statement following the incident the Tamil Nadu state government, which is responsible for the police, said: "Due to unavoidable circumstances, we had to take action to bring the situation under control."

The Thoothukudi district administration and state police officials did not respond to emails seeking comments on the autopsy reports. Federal police investigating the deaths did not respond to requests for comment on the autopsy findings. Vedanta did not respond to a request for comment. The company, which had no involvement in the shootings, has previously expressed regret over the deaths at the protest, which it call "absolutely unfortunate". —Reuters

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Washington Watch

Troubling state of affairs in Tunisia, Egypt

By Dr James J Zogby

Eight years after the unfolding of the events of "Arab Spring", Tunisians and Egyptians appear deeply displeased about the situations in their respective countries. When asked whether their countries were moving in the right or wrong direction, only one in five Tunisians and Egyptians said "right direction," while 69 percent of Tunisians and 55 percent of Egyptians said their countries were moving in the "wrong direction."

This is just one of the findings of a Sept 2018 comprehensive public opinion poll in eight Arab countries and Turkey and Iran by Zogby Research Services (ZRS). The survey was conducted for the annual Sir Bani Yas Forum in the UAE. While, in future articles, I will be reporting on other major findings from this ZRS poll, the dissatisfaction of Tunisians and Egyptians was especially significant.

When asked whether respondents felt they were better off or worse off than they had been five years ago, only 21 percent of Tunisians and 20 percent of Egyptians said "better off," while 59 percent of Tunisians and 64 percent of Egyptians claimed they were "worse off". It is important to note that when we polled in both countries five years ago, 94 percent of Tunisians and 85 percent of Egyptians told us that they had been "hopeful that their countries were on the right track" after the revolts succeeded in toppling their regimes.

Over the next few years, attitudes in Tunisia gradually became more tempered. The mood changes registered by Egyptians, on the other hand, were more volatile. By May of 2013, only 36 percent of Egyptians said they were hopeful. But after the Tamarrud events of June 2013, that number rose to 68 percent who said they were optimistic that the country was on the "right track." By the end of 2014, however, only 41 percent were hopeful.

Therefore, the precipitous drop to just one in five (20 percent in Tunisia and 19 percent in Egypt) who feel they are moving in the right direction must be seen as worrisome. (It is worth noting that in other polling conducted by ZRS, we have found that there is a strong correlation between those who say "wrong direction" and individuals who demonstrate sympathy with extremist movements.)

Lack of confidence

This lack of optimism and satisfaction among Tunisians and Egyptians can also be seen in their expressed lack of confidence in their basic institutions. For example, in this year's poll we asked respondents how much confidence they had in their military, police, judiciary, religious establishment, media, and parliament.

Tunisian confidence levels were extremely low in each of the institutions under scrutiny. Only 33 percent had confidence in their military, 26 percent in the police, 41 percent in the judiciary, 15 percent in their religious establishment, 10 percent in the media, and only 25 percent in the parliament.

The Egyptian confidence levels were not much better: 41 percent in their military, 37 percent in the police, 39 percent in the judiciary, 50 percent in the religious establishment, 28 percent in the media, and only 27 percent in the parliament.

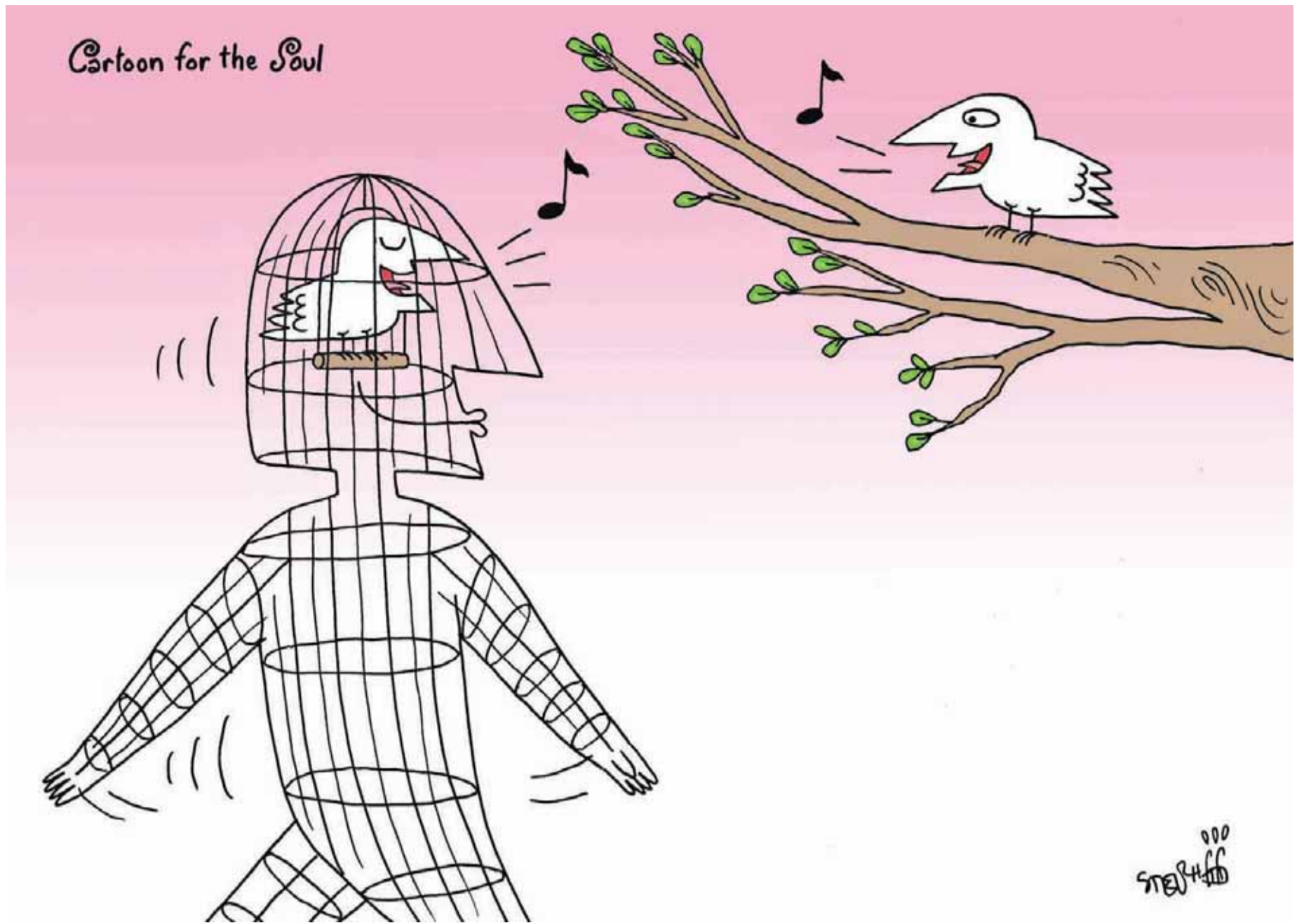
What is especially significant here is the precipitous drop in confidence Egyptians now have in their military. In polls we conducted in 2013, right before and shortly after the military had deposed the Muslim Brotherhood government, more than nine in ten Egyptians said they had confidence in their military. By late 2013, that had dropped to seven in ten. Now it's four in ten - a drop of 50 points in five years.

The problems facing both countries are substantial. When we asked respondents to rank the issues that were most important to them, despite differences in the order of importance, sharing the top tier of priority concerns among Tunisians and Egyptians were: expanding employment opportunities (the top priority in Tunisia), ending corruption and nepotism (the top priority in Egypt), improving the educational system, and political and governmental reform. The bottom line: the need to create jobs and reform governance so as to create greater confidence and opportunities for citizens are the challenges faced by the leaderships in both Tunisia and Egypt.

Eight years after the upheavals that rocked both countries ushering in what came to be known as the "Arab Spring," both societies are struggling to fulfill the expectations created and the unmet needs of their citizens. Their experiments with elected Muslim Brotherhood governments failed - in Tunisia, respondents told us it was the MB's ineffectiveness, in Egypt it was the real concern generated by the aggressive MB's overreach. The governments that replaced the Brotherhood initially restored hope, but the chaotic and fractured political scene in Tunisia and the heavy-handed approach taken by the Egyptian military have sapped the confidence of their respective citizenry.

Where there was once unbridled hope, there is now a loss of confidence and optimism. What this year's polling demonstrates is the depth of that frustration.

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



Mattis exit makes the world more volatile

For Washington's national security community and overseas allies, the departure of US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is a nasty surprise. President Donald Trump started 2018 with a triumvirate of respected current and former generals seen as central to restraining his wilder foreign policy instincts. Now that constraint will soon be gone, leaving US international relations hugely less predictable.

Here are four of the most immediate implications of the Mattis departure:

One: Trump is now making his own foreign policy. It began earlier this year with the ousters of national security adviser Lieutenant General H R McMaster and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and continued this month with the announced departures of White House Chief of Staff John Kelly and now Mattis. All four individuals were seen as moderating influences on Trump on issues like potential strikes on North Korea or US military support for NATO and Asian allies. By the end of February, all will have departed - with replacements such as conservative national security adviser John Bolton seen as much more willing to follow Trump's direction.

This has implications on fronts ranging from trade to nuclear weapons policy. After the G20 meeting in Buenos Aires ended on Dec 1, Trump tweeted his intent to meet with Russian and Chinese counterparts Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping in the new year to address global tensions and the arms trade. The US president is now likely to be entering those meetings - if they ever take place - feeling less restricted in his options. The same goes for an anticipated second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. A more unfettered Trump may well be more isolationist, but also potentially more prone to dramatic, impulsive action.

Two: In the Middle East, America will let others call the shots. Mattis' resignation letter indicates that Trump's unexpected announcement of an immediate US troop withdrawal from Syria, coupled with a pull-

back of troops from Afghanistan, was the last straw for the defense secretary. Throughout the Trump presidency, the Pentagon has advocated ferociously for more resources for both conflicts despite the president's long-running antipathy towards long-term military interventions in the region.

If Trump goes ahead with the withdrawal, there will be dramatic implications on the ground. In Syria, the move will likely embolden both Turkey and the Russian-backed forces of President Bashar al-Assad fighting against America's former Syrian Kurdish allies. European states - most likely led by Syria's former colonial power France - will have to decide fast if they wish to fill the gap left by the US departure.

As with the ongoing Saudi-led war with Yemen, Washington appears to be signaling that it will simply be less involved, essentially leaving the field to the growing confrontation between the regional powers of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The White House will likely want to keep up the pressure on the latter over Iran's nuclear program using sanctions and other means, but will probably not intervene otherwise.

Three: Asian and European allies will be nervous. Throughout Trump's two years in office, much of Mattis' role has been to travel the globe placating America's allies and reassuring them of Washington's long-term support. His departure will leave them wondering what those guarantees were worth - and watching the White House closely for signs of how policy will now change.

The biggest question will be whether Trump attempts to tamper with US commitments in Europe and Asia, where Washington has continued to step up military activity in the face of increasingly assertive Russian and Chinese action. Trump has been repeatedly critical of America's allies, saying they have done too little to secure their own defense and have become too reliant on Washington's spending.

After his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in June, Trump shocked many in his own

certain of itself and its beliefs than the left. Europe has become, comparatively, a less Christian zone, at least in terms of attendance and the salience of the churches. But there are strenuous efforts to change that - coming, curiously, less from the churches themselves, and more from politicians.

Here's some of the activity. In Hungary, authoritarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has shifted from defending "illiberal democracy" to proposing a new, less liberally-inclined "old-school Christian Democracy". He sees the Christian Democratic parties of Western Europe - in Germany, Italy, Sweden and elsewhere - as having succumbed to leftist influences and wants a return to the time when the movement began at the end of the 19th century, as a political opposition to socialism.

Poland is still the most religiously-inclined state in Europe - though even there, a once-fervent Roman Catholicism is declining and the priesthood was sharply criticized in a recent much-viewed film, "Kler" ("Clergy"). Still, the dominant political figure, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, leader of the ruling Law and Justice Party, strongly supports the church as the moral basis of the state, saying those who fought the Catholic church "favored nihilism." For the conservative part of the electorate, Catholicism, even if not actively practiced, remains the default moral precept.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, former KGB officer and communist, who saw the collapse of the Soviet Union as the 20th century's greatest tragedy, now embraces the Russian Orthodox Church, especially its imperial pretensions, with widely-publicized fervor. The church and its leader, the Patriarch Kirill, have been supported and enriched by the state; attendance in the gorgeously-restored churches remains low, though baptisms, weddings and funerals are often routed through them.

In these former Communist countries, state power seeks a kind of fusion with the church. In Western Europe, the signs of an attempted revival remain largely on the right - but are more scattered, less developed. In Italy, Deputy Prime Minister Luigi di Maio, following the example set by Poland, has announced plans to close large shopping centers on Sundays, arguing that liberalization of opening hours was "destroying Italian families." The plan has yet to be put into practice.

Outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel is, like British Prime Minister Theresa May, a pastor's daughter.

administration by pledging to cease joint exercises with South Korea in the hope of reducing tensions. The real nightmare for many in the Pentagon, NATO and beyond is that he may now do the same with military activities in Europe, Asia, or both, possibly emboldening America's most powerful potential foes and driving up the chances of an inadvertent conflict.

Four: America may become both more isolationist and volatile. Much will depend on who Mattis' replacement turns out to be - a choice that will be shaped both by who Trump will tolerate and who might be willing to take the job. Overall, however, experience suggests that any appointee will have to embrace a Trumpian worldview that is more isolationist and sometimes more reactionary than much of the US national security establishment would wish.

What that means is remarkably hard to model - not least because Trump himself has been so inconsistent. He has talked repeatedly about building a strong US military - but last month suggested he might cut it as part of the deal to slow the arms race. He has been openly cautious of military action - but stepped up US airstrikes in Afghanistan and elsewhere. In confrontations such as those with Russia and China in Eastern Europe and the South China Sea, he could easily take either a much more aggressive or conciliatory approach.

We've seen this dynamic with North Korea, where Trump was initially seen as keener than the Pentagon to consider military action, only to then offer greater concessions than the national security establishment considered wise. That dynamic is now in play on a global scale, and it could go either way. Also complicating matters is Trump's political position at home, where he faces a deadlocked Congress, the endgame of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into alleged collusion with Russia and the start of the 2020 presidential campaign. Bottom line: 2019 was already looking volatile. The departure of Mattis makes it dramatically more so. — Reuters

Neither made any political capital of that, nor of their Protestant faiths, but Merkel's chosen successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, is a Catholic conservative, and is opposed to same-sex marriage. In France, the rising star on the far right, Marion Marechal-Le Pen, niece of the National Rally (formerly National Front) leader Marine Le Pen, is at the center of a network of new right activists and thinkers, many proclaiming their Christian faith.

Reversal

Writing of this group, the US scholar Mark Lilla observes that their rise "may indicate that the relationship between religious and political identification is reversing in Europe - that it is no longer religious affiliation that helps determine one's political views, but one's political views that help determine whether one self-identifies as religious".

Beyond Europe and North America, Christian evangelical churches continue to expand both their congregations and their political power. In Brazil, most recently, they strongly endorsed the election of the rightist ex-army officer Jair Bolsonaro - though he is a nominal Catholic - seeing in him one who would reverse the liberal legislation and expansion of the state under the previous Workers' Party government, which the evangelicals saw as threatening their conservative morality.

In Africa, Pentecostal Christianity spreads rapidly still, with mega-churches often linked to sponsoring institutions in the United States. The church also wields increasing political power on the continent, as it does throughout the world. In Africa - in contrast to the North American and European churches - the power usually comes from below, the churches successfully gathering large congregations which then become attractive to politicians seeking endorsement and votes.

This is not (yet) a revolution: There is no coordinating center, no one group or figure directing the very varied initiatives - which are Catholic, Orthodox and various kinds of Protestant. Common to all, however, is a recoil from secularism and a search for a moral authority more powerful, because more traditional, than that of the state or of liberalism. For the adherents to these faiths, Christmas really will be a mass for Christ - even if the more powerful supporters in governments and presidential palaces look to material and political benefits in this, as well as the next, world. — Reuters

Business

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QUITO: People ride onboard the public transportation "Christmas bus" in Quito on December 21, 2018. Since 2005, Translatinos, an Ecuadorean transport cooperative, picks a bus on a day near Christmas to give out candy instead of charging for the ride. — AFP

Online clothing retailers hunt for better fit

Returns a costly problem, companies using feedback from AI tools

BERLIN/MADRID: Models testing fashion brands like Adidas, Benetton and Gap are finding that almost a third of the shoes and clothes they try on are bigger or smaller than the size on the label indicates, explaining why many clothes bought online are sent back. Calculating sizes more accurately could help online retailers like Germany's Zalando and Britain's ASOS cut costly returns and improve customer satisfaction.

"If you try on the same brand in a different color it is sometimes a different size," Zalando fitting model Savina Bellotto said as she squeezed a foot into a stiletto shoe with a shiny silver buckle that dug into her ankle. Discounting to shift stock means fashion retailers are struggling to preserve profit margins, and ASOS's warning on Monday of a major downturn caused retail shares to tumble. Targeting returns, fast fashion firms like Zara and H&M have introduced software that suggests sizes for online customers. Customers type in height and weight, which are processed alongside historic data on purchases and returns.

"It's a big burden for the retailer," said Nivindya Sharma, director of retail strategy at trend forecaster

WGSN. "Free returns started off as being a competitive advantage but now they're the norm."

Fast fashion

Around half of Americans expect to return clothes ordered online this holiday season due to poor fit, according to a survey by technology firm BodyBlock. "Returns cost you a fortune. Firstly, you've got an unhappy customer, but also you've got the re-processing and putting it back into stock," said Charlotte Kula-Przewanski, a partner at Columbus Consulting, which specializes in retail processes.

To crack the sizing problem, Zalando, Europe's biggest online-only fashion retailer, told Reuters it was augmenting the data it gathers online with feedback from models who check new styles. "If we can put an article on a fitting model, just before or as an article is online, we immediately know there is a fitting problem," said Zalando's director of engineering Stacia Carr, adding that models flag about 30 percent of stock as too big or too small.

Returns are a major issue for Zalando as about half

the products it sells are sent back. A tradition of catalogue shopping with free returns means customers in its German home market are comfortable sending back unwanted goods. Problems with processing returns contributed to a third-quarter loss that prompted a sell-off in Zalando shares and sparked speculation it could be a takeover target for Chinese e-commerce giants like Alibaba or JD.com. Zalando co-CEO Rubin Ritter said in November the problems with processing returns had been resolved and the company was taking steps to increase the profitability of smaller orders such as making size recommendations to reduce returns.

"It is very subjective"

A change in fabric or design can have a big impact, Carr said, noting that size-related returns soared recently for one major denim brand after it adjusted its design. When Zalando flagged the issue, it changed back. "In this era of turning around articles very quickly, the corners that get cut sometimes impact the fit of the garment," she said.

Zalando's small team of models initially tested shoes,

but now they try on clothes too. Dresses, its top selling category, also have the highest rate of returns. Models try on up to 120 shoes a day, measuring the inside with a special ruler and noting how each fits at heel, ankle and toes, while also looking for strong smells or quality issues. "It is very subjective. That is why we get the average between three models," said model Gerard Nieto, as he measured a fleece-lined leather lace-up boot.

Cracking the sizing challenge is like solving the Rubik's cube because there are so many variables, Carr said. "We know the Nordics like things more loose and oversized. The further south you go, it's a tighter fit, the bodies are different," she said. "We've all been surprised that we've been able to put a dent in this because it is such a complex topic." British lingerie retailer Figleaves, owned by fashion group N Brown, supplements artificial intelligence with a feature letting a buyer speak to a fitting assistant via Skype. "Often it's the customer care person who is showing on her body how something should fit," said CEO Miriam Lahage. "What's most important is that you have two people looking face-to-face and making a human connection." — Reuters

Yellow vest numbers fall as Christmas nears

PARIS: French "yellow vests" turned out in small numbers for a sixth Saturday of nationwide demonstrations, with one person killed in a road accident, the tenth death since the protests began last month. In Paris, the scene of violent clashes in previous demonstrations, traffic was normal in the morning and most shops, except for some luxury boutiques, were open for business in the busy weekend before Christmas.

David Delbryere was one of about 20 protesters near the Arc de Triomphe, the fifth time he has come to the French capital to join a demonstration. And he wasn't discouraged by the small turnout so far. "I think it's going to happen," the 48-year-old said. Some 200 people gathered for a demonstration in Paris' tourist area of Montmartre and the Sacre Coeur basilica. In all, around 800 "yellow vests" showed up for small demonstrations around the French capital, police said at mid-day. Authorities were also stationed at the Palace of Versailles outside Paris which has been closed to visitors over fears of unrest.

A Facebook event organized by "yellow vest" leader Eric Drouet listed 1,400 people as planned "participants" in the Versailles demonstration with a further 8,000 people saying they were "interested". Overnight in Perpignan in southern France a driver was killed when his car collided with a truck stopped at a roadblock set up by "yellow vest" protesters at the entrance to an autoroute, prosecutor Jean-Jacques Fagni told AFP. There have now been 10 deaths related to the protests since they began on November 17. Around 50 "yellow vests" briefly blocked trucks near the border between France and Spain before gendarmes stepped in. Blockades were also reported in northern France near the border with Belgium. Further demonstrations were planned for yesterday in Lyon,



PARIS: A woman, wearing a Phrygian cap to symbolically represent Justice, and yellow vest protesters walk near the Arc de Triomphe (Arch of Triumph) on the Champs Elysees avenue. — AFP

Toulouse, Orleans and Brittany. The number of protesters has however fallen significantly since last week, when President Emmanuel Macron, a pro-business centrist, gave in to some of their demands.

Since the peak on November 17 with 282,000 demonstrators, the turnout has fallen to around 166,000 on November 24, 136,000 on the first and eighth of December and 66,000 on December 15. The interior ministry estimated the numbers taking part in various protests on Thursday at under 4,000, the lowest since demonstrations began. The movement characterized by the high-visibility yellow vests worn by the protesters originally started as a protest about planned fuel tax hikes, but has morphed into a mass demonstration against Macron's policies and top-down style of governing. — AFP

India cuts tax rates on goods under national sales tax

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: India slashed the sales tax rate on over 20 items yesterday in a move aimed at appealing to traders and the middle class after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party lost elections in five states. Modi is seeking a second term in next five months amid voter frustration over the abrupt implementation of a nationwide goods and services tax (GST) in July 2017 that has resulted in job losses for thousands of workers in small businesses.

The GST council, headed by India's finance minister Arun Jaitley, agreed to lower the tax on some goods including televisions, batteries and movie tickets. The council cut tax rates on six items

from the highest tax rate of 28 percent to 18 percent and on one item - wheelchairs and parts - to five percent. Most other items saw tax rates cut from 18 percent to 12 percent and five percent.

The council has so far taken more than 190 items, including washing machines and leather goods, out of the highest tax rate. Only 34 items - particularly luxury goods - remain in the top slab of 28 percent. "It is decided to retain sin (such as alcohol and tobacco) and luxury goods in 28 percent bracket. Cement and some auto parts are also still in 28 percent slab," Jaitley told reporters.

On Tuesday, Modi said the government was planning to cut the number of items taxed at the highest rate so that over 99 percent of items, with the exception of luxury goods, come under the 18 percent or lower rates. A report by the country's largest bank State Bank of India estimated that federal and state governments could face a shortfall of about 900 billion rupees (\$12.83 billion) in GST tax collections in the current fiscal year against the budget target of 12.9 trillion rupees. — Reuters

Business

Third straight rout ends worst week for Dow, Nasdaq since 2008 crisis

Amid worries about trade wars and possible US govt shutdown

NEW YORK: Wall Street ended its worst week in a decade with more bruising losses Friday, and with the tech-rich Nasdaq entering a bear market amid worries about trade wars and a possible US government shutdown. The Nasdaq and Dow suffered their worst weeks since the start of the global financial crisis as the US-China trade dispute returning to the forefront, and amid continued concerns about the Federal Reserve's plans for interest rate increases.

"It has been a remarkably terrible trading week for financial markets amid concerns over rising US interest rates, decelerating global growth, Brexit uncertainty and chaos in Washington," said Lukman Otunuga, a research analyst at FXTM. The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished the week with a loss of nearly seven percent, after losing 1.8 percent or more than 400 points Friday, to close at 22,445.37. Markets elsewhere were mixed, with European bourses flat or rising slightly, while Tokyo slid.

The Wall Street decline came as Washington teetered towards a likely government shutdown as US President Donald Trump dug in on threats to close if congressional Democrats continue to refuse his demand for funds to build a wall on the border of Mexico. Thousands of US government employees could be furloughed without a paycheck right before the end-of-year holidays if Trump and congressional Democrats fail to strike a deal by midnight (0500 GMT Saturday).

With that deadline looming, investors received

another jolt in the final hour of trading when White House advisor Peter Navarro delivered hardline comments on the ongoing trade talks with China. "China is basically trying to steal the future of Japan, the US and Europe, by going after our technology," Navarro, a longtime China hawk, told the Japan's Nikkei news agency in an interview conducted Thursday but published Friday.

And he said China must address all US concerns about its trade policies, saying there are "no half-measures." Investors also have been anxious over the surprise resignation of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who laid out significant policy disagreements with the US president in his letter to Trump which he made public. "We are in a fragile environment," said Gregori Volokhine of Meeschaert Financial Services. "The extremist position is winning in the Trump administration, not just on trade but on everything."

Investors have been unnerved by the Federal Reserve's decision to raise interest rates this week, and projecting it would continue to raise next year. New York Federal Reserve Bank President John Williams on Friday tried to tamp down market concerns, opening the door to a more benign monetary policy in 2019, saying the Fed was listening to the fears about the risks and will "be ready to reassess and re-evaluate our views and our policy stance." Stocks briefly rallied on Williams remarks, but fell quickly back into the red. —AFP



Massages, free fish helping East Europe tackle labor shortages

PRAGUE: What's does a company do when it doesn't have enough workers and unemployment rates are at record lows? In eastern Europe answers includes workplace massages, free carp for Christmas and guaranteed jobs for spouses. With some of the European Union's lowest unemployment rates, companies in the region are increasingly being forced to adopt novel measures to attract and retain workers so they can carry on expanding.

Take Amazon, which employs 20,000 people in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia and wanted to hire another 10,000 for the holiday season. To fully staff its centers, the company has to bus in staff from cities up to 90 minutes away. The US giant also uses daily questionnaires to ensure workers are happy, asking among other things whether restrooms are clean as managers try to resolve immediately any issue that might dissatisfy employees.

"The only way we can get these numbers is by spending lots of time on the conditions and the work environment," said Steven Harman, who oversees Amazon's logistics centers across a number of European countries. Filling positions is a struggle for companies such as Amazon in the Czech Republic where the unemployment rate is the lowest in European Union at well under 3 percent. The number of job vacancies in the country of 10.6 million people is the highest since records started in 1995. "It is about where the people are applying from and we find the most efficient way to get them to our fulfillment centres," Harman said. —Reuters

KPI to celebrate launch of Vietnamese refinery

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum International is to celebrate the launch of its official and commercial operations at Nghi Son refinery and petrochemical complex in Vietnam today. The joint Kuwaiti-Vietnamese oil refinery obtained a preliminary approval to start after completing trial operations, KPI stated to KUNA yesterday.

A Kuwaiti high-level oil delegation, headed by the company's CEO Nabil Bourisli, is set to attend the launching ceremony in Thanh Hoa province, northern Vietnam, said KPI. The event will be held under the auspices and presence of Vietnamese Prime Minister and participation of Kuwaiti Embassy in Hanoi and a Japanese high-level delegation, it added.

The joint company was established as the owner of the refinery and petrochemical complex project in Vietnam, where KPI owns a 35.1 percent share, Japan's Idemitsu Kosan owns a 35.1 percent share, PetroVietnam owns a 25.1 percent share, and Japan's



Mitsui owns a 4.7 percent share, it noted. The project's investment capital is estimated at around USD nine billion, KPI said, adding the refinery was designed to process Kuwaiti crude with a capacity of up to 200,000 barrels a day.

For his part, Bourisli expressed his pride of the great efforts exerted by KPI's staff and the project's workers

in making such a significant progress, lauding their dedication to overcome all challenges and difficulties. He also thanked Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Eng Bakheet Al-Rashidi, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, and KPC's CEO for their continued support and pivotal role in attaining such unprecedented achievement. —KUNA

AUB opens in the Avenues Phase 4

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank has announced the opening of its latest branch in Kuwait at the Avenues Mall, Phase 4, on Thursday, 20 December 2018, in the presence of Tareq Muhmood AUB's Senior Deputy Chief Executive Officer Banking group, and other members of the Ahli United Bank executive management. After cutting the ribbon to mark the opening, guests toured the branch which is distinguished with the fresh and open design, to reflect the digital age and its location in the Electra section of Avenues Phase 4

There are a number of features that make this Branch one of the most advanced in the region. The Branch is designed in a way that will allow it add new technology to be added over the coming months and years. In addition, the Branch empowers our customers to manage their finances using our latest ATMs and Kiosks, whilst also benefiting from the availability of our Branch Relationship Officers. The opening highlighted the adoption of an advanced queuing system that interacts with the customer's mobile phone to ensure customers know when they are able to meet with the Relationship Officer.

Tablets and touch screens allow customers to browse the Bank's offering at their leisure, even when the Branch is closed and allows customers to leave their details if they need any support or advice from Ahli United Bank. In addition to all this functionality, what makes the Branch stand out is the presentation. The external signage and the large screens in the Bank adopt the social media passion in Kuwait.

There is a running feed of the Bank's Twitter & Instagram accounts and will be running 24x7. As with any progressive organization, new enhancements are already in the works. New functionalities will be added to the ATMs and Kiosks, and a video chat room will allow customers to speak to a Customer Service representative.

During the opening Tareq Muhmood AUB's senior deputy chief executive officer Banking group highlighted that "the launch of this advanced, modern and evolving branch represents another step in Ahli United's commitment to support the



Group picture of the bank management.



Tareq Muhmood cutting the ribbon to mark the opening.

continued prosperity of the economy, businesses and individuals.

Jehad Al-Humaidhi, AUB's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, add that "over the past 12 months, Ahli United has launched a number of enhancements to our products and the customer experience. The coming months will see the rollout of

more improvements that ensures we continue to deliver to the evolving needs of our customers".

Ranjan Sen AUB's General Manager Retail Banking explained "This step will contribute to the impact of customer experience through providing an instant e-banking experience. The new branch

adopts smart technology, and is characterized by its strategic location, futuristic luxury design, state-of-the-art technological facilities which provides a wide range of financial solutions and innovative self-banking services that provides customers with ample time in an atmosphere of privacy, comfort and convenience.

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.379086	0.392986
Czech Korune	0.005534	0.014834
Danish Krone	0.042699	0.047699
Euro	0.339450	0.353150
Georgian Lari	0.135044	0.135044
Hungarian O.001148	0.001336	
Norwegian Krone	0.031154	0.036354
Romanian Leu	0.065272	0.082122
Russian ruble	0.004459	0.004459
Slovakia	0.009106	0.019106
Swedish Krona	0.030053	0.035053
Swiss Franc	0.299992	0.0310992
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.206366	0.218366
New Zealand Dollar	0.198795	0.208295
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.218831	0.227831
US Dollars	0.300450	0.305750
US Dollars Mint	0.300950	0.305750
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003032	0.003833
Chinese Yuan	0.042729	0.046229
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037055	0.039805
Indian Rupee	0.003783	0.004555
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000016	0.000022
Japanese Yen	0.002659	0.002839
Korean Won	0.000260	0.000275
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069129	0.075129
Nepalese Rupee	0.002611	0.002951
Pakistan Rupee	0.001614	0.002384
Philippine Peso	0.005816	0.006116
Singapore Dollar	0.217161	0.227161
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001376	0.001958
Taiwan	0.010165	0.010345
Thai Baht	0.008974	0.009524
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.793254	0.809754
Egyptian Pound	0.014621	0.0203339
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000208	0.000208
Jordanian Dinar	0.425252	0.434252
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021761	0.045761
Omani Riyal	0.784721	0.790401
Qatar Riyal	0.079362	0.084302
Saudi Riyal	0.080127	0.081427
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.097826	0.105826

Business

Ooredoo bags 3 awards from Advertising Creativity award

Alayoub: Proud to add these awards to the previous ones we won this year

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait proudly received 3 titles as part of the 6th Advertising Creativity Award 2018; a distinguished annual event under the umbrella of the Arab Media Forum. The event is organized and supervised by Secretary-General and Chairman of the Kuwaiti Society for Media and Communications Madhi Al-Khamees.

The ceremony, held last Wednesday at the Crown Plaza Hotel, was under the patronage and presence of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al-Jabri. Dignitaries and a group of media and creative agencies from Kuwait and the Arab world attended as well as a number of Social Media influencers. Ooredoo won the following awards: Best Idea for "Enjoy the Internet" TVC starring Messi and Bader Al-Mutawa. Ooredoo and the renowned Lionel Messi collaborated earlier this year, for such an amusing advertising campaign with a focus the digital world's content.

The campaign - back then came with "Enjoy the Internet" slogan, in which Kuwaiti football player Bader Al Mutawa starred alongside Messi. The TVC included some exciting and fun scenes: visualizing the concept of enjoying the Internet and communicating with others. It also pictured unexpected moments that can be shared with others. The TVC emphasizes on the importance of being connected while enjoying shopping online, downloading applications and other things that truly matter to all customers in Kuwait from all age groups.

The second Award was given to Ooredoo's National Day TVC labeled as the best idea for National Days' TVC. Ooredoo Kuwait released a new song on YouTube dedicated to Kuwait on the occasion of the National

Holidays Back in Feb earlier this year. The song achieved more than 2 million views within 3 days on YouTube. The release of the song comes to reiterate Ooredoo's commitment to taking a proactive role in sharing the joy of this auspicious occasion with the people of Kuwait.

The song, which is entitled "Devotees for a Country" was sung by a chorus of young men and women, and was written by lyricist Saad Al Musallam, composed by Fahad AlNasser. It features Kuwaiti singer Abdulaziz Al-Duwaihi, who appears in a traditional Kuwaiti 'samra' segment. The song features a consortium of Ooredoo's athletic youth brand ambassadors: tri-aletes Najla Al Juraiwi, Abdulaziz Al-Rashed and the Kuwaiti Horse Rider Rakan Al- Hassawi. The song's video also features G7 Protoges; a youth development program sponsored by Ooredoo for years now.

Ooredoo was named the "The Best Brand in Kuwait": an award given only to companies that uniquely assess the best services for both B2C & B2B as well as increasing the brand equity. "I would like to first thank Madhi Al-Khamees for his great efforts -every year- in supporting and appreciating all those who are interested to take part whether from inside or outside Kuwait; across all levels and from all sectors. Ooredoo is honored to win such prestigious awards at this ceremony each year. This event is a great example of a recognition of excellence; showcasing unique and innovative ideas to our customers for national and other occasions" said Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications at Ooredoo.

He added "It is the digital transformation and modern technology era, and we are committed to offering innova-



live and unique ideas, so the task is not easy and no longer limited to the consumer behavior but went beyond and became an awareness and national related, not just mere commercial. "Ooredoo will continue into the journey of success and looking forward for more titles in the future. Our main interest is to be there for our customers and committed to provide the best and the latest prod-

ucts and services to better enriches their experiences" Mijbil concluded. It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo Kuwait has won two awards recently at the Stevie Awards held in London last October. It is the world's most prestigious award given to top companies worldwide for its achievements, across all fields. Winners are carefully selected by competent committee.

Flydubai announces direct flights to Kozhikode, India

KUWAIT: Dubai-based flydubai has announced the launch of direct flights to Kozhikode in Kerala, India. The three times weekly service from Dubai International (DXB) to Kozhikode Calicut International Airport (CCJ) will start from 01 February 2019 making flydubai the only Dubai-based carrier to operate this route.

Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer, flydubai commenting on the new announcement: "we have always been proud of the strong ties between India and the UAE. We have seen a stronger flow of trade and tourism between the two countries over the past few years. In 2017, India became the first source market to top 2 million annual visitors representing an impressive 15 per cent year-on-year increase in total number of visitors to Dubai. We are grateful for the support we have received from the Indian authorities and we remain committed to serving the market. We look forward to more opportunities to strengthen the air-links between the two countries in the future," added Al Ghaith.

Commenting on the announcement, Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Commercial (UAE, GCC, Subcontinent and Africa) at flydubai, said: "we are pleased to add Kozhikode

to our network of eight destinations in India, offering greater connectivity and an unrivalled travel experience to our passengers in India. The new route will provide more passengers from India with access to Dubai and beyond via its aviation hub together with the new code share agreement."

Passengers travelling to and from Kozhikode will have the option to experience our Business Class service, benefiting from priority check-in service, comfortable spacious seats and a range of dining options. Passengers travelling in Economy Class are able to choose between bundled (Flex/Value) or unbundled (Lite) fares depending on their travel needs.

Kozhikode, formerly known as Calicut, is a prosperous trading town and known as the 'City of Spices'. Along with its flourishing trade, the city is nestled between the Arabian sea and the Wayanad Hills. Its serene beaches, green countryside and rich history make it a fascinating destination for travelers. flydubai started operating to India in 2010 with the start of direct flights to Lucknow. Today, flydubai operates 30 weekly flights from eight points in India: Ahmedabad, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Mumbai and now Kozhikode.

As part of the Emirates flydubai partnership announced in 2017, Emirates will code share on this route. For bookings under the code share, Emirates passengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Economy class. With the partnership, passengers from India will have an opportunity to travel via Dubai to hundreds of destinations all over the world.

Bahrah garners honors at Hino Skill Contest

KUWAIT: Bahrah Trading Company (BTC), a subsidiary of ALSAYER Holding participated in the Hino Motors LTD Annual Regional Skill Contest 2018 which was held at Dubai recently and their contestant Renjith Soman Supervisor Parts and Accessories Sales was declared Champion in the Spare parts category. Hamza Melakandy General Manager on behalf of Team BTC congratulated Renjith on his remarkable achievement winning the coveted trophy and medal as well as encouraged the team to keep up the great team efforts aim for top consistent results.

"Meticulous preparation and keen attention to the detail were the key factors behind Renjith's remarkable achievement. He excelled professionally in the challenging contest and finally earned top honor, winning a week's trip to Japan sponsored by Hino Motors Ltd." said

Riyas Kochumon Spare Parts Manager, Parts and Accessories Sales. For Bahrah and Hino team, the award is yet another success story in their continuing quest for excellence in customer service by efficiently adapting the Total support philosophy of Hino Motors Ltd.

HINO Motors Ltd, a subsidiary of Toyota Motor Corporation, is the largest manufacturer of Trucks and buses in Japan, conduct such regional competitions to ensure their company representatives, technicians as well as service standards are among the best. Hino has maintained a proven record as one of the world market leaders with representation and presence in GCC and Africa since 1960's with trucks for powerful driving performance, durability, and reliability featuring tomorrow's technology for today's environment.

As well as the Nissan Sunny 2019, now for KD 2,999 with its spacious interior, advanced technology, and performance as the bumper-integrated lamps provide extra illumination under foggy conditions and a 15-inch machine-finish aluminum-alloy wheel design. Making parking easier, the rear parking sensor is a boon with its ultrasonic technology. Accommodated by a Bluetooth hands-free phone system, the

vehicle also brings in smart technology, ensuring a great experience through its audio system with AUX/USB feature capabilities. The Nissan Sunny comes with a 1.5L engine.

Starting for only KD 3,999, the Nissan Sentra comes with 130-hp, 1.8-litre, 4-cylinder engine with advanced valve timing to its next-generation Xtronic CVT transmission. It is a technical force aimed at providing the best of both worlds - efficiency and performance providing the best-in-class fuel economy that sets the standard. The Nissan Sentra's design was perfected in the wind tunnel to create a shape that's as fuel-efficient as it is refined.

Nissan Connect is an available smart technology that will be found incredibly handy combined with music, information, and the apps that keep one connected to their world seamlessly together through the smartphone and the Nissan Sentra's touch-screen. Nissan Al Babtain invites customers to seize the year end opportunity and visit its showrooms to enjoy the exclusive deals. Every campaign is a reflection of Nissan Al-Babtain's commitment to enhancing every customer's overall appreciation by offering great seasonal deals that suits all categories.



Nissan Al Babtain unveils seasonal deals

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the sole authorized dealer of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, recently announced grand deals that now come with special prices, and packages on selected 2018 and 2019 vehicles for fans to enjoy as the year comes to a close and the new year begins. Nissan Kuwait invites everyone to visit its showrooms in Al Rai and Ahmadi and explore this year's season gifts that the Nissan MAXIMA, Nissan PATHFINDER, Nissan SUNNY, and Nissan SENTRA have to offer. All Vehicles comes with 5-year unlimited factory warranty, 3rd party insurance and free traffic registration.

Starting for only KD 7,699, the 4-Door Sports car, Nissan Maxima thrills fans with a 300 HP engine, 3.5L V6 cylinder, and 18" aluminum-alloy wheels styled with a mirror-effect derived from a unique diamond-cut finish. The front presents the signature boomerang-shaped headlamps that feature a captivating LED signature line that stays illuminated at all times.

With full option of KD 2,000 cashback gift, the 4X4 seven-seat family vehicle, Nissan Pathfinder comes with a 3.5-liter V6 engine adds direct injection system, horsepower increases to 271, with towing capacity



of 1,500 KG and is offered with enhanced user friendliness features ranging from Motion-Activated lift gate to a new touch screen monitor; and 20 inches alloy wheels.

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Turkish Airlines wins first-ever GT Tested Reader Survey award

Turkish Airlines, flying to more countries and international destinations than any other airline in the world, is the recipient of three 2018 GT Tested Reader Survey awards by Global Traveler magazine, including the first-ever award for "Best Corporate Travel Program for Business Travelers" for its prestigious Turkish Airlines Corporate Club program. In addition, the global airline was awarded "Best Airline for Business Travelers" and "Best Airport Staff/Gate Agents" for the second consecutive year. This is the 15th year of the magazine's survey, which polled more than 22,000 frequent business and luxury travelers to name the best in more than 80 travel-related categories.

"At Turkish Airlines, we place a premium on the value of our business and corporate travelers. Many of the hallmarks of Turkish Airlines' award-winning services are developed with a long-term vision of creating a seamless door-to-door experience for our business and corporate travelers, and these awards are a true testament of our customer-first philosophy," said Mert Dorman, Turkish

Airlines SVP Corporate Marketing and Distribution Channels. "We thank our passengers, Corporate Club members and Global Traveler magazine for recognizing our award-winning product and services."

Turkish Airlines Corporate Club offers one of the world's most extensive corporate frequent flyer programs, designed to offer a wide variety of cost-effective advantages for corporations while offering premium services. There is no fee to join and no commitments, and members receive benefits such as exclusive upfront discounts, special baggage allowances, flexibility of changes/cancellations without penalty, free tickets, upgrades and access to passenger lounges.

In addition, an important part of business and corporate travel is access to destinations globally. Turkish Airlines flies to more than 300 destinations in 124 countries on five continents and connects 17 cities in the Americas to more than 40 countries that are less than three hours from Istanbul. The Istanbul Airport, set to be the largest international hub by passenger capacity, will open up routes to even more destinations, and offer new, innovative products and services to meet the evolving needs of today's traveler.

Mert Dorman accepted the "Best Corporate Travel Program for Business Travelers" award on behalf of Turkish Airlines during the award ceremony held in Beverly Hills, California, US. Joining him was Mr Ersen Engin, Turkish Airlines, General Manager, Los Angeles, who accepted Turkish Airlines' "Best Airline for Business Class", and "Best Airport Staff/Gate Agents" awards.



Business

Zain's executive management takes part in receiving customer calls at Contact Center

As part of Customer Week initiative aimed at enhancing customer experience



Al Roudhan with executive management and customer experience team.



Al Roudhan listens to customer calls with a Zain talent at the contact center.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, organized Customer Week: a Customer Experience Management initiative aimed at offering the company's executive management with the opportunity to receive customer calls at the Contact Center (107) with the aim of enriching customer experience.

The Customer Week initiative witnessed the attendance of Zain's chief executive management from across the company's divisions and departments, headed by Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al Roudhan. Throughout a whole week, the company's executive management took part alongside Contact Center (107) agents in receiving customer calls, replying to their inquiries, and learning about their needs and aspirations. The initiative aimed at giving top management a clear picture up-close about the experience customers go through when being served.

Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al Roudhan commented: "I was pleased to take part in our Customer Week initiative alongside my colleagues from Zain's executive management. The initiative witnessed

great positive feedback from all team members and across many levels, where we directly interacted with our valued customers by responding to their calls at the Contact Center (107). We learned up-close about their experience with us, and what they had in mind regarding our service level, with the aim of enriching their experience in the future".

'A rich experience'

Al Roudhan continued: "by organizing this initiative, we wanted to give top management and decision makers, who usually do not get the chance to directly interact with customers, an opportunity to interact with them in a direct and natural manner. In addition, we also directly listened to suggestions from our Contact Center agents about customer service workflows in order to further enhance them, as well as the challenges they face in order to overcome them. Overall, it was a rich experience for us all".

Al Roudhan explained: "it was a valuable opportunity for us as executive management to take part in serving customers, as well as support our Contact Center agents in

receiving customer inquiries and suggestions. This experience has presented us with even greater pride in the expertise and young talents we have at our Contact Center, and I would like to thank our dedicated talents at Zain's Contact Center for representing us at the front of our customer service line. They are Zain's ambassadors, and there's no one better to represent us".

Al Roudhan added: "we cherish our customers' trust, and we are committed to enriching their experience to continue offering them the latest innovative solutions and services to keep up with the swift changes witnessed by the technology sector around the world. We recently launched zBot, an interactive digital channel for smart customer service, which utilizes the latest artificial intelligence (AI) solutions to interact and respond to customer inquiries in a fully automated manner without the need of human input. The channel offers a wide range of services, and is added to our existing traditional channels such as the call center and Zain branches available all around Kuwait".

Al Roudhan further explained: "implementing digital

transformation tools has become a necessity to advance the Customer Experience sector and overcome the challenges it faces. As Zain serves the largest family of subscribers in Kuwait, we are committed to intensify our efforts to enrich our customer experience and make it easier and more flexible through launching such developmental initiatives inside the organization to better serve our valued customers".

Al Roudhan pointed out that implementing AI and digital transformation solutions to enhance customer experience is at the forefront of Zain's priorities. The company launches many smart services and solutions from time to time to keep up with the fast-paced telecom and IT sector around the world, to help put Kuwait at the forefront of the global digital transformation map.

Zain's strategy is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter portable lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology and Zain's long experience to enable an easier and more flexible life. The company places itself as an active partner in creating the future of smart life in Kuwait.

Warba Bank announces 'Al Sunbula' weekly draw

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait will be organizing its 47th weekly draw for Al Sunbula on Thursday at 11:00am in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Bank officials.

Al Sunbula Account is the perfect choice for all customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while simultaneously have the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year. Due to the high traffic on this account, for its offerings of unparalleled opportunities, Warba Bank has worked on enhancing Al Sunbula account to provide customers with more benefits.

Such enhancements include increasing the number of winners and the frequency of the draws. Now, on every Thursday the Bank holds draws for 5 weekly winners of KD 1,000 each. In addition, the Bank continues its monthly draws held on the first Thursday of every month, with cash prizes of KD 30,000 divided amongst 4 winners: two winners getting KD 10,000 each, and two winners getting KD 5,000 each.

Thus, the new development of Al Sunbula account has increased the total number of winners to 24, and the total amount of prizes to KD 50,000 instead of KD 30,000. As for the chances for winning, each customer is eligible to enter the draw against each KD10. It is noteworthy, that Warba Bank has recently launched the Al Sunbula Fixed Deposit, which provides depositors with high returns of up to 3%, as well as getting monthly chances to win in Al Sunbula Account draws.

Furthermore, Warba Bank has launched its latest Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request opening Al Sunbula account in an easy electronic manner through the Bank's website without having to visit any of the Bank's branches, by following 5 simple steps that might take up to 5 minutes. New customers will be able to request opening the account at anytime, anywhere, and the Bank will receive, process and pass the new application for approval through whole new and unique electronic system used to implement this service. Warba Staff will then contact the customer to determine the appropriate time to visit the branch to get required signatures, verify the customer's identity, deliver his/her debit card, and activate the account.

Zain main sponsor of 4th 'Dal Talks' conference

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the fourth edition of 'Dal Talks' conference. The event, organized by Kuwait's International Law Society, was held at Shaheed Park with the presence of many creative and ambitious Kuwaiti youth.

Zain's support to this conference came as part of the company's continuous efforts to highlight the creativity and achievements of Kuwait's youth in all fields, as well as its support of initiatives launched by Kuwait's International Law Society all year round. Zain is committed to contribute to the further development of the youth sector, reflecting its social responsibility towards the community's most vibrant segment.

'Dal Talks' was held for the fourth consecutive year with the aim of providing a space for effective discussion and dialogue between Kuwaiti and Arab speakers from across all fields and professions. Each speaker shared their unique stories and experiences with the attending crowds who were eager to develop their skills and gain further insight and knowledge.

Zain firmly believes in the importance of mutual cooperation between the private sector and entities that support the youth through initiatives and programs that aim at developing and nurturing their skills and capabilities.

Best Al-Yousifi Electronics opens new showroom at 89 Mall - Al-Ogeila

KUWAIT: Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Co recently opened a new Best Al-Yousifi Electronics showroom at the 89 Mall - Al-Ogeila. This is one of the largest & modern electronics showrooms in Kuwait, being the fourteenth outlet in Best Electronics chain in Kuwait. The event was attended by company owners & corporate managers, prominent figures and guests, interested customers, media workers and the press.

The company announced that the opening of its new showroom at the 89 Mall is part of its strategy aimed at meeting its customers' needs to provide the best services and shopping facilities. Best Al-Yousifi Electronics Co, by expanding the number of its showrooms open to the public, with this showroom being the number 14, seeks to enhance its service level and make them available to the largest possible customer base. Al-Yousifi opened the first location of Best Al-Yousifi Electronics Showroom in Hawally on September 29, 2009. Best Al-Yousifi Electronics also plans to join forces with other international brands for its future showrooms.



Zain's representative takes part in Dal Talks activities.

Through supporting such initiatives, Zain reflects its commitment towards the development of the youth, ultimately achieving a more sustainable future.

Zain will remain a main supporter of such innovative initiatives that cater to the achievements of Kuwaiti youth.

The company will remain dedicated to the further progress of youth development in the country, and will spare no efforts in supporting any entities that exert efforts in advancing the advancement of the youth sector in Kuwait.



To celebrate the new showroom opening, Best Al-Yousifi Electronics threw in a special opening festivity at the 89 Mall to all its guests and customers and launched special offers and excellent prices deals for new products. The welcome speech by General Manager of the Electronics group, Wael Deeb, said that this new showroom comes as part of the company expansion policy to please all clients in, also promised of more new showrooms

in the coming future. The opening ceremony also featured musical performances and a variety of entertainments in a distinctive atmosphere where the audience expressed their happiness. Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Co, through its retail network has undoubtedly emerged as the preferred partner for a number of internationally renowned brands, making it the natural choice for international companies wishing to put their products in the Kuwaiti market.

Today WARBA BANK

Al Sunbula Account Draw

50,000

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The highest chances of winning in Kuwait



Health & Science

Protected Chilean sea lions are the 'enemy' of fishermen

Over 80% of the boats return with nets shredded

VALPARAISO: Off the coast of Chile, fishermen face competition from a cunning carnivorous hunter that has decimated their industry due to its voracious appetite. For Chile's fishermen, sea lions are a "plague." "They're an enemy!" complained Mario Rojas to AFP. "We try to make them go away but it's impossible!" Part of the wider seal family that was once hunted mercilessly all over the world, leaving some populations close to extinction, the South American sea lion in Chile has been protected for the last 28 years. Hunting them for their richly prized fur is illegal.

Liberated from their most dangerous predator—they are still prey for sharks and orcas—the sea mammal's population has been on the rise, helped in no small part by the abundant fodder they manage to steal from fishermen. They have learnt to distinguish the sound of the fishing boats' motors, allowing them to follow the vessels as they head out to sea. "The sea lions don't hunt anymore. They hear the noise of a boat and they know that the food is there," said Rojas. With their sharp teeth and the enormous power in bodies that can weigh around 650 pounds (300 kilograms), they manage to destroy the fishing nets and gobble up the treats inside.

And they have some appetite, consuming 90 pounds of fish each a day. Rojas says more than 80 percent of the boats working in his area, around the port of Valparaiso, return from a day's work empty, with their nets shredded. There, sea lions hang around on the beach or beneath the wharf, waiting for the scraps and entrails thrown back into the water by fishermen. Around 40 percent of the world's sea lion population, some 200,000 animals, live off the coast of Chile and pose a serious threat to the fishing industry. Local fishermen want to be able to cull their numbers.

'A crisis'

A decade ago, at the Portales cove at Valparaiso, where

Rojas is the fishermen's leader, around 1,300 pounds of fish were caught daily, but that is now down to just 110 pounds. It's a similar situation all along the coast. "We're going through a crisis specifically because of sea lions," said Jose Alvarado, leader of the fishermen at Hualaihue, around 700 miles (1,000 kilometers) to the south of the capital Santiago. Fishermen want the ban on sea lion hunting lifted so they can control the numbers. "The only viable solution for the fishermen is to eliminate the sea lions and this won't happen," fisheries under-secretary Eduardo Riquelme told AFP.

He admits that sea lions are creating problems for the fishing industry but the first step in addressing the issue will come in February with a census to establish the size of the Chilean population of these eared seals. The government has also agreed with fishermen to convene a commission of experts to study the problem, while also eradicating some of the fishermen's bad habits, such as throwing fish entrails, which sea lions feed on, back into the sea. They've agreed to begin tests on boats fitted with ultrasound equipment to scare away sea lions, and machines that will reel in nets quicker.

'Catastrophic problems'

The hunting ban was imposed to preserve the South American sea lion, after two closely related fur seal species were almost driven extinct during the 20th century. Chile has signed international accords to protect the sea lion and any violation would engender serious penalties, such as the suspension of salmon imports from the United States, an industry that generates almost \$4 billion a year. The predator's presence is necessary "to balance food chains," Jose Luis Brito, director at San Antonio's natural history museum said. Hunting by humans "can produce catastrophic problems with huge consequences,



VALPARAISO: View of sea lions in Valparaiso. The hunting of sea lions is prohibited in Chile until 2021, but their proliferation in the last decades has become a huge problem for fishermen, since they attack their nets and rob the fish, putting their work in risk. — AFP

because they are the ones that control life," said Brito. But, "since they don't have any rivals, and not enough predators," their numbers are on the rise, "provoking them to

compete with another predator, which is us." For Riquelme, there's only one solution: "We have to learn to live with the sea lions." — AFP

Cell-by-cell DNA science is 'Breakthrough of 2018'

TAMPA: The US journal Science has coined as "Breakthrough of the Year" for 2018 new technologies that reveal how DNA cues individual cells to grow through time. Experts say these methods will transform science over the coming decades, allowing an ever clearer picture of the processes behind aging, healing,

and disease. "Just as a music score indicates when strings, brass, percussion, and woodwinds chime in to create a symphony, a combination of technologies is revealing when genes in individual cells switch on, cueing the cells to play their specialized parts," said the report. "The result is the ability to track development of organisms and organs in stunning detail, cell by cell and through time."

Modern methods build on the 2002 Nobel Prize-winning work of John Sulston and colleagues, "who mapped the development of the roundworm *Caenorhabditis elegans* by painstakingly watching larvae mature cell by cell through microscopes," said Jeremy Berg, editor-in-chief of the Science family of journals. "With today's technologies, especially massively parallel DNA sequencing and advanced fluorescence microscopy, the cells that comprise *C. elegans* have been mapped again using tag-ana-

lyze-assemble methods based on gene expression patterns within each cell."

'Revolution is just starting'

Scientific papers have been published this year on how a flatworm, a fish, a frog, and other organisms begin to make organs and appendages. International researchers are hard at work, looking for ways to apply these techniques to human cells—how they mature, regenerate, and what goes wrong when cancer, diabetes or even physical malformations occur.

Among the projects underway is an international consortium called the Human Cell Atlas, which is identifying "every human cell type, where each type is located in the body, and how the cells work together to form tissues and organs," said the report. Other scientists are studying kidney cell types, including ones that become cancerous,

as well as the interplay between maternal and fetal cells in pregnancy. A group of 53 institutions and 60 companies across Europe, called the LifeTime consortium, is studying cell by cell how tissues develop cancer, diabetes, and other diseases.

"The single-cell revolution is just starting," said the report in Science, which is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The winner was picked after online readers were invited to vote on a dozen pre-picked breakthroughs for the year. Of some 12,000 votes cast, the "clear winner" was techniques that enable scientists to track development at the cellular level, it said. "These technologies create some of the most extraordinary movies ever made, showing how a single cell grows into the intricate tissues and organs of a mature animal," said Tim Appenzeller, Science's news editor. — AFP

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- ◆ 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 visits Tareq Rajab Museum of Islamic Calligraphy

On the morning of December 12, 2018, members of the International Women's Group which consists of Ambassador's wives and VIP women, were greeted by Dr Ziad Rajab and Abbas Dashti at the Tareq Rajab Museum of Islamic Calligraphy.

Unveiled in 1980, the original Museum was a private art collection and now the Tareq Rajab Museum contains a collection of over thirty thousand items collected by this dynamic couple over the last fifty years, 10 thousand of which are now on permanent display. After which, the museum has been extended by adding two new buildings (Dar Al-Cid and Dar Jehan also called the Tareq Rajab Museum of Islamic Calligraphy) to the museum in Jabriya, the area

where the first museum was opened. The latter is where the IWG prominent women visited and were marveled by the artistic history it represented.

This Museum of Islamic Calligraphy is one of the most beautiful buildings in Kuwait and it aims to trace and educate visitors about the growth of the Arabic Script through time, with the scripts on display dating back from the 6th century up to the present day. The magnificent tour was very enticing to all the ladies there, and the generous explanations by the gentlemen were very thorough and kept members of the IWG all ears! The visit was yet another successful excursion organized by members of the IWG Board: one that they will go home to tell all their loved ones about.



Jumeirah Hotel's annual corporate event held in style

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa holds its annual corporate event at the Sadu Terrace, in which decision makers attended. The event held as an expression of gratitude to its business partners which was a lavish one with a live cooking stations, live entertainment and a hearty speech by the General Manager, Savino Leone.

During the course of the event, a brief presentation displayed the vast array of facilities in Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa. As guests indulged in the live cooking stations' open buffet, a raffle draw announced lucky winners as airline tickets were awarded. Beyond entertaining guests,



the event showcased Kuwait's idyllic resort's commitment and ability to deliver the brand promise of 'Stay different' to both the local and the expat market.

"Our annual gathering here serves as a reminder of the effort and commitment we've always put in creating a personalised service that gives a unique feeling to our guests," Said General Manager, Savino Leone as he addressed the audience in a heart to heart speech.

McDonald's: Gold partner of 'New Generation's Priority: Innovation Program'

McDonald's Kuwait recently partnered with the 'New Generation's Priority: Innovative Program' as a gold partner. Organized by Makers Academy, part of Big Brains, the training program was held under the patronage of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs at The View Tower. A total 50 students ages 11 to 15 attended the workshop, demonstrating a passion for innovation and technology.

Launched by Kuwaiti inventor, Engineer Nasser Al-Khaldi, the training program aimed at supporting aspiring youth with innovative ideas through specialized courses in digital technology, software and the latest electronics and gadgets. Additionally, the training program focused on shedding light on thinking creatively to solve various problems using logic.

Senior Marketing Director of McDonald's Kuwait, Sherif Coutry, said: "At McDonald's, we always sponsor community-based events that serve the entire community, particularly youth. We believe that they are a wealth of potential, driving us to achieve more across all areas."

Coutry pointed out this sponsorship came as part of McDonald's support of the Program's objectives. The Program aimed at occupying youth's time with useful scientific thinking, as well as developing their overall skills, improving their spirit of teamwork, and nurturing their creative thinking. Through the workshop, both inventors and educators were given the perfect opportunity to learn from each other's experience and expertise, where educators encouraged youth to design prototypes of their projects to transform their ideas into reality.

At the end of his statement, Coutry added: "As a locally-owned and managed company, we have always been proud of McDonald's Kuwait and being part of the local community. We are committed to playing a dynamic role in the community and we remain focused on supporting and encouraging young, ambitious youth. That's why this year, we will continue to organize and participate in a number of youth-related initiatives, given that they are the future of this nation."



A group photograph at the luncheon hosted by Spanish Ambassador Alvaro Rodridge at his residence recently. Attendees included Yousof Al-Marzook, Editor-in-Chief Al-Anba Newspaper, Dr Shamian Al-Essa, Dr Nada Al-Rayes, Javaid Ahmad, Blanca Londaix DHM, Dr Ghanim Al-Rumaihi, Fran Cisco Martinrz Dobalo and Juan Guillermo Riacho.

Sunshine Kindergarten organizes field trip to the zoo

Kuwait zoo was the venue for The Sunshine Kindergarten field trip last week. All the children from the KG classes set out from TSK on their journey ready to learn about animals and their habitats. Of course, other than a safari or polar outing, we never get to see animals in their natural environment, but as an alternative, Kuwait zoo was a real treat.

The children from TSK are learning about animals in their classes and had many questions for their teachers to answer, like: Why do elephants have long noses?, What does a tiger eat? and Why

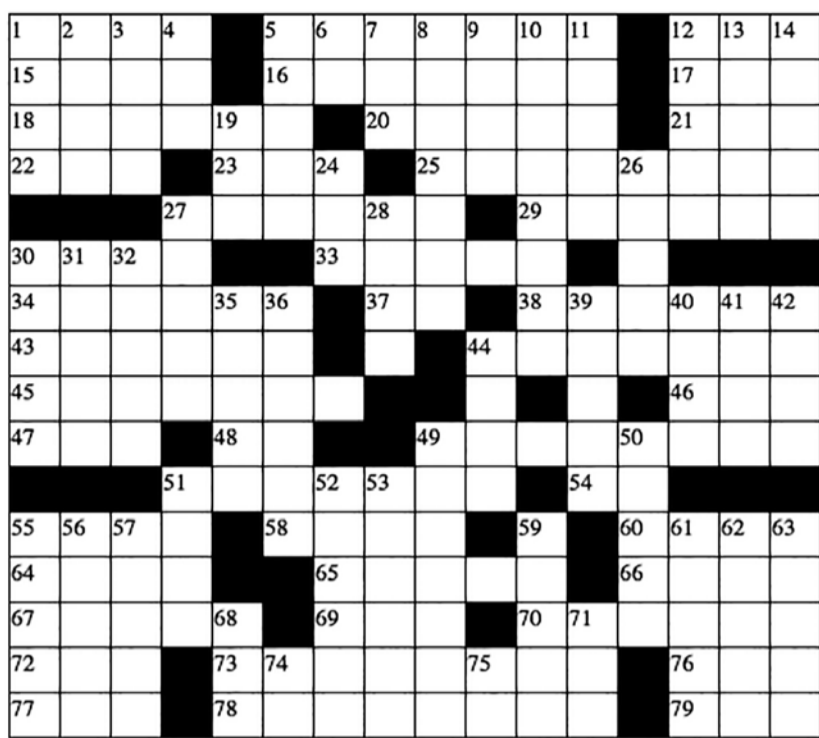
did the doctor tell the monkey no more jumping on the bed?

When you work with very young children, they make you remember that the world is a stimulating and wonderful place. All the children in Kindergarten came back from their trips brimming with excitement about the animals they had seen and the knowledge they now had about each one. Classroom learning was enhanced and fun was had by all.



Stars

CROSSWORD 2091



ACROSS

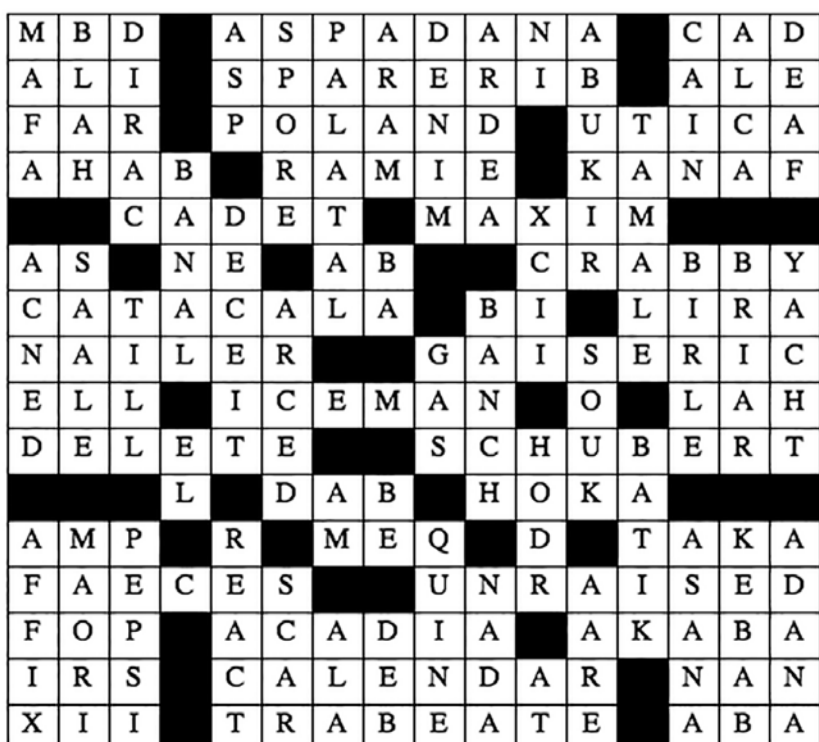
1. The time during which someone's life continues.
5. Plant bearing large mild thick-walled usually bell-shaped fruits.
12. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
15. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
16. European bison having a smaller and higher head than the North American bison.
17. How long something has existed.
18. A starch made by leaching and drying the root of the cassava plant.
20. Razor clams.
21. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
22. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
23. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
25. One who intrudes or pushes himself forward.
29. Deprived of color.
30. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
33. English film actress (1913-1967).
34. Disposed to venture or take risks.
37. An associate degree in nursing.
38. A compound that exists in forms having different arrangements of atoms but the same molecular weight.
43. (music) Characterized by avoidance of traditional Western tonality.
45. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
46. Meeting adequate standards for a purpose.
47. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
48. A radioactive gaseous element formed by the disintegration of radium.
54. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
55. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
58. A British peer ranking below a Marquess and above a Viscount.
60. A group of countries in special alliance.
64. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
65. Any of various perennial South American plants of the genus *Loasa* having stinging hairs and showy white or yellow or reddish-orange flowers.
66. Rock that in its molten form (as magma) issues from volcanoes.
67. Of or relating to the former Indo-European people.
69. Of a dull grayish brown to brownish gray color.
70. One of the evil spirits of traditional Jewish and Christian belief.
72. The seat within a bishop's diocese where his cathedral is located.
73. French writer whose novels were the first to feature psychological analysis of the character (1783-1842).
76. Being one more than two.
77. Inquire about.
78. Type genus of Cladoniaeae.
79. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.

DOWN

1. Fallow deer.
2. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.

3. A member of an extinct North American Indian people who lived in the Pit river valley in northern California.
4. Narrow wood or metal or plastic runners used for gliding over snow.
5. A horse used to set the pace in racing.
6. A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
7. (prefix) Coming before or being preliminary or preparatory.
8. German physicist who discovered x-rays and developed roentgenography (1845-1923).
9. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
10. A member of a people of Turkic speech and Mongolian race inhabiting vast regions of central Siberia.
11. An ancient Assyrian city on the River Tigris and traditional capital of Assyria.
12. Everyone except the clergy.
13. Be in accord.
14. The hair growing on the lower part of a man's face.
19. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
24. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
26. Of or relating to or characteristic of the early Saxons or Anglo-Saxons and their descendants (especially the English or Lowland Scots) and their language.
27. Russian pancake of buckwheat flour and yeast.
28. A less than average tide occurring at the first and third quarters of the moon.
31. Held back.
32. Become ground down or deteriorate.
35. The iridescent internal layer of a mollusk shell.
36. A quick look.
39. Formerly a term of respect for important white Europeans in colonial India.
40. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
41. Expel, as of gases and odors.
42. An established ceremony prescribed by a religion.
44. A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.
49. A city in central Florida.
50. The vertical triangular wall between the sloping ends of gable roof.
51. A small cake leavened with yeast.
52. Ground snakes.
53. In the area or vicinity.
56. Extensive landed property (especially in the country) retained by the owner for his own use.
57. English economist (born in Austria) noted for work on the optimum allocation of resources (1899-1992).
59. A family of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in southeastern Asia.
61. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
62. Rounded like an egg.
63. Any of various fissioned mammals with nonretractile claws and typically long muzzles.
68. A committee in the executive branch of government that advises the president on foreign and military and national security.
71. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
74. A soft gray malleable metallic element that resembles tin but discolors on exposure to air.
75. A colorless explosive liquid that is volatile and poisonous and foul-smelling.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today finds you somewhat emotionally detached on a personal level. You may feel as though you want to be alone and just keep to yourself. Ideas are what count for you now. You seem to put any type of personal concerns on the back burner. You have no tolerance for drama nor anyone that seems to intrude in your life or has a negative opinion of your choices. You seem to find yourself drawn to all that is new and unusual. This is a different side of you that is starting to emerge. You may find you are being drawn out of your shell and have developed new taste and a new approach to life and the way you choose to live it. You may be truly finding out who you are.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

The exchange of ideas is very important to you. You wish to surround yourself with like-minded individuals. Those that have different outlook on life are not tolerable to you now. You may find yourself working well with a colleague today, and the exchange of ideas seems to make this a productive day. You seem to be very open to expressing yourself and your feelings to others and this feels great to you. You feel more alive than you have in years.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It seems as everyone around you is noticing your more unique qualities today. Someone close to you may be supportive of that which sets you apart from the crowd. Problems seem no match for you today. You are as sharp as a tack. New ideas and even inventions may start to develop in your mind today. This is a great day to make a note of the exciting ideas that come to you today. You may find you have a gift of knowing what others want and you may just be able to create it.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today may find you unemotional and detached. You may be in a private mood and unable to feel close to anyone. You wish everyone would keep their distance and let you be. You are focused solely on your ideas and have no time for people. You really have no tolerance for anyone who does not have the same mindset you do. This is a time in your life where you may experience spiritual growth and find an inner peace you have long wished for. Enjoy this time.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

They say you live and you learn. The cycle you are entering now involves just this. You have successfully turned stumbling blocks into stepping stones your entire life. Now is the time to reflect and apply your experiences to your current situation. You are wise beyond your years. This is a time to tend to all matters in your life you have been avoiding and focus on your future. A great understanding of life and the strength you possess come to light at this time.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Repetition is key to making a practice second nature. The change you are considering may seem hard at first. And it will be. But as you consciously practice doing it over and over, it will become a habit. The habit will become second nature. Ta da! It's ingrained in your character. Which is what you are aiming for.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may be feeling a need for change. A deep desire for emotional security takes hold now and you feel your most content when surrounded by family and those closest to you. Relationships are a priority in your world now. You feel as if things in your life are monotonous and you are ready to spice things up. This may mean a shiny new car purchase, a vacation, or simply surrounding yourself with a new group of friends. Any direction you choose, this will be a time of excitement and give you a fresh start and a more focused outlook. We all need a bit of change from time to time. Keep life interesting and exciting.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today finds you somewhat emotionally detached on a personal level. You may feel as though you want to be alone and just keep to yourself. Ideas are what count for you now. You seem to put any type of personal concerns on the back burner. You have no tolerance for drama nor anyone that seems to intrude in your life or has a negative opinion of your choices. You seem to find yourself drawn to all that is new and unusual. This is a different side of you that is starting to emerge. You may find you are being drawn out of your shell and have developed new taste and a new approach to life and the way you choose to live it.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Those sentences that start with, "I am not supposed to say anything, but..." may be just what you want to hear today. You seem to be drawn to hear the gossip others have to tell. Knowing what is going on in the lives of others seems to draw you in. You may find comfort in knowing your problems seem minimal when listening to what others are going through. Whether it is right or wrong, it is comforting to know your problems aren't as big as they seem. It seems ideas are what really count for you now. You are becoming drawn to all that is new and unusual. This may be a great time of change for you. Out with the old and in with the new.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are highly imaginative when it comes to your thoughts and ideas. There are no limits to the thoughts and ideas that are going through your mind now. You may seem to be emotionally detached now. Ideas are what count for you now. Narrow minded personal concerns seem trivial and you dismiss them all together. You have no tolerance for others who do not operate at this level. The new, unusual, and avant garde are the things that instinctively appeal to you now. You have taken a giant step outside of your normal comfort zone.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may be feeling an emotional detachment from everyone and everything around you. Ideas are what count for you now. You may find yourself wanting to be surrounded with like-minded individuals. Those who don't seem to see things from your point of view get on your nerves. You have zero tolerance for drama and for any trivial matters that seem present. It seems, the new, unusual, and avant garde are the things that appeal to you now, Aquarius. A new outlook on life and new interest seem to turn up the excitement for you. This is a good time to take a step out of your comfort zone and live a little.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Now is a time that your health seems to be a major concern for you. You feel the need to get serious about getting healthy. Join the gym, start meal planning, or just get up and get moving. These will be the things that can be new habits for you. You want to feel as good about yourself as you feel about the things in your life. Today is the first day of the new healthy way of life for you. You may seem to be feeling emotionally detached from those close to you. You are entering a phase in your life where you place much emphasis on idealism.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old TV Shows 2

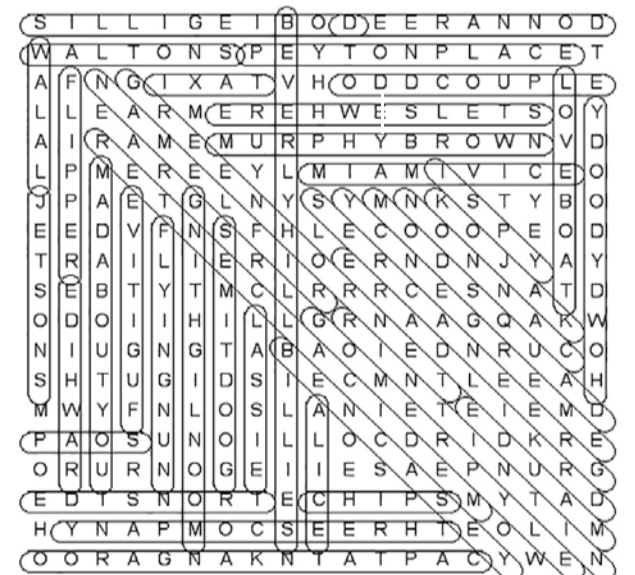
Find and circle all of the old TV shows that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional old TV show.



- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| A-TEAM | DOCTOR WHO | HEE HAW | NEWHART |
| ALF | DYNASTY | HUNTER | NIGHT COURT |
| AIRWOLF | EQUALIZER | JEFFERSONS | OUTER LIMITS |
| BARETTA | FALCON CREST | KNIGHT RIDER | PRISONER |
| BARNABY JONES | FAME | MAGGYVER | S.W.A.T. |
| BENSON | FANTASY ISLAND | MAVERICK | SILVER SPOONS |
| BIG VALLEY | FISH | MAYBERRY R.F.D. | T.J. HOOKER |
| BONANZA | FLINTSTONES | MISTER ED | TWILIGHT ZONE |
| CHEERS | FULL HOUSE | MUNSTERS | VIRGINIAN |
| COACH | GROWING PAINS | NANNY | WEBSTER |
| DALLAS | HAWAII FIVE-O | | |

Friday's Solution

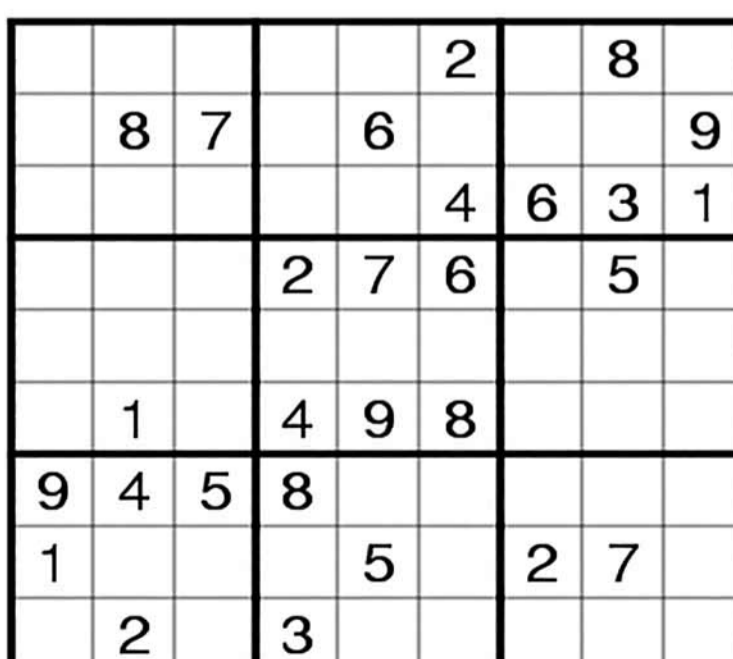
Old TV Shows 1



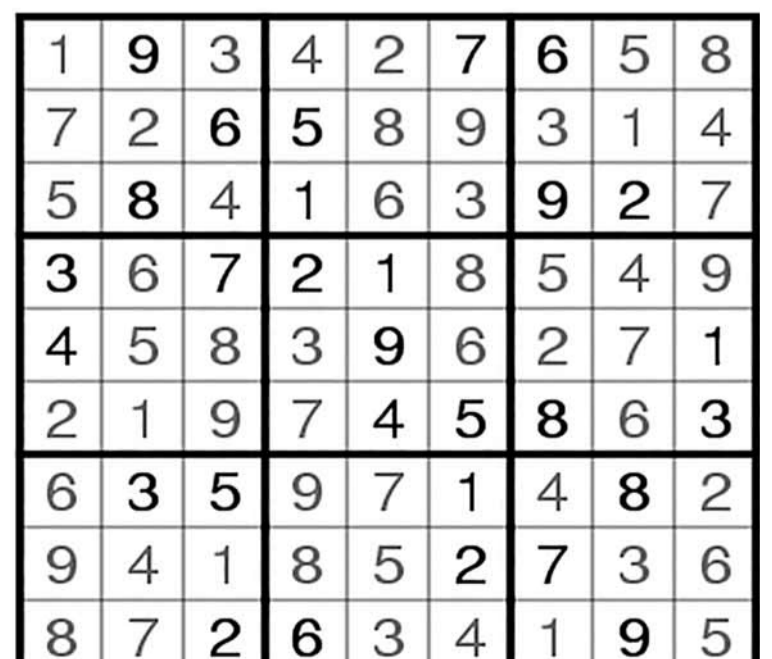
- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ALICE | FLYING NUN | L.A. LAW | ODD COUPLE |
| BEN CASEY | FUGITIVE | LISSIE | PEYTON PLACE |
| BEVERLY HILLBILLIES | GOMER PYLE | LOVE BOAT | RAWHIDE |
| CHIPS | GOOD TIMES | MAD ABOUT YOU | RIFLEMAN |
| CANNON | GREEN ACRES | MAUDE | RIN TIN TIN |
| CAPTAIN KANGAROO | GREEN HORNET | MEDICAL CENTER | SOAP |
| DOBBIE GILLIS | HOWDY DOODY | MIAMI VICE | TAXI |
| DONNA REED | I SPY | MOD SQUAD | THREE'S COMPANY |
| DR. KILDARE | IRONSIDE | MOONLIGHTING | WALTONS |
| EMERGENCY | JETSONS | MURPHY BROWN | |
| FLIPPER | KOJAK | | |

The hidden TV show is: THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW

Daily SuDoku

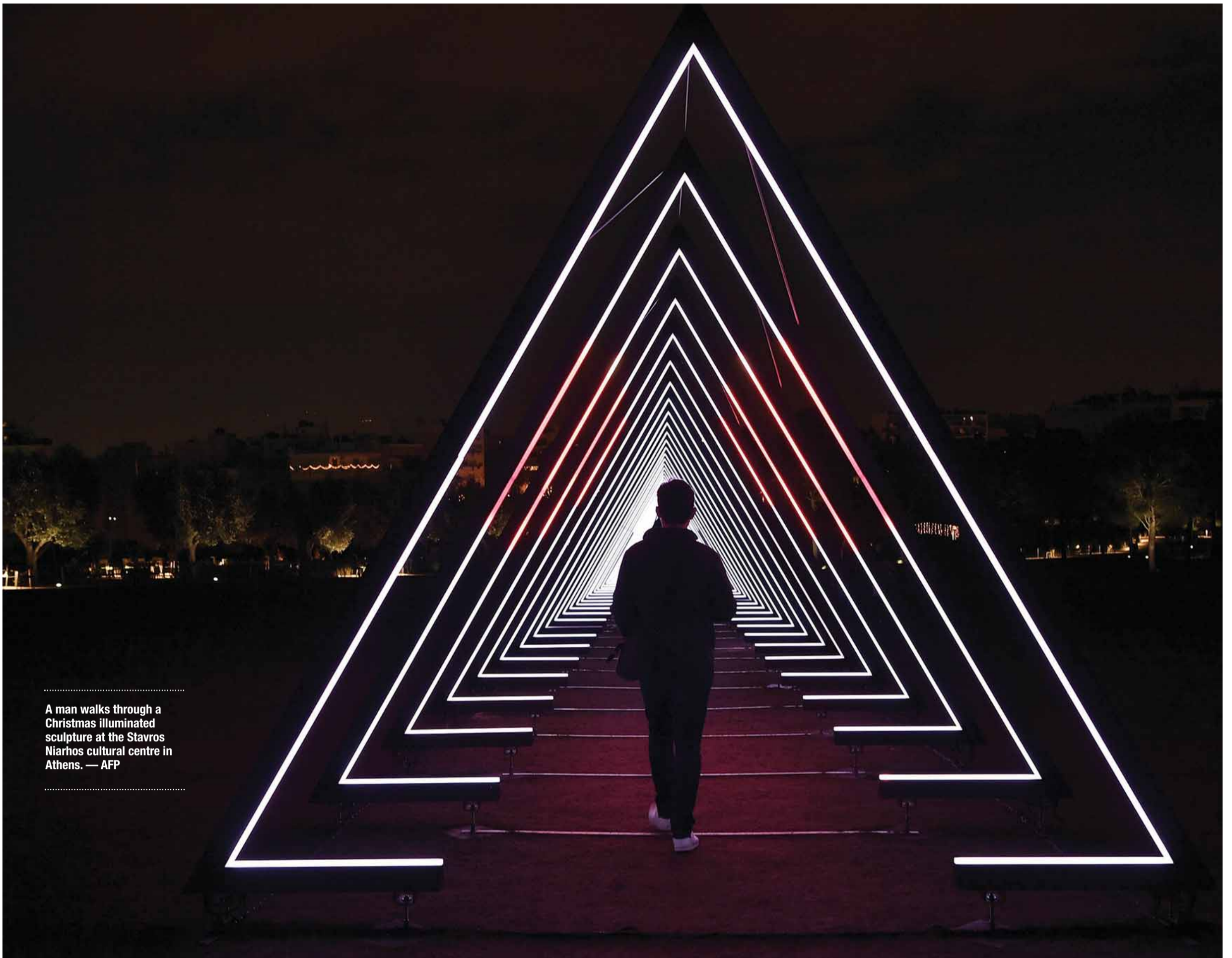


Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2018



A man walks through a Christmas illuminated sculpture at the Stavros Niarchos cultural centre in Athens. — AFP

Green Acres: 'Farmer' Trump sings country in video post

He's still the government's best showman. Surrounded by political chaos, with the government verging on shutdown and legal cases coming in from every direction, President Donald Trump delivered comic relief when he posted a video Thursday of himself singing a comball duet from an old sitcom. The 13-year-old video from an Emmy Awards broadcast shows the New York born-and-bred, cow-country adverse real estate billionaire dressed as a farmer in denim overalls and a straw hat, wielding a pitchfork while singing the theme song from the popular 1965-1971 show "Green Acres."

In the show, actors Eddie Albert and Eva Gabor played Central Park highrise-dwellers who move to a country farm, with Albert happily bumbling as a planter and Gabor finding it difficult to give up New York society life, in a part that may have fit similarly Slavic-accented Melania Trump to a tee. In a faux talent show for the 2005 Emmys show, Trump reprised the "Green Acres" duet with actress Megan Mullally, then the star of the popular "Will and Grace."



Donald Trump and Actress Megan Mullally perform the theme song of the old cornpone sitcom for the 2005 Emmy Awards ceremony.

"Land spreadin' out so far and wide, Keep Manhattan, just give me that countryside," he sang, answered by her "New York is where I'd rather stay, I get allergic smelling hay." The duet worked: they won the Emmys contest. Trump brought back the video to mark the week's most-or perhaps only-uncontroversial act in Washington, the signing of the \$867 billion Farm Bill.

It served to ease tensions momentarily in the US capital just as Trump locked horns with Congress over another issue, his demand for money to build a border wall. With a Friday midnight deadline, the White House threatened to shut down the government days before Christmas over the issue if Trump doesn't get his wall budget. But bringing the old video back didn't make everyone grin. Mullally, politically no fan of the president, tweeted: "Omg.. if you guys need me, I'll be in a hole in the ground." —AFP

US films, hip hop inspire young immigrants' American dream

Jimmy Martinez, a 22-year old Salvadoran who has traveled north since October in a caravan of Central American migrants seeking to reach the United States, wears his shorts low and baggy and his hair slicked back like his favorite US hip hop artists. Like many other young Central Americans who have traveled thousands of miles to this Mexican city with hopes of crossing the border into California, he said US music videos and Hollywood films have formed his vision of the American Dream.

"I want to go to Miami because it looks so nice in films like 'Fast and Furious,'" said Martinez, who is fleeing street gangs in El Salvador, a country with one of the highest homicide rates in the world. He said the gangs killed his father, uncle and cousin and threatened to come after him. After weeks of walking and hitching rides, he arrived in Tijuana. He has been working in construction but hopes to study to become a psychologist in the United States. "I want to be there to have more security and a better future," he said.

Also sheltering in a squalid camp in Tijuana, Anyi Loan Mejia, 22, from Honduras, said she dreamed of New York City's bright lights and skyscrapers, that she had seen in films. She said she believed "you can walk there without danger ...and that I could have things there I couldn't in Honduras, like a good job, wage and house, healthcare." Wearing black leggings, a white t-shirt and crimson lipstick, Loan Mejia said she always liked to look her best, no matter how difficult her living conditions. Like many of the migrants in Tijuana, she is living in a tent.

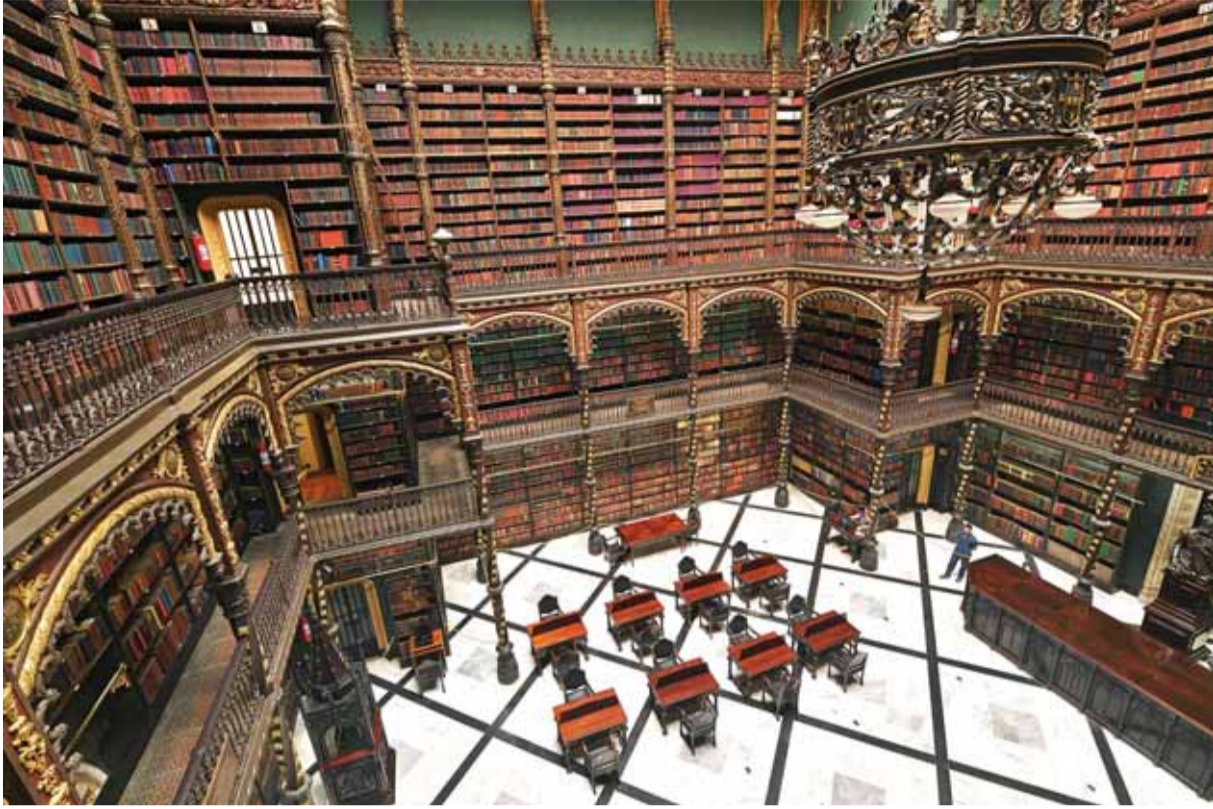
All those interviewed for this story said they did not have enough food and water or facilities to go to the bathroom and wash. Still, Loan Mejia's friend Damaris Tejada said she was wearing combat trousers and a sports t-shirt because that is how she imagined from films and the news media that Americans dress.

"My dream is to have the opportunity there of studying and working," said the 15-year old, who had to leave school early

to help provide for her family. All the young migrants agreed on one point: even if they did not manage to cross to the United States this time, they would never give up on their American dream. "I would feel sad and defeated if I don't make it this time," said Martinez. "But I would come back and try again - as many times as necessary." —Reuters



Yaderin Alexandra Banias, a migrant from Honduras, part of a caravan of thousands traveling from Central America en route to the United States, poses in front of the border wall between the US and Mexico in Tijuana, Mexico. — AFP



View of the Royal Portuguese Cabinet of Reading in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.—AFP photos

Historic library weaves 'Harry Potter'-style tourist magic in Rio

From the outside, it looks like another historic edifice in Rio's rundown city center. Inside, however, is a multi-tiered library so spectacular, so ornate, that stunned visitors feel like they've walked into a movie fantasy set. "In 'Harry Potter' we've seen libraries like this!" exclaimed Didier Margouet, a 57-year-old French tourist, looking around at the shelves of leather bound books climbing the walls under an octagonal skylight of red, white and blue stained glass. "Yes, like in the movies," agreed his partner, Leticia Rau, 50.

“The alma mater of the Portuguese in Brazil”

The Royal Portuguese Reading Room—the Real Gabinete Português de Leitura in Portuguese—was built in the late 19th century under the stewardship of an association of Portuguese migrants that still cares for the institution. Its Gothic-Renaissance architecture and plethora of carvings, tiles and sculptures celebrate the glory of the Portuguese discoveries era in the 15th and 16th centuries. Holding some 350,000 books, some of them very rare, the library today is more a tourist attraction and selfie backdrop than a reading room, though for a few it remains an indispensable haven for the largest collection of Portuguese-language books outside of Portugal.

Loyal reader

One such loyal reader is Carlos Francisco Moura, an 86-year-old who writes about the history of Portugal. He arrived in Brazil from Portugal aged four with his parents, and from childhood became a regular visitor. Now retired from his profession as architect, Moura spends his time leafing through the tomes, copying information for his own books. "This is the alma mater of the Portuguese in Brazil—the reading room is that, and a lot more," Moura said, sitting at one of the dark wooden desks.

The library is a valuable resource, he explained, because since the 1930s it has become a repository of every book published in Portugal. Brazil's historic connection with its former colonial ruler runs deep. In 1808,



Brazilian Architect and researcher Carlos Francisco Moura, is seen at the Royal Portuguese Cabinet of Reading.



Portugal's king and his government made Rio de Janeiro the capital of the Portuguese Empire. Later, the king's son declared independence and made himself the emperor of Brazil. Portuguese remained the country's principal language, and with it a two-way literary culture between the two countries. Today, the Portuguese and Brazilian flags both fly on the library's exterior.

Custodian

Orlando Inacio, 67, manages the place. He too came from Portugal as a boy—and has never returned. "It's a real point of pride to know that this library created by Portuguese is one of the most beautiful in the world," he said. Giving a bit of its history, he traced the library's roots back to an association of Portuguese immigrants started in 1837. "The aim was to help the immigrants, who in general were little educated, to improve their knowledge, their education," he said.

The association continues to fund the library, its members paying a monthly amount that helps cover part of its overheads. The rest of the income comes from other buildings owned by the association that are rented out. Inacio acknowledged that the internet has brought changes, reducing the need for researchers and book-

worms to frequent the place except for consulting rare books that are otherwise unavailable. But his delight in his everyday office is evident. He is, after all, custodian of a temple of literature steeped in history, connecting Portugal and Brazil in a bond of language.—AFP



Serbia's cafe culture percolates underground

Four hundred meters below the small city of Bor, the depth of Serbia's love for coffee is on display as men in hard-hats huddle inside a cafe carved into the walls of their copper mine. Known as "The Pit", the cave-like room has rough earthen walls and long wooden tables where miners and visitors sip hot drinks and smoke cigarettes in the centre of RTB Bor, the biggest copper mine in Serbia.

The cafe was first opened in 2012 to give relatives and tourists a chance to connect with the miners and better understand their work. "We wanted to make it possible for everyone interested, who has never been down in the mine, to see and feel what it is like," said Gorica Toncevic Vasilic, a spokeswoman for the mine.

"Above and below this cafe, miners are working. The production is always the priority," she added.

Although residents of Bor have long relied on the mine for cranking their economy, most had never seen it firsthand.

Since it opened, more than 5,000 people have plunged its depths for a free cup of joe, including foreign visitors and a slew of local celebrities.

Constant danger

While the miners have welcomed the outreach, they say the cafe is a world apart from the humidity, dust and darkness they grapple with inside the mine shafts. "Down below is totally different," Nemanja Radoicic,

who has been working there for five years, told AFP from the cafe. "It is very dark there, and you are always dreading some kind of injury because there is constantly a danger of rocks collapsing due to explosions," he added.

A sign reading "Good Luck" hangs across the elevator that brings miners to their work sites. Those words are also the most common greeting between workers, who are always aware of the risks of their job. Apart from the daily dangers below ground, the copper mine and smelting complex has hit hard financial times in recent years. It was a pillar of Serbia's industrial sector before the collapse of communist Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

But production has since plummeted as the company has become saddled with debt. After years of trying to privatise the troubled mine, Serbia this year sealed a deal handing control over to the Chinese firm, Zijin. Miners are not sure if, or how this will change their daily grind. "We call working down there 'earning the bread of seven crusts', because of how difficult it is to make a buck," said Radoicic, using the Serbian equivalent of "hard-earned bread".—AFP



Miners take a coffee break at 'The Pit' (Jama in Serbian) cafe, some 420 meters below the surface in Bor, eastern Serbia. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



This photograph shows Vietnamese woman Bui Thi Nga putting 'cha ruoi' ragworms in a bowl to prepare patties at her stall in the old quarters of Hanoi. — AFP photos



Vietnamese women eat 'cha ruoi' ragworms fritters.



A Vietnamese vendor carries 'cha ruoi' ragworms fritters.

Critter fritter: Hanoi's winter worm cakes delight diners

Crispy, fried and packed full of worms: Hanoi's "cha ruoi" ragworm fritters are a winter foodie favorite in the Vietnamese capital, but the deep-fried delights are not for the squeamish. The piping hot patties are made with meat, egg, fresh dill, citrus rind and a hefty handful of fried worms and served up from street food stalls and home kitchens across northern Vietnam. The edible critters flood farmers' fields as temperatures in the north drop around October and November.

Purveyors of the snack, which cost around \$1 each, urge customers not to be put off by the sinuous insides. "It looks ugly but don't be afraid," said Bui Thi Nga, whose family has served up the specialty for 30 years. "The insides are delicious, and they're high in protein," she told AFP from her Old Quarter stall on a chilly December afternoon. The worms can also be stewed in a sticky caramel sauce, stirred with herbs or mixed with

'It looks ugly but don't be afraid,

chilies to make a spicy condiment.

But ragworm fritters—best prepared while the wriggling worms are still alive—have long been a favorite. The pancake-shaped patties have been made in northern Vietnam for generations, and are even credited with keeping married couples happy. "If a couple misses even a bite of 'cha ruoi' during the season, not only will the wife lament but the husband will surely complain," author Vu Bang wrote in his 1952 book "Hanoi Delicacies".

Though Vietnamese cuisine is best known outside its borders for "pho" noodle soup and "banh mi" pate baguettes, winter fritters are not the only dishes to feature creepy crawlers. Deep fried crickets, squirming coconut worm larvae, locusts and stink bugs are all on offer on Vietnamese menus. Chefs from Paris to Sao Paulo have embraced the trend, dishing up grasshoppers or scorpions as a cheap and sustainable source of protein.

Back in Hanoi the worm fritters will no doubt remain a cold-weather staple. "I like eating cha ruoi in the winter. You've got the sweet and sour flavor from the dipping sauce, and the herbs are cooling... it is very unique," Hoang Thi Thu Hang told AFP. —AFP

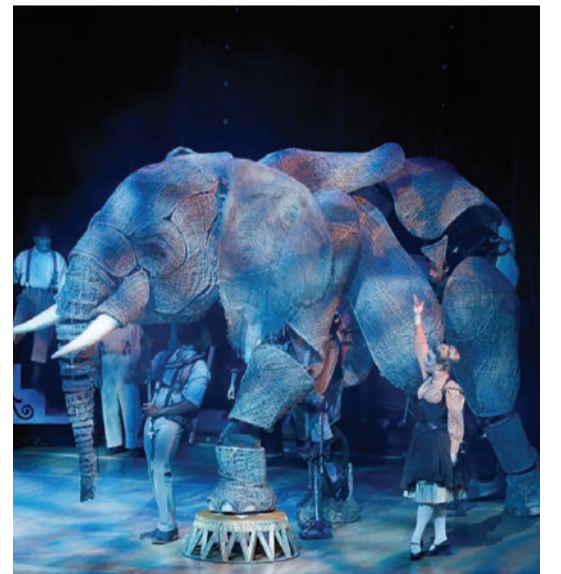
Inside the elephant at the heart of 'Circus 1903'

A roll-call of acrobats, contortionists, jugglers and trapeze artists will be captivating London audiences this Christmas season in a show that celebrates the golden age of circus acts. But some of the performers at the heart of "Circus 1903" will be largely hidden from view, inside the life-size - and eerily lifelike - puppet elephants that give the spectacle a decidedly 21st-century twist.

"I think we're taking ... an old-fashioned circus and (giving it) ... a modern take. And with that comes the magic of puppetry," puppeteer Luke Chadwick-Jones told Reuters. "Inside I have really impaired vision because of the way that the suit is designed, but I can see just about enough to maneuver and not bump into anything." For puppetry director Mervyn Millar, replicating on a far larger scale the animatronics he mastered as part of the original creative team on the National Theatre's ground-breaking drama "War Horse" was a major challenge.

"We're working with aluminum as a kind of base skeleton and then on top of that there are shells which are made out of types of thermoplastic mesh that we've had to make from scratch really..." he said. "So it was a long process." As attitudes towards animals in captivity have changed over the past 20 years, the use of wild animals in British circuses has declined dramatically, with just two shows featuring them by 2017, according to data from animal rights group Born Free.

That "Circus 1903", marking its European premiere with a three-week Festival Hall run that starts on Wednesday, still manages to give such a clear nod to a time when no big top was complete without its own menagerie lends the show an added poignancy. "It allows you that reflection back on how things were in 1903 but without the need for animals," said British Veterinary Association President Simon Doherty. "I think it's really clever." —Reuters



Actors rehearse during a media photocall for the play 'Circus 1903', which includes puppet Elephants, at the Royal Festival Hall in London. — Reuters

Kim shoots Trump dead in South Korea art satire

Kim Jong Un, a smoking pistol in his hand, looks down at the dead body of Donald Trump, sprawled on a red carpet next to a metal bag overflowing with US dollars. Behind the North Korean leader glows a neon slogan saying "The show must go on!" The scene is part of an installation art exhibition in Seoul—a satire of the diplomacy over the Korean peninsula that has become "a big political show featuring two of the world's biggest showmen."

The piece by South Korean artist Lim Young-sun marks the end of a whirlwind year on the flashpoint peninsula, during which Kim and Trump traded threats of war and personal attacks against each other before their dramatic, first summit in Singapore. The colorful war of words between the leaders of the impoverished but nuclear-armed North and the world's top superpower—as well as their highly-publicized summit in June-dominated global headlines this year.

"I just wanted to show our political reality we live in, in which citizens get nervous, anxious and happy watching their every single move as if they are watching a movie," Lim, 59, told AFP. The work portrays a film set, with Kim and Trump as friends and quarrelling over money. Eventually Kim, angered by the high interest rates demanded by Trump, shoots the lender to death. "Both leaders are masters of political shows and using the tension created by their hostile rhetoric for their own political gain at home...but what they are lacking seems sincerity," Lim said.

The week-long exhibition that ended on Wednesday drew thousands of visitors, some of who were left aghast at the sight of the leader of the South's top ally killed-albeit in art-by the leader of its wayward northern neighbor. "Some people angrily told to my face 'artists like you are jeopardizing our ties with the US and national security,' while some others, apparently not Trump fans, said this piece gave them catharsis," Lim said. —AFP



This photo shows a general view of the Hello Corgi Cafe in Shanghai. -AFP photos

'Hello Corgi': Short legged dogs shine at Shanghai cafe

Corgis waddle around a pink-walled cafe in Shanghai as customers chomp on sweets shaped like the rump of the short-legged dogs. Welcome to Hello Corgi Cafe, the latest coffee shop in China populated with pets that clients can caress while drinking coffee or tea.



This photo shows a customer holding a corgi.

"We want to provide a place to those who want to play with corgis but are not able to raise one at home," said Wang Yimi, who founded the cafe with his girlfriend and another couple.

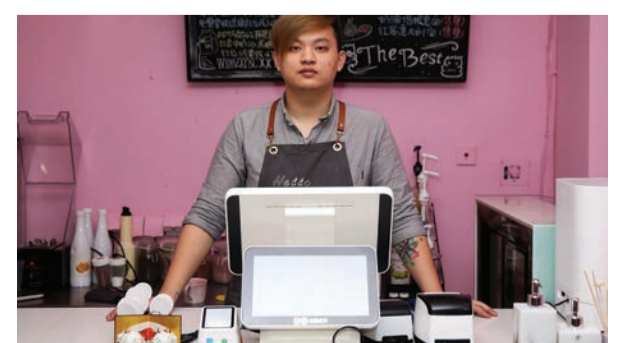
The group said their affection for corgis inspired them to open a cafe where other people can enjoy the animals' company. Hello Corgi, which opened in August, is famous for the chef's special: corgi bum-shaped dumplings made of glutinous rice and brown sugar syrup. Cakes and coffee are all topped by corgi butt patterns. Even the table cards are in the shape of canine bottoms.

Fourteen females shuffle around the cafe, some wearing shirts with QR codes printed on them, ahead of a planned systems upgrade when the pooches will become waitresses taking orders, Wang said. "Customers can use their phones to scan those codes on the back of our corgis and order on their mobile with the new system coming soon, which can help us save on labour," said Wang. "They are all female because females are more docile and do not fight a lot," Wang said.

Customers took photos and hugged corgis on a recent afternoon. "I like small animals so I enjoy visiting pet cafes like this one," said Liu Xinyi, a customer who visited the coffee shop with her boyfriend. "It can help me release stress. Touching them is comforting." Pet cafes have become an increasingly popular attraction in China, especially among young people who do not have enough money or space for a cat or a dog. —AFP



This photo shows Zhu Wenyan, left, and Liu Xinyi playing with a corgi.



This photo shows owner Wang Yimi posing for a picture.

Lifestyle | Features

Sexual assault case against Steven Seagal dropped

Hollywood action star Steven Seagal will not face prosecution after a woman accused him of sexually assaulting her when she was 17, prosecutors said Friday. The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office said time had run out to pursue the case brought by a Dutch model who alleges she was groped in a hotel room in 2002. Prosecutors did not name the alleged victim, but lawyer Lisa Bloom identified her as Dutch model Faviola Dadis.

Dadis, who didn't come forward until several years after the alleged assault, accuses Seagal of attacking her

during what she thought was an audition in the W Hotel in Beverly Hills. She is one of several women who have come forward with allegations of sexual assault or harassment against the 66-year-old "Under Siege" star. He has denied all claims of misconduct.

In paperwork released Friday, a prosecutor said the case was referred for further investigation which did not yield evidence "sufficient to meet the requirements of state law involving the statute of limitations." "Therefore, the case is declined due to the expiration of the statute of limitations," it said. The time limit for prosecution of sex-

ual offenses ranges from six years to three in California, depending on the seriousness of the allegations.

Bloom released a statement thanking the district attorney for a "careful review" but saying prosecutors' hands had been tied by "this unfair law which bars the courthouse door even to young women like my client, Faviola Dadis, who is highly credible." She said her client was a minor at the time of the incident but that California law still requires she have independent evidence that clearly corroborates her claims.

"The law fails to recognize that few minors are emo-

tionally ready to seek justice against their rapists until many years later," she added. "Instead, it offers rapists a 'get out of jail free' card if they simply pass an arbitrary time deadline. And the law seems to presume that victims are lying, creating an unfairly high evidentiary standard not required in other criminal cases. Few rapists commit their crimes in the presence of witnesses." Prosecutors had declined earlier this year to file a case against Seagal involving an alleged sexual assault in 1993, citing the statute of limitations.—AFP



Gatekeeper at Japan's 'Suicide Forest' hopes music can save lives

A general view of Aokigahara Forest.

From his hut on the edge of Japan's "Suicide Forest", Kyochi Watanabe blasts John Lennon's "Imagine" into the night-hoping that music can lift people from their despair before it's too late. The 60-year-old musician has been waging an eight-year battle to banish the vast forest's morbid reputation by reaching out to those who come to end their lives. But now he fears his work is being undone.

The forest, known as Aokigahara, made global headlines last year when YouTube star Logan Paul filmed an episode of his online series there, showing a suicide victim at the site. The footage sparked outrage and infuriated Watanabe, who was born nearby and has spent most of his life in and around the forest. "It's a forest of nature. It's a forest of religion. It's not that kind of place," he said.

"Do people want to make this forest a hell?" he said, calling it "so painful" to see the woods depicted in such a grim fashion. Watanabe now lives in a hut on the edge of

Aokigahara, which means "a field of blue trees". As night falls, he flips on speakers outside his secluded home and blasts rock and hip-hop into the darkness, breaking the thick silence of the ocean of trees.

He believes music is a way to reach people engulfed in inner turmoil, and describes seeing people turn around and leave the forest when they hear the blasting tunes. Sometimes he plays guitar and sings his favorite songs into a microphone to break the silence. He has even intervened directly, convincing one man who had travelled from the western city of Osaka to go home. "He returned home, and he still sends me messages on Facebook," he said.

Highest suicide rate in the G7

Aokigahara's long history dates back to the middle of the ninth century, when Mount Fuji erupted and lava covered wide areas that have since transformed into a 30 square-kilometer forest. Local people have long wor-



In this picture Japanese musician Kyochi Watanabe plays his guitar as he poses for a photo at the entrance of Aokigahara Forest, known as Suicide Forest, in Narusawa village, Yamanashi prefecture. — AFP photos

shipped the woods and its surroundings as a sacred place that reputedly enshrines a dragon. It is a foreboding place, thickly planted with tall trees that block out the sun, and carpeted with moss and gnarled roots.

That led in the 1970s to it being increasingly depicted in popular novels, movies and television dramas as the fictional setting for suicides. The association eventually became strong enough that suicidal people began travelling to the forest to die. Authorities no longer give official figures for suicides in the forest, but at one time dozens of people were dying there each year.

A sign at the entrance reads: "Life is a precious thing given by your parents. Think again calmly about your parents, siblings and children. Do not worry alone. First talk to us" and gives a hotline number to call. Japan has the highest suicide rate of any Group of Seven industrialized nation, with more than 20,000 people taking their own lives annually. And the suicide rate in Yamanashi prefecture, where the forest is located, was the worst in Japan for eight years until 2014.

Nearly half of those who killed themselves in the region were from elsewhere, suggesting they had expressly travelled to the area to commit suicide. In recent years, local residents say, the number of victims appeared to be on the decline, with some hoping the forest might finally shed its malign image. But that hope was shattered when Paul uploaded his controversial film showing the body of a man who had committed suicide. The video attracted six million views before it was deleted. He has since apologized for the film.

'It's my duty'

"The first wave of notoriety was created by mass media decades ago and now we are facing a second wave created by social media," Watanabe said. "Now that it's recognized globally, people are coming from all over the world... to see something unusual." Paul's footage was not the only factor—a steady stream of sometimes sensationalist news reports, and a 2015 film about two men coming to the forest to kill themselves—have cemented the place's morbid reputation in recent years.

But Watanabe said Paul's film appeared to have attracted visitors seeking the macabre. "Some foreign visitors have even asked me where they can see dead men." Despite its reputation, the forest does still attract regular sightseers. Lisa Bishop, a 33-year-old tourist from Canada, said she was there "to come and see from our perspective what exactly we feel when we walk in here." She rejected footage like Paul's: "It's absolutely wrong. It's people's privacy." Watanabe knows he faces an uphill struggle, but says he is committed to his campaign. "Because I was born here, I have to protect this place," he says. "I'm a gatekeeper. I feel it's like my duty."—AFP



A walking path in Aokigahara Forest.



Autotuned autocrat: Turkmen leader croons Christmas song

Turkmenistan's President, accused by rights groups of heading one of the world's most repressive regimes, encouraged citizens to "play the tune of love" in a self-penned Christmas song performed on state television. Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov sat behind a white piano for the Eurovision-style clip while his 14-year-old grandson accompanied him on synths in the video also released online. "With its beautiful melody and heartfelt words, the song penetrated deep into the soul of all listeners, leaving strong impressions," an announcer on the Turkmen Owazy channel said Saturday.

The song, "Dream" was performed in English, Turkmen and German, and contained the line, "let our hearts play the tune of love," as well as references to the "circle of life". Berdimukhamedov, wearing a brown suit, smiled to the camera as cartoon snowflakes fell on a screen behind him. The president's relatives are rarely shown on state television, despite Berdimukhamedov's son Serdar serving as a lawmaker and deputy foreign minister.

Favorite grandson Kerimguly, who is the son of the president's daughter, is a notable exception. State media has in the past shown him performing other songs with his grandfather and also competing in and winning prestigious horse races. Berdimukhamedov took over after the death of his eccentric predecessor Saparmurat Niyazov who renamed months after family members and erected a revolving golden statue of himself. Berdimukhamedov has echoed many of his predecessor's authoritarian tactics and is also honoured with a golden statue in capital Ashgabat.—AFP

Afghanistan mourns death of comic who mocked the powerful

Afghanistan has been mourning the death this week of one of its most treasured celebrities, comedian Hanif Hamgam, known for ridiculing the powerful in a region where poking fun at warlords is no laughing matter. Hamgam's daily show "Zang Khatar" (The Alarm Bell), which aired on Afghanistan's largest private TV channel Tolo from 2007-2013, was so popular that squadron leaders on the front line against the Taliban would demand televisions so as not to miss an episode.

"After the fall of the Taliban (in 2001) and freedom of media, his show was the first that critically looked at important issues," his old friend and Zang Khatar colleague Nehmat Haidari told AFP. "He had a big impact on society, even people in remote areas knew him," he says sadly. A 56-year-old graduate of Kabul Theatre and Art School, Hamgam died on Saturday from a long illness.

Politicians, artists, civil servants and fans risked security fears on Monday to attend a religious ceremony marking his death in Kabul and express their condolences to his family. A large portrait of his round face, thick beard and mischievous eyes hung on the mosque's facade. On the poster, an old Persian poem reads: "The man does not die in death... Once a name is popular, it never dies easily."

The commander of the Kabul garrison, Murad Ali Murad, arrived amid shouting sirens and an imposing

military escort to praise a man who "fought through comedy". "All the government officials were watching Zang Khatar and were trying to fix the flaws brought up by the show," he said. "We have lost one of our best comedians," said director Salim Shaheen, who became a hit at Cannes in 2017 for his starring role in the documentary "Nothingwood", and who directed Hamgam in his film career.

Hamgam's show awakened many people to their rights, Shaheen-known as the "Afghan Spielberg"—continued. "Zang Khatar would also target powerful and corrupt officials. (Hamgam) was on the front line... His life was threatened several times by such officials, but he strongly fought them all off. The legacy of such men lives on."



In this photograph Afghan comedian Hanif Hamgam performs a scene for the comedy television show Zang Khatar (The Dangerous Bell) on Afghanistan's largest private TV channel Tolo in Kabul. — AFP

A need to laugh

The fall of the Taliban and the influx of funds from the international community paved the way for a media surge in Afghanistan. In a country rife with corruption and battered by war, many turn not to officials or MPs for justice but to the media and satire such as Hamgam's. According to the Afghanistan Media Support Center, NAI, the country now has 100 television channels, 250 radio stations and nearly 200 newspapers, enjoying better freedom of expression than some of its neighbors.

"In many countries, there aren't many jokes directly targeting senior officials but here almost all our jokes are political," says Nabi Fakhri, another of Hamgam's long-time associates. Hamgam spared no one: not the Taliban, American military, politicians or businessmen—even his own boss. "We would get threatening calls after each show, but we were determined to target them with our comedy," Fakhri said. "That is how we tried to solve people's problems."

"We need entertainment in Afghan society, we need comedy," said Shir Khan, comedian on Arezo TV, a local television channel. The people of Afghanistan need to laugh more than anything else, agreed Seyar Mateen, one of the comedians starring in Tolo TV's new comedy show Shabake Khanda, and Hamgam's son-in-law. "He was making people laugh... and some cry for laughter."—AFP

Technology

Internet users in the Middle East, Turkey face up to 1.5 million attacks daily



Eugene Kaspersky poses for a picture with media personnel.

By Islam Al-Sharaa

MOSCOW: Kaspersky Lab solutions repelled almost 2 billion attacks launched from online resources and detected more than 21 million unique malicious objects from around the world in 2018. Our statistics show that, globally, 30 percent of user computers encountered an online malware attack at least once over the past year.

As for the META Region, Kaspersky Lab registered an 11 percent increase in malware infections, reaching an average of 1.5 million attacks per day, and 575 million in 1 year. Experts witnessed an increase of 78 percent in phishing attacks targeting the region, totaling to 20 million attacks in 2018. Ransomware attacks were also quite common the region, reaching 1.2 million attacks - a 128 percent increase from the previous year.

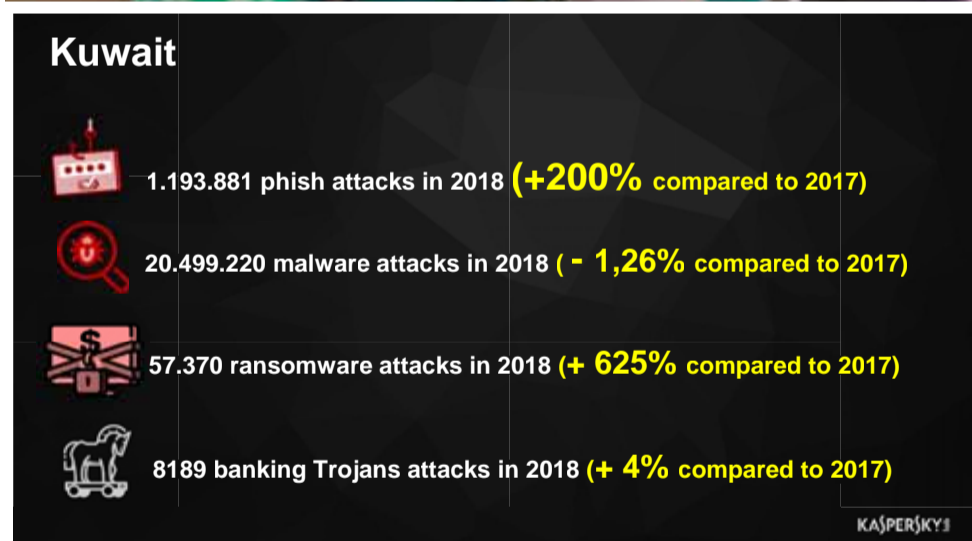
"Cities around the META region are becoming smarter are being pioneers in adopting the latest technologies for the betterment of their citizens. Companies are also digitally transforming to offer more services online. This transformation undoubtedly brings convenience to us, however, with more and more devices being connected to the internet we become more likely to face a cyber threats online. We urge consumers to pay more attention to cybersecurity because sometimes they can be the weakest link" said Fabio Assolini Senior Security Researcher at Kaspersky Lab.

Overall globally, Kaspersky Lab's detection technologies handled 346,000 new malicious files every day in the first ten months of the year. The number and range of new malicious files detected on a daily basis is a good indicator of the interests of cybercriminals involved in the creation and distribution of malware. In 2011, our technologies detected 70,000 new files a day, and by 2017, the number had risen five-fold to 360,000.

Financial insights, predictions for 2019

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

Cryptocurrencies have also become an established part of many people's lives, and a more attractive target for cybercriminals across the world, which resulted in a rapid increase in malicious mining of cryptocurrencies. Kaspersky Lab recorded a 4 fold



increase in cryptomining attacks in the META region from 3.5 million in 2017 to 13 million in 2018.

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

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

Financial cyber threats

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

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



Fabio Assolini talks during the Seminar.

In order to stay protected, Kaspersky Lab recommends the following:

- Pay close attention to, and don't open any suspicious files or attachments received from unknown sources.
- Do not download and install applications from untrusted sources.
- Do not click on any links received from unknown sources and suspicious online advertisements.
- Create strong passwords and don't forget to change them regularly.
- Always install updates. Some of them may contain critical security issues fixes.
- Ignore messages asking to disable security systems for Office software or antivirus software.
- Use a robust security solution appropriate to your system type and devices like Kaspersky Internet Security or Kaspersky Security Cloud.

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

The future of cryptocurrency

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

In 2017 a number of suppliers of goods and services announced that they would accept cryptocurrencies as a form of payment. However, in the face of huge commissions (an acute problem in December 2017), slow transfers, a large price for integration, and, most importantly, a small number of customers, its use as a method of payment declined steadily. In the end, the use of cryptocurrencies by a legitimate business simply does not make much sense.

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





EGYPT: A camel walks past the pyramid of Khafre (also known as Chephren) at the Giza pyramids necropolis on the outskirts of the Egyptian capital Cairo on Friday. — AFP

Turkey to take over fight against IS after US pullout

ISTANBUL/BEIRUT: Turkey will take over the fight against Islamic State militants in Syria as the United States withdraws its troops, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday, in the latest upheaval wrought by Washington's abrupt policy shift. The surprise announcement by US President Donald Trump this week that he would withdraw roughly 2,000 troops has felled a pillar of American policy in the Middle East. Critics say Trump's decision will make it harder to find a diplomatic solution to Syria's seven-year-old conflict.

For Turkey, the step removes a source of friction with the United States. Erdogan has long castigated his NATO ally over its support for Syrian Kurdish YPG fighters against Islamic State. Turkey considers the YPG a terrorist group and an offshoot of the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), fighting for Kurdish autonomy across the border on Turkish soil. In a speech in Istanbul, Erdogan said Turkey would mobilize to fight remaining Islamic State forces in Syria and temporarily delay plans to attack Kurdish fighters in the northeast of Syria - shifts both precipitated by the American decision to withdraw.

The news was less welcome for other US allies. Both France and Germany warned that the US change of course risked damaging the campaign against Islamic State, the jihadists who seized big swathes of Iraq and Syria in 2014-15 but have now been beaten back to a sliver of Syrian territory. Likewise, the US-backed militia spearheaded by the YPG said a Turkish attack would force it to divert fighters from the battle against Islamic State to protect its territory.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said American troops may continue to operate against Islamic State in Syria. The Pentagon is considering using Special Operation teams based in Iraq to target militants in Syria, the official said. The official emphasized that using special operators on the ground was one of many options being considered, was still in the planning stages and

that no final decision had been made. Islamic State launched an attack on Friday in Syria's southeast against the US-backed SDF militia, employing car bombs and dozens of militants.

"We will be working on our operational plans to eliminate ISIS (Islamic State) elements, which are said to remain intact in Syria, in line with our conversation with President Trump," Erdogan said. The Turkish president had announced plans last week to start an operation east of the Euphrates River in northern Syria to oust the YPG from the area that it largely controls. This week, he said the campaign could come at any moment. But on Friday, he cited the talk with Trump as a reason to wait.

"Our phone call with President Trump, along with contacts between our diplomats and security officials and statements by the United States, have led us to wait a little longer," he said. "We have postponed our military operation against the east of the Euphrates River until we see on the ground the result of America's decision to withdraw from Syria," Erdogan said, however, that this was not an "open-ended waiting period" and that, due to past "negative experiences", Ankara welcomed the United States' statements with an equal amount of pleasure and caution.

Turkey has repeatedly voiced frustration over what it says is the slow implementation of a deal with Washington to pull YPG fighters out of Manbij, a town in mainly Arab territory west of the Euphrates in northern Syria. The United States will probably end its air campaign against IS in Syria when it pulls out troops, US officials have said. Erdogan's foreign minister said the withdrawal plan would be discussed by the two countries in Washington in January.

Trump maintained that IS had been wiped out, a view not shared by key allies, that Washington had been doing the work of other countries and it was "time for others to finally fight". His defense secretary, Jim Mattis, opposed the decision and abruptly announced

on Thursday he was resigning after meeting with the president. In a candid letter to Trump, the retired Marine general emphasized the importance of "showing respect" to allies that have voiced surprise and concern about the president's decision.

Russia said on Friday it did not understand what the United States' next steps in Syria would be, adding that chaotic and unpredictable decision-making in Washington was creating discomfort in international affairs. Several of Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress, joined by opposition Democrats, urged the president to reverse course, saying the withdrawal would strengthen the hand of Russia and Iran in Syria and enable a resurgence of Islamic State.

Trump has given no sign of changing his mind. He promised to remove forces from Syria during his 2016 election campaign. The roughly 2,000 US troops in Syria, many of them special forces, were ostensibly helping to combat Islamic State but were also seen as a possible bulwark against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, who has retaken much of the country from his foes in the multi-sided civil war, with military help from Iran and Russia.

IS declared a caliphate in 2014 after seizing parts of Syria and Iraq. The ultra-hardline militants established their de facto capital in the Syrian city of Raqqa, using it as a base to plot attacks in Europe. A senior US official last week said Islamic State was down to the last 1 percent of the territory it once held. The group has no remaining territory in Iraq, though militants have resumed attacks since their defeat there last year. Islamic State launched an attack on Friday on positions held by the SDF in Syria's southeast and the US-led coalition mounted air strikes in the area, an SDF official said. Kurdish-led forces in northern Syria may not be able to continue to hold Islamic State prisoners if the situation in the region gets out of control after a US pull-out, top Syrian Kurdish official Ilham Ahmed said on Friday. — Reuters

Iran executes businessman dubbed 'Sultan of Bitumen'

TEHRAN: Iran executed a trader known as the "Sultan of Bitumen" yesterday over charges of fraud and large-scale smuggling of the oil product, the judiciary's news agency Mizan online reported. Hamidreza Bagheri Dermani, 49, is the third businessman to be executed since an anti-corruption drive was launched over the summer. He was convicted of "corruption on earth" - a broad Islamic charge used for the most high-profile and serious cases - after swindling over 10 trillion rials (around \$100 million at the current rate) through "fraud, forgery and bribery", Mizan reported.

Dermani, who was arrested in August 2014, reportedly forged dozens of documents of fake real estate to acquire bank loans. He then used front companies to procure more than 300,000 tonnes of bitumen - an oil-based substance used in asphalt and other products and one of Iran's most profitable businesses - Mizan said. Dermani was also accused of ties to business magnate Babak Morteza

Zanjani, who is awaiting execution after being convicted in 2016 of embezzling \$2.7 billion while helping the government circumvent international sanctions.

The judiciary said Dermani's loans were facilitated by former central bank governor Mahmoud Reza Khavari, who was convicted in absentia last year after fleeing to Canada in the wake of yet another major embezzlement scandal. News of Dermani's execution was presented in dramatic fashion on state television, with an action-movie soundtrack and full documentary about his crimes. The footage showed documents claiming Iranian journalist and women's rights activist Hengameh Shahidi, sentenced earlier this month to 12 years in prison on unspecified charges, had tried to pay Dermani's bail last year.

Iran has seen a sharp economic downturn this year, fuelled in part by US President Donald Trump's decision in May to withdraw from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal and reimpose crippling unilateral sanctions. The authorities have been keen to show they are cracking down on "economic disruptors" accused of exploiting shortages and fluctuations in gold and currency prices. Dozens have been tried and in November a trader dubbed the "Sultan of Coins" and his accomplice were executed for exploiting a surge in gold demand. — AFP

Partial US govt shutdown over...

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His own Republican party still controls both the House and Senate, but in January the House comes under Democratic control.

Governor Ralph Northam of Virginia - a state bordering the US Capitol that is home to many federal workers - urged Trump in a letter yesterday to push immediate action to end the shutdown, saying it "inflicts real harm" on workers. "I share your desire for strong economic growth throughout the United States, but the current partial government shutdown makes it harder to achieve this goal," the Democratic governor said.

About three-quarters of the government, including the military and the Department of Health and Human Services, is fully funded until the end of Sept 2019, leaving 25 percent unfunded as of yesterday. Most NASA employees will be sent home, as will Commerce Department workers and many at the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, Agriculture and State. "It's up to the Democrats whether or not we have a shutdown tonight," Trump said earlier Friday, blaming his political opponents for the crisis. "I hope we don't," the president added, but "we're totally prepared for a very

long shutdown."

Should they eventually strike a deal, it could swiftly clear Congress and reach the president's desk, said Senate Republican Bob Corker. One focus of discussion was the \$1.6 billion in border security funding that was a part of pending Senate legislation, number two Senate Republican John Cornyn told AFP. But conservatives in the House would likely balk at that figure. "There's no agreement," congressman Mark Meadows, chairman of the House Freedom Caucus of ultraconservatives, told reporters as he left a closed-door meeting on the Capitol's Senate side. "There's a whole lot of numbers being thrown around," but a maximum \$1.6 billion for border security "is not acceptable".

Trump reversed course Thursday and rejected a measure that had unanimously passed the Senate and was under House consideration. It would have extended government funding until Feb 8, but contained no money for a border wall, a pet project Trump has fought for since his presidential campaign. Democrats painted Trump as the Grinch who stole the year-end deal. With lawmakers like Meadows and prominent conservative commentators demanding that the president stick to his campaign promises, Trump would not budge on his wall. The House swiftly passed a bill that fulfilled the president's demands. It included \$5.7 billion in wall funding, and \$7.8 billion in disaster relief. But it stalled at the first hurdle in the Senate.

Trump was scheduled to fly to Florida Friday for his Christmas break, but he postponed the trip. — AFP

Pakistan plans to relax visa...

Continued from Page 1

Potentially restarting tourism has been one of the most talked about parts of new Prime Minister Imran Khan's push to create an Islamic welfare state in Pakistan, but visitors to the country often complain of an arduous visa process. Former Real Madrid soccer stars Kaka of Brazil and Portuguese playmaker Luis Figo were recently denied visas to the country for a promotional visit, Chaudhry said, highlighting the nation's laborious visa process. "We refused a visa to Kaka and Figo. Can you believe that? I called the section officer and he never heard of ... Kaka," Chaudhry said, laughing. "I spoke to the interior secretary

yesterday and gave him a piece of my mind."

Pakistan was last a prominent tourist destination in the 1970s when the "hippie trail" brought Western travellers through the apricot and walnut orchards of the Swat Valley and Kashmir on their way to India and Nepal. Since then, a deteriorating security situation and the imposition of a harsh interpretation of Islamic laws has chipped away at the number of visitors.

Following Pakistan's participation in the US-led war in Afghanistan after the Sept 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, the country was rocked by a decade of regular large-scale militant attacks. Security has since improved dramatically, with militant attacks down sharply in the mainly Muslim country of 208 million people. British Airways on Tuesday announced it would resume flights to Pakistan next year after a 10-year absence that followed a major hotel bombing, becoming the first Western airline to restart such flights. — Reuters

India empowers agencies to spy...

Continued from Page 1

Anand Sharma told reporters, flanked by politicians from many opposition parties. "We collectively oppose it because this gives unlimited powers to all these agencies

to monitor every information, to intercept and complete surveillance which is unacceptable in our democracy."

The Supreme Court last year recognized the right to privacy as a fundamental right, and in September it reined in a government push to make a biometric identity system known as Aadhar mandatory for such things as banking and telecom services. "The ministry has taken a regressive step by delegating powers to different agencies. This is dangerous because there is no independent oversight of the way interception is carried out," lawyer and privacy activist Raman Chima said. — Reuters

Sports

Ailing James still racks up triple-double in Lakers' win

Balanced attack leads Spurs past Timberwolves

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James, sick enough earlier in the day that his ability to take the court Friday night was in doubt, nonetheless finished with 22 points, 12 rebounds and 14 assists as the host Los Angeles Lakers turned back the New Orleans Pelicans 112-104 on Friday night. It was James' third triple-double as a member of the Lakers and his second in four games. It was also the 76th of his career. Kyle Kuzma added 23 points for the Lakers, who ended a two-game losing streak. Anthony Davis produced 30 points and 20 rebounds for the Pelicans, who lost their third consecutive game and are 0-2 to start their four-game road trip. Los Angeles' Rajon Rondo scored eight points and dished out nine assists in his first game since Nov. 14. He missed 17 contests because of a broken bone in his hand that required surgery.

BUCKS 120, CELTICS 107

While Giannis Antetokounmpo got off to a slow start, his Milwaukee teammates used their size and 3-point shooting to build a 26-point first-half advantage, and the visiting Bucks went on to win at Boston. Antetokounmpo attempted only four shots from the field in scoring 11 points before the break. He finished with 30 points on 8-for-13 shooting to go along with eight rebounds, five assists and three blocked shots. Khris Middleton added 21 points and Eric Bledsoe had 16 for the Bucks. Jaylen Brown led the Celtics with 21 points off the bench. Jayson Tatum finished with 20 points despite missing 10 of 15 shots from the field.

RAPTORS 126, CAVALIERS 110

Kawhi Leonard matched his season best with 37 points on 12-for-16 shooting, and Toronto defeated visiting Cleveland. OG Anunoby equaled his career bests with 21 points and eight rebounds for the Raptors. Pascal Siakam added 15 points and 10 rebounds, Fred VanVleet added 14 points and eight assists, and Norman Powell scored 11 points. Jordan Clarkson had 20 points for Cleveland. Collin Sexton added 17 points. Larry Nance Jr. had 16 points and 12 rebounds, and Cedi Osman chipped in with 12 points for the Cavaliers.

PACERS 114, NETS 106

Victor Oladipo recorded 26 points, nine rebounds and six assists to help Indiana beat Brooklyn in New York. Thaddeus Young scored 21 points while Domantas Sabonis and Bojan Bogdanovic added 17 apiece for the Pacers, who ended a two-game slide. Myles Turner contributed 15 points and 12 rebounds. Rodions Kurucs scored 24 points and DeMarre Carroll added 16 for Brooklyn, which had a season-best seven-game winning streak snapped. Spencer Dinwiddie scored 15 points, and Rondae Hollis-Jefferson and Joe Harris had 13 apiece.

SPURS 124, TIMBERWOLVES 98

Bryn Forbes poured in 22 points, 15 of them in the first half, and six of his teammates scored in double figures as San Antonio cruised past visiting Minnesota. San Antonio rolled to its third win in a row. Minnesota took its second straight loss and its sixth in seven games. Marco Belinelli added 17 points

for the Spurs, with Davis Bertans tallying 15, Rudy Gay hitting for 14, and DeMar DeRozan and Jakob Poeltl scoring 12 each. The Spurs outshot Minnesota 52.9 percent to 39.8 percent and outrebounded the Timberwolves 50-39.

JAZZ 120, TRAIL BLAZERS 90

Ricky Rubio scored 24 points and dished out eight assists as visiting Utah blew away Portland. Kyle Korver and Jae Crowder came off the bench for 18 and 16 points, respectively, and Rudy Gobert contributed 11 points and 11 rebounds for the Jazz, who had lost four in a row on the road. Damian Lillard scored 19 points to lead the Trail Blazers, who saw their three-game winning streak come to an end. It was Portland's second-biggest margin of defeat this season, next to a 143-100 drubbing at Milwaukee on Nov. 21.

KINGS 102, GRIZZLIES 99

De'Aaron Fox capped a huge comeback by sinking the tying and go-ahead free throws with 1:17 remaining, and host Sacramento took advantage of a late scoring drought by Memphis to score a victory. Willie Cauley-Stein and Buddy Hield each added two free throws to ice the victory for the Kings, who snapped a two-game losing streak. Hield led all scorers with 28 points in the first half and began the fourth quarter down 74-65. Mike Conley made seven 3-pointers while scoring 23 points for the Grizzlies, who lost their fifth straight.

BULLS 90, MAGIC 80

Lauri Markkanen scored a season-high 32 points, one shy of his career best, and made the jump shot that put Orlando away for good in Chicago's home win. Robin Lopez scored 14 points and Kris Dunn added 12 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Bulls, who won for just the third time in the past 15 games. Evan Fournier sank five 3-pointers and scored 24 points, and Nikola Vucevic had 19 points and 19 rebounds for the Magic. Aaron Gordon added 14 points and 12 rebounds, but Orlando shot just 32.6 percent from the floor.

HORNETS 98, PISTONS 86

Marvin Williams scored 24 points, with a career-high seven 3-pointers, and host Charlotte continued its mastery over Detroit. Williams hit four of his triples in the third quarter, when the Hornets pulled out to a 14-point lead and took control of the game for good. It was Charlotte's third win over the Pistons in three games this season, and it was the second in the past 10 days. Blake Griffin led the Pistons with 23 points. Andre Drummond finished with 17 points and 16 rebounds.

HAWKS 114, KNICKS 107

Kent Bazemore scored 22 points and sparked his team's strong second-half defense to lead visiting Atlanta over New York. Bazemore also pulled down six rebounds to help Atlanta win its second straight game and break a five-game road losing streak. Bazemore hit a pair of free throws with 48.7 sec-



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James No 23 of the Los Angeles Lakers comes up with a rebound in front of Jrue Holiday No 11, E'Twaun Moore No 55 and Julius Randle No 30 of the New Orleans Pelicans during a 112-104 Laker win at Staples Center on Friday in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

NBA results/standings

Boston 107, Milwaukee 120; LA Lakers 112, New Orleans 104; San Antonio 124, Minnesota 98; Brooklyn 106, Indiana 114; New York 107, Atlanta 114; Portland 90, Utah 120; Sacramento 102, Memphis 99; Chicago 90, Orlando 80; Charlotte 98, Detroit 86; Toronto 126, Cleveland 110.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
	W	L	PCT		W	L	PCT	
Toronto	25	9	0.735	—	Denver	21	9	0.700
Milwaukee	22	9	0.710	1.5	Oklahoma City	20	10	0.667
Indiana	21	12	0.636	3.5	Golden State	21	11	0.656
Philadelphia	21	12	0.636	3.5	LA Lakers	19	13	0.594
Boston	18	13	0.581	5.5	LA Clippers	18	13	0.581
Charlotte	16	15	0.516	7.5	Portland	18	14	0.563
Detroit	15	15	0.500	8	San Antonio	18	15	0.545
Miami	14	16	0.467	9	Sacramento	17	15	0.531
Orlando	14	17	0.452	9.5	Houston	16	15	0.516
Brooklyn	15	19	0.441	10	Memphis	16	16	0.500
Washington	12	20	0.375	12	Dallas	15	15	0.500
New York	9	25	0.265	16	Utah	16	17	0.485
Atlanta	8	23	0.258	15.5	New Orleans	15	18	0.455
Chicago	8	25	0.242	16.5	Minnesota	14	18	0.438
Cleveland	8	25	0.242	16.5	Phoenix	8	24	0.250

onds remaining to give Atlanta a seven-point lead and ice the game. New York was led by Emmanuel Mudiay with 32 points, the third time he's reached

the 30-point mark this season—all in the last five games. Kevin Knox added 24 points and six rebounds. —Reuters

WADA denied Moscow lab data access, leaving Russia facing ban

TORONTO: Russia's Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) is again on the verge of suspension after a World Anti-Doping Agency inspection team visiting a Moscow laboratory was denied access to raw data to complete its full reinstatement, WADA said on Friday.

The five-member WADA team had spent a week in Russia but left the Moscow lab and returned home frustrated and without having retrieved any of the data in the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) it had been promised access to.

If RUSADA is found to be non-compliant Russian athletes could again be on the outside looking in with another Olympics approaching in Tokyo in 2020.

Russian authorities said that the inspection team's equipment was not certified under Russian law. Access to the lab and data was a condition of WADA's September decision to reinstate RUSADA.

The inspection team will now prepare a formal report which will be sent to the independent Compliance Review Committee (CRC). The CRC will meet on Jan 14-15 when RUSADA's code compliance status will again be considered.

The CRC's recommendation will then be considered by the WADA executive committee.

WADA had set a Dec. 31 deadline for RUSADA to meet the condition or once again be found non-compliant and face even tougher sanctions laid out in the International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories.

RUSADA was suspended in 2015 after a WADA-commissioned report outlined evidence of massive state-backed, systematic doping in Russian athletics, allegations Moscow has denied.

Russian authorities, at first, downplayed the latest crisis with Russian Sports Minister Pavel Kolobkov describing the problems in a TASS report as "technical issues".

Kolobkov added: "The experts are satisfied with the visit," and said there were plans for a follow-up visit to the lab. —Reuters

Shiffrin first woman to reach 50 World Cup wins with Courchevel victory

COURCHEVEL: American Mikaela Shiffrin became the youngest woman to win 50 World Cup ski races with victory in the slalom in the French Alps yesterday. The 2014 Olympic champion, who led after the first run, finished 0.29sec ahead of Slovakia's Petra Vlhova and 0.37sec ahead of Sweden Frida Hansdotter in third place to win in Courchevel.

Hansdotter predicts further success for Shiffrin. "She can beat all the records possible. To have won everything she has won at 23 is so impressive," she said. The Olympic champion becomes the first woman to secure a half century of race victories before her 24th birthday, which

she will celebrate in March next year.

Shiffrin won Friday's giant slalom by overcoming a 0.08sec deficit and blizzard-like conditions. Victory on Saturday was her fourth consecutive win in the French resort. Sweden's Ingemar Stenmark leads the record for both men and women with 86 career successes.

Shiffrin's fellow US racer Lindsey Vonn has the most female wins with 82 victories across all five alpine disciplines. Vonn is expected to return to the circuit early in 2019 after recovering from injury.

The Colorado native joins retired Austrian Marlies Schild with a record 35 slalom World Cup titles. Shiffrin leads the overall standings on 889 points after 13 out of the 38 events, twice as many as both Slovakian Vlhova in second place and Norway's Ragnhild Mowinckel in third combined. She can continue her already illustrious career by adding a fourth World Championship to her name in Are, Sweden in February. —AFP



COURCHEVEL: Mikaela Shiffrin of the US celebrates on the podium after winning the FIS Alpine World Cup Women Slalom yesterday in Courchevel, French Alps. —AFP

Kuwait Stars continue its winning streak



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: "Kuwait Stars" Ice Hockey team continued its winning ways with its third defeat of the Saudi "Jedda" team by

the score of 8-1, as the team had a total control of the entire match, and this marks the Saudi team's second defeat.

Meanwhile "Abu Dhabi" storms won its match against Bahrain with the score of 5-



0. Head of Finance Committee at Kuwait Winter Games Club Ahmad Al-Omran said the tournament gave a good opportunity for Gulf players to gain experience, especially that there are professional

players of good standard.

He said the tournament was distinguished by having participating clubs playing good levels, despite the various experience level which goes to UAE and Kuwait.

Sports

Paul, Lewis hand Windies T20 series win against Bangladesh

Keemo grabs record 5-15 and Evin smashed 89 off 36 balls

DHAKA: Keemo Paul grabbed a record 5-15 and Evin Lewis smashed 89 off 36 balls as the West Indies beat Bangladesh by 50 runs in the third and final Twenty20 in Dhaka yesterday to win the series 2-1.

Lewis guided West Indies to 190 in 19.2 overs despite a late fightback by Bangladesh led by Mahmudullah Riyad, Mustafizur Rahman and Shakib Al Hasan, who claimed three wickets each.

Paul then posted the best-ever T20 figures for a West Indies bowler to help the visitors bowl out Bangladesh for 140 runs. Opener Liton Das, Bangladesh's highest scorer with 43 off 25, gave the hosts a strong start but they lost their way after an umpiring gaffe appeared to have broken their concentration.

In the fourth over of the innings, Bangladeshi umpire Tanvir Ahmed called a no-ball when Liton spooned a catch to Shimron Hetmyer at mid-off. But TV replays showed Oshane Thomas had bowled a legitimate delivery, leaving Carlos Brathwaite furious. The West Indies skipper immediately asked for a review, which halted the game for nearly 10 minutes. Match officials eventually upheld the decision of umpire Ahmed after long discussion, but Bangladesh collapsed and were soon all out in 17 overs.

"I am very happy. We wanted to be aggressive and we wanted to be positive. In all three matches, we

have batted really well," Brathwaite said. Bangladesh skipper Shakib lamented their poor batting.

"The way we came back with the ball was terrific. I think it was... (a) 180-run wicket. With the bat we were not sure how to go about our business," he said. Earlier, Lewis set the West Indies up for victory with a blistering innings, which included six fours and eight sixes-four of the sixes in one over-until he was dismissed by Mahmudullah.

Sent in to bat by Bangladesh, openers Lewis and Shai Hope put on 76 runs in just five overs for the visitors before left-arm spinner Shakib and pace bowler Mustafizur struck. Shakib bowled Hope for 23 while Mustafizur removed Paul for two, but Lewis continued his onslaught, racing to 50 off just 18 balls.

Mahmudullah, who finished with 3-18, trapped Shimron Hetmyer leg-before for a duck right after he bowled Lewis, slowing the West Indies scoring spree. Nicholas Pooran added 29 off 24 balls down the order but Bangladesh did well in the final overs to contain the tourists.

The West Indies were 176-5 after 16 overs but lost their last five wickets for just 14 runs, folding in 19.2 overs. Mustafizur Rahman claimed 3-33 and Shakib finished with 3-37 in the Bangladesh fightback. Bangladesh won the preceding Test series and one-day international series 2-0 and 2-1 respectively. —AFP



DHAKA: West Indies cricketers pose with the tournament trophy following the third Twenty20 (T20) cricket match between Bangladesh and West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. —AFP

Hall enjoys 4-point night for Devils

NEW JERSEY: Reigning NHL MVP Taylor Hall scored two goals and added two assists as the New Jersey Devils routed the Ottawa Senators 5-2 on Friday night in Newark, N.J. The Devils' Kyle Palmieri also scored once, giving him a team-best 18 goals, and had two assists. Pavel Zacha and Nico Hischier scored New Jersey's other goals. New Jersey goalie Keith Kinkaid earned the win, stopping 25 of 27 shots. New Jersey snapped a three-game losing streak. The Devils, who started the season 4-0-0, have not won consecutive games since Nov. 15 and are still in last place in the 16-team Eastern Conference. Ottawa, which got two goals from Matt Duchene, continues to struggle on the road, falling to 4-12-1 away from home.

CAPITALS 2, SABRES 1

Tom Wilson's tiebreaking goal in the third period sent Washington to its seventh straight home win over Buffalo. With the game knotted at 1, Wilson scored after Evgeny Kuznetsov stole the puck from Buffalo goalie Carter Hutton behind the net and fed Wilson for his 10th goal at the 13-minute mark. Chandler Stephenson also scored for the Capitals, and Braden Holtby made 36 saves. Johan Larsson scored for the Sabres, who have lost two straight, and Hutton stopped 22 shots.

BLACKHAWKS 2, AVALANCHE 1

Artem Anisimov scored a tiebreaking goal at the 1:19 mark of the third period to lift Chicago past Colorado in Denver for its season-best third consecutive win. Moments after the Blackhawks had finished killing an



NEWARK: Taylor Hall #9 of the New Jersey Devils his second goal of the second period at 5:19 against the Craig Anderson #41 of the Ottawa Senators at the Prudential Center on Friday in Newark, New Jersey. —AFP

interference penalty against Duncan Keith. Patrick Kane fired a shot that was partially blocked. The puck was redirected and spinning around near the goal line when Anisimov swooped in and poked it past Avalanche goaltender Philipp Grubauer. Colorado went

on the power play at the 13:55 mark of the third period, but was unable to convert against Blackhawks goaltender Collin Delia, who stopped 35 of the 36 shots he faced. Alex DeBrincat collected Chicago's first goal, and J.T. Compher replied for the Avalanche. —Reuters

Dortmund beat 'Gladbach to become 'autumn champions'

DORTMUND: Borussia Dortmund will begin the new year in pole position to win their first Bundesliga title since 2012 after beating second-placed Borussia Moenchengladbach 2-1 on Friday.

An outstanding goal from English teenager Jadon Sancho and a sliding finish from Marco Reus ensured Dortmund end the first half of the German season top of the table as "autumn champions" going into the winter break. Dortmund captain Reus admitted they showed some signs of tiredness following three league games in the last six days, including Tuesday's shock 2-1 defeat at strugglers Fortuna Dusseldorf. "We could see in the last 20 minutes that we were on our knees," admitted match-winner Reus.

"A few weeks break will do us good so that we can attack again in the new year - the job is half done." The win puts Dortmund

nine points clear of Gladbach, who are level on points with reigning champions Bayern Munich who have a chance to cut the gap to six points when they face Eintracht Frankfurt later.

Sancho, the 18-year-old whose progress has been a major factor in Dortmund's fine season, squeezed a shot in from the tightest of angles on 42 minutes after the lively Reus had crossed and Mario Goetze helped the ball on to the youngster. Gladbach pulled level just before the break with a controversial goal from Christoph Kramer, which came after a goalmouth scramble that appeared to involve a handball but which the referee ruled valid after checking the VAR.

After the break, Reus charged in to put Dortmund back in front with Goetze the provider. Reus then slammed a free-kick against a post as Dortmund returned to winning ways after losing for the first time this season at Dusseldorf.

Dortmund head coach Lucien Favre played an experimental back four with Germany's defensive midfielder Julian Weigl partnering Omer Toprak at centre-back. "We deserved the win and now a few days of holiday," said Favre.

"Julian Weigl played really well, created a lot of movement and solved a few problems for us at the back - it worked well." —AFP



DORTMUND: Moenchengladbach's Swedish defender Oscar Wendt and Dortmund's Polish defender Lukasz Piszczek vie for the ball during the German First division Bundesliga football match between Borussia Dortmund and Borussia Moenchengladbach in Dortmund, western Germany, on Friday. —AFP

Dodgers deal Puig, Matt Kemp to Reds

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Dodgers traded outfielders Matt Kemp and Yasiel Puig to the Cincinnati Reds, the teams announced Friday. Left-hander Alex Wood and backup catcher Kyle Farmer also were sent to Cincinnati, which dealt right-hander Homer Bailey to the Dodgers. Los Angeles sent \$7 million to the Reds.

The Reds also sent two prospects to the Dodgers, shortstop Jeter Downs and right-hander Josiah Gray. Downs was a first-round pick in 2017, while Gray was a second-round choice this summer. Dealing two outfielders

increases the speculation that free agent Bryce Harper could end up choosing Los Angeles. The former Washington Nationals star is looking for upward of \$300 million, and the Dodgers are among the teams pursuing him. New York Yankees left-hander CC Sabathia recently underwent an angioplasty to clear a blocked artery, his agent announced. Kyle Thousand of Roc Nation Sports issued a statement that read, "CC was experiencing some chest pain which turned out to be a blockage in one artery to his heart. A procedure was done to insert a stent to clear the blockage on Dec. 11. CC is doing great and will be reporting to spring training on time to get ready to play for his upcoming final season in 2019."

Yankees general manager Brian Cashman confirmed that Sabathia, 38, should be ready for the beginning of spring training. Free agent infielder Manny Machado has

told teams interested in his services that he won't be making a decision until after the New Year, according to Jon Heyman of MLB Network. The three teams known to have hosted Machado for a visit are the New York Yankees, Chicago White Sox and Philadelphia Phillies.

Machado, 26, is believed to be seeking a contract in the 10-year, \$300 million-plus range. The Athletic's Jim Bowden reported Friday that Machado has told friends in his hometown of Miami that he'd prefer to play in New York and would choose the Yankees if the offers are close.

Machado split his time between the Baltimore Orioles and Los Angeles Dodgers in 2018. On the season, he hit 297 and had 37 home runs and 104 RBIs in 162 games. The Oakland Athletics filled their impending hole at second base by trading for infielder Jurickson Profar in a three-team, seven-player deal. —Reuters

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the third Twenty20 international between Bangladesh and the West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday:

West Indies	
E. Lewis b Mahmudullah	89
S. Hope b Shakib	23
K. Paul c Ariful b Mustafizur	2
R. Powell c Liton b Mahmudullah	19
S. Hetmyer lbw b Mahmudullah	0
N. Pooran c Hider b Mustafizur	29
C. Brathwaite c Mehidy b Mustafizur	8
S. Rutherford c Mushfiqur b Shakib	2
F. Allen st Mushfiqur b Rahim	8
S. Cottrell not out	2
O. Thomas run out	0
Extra (b1, w7)	8
Total (all out, 19.2 overs)	190
Fall of wickets: 1-76 (Hope), 2-90 (Paul), 3-122 (Lewis), 4-122 (Hetmyer), 5-159 (Powell), 6-176 (Pooran), 7-178 (Brathwaite), 8-188 (Allen), 9-189 (Rutherford), 10-190 (Thomas)	
Bowling: Hider 2-0-39-0 (w2), Saifuddin 4-0-36-0 (w2), Mehidy 2-0-26-0, Shakib 4-0-37-3, Mustafizur 4-0-33-3 (w1), Mahmudullah 3.2-0-18-3 (w2).	

Bangladesh	
Tamim Iqbal run out	8
Liton Das c Brathwaite b Paul	43
Soumya Sarkar c Cottrell b Allen	9
Shakib Al Hasan c Cottrell b Allen	0
Mushfiqur Rahim c Allen b Paul	1
Mahmudullah c Brathwaite b Paul	11
Mehidy Hasan c Allen b Cottrell	19
Ariful Haque c Rutherford b Paul	0
Saifuddin c Hope b Paul	5
Abu Hider not out	22
Mustafizur Rahman b Brathwaite	8
Extras (b1, lb2, w6, nb5)	14
Total (all out, 17 overs)	140
Fall of wickets: 1-22 (Tamim), 2-65 (Soumya), 3-65 (Shakib), 4-66 (Mushfiqur), 5-80 (Mahmudullah), 6-89 (Liton Das), 7-89 (Ariful), 8-96 (Saifuddin), 9-129 (Mehidy), 10-140 (Mustafizur)	
Bowling: Cottrell 4-0-32-1 (nb1, w3), Thomas 3-0-56-0 (nb4, w2), Allen 4-0-19-2 (w1), Paul 4-0-15-5, Brathwaite 2-0-15-1.	
Result: West Indies won by 50 runs	
Series Result: West Indies won 2-1	

Bancroft reveals he almost gave up cricket for yoga

SYDNEY: Disgraced Australian player Cameron Bancroft yesterday said he was a vastly different person to the one caught ball-tampering and revealed he considered walking away from cricket to become a yoga teacher.

The opener received a nine-month ban from the international and domestic game for his part in the scandal in South Africa that rocked the sport, in which he used sandpaper to try to alter the ball. Then-captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner were suspended for a year. A day after Smith re-emerged into public life with a press conference in Sydney, Bancroft has also broken his silence a week ahead of his ban running out.

He did so in the form of a long letter addressed to his former self, published in the West Australian newspaper, describing his emotional journey since.

In it, Bancroft describes the major influence Australian coach Justin Langer has had on him, along with West Australian mentor Adam Voges.

He said a crucial moment was Voges asking him to justify why he should be on a pre-season trip to Brisbane by the Western Warriors Sheffield Shield team.

"On your way to present your case to your coach you realise this is the moment when you begin to become OK with the thought of never having cricket as part of your life again," he wrote in the self-addressed letter.

"Until you are able to acknowledge that you are Cameron Bancroft, the person who plays cricket as a profession, and not Cameron Bancroft the cricketer, you will not be able to move forward.

"This will become a defining moment for you." Yoga became an important part of his life in exile while dealing with an absence of cricket, to the extent that he considered quitting the game to become a teacher of the discipline.

"Maybe cricket isn't for you, you'll ask yourself ... will you return? Yoga will be such a fulfilling experience," he wrote. Bancroft ultimately decided to pursue his cricket career and is due to make his comeback in the Big Bash Twenty20 League for the Perth Scorchers on December 30.

"While you do not look that different, on the inside you are a vastly different man to the bloke who made that mistake in South Africa," he added in the letter. —AFP

Sports

Man City stunned by Crystal Palace, Arsenal pounce on Chelsea defeat

City slump to second defeat in three Premier League games

LONDON: Manchester City slumped to a second defeat in three Premier League games to hand Liverpool an early Christmas present in the title race as Crystal Palace shocked the Etihad with a 3-2 win yesterday.

Chelsea were also stunned at home by Jamie Vardy's winner for Leicester in a 1-0 victory at Stamford Bridge to allow Arsenal to move level on points with their London rivals in fourth after a 3-1 win over Burnley.

Victory for Watford at West Ham pushed Manchester United down to seventh ahead of their first outing since Jose Mourinho was sacked as manager in midweek with Ole Gunnar Solskjaer recalling Paul Pogba for his first game in charge against Cardiff.

Liverpool opened up a four-point lead at the top with a highly impressive 2-0 win at Wolves on Friday to extend their unbeaten start to the campaign.

And City failed to cut the gap as they dropped points at home for the first time this season despite going ahead through Ilkay Gundogan's header.

Jeffrey Schlupp levelled for Palace against the run of play just after the half-hour mark and two minutes later Andros Townsend thumped a stunning volley into the top corner from well outside the area.

Pep Guardiola summoned Sergio Aguero from the bench soon after the break, but City had a mountain to climb when Kyle Walker chopped down Max Meyer and Luka Milivojevic dispatched the resulting penalty.

Kevin De Bruyne was also thrown on to try and turn the game around and his

intended cross that flew in off the post brought City back into the game five minutes from time.

But despite incessant pressure, the champions could not find an equaliser to hand Liverpool a huge boost ahead of their trip to City on January 3.

AUBAMEYANG AT THE DOUBLE

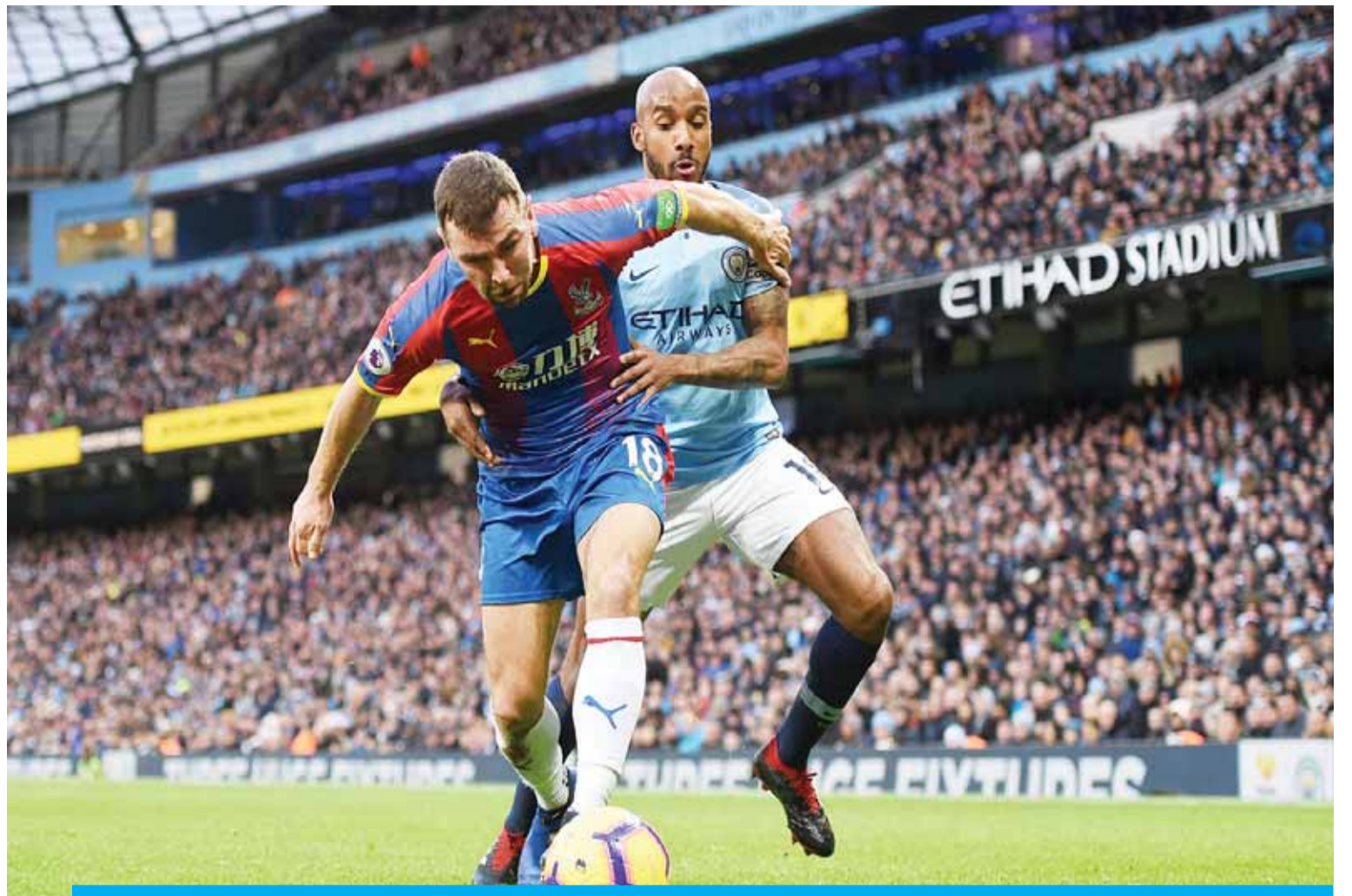
Chelsea were also beaten at Stamford Bridge for the first time under Maurizio Sarri as Vardy fired home James Maddison's pass to give the Foxes their first victory in five games.

Defeat for the Blues allowed Arsenal to close on a top-four finish as two goals from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang beat Burnley 3-1 in a bad-tempered clash.

Mesut Ozil made his return to Unai Emery's starting line-up in the Premier League for the first time since November 11 and helped set up Aubameyang's opener.

"We want Mesut like today," said Emery. Aubameyang smashed home his 12th Premier League goal of the season to move ahead of Mohamed Salah as the division's top scorer early in the second period.

Ashley Barnes pulled a goal back for the visitors, but they remain in the bottom three as Alex Iwobi secured all three points for Arsenal in stoppage time. The Claretts are now two points adrift of safety as Southampton's upturn in fortunes under Ralph Hasenhuetl continued with a 3-1 win at Huddersfield thanks to goals from Nathan Redmond, Danny Ings and Michael Obafemi. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Crystal Palace's Scottish midfielder James McArthur (L) battles with Manchester City's English midfielder Fabian Delph (R) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Crystal Palace at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. — AFP

Chiesa's rocket adds to Milan's troubles

MILAN: A magnificent strike by Federico Chiesa gave Fiorentina a 1-0 win at AC Milan in Serie A yesterday on another unhappy afternoon for Gennaro Gattuso's injury-ravaged side.

Milan, who completed three Serie A games without scoring, gave a disjointed performance but still created enough chances against a Fiorentina side who were largely toothless until Chiesa's inspired effort in the 73rd minute.

The 21-year-old collected the ball in midfield, cut inside his marker and unleashed a vicious, dipping drive which flew past Gianluigi Donnarumma and bounced into the net. He was booked for pulling off his shirt and throwing it on to the pitch as he celebrated.

In contrast to Chiesa's joy, it was another hugely frustrating match for Milan striker Gonzalo Higuain who has not scored for nearly two months. The Argentine, who has struggled since his move on loan from Juventus and is deprived of the service he enjoyed with the Turin side, was a lonely figure in attack, often dropping back well inside his own half to look for the ball.

"It's a complicated moment," said Milan coach Gattuso. "We cannot blame the team, we were in an emergency situation and today a bit of bad luck was decisive. There's no point in looking for someone to blame.

"Everyone who played did well and Fiorentina did not have a shot on target before they scored," he added. "Higuain is not having a brilliant spell but he is still an important player. A forward is never happy when he doesn't score."



VERONA: Chievo's Italian defender Mattia Bani (L) and Inter Milan's Croatian midfielder Ivan Perisic go for the ball during the Italian Serie A Football match Chievo Verona vs Inter Milan at the Marcantonio-Bentegodi stadium in Verona. — AFP

Milan, with 27 points from 17 games, dropped to fifth, outside the Champions League spots, while Fiorentina moved up to seventh with 25. Ricardo Rodriguez nearly gave Milan a first-half lead with a powerful drive which Alban Lafont saved at the foot of his post, and Hakan Calhanoglu had a shot cleared off

the line by Nikola Malinkovic.

Higuain was also foiled by Lafont as his header was turned away in the 58th minute. After Chiesa's strike, Lafont frustrated Milan again with a fingertip saved from a Rodriguez header. "We need to stay lucid so we get out of this situation," said Gattuso. — Reuters

Newcastle United draw with Fulham

NEWCASTLE: Fulham secured their first clean sheet of the season with some dogged defending in a 0-0 draw with Newcastle United in the Premier League yesterday. The hosts, looking for a second successive win, were unable to find a way past a Fulham side who remain bottom of the standings but have stopped shipping goals at the rate they did before coach Claudio Ranieri succeeded Slavisa Jokanovic.

That was almost undone after 20 minutes at St James' Park as a header from Jamaal Lascelles took a deflection off Fulham striker and ex-Newcastle man Aleksandar Mitrovic and was going in before being hooked off the line.

Newcastle had a penalty appeal turned down before halftime with a Matt Ritchie shot appearing to hit the hand of defender Calum Chambers, although referee Martin Atkinson was not convinced. Rafa Benitez's side continued to pump balls into the area in the second half, looking to find the head of striker Salomon Rondon, but the Venezuelan could not carve out a clear-cut chance. Newcastle had another appeal for a penalty late on when Kenedy felt he was pulled by Fulham's Joe Bryan in the box. However, again, the hosts were denied a spot kick as the match finished in a stalemate leaving them 14th in the standings. — Reuters

Salah and Van Dijk seal Christmas top spot for Liverpool

WOLVERHAMPTON: Liverpool passed another stringent test of their Premier League title credentials as Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk gave them a 2-0 victory at Wolverhampton on Friday that guarantees top spot at Christmas.

Salah's 11th goal of the season was a classy one and helped subdue a dangerous Wolves side who had made a lively start. The home side continued to push Jurgen Klopp's side hard but their resistance was finally broken with 22 minutes remaining as Van Dijk capped a superb performance with a goal that cemented his side's position at the top of the table with 48 points.

Manager Jurgen Klopp said: "The first goal was brilliant, it was cool. And the second goal - yes, well done. I'm completely happy with the result and it is big for us. We will be training on Christmas morning so it is like every other day. It is an outstanding number (of points), it is absolutely cool."

While Liverpool have struggled at times to match the attacking potency of Manchester City, who they face on January 3, their added defensive steel has made them serious contenders for their first title of the Premier League era.

In the first half at a wet, windy Molineux they showed signs that some of the swagger that marked them out as the league's great entertainers last season

is returning. Salah linked up impressively with Sadio Mane and Robert Firmino in attack and Klopp's side might have added to their tally earlier than they did.

Then, when Wolves managed to blunt Liverpool's attacking threat, their defence clicked into gear to silence a dangerous frontline with Van Dijk in outstanding form at the heart of Klopp's back four.

Klopp's men endured a nervous opening when, in the fourth minute, Fabinho's lapse in concentration saw his pass intercepted by Joao Moutinho. Moutinho fed Adama Traore but he curled a shot narrowly wide.

Traore threatened again moments later when he was supplied by the solid link-up play of Raul Jimenez before again shooting just off target. Early chances were scarce for the visitors and when one arrived, with James Milner's corner dropping kindly for Van Dijk, the Dutchman's shot was charged down by Matt Doherty.

A fine move from Wolves almost brought the opening goal when Conor Coady's superb pass and Doherty's neat touch release Romain Saiss, whose shot was well saved by Alisson after it had taken a deflection off Dejan Lovren.

Liverpool had been on the back foot but there was no denying the quality of their opening goal, scored by Salah on 18 minutes. Fabinho was the architect with a driving run and a neat one-two with Sadio Mane before he crossed for Salah to prod home deftly with his outside of his left foot.

The Reds pushed for a second and Rui Patrício saved well from James Milner but there were chances for Wolves, too, with Alisson forced to save from Jonny Castro Otto. Wolves' pressing was making life hard for Klopp's side, but they doubled their lead and effectively sealed their win with 22 minutes remaining.

A corner was cleared as far as Salah, who delivered

a teasing cross from which Van Dijk stretched to turn the ball home. Morgan Gibbs-White should have halved Liverpool's lead late on but the Wolves youngster fired into the side netting. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Everton FC v Tottenham Hotspur	19:00	
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Valencia C.F v Huesca	14:00	
CD Leganes v Sevilla FC	18:15	
Rayo Vallecano v Levante	20:30	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA		
FC Augsburg v VfL Wolfsburg	17:30	
TSG 1899 Hoffenheim v FSV Mainz 05	20:00	
FRENCH LEAGUE		
FC Girondins de Bordeaux v Amiens SC	9:00	

Deeney, Deulofeu seal Watford win at West Ham

LONDON: Watford brought West Ham United's streak of Premier League success to an abrupt halt with a surprise 2-0 win at the London Stadium yesterday thanks to a first-half Troy Deeney penalty and a late Gerard Deulofeu clincher.

Deeney tucked home his third goal of the season on the half-hour from the spot after Fabian Balbuena had bundled over Roberto Pereyra, the defender injuring himself so badly that he had to leave the field.

The goal had come during end-to-end fare as the Hammers had started to take control in search of a fifth successive league victory. Lukasz Fabianski had saved his last three penalties but could do nothing to stop Deeney putting the visitors ahead, although the Polish goalkeeper did make a magnificent stop after the break to deny Abdoulaye Doucoure.

West Ham did most of the pressing, though, with Michail Antonio twice heading against the post after the break and Javier Hernandez squandering excellent chances before Deulofeu sealed victory three minutes from time with a sharp finish.

The Spaniard's goal secured Watford their first away win for over two months and lifted them, temporarily at least, into the top six, three points clear of the Hammers. — Reuters

25 Shiffrin first woman to reach 50 World Cup wins with Courchevel victory

26 Paul, Lewis hand Windies T20 series win against Bangladesh

27 Man City stunned by Crystal Palace, Arsenal pounce on Chelsea defeat



ABU DHABI: Real Madrid's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the FIFA Club World Cup final football match Spain's Real Madrid vs Abu Dhabi's Al Ain at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, yesterday. — AFP

Real clinch third Club World Cup

River crush Kashima to finish third in Club World Cup

ABU DHABI: Real Madrid eased to a third straight Club World Cup title as Luka Modric and Sergio Ramos scored in a 4-1 final victory over home team Al Ain in Abu Dhabi yesterday. The European champions have struggled at times this season but had little trouble in brushing aside Al Ain, whose surprise run to the final included a comeback from 3-0 down against Team Wellington and a shock last-four win over River Plate.

The Spanish giants have now won a record four Club World Cup titles, pulling one clear of arch rivals Barcelona, who were in La Liga action yesterday. Real boss Santiago Solari, who has had to deal with rumours surrounding his future after former Los Blancos coach Jose Mourinho's sacking by Manchester United earlier this week, named a strong side including Modric, Toni Kroos and Gareth Bale.

Ballon d'Or winner Modric gave Real a 14th-minute

lead, and Marcos Llorente's fantastic volley wrapped up the win on the hour mark before Sergio Ramos' late third and Tsukasa Shiotani's consolation.

Yahia Nader put through his own net in injury time as Real comfortably claimed their 11th win in 13 games and a first trophy since Solari took over from the sacked Julen Lopetegui in October.

Al Ain started brightly and came close to taking a shock lead when Sweden international striker Marcus Berg could only prod the ball into the gloves of goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

But Real did not wait long to make Berg pay, as Karim Benzema teed up Modric, who took a touch before curling a fine left-footed strike into the bottom corner. Benzema went close with a blocked effort, before also firing over the bar. A second goal always looked likely to arrive sooner rather than later, with

Modric denied by an excellent save from Al Ain keeper Khalid Eisa.

But the Emiratis hung in the game and could have levelled when Rayan Yaslam Mohamad Al Jaberi could only slice a shot out of play for a throw-in. Real doubled their lead, though, as 23-year-old midfielder Llorente drilled home his first goal for the club with a wonderful volley from just outside the area.

The game was all over as a contest in the 79th minute when Ramos climbed above the Al Ain defence to power a trademark header into the net from Modric's corner. Japanese midfielder Shiotani glanced in a Caio free-kick to grab Al Ain an 86th-minute consolation, but Nader deflected Junior Vinicius' effort past Eisa in the first minute of added time.

Earlier, South American champions River Plate thrashed Japanese side Kashima Antlers 4-0 in the

third place playoff at the Club World Cup yesterday. Argentine side River, who beat arch-rivals Boca Juniors to win the Copa Libertadores this month but suffered a humiliating defeat by Al Ain in a penalty shootout in the semi-finals, took the lead midway through the first half with a header from midfielder Bruno Zuculini.

Gonzalo "Pity" Martinez signed off from a memorable career with the Argentine club, including two Copa Libertadores triumphs, by scoring twice in the second half after coming off the bench in his last appearance before heading to MLS side Atlanta United. Martinez increased River's lead in the 73rd minute and completed the thrashing with a chipped finish in stoppage time after Colombian striker Rafael Santos Borré had scored the third goal from the penalty spot. — Agencies

Napoli keep pressure on Juventus, AC Milan drop out of top four

MILAN: Defender Raul Albiol scored the only goal as Napoli kept the pressure on Juventus with a 1-0 win over SPAL in Serie A yesterday, but AC Milan dropped out of the top four after losing by the same scoreline at home to Fiorentina.

Albiol got his head to a Dries Mertens corner to score his first goal this season just before the break with goalkeeper Alex Meret ensuring the hosts kept all three points by denying SPAL's Alberto Paloschi and Mohamed Fares late on.

Carlo Ancelotti's side to within five points of champions Juventus, who will look to maintain their unbeaten run against ninth-placed Roma in Turin later. Inter Milan are third, nine points behind Napoli ahead of their match with bottom club Chievo.

"Thinking of Juventus is likely to demotivate us,"

said Ancelotti. "We have to think about ourselves because this team can do more, we have room for improvement and I say it after today's match, which was not amazing."

In Milan, Federico Chiesa's second-half scorcher pushed AC Milan out of the Champions League places at the expense of Lazio. The pressure is on Gennaro Gattuso as his side are a point behind Lazio, who ended their five-match winless league run with a 3-1 win over Cagliari in Rome.

Fiorentina meanwhile move up to seventh, just three points off the top four places after achieving back-to-back wins for just the second time this season. "There's no use looking at who's to blame. The team is going through a bad moment," said Gattuso, whose side have taken just two points from their last three games and crashed out of the Europa League.

Krzysztof Piatek extended his lead at the top of the Serie A scoring charts when he scored his 13th goal of the season in Genoa's 3-1 win over Atalanta, the Polish striker moving two ahead of Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo after sealing the points two minutes from the end. Earlier Sergej Milinkovic-Savic scored his first goal in three months as Lazio got back winning at the Stadio Olimpico. Serbian midfielder Milinkovic-Savic scored 12 times in the league last season but this term had only found the net once against Genoa on September 23. — AFP



NAPLES: SPAL's Italian forward Alberto Paloschi (L) and Napoli's Italian forward Lorenzo Insigne go for the ball during the Italian Serie A Football match Napoli vs SPAL 2013 yesterday at the San Paolo stadium Naples. — AFP