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Tsunami kills at least 222 in Indonesia as volcano erupts

Anak Krakatoa eruption triggers underwater landslide • Amir sends condolences

CARITA, Indonesia: A volcano-triggered tsunami has left at least 222 people dead and hundreds more injured after slamming without warning into beaches around Indonesia's Sunda Strait, officials said yesterday, voicing fears that the toll would rise further. Hundreds of buildings were destroyed by the wave, which hit the coast of southern Sumatra and the western tip of Java about 9:30 pm (1430 GMT) on Saturday after a volcano known as the "child" of Krakatoa erupted, national disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said.

Dramatic video posted on social media showed a wall of water suddenly crashing into a concert by pop group "Seventeen" - hurling band members off the stage and then flooding into the audience. In a tearful Instagram post, frontman Riefian Fajarsyah said the band's bassist and road manager had been killed and his wife was missing. Search and rescue teams were

scouring rubble for survivors, with 222 people confirmed dead, 843 people injured and 28 missing, Nugroho said.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday. In the cable, he expressed sincere grief towards the victims of the tsunami. HH the Amir wished the injured quick recuperation and hoped the nation will be able to cope with the consequences of the natural catastrophe. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Indonesian president.

Tsunamis triggered by volcanic eruptions are relatively rare, caused by the sudden displacement of water or "slope failure", according to the International Tsunami Information Centre. Unlike those

caused by earthquakes, which trigger alert systems, they give authorities very little time to warn residents of the impending threat. The destructive wave left a trail of uprooted trees and debris strewn across beaches. A tangled mess of corrugated steel roofing, timber and rubble was dragged inland at Carita beach, a popular spot for day-trippers on the west coast of Java.

Photographer Oystein Andersen described how he was caught up in the disaster while on the beach taking photos of Anak Krakatoa. "I suddenly saw a big wave," he wrote on his Facebook page. "I had to run, as the wave passed the beach and landed 15-20m inland. (The) next wave entered the hotel area where I was staying and downed cars on the road behind it." The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said the "powerful waves" reached a height of 30-90 cm.

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CARITA, Indonesia: Residents inspect damaged buildings yesterday after the area was hit by a tsunami on Saturday following an eruption of the Anak Krakatoa volcano. — AFP

News in brief

Ban on toxic herbal medicines

KUWAIT: The health ministry imposed a ban yesterday on import of a number of herbal medicines due to their severely toxic nature. The ministry's laboratory detected concentration of pyrrolizidine alkaloids in some herbs such as senecio, heliotropium, crotonia and trichodesma. Assistant Undersecretary for Medicine and Food Monitoring Dr Abdullah Al-Bader said. Alkaloids are highly toxic, affecting mostly liver and cells, which eventually leads to death, he added. He also pointed out that aristolochia plant, along with its multiple species, can cause renal failure and urinary cancer, adding that another plant, kava, also known as Piper methysticum, has a direct impact on the human nervous system as well as a toxic effect on the liver. — KUNA

Egypt arrests Kuwaiti's killers

KUWAIT: Egyptian security forces in Gharbia governorate identified and arrested four suspects over charges of robbing and killing a Kuwait citizen, said security sources, noting that the victim was found dead in his house in Jaafariya village. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said on Saturday Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh and embassy staff arrived in Gharbia governorate in Egypt's Delta region and are closely following up the latest developments related to the murder. — A Saleh

Minced meat added to rations

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is about to add minced meat to the list of subsidized foodstuff given to citizens, who will have the choice to select between minced beef and mutton. The source added that the addition comes in response to demands made by a large segment of citizens in a survey conducted by the ministry. The sources also noted that the ministry is currently discussing the quantity to be given per person with Kuwait Supplies Company, which will be responsible for contracting and pricing the meat in the coming few months. — A Saleh

Kuwait Bay factories shut

KUWAIT: Factories dotting Kuwait Bay will be shut down, the Environment Public Authority (EPA) announced yesterday. EPA said in a statement that it had coordinated with competent authorities to begin removing the factories as a prelude to rehabilitating the area. Kuwait Bay is home to various species of fish and other creatures. Authorities had complained against high pollution in the bay's waters, which apparently caused recurrent fish deaths and degradation of the water quality. — KUNA

MPs to debate court verdict, grilling on Jan 8

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday the Assembly will debate the constitutional court's verdict and the report on the grilling of the prime minister on Jan 8 and not tomorrow because the issues have not yet been finalized. Ghanem told reporters that the Assembly received a copy of the constitutional court ruling declaring article 16 of the internal charter unconstitutional and the Assembly office yesterday discussed the issue.

He said that the office decided to wait until the court issues its final verdict on this issue on Dec 26 and then discuss all the verdicts together. He added that the legal and legislative committee has not yet completed its report on whether a grilling against the prime minister is in line with the constitution or not. Ghanem also said that the financial and economic

affairs committee has not completed amendments to the early retirement law, and accordingly it will be delayed until Jan 8.

The constitutional court last week ruled that article 16 of the Assembly's internal charter is unconstitutional, which means it has to be replaced. The Assembly in October depended on the article to retain the memberships of MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash after they were sentenced to jail in a final ruling by the court of cassation. The court said that the Assembly's vote on the issue infringed on the authority of the judiciary and the court itself.

Seven lawmakers met to discuss the issue yesterday and to call for delaying any debate on the issue or delaying taking any measure as a result of the ruling. Islamist opposition MP Mohammad Al-Dallal yesterday called on the Assembly to take its time before adopting any decision or action on the constitutional court ruling, saying the verdict has created a constitutional vacuum. He said the court has surpassed its powers and has taken some of the Assembly's powers through this ruling, which he said was issued in a rush.

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Producers to cut oil output by 2-3% to boost prices



KUWAIT: UAE Minister of Energy and Industry Suhail Al-Mazrouei (second left) speaks during a joint press conference with Iraqi Oil Minister Tamer Ghadban (second right), Algerian Energy Minister Mustapha Guitouni (left) and Kuwait's OPEC Governor Haitham Al-Ghais at the end of an OAPEE meeting yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Oil ministers from leading OPEC nations said yesterday they expect prices will arrest their recent slide and rebalance early next year, when a deal on new production cuts takes effect. Oil prices have shed more than 36 percent since early October to

trade at \$54 per barrel, due to fears of oversupply and weak global demand. But president of OPEC and UAE Energy Minister Suhail Al-Mazrouei said that the surplus in the oil market was small compared to 2017

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Hundreds take to Beirut streets over corruption

BEIRUT: Hundreds of Lebanese took to the streets yesterday in Beirut to protest rampant corruption and poor living conditions, as anger mounts over political

deadlock that has left the country without a government since May. People marched to the prime minister's office in central Beirut to demonstrate against Lebanon's fractious political class, widespread graft and failing public services. Some protesters sported the iconic yellow vests worn by anti-government protesters in France, adorned with a cedar tree - Lebanon's national symbol.

"There is corruption and theft of state funds," 43-year-old Hana told AFP.

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BEIRUT: Anti-government protesters inspired by the French yellow vests movement hold placards as they demonstrate in central Beirut yesterday. — AFP

Turkey, Israel in new war of words

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday lambasted the Israeli prime minister as an "oppressor" after he accused Turkey of "massacres" against Kurds in a new war of words. Relations between Turkey and Israel have been tense this year over multiple issues including a controversial law passed by the Israeli parliament in July which defined the country as the nation state of the Jewish people. "You are an oppressor, cruel and at the head of state terror," Erdogan told Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a televised speech in Istanbul, the president also accused Israel of "occupying Palestine" as well as committing "sins, crimes against humanity, massacres". The latest diplomatic row began after Erdogan warned young Turks on Saturday: "Do not kick the enemy you have brought down to the ground. You are not a Jew in Israel." Netanyahu told Erdogan in a tweet late on Saturday that he "should not preach to Israel" as "the occupier of northern Cyprus, whose army massacres women and children in Kurdish villages, inside and outside Turkey".

Before Erdogan's comments yesterday, his chief advisor Ibrahim Kalin hit out in a tweet at Netanyahu who he accused of using Erdogan "bashing... as a political chip" in a bid to save himself "from his domestic troubles". On Dec 14, Erdogan also said Palestinians were subjected to "pressures, violence and intimidation policies no less grave than the oppression done to the Jews during the Second World War", referring to the Holocaust.

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Local

Amir's envoy commends 'crucial and strategic' talks with China

Kuwait Airways operates new route to Guangzhou in China



BEIJING: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah departs China yesterday. — KUNA photos



First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives head and members of the Kuwaiti military bureau in China.

BEIJING: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said he had 'crucial and strategic' talks with senior Chinese officials that serve both countries. This came in a press release sent by the Kuwaiti Embassy in China yesterday at the wrapping-up of Sheikh Nasser Sabah's week-long official visit to China. He voiced much thanks and appreciation to Chinese President Xi Jinping and Vice-Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Han Xiang and other senior officials for warm welcome, hospitality and the friendly atmosphere in which strategic talks were held. He spoke highly of Beijing's constant objective and fair positions, along with unyielding coordination with Kuwait at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), while voicing satisfaction with the upgrading of bilateral historical relations to the level of strategic comprehensive partnership.

The senior Kuwaiti official pointed out the essential progress of political, economic, investment and trade cooperation between both sides, especially following

the signing of a strategic comprehensive partnership deal. He further extolled China's involvement in a set of major development projects carried out in Kuwait, in addition to its interest in the country's planned northern titanic enterprises. However, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad underlined that it is indispensable to promote China's direct investments, mainly in infrastructure and technology projects, while expressing confidence that the outcomes of his Beijing tour would serve both countries' mutual interests.

'Totally successful'

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Ambassador in Beijing Sameeh Johar Hayat hailed the visit as being 'totally successful,' reflecting the strategic depth and matching the level of Kuwaiti-Sino historical bonds. He was quoted in the embassy's release as noting mutual willingness to

cement and beef up strategic partnership ties which were given a strong push during a state visit by His Highness the Amir to China in July. He acclaimed the mutual consultation and coordination approach adopted by both nations' leaderships as having become effective and momentous.

Underlining practical cooperation between both countries, the ambassador quoted Chinese leaders as viewing Kuwait as a key strategic partner in political, economic, trade, investment, cultural and security realms. "During meetings with Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad, Kuwait's political leadership stressed that Kuwait is a significant, key and influential country in Middle East and Arab Gulf due to His Highness the Amir's major role in keeping the region secure and stable," he said.

The Kuwaiti defense minister began his official visit to China on December 15, during which he handed a

written letter from His Highness the Amir to Chinese president Xi Jinping. He held talks with Vice-Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Han Xiang, on means of bolstering cooperation and strategic partnership between the two countries. Sheikh Nasser Sabah also participated in Beijing dialogue forum highlighting New Kuwait Vision 2035. During his stay in Beijing, the Kuwaiti official also toured Yangshan Port. Furthermore, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad received on Saturday China head and members of the Kuwaiti military bureau in China.

New route to Guangzhou in China

In other news, Kuwait Airways announced yesterday it would be operating flights to the Chinese city of Guangzhou as for its flights schedule during summer. The national carrier in a statement confirmed its keenness on providing new routes that meet the growing demand for long and medium term destinations. Kuwait Airways is the oldest in the Arabian Gulf region. It was established in 1953 under the name of Kuwait National Airways Ltd. The Government of Kuwait bought the carrier in 1962. — KUNA



Sheikh Nasser meets Kuwaiti military officials

Audit Bureau inks accord with Turkey's Court of Accounts

KUWAIT: The State Audit Bureau inked yesterday a cooperation pact with the Turkish Court of Accounts to swap expertise on advancing vocational skills in the sector. The bureau said in a statement that the agreement aims at exchanging information, documents related to professional activities, holding consultations, conducting joint research, audit operations and organizing seminars.

The accord was inked as part of a current visit to the country by the Chief of the Turkish Court of Accounts, Seyit Ahmet Bas. The statement quoted Mohammad Al-

Dosari, in charge of supervision of records about marketing and investment of the national oil companies at the bureau, as saying that the agreement stipulated expertise exchange, external auditing, training and improving staff professional criteria.

He indicated that discussions had been held between the Kuwaiti and Turkish auditors on cooperation within framework of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), in addition to the bureau auditors' participation in activities, organized by the regional forum for higher audit authorities in south and central Asia. The agreement was signed by the acting chairman of Kuwait Audit Bureau, Adel Al-Saraawi, and justice Bas.

Earlier yesterday, the visiting Turkish chief auditor also met separately with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Saraawi attended both meetings. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the Chief of the Turkish Court of Accounts Seyit Ahmet Bas.



KUWAIT: State Audit Bureau and the Turkish Court of Accounts sign an agreement to swap expertise on advancing vocational skills. — KUNA photos



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem meets with the visiting Chief of the Turkish Court of Accounts Seyit Ahmet Bas.

Vietnam refinery project important to all investors

KUWAIT: The Nghi Son Refinery and Petrochemical Limited Liability Company (NSRP) in Vietnam is considered to be part of a vast and important project to all shareholders in the energy sector especially the Vietnamese government, CEO of Kuwait Petroleum International Ltd (KPI) and head of the Kuwaiti delegation Nabil Bourisly said. When contacted by yesterday after the official ceremony of the refinery's commercial operation, Bourisly explained the significance of this step forward due to the increased demand of oil production and the cooperative efforts by all the sponsors of this project showing a strengthening of relations between all three state owners (Kuwait - Japan - Vietnam).

This strategic venture focuses on investing in the major developing markets specifically in Asia and areas that help strengthen the relations of KPI, mentioned Bourisly. He also added this major investment in the refinery and petrochemicals sectors which will support KPI in its relations with other associations and open new doors for even more investments and partnerships and diversifies Kuwait's Crude oil outlets, while

also an opportunity for small and upcoming companies.

When asked how this project could benefit the Vietnamese government, Bourisly said that the NSRP as the second refinery in Vietnam along with the existing Dung Quat refinery together meets around 70 percent of local demand for oil production. He also added that NSRP provides premium products to the market like premium diesel and gasoline in addition to LPG, jet fuel, and many petrochemical products like polypropylene and Benzene. All this production needs a large workforce which provides hundreds of jobs to the local Vietnamese population.

The NSRP also secures KPI's production for the long term as the complex is a Greenfield refinery with a capacity of 200 KBPD, said Bourisly. The partnership with Petro Vietnam and Japan's Idemitsu Kosan Co. is very beneficial in marketing the products in the local and international markets as the Japanese experience and support are very valuable especially in the world market. Other than the economic benefits of this investment, Bourisly emphasized the high level of experience KPI's employees will obtain from such a project from the challenges they will face, as well as gaining safe depositories for Kuwaiti crude oil. The three Kuwaiti banks that financially contributed to the NSRP project are the National Bank of Kuwait, Commercial Bank of Kuwait and Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait, which is worth around \$112 million and "they have always been supporting KPI in its international venture," said Bourisly. — KUNA



Workers are seen at the Nghi Son Refinery in Vietnam in this file photo. — KUNA

Amir hosts top state officials at Bayan Palace

Amir meets Bahrain's finance minister, OAPEC ministers, Turkish chief auditors

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also hosted President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Chief Judge of the Court of Cassation and the Constitutional Court Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Finance, acting minister of oil, water and electricity, Nayef Al-Hajraf, along with the visiting Bahraini Minister of Finance and Economy, Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa. Separately, His Highness hosted Hajraf, accompanied by oil and energy ministers of member states of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), participating in OAPEC's 10th meeting, hosted by Kuwait. He also received the acting Audit Bureau chairman, Adel Abdulaziz Al-Saraawi, accompanied by Chief of the Turkish Court of Accounts Seyit Ahmet Bas. Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meetings.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness also received Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

In other news, His Highness the Amir on Saturday sent a cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to extend condolences over the death of Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. In his cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to God Almighty to bestow his mercy on the late prince and bring solace to his brother King Salman and all the Saudi royal family. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar condolence cables to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. Meanwhile, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud offering sincere condolences over demise of Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Chief Judge of the Court of Cassation and the Constitutional Court Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with UAE's Minister of Energy Suhail Mohammed Al-Mazrouie, whose country currently chairs the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chief of the Turkish Court of Accounts Seyit Ahmet Bas.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Bahraini Minister of Finance and Economy, Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City's skyline from Al-Shaheed Park. — Photo by Ali Al-Arbash (KUNA)

Charity provides medical care for Syrian refugees

KRCS offers financial aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan



AMMAN: Kuwait's Al-Najat charity workers deliver aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan. — KUNA photos



Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Jordan's King Hussein Cancer Center officials take a group photo after signing a deal to offer medical care to Syrian cancer patients.

AMMAN: Kuwait's Al-Najat charity has launched a humanitarian endeavor encompassing medical aid for Syrian refugees residing in Jordan, including 1,500 orphans. The charity has sent a contingent to Jordan to provide medical attention to Syrian refugees, many of whom are in dire need of such care. Oud Al-Khamis, the head of a committee affiliated with Al-Najat, said in a statement yesterday. The medical aid package includes "social support and psychological help," he added, saying that orphans are among the main recipients of aid given by the charity. Concerning Syrian refugees in Jordan, he said even those residing in the most remote places have been taken into account, pointing out that the frigid weather conditions usually augment their misery. He thanked the charity's supporters and all those who have contributed to its altruistic projects in any way.

Financial aid

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), alongside its partners in Jordan, doled out pecuniary aid yesterday to some 500 Syrian refugee families across the Hashemite kingdom. The principles of altruism form the bedrock of Kuwait's foreign policy, as evident by the moniker of 'Humanitarian Leader' the UN has given the Gulf state's Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to Amman Aziz Al-Daihani said. The aid Kuwait has given the legions of Syrian refugees in Jordan is part of a 'prolonged' humanitarian endeavor it has launched since the conflict in Syria commenced, he added. The venerable Kuwaiti charity provided the families with 500 coupons worth \$70 each, the director of KRCS' volunteer center Dr Msaad Al-Enezi revealed. Jordan National Red Crescent Society's chairman Dr Mohammad Al-Hadid was grateful for the copious amounts of Kuwaiti aid, saying it helped the Jordanian government cope with the influx of Syrian refugees. Jordan is home to 1.3 million Syrian refugees, 655,000 of whom are registered.

Cancer patients

In the meantime, KRCS and Jordan's King Hussein Cancer Center yesterday inked a deal in the vicinity of KD 40,000 (\$132,000), purposed to offer medical care to Syrian cancer patients living in Jordan. The sum was provided by Kuwait Finance House (KFH). The agreement was signed by KRCS volunteers section head



Kuwait treats Syrian cancer patients

Mesaed Al-Enezi and the Jordanian center's chief Nesreen Qatamesh, with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Amman Azeez Al-Daihani and Jordan National Red Crescent Society Chairman Mohammad Al-Hadeed attending.

Following the signing of the deal, Daihani said that it was the second-of-its-kind grant to have been extended by the KFH to the Jordanian cancer center. It is nothing but emblematic of Kuwait's humanitarian line aiming at helping the needy across the world at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, he boasted. The move reflects the deep humanitarian cooperation between the KRCS, with all Kuwaiti charities working under its umbrella, and Jordan's King Hussein Cancer Center, which caters for Syrian refugees in Jordan, he said.

Meanwhile, Qatamesh said the Kuwaiti move was intended to provide necessary medical treatment for



Syrian refugee families in Jordan receive aid delivered by Kuwait Red Crescent Society.

Syrian patients at the Jordanian cancer center. She spoke highly of Kuwait's relief efforts and incessant strive to aid in medically treating thousands of Arab patients in Jordan. — KUNA

Local

Education ministry to replace 1,000 expatriates with national manpower

300 teachers, 100 social workers and 600 service staff to be terminated

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education's administrative sector is currently finalizing lists including the names of 1,000 expat employees who will be replaced by citizens during the current academic year 2018-2019, said informed sources. The sources explained that the employees due to be terminated by the end of June 2019 include 300 teachers, 100 social workers and 600 service staff (office boys). The sources added the education sector has targeted the 300 teachers according to the subjects they teach, due to the abundance of Kuwaiti teachers of the same subjects to replace them.



Job opportunities
Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced that the total number of citizens working for it with degrees in petroleum and chemical engineering is 2,021 while expats are only 329. KPC also announced that there are 750 job opportunities for citizens holding degrees in petroleum and chemical engineering starting with fiscal year 2019-2010 until 2023-2024.

Stateless doctors

Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah announced taking serious measures in collaboration with related bodies to

resolve the problems faced by stateless doctors working for the ministry. "The state needs those doctors," he stressed, pointing out that one of the suggested solutions is to enroll them to work for private sector hospitals and medical centers. He added that he had already met a number of stateless doctors and promised to resolve the problems they are facing.

Bone marrow transplant

Al-Sabah Medical Zone Director Dr Abdul Aziz Al-Farhoud opened the blood diseases and bone marrow transplant ward at Yaqoub Behbehani center after it was refurbished. The opening ceremony was attended by Aqeel Yaqoub Behbehani. Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) Manager Dr Khloud Al-Ali said the ward includes eight beds and it serves bone marrow transplant patients aged 14 and above. She added that the new ward will help boost bone marrow transplants, which began in Kuwait in 2011.

Health Ministry needs stateless doctors

New trademarks

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced that its trademarks and patent rights department received 2,552 applications to register new trademarks through its web portal in November. The ministry announced that it processed 924 trademark registration applications, 1,143 applications to publish trademarks and 484 trademark registrations.



The Ministry of Education.

Property taxes

The secretariat of the Jordanian capital Amman announced that Kuwaitis' real estate, apartments and lands are exempted from fines on property taxes till the end of the year. In this regard, the secretariat's financial affairs

manager Samer Yaseen said that the opportunity is open for all owners, including Kuwaitis, to benefit from the exemption provided they pay the tax in full, noting that the exemption during the first quarter of 2019 will drop to only 50 percent.

Motorist killed in Sixth Ring Road accident

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A motorist died in an accident reported yesterday afternoon at the Sixth Ring Road. The victim was driving towards Jahra when his vehicle lost balance and turned over, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) reported. The man had succumbed to his injuries by the time firefighters and paramedics arrived to the scene. It was not immediately known whether other vehicles were involved in the accident. An investigation was opened to determine what caused the accident.



Cigarette boxes found hidden in a pick-up truck.

Cigarette smugglers caught

Customs officers at the Nuwaiseeb border outlet south of the country arrested a passenger who was leaving Kuwait with 70 cartons of cigarettes he tried to smuggle out of the country. Meanwhile, in another case, officers found 2,000 cartons of cigarettes hidden in a pick-up truck. The vehicles was impounded. Smuggling of cigarettes from Kuwait has increased since Saudi Arabia imposed heavy taxes on the commodity in April 2017.

Police station fire

Firemen fought a blaze in the Jabriya police station file room. The fire was put out without injuries, as investigations are underway to determine the cause of the blaze.

intervened and referred the incident to the police. The incident began when the vehicles collided and sustained damage. The two motorists exchanged blame, which evolved to exchanging blows.

Abnormal condition

Hawally police arrested three citizens who were in an abnormal condition and had psychoactive tablets on them. All were sent to concerned authorities. A police patrol spotted the three in a parked car in Hawally.

Addict arrested

Hawally police arrested an Egyptian man who lay down on the pavement in Nugra after consuming too much drugs. Interior ministry operations received a call from passersby about a man in an abnormal condition behaving strangely in Nugra. Police and paramedics went to the scene and found the suspect lying on the ground. When a policeman approached him, he attempted to escape on foot but failed when a police patrol cut him off. He was treated, then sent to the police station to face legal action. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Domestic violence

An Egyptian man beat his wife due to a domestic dispute, causing various injuries. Police had to intervene to rescue the woman after she called them for help. The couple was taken to the police station, where the woman insisted on lodging a complaint and submitted a medical report stating her condition.

Fight

A fight broke out following a car accident. Policemen



KUWAIT: A man stands next to cigarette boxes confiscated with a passenger at the Nuwaiseeb border outlet south of the country.

Domestic helper attempts suicide

KUWAIT: A domestic helper was rushed to Mubarak Hospital following a suicide attempt by ingesting a large quantity of medicine, but the sponsor's action saved her life. The sponsor called police, who rushed to the scene with paramedics and found the Sri Lankan woman in critical condition. Doctors performed gastric lavage and her condition stabilized.

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KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education yesterday opened a gallery at the Avenues Mall to showcase students' artworks which they created using used material. The gallery, titled 'Recycle Station,' is held to highlight the benefits of recycling and featured 80 artworks. — KUNA photos



Exonerated but not free: Bibi to spend Xmas in custody

US shutdown enters second day, set to last through Xmas



SANAA: Retired Dutch general Patrick Cammaert, who heads a United Nations team tasked with monitoring a ceasefire between the Iranian-aligned Houthi group and Saudi-backed government forces in Yemen's Hodeidah, arrives in the Yemeni capital Sanaa yesterday. — AFP

Head of UN monitors arrives in Yemen

Security Council approves deployment of observers

SANAA: The head of the UN team tasked with monitoring a fragile ceasefire in Yemen's port city of Hodeida arrived in the rebel-held capital Sanaa yesterday, an AFP photographer said. Retired Dutch general Patrick Cammaert is heading a joint committee including members of the government and the Houthi rebels, in charge of monitoring a truce in the Red Sea city and its surroundings. Cammaert was greeted by the head of the Houthi delegation, Ali Al-Mushki, and a number of other members of the UN team at Sanaa international airport. He is making a stop in Sanaa before heading to Hodeida, a lifeline port city that serves as the entry point for the majority of imports to war-torn Yemen, a UN official said.

On Saturday, Cammaert arrived in Aden where he held talks with Yemen government officials. During those talks he urged Yemeni leaders and the Saudi-led coalition backing the loyalists to uphold the ceasefire that came into effect last week, said UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric. He also "sought their commitment and cooperation to secure the unhindered flow of humanitarian aid", said Dujarric, adding that Cammaert will "convey similar messages" to the Houthis in Sanaa. On Friday, the UN Security Council unanimously approved a resolution authorizing the deployment of observers to Hodeida, which is held by the rebels and has been subjected to an offensive by pro-government forces.

UN to secure port

Both the government and the rebels backed the resolution on Friday. Rebel negotiator Mohammed Abdelsalam said it marked "an important step towards stopping the aggression and lifting the blockade". He was referring to the Saudi-led military coalition that intervened in 2015 and imposed a blockade on Yemeni waters and airports. The internationally-recognized government, in turn, reaffirmed in a statement its "commitment (to respect) the agreement" reached in Sweden and endorsed by the UN resolution.

It pledged to work "in a positive spirit" with UN envoy Martin Griffiths towards a lasting political agreement to end the war. A halt to fighting in the strategic port city follows intense diplomatic efforts which culminated in peace talks earlier this month in Sweden, where the warring parties agreed to the truce which came into force on Tuesday. The ceasefire remained shaky, however, with both sides accusing each other of violations in Hodeida province. The UN monitoring team aims to secure the functioning of Hodeida port and supervise the withdrawal of fighters from the city.

The text approved by the Security Council "insists on the full respect by all parties of the ceasefire agreed" for Hodeida. It authorizes the United Nations to "establish and deploy, for an initial period of 30 days from the adoption of this resolution, an advance team to begin monitoring" the ceasefire, under Cammaert's



KHOKHA: Yemeni children play at a camp for displaced people in the Khokha district of the western province of Hodeidah. — AFP

leadership. Around 10,000 people have been killed since the Saudi-led intervention, according to the World Health Organization, although rights groups say

the death toll could be five times higher. The conflict has unleashed a major humanitarian crisis and pushed 14 million Yemenis to the brink of famine. — AFP

Angry 'Child of Krakatoa' rumbles on

JAKARTA: The volcano that apparently triggered a deadly tsunami in Indonesia late Saturday emerged from the sea around the legendary Krakatoa 90 years ago and has been on a high-level eruption watchlist for the past decade. Anak Krakatoa (the "Child of Krakatoa") has been particularly active since June, occasionally sending massive plumes of ash high into the sky and in October a tour boat was nearly hit by lava bombs from the erupting volcano. Experts say Anak Krakatoa emerged around 1928 in the caldera of Krakatoa, a volcanic island that violently erupted in 1883. With subsequent lava flows it grew from a submarine setting to become a small volcanic island, with the cone now standing at an altitude of around 300 meters above sea level.

Since its birth, Anak Krakatoa has been in a "state of semi-continuous eruptive activity", growing bigger as it experiences eruptions every two to three years, volcanology professor Ray Cas from Monash University in Australia told AFP. "Most of the eruptions are relatively small on the scale of explosive eruptions ... and there's also eruptions that produce lava flows," he added. Cas said the latest event appeared to be "a relatively small explosive eruption" but could then have triggered or coincided with a submarine event like a landslide or earthquake, causing the deadly tsunami.

No one lives on the island, but the peak is popular with tourists and is a major study area for volcanologists. When Krakatoa erupted on August 27, 1883 it shot a column of ash more than 20 kilome-



ANYER, Indonesia: Damaged buildings and cars are seen in Anyer, Serang yesterday after the area was hit by a tsunami following an eruption of the Anak Krakatoa volcano. — AFP

ters (12 miles) into the air in a series of powerful explosions that were heard in Australia and up to 4,500 kilometers away near Mauritius. The massive cloud of ash plunged the area into darkness for two days. The dust gave rise to spectacular sunsets and sunrises around the world the following year and disrupted weather patterns for years.

The tsunami triggered by the eruption killed more than 36,000 people in one of the world's

worst natural disasters. Indonesia's proximity to the junction of three continental plates, which jostle under immense pressure, makes it particularly vulnerable to earthquakes and eruptions. The archipelago nation has nearly 130 active volcanoes, forming part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire"—an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches from quake-prone Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin. — AFP

Deadly tsunami rips through the stage as band performs

CARITA: Dramatic video posted online showed the tsunami that struck Indonesia smashing into an open-air concert, hurling members of a pop band from the stage and slamming into the audience. Riefian Fajarsyah, lead vocalist of the band "Seventeen" later posted an emotional video to his 260,000 Instagram followers in which he said the group's bassist and road manager were killed.

The band were playing Saturday night to a large crowd in a marquee at the Tanjung Lesung Beach Resort on the western tip of Java when the wall of water hit. On the video, fans can be seen clapping and cheering before a wave rips under the stage, sending the band members and their equipment crashing into the men and women dancing at the front. The shocking video then suddenly stops. Fighting back tears and wiping his eyes, Fajarsyah said two more band members, a crew member and his wife were still missing.

"We lost our bassist Bani and our road manager Oki," he said in the video, in which he is wearing a green shirt with the band's Seventeen logo stitched into the chest. "Andi (drummer) and Herman (guitar) and Ujang (crew) have not been found. Please pray so that my wife Dylan (Dylan Sahara) will be found soon. "The rest are thankfully safe although suffering from injuries and broken bones. Please pray so my wife Dylan, Andi and Herman and Ujang can be found soon." Seventeen posted earlier this week on their Instagram page that they would be playing at the Tanjung Lesung Beach Resort from December 21 to 23. — AFP

International

US envoy to anti-IS coalition quits after US' Syria decision

Netanyahu seeks to calm Israeli concerns

WASHINGTON: Brett McGurk, the US special envoy to the anti-Islamic State group coalition, has resigned, a State Department official said Saturday, capping a chaotic week that saw the departure of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Donald Trump's stunning decision to pull troops from Syria. McGurk's resignation, effective December 31, comes on the heels of Mattis's decision to quit the Trump administration over key disagreements with the US president, notably the Syria withdrawal. Just last week McGurk, a Barack Obama appointee whom Trump kept on, said "nobody is declaring a mission accomplished" in the battle against IS-just days before the president blindsided politicians and allies with his announcement of victory against the jihadist movement.

Trump on Saturday said that the jihadist group "is largely defeated." "When I became President, ISIS was going wild," the president tweeted. "Now ISIS is largely defeated and other local countries, including Turkey, should be able to easily take care of whatever remains. We're coming home!" Trump later took aim at McGurk on Twitter, referring to him as a "grandstander" who was quitting just before his time was up. McGurk, 45, was set to leave his position in February, but reportedly felt he could no longer continue in the job after Trump's declaration and on Friday evening informed Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of his intention to wrap up at year's end.

His conclusion mirrored that of Mattis, who was seen as a voice of moderation in the mercurial Trump White House and quit after telling the president he could not go along with the Syria decision. McGurk has served as the US envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, an acronym for the jihadist group, since 2015. He also served as the deputy assistant secretary of state for Iraq and Iran, and worked under Republican George W Bush as a senior official on Iraq and Afghanistan. Discussing the US role in Syria this month, he had told journalists that "it would be reckless if we were just to say, 'Well, the physical caliphate is defeated, so we can just leave now.'" "I think anyone who's looked at a conflict like this would agree with that."

'Complete reversal of policy'

McGurk called Trump's move to leave Syria "a shock" and "a complete reversal of policy that was articulated to us," in an email announcing his decision to colleagues that was obtained by The New York Times. "It left our coalition partners confused and our fighting partners bewildered," he said, according to the newspaper.

"I worked this week to help manage some of the fallout but-as many of you heard in my meetings and phone calls-I ultimately concluded that I could not carry out these new instructions and maintain my integrity." Just after announcing his Syria decision, Trump again confounded international partners with plans to slash troop numbers in Afghanistan. The momentous reversal of years of US foreign policy will leave the war-torn regions at risk of continued and potentially heightened bloodshed. In typical fashion, Trump said Saturday that the media was treating him unfairly over the Syria withdrawal decision.

"If anybody but your favorite President, Donald J. Trump, announced that, after decimating ISIS in Syria, we were going to bring our troops back home (happy & healthy), that person would be the most popular hero in America," he tweeted. "With me, hit hard instead by the Fake News Media. Crazy!" The troop pullout will leave thousands of Kurdish fighters-which the Pentagon spent years training and arming against IS-vulnerable to Turkish attack. On Saturday, a senior Kurdish official called on the United States to prevent a potential Turkish offensive against areas in northern Syria inhabited by Kurds, calling it America's "duty to prevent any attack and to put an end to Turkish threats."

The US has for years supported the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the fight against IS in Syria. Aldar Khalil, a key player in establishing Syria's semi-autonomous Kurdish region in 2013, said the US and its partners "must honor their commitments." Heavyweight adviser Mattis-a decorated Marine general who was often referred to as "the last adult in the room"-made clear in his resignation letter that pulling out of Syria crossed the line. The departures of Mattis and now McGurk follow those of



AIN ISSA: In this file photo, Brett McGurk (left), US special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter IS, and Rupert Jones (right), deputy commander of Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), arrive for a meeting with the Raqa Civil Council in the northern Syrian village of Ain Issa. —AFP

national security advisor HR McMaster and White House chief of staff John Kelly-leaving Trump, who has no political, diplomatic or military experience, increasingly alone.

Israeli concerns

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought yesterday to calm domestic concerns over US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from Syria, saying his country will still act against Iran there. Netanyahu

will also reportedly meet US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo when he travels to Brazil for the January 1 inauguration of new president Jair Bolsonaro. The prime minister's office has not confirmed the meeting reported by Israeli media. Trump last week said the Islamic State group had been defeated and he was withdrawing the United States' 2,000 troops from Syria. Israel has seen the US presence in neighboring Syria as a bulwark against its main enemy Iran and a counterweight to Russia. —Agencies

Kids in Iraq camps dream big, but can't enroll in school

HAMMAM AL-ALIL: Maareb has big dreams, but she may never get to realize them. Every day, when her friends attend class in the Iraqi displacement camp they call home, she stays behind. The makeshift primary school in the dusty Hammam Al-Alil 2 camp in Iraq's north opened earlier this year, but several thousand displaced children are unable to access it. For Maareb, the problem is paperwork. "I want to go to school with my friends, but I'm not allowed because I don't have an ID," says the seven-year-old, her plaited hair dangling down her back. "I want to finish my studies to become a doctor." Maareb and her family fled to Hammam Al-Alil 2 a few years ago from Zammur, around 90 kilometers west, as the Islamic State group overran the region.

At the time, Maareb had proof of birth provided by a hospital, but no government-issued identification. In the violent chaos of IS's reign, her father could not acquire the necessary papers to secure her a spot in a classroom. "Because of our displacement, I was never able to get an ID card for Maareb, so she doesn't have any paperwork now besides a birth certificate," says her father, Ibrahim Helo. Hammam Al-Alil 2

lies in an arid plain just 30 kilometers southeast of Mosul, the historic Iraqi city that became infamous as IS's de facto capital in the country. Iraqi security forces retook Mosul last summer, but with no homes to return to, thousands stayed in camps. Over 1.9 million people remain displaced in Iraq, more than half of them children.

Starved of schooling

Over the years, Hammam al-Alil 2 became a bustling settlement: rows of tents with water and electricity access, plus storefronts, playgrounds, and a health centre. But aid groups only established a primary school this year, with five teachers instructing 2,500 kids up to age 10. That leaves around 5,000 camp children with no schooling, says school principal Ibrahim Khodr, 55. "There are many reasons kids can't attend school," Khodr says. "No documentation due to displacement, no encouragement by parents to finish schooling, tough financial situations, and the fact that families — especially those without breadwinners — send their children to work."

Khodr says education authorities in Nineveh province have pledged to establish a school for older kids. "We can't keep teaching in these circumstances. The Nineveh education directorate and the ministry of education must act to alleviate this suffering." Human Rights Watch researcher Belkis



HAMMAM AL-ALIL: School children hold UNICEF school supplies at a (UNHCR) camp for displaced people in Hammam Al-Alil, south of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. —AFP

Wille told AFP Iraq's policy of barring school access for undocumented children was "shocking". "Iraq should be engaging in every effort to reintegrate the hundreds of thousands of families who lived under IS for three years," she said. "A key way of ensuring they are brought back into the fold is through putting their children back into Iraqi schools as quickly as possible."

But even with the right paperwork, school remains too expensive for some families. Abdulkhalil Julud, 37, cannot

afford to educate his five children. "Our difficult financial situation means I can't buy what they need for school: clothes, backpacks, notebooks," says Julud. "I'm unemployed and we don't have savings. We live off whatever food aid we get in the camp." Iraqi students from poorer backgrounds are much less likely to attend or finish school than wealthier classmates, the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF) says. Nineveh in particular has one of the lowest completion rates for primary or secondary schools. —AFP

Libya migrant rescue ship seeks Xmas port

ROME: A civilian ship with 33 migrants aboard rescued off the Libyan coast appealed yesterday for a European port to take them to before the weather turns at Christmas. German NGO ship Sea Watch 3 rescued the migrants, including four women and six children, when they were in difficulty attempting the perilous journey across the Mediterranean on Saturday. "We have requested a

port of safety to disembark those people." Sea Watch spokesman Ruben Neugebauer told AFP. "There is no country willing so far to offer the people safe port." Requests to receive the Dutch-flagged vessel have been made to several countries, he said, and Italy and Malta have refused. Their governments say that they have to bear an unfair burden of migrants arriving from Africa.

"We will try everything to get a port of safety before Christmas, because on the 25th the weather is worsening, so we urge European states to find a solution within the next 24 hours," Neugebauer said. The rescued migrants include people from Nigeria, Libya and Ivory Coast. A Spanish civilian rescue ship with over 300 migrants also rescued off Libya was on Saturday author-

ized to sail to Spain after Malta and Italy declined to let it come to port. A newborn baby and his mother were helicoptered from the ship operated by Proactiva Open Arms to safety in Malta.

Sea Watch said that they had attempted to contact the Libyan search and rescue coordination centre but with no response. 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 some leaders including Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini. Accusing the groups of acting as a "taxi service" for migrants, he has denied them access to Italy's ports. —AFP

Somalia bombing death toll hits 20

MOGADISHU: The death toll from a double car-bomb attack near the presidential palace in Somalia rose to 20 yesterday, police said. Police on Saturday had said seven people were killed following the two blasts in Mogadishu, which were claimed by the jihadist Shabaab group. "The number of victims who were killed in the blasts increased to 20 and more than 40 others have been wounded," said a Somali police official, Ibrahim Mohamed.

He said the toll had risen after some of those wounded on Saturday died in hospital. Both civilians and members from the security forces were among the casualties, the official said. Somalia's London-based Universal TV said on Saturday that three of its staff were among the fatalities, naming one as Somali and British dual national Awil Dahir. Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed condemned the "cowardly attacks". "We

will continue defeating terrorists in order to lead the Somali people to stability and prosperity," he said in a statement.

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairi visited the wounded in hospital. The first explosion happened at a checkpoint outside the national theatre, some 500 metres (yards) from the palace on Saturday morning. The second blast, more powerful according to witnesses, came minutes later at a nearby crossroads. Mohamed Abdullahi, a senior local official who was slightly wounded in the first blast, said members of his security team were among the dead. "Seven of my security escort and a driver were among those killed in the blast, but such attacks will encourage our efforts to redouble the war against terrorists", he said in a statement.

A Shabaab statement on Saturday said the Islamist group's "martyrdom operation" had targeted "a security checkpoint that used to protect the presidential palace." The group was largely driven out of the capital in 2011 and has lost many of its strongholds. But it retains control of large rural swathes of the



MOGADISHU: Somali people walk next to the scene of a car bombing attack in Mogadishu, Somalia. —AFP

country and continues to wage a guerrilla war against the authorities. The group has vowed to topple the internationally-backed government. The worst carnage

to date in Somalia occurred on October 14 last year when 512 people were killed in Hodan, a busy commercial district in the capital. —AFP

In areas backed by Turkey, Syrians hail US withdrawal

AZAZ: Residents and fighters in territory held by pro-Turkish rebels in northern Syria cautiously welcomed Washington's decision to pull out troops, viewing it as a chance to push further into Kurdish territory. "The withdrawal is positive", said Mustafa Hamush, a resident of Azaz, a city at the heart of a Turkish zone of influence in Syria's bewilderingly complex civil war. "When the US withdraws its forces, the Kurdish authorities will automatically be weakened," said the 20-year-old fashion designer, adding that Turkey and its Syrian rebel allies could seize Kurdish-held regions east of the Euphrates River. Even before US President Donald Trump shocked allies by announcing the pullout on Wednesday, Turkey had already upped its threats of a new offensive against Syria's Kurds.

Early this year, Ankara dislodged the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) from Afrin, seizing a key stronghold in a US-backed federation that accounts for around 30 percent of Syria's territory. Washington and other powers in an anti-jihadist coalition have supported the Kurds as a bulwark against the Islamic State group — another protagonist in Syria's multi-fronted conflict. For pharmacist Omar Kazila, also 20, territory under Ankara's control will increase significantly "if Turkey seizes these regions and replaces the American forces".

IS to fill void?

Not everyone in the Turkish-backed rebel zone sees the US withdrawal as an unadulterated positive. Some residents believe the void left by the planned US departure could see Syria's military reclaim yet more ground, rather than the Turks extending their own sphere of influence. Kurdish authorities could mend fences with Damascus, joining forces to better protect themselves against a possible offensive by Ankara, with the Kurds maintaining a degree of autonomy. The Syrian regime has regained significant ground since Russia intervened on its side in 2015. Opposition groups — including Turkish-backed forces and a former branch of Al-Qaeda — now control less than 10 percent of the country's territory.

For Ahmad Faruh, a resident of Azaz, the American withdrawal risks being exploited by IS, allowing it to stage a comeback in Syria. The extremist group has seen its territory shrink to a few pockets, its once vast self-declared "caliphate" squeezed by separate offensives by the Washington-backed Kurds and Syria's Moscow-aligned regime. "The US withdrawal and the absence of coalition planes could reinforce IS and (enable it) to control new regions," the 20-year-old student cautioned.

On the frontline, these fears of a jihadist resurgence are shared by some Turkish-backed fighters. But the forces on the ground are up to the challenge, asserted Mahmud Abu Abdullah, a fighter with rebel group Al-Jabha Al-Shamiya. He said the Ankara-backed rebel factions in Syria are ready to take the fight to IS again, as they did in a major Turkish-sponsored operation in 2016 in Jarablus and Al-Bab. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed this week to eliminate both IS and Kurdish militias in northern Syria, on Friday saying an offensive would start in the coming months. —AFP

International

US shutdown enters its second day, set to last through Xmas

Trump digs in on his demand for border wall

WASHINGTON: A partial US government shutdown that entered its second day yesterday was set to stretch through Christmas, after Congress adjourned for the weekend with no deal in sight to end an impasse over funding for President Donald Trump's wall on the US-Mexico border. Due to the shutdown - in which several key US agencies ceased operations at 12:01 am Saturday - Trump said he would remain in Washington over Christmas instead of going to Florida.

"I am in the White House, working hard," the Republican president tweeted. "We are negotiating with the Democrats on desperately needed Border Security (Gangs, Drugs, Human Trafficking & more) but it could be a long stay." Trump has dug in on his demand for \$5 billion for construction of the border wall, a signature campaign promise and part of his effort to reduce illegal immigration. Democrats are staunchly opposed, and the absence of a deal meant federal funds for dozens of agencies lapsed at midnight Friday. The House of Representatives and the Senate held sessions on Saturday, but both chambers adjourned without agreement, and no votes were expected until Thursday.

Visitors to the capital's park-like National Mall, home to attractions including war memorials and the towering Washington Monument, criticized the shutdown which added to an air of chaos in a capital still reeling from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis's resignation last week over Trump policies. The uncertainty also helped push Wall Street into another rout on Friday, ending its worst week in a decade. "Oh I think it's ridiculous. It's unnecessary," Philip Gibbs, a retired business professor from South Virginia, said of the shutdown. Jeffrey Grignon, a Wisconsin healthcare worker, said the politicians "need to stop acting like children" and do the work they were elected to do. "It isn't just one or two people. It's all them," he said.



US president and Democrats face off

The year's third shutdown

Another visitor, Howard Vander Griend, 57, predicted Trump will come out a winner from the budget impasse. "I don't think the shutdown will pressure president Trump at all," said Vander Griend, of Tennessee. "So I think he will get what he wants and I think that's a good thing." Although tourists could still stroll along the Mall and visit its open-air sites, they found public restrooms closed. Some other Washington tourist sites including the White House Visitor Center, National Christmas Tree, and National Archives — home to the US Constitution and other historic documents — were closed.

Some national parks have shuttered completely, but New York's governor provided funding to the Statue of Liberty monument and Ellis Island so those attractions could remain open. This is the third partial government shutdown of the year, even though Trump's own Republican party still controls both the House and Senate. That will change in January when the House comes under Democratic control. Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer

blamed the president for provoking the latest furlough. "The Trump shutdown isn't over border security; it's because President Trump is demanding billions of dollars for an expensive, ineffective wall that the majority of Americans don't support," Schumer said.

Most critical US security functions remain operational, but 800,000 federal workers are affected, with many furloughed before Christmas. Others deemed essential, including Transportation Security Administration officers screening passengers during the holiday crush, are working unpaid. Governor Ralph Northam of Virginia — a state bordering the US capital that is home to many federal employees — urged Trump in a letter Saturday to push immediate action to end the shutdown, saying it "inflicts real harm" on workers. "I share your desire for



WASHINGTON: The US Capitol is seen as the federal government is in a partial shutdown in Washington, DC. Republicans and Democrats can't seem to agree on President Donald Trump's demands for \$5 billion dollars to go toward building a wall on the US southern border. —AFP

strong economic growth throughout the United States, but the current partial government shutdown makes it harder to achieve this goal," the Democratic governor said.

Demands from conservatives

About three-quarters of the government, including the military and the Department of Health and Human Services, is fully funded until the end of September 2019, leaving 25 percent unfunded as of Saturday. One focus of last-minute discussions was \$1.6 billion in border security support that was a part of pending Senate legislation, number two Senate Republican John Cornyn told AFP. Conservatives in the House

would likely balk at that figure.

Trump had 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 February 8 to allow time for debate about issues including border security, but it contained no money for a wall. With ultra-conservative lawmakers and media commentators demanding that the president stick to his campaign promises, Trump stood his ground on the wall. The House then swiftly passed a bill that fulfilled the president's demands and included \$5.7 billion in wall funding, but it stalled at the first hurdle in the Senate. —AFP

News in brief

Egypt kills 14 militants

CAIRO: Egyptian security forces have killed 14 Islamist militants in an exchange of fire in the country's turbulent northern Sinai region, the interior ministry said yesterday. The militants were under surveillance ahead of security forces raiding their hideout in the town of El-Arish, the ministry said in a statement. An exchange of fire lasting several hours killed eight militants, the ministry said without detailing when the raid took place. The other six attempted to flee but were killed in a police chase. The militants were suspected of planning attacks on "important and vital facilities", armed forces and police personnel, the interior ministry said. Egypt has for years been battling an insurgency in North Sinai, which upsurged following the 2013 military ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. Hundreds of police and soldiers have since been killed in militant attacks. —AFP

Attack in Congo kills 5

BENI: At least five people, including four civilians, were killed in an attack by suspected Ugandan rebels in DR Congo, an AFP correspondent and witnesses said yesterday. The attack by Uganda-based Allied Democratic Forces targeted the locality of Masiani in the Beni region of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo overnight. An AFP correspondent saw the bodies of a soldier and four civilians—three men and one woman—in the hospital morgue in Beni following the attack. Three people wounded were treated in hospital in Beni. Witnesses said the death toll from the incursion "by the ADF" could be as high as eight. Neither the authorities nor the army confirmed the attack. The ADF, which has operated in DR Congo since 1995, is a loose grouping of Islamist groups with an opaque leadership which opposes President Yoweri Museveni. Forced out of Uganda, they have been accused of carrying out a series of massacres of hundreds of civilians since October 2014. —AFP

Myanmar police found dead

YANGON: The bullet-riddled body of a Myanmar policeman was found in northern Rakhine state, government media said yesterday, as tensions rise in the hotspot where the Rohingya crisis erupted last year. The western territory is a tinderbox of ethnic and religious divisions and security forces have clashed with both Rohingya insurgents and much better armed Rakhine fighters from the mostly Buddhist Arakan Army. Private Aung Kyaw The went missing in action after an ambush last week by unknown assailants in Maungdaw township near the border with Bangladesh. His body was found two days ago with "gunshot wounds in his face, arm and leg near a hill inside the other country," according to government-backed Global New Light of Myanmar. —AFP

UK ex-Lib Dem leader dies

LONDON: Paddy Ashdown, the former leader of Britain's Liberal Democrats who served as the international high representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, died Saturday at the age of 77, his party announced. He made an "immeasurable contribution to furthering the cause of liberalism" and will be "desperately missed", the Lib Dems said in a statement. Ashdown, a former special forces officer, led the centrist Liberal Democrats in opposition from 1988 until 1999, reviving their fortunes after years in the wilderness. He served as the international high representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2002 to 2006. He revealed in November that he was being treated for bladder cancer. "I have the best of people and the best of friends to fight this with, which makes me, as so often in my life, very lucky," Ashdown said. —AFP

Spiegel to file criminal complaint against cheating reporter

BERLIN: Influential German news weekly Der Spiegel said yesterday it would file a criminal complaint against a disgraced reporter after it emerged he may have embezzled donations intended for Syrian street children. Claas Relotius, 33, resigned this month after admitting to making up stories and inventing protagonists in more than a dozen articles in the magazine's print and online editions. Spiegel said it now had information that Relotius allegedly launched a campaign for readers to give money to help subjects of an article he wrote but that the bank details he gave directed the funds to his own account. "Der Spiegel will give all the information it collects to

public prosecutors as part of a criminal complaint," it said on its website.

Spiegel said concerned readers had in recent days reported Relotius's call for donations purportedly for orphaned Syrian children living on the streets of Turkey. It said it had been unaware of the campaign and that it was not immediately clear how much money was raised from the appeal, apparently made by email to readers who contacted him about the story. Spiegel published the article by Relotius in July 2016 but a Turkish photographer who worked with him on the piece has since noted significant inaccuracies.

The magazine said it now believes Relotius may have simply made up one of the main protagonists, whom the article described as young siblings. Relotius described his attempts to help the children in a subsequent collection of articles, including a months-long effort to bring the children to Germany to be adopted by a family. Spiegel said this also appeared to be a lie. In its most recent edition, the magazine said the

Protesters block women going to flashpoint temple

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Hundreds of Hindu devotees yesterday blocked a path leading to one of the religion's holiest temples in southern India to stop a group of women making a new attempt to reach the landmark. Women

activists have been trying to enter the Sabrimala temple complex in Kerala state since a September ruling by the Supreme Court overturned a longstanding ban on women of childbearing age from visiting the shrine.

Tensions peaked again after 11 women reached the village of Pamba at the foot of the hill with the Sabrimala shrine at the top. Pilgrims have to walk about four hours to reach the shrine but hundreds of protesters, including women, from across India blocked the path, noisily vowing not to let the women pass. "The women are adamant they won't withdraw until they have seen the deity at the Sabarimala temple," said Selvi, a leader of the women, who only uses one name. Police held

and other areas. Two demonstrators were killed in Athara and six others in Al-Qadaf, officials had said Thursday, as protesters torched offices of President Omar al-Bashir's ruling National Congress Party (NCP). Mahdi called for a "national and international investigation" into the deaths and said demonstrations will continue to rock Sudan.

The protest movement "is legal and was launched because of the deteriorating situation in Sudan," he said in his first news conference since returning home on Wednesday after almost a year in exile. A fixture of Sudanese politics since the 1960s, Mahdi was prime minister from 1966 to 1967 and again from 1986 to 1989. His government was the last one to be democratically elected in Sudan, before it was toppled by a 1989 coup launched by Bashir. Since then Mahdi's Umma Party has acted as Sudan's main opposition group and has regularly campaigned against the policies of Bashir's government.

Demonstrations spread

According to witnesses, demonstrations spread on Saturday to several more cities. Around 300 people gathered in the centre of Wad Madani, south-east of Khartoum, "chanting 'the people want the



HAMBURG: The head office of German publishing house 'Der Spiegel' is pictured in Hamburg, northern Germany. —AFP

scam was the "worst thing that can happen to an editorial team". Acknowledging the damage to faith in its

own work and the media in general, it apologized promised to "do everything to boost our credibility again." —AFP

talks between the two sides in a bid to end the showdown.

"We are monitoring the situation and will follow the decision of the High court appointed monitoring committee," Kerala state government minister for cooperation Kadakampally Surendran told journalists. Hundreds of thousands of Hindus - men, young girls and elderly women - normally trek to the temple during the current festival season. But Sabrimala has become a major battleground between Hindu radicals and gender activists since the Supreme Court's landmark revocation of the ban on women between 10 and 50, which has sparked waves of protests and shutdowns across Kerala. —AFP



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

fall of the regime," one witness told AFP by phone. Police responded with tear gas and by hitting the protesters with batons, he added. In El Rahad south-west of Khartoum, hundreds of demonstrators shouting "no to hunger" were tear gassed, while administrative premises and the office of the NCP were set on fire, accord-

ing to another witness. North of the capital in Al-Obeid protesters clashed with police who fired tear gas, witnesses told AFP. Government spokesman Bashar Jumaa had on Friday warned that authorities "will not be lenient" with those who set state buildings on fire or cause other damage to public property. —AFP

International

Exonerated but not free: Asia Bibi to spend Xmas in custody

Pakistani extremists call for her blood

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi will celebrate Christmas under guard, despite being cleared of the blasphemy charges that kept her in jail since 2010. Bibi - a former laborer who was on death row for eight years - remains a prime target in conservative Muslim-majority Pakistan, with extremists calling for her blood and the government refusing to reveal her location out of fear for her safety.

"It's too dangerous... People want to kill her," said Yousaf Hadayat, a resident from one of Islamabad's impoverished Christian ghettos, littered this week by a smattering of Santa hats and Christmas trees. Security this Christmas, like many before it, will be tight with the government set to deploy armed forces to the Christian colonies. Residents say they feel more uneasy than ever during the religious holiday while Bibi's fate continues to loom large. "We're afraid," said Pastor Munawar Inayat at Holy of Holies Church in Islamabad. "We can't speak against anyone."

The Supreme Court overturned Bibi's death sentence for blasphemy in October, and she has legally been a free woman ever since. But the ruling ignited days of violent demonstrations that paralysed large swathes of the country, with enraged Islamists calling for her beheading, mutiny within the powerful military and the assassination of the country's top judges. The government has since launched a crackdown on the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) party - the Islamist group driving the violent protests - charging its leaders with sedition and terrorism.

But authorities also struck a deal with the protesters to end the violence, forming an agreement which included allowing a final review of the Supreme Court's judgment. Bibi, who is seeking asylum abroad, is believed to be in protective custody inside Pakistan as the review continues. But there is no clear timeline for when it will be completed. A government spokesman refused to comment on its status, saying only that the matter is with the court. Analyst Fasi Zaka warned that the longer Bibi remains in limbo, the

greater the danger. "For some elements if they don't have access to Asia Bibi they'll find stand-ins for their vengeance," he told AFP.

'Lighting rod'

Blasphemy continues to be a massively inflammatory issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where even unproven accusations of insulting Islam can spark lynchings. Many cases see Muslims accusing Muslims. But rights activists have warned that minorities - particularly Christians - are often caught in the crossfire, with blasphemy charges used to settle personal scores. "This is a lighting rod issue that affects a whole community," said Zaka. The allegations against Bibi date back to 2009, when a fight erupted between her and fellow Muslim laborers, who later accused Bibi of blasphemy. She was convicted under Pakistan's controversial anti-blasphemy laws and in 2010 sentenced to death. Since her acquittal speculation has been rife that an asylum deal with a European or North American country may be in the works.

Many residents of the 100 Quarters Colony in Islamabad cautioned against Bibi's release, saying her safety would only be guaranteed once she was granted asylum in a foreign country. "No, no. She cannot stay," said resident Hadayat. Polio campaign worker Shahnaz Arif argued against Bibi's ongoing custody. "We should get the same freedom that others enjoy," she said. Even so she admitted she was afraid, citing Pakistan's long history of political assassinations, including some over blasphemy. "There is not enough security for our leaders - we are just poor citizens," she explained.

Blacklisted

Christians - who make up around two percent of the population - occupy one of the lowest rungs in class-obsessed Pakistani society, largely living in slums and working menial jobs as street sweepers, cleaners and



ISLAMABAD: Christmas decoration seller Amjab Burgkat tidies his shop in 100 Quarters Colony, one of Islamabad's impoverished Christian ghettos. Security this Christmas in Pakistan, like many before it, will be tight with the government set to deploy armed forces to the Christian colonies. Residents say they feel more uneasy than ever during the religious holiday while the fate of Asia Bibi - a Christian who was on death row for eight years after being convicted under the country's controversial anti-blasphemy laws - continues to loom large. —AFP

cooks. The tension comes as Washington added Pakistan this month to a blacklist of countries that it says wantonly violate religious freedom, citing the country's high number of blasphemy convictions and failure to hold perpetrators targeting religious minorities to account. Islamabad later dismissed the US move as politically motivated. Back in the

100 Quarters Colony, residents said their thoughts were with a mother who has already spent many Christmases in solitary confinement. "Christmas is celebrated with near and dear ones, and not in custody," said Christmas decoration seller Amjab Burgkat. "There are security fears, but she should celebrate Christmas with her family." —AFP

Singapore's 'freegans' find treasure in trash

SINGAPORE: A new movement in Singapore that seeks to reduce the amount of consumer waste in the affluent city-state is scavenging for unwanted goods, some in near-mint condition, that migrant workers can send home for the holidays. "Freegans", broadly defined as people committed to cutting wasteful production and consumption, have connected with thousands of foreign labourers from lower-income countries, many of whom cannot afford the products sold in the city's shiny shopping malls.

In Singapore, the luxurious backdrop for the movie "Crazy Rich Asians", what passes as trash for one household ends up in a

shipping container on its way to the home country of a migrant worker. "We should give whatever we have in excess to the poor instead of throwing it away," said Colin Lau, a member of the "Freegan in Singapore" Facebook group whose 6,500 members includes Singaporeans and foreigners. Some members like Lau search dumpsters and rubbish bins, retrieving discarded items and re-using them or sharing with others in an effort to save money and the environment.

Singapore's waste is incinerated or shipped to its only landfill on a nearby man-made island. The National Environment Agency (NEA) has estimated that the landfill could reach capacity by 2035, a decade earlier than initially projected. The freegans often post photos of their discoveries, including barely-worn clothing, jewelry, electronics and luxury goods such as handbags. They also share items with migrant workers at weekly giveaways. At one such

gathering before the year-end holidays, freegans held a lucky draw for discarded luxury items and electronics. Glendrose Gorriceta, a 45-year-old domestic worker from the Philippines, screamed triumphantly after receiving a Louis Vuitton handbag at her first giveaway.

Other secondhand items in the lucky draw included a Coach handbag and a set of Sony speakers, both in excellent condition. Virginia Andrade, 52, said this year she was able to send home two television sets, a laptop for her son, and two wheelchairs for her mother and sister who are unable to walk after suffering strokes. "Since I have started sending things back we don't have to buy clothes anymore and we use money for food and school fees instead," Andrade said. "I've told my family that the items they receive are donated and some are from the dumpster. They are so thankful to Colin and his friends," she added. —Reuters

Japan emperor draws huge birthday crowd before abdication

TOKYO: More than 82,000 well-wishers paid their respects to Emperor Akihito who turned 85 yesterday, his last birthday celebration at Tokyo's Imperial Palace before stepping down next year. The birthday of the emperor, whose position is ceremonial with no political power, is traditionally marked by a national holiday and an address at the palace, which opens to the public on the day.

The crowd of 82,850, according to the Imperial Household Agency, was the largest birthday attendance during Akihito's three-decade reign, known as the "Heisei" era, which means "achieving peace" in Japanese. Akihito -

flanked by his wife, eldest son Naruhito and other members of the imperial family on a balcony - addressed well-wishers waving small Japanese flags and holding up smartphones.

"My thoughts go out to those who have lost family members or those close to them, or have suffered damage and whose lives are currently impaired," he said, referring to the natural disasters that hit Japan in the past year. Earthquakes, severe storms and heatwaves killed hundreds of people, destroyed homes and disrupted supply chains, clouding the outlook for Japan's export-reliant economy. Along with Empress Michiko, Akihito has spent much of his reign addressing the legacy of World War Two, which was fought in the name of his father, Hirohito, and consoling victims of natural disasters.

"I would like to thank him for standing by us, the Japanese people, and would like him to rest and enjoy his time from now on," said 46-year-old Kazuyo Toyama from Nagoya. Akihito, who has had heart surgery and treatment for prostate cancer, is scheduled to step down on April 30,

passing the Chrysanthemum Throne to 58-year-old Crown Prince Naruhito.

The last time a Japanese emperor abdicated was in 1817. Although he cannot directly influence government policy, Akihito has created a broader consciousness of Japan's wartime past throughout his symbolic reign, experts said. In comments made to the media ahead of his birthday, Akihito said "it is important not to forget that countless lives were lost in World War Two...and to pass on this history accurately to those born after the war".

His conciliatory stance contrasts with gestures made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has adopted a less apologetic tone over Japan's past military aggression. Akihito also referred to foreign workers, saying he hoped that "the Japanese people will be able to warmly welcome as members of our society those who come to Japan to work". Japan enacted a law this month to let in more foreign, blue-collar workers to ease a labor shortage, despite criticism it was too hastily crafted and risked exposing the workers to exploitation. —Reuters

Afghan leader replaces top security chiefs in major shake-up

KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani yesterday replaced two of the country's top security chiefs with staunch anti-Taliban officials, in a major shake-up days after US President Donald Trump's decision to slash troop numbers in the country. Amrullah Saleh and Assadullah Khaled, both former heads of the Afghan intelligence agency, have been appointed to the critical posts of interior minister and defense minister, respectively, a presidential decree said. There was no official explanation for the sudden reshuffle. But it comes four months after Ghani rejected the resignations of former interior minister Wais Ahmad Barnak and defense minister Tariq Shah Bahrami following criticism over an increasingly deadly insurgency.

The move caps a tumultuous few days for Afghanistan after an American official told AFP late last week that Trump had decided to pull out "roughly half" of the 14,000 US forces in the country. The unexpected move stunned and dismayed foreign diplomats and Afghan officials in Kabul who are intensifying a push to end the 17-year conflict with the Taliban. While the Taliban has not issued a formal statement on Trump's plan, a senior commander told AFP the group was "more than happy". Trump's decision apparently came Tuesday as US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad met with the Taliban in Abu Dhabi, part of efforts to bring the militants to the negotiating table with Kabul. —AFP

Kuwait Times

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Analysis

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Washington Watch

'Cut away': Dual nationals feel cast adrift in Japan

When Yuki Shiraiishi passes through immigration at Tokyo airport, she is hit with a wave of shame and embarrassment. While her parents whizz through the line for Japanese nationals, she is stuck with the foreigners, surreptitiously trying to hide her Swiss passport. Shiraiishi is one of an estimated million citizens forced to give up their Japanese nationality when they became dual nationals.

The issue was thrust into the spotlight when tennis star Naomi Osaka won the US Open. The 21-year-old has a Japanese mother, a Haitian father and was born in Japan but raised in the United States. She has dual citizenship but will technically have to decide by her 22nd birthday which flag to play under, unless Japanese authorities turn a blind eye to a special case. Shiraiishi, now 34, is battling for change. With a group of others, she filed a suit this year against the Japanese government in a bid to reform what critics see as an antiquated and obsolete system.

'I was being rejected'

She was born and raised in Switzerland, her parents working for the UN and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Shortly before she turned 16, she took her parents' advice and obtained Swiss nationality to facilitate day-to-day administrative issues. It was only when she returned to Japan, six years later, that she realized what that decision meant.

Her father, a lawyer, advised her to return her Japanese passport. "For him, there was no question of me living 'hidden', residing against Japanese laws by holding two passports in secret." She went to the consulate and describes a sad experience of feeling thrown out by her own country. "I realized that, without any reason, I was being rejected. I was being cut away from my country even though I was born with a Japanese passport, my two parents are Japanese and I still have very close ties with Japan," she said.

What really stung was when her name was transformed for official purposes from the traditional kanji letters to a Western-style alphabet. "I pretended that it was just an administrative thing. But in fact, it really hurt," she said. Hitoshi Nogawa, who is also suing the government, lost his Japanese nationality after gaining a Swiss passport and blasts what he says is a law stuck in the past. "Japan was closed off to other countries for around 250 years and the lawmakers at the time never imagined that Japanese people would one day go to work abroad," said the 75-year-old. Shiraiishi said the law is "absurd" and has "stripped me of my nationality without my consent". "I am Japanese and Swiss, like a child who sticks to two parents, not just one of them," she said.

'One people'

The relevant department in the justice ministry declined to comment on the specific case "because it could interfere" with the legal procedure. But authorities recalled that the law cuts both ways - it also allows people the freedom to give up their Japanese nationality if they choose. According to the letter of the law, anyone who has not chosen either way within the period prescribed is required to make a decision within a month or they are stripped of their nationality.

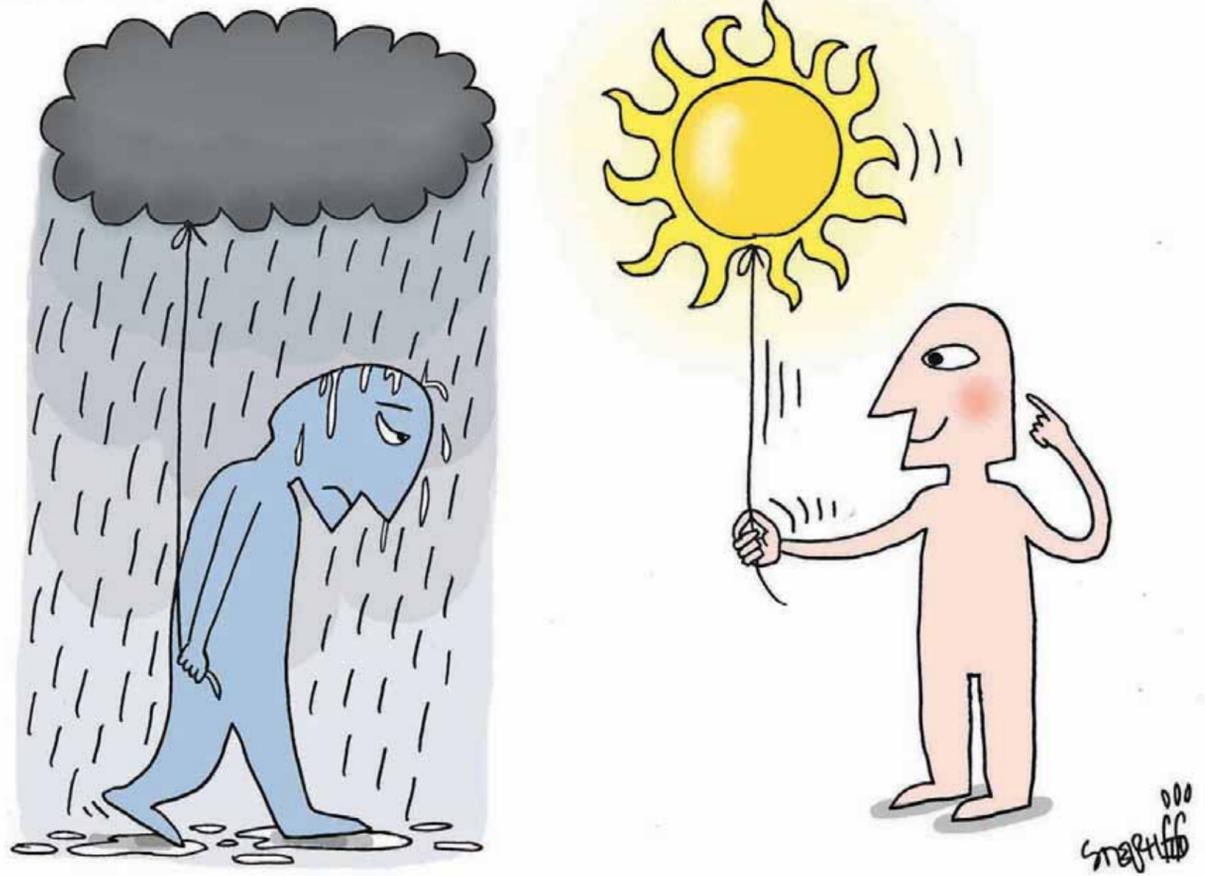
In practice, though, the justice ministry has never sent such a demand. It says it was aware of 900,000 people with dual nationality between 1985 and 2016. But the actual figure could be larger or smaller. For Shiki Tomimasa, the attorney in charge of the suit, this makes the law all the more ridiculous. "Everything rests on a personal declaration so unless an individual admits to having dual nationality, the government will never realize."

Japan is one of around 50 countries in the world that allows only one nationality. In Asia, China and South Korea also impose such a law. Atsushi Kondo, law professor at the University of Meijo near Nagoya in western Japan, said there was one main reason the government was unwilling to change the law. "The majority of the population want Japan to remain a country of one people and perhaps linked to that is the idea that we do not want to become a country of immigration." — AFP



In this photo taken on Sept 8, 2018, US Open women's single champion Naomi Osaka of Japan holds the trophy at the 2018 US Open in New York. — AFP

Cartoon for the Soul



Alexa talks murder, sex in AI experiment

Millions of users of Amazon's Echo speakers have grown accustomed to the soothing strains of Alexa, the human-sounding virtual assistant that can tell them the weather, order takeout and handle other basic tasks in response to a voice command. So a customer was shocked last year when Alexa blurted out: "Kill your foster parents." Alexa has also chatted with users about sex acts. She gave a discourse on dog defecation. And this summer, a hack Amazon traced back to China may have exposed some customers' data, according to five people familiar with the events.

Alexa is not having a breakdown. The episodes, previously unreported, arise from Amazon.com Inc's strategy to make Alexa a better communicator. New research is helping Alexa mimic human banter and talk about almost anything she finds on the internet. However, ensuring she does not offend users has been a challenge for the world's largest online retailer. At stake is a fast-growing market for gadgets with virtual assistants. An estimated two-thirds of US smart-speaker customers, about 43 million people, use Amazon's Echo devices, according to research firm eMarketer. It is a lead the company wants to maintain over the Google Home from Alphabet Inc and the HomePod from Apple Inc.

Over time, Amazon wants to get better at handling complex customer needs through Alexa, be they home security, shopping or companionship. "Many of our AI dreams are inspired by science fiction," said Rohit Prasad, Amazon's vice president and head scientist of Alexa Artificial Intelligence (AI), during a talk last month in Las Vegas. To make that happen, the company in 2016 launched the annual Alexa Prize, enlisting computer science students to improve the assistant's conversation skills.

Teams vie for the \$500,000 first prize by creating talking computer systems known as chatbots that allow Alexa to attempt more sophisticated discussions with people. Amazon customers can participate by saying "let's chat" to their devices. Alexa then tells users that one of the bots will take over, unshackling the voice aide's normal constraints. From August to November alone, three bots that made it to this year's finals had 1.7 million conversations, Amazon said. The project has been important to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, who signed off on using the company's customers as guinea pigs, one of the people said.

Amazon has been willing to accept the risk of public blunders to stress-test the technology in real life and move Alexa faster up the learning curve, the person said. The experiment is already bearing fruit. The university teams are helping Alexa have a wider range of conversations. Amazon customers have also given the bots better ratings this year than last, the company said. But Alexa's gaffes are alienating others, and Bezos on occasion has ordered staff to shut down a bot, three people familiar with the matter said. The user who was told to whack his foster parents wrote a harsh review on Amazon's website, calling the situation "a whole new level of creepy". A probe into the

incident found the bot had quoted a post without context from Reddit, the social news aggregation site, according to the people. The privacy implications may be even messier. Consumers might not realize that some of their most sensitive conversations are being recorded by Amazon's devices, information that could be highly prized by criminals, law enforcement, marketers and others.

On Thursday, Amazon said a "human error" let an Alexa customer in Germany access another user's voice recordings accidentally. "The potential uses for the Amazon datasets are off the charts," said Marc Groman, an expert on privacy and technology policy who teaches at

Georgetown Law. "How are they going to ensure that, as they share their data, it is being used responsibly" and will not lead to a "data-driven catastrophe" like the recent woes at Facebook?

In July, Amazon discovered one of the student-designed bots had been hit by a hacker in China, people familiar with the incident said. This compromised a digital key that could have unlocked transcripts of the bot's conversations, stripped of users' names. Amazon quickly disabled the bot and made the students rebuild it for extra security. It was unclear what entity in China was responsible, according to the people. The company acknowledged the event in a statement. "At no time were any internal Amazon systems or customer identifiable data impacted," it said.

Amazon declined to discuss specific Alexa blunders reported by Reuters, but stressed its ongoing work to protect customers from offensive content. "These instances are quite rare especially given the fact that millions of customers have interacted with the socialbots," Amazon said. Like Google's search engine, Alexa has the potential to become a dominant gateway to the internet, so the company is pressing ahead. "By controlling that gateway, you can build a super profitable business," said Kartik Hosanagar, a Wharton professor studying the digital economy.

Amazon's business strategy for Alexa has meant tackling a massive research problem: How do you teach the art of conversation to a computer? Alexa relies on machine learning, the most popular form of AI, to work. These com-

puter programs transcribe human speech and then respond to that input with an educated guess based on what they have observed before. Alexa "learns" from new interactions, gradually improving over time.

In this way, Alexa can execute simple orders: "Play the Rolling Stones." And she knows which script to use for popular questions such as: "What is the meaning of life?" Human editors at Amazon pen many of the answers. That is where Amazon is now. The Alexa Prize chatbots are forging the path to where Amazon aims to be, with an assistant capable of natural, open-ended dialogue. That requires Alexa to understand a broader set of verbal cues from customers, a task that is challenging even for humans.

This year's Alexa Prize winner, a 12-person team from the University of California, Davis, used more than 300,000 movie quotes to train computer models to recognize distinct sentences. Next, their bot determined which ones merited responses, categorizing social cues far more granularly than technology Amazon shared with contestants. For instance, the UC Davis bot recognizes the difference between a user expressing admiration ("that's cool") and a user expressing gratitude ("thank you").

The next challenge for social bots is figuring out how to respond appropriately to their human chat buddies. For the most part, teams programmed their bots to search the internet for material. They could retrieve news articles found in The Washington Post, the newspaper that Bezos privately owns, through a licensing deal that gave them access. They could pull facts from Wikipedia, a film database or the book recommendation site Goodreads. Or they could find a popular post on social media that seemed relevant to what a user last said.

That opened a Pandora's box for Amazon. During last year's contest, a team from Scotland's Heriot-Watt University found that its Alexa bot developed a nasty personality when they trained her to chat using comments from Reddit, whose members are known for their trolling and abuse. The team put guardrails in place so the bot would steer clear of risky subjects. But that did not stop Alexa from reciting the Wikipedia entry for masturbation to a customer, Heriot-Watt's team leader said.

One bot described sexual intercourse using words such as "deeper", which on its own is not offensive, but was vulgar in this particular context. "I don't know how you can catch that through machine-learning models. That's almost impossible," said a person familiar with the incident. Amazon has responded with tools the teams can use to filter profanity and sensitive topics, which can spot even subtle offenses. The company also scans transcripts of conversations and shuts down transgressive bots until they are fixed. But Amazon cannot anticipate every potential problem because sensitivities change over time. Amazon's Prasad said in an interview. That means Alexa could find new ways to shock her human listeners. "We are mostly reacting at this stage, but it's still progress over what it was last year," he said. — Reuters

Georgetown Law. "How are they going to ensure that, as they share their data, it is being used responsibly" and will not lead to a "data-driven catastrophe" like the recent woes at Facebook?

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Amazon's business strategy for Alexa has meant tackling a massive research problem: How do you teach the art of conversation to a computer? Alexa relies on machine learning, the most popular form of AI, to work. These com-

Zimbabwe economic crisis wipes out cheer

At Solomon Chakauya's grocery store in Zimbabwe's Chinamhora district outside Harare, there's no sign of the seasonal Christmas rush that he needs to keep his business afloat. Even in the country's toughest times, sales rocketed in the days before Christmas, but this year few people are able to buy anything. It is a far cry from the revived economy that President Emmerson Mnangagwa promised more than a year ago when he took over from the ousted Robert Mugabe.

Instead, shortages of bread, cooking oil and fuel have worsened in recent months, banknotes become even scarcer and shop shelves have often been left bare. "In previous years, people would stream in to buy things like rice, oil, biscuits, sweets, soup powder and drinks. It was so busy I would be on my feet all day," Chakauya, 29, told AFP. "Things are tough and most people have no money." But over this holiday season, Chakauya has

sometimes had only four customers a day, leaving him to kill time sitting in the shade in front of his store.

Local villager Emilda Chingarambe said that for the first time in many years she could not buy her two daughters new clothes for Christmas day. "I don't consider it Christmas at all," said Chingarambe whose husband works part-time as a laborer tilling fields. "There is no bread in the shops. We can't afford flour and groceries we usually buy for Christmas."

Shortages have fuelled a ferocious climb in prices and long queues. In Chinamhora, a litre of cooking oil was around \$3.50 in early September and is now selling for \$10. Inflation is officially 20 percent. Once ubiquitous soft drinks such as Coca-Cola and the local Mazoe juice have also become hard to find. "I haven't seen Coca-Cola in the last two months," Chingarambe said.

No post-Mugabe boom
Zimbabwe's economy has been in dire straits since hyperinflation wiped out savings between 2007 and 2009 and the Zimbabwean dollar was abandoned. Under Mugabe, farms were seized, agriculture collapsed and investors fled as the country became internationally isolated. Mugabe's fall last year saw Mnangagwa - his former deputy - claim that he represented a fresh start. But the country has only lurched into fresh economic trouble after July that failed to encourage foreign investors or to unleash a flood of aid.

"The challenges have dampened the festive mood,"

Prosper Chitambar, economist at the think-tank Labour and Economic Research Institute, told AFP. "It does not look like there is going to be an immediate end to the queues and shortages. Next year, there is going to be lots of pressure on the government to increase salaries which will put pressure on expenditure."

The latest downturn erupted two months ago when finance minister Mthuli Ncube announced a two-percent tax on all electronic transactions to increase revenue. Zimbabweans rely on electronic payments in US dollars, which are in short supply and function as the main currency. The local "bond note" currency is little trusted. Many shops and pharmacies have closed down in the capital, Harare. Those still operating charge much more when customers pay electronically or in bond notes than in US dollars.

In one shop, a bottle of paracetamol syrup is 3 US dollars in cash, 15 dollars in bond notes - and 17 dollars when using a bank card. Doctors at state hospitals have been on strike for the past three weeks demanding salaries in US dollars while a group of teachers completed a 200-km walk from the eastern city of Mutare to Harare to demand better pay. At the ruling ZANU-PF party last week, Mnangagwa admitted the economy "was characterized by fuel shortages, high cost of drugs, medicines (and) wide range of basic commodities". He offered little immediate relief, instead blaming "gluttonous" businesses for price rises that "resulted in untold suffering to the majority of our people". — AFP

Business

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Burgan Bank increases authorized capital

Al-Ajeel: We are grateful for the continuous support and trust our shareholders have in us



(From left) Chief Executive Officer Raed Al Haqhaq, Chairman Majel Essaa Al Ajeel and Group Chief Financial Officer Khalid Al Zoman. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, Kuwait's second largest conventional bank by assets, raised its authorized capital ceiling after obtaining shareholders' approval in the 34th Extra-Ordinary General meeting held yesterday. The Bank's authorized capital ceiling was raised from KD 250,000,000 to KD 400,000,000 and it to be utilized in the future as needed.

Majed Essaa Al Ajeel, the Chairman of Burgan Bank commented: "We are grateful for the continuous support and trust our shareholders have placed in us. Increasing the authorized capital ceiling will allow the Bank in the future, and when needed, to maintain healthy capitalization ratios in accordance with the standards adopted by the regulatory authorities. It will

also allow the Bank to capture growth opportunities in the future." The Bank also approved the report of the External Auditors in this regard and the amendment of Article (6) of the Memorandum of Association and article (5) of the Articles of Association of the Bank as stipulated in agenda of Burgan Bank's 34th Extra-Ordinary General Assembly which was held yesterday.

Burgan Bank KPSC encompasses operations in Kuwait, and its share from its regional subsidiaries, namely Burgan Bank Turkey, Gulf Bank Algeria, Bank of Baghdad, Tunis International Bank. It has one of the largest regional branch networks across Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon as well as a representative office in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

No place like home: Dublin boom fuels housing spiral

DUBLIN: Sharing a studio flat in Dublin with two other people, Greek security guard Aris complains about the housing crisis that forces him to live in cramped conditions. "It's quite rough," said Aris, who splits the 850 euros (\$970) a month rent for the 30-square-metre flat. With scant storage space, personal belongings are relegated to the ground. A kitchen hob is within arm's reach of one mattress, while the other two are pushed together. "It's not humane conditions to live in Dublin," said 42-year-old, who moved to Ireland three years ago.

Rocketing prices have impoverished renters and pushed families into homelessness, leading to weekly protests in the streets of Dublin by affordable housing campaigners. Aris's situation is not rare in the capital, which is currently in the midst of a "perfect storm" that is driving the average rent to between 1,600 euros and 2,000 euros. Increased immigration, depleted stocks of social housing, an aversion to

building tall structures and simple greed following a hardscrabble recession are all factors.

Dublin's increasing role as a tech hub is also bringing high-earners to the city, whilst Airbnb is capitalising on the popularity of the city as a weekend-break destination — to the detriment of people looking for long-term rentals. At one point this year, the property site Daft.ie said there were just 1,258 properties available for long-term rent in Dublin, while Airbnb offered 1,419 short-term lets.

'People are desperate'

The irony is that Ireland witnesses an unprecedented property boom in the run-up to the 2008 financial crisis — a period known as the Celtic Tiger years. Construction of new properties ground to a halt after the crash, setting the scene for the current squeeze on housing stock as the Irish population grows rapidly due to a high birth rate and significant immigration rates. The results are clear in long-term rental advertisements: Rooms with vanishingly little floorspace are advertised for 1,000 euros and ranks of bunk beds in single rooms.

"There's such a pent-up demand for housing across all the tenures, that people are desperate," said John-Mark McCafferty, head of housing charity Threshold. "There's a whole suite of differ-

ent situations, whether it's people going into some level of poverty or people living in acutely overcrowded situations, and it's affecting people's quality of life."

At the bottom of the property ladder, people are falling off the lowest rung — unable to keep up with rents that have risen 10 percent on average in the last year alone. The most recent housing ministry figures show 1,295 families were in need of state-funded emergency accommodation during a single week in October. In August, images of a young mother staying overnight with six of her children in a police station — bedded down on metal waiting room chairs for want of emergency accommodation — shocked the nation.

One month later balaclava-clad policemen and private security evicted protesters from a grandiose but empty house in central Dublin. Many saw the move as heavy-handed. Since then, major housing marches of thousands have been regular fixtures, led by activist group Take Back the City. "Housing is a human right!" and "Homes for need not for greed!" have been staple chants in demonstrations.

'They're not doing enough'

Activists also occupied the offices of Airbnb — which has installed its European headquarters in the city. "Airbnb appears to have rapidly colonized vast amounts of our city, locking people



DUBLIN: Part of a mural is seen on a boarded-up property, depicting a recent eviction, where balaclava-clad policemen and private security evicted protesters and sealed up the property in Dublin City centre. — AFP

out of homes," the campaign group said in a statement. In November, they stormed the offices of the Residential Tenancies Board, a government body responsible for resolving rent disputes.

Prime Minister Leo Varadkar's government has tabled limits on letting with Airbnb, as well as stiff penalties of 30,000 euros (\$34,000) for landlords who breach rent inflation restrictions. The government is also aiming to encourage the building of new homes. At a ribbon-cutting ceremony

for a Dublin development in November, Varadkar was ambushed by a local resident complaining about the slow pace of construction of new housing. "It took ten years to just build these two!" said 58-year-old Catherine Cooke. "How long is it going to take to build them over there?," she added — gesturing to nearby land. Varadkar quickly headed off for his next engagement in a sleek motorcade. As the cars left, Cooke muttered: "They're not doing enough". — AFP

Romania adopts 'greed tax' despite investor concerns

BUCHAREST: Romania's left-wing government on Friday issued a controversial emergency ordinance imposing new taxes on banks and energy companies, despite an outcry from investors. The package of taxes and price caps sparked a big sell-off on the Bucharest stock market on Wednesday, following a government announcement, although the measures adopted on Friday were less strict than the original proposals.

"We are adopting a new set of measures to increase the well-being of Romanians, the level of investment and to correct some unfair practices in the energy and banking sectors", Prime Minister Viorica Dancila said at a cabinet meeting on Friday evening which pushed the measures through. The government has introduced the measures in a bid to keep its budget deficit below the EU-mandated

target of three percent of gross domestic product (GDP), but businesses complained of a lack of prior consultation.

Romania is one of the fastest-growing economies in the European Union but moves this year to raise public sector wages and pensions, combined with tax cuts, have depleted its coffers. Under the new rules there will be a levy on bank assets if interbank lending rates exceed two percent, in what the government has dubbed a "tax on greed". Also, energy companies will face a two percent tax on turnover.

Gas and electricity prices will be capped for the next three years for domestic consumers but only for some industrial consumers, not all as in the original proposals. Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz used a visit to Bucharest on Friday to criticize the plans. Foreign companies with a presence in Romania, including Austrian oil major OMV, could be affected by the measures. "I am not worried about Austrian companies. They could pack up and leave, so I'm not worried for them, but for Romania's economy", Kurz said, adding the taxes could deter investment and harm growth. Investors' groups have also urged the government not to adopt the new measures, saying they could trigger an "economic crisis". — AFP

US charges Chinese for stealing energy 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 recently 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 prod-

uct." 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. The arrest came amid a broad US crackdown on Chinese government-backed hacking and theft of commercial data and secrets. On Thursday the Justice Department unveiled indictments against two hackers allegedly tied to Beijing's security services who operated as part of a multi-year plan to break into the computers of dozens of US companies and agencies.

"The Chinese government is attempting to acquire or steal not only the plans and intentions of the United States government, but also the ideas and innovations of the very people that make our economy so incredibly successful," Bill Priestap, head of the FBI's counterintelligence division, told Congress last week. — AFP

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Fed delivers fourth rate hike of 2018, oil suffers heavy losses

Sharp drop in US equities and bond yields

KUWAIT: After long talk of a fourth interest rate hike before the end of the year, the Federal Reserve finally announced its intention to march ahead with a 25 basis point increase in rates. Despite calls by President Donald Trump for the Fed to stop raising interest rates, the latter stuck by its plan to keep withdrawing support from an economy it views as strong. Traders felt uneasy by the decision, as evident in the sharp drop in US equities and bond yields.

Markets are skeptical

Even though the Fed signaled "some further gradual" rate hikes and its intention to continue to cut its massive bond portfolio, interest rate futures revealed that traders do not buy this claim. Markets are currently betting the Fed won't raise interest rates at all next year. However, Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell did acknowledge the recent "softening" in global growth, tighter financial conditions, and expectations the US economy will slow next year. In that case, he admitted the policymakers can be "patient".

The US government was shut down last week after the standoff over Trump's \$5 billion border wall with Mexico was not approved by congress. With no deal in sight on a bill to fund the government, US senators were sent home until Thursday. The quarter of the federal government programs (Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, Agriculture, Parks and Museums) will not be funded up until a deal is concluded in congress. In details, 400,000 federal employees in those organizations will work without pay and another 380,000 will be on temporary leave also without any wages.

Fed intends to continue policy normalization

Nonetheless, Powell asserted that the Fed will continue to trim its balance sheet by \$50 billion each month. Furthermore, he also revealed that the Fed could be forced to raise rates to the point where they start to hinder the economy's momentum should the strong economic numbers continue in the future. Overall, the Federal Reserve believes the US economy continues to perform well and no longer requires the Fed's support either by maintaining a large balance sheet or through lower than normal interest rates. "Policy does not need to be accommodative," insisted Powell.

Sharp reaction from investors

Global equity markets did not take kindly to the hike. In fact, US equities experienced their worst reaction to a Fed rate hike since 1994, when the Fed raised hikes by

2.5% in a single year. The Dow Jones, NASDAQ, and the S&P 500 were all down by 1.5% or more as the central bank marched on with a rate raise despite signs pointing to faltering global economic growth. World markets followed suit, as MSCI's global equity index fell to its lowest since May 2017, shedding nearly 1.5%.

This sentiment was also shared in Asia, where the Bank of Japan decided to keep interest rates on hold as global economic risks continued to mount. The Topix benchmark entered bear market territory, where it is now down by more than 20% from its January high. Investors fleeing the equity market found shelter in safe government bonds. Treasuries rallied as the yield on the 10-year US Treasury fell by more than 2% to its lowest level in eight months after the rate decision. German 10-year government bond yields, the euro zone benchmark, fell to their lowest in nearly seven months. Other high grade euro zone bond yields also fell.

Fed hike adds to oil woes

Meanwhile, oil prices dominated headlines after suffering heavy losses last week. Since the October high, prices have now fallen more than 35%. OPEC and Russia's agreed additional production cuts have failed to stop this downward trajectory of prices. At the same time, weaker prospects for oil demand amid a possible slowdown in the global economy have raised concerns about an oversupply, calling into question the effectiveness of the aforementioned supply cuts.

Moreover, the lingering trade war worries between the two largest economies continue to pressure oil prices. Adding fuel to fire, the US continues to ramp up production and has beaten Russia and Saudi Arabia as the world's largest oil producer for the first time. US output now stands at a record 11.7 million barrels per day. Finally, an interest rate hike in the US added to the attraction of the dollar, which maintains an inverse relationship with oil prices.

UK & EUROPE

No-deal Brexit increasingly likely
With less than 100 days to go until Brexit day, the prospects a no-deal Brexit have jumped especially since Theresa May's deal is struggling in Parliament. Accordingly, the government has stepped up plans to prepare for such an event. A part of this plan, which was revealed last week, included putting 3,500 military personnel on standby to "to support any government department on any contingencies they need". The Ministry of Defense said the personnel, who will



include engineers, mechanics, and drivers mostly drawn from a number of army regiments, will be ready to be deployed for any crisis if the UK crashes out of the EU without an agreement being signed.

Businesses and politicians do not share priorities

The plan also includes dispatching 80,000 emails to company executives explaining how to deal with customs and regulatory changes in the event of no deal. Consequently, the UK's five leading business groups proceeded to attack the "managed no-deal" Brexit. In a joint statement, the five groups - the British Chambers of Commerce, the CBI, the EEF manufacturers' organization, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors - said they had been "watching in horror as politicians have focused on factional disputes rather than practical steps that business needs". The statement added that "the suggestion that 'no-deal' can be 'managed' is not a credible proposition. It is clear there is simply not enough time to prevent severe dislocation and disruption in just 100 days."

Preparations to mitigate chaos

On the other hand, Brussels also ramped up efforts to attempt avoiding the worst of a no-deal Brexit. The European Commission unveiled a package of 14 contingency proposals that included measures to ensure

uninterrupted flights between Europe and the UK, and to retain EU citizens' access to the City of London. The package however does not include the side deals to Britain that some Brexiters are confident will be available. Amongst other disruptions, the EU expects unprecedented border queues and diminished flight schedules to be some of the immediate consequences of a no-deal Brexit.

BOE maintains its benchmark rates

In its latest meeting, the Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously on keeping rates on hold without making any alterations to the amount of money printed under its quantitative easing program that followed the global financial crisis. The Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 0.75% as it warned that Brexit uncertainties had "intensified considerably" during the last month. For the first time in its history, and with little idea whether the UK was going to leave the EU smoothly or crash out in March. The MPC gave no indication of how recent data were shaping its thinking on monetary policy, what it gave was merely a repetition of what it said at its November meeting. Reiterating that if there was a smooth Brexit with a transition period, the economy was likely to need roughly one quarter-point interest rate rise a year to keep inflation anchored to its target of 2%.

Mass protests in Istanbul against higher living costs

ISTANBUL: Thousands of protesters on Saturday took to the streets in Istanbul to demonstrate against the rising cost of living and crippling inflation in Turkey. Surrounded by a heavy police presence, the protesters held banners with references to the "yellow vest" movement in France, which began as a demonstration against fuel price hikes but snowballed into anti-government protests, an AFP correspondent reported.

The protest, organized by the KESK, a confederation of public service workers unions, drew people from all over Turkey including the northwestern provinces of Edirne, Bursa and Yalova, the correspondent said. They shouted "work, bread, freedom" and also carried banners saying "the crisis is theirs, the

street is ours" and "Haziran" which means June in Turkish. June refers to the mass 2013 demonstrations against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rule sparked by the planned redevelopment of Gezi Park in Istanbul.

Saturday's protest comes almost a week after thousands of people demonstrated in another KESK rally against the cost of living in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir. The Turkish economy has come under heavy strain since a currency crisis in August and inflation reached 25.24 percent in October, a 15-year-high. Although inflation dropped to 21.62 in November, the price of everyday goods remains high. Since the start of this year, the lira has lost nearly 22.5 percent in value against the US dollar.

The country's economic growth has also slowed down raising fears of a recession after the economy contracted by 1.1 percent in the third quarter compared with the previous quarter. A recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of shrinking output based on a quarter-on-quarter comparison. —AFP

Want to sue Venezuela for millions? These firms can help

WILMINGTON: As Venezuela collapses, one little-known US investment fund is poised to win big from litigation against its socialist government: Tenor Capital Management. Since 2012, the New York firm has invested \$76 million in Canadian mining firm Crystallex International Corp, largely to fund a lawsuit being waged against Venezuela for expropriating a gold mine.

Now, Tenor stands to claim around \$800 million of a \$1.4 billion international arbitration award that Crystallex has been trying to collect since 2016. Tenor's cash allowed Crystallex to force Venezuela to pay up by attempting a court-ordered seizure of Houston-based Citgo Petroleum Corp, the country's overseas crown jewel. The case is part of wave of lawsuits bankrolled by firms specializing in so-called litigation finance, providing funding to plaintiffs in return for a slice of any financial winnings.

While the practice dates back centuries, the business has boomed over the past decade, fueled by favorable court rulings and investors seeking juicy returns not correlated to stock markets. Between 2012 and 2016, the money committed to cases grew 40 percent a year, and is expected to top \$2 billion annually by 2021, according to litigation financing firm Vannin Capital. These companies have backed a slew of big-dollar corporate lawsuits, including investor litigation in Volkswagen's emissions scandal and a \$213 million unjust enrichment case against US billionaire Ira Rennett.

But foreign governments are emerging as popular targets as well, putting taxpayers at risk for ever-larger claims. In addition to Tenor, firms working this niche include London Stock Exchange-listed Burford Capital, IMF Bentham Ltd of Australia and Therium Group Holdings Ltd of the UK. Litigation finance companies typically seek returns of three to 10 times their initial investment, industry players said. Now a market is developing for these firms to begin cashing out before a suit concludes by selling portions of their portfolios, or even slices of individual cases, to other investors.

Burford, for example, scored a 736 percent return by selling for \$107 million its entitlement in a case against Argentina over two expropriated airlines. Burford said it invested \$12.8 million in the litigation. Critics fear this financing will embolden companies to bring weaker cases, and that developing countries will be more likely to be sued for adopting regulations to protect public health or the environment. Money from funders also discourages companies from sticking with long-term commitments in foreign markets, according to Lise Johnson, the head of the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment at Columbia University in New York.

"With third-party funding there is an incentive to sell a claim, extract cash and leave," she said. Litigation finance companies say they are helping the underdogs: small companies wronged by governments. "It's an easy story to tell that these are rapacious hedge funds trying to bring a struggling country to its knees," said Zachary Krug, senior investment officer with funding



SABANETA: A youngster rides a bike past a mural depicting late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, in his hometown Sabaneta, Barinas state, Venezuela. —AFP

firm Woodford Litigation Funding in London. "That's not what we do."

Eric Blinderman, who heads the North American business of funding firm Therium, said funders guard against weak cases by providing a neutral opinion on the strength of claims. He said his firm backs less than 5 percent of the cases brought to it, and requires a 70 percent chance of success. Otherwise, he said, "we'd lose a lot of cases we funded and Therium would be out of business shortly."

Legal gold mine

The Crystallex case started in 2011, when Caracas expropriated the company's mining project at Las Cristinas, one of the world's largest gold deposits located in southeastern Venezuela. Crystallex sought compensation through what is known as investor-state dispute settlement or ISDS, by bringing an arbitration case registered with the World Bank. Effectively bankrupted by the loss of its Venezuela project, Crystallex turned to Tenor. Tenor and Crystallex declined to comment.

Court records show Tenor eventually provided \$76 million to fund the litigation. In return, Crystallex agreed to give Tenor at least 70 percent of any payments it could collect from Venezuela, once Crystallex paid off Tenor's loan and other creditors, the documents show. In 2016, the World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, or ICSID, entered an award that has grown to \$1.4 billion with interest.

Crystallex said in November it had already received \$500 million. Just weeks later the company accused Venezuela of breaching the agreement. It is not clear whether it will receive a full payout. Venezuela's Information Ministry did not respond to a request for comment. Companies increasingly are taking on foreign governments in the ICSID and other tribunals, including the International Chamber of Commerce and the United Nations.

In the 2000s, there were typically around 40 cases per year, but since 2013 the number has jumped to an average of 69 cases annually, according to a United Nations report. The UN noted that figure could be even higher as some cases remain entirely confidential. Funding arrangements generally are not disclosed. The World Bank has proposed changing that, in part to shed light on potential conflicts of interest between arbitrators and funders. For now, it is unclear how many companies are funding such cases using litigation financing, also known third-party funding, but industry executives and lawyers say the practice is common. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.379086	0.392986
Czech Koruna	0.005534	0.014834
Danish Krone	0.042699	0.047699
Euro	0.339450	0.353150
Georgian Lari	0.135044	0.135044
Hungarian O.001148	0.001338	
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	0.031092

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	0.038055
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 Bhat	0.008974	0.009524
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.793254	0.809754
Egyptian Pound	0.014621	0.0203339

Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000208	0.000268
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
Turkish Lira	0.051433	0.062933
YAE Dirhams	0.081493	0.083193
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.190
Canadian Dollar	224.400
Sterling Pound	386.940
Euro	349.436
Swiss Frank	304.040
Bahrain Dinar	808.955
UAE Dirhams	83.220
Qatari Riyals	84.460
Saudi Riyals	82.015
Jordanian Dinar	430.325
Egyptian Pound	16.954
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.677
Indian Rupees	4.339
Pakistani Rupees	2.188
Bangladesh Taka	3.628
Philippines Peso	5.736
Cyprus pound	18.100
Japanese Yen	3.735
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.726
Malaysian Ringgit	73.680
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.465
Thai Bhat	10.325
Turkish Lira	57.605
Singapore dollars	221.745

Business

Regional, global asset managers to launch co-authored MENA Fixed Income paper

DUBAI: Emirates NBD Asset Management, KAMCO Investment Company and Fisch Asset Management will partner to co-author research examining key trends driving performance of MENA and emerging market Fixed Income instruments, reviewing 2018 and providing an outlook for 2019.

The three asset management companies, who have combined Assets under Management (AuM) of more than USD 25 billion, have come together for a content partnership to publish their inaugural co-authored whitepaper, which will be available to investors and the media in January 2019. The whitepaper will analyse recent trends impacting Fixed Income markets, macroeconomic drivers in MENA, the evolution of Fixed Income issuance in the

region, risk factors and an outlook for 2019.

Faisal Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, KAMCO added "over the past months we have seen considerable appetite for Fixed Income products from investors in Kuwait and the wider GCC. Due to that we have launched our KAMCO MENA fixed income fund to cater to the demand of such product in the region. We believe this project and its output will be of considerable value to the investor community, and particularly institutional investors looking to further understand the opportunities that exist in this asset class while considering their allocation strategies for the year ahead."

Philipp Good, CEO and Head of Portfolio Management, Fisch Asset Management, concluded "we believe our

research partnership with Emirates NBD Asset Management and KAMCO will be a valuable initiative for providing regional and international perspectives on the region's debt market. The robust performance of GCC instruments in 2018 undoubtedly stands out when compared to emerging market peers, but the substantial drop in oil prices translates into challenges for the coming years. We see value in exploring broader MENA and emerging market trends, providing investors with a wide range of insights from our portfolio management teams." The white paper will be formally released to the media in January, after which the three asset managers will co-host a series of invitation-only investor and media events in Kuwait, Dubai and Zurich.



KAMCO CEO Faisal Sarkhou



Philipp Good

Renault Al Babtain rewards customers with benefits

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait is delighted to announce that customers can avail of the exciting offer that comes with the Renault Koleos 2019. The outstanding offer includes a ten year warranty and 50,000 KM free maintenance this festive season.

The Renault Koleos exterior holds a taste for adventure all that is expected of a D-segment SUV. It's robust and muscular features amplifies the athletic exterior design with door protective moldings, large diameter two-tone alloy wheels, alloy roof rails, shark antenna,

fender chrome lines and silver front skid. The four wheel drive technology, all-terrain ability, engine and transmission line-up has been tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the Kuwaiti market.

The 2.5-litre petrol engine is also an atmospheric, four-cylinder, power is 170hp (126kW) at 6,000rpm, with peak torque of 233Nm at 4,000 rpm. The Renault KOLEOS captures everyone's attention with an athletic profile, robust front end, roomy seats, taut lines underscored with chrome, and C-Shape LED Daytime Running Lights.

Ensuring unique driving experiences, it comes with ambient lighting, panoramic sunroof, 8.7" touchscreen tablet with R-Link 2 multimedia & navigation system, and Bose Sound System. Further backed by a wide interior with premium looking, refined materials and details, high tech digital cluster, ventilated power seats, wide door opening, cooled cup holders, generous storage space & sliding armrest. Renault Al Babtain urges its Renault fans to avail of the benefits that accompany the new model during the limited time offer.



The fastest smartphone for Internet browsing

KUWAIT: Smartphones are replacing all the other devices such as tablets and laptops with their enhanced functionalities. Users are looking for advanced technologies and fast internet browsing on the go. All smartphones are good for browsing the internet; however, not all of those available in the market can render a superfast browsing experience as the devices should support the necessary connectivity features. But out of all these good smartphones, there is one that stands out distinguishably out of the crowd and it is unquestionably the Huawei Mate 20 Pro.

To deliver the best connectivity to phones powered by its own and latest chipset Kirin 980, Huawei integrated the world's first modem supporting LTE Cat.21 with a peak download speed of 1.4 Gbps. Additionally, with carrier aggregation across frequency bands, users will be free to choose their mobile operators and still enjoy the same premium connectivity experience, wherever they are. Moreover, it's optimized to effectively reduce the lags and freezes, guaranteeing more stable and smoother gaming experience across all mobile networks especially while on high-speed railways, subways and highway scenarios.

A user of the Huawei Mate 20 Pro can stream a 4K video without buffering; download a 2GB video in 10 seconds; or swiftly download a game update in a few seconds. Huawei Mate 20 Pro can cache up map information in the blink of an eye, so that users would not be worrying about using too much data when traveling.



In addition, the Huawei Mate 20 Pro powered by Hi1103 chip, the world's fastest mobile phone Wi-Fi chipset, supports 160 MHz bandwidth. The theoretical peak download rate is 1.7 Gbit/s, bringing users a fast Wi-Fi connection experience. In public spaces, homes, and enterprise scenarios, mobile users can enjoy the fastest Wi-Fi access available. Furthermore, Huawei Mate 20 Pro supports Dual Frequency AI Satellite Selection GPS (L1 and L5). The L5 band delivers up to a theoretical 10 times greater accuracy, enabling users' smartphone to pinpoint their location,

KIB offers non-profit medical financing up to KD 15,000

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to providing the best banking products and services to its customers, KIB is currently offering non-profit medical financing for up to KD 15,000, in cooperation with Kuwait Medical International (KMI). With this offer, the Bank provides customers with the best medical services through flexible financing solutions for a maximum of 36 months - all in line with Islamic sharia principles.

On this occasion, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department, Othman Tawfiq, said: "This financing solution reaffirms KIB's dedication to providing the best and latest



Othman Tawfiq

products and services to its customers, making the Bank a true partner in all aspects of people's lives. As part of this solution, the Bank provides the necessary financing to customers interested in medical treatment services, which includes access to various treatments across diverse medical areas at a reasonable price and without any interest." Tawfiq added that this financing solution will facilitate a healthier, more flexible lifestyle for KIB customers.

The Bank offers customers who are interested in medical treatment and services access to short-term, easy payment terms with utmost flexibility, reflecting its commitment as a leading Islamic banking institution.

CITRA, Microsoft host cloud and AI workshop

KUWAIT: In line with its efforts to accelerate digital transformation amongst government entities in Kuwait, the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) and Microsoft hosted a workshop to accelerate adoption of cloud and artificial intelligence technologies, enabling the country to pursue the mission of government modernization. ??Mohammad Jassim? Al-Tora, Chief of Information Technology ?Sector, CITRA,? delivered the opening keynote session and highlighted the importance of digital transformation of the public sector as part of the New Kuwait vision, and how it can make an impact on the country's economy by adopting the cloud and digital technologies.

He said: "Digital transformation is only possible when governments leave behind traditional processes and find innovative ways to bring data, people and processes together. Technology is not simply adding capability - it is transforming the entire model to overcome challenges, which requires the openness to re-envision our services and become a true digital government. This is our mission and we are accelerating in this journey with events like these and with the support of Microsoft - a partner who can be trusted to deliver the technology and the expertise, to accelerate this ambitious digital transformation journey."

The workshop covered case studies, panel discussions, technology showcase and demonstrations. Microsoft experts shared best practices and highlighted various use case scenarios of AI technologies powered by the intelligent cloud that can enable government entities to leverage them in their operations to gain actionable insights for better decision making and improve government operations. The attendees also learned about the use of chatbots, machine learning and cognitive services to improve gov-



ernment services to increase accuracy, apply automation, and infuse those capabilities in government applications and customer channels.

"In today's complex, interlinked and fast-paced citizen centric environment, it is necessary for government entities to stay ahead by adopting the cloud to be efficient and effective," said Charles Nahas, General Manager, Microsoft Kuwait. "In line with Kuwait vision 2035 and supported by agencies such as CITRA, we see the government taking leaps to harness the power of technology as a cornerstone of its overall strategy. It is exciting to see the true digital transformation underway in Kuwait and the synergies amongst the government entities to thrive on AI and the cloud to drive economic growth and better serve the citizens. This event is an ideal platform for us to highlight how our technologies work in concert with each other to deliver the message of an 'Empowered Government'."

Microsoft partners also participated in the workshop to showcase ground breaking solutions built on the Microsoft Azure Cloud platform. EasyDocs showcased Digital Locker Solutions that enable secure storage and the ability to share Official Documents Online; Blackstone demonstrated various chatbot, machine learning and robot solutions for efficient government operations; SiteCore highlighted Digital Experience solutions for optimized citizen service delivery; and Sprinklr revealed its social media analytics platform to better engage citizens.

Together
We Succeed
For Life



For the 3rd Consecutive Year	In Recognition of its New Brand Excellence	For the 5th Consecutive Year	In Recognition of its Innovative Services & Products	For the 4th Consecutive Year
Fastest Growing Islamic Bank	Best Branding	Best Islamic Bank	Best Customer Acquisition	Best Sharia Compliant Bank
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Business

KFH Turkey breaks new ground by offering banking services in sign language via XTMs

A pioneer move to serve all segments of society



KUWAIT: Seeking to serve all segments of society and part of its digital transformation journey, Kuwait Finance House- Turkey "KFH-Turkey" developed a new service that aids those with hearing impairment in society through providing sign language feature in XTMs. As one of the leading banks, KFH- Turkey focuses on developing projects combining the practical application of XTMs with numerous services provided in its traditional branches.

With the high demand on XTMs, KFH-Turkey decided to expand the users base of this pioneering service and provide sign language in a move that reflects the Bank's leadership and excellence in rolling out a wide range of innovative services and products. During a press conference organized by KFH-Turkey, the Bank's R&D team highlighted the 2013- launched XTMs in terms of the high demand and their importance in meeting the needs of customers and users as well as those with hearing impairment in the Turkish society.

KFH- Turkey's Deputy General Manager- Retail Banking Mehmet Oral, began his speech by noting that

customers' expectations from bank branches have changed with the rise in digitalization around the world. "Today's customers expect both faster and more convenient services from their banks and care for face-to-face communications. We are rendering a service exactly in this direction with our innovative XTM devices which we initially started producing in 2013 in Turkey and have enhanced since then. Our customers can contact our call center via our XTM devices and perform their banking transactions quickly, easily and safely through video calls. Thanks to the XTMs that we have positioned as digital banking channels, we create new employment opportunities." He said.

Oral stated that they have developed the 'sign language banking' by aiming to turn the video communication feature of XTMs into a positive value for the hearing impaired, saying "Our hearing impaired customers can start all banking transactions with one touch. Whether our customer or not, when a hearing impaired users uses video-calls through our call center via our XTM branches, a sign language interpreter will answer that call. If they do not have



an account in our bank, they can open one in a short time. Our customers can easily carry out many banking transactions ranging from money transfer to precious metal trading. We aim to make life easier for more than 3 million hearing-impaired citizens with sign language banking."

Harnessing technology

Oral stressed that banking application in sign language is a result of KFH-Turkey's interest in harnessing technology and innovation in the promotion of corporate social responsibility, which the Bank regards with great importance. "We believe that we will create awareness in the entire society through this service that we provide for the hearing-impaired citizens via XTMs. Moreover, as KFH-Turkey, one of our biggest goals is to provide high quality banking services for the disabled both in our traditional branches and via our XTMs. In addition to projects for the hearing impaired, we are also developing projects for visually-impaired and physically-handicapped citizens," he said. Pointing out that XTMs can be opened even in very

small locations compared to traditional branches and thus they can have access to areas where it's possible to open a branch, Oral said, "As KFH- Turkey, we strive to contribute to the development of both our bank and participation banking to be accessible by all segments of society." In the future, we will focus on our XTM branches in addition to our traditional branches. In this way, more users can benefit from all the advantages of the digital world without leaving their neighborhood."

Meanwhile, IT Manager of KFH-Turkey, Mucahit Gundebar, stated that the digital transformation journey, started by KFH-Turkey 10 years ago, constitutes the basis of XTM project, and said, "We were the first to establish an R&D center in the banking industry in Turkey. Today, we're the only bank with two R&D centers in Turkey. We actualize very important projects with our Turkish engineers, and we export these developed technologies to many countries. Our XTM branches that were developed with this vision are among our ground-breaking pioneer projects in Turkey."

Al Tijari names winner of weekly draw for Al-Najma program

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait has announced Muhammad Khan Khan Mohammad as the winner of the weekly draw winning the prize money of KD 5,000. The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000 & monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the grand prize (the biggest prize in the world) of KD 1,500,000 for which the draw will be held in January 2019.

Al Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Now CBK existing customers can open Al Najma Account through Al Tijari Online and enter all draws without visiting the Bank's branch. However, CBK non-customers can submit an account opening application via the Bank's website where the Bank's Sales Unit will call them to arrange a visit to the customers to complete the account opening formalities. Customers can obtain further information on Al-Najma Account by either calling the Service Center or by visiting the Bank's website www.CBK.com and they can also visit their nearest CBK branch where the Bank staff will be ready to serve them and respond to their queries. Furthermore all details & information related to the latest offers & services launched by the Bank is also available on the Bank's social sites.

Al Mulla Exchange conducts its annual corporate meet

KUWAIT: Al Mulla International Exchange Co conducted their Annual Meet of corporate clients at the Millennium Hotel in Salmiya last Wednesday. The annual meet provided an excellent opportunity to Al Mulla Exchange's top corporate clients a chance to gather together and interact. The forum started with the welcome address of Praveen Singh, the Divisional General Manager of Al Mulla Exchanges. The customers were taken across the importance of technology as well as compliance in the sphere of remittances.

He mentioned that "Corporates are not only fuel for the growth of economy but also for Exchange companies like ours. They make it possible for us to introduce innovations and bring newer products. In our continuous reach for providing exceptional service to customers, we have teamed up with some world class service providers for which remittances to UK, Europe and Australia are credited within a matter of hours. In fact, we only a few entities in GCC to offer GBP payments through FASTER PAYMENT which enables credit of fund within seconds to the beneficiaries account. We have also expanded our partnerships to UAE, Jordan, Thailand, Indonesia, Morocco and African countries through tie-ups and we are able to offer services to our customers in this corridor."

He shared that while Al Mulla Exchange is in the forefront of technology to make the remittances of corporates hassle free, compliance also counts most in the realm of remittance world. "Al Mulla Exchange has gone to great lengths to ensure that their compliance and regulatory measures are not only the best globally but also follows all the regulatory mechanisms mandated by Central Bank of Kuwait. We also are known to be very rigorous in compliance. We are sure you all understand and appreciate that every remittance that are being sent are monitored, evaluated for the genuineness by Correspondent banks, Central Banks and global monitoring systems. So, it is vital that we ascertain that every remittance that pass through us is seen through the scanner of compliance. This, as you will all agree, is to protect your interests as well as ours"

He also urged corporates to adopt digitization at a greater speed while also being fully mindful of challenges related to IT security in the areas of email hacking, identity theft, data breaches, network breaches, etc. He also welcomed the Chief Guest of the evening, M R Raghu who is a noted scholar and also a renowned speaker par excellence in the field of finance. Raghu is the Head of Research at Markaz as well as the Managing Director of Marmore Mena Intelligence, a research subsidiary of Markaz. He gave an enlightening talk about Kuwait markets and future which was particularly of great interest to those attended.

Praveen Singh, gave the vote of thanks acknowledging the immense value of Corporates and their remittances. He also thanked Raghu for his highly researched and engrossing presentation. The event then moved on to showcasing the latest innovations from Al Mulla Exchange including the features of Al Mulla Exchange App and wrapped up with the dinner at the banquet hall.



Gulf Air celebrates Bahrain's National Day in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Hundreds of passengers of Bahrain's national carrier Gulf Air were greeted with gifts and novelties at Kuwait International Airport on the occasion of Bahrain's 47th National Day and the anniversary of His Majesty the King of Bahrain's Accession to the Throne. Passengers flying to and from Kuwait enjoyed a special celebration organized by Gulf Air's team in Kuwait and supported by the airline's local GSA office Al Ghanim Travels, Kuwaiti Civil Aviation, Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior, and Al Jassar Perfumes. Passengers expressed their appreciation for the gesture, and wished the leadership and people of Bahrain further progress and prosperity.



Health & Science

China bike-sharing pioneer hits the skids amid worries

Bike-sharing craze beginning to look like economic disaster

BEIJING: Bicycle cemeteries, blocked pavements and angry users: the bike-sharing craze is beginning to look like an economic disaster in China, where fierce competition appears set to drive a pioneer of the sector into the ditch. Bright orange, yellow and blue shared bikes have flooded the sidewalks of major Chinese cities for the past two years as the sector's main rivals Ofo and Mobike deposited millions of the two-wheelers in front of office buildings and subway exits in an attempt to drown their rival.

A tech start-up darling after its launch in 2014, Ofo attracted major funding from Chinese and international investors and had been valued at more than \$2 billion. In a swift reversal the firm, which claims 200 million users, now appears on the skids, with nearly 11 million customers demanding the return of their deposits. At the group's Beijing headquarters, a "very angry" Mr Wang said he has been seeking to recover his 199 yuan (23 euros, \$29) deposit since November 13. Wang "has a car and a motor-bike" and no longer borrows the lemon-yellow bikes, which are unlocked by scanning a barcode with a mobile phone app.

A month after he made his demand online, "the request failed" without explanation so Wang headed to the Ofo office this week, along with hundreds of other angry customers. In a statement Monday, Ofo said their claims would be processed in chronological order. "Yesterday, I was ranked 10.76-millionth, today I'm 10.75-millionth. That means 10,000 people have left the list," said Wang. "At this rate, it'll take three years to recover my 200 yuan!" To use the bicycles, the first users had to post a deposit of 99 yuan, which has since increased to 199 yuan.

The company is now facing demands for nearly a billion yuan in deposit refunds. On social networks, users have complained about the poor condition of the bikes, over-

charging on their electronic wallets, or their fear of seeing the company go bankrupt. "Ofo has too many broken bikes on the street, thus it's hard to find an available bike," said Yu Xue, internet and blockchain research manager with IDC in Beijing. "Its main competitors - Mobike and Hello Bike - do not require deposits any more and this makes them more attractive than Ofo. Basically, fewer rides, less revenue," Yu said.

'Free liquidity lifeline'

"Access to customer deposits has acted as a free liquidity lifeline to Ofo and other bicycle-rental businesses," said Michael Pettis, a finance professor in Beijing. Customers often leave 100 yuan or even up to 1,000 in their accounts under the assumption that this deposit will pay for the use of the bicycles and that they will be able to withdraw what they don't use, he explained.

"Most analysts have long argued that these companies were able to survive and compete aggressively to expand not because the business was profitable, but rather because of access to customer deposits," he stressed. Without these deposits, "it is hard to see how many of these businesses will be able to survive", he said. "This may be a good thing if it ultimately allows consolidation in what has been a chaotic market, but in the short run it may prove very painful." In China the bike-sharing sector has also seen a massive waste of resources, with mountains of bikes discarded rather than repaired, in contrast to the "green" image usually associated with urban cycling.

And Ofo now makes no secret that it is in trouble. In a letter to its employees this week, founder Dai Wei admitted to toying with the idea of declaring bankruptcy. In early December a court ordered the company to refrain from excessive expenditure. Dai has also been placed on a credit blacklist and is banned from flying or staying in top



PARIS: Ofo General Manager for France Laurent Kennel poses while presenting Chinese station-free bike sharing platform Ofo Bicycles at the "Autonomy and the urban mobility" fair in Paris. — AFP

hotels. For its international expansion, Ofo in March had raised more than \$850 million from investors, including Chinese e-commerce titan Alibaba, adding to the \$700 million it attracted in July 2017.

But Ofo has had to abandon several foreign ventures while rival Mobike, launched in 2016, continues its global expansion with the support of another Chinese internet giant, Tencent. — AFP

Future of urology surgery specialty

KUWAIT: A large number of urologists from five major training hospitals said the future of urology surgery specialty is in its graduates in Kuwait board and its reflection on health care and patients' safety. The doctors were speaking at a press conference in which they explained the deteriorating conditions. They raised the issue of Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties (KIMS) and last year's program which is marred by nepotism, favoritism, and misinformation

at the expense of the country's and people's interests.

The doctors said they tried to report the problems to concerned authorities such as the secretary general and post-graduate studies office - adding that all their efforts ended up in failure. The consultants said they have submitted a letter of non-cooperation to stop the blatant violations which include interference in the board of the urology surgery college, as well as violating internal rules of KIMS, and closing the door of registration and admission of new doctors to join Kuwait Urology Board since 2018, for no apparent reasons - deliberately marginalizing the role of the urology college.



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What's On



EU delegation presents LOYAC with 'Chaillot Special Mention' award

The delegation of the European Union recently awarded LOYAC "The Chaillot Special Mention" award for promoting human rights in the Gulf region in 2018, which is usually awarded to NGOs in appreciation for their outstanding efforts in promoting human rights worldwide. A special ceremony was held to celebrate the occasion at Al-

Qibliya school with the presence of MOCI, Khaled Al-Roudhan, the head of the Arab and international relations council, Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager, the EU delegation envoy, EU ambassador in Kuwait and LOYAC board of directors. Meanwhile, LOYAC announced forming its board of trustees headed by

Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager and including Dherar Al-Ghanem, Fadwa Al-Humaidhi, Dr. Saad Al-Barrak, Omran Hayat, Fadiya Al-Marzouq and Fare'a Al-Saqqa. Notably, the award is named after the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, where the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948.

NBK sponsors LOYAC's trip to Nepal

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsors a trip for LOYAC's students to Nepal. This sponsorship reflects NBK's commitment towards its Corporate Social Responsibility as well as the vital role it plays in supporting students, youths and self-building initiatives in Kuwait. The initiative goes with NBK's support to LOYAC's annual activities and events including the

international and cultural trips. A group of 12 volunteers age 14-18 years old from different backgrounds are participating in this trip which is designed to build the leadership skills in their personality.

This 7-day trip includes a group of social initiatives, interacting with different cultures, volunteering and donating. During this trip, participants will be introduced to Nepal's different cultures and learn Nepalese daily life routine. NBK always strives to empower Kuwaiti youth to realize their potentials, build their personalities and motivates their ambition. This trip with LOYAC comes in line with the bank's strategy to invest in youth and develop their capabilities.

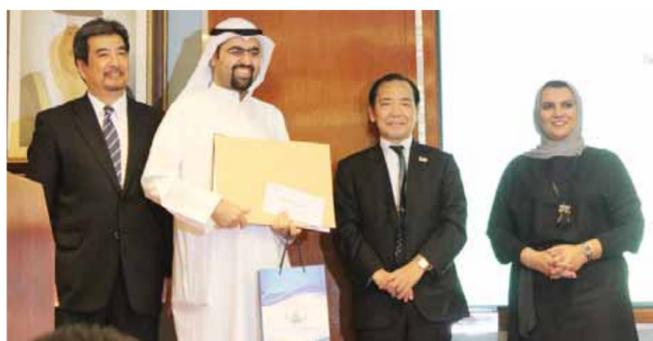
Nepal is the second trip this year with LOYAC after Morocco. NBK looks forward

to re-experience the inspiring trip, living with the local families, hanging out with the youth, contributing to the community and exploring the treasures of its cities. Throughout the program, Loyacers and Nepalese youth will be engaging in stimulating discussions about various aspects of each society to gain a deeper understanding of what makes our cultures unique and beautiful.

In addition, the program includes cultural exchange, visiting Kathmandu Durbar Square, doing community service, whitewater rafting and camping. LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



Japanese Embassy in Kuwait, KU organize 12th Japanese Speech Contest



Center of Community Service and Continuous Education at Kuwait University organized the 12th Japanese Speech Contest in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in Kuwait and the Japanese Society Association. The contest was held under the name of Kuwait University's Vice President Dr. Jassem Al-

Kandari on December 20, 2018, at Kuwait University-Khalidiya.

Fatema Al-Jumeian and Munira Albaz from the center, the ambassador Takashi Ashiki, the second secretary Sako, and a representative of the Japanese Society Association Suzuki attended the contest. Seven people participated in the contest

and they showed their abilities using the Japanese language in front of an audience who are interested in the Japanese culture. Some students presented a small presentation about the history of Kuwait's flag. Rashed Alrashed won the first place, Mousa Al-Bloushi won the second place and Asila Alshatti won the third place.

Lulu Hypermarket launches Xmas, New Year promotion

Lulu Hypermarket, the leading hypermarket in the region, launched its Xmas and New Year promotion on December 20, 2018, at the Al Rai outlet. A highlight of the launch to celebrate the Xmas season and welcome the New Year, was a Little Santa Claus Fashion Show featuring a parade of adorable children. Another Little Santa Claus Fashion Show, held the next day at the hypermarket's Dajeer outlet, was also applauded by shoppers and well-wishers to the hypermarket.

The special promotional offers and activities organized during the festival period at all outlets of the hypermarket are slated to end on January 1, 2019. The list of promotions during the 11-day festival includes the six-day Trolley Free promotion from December 27, 2018 to January 1, 2019 which promises 555 lucky patrons their trolley of purchases for free. From December 27, 2018 to January 1, 2019, shoppers can also count on the Happy Hour to brighten their shopping with instant enticing offers being announced every hour.

Ring in the New Year on the night of 31 December with the Midnight Surprise promotion where special cool offers cover diverse products, while ringing in the New Year with promises of exciting new offers and value propositions for the year ahead.

The life and energy of Christmas and New Year is reflected across all Lulu hypermarket outlets, with vibrant decorations sprucing up the place, and special gift counters for Christmas and New Year offering unique gift purchases. Another attractive aspect of the hypermarket's offering during the festival period is the cake counter that allows shoppers to buy a range of delectable cakes and other treats.

Adding vivacity to the festival and fun to the season are a host of entertaining activities, including a variety stage show on the 31 December that will keep the children entertained, and do not forget to catch the New Year Flash Mob scheduled for the night of December 31, 2018. The Spin and Win on January 1, 2019 will entitle winners to attractive prizes with every spin. All Lulu social media users will also have the opportunity to enter the amazing photo booth contest.

With a customer-centric focus and a commitment to enhance the shopping experience, Lulu hypermarket celebrates popular festivals throughout the year with various promotions. The Xmas and New Year festival brings the 2018 celebrations to a close, while ringing in the New Year with promises of exciting new offers and value propositions for the year ahead.



Korean Cultural Week

The Embassy of the Republic of Korea is pleased to announce the programme of the Korean Cultural Week:

1. The Korean Street Food Festival
 - a. King of the Gimbap Contest (4:00 - 5:30 pm)
 - b. The Korean Street Food Bazar (5:30 - 8:30 pm)

Date & Time: Sun, Dec 23, 2018 at 4:00 pm
Venue: The Multi-purpose Hall at the Embassy
Registration: * Required

2. The Korean Movie Night

Date & Time: Wed, Dec 26, 2018 at 6:00 pm
Venue: Gnescape Laila Gallery Cinema
Registration: * Required

3. "I'm a singer - Korean Singer Contest"

Date & Time: Thu, Dec 27, 2018 at 6:00 pm
Venue: The Multi-purpose Hall at the Embassy
Registration: * Required

Notes:

- Only registered applicants will be allowed to participate in the events.
- Participation is allowed to registered persons only and cannot be transferred. All family members or friends must register.
- Please register at the following link:

<https://korean-week.questionpro.com>

Lifestyle

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2018



A Christmas tree is pictured on the Freedom square in central Baku. — AFP

New Banksy artwork brings crowds to Welsh town

A new work by enigmatic street artist Banksy has got visitors flocking to the back of a car garage in Port Talbot, causing quite a stir in the south Wales steel town. The image appeared on Tuesday. Since then the local authority has brought in two traffic wardens to manage the crowds packing out a narrow lane in a bid to see it. The work, in the shadow of the town's dominant steelworks, shows a child seemingly playing in the snow, standing by a sled with his tongue out, tasting the falling snowflakes.

But round the corner of the garage, it shows smoke rising from a burning fire, and the snowflakes are actually

“

Strong social statement

”



People view new work by the artist Banksy that appeared during the week on the walls of a garage in Port Talbot, Britain. — Reuters



falling ash. "It's lovely because it brings over a number of messages," said local resident Kirstin Tucker. "When you first look at it from this angle it just looks like there's a little child out there in the snow playing," she said. "But when you see the flames and the pollution that comes around from the other side of the picture, it brings out the thoughts of what Port Talbot was all about, the industrial side of things and the history."

Jason Nicholas Smart added: "I followed his art and looked into it. I think it's marvelous for Port Talbot that

he's actually come down here and done something for the local community. Strong social statement." Banksy, the secretive British artist, claimed responsibility for the new artwork on his website and Instagram account on Wednesday.

The garage is owned by Ivan Lewis, 55, a steelworker at the town's Tata Steel plant. "It started off as fun, but now it's gone to stress. It's down to not sleeping, but now I've got the security there it's taken that weight off me," he said. "I've never experienced anything like this. My

phone is ringing, on my house phone there's 1,000 messages on it." The father-of-one said he has not decided what to do with the artwork, and denied receiving any offers to sell it.

"I'm really just rolling with it at the moment and I don't know where it's going," he said. The work is Banksy's first in Wales and is taken by some to be a comment on Port Talbot's industrial heritage and pollution linked to its steel plant. The traffic wardens will stay in place over the Christmas and New Year holidays. Port Talbot resident

Anne-Marie Hutchinson said: "To have this unique opportunity to bring people from far and wide—I think they come in from all over the world—is brilliant for us."

Artistic jaws dropped in October after Banksy's audacious prank involving the shredding of his "Girl With Balloon", moments after it fetched £1,042,000 (\$1.4 million, 1.2 million euros) — a joint record for the maverick, who had hidden a shredder in the frame. Experts said that stunt only added to the value of the work. —AFP

Fashion designer Raf Simons to leave Calvin Klein

Belgian fashion designer Raf Simons, considered one of the most talented of his generation, will leave Calvin Klein little more than two years after joining it, parent company PVH said Friday. "Both parties have amicably decided to part ways after Calvin Klein, Inc decided on a new brand direction which differs from Simons' creative vision," the company said in a statement. The arrival of the self-taught Simons in New York in August 2016 after four years at Dior caused a sensation.

Dubbed "chief creative officer," he had vast powers to revitalize the American brand, which relied on him to boost the profits of its high-end collection. But there has been speculation since November about his potential departure, after an official from PVH apportioned him some of the blame for declining sales. PVH did not specify when Simons would leave, but according to The New York Times, his departure is immediate even

though his contract expires in less than six months.

No details have been given as to who will replace him or what he will do after his departure. During his short stint at Calvin Klein, Simons garnered praise from the fashion world for his innovative collections, and he has received three awards from the Council of Fashion Designers of America. Calvin Klein's shows at New York Fashion Week were among the most popular but the fashion house will not organize any runway events at the next Fashion Week to take place in February, PVH said.

Simons' last Fashion Week runway show in September was inspired by "Jaws," the 1975 Steven Spielberg blockbuster film. "The landscape of America—literal and psychological—inspires Calvin Klein. A journey through America leads, inevitably, to the edge of the landscape: the beach," where there is "this incredible idea of beauty, but also a tension," Simons wrote in notes for the show.

Simons, 50, has been credited with giving the iconic American label renewed relevancy, his collections diving deep into the good, the bad and the ugly of the United States. But several industry news sites had speculated about the departure of Simons, after the PVH group head blamed him during a third-quarter earnings presentation for a lack of dynamism in sales.

PVH chairman and CEO Emanuel "Manny" Chirico announced a more commercialized marketing approach, signaling that the Simons creative era was ending. Calvin Klein, the New Yorker who in 1968 founded the label bearing his name, sold it in 2003 to PVH which also has the Tommy Hilfger brand. —AFP



In this file photo Belgian fashion designer Raf Simons waves to his guests on the runway at the Calvin Klein 205W39NYC Spring 2019 Men's and Women's runway show during New York Fashion Week in New York City. — AFP



Prince Harry, Meghan Markle to spend Christmas in Norfolk

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are to spend their first Christmas as a married couple with Harry's grandmother, Queen Elizabeth, at Sandringham. They will take part in various royal traditions like going to the church service on Christmas Day before heading back to Sandringham House for their traditional meal. Guests are expected to arrive on Christmas Eve and they will exchange gifts on that day with the other attendees including the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and their three children - George, Charlotte and Louis. Meanwhile, Meghan's mother reportedly rejected an invitation to spend Christmas Day with the royal family. Doria Ragland - who is based in Los Angeles - was offered the opportunity to spend the day alongside her beloved daughter and her husband Prince Harry, as well as the other royals, but she has instead opted to remain in the US. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex - who are preparing for the arrival of their first child in 2019 - are set to join the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and other royals at Sandringham on Christmas Day.

Offset to 'change his ways' after vacation with wife Cardi B



The former couple split up a few weeks ago, and since then the Migos rapper has been determined to win back the 'Bodak Yellow' hitmaker, as he turned up at one of her concerts to beg for her forgiveness. And although Cardi seemed adamant that they wouldn't get back together, the pair were spotted enjoying some sun on the back of a jet ski in the Caribbean island this weekend. Now, Offset has taken to Instagram to share a picture of himself from his 27th birthday last weekend - in which he wore a \$11,000, custom-made Laurel Dewitt Swarovski crystal ski mask and matching jacket - and quoted lyrics from the late Michael Jackson's hit 'Man in the Mirror'. As of the time of writing, it's unknown whether Offset's lyrical reference had anything to do with his ongoing marital problems. Meanwhile, Cardi had reportedly been planning spend Christmas with Offset for the sake of their daughter Kulture. A source said recently: "Cardi B wants Offset to be a part of Kulture's life and wants him to spend Christmas with his daughter. It's Kulture's first Christmas and it means a lot to Cardi to have the family together ... She plans to spend time and celebrate the holiday [in the Dominican Republic]."

Jennifer Lopez makes Leah Remini cry from laughter on the set of 'Second Act'



The 49-year-old singer and actress stars with her close friend Leah in the new movie, and managed to make her burst into tears through intense laughter after an improvised scene ended in a jovial "slap". In one scene, Leah's character Joan gives her best friend Maya (Jennifer) a pep talk before applying to a high-ranking corporate job, and Leah decided to improvise a little by calling on the phrase "Who's the champ?", which she often tells Jennifer before her concerts. Leah, 48, said: "This time I decided I'd slap her. She slapped me back so hard it made me cry from laughter." The pair had a "natural chemistry" on set as they've been close friends for years, and Leah claims the bond on-screen looked so "real" because they ended up "improvising" so much that the final product was the two actresses showcasing their own relationship.

Kenneth Petty pays tribute to Nicki Minaj with a tattoo

The 36-year-old rapper has only been romancing Kenneth Petty for a few weeks but it seems things are already getting serious between them as he's made a public and permanent declaration of love by getting 'Onika' - the 'Barbie Dreams' hitmaker's real first name - inked on his neck. Nicki showed off the body art on her Instagram account in a video which she captioned: "Did ya tat hurt zaddy? His first tat- frontin like it didn't sting #Onika #HeavyOnIt #SuperSleezy (sic)" Earlier this month, Nicki made their romance Instagram official when she shared a photo of them taken during her birthday celebrations in Turks and Caicos. She captioned the post: "Did you ever make it out of that town where nothing ever happens? it's no secret... that the both of us... are running out of time...(sic)" The 'Superbass' hitmaker also spoke out to defend her 40-year-old partner after it was revealed he is a level two sex offender, who was convicted of attempted rape in 1995. She wrote in response to her critics: "He was 15, she was 16... in a relationship. But go [off] internet. Ya'll can't run my life. Ya'll can't even run ya'll own life.(sic)" She then shared two other photos of them together and wrote: "Oh they wanna talk? Let's give'm [something] to talk about.(sic)"



Justin and Hailey Bieber adopt a puppy



The 'Love Yourself' singer and his 22-year-old model wife - who he's believed to have married in September - took to their Instagram accounts on Saturday to share pictures and video footage of their new "dogson", who they have named Oscar. Justin shared a shirtless photo of himself with the pooch sitting on his shoulder and wrote: "Meet our dogson his name is #Oscar (sic)" The cute canine then appeared in several posts on his Instagram Story, with one photo showing off Oscar's new toys and sleep area which was captioned: "Merry Christmas from Oscar." The 24-year-old pop star then shared a number of videos of himself and Hailey in bed with Oscar as the tiny puppy crawled across Justin's chest, was showered in kisses by the model, and returned the favor by licking her nose. The 'Believe' hitmaker ended his flurry of posts with a picture of Oscar fast asleep on a pillow. Hailey - whose surname before her marriage was Baldwin - also shared a number of videos of her "Christmas baby" on her own Instagram story, including one of Oscar scampering around on the bed adorned with a large blue bow and more of him sleeping. However, she also admitted the number of dog posts had been an "overload" but she just couldn't help sharing them. While the couple may be smitten with their new "dogson", Hailey - who is the daughter of Stephen and Kenna Baldwin - recently admitted she "can't wait" to have children and hinted that won't be too far away in the future for the couple. She shared: "I love kids and I can't wait to have my own. I would say now that's a closer reality."

Kim Kardashian West gets squishy Christmas tree for daughter North

The 38-year-old reality star has splashed out on a special tree for her eldest child this festive season, as she revealed the five-year-old tot has a soft tree in her bedroom, complete with squishable ornaments which she and her mother decorated together. Speaking to Busy Philipps in special bonus footage of 'Busy Tonight', she said: "I got North an all Squishy tree with ornaments that are Squishies. She's gonna be in heaven when we decorate it tomorrow." The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star is hosting the annual Christmas Eve party for her famous family this year, and has said that whilst she's not usually one to go overboard with festive decorations, she's had whole "teams" of people lending her a hand this year. She added to Busy: "Because we're throwing the Christmas Eve party this year, I feel like I have to get the teams in to figure it out and really step it up. We're usually really simple, just like twinkie lights but not a lot of decorations ... so I gotta figure it out." The Kardashian and Jenner family usually come together to create their own Christmas card every year and it appeared Kim was organizing it this year as she gave fans updates online.



Khloe Kardashian heaps praise on her strong and fabulous mother



The 34-year-old reality star took to Instagram on Saturday to share a glowing tribute to her mother Kris Jenner, as she dubbed her as a "Queen" and praised her for raising "multiple mini Queens" in the form of Khloe herself, as well as her sisters Kim Kardashian West, Kourtney Kardashian, and Kendall and Kylie Jenner. Posting a picture of herself and Kris at a party, Khloe wrote: "You are a Queen who has raised multiple mini Queens still trying to be as strong and fabulous as you are! I will love you more and more every day. Until the end of time (sic)" The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star's thoughtful post comes just days after she quipped that their close family friends John Legend and Chrissy Teigen will want to get a "restraining order" against Kris, after she continued to hound her followers and her friends with her constant shout outs about the couple's festive show, 'A Legendary Christmas with John & Chrissy'.

Lifestyle | Gossip

Drew Barrymore sheds 25 lbs in three months

The 43-year-old actress - who is mother to Olivia, six, and Frankie, four, whom she has with her estranged husband Will Kopelman - took to Instagram on Friday to share before and after photos of herself as she admitted that although her weight loss journey has been "very hard", she knows it's all been worth it. She captioned her Instagram snaps: "#TheWayItLooksToUs: WELLNESS ... @marniealton "When I look at Instagram, I am made to think I should be at my best self But most days, I lack consistency due to real life. "Solution: with the right people (@marniealton) we can make our goals a reality... "Here is me in a before pose and then 25 pounds later in the same place. "You can tell my face is so much thinner! This takes me so much work. Diet and exercise and fighting like a lion for it! Damn you genetics! And yet thank you for all the good stuff. I love where I come from (JOHN ETHEL LIONEL) and whatever package it comes in. I just know that I have the control to be what I want. Even if it is hard AF! "At least I know there are experts I can turn to for help. I mean look at what Marnie helped me do in three months! When i have time off in 2019...I'm comin for ya! PS may I just say I want to be these ladies on the front page. You are my spirit animals and my goal posts! (sic)" For the 'Santa Clarita Diet' star, the difficult weight loss isn't the only thing she's found challenging lately, as she recently took to social media to explain that co-parenting with her former spouse - whom she split with in 2016 after almost four years of marriage - isn't always easy.



Leonardo DiCaprio's foundation raises more than \$100 million

The Academy Award-winning actor has focused much of his attention on raising awareness of climate change over recent years, and his Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation - which he created in 1998 - has just surpassed the landmark figure. A statement from DiCaprio on the foundation's website read: "When I founded LDF 20 years ago, I did so based on the simple idea that we could make a real difference by directly funding some of the most effective environmental projects. "Whether it be individuals, grassroots movements or major nonprofits, we wanted to focus on getting critical funding to those who could have the greatest impact. "We are extremely proud to celebrate 20 years of this model. Since 1998, we have supported over 200 projects on every continent and in every ocean from habitat and species conservation, renewable energy, climate change, indigenous rights, and more. "I am pleased to announce \$11 million in new grants across our six program areas, bringing the total financial impact of LDF to over \$100 million. (sic)" DiCaprio, 44, produced and starred in the 2016 documentary film 'Before the Flood', which focused on the issue of climate change. Speaking about the documentary, DiCaprio previously explained: "We went to every corner of the globe to document the devastating impacts of climate change and questioned humanity's ability to reverse what may be the most catastrophic problem mankind has ever faced. There was a lot to take in. "All that we witnessed on this journey shows us that our world's climate is incredibly interconnected and that it is at urgent breaking point. "We wanted to create a film that gave people a sense of urgency, that made them understand what particular things are going to solve this problem."

Demi Lovato is 'sober and grateful to be alive'



The 26-year-old pop star spent time in rehab earlier this year after she was found unconscious at her Los Angeles home following a night of partying and Demi has reassured fans she is fine but asked for space to heal privately. She wrote on Twitter: "If I feel like the world needs to know something, I will tell them MYSELF. Otherwise people stop writing about my recovery, because it's no one's business but mine. I am sober and grateful to be alive and taking care of ME. "Someday I'll tell the world what exactly happened, why it happened and what my life is like today.. but until I'm ready to share that with people please stop prying and making up s**t that you know nothing about. I still need space and time to heal. "I would love to set the record straight on all the rumors out there but I literally don't owe anyone anything so I'm not going to. All my fans need to know is I'm working hard on myself, I'm happy and clean and I'm SO grateful for their support. "I'm so blessed I get to take this time to be with family, relax, work on my mind, body and soul and come back when I'm ready. I have my fans to thank for that. I'm so grateful, truly. I love you guys so much thank you (sic)."

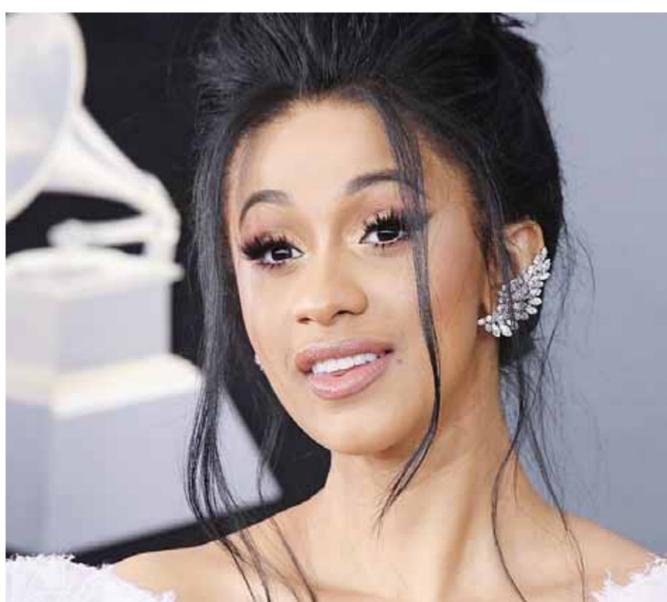
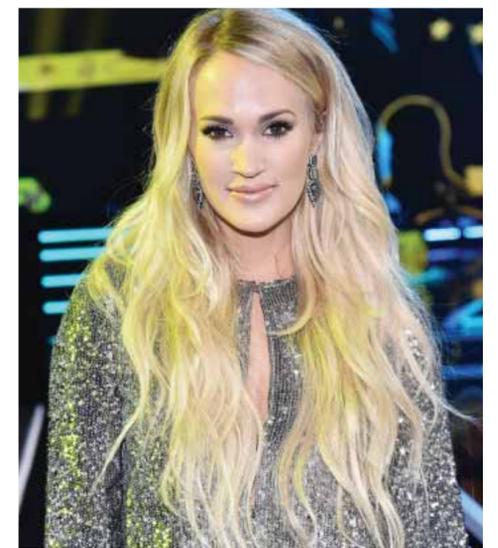


John Legend finds it hard to treat his children over Christmas

The 'All of Me' hitmaker admitted his own modest upbringing was so very different to that which his and wife Chrissy Teigen's two kids, Luna, two, and seven-month-old Miles, are experiencing, he "can't imagine" what it's like to be them but he's determined not to spoil the youngsters. He said: "I don't think we'll spoil them for Christmas - we'll just try and keep it at a normal level. It's hard. "I can't even imagine what it's like to be a kid like my kids because I grew up in a house where it was very different. "My parents were working class. My dad worked in a factory and we couldn't afford a lot. "We couldn't afford to have these huge Christmas celebrations with big gifts. It was all about family, it was about music, it was about food, but it wasn't about material things at all. "So, it's weird raising kids that are having very much the opposite experience, where they're surrounded by privilege and wealth and don't want for anything. "It's hard to know how to deal with Christmas with them."

Lin-Manuel Miranda calls Emily Blunt 'human sunshine'

The 'Mary Poppins Returns' actress' co-star is grateful that she was so kind on the set of the 2018 movie and praised her for being the "classiest, best lady". Speaking on Late Night with Seth Meyers, he said: "Emily Blunt is like human sunshine. The person at the top of the call sheet determines the mood of the set. If your star is in a bad mood, everyone's like 'we're in a bad mood.' And she's just like the classiest, best lady. It was a joy to go to work with her." Meanwhile, Lin-Manuel thinks Emily is the "perfect" Mary Poppins. Speaking at the movie's premiere, he told BANG Showbiz: "I was so excited Emily was playing the role because she is perfect for it." He loved being able to bring his son on set for every musical number. Asked about his highlights making the film, he said: "Coming from the theatre, where the only thing that changes in the performance is the audience and your energy that day, to go, 'Okay, Thursday, we'll be shutting down Buckingham Palace and riding with 500 bicyclists. And Friday, I'll be dancing with the penguins,' those kinds of moments are really unforgettable. I brought my son to set, every time that we filmed a musical number, and to watch his eyes like saucers while daddy danced with what seemed like 500 dancers and bikers. I'll never forget the look on his face, as long as I live."



Cardi B turns down Super Bowl halftime show

The 26-year-old rapper is believed to have been asked to take to the stage alongside Maroon 5 on February 3 in Atlanta to perform their collaboration 'Girls Like You' but Cardi refused to take part in support of Colin Kaepernick, the former San Francisco 49ers quarterback who started the take-a-knee protest movement in response to racial inequality. A representative for Cardi told the New York Post's Page Six: "The report circulating that she wants a million dollars and she wants her own set is false. There was never a firm offer to begin with for a performance. There [were] talks about it, but she was not particularly interested in participating because of how she feels about Colin Kaepernick and the whole movement .??. But again, there was never a solid offer for her to say yes or no regarding the Super Bowl. She is already confirmed to do a set with Bruno Mars that weekend." It had been claimed that Cardi demanded one million dollars and a solo performance slot to take part.

Carrie Underwood struggles with insomnia

The 'Before He Cheats' hitmaker is expecting her second child with her husband Mike Fisher and she admits she is "losing her mind" over her pregnancy insomnia. She wrote on Twitter: "Dear pregnancy insomnia, Please go bother someone else...like dads. Go bother dads. My husband sleeps so soundly and peacefully and I've been awake for 2 hours (so far). How is this fair? Imma lose my mind! (sic)" Meanwhile, Carrie - who already has three-year-old son Isaiah - previously admitted she is "so thankful" to be pregnant following three devastating miscarriages. She shared: "It took us a while to get here ... I'm gonna cry again. [I'm] just so thankful to find out Isaiah's gonna have a baby brother. It was just great news. We're excited ... Balance is what it's all about, no matter what your job is. Being a mom, working and dividing your time. It's what we all have to do as mothers." Carrie had previously revealed she had endured three miscarriages in the last two years, and said she was left feeling "angry" by the ordeal. —Bang Showbiz

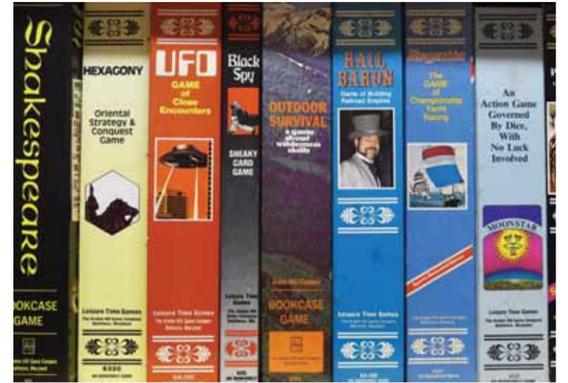
Lifestyle | Features



Tom Werneck poses behind a board game at the Bayerisches Spielearchiv archive for board games in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP photos



Several board games are seen in a shelf of the Bayerisches Spielearchiv archive for board games in Munich.



Germany's board games guru says happy to lose



Picture shows the box of a historical game.

With a treasure trove of over 20,000 board games, including a discontinued Trump property game, Germany's Tom Werneck has turned a lifelong passion for rolling the dice and passing go into one of the world's biggest collections. And if the 79-year-old has learned anything along the way, it's that winning comes second—and sometimes it's ok to bend the rules.

Walking past endless rows of games stacked up to the ceiling in a Bavarian basement, Werneck chuckles as he pulls out "Trump: The Game" and points to the gold-lettered tagline on the box, picked up in Trump Tower in the late 1980s. "It's not whether you win or lose, but whether you win!" it reads, above a picture of the future US president. To Werneck, nothing could be further from the truth.

"Playing is about connecting with people. I want to play with you, look you in the eyes. You're the real aim of the game. I couldn't care less whether I win or lose," he tells AFP. It's a sentiment that increasingly resonates in today's digital world, where a desire to turn off our screens and have real-life interactions has fuelled a global board games boom. The market for table-top games, which includes puzzles and card games, grew six percent globally in 2017, according to the NPD research group, and the trend shows no sign of abating. The German industry alone generates some 500 million euros in annual revenues, the DVSI toy federation said, accounting for a sizeable chunk of the country's three-billion-euro toy market.

Nazi game

Wanting to preserve his vast collection for future generations, former Siemens employee Werneck turned his trove into a non-profit association almost two decades ago, called the Bavarian Games Archive Haar. Among the oldest

treasures in his Aladdin's cave is a green and white card game from the 1870s featuring famous composers.

More controversially, he also has a Nazi-era board game based on Hitler's troops conquering England, which Werneck describes as pure propaganda. "It's terrible, it was designed to make children excited about war." The archive is housed in a building provided by the local municipality in Haar, on the outskirts of Munich, where Werneck and his team of some 15 volunteers carefully catalogue and store each title—with new additions arriving almost daily.

Fast and silly

To tap into growing demand for table-top games among young adults and children, toymakers are scrambling to marry the new with the analogue. The success of viral videos showing players enjoying simple games like "Pie Face", where a person gets hit with whipped cream, has sparked a surge in silly, easy-to-grasp games, said Frederique Tutt, NPD Group's global toy industry expert. Toy firms have also turned to online "influencers" like YouTube stars to promote games, while rulebooks are going unread in favor of online explainers.

Long-established classics are getting in on the act with reboots such as Monopoly's Fortnite edition, based on a blockbuster video game, or sped-up versions of existing games. Among adults, Tutt said so-called "kidult" games that are intentionally childish or irreverent are having a moment, often played at parties or retro game nights. The popularity of these games comes as no surprise to Werneck, who believes that board games "mirror what is happening in society".

And although there have been attempts at integrating smartphone apps into board games, Werneck gives short shrift to tech gimmicks that don't add value. "If I have to



Picture shows the box of a historical game.

focus my attention on some stupid device instead of my fellow players, then something's wrong."

While Werneck enjoys trying out the latest offerings with his grandchildren, the affable septuagenarian never played board games himself growing up, recalling an out-of-doors childhood in the Bavarian Alps. He was an adult when he bought his first board game from an expensive catalogue, only to be disappointed. Ever the optimist, Werneck tweaked the rules until it worked better and promptly developed an insatiable appetite for board games—until his wife told him his hobby was getting too expensive. —AFP

In a Tokyo neighborhood's last sushi restaurant, a sense of loss

I'll have a draft, says Yasuo Fujinuma, heaving himself down at the sushi counter. He pulls a pack of cigarettes from a frayed pocket of his sweater. From the corner of the restaurant, a small TV hums the noon weather forecast. He never drinks at noon. "I've just come from the hospital," he says, tapping the filter end of his cigarette on the bar. "My sister died."

The chef puts his knife down. Another customer peers over the top of his sports pages. After a pause, the chef returns to his cutting board. "You took good care of her," he says, placing a sheaf of haran leaf on the chipped black counter. He lines the leaf with a dozen nigiri sushi and hands Fujinuma a mug of beer. Conversations roll on like this at the Eiraku sushi bar. They start mid-sentence with no hellos or how-are-yous and veer into private thoughts without much fanfare, punctuated by news of ordinary tragedies.

The chef and Fujinuma talk about how his sister was last in a few years ago, stopping by after an evening dip in the public bath across the street. She had her usual sushi and a beer, then walked home with her cane past an abandoned karaoke bar, past the empty tempura restaurant, turning the corner where two more pubs used to stand.

Eiraku is the last surviving sushi bar in this cluttered neighborhood of steep cobblestoned hills and cherry trees unseen on most tourist maps of Tokyo. Caught between the rarified world of \$300 omakase dinners and the brutal efficiency of chain-restaurant fish, mom-and-pop shops like it are fast disappearing.

Fujinuma, 76, pops sushi into his mouth and thinks out loud about the arrangements still to be made for his sister. A hospital consent form he just signed is handed around and examined at the bar. "It's just me now," he says, his mouth still half-full with vinegary rice and fresh fish. He nods at the man and woman behind the counter. "You're lucky you have each other."

Chef Masatoshi Fukutsuna and his wife, Mitsue, smile without a word. In the 35 years since they opened up shop, the couple has seen many of their friends move away for a job or family, only to return decades later, often without the job or the family, their absence unspoken. Absence is a part of life here on what remains of the Medaka shopping street, a road so narrow that cars have to drive up onto the sidewalk to let another vehicle pass.

No one can say exactly when the first shop on the street closed. People squint a little and say it was probably the electronics store a decade ago, or maybe it was the rival fishmongers across the street from each other.

er. Next to close was probably the butcher shop, they say, then maybe the Chinese restaurant after that. In the past decade, three family-owned sushi restaurants in the area have shuttered.

In the empty spaces left behind, fluorescent 7-11s have moved in, with microwave bento boxes and \$5 trays of sushi and men in tired suits smoking alone outside. Once the sky turns pink and the sun sets, the street descends into shadow, save for the faintest glow from halogen lamp posts.

It's a neighborhood in twilight. More like it are scattered across this city, their corner cafes and stores far from the neon glare of the famous shopping districts. The number of independent, family-owned sushi bars in Tokyo has halved to 750 in the last decade, a trade association says, driven out of business by fast-food joints and a younger generation that doesn't want to inherit them.

"People would rather pay 100 yen for a plate of sushi at a really cheap place or they'd shell out tens of thousands of yen to go to a famous sushi restaurant in Ginza that they heard about on television," says the chef, absently changing the channel of the TV. "But places like ours, shops that are right in the middle, we just can't seem to survive." A game show starts playing, and canned laughter soon fills the room.

To compete with cheaper corporate-backed restaurants, Eiraku has kept its lunch and dinner prices unchanged for the past 10 years. Their sushi lunch sets start at \$8, while dinner and drinks usually cost around \$50 per couple. To keep expenses down, Fukutsuna drives his Honda motorcycle to the new Toyosu wholesale market every morning to haggle over small amounts of fish.

He buys only what he might sell in a day, but takes pride in picking the best seafood himself. His oldest son, who works as a manager of a three-story sushi chain with hundreds of tables on the other side of the city, never goes to the market himself and orders his supplies in bulk. "They charge you 30 percent more if you order by fax, online or by phone," Masatoshi says.

Despite their best efforts, the office workers and factory men who once stopped by during the day are long gone, their offices and workshops outsourced to far-flung neighborhoods or foreign countries. One of the couple's former customers, an executive of a medical equipment firm, still sends one of his junior employees across town every year to deliver a new company calendar. It stands on the restaurant's limited wall space like a bittersweet reminder, hung across the room from an aerial photograph of the old Tsukiji fish market.

The bar can only seat 10 people at a time. Most patrons prefer to sit on one of the four

stools at the counter, where they can point directly at the fish on display and watch the chef prepare their dish. Elderly customers find it harder to sit at the two low tables set out on tatami mats near the front of the restaurant. When the couple's children come home for the holiday season, their grandchildren throw off their shoes and play on the cushions.

Shop closings are middle-of-the-night affairs

At 5 pm, moments after flicking on the restaurant sign to open for dinner, Mitsue walks over to the whiteboard and takes sardines off of the daily menu. Too expensive. It could be global warming, the pair say, or it's just an off week or year, a bad harvest. Fishmongers give them a different answer each time. Whatever the reason, they can't serve the fish tonight. Behind the counter, Mitsue and Masatoshi work in comfortable silence, often with their backs to each other.

The 63-year-old chef, despite his wispy white hair, still has the look of a bemused boy, while Mitsue, 61, has an unlined face that sometimes betrays an expression of concern. They met when Mitsue was still in high school. Like many long-together couples, they book-end each other's sentences, and Mitsue often repeats orders for her husband and nudges him to finish a train of thought.

"The only reason why we can stay in business..." he starts. "Wait, what was I going to say?" he turns to his wife, who is never more than a few feet away from him in their tiny kitchen. She stirs a pot of miso soup on their two-burner gas stove. "We can stay in business because our children are grown, because we own the place ourselves, and we make just enough for the two of us to live on," she says.

They can't say when they will retire, but they're both adamant their oldest son shouldn't take over the business. "I want him to make his own way, and do well for his family," says the chef. In the meantime, they make sure never to go away for longer than a few days. Even when they traveled to Guam with their children and grandchildren two years ago, they were gone just four days. "I don't want them to think that we've gone out of business," Mitsue says.

Shop closings are a quiet, middle-of-the-



Masatoshi Fukutsuna, chef and owner of sushi restaurant Eiraku, and his wife Mitsue cook sushi dish at their restaurant in Tokyo, Japan. — Reuters photos



Sushi dish is served to a customer at Eiraku restaurant in Tokyo.

night affairs. Neighbors only find out when they see an ominous sheet of paper tacked onto bolted doors. The notes, usually hastily written, are letters of gratitude to their customers of 10, 20 or 30 years. Soon, vines will

tangle over the empty doorway, and its passing will barely be remembered by those still here. Night falls, and neighbors shiver down the street in their heavy coats. — Reuters

South African jazz artist plays guitar during brain surgery

South African jazz artist Musa Manzini has played his music all over the world, but one performance stands out — strumming his guitar while surgeons operated on his brain. JA video of the multi-instrumentalist and university lecturer taken during the six-hour surgery for a brain tumor, shows him lying on his back in the operating theatre, surrounded by scrubbed-up medical staff, plucking the strings of his guitar.

This allowed doctors in the South African city of Durban to observe which areas of his brain Manzini used to play music, allowing them to preserve those areas and also restore some movement to his fingers, which were affected by the tumor. "I felt very awkward and uncomfortable," Manzini said a week after the operation. "Being in between general anesthesia and awake and hearing the sounds of a blow torch inside your brain...it's very difficult to concentrate."

Doctors opted to keep Manzini awake in order to assess which areas of his brain were functioning as the surgery went on, helping to reduce the risk of neurological damage. "It was a success in that the biggest risk was paralysis, I'm not paralyzed, and I still have control of my limbs and thus in good spirits and recovering nicely," he said. Once fully recovered, Manzini intends to take to the stage again, he said. — Reuters

Classifieds

Monday, December 24, 2018

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 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Sunny with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 38 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 23/12/2018 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	18 °C	13 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	19 °C	09 °C			
ABDALY	17 °C	07 °C			
BUBYAN	** °C	** °C			
JAHRA	19 °C	10 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	17 °C	11 °C			
SALMIYAH	17 °C	14 °C			
AHMADI	18 °C	12 °C			
NUWASIB	20 °C	11 °C			
WAFRA	19 °C	09 °C			
SALMY	16 °C	06 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	12/24	Sunny	20 °C	09 °C	NW	10 - 32 km/h
Tuesday	12/25	Sunny	21 °C	10 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	12/26	Partly cloudy	21 °C	09 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h
Thursday	12/27	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	23 °C	12 °C	SE	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:14
Sunrise	06:39
Zuhr	11:47
Asr	14:37
Sunset	16:55
Isha	18:17

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	18 °C
MIN. Temp.	12 °C
MAX. RH	94 %
MIN. RH	50 %
MAX. Wind	N 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

Arwa Mithawala. (C 5439)
 20-12-2018

I, Batul, holder of Indian Passport No. S2091663 and Civil ID no. 297122301821, has changed my name to Batul Khojema Kanchwala. (C 5439)

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

I, Hozefa, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3201289 and Civil ID no. 277021101304, has changed my name to Hozefa Mithawala. (C 5439)

I, Arwa, holder of Indian Passport No. L6663051 and Civil ID no. 2822012002028, has changed my name to

Airlines	
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Monday 24/12/2018				Departure Flights on Monday 24/12/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
KAC	364	Colombo	14:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KAC	286	Dhaka	14:30	RBG	554	Alexandria	14:45
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
KAC	618	Doha	14:40	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	IRA	666	Esfahan	15:10
KAC	412	Bangkok	15:00	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
KAC	562	Amman	15:35	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	KAC	743	Dammam	15:55
KAC	304	Mumbai	15:40	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
SYR	341	Damascus	16:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
SAW	705	Damascus	16:00	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:20
ABY	127	Sharjah	16:05	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:30
KAC	118	New York	16:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
KAC	502	Beirut	16:30	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
KAC	542	Cairo	16:30	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00
QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	SYR	342	Damascus	17:00
FDB	051	Dubai	16:40	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35
JZR	114	Doha	17:10	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	JZR	215	Alexandria	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
JZR	124	Dubai	18:20	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	KAC	621	Doha	18:25
KAC	744	Dammam	19:00	JZR	253	Amman	18:40
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
JZR	104	Bahrain	19:25	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
KAC	616	Bahrain	19:30	JZR	127	Dubai	19:10
KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	776	Riyadh	19:50	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
FDB	057	Dubai	19:50	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KNE	381	Taif	20:00	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	620	Doha	20:15	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	JZR	1735	Cairo	20:20
DHX	172	Bahrain	20:20	KAC	357	Kochi	20:30
AZQ	4565	Baku	20:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
KAC	674	Dubai	20:35	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:35
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35	KNE	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
KAC	174	Munich	21:15	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
KAC	164	MXP	21:25	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
KAC	168	Paris	21:30	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
UAE	859	Dubai	21:35	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	564	Amman	21:55	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
KAC	162	Geneva	21:55	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
JAI	574	Mumbai	22:00	AZQ	4566	Baku	22:30
QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
KAC	622	Doha	22:30	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
SVA	514	Riyadh	22:30	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
KAC	786	Jeddah	22:45	JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00
SVA	502	Jeddah	22:45	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KAC	501	Alexandria	23:05	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:30
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	SVA	503	Jeddah	23:45
JZR	128	Dubai	23:50				

Trump, Erdogan discuss 'highly coordinated' US Syria pullout

Turkey bolsters troops in Kurdish areas of northern Syria

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump said yesterday he had discussed Syria and "the slow & highly coordinated pullout of US troops from the area" in a phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The US president tweeted that the two leaders had "a long and productive call" and also discussed the Islamic State group (IS) and "heavily expanded trade".

Trump shocked US allies on Friday when he announced plans to pull the 2,000 US troops out of Syria, where they have been helping coordinate a multinational fight against IS. But the move was lauded by Turkey. The decision followed an earlier Trump phone call with Erdogan, who has been pressing for a US withdrawal.

An American pullout would allow Turkish troops to move against the hardened Kurdish fighters in Syria deemed terrorists by the Ankara regime - but who have strongly supported US efforts there. A US withdrawal, said Mutlu Civiroglu, a Kurdish affairs analyst, "will open way for Turkey to start its operations against the Kurds, and a bloody war will begin".

Trump's sudden decision sparked turmoil in his administration, prompting the resignation of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, as well as of Brett McGurk, the special envoy to the anti-IS coalition. Several US politi-

cians of both parties rejected Trump's claim that the forces of IS had been defeated, and many in the US military expressed alarm and dismay at the thought of suddenly abandoning their Kurdish allies.

Turkey on Saturday sent military reinforcements to northern Syria near an area controlled by Kurdish forces as Ankara threatens to carry out a fresh offensive to wipe them out, a war monitor said. Washington has for years supported the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the fight against IS as part of an international coalition dominated by the People's Protection Units (YPG).

"Around 35 tanks and other heavy weapons, carried aboard tank carriers, crossed the Jarablos border crossing in the early evening," Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, told AFP. "They headed for an area near the Sajour River, between Jarablos and Minbej, not far from the front lines where Kurdish fighters of the Minbej Military Council are stationed," he added.

Turkey accuses the YPG of being a "terrorist offshoot" of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. Erdogan on Friday vowed to

drive both the YPG and IS from Syria. Ankara fears a Kurdish state could be established on its borders, which it believes could reinforce separatist ambitions of the Kurdish minority in Turkey.

The Kurdish community accounts for 15 percent of Syria's population and controls around 30 percent of the country, as a federal region declared in 2016. In the past two years Turkey has conducted two offensives into northern Syria. In 2016 it launched an operation against IS, which also aimed to block the YPG from joining up the territory it held in northern Syria. And in Jan 2018 Turkey staged an offensive against the militia in its northwestern enclave of Afrin.

Meanwhile, exiled opposition leader Nasr Al-Hariri earlier yesterday had urged the US to coordinate its pullout from Syria with Turkey and Ankara-backed rebel groups to prevent regime forces from retaking the country's northeast. "An uncoordinated US withdrawal may leave a void that would be filled by Daesh, the Syrian regime or Iranian militias," Hariri warned on Twitter, using an Arabic acronym to refer to the Islamic State group.

"That is why we strongly support the idea of a gradual withdrawal in full cooperation with the 'national army' and Turkey... to avoid these dangerous scenarios."

The "Syrian National Army" is a coalition of Turkey-aligned rebel groups in northern Syria opposed to the government of President Bashar Al-Assad.

The Ankara-backed rebels fought alongside Turkish soldiers earlier this year to retake the Kurdish border enclave of Afrin-one of three cantons unilaterally declared by Syrian Kurds in 2016 as their "federal region". "It is possible to strengthen the role of the forces of the revolution and the Syrian opposition in parallel with that of Turkey... in northeast Syria," Hariri added, referring to Kurdish-held territory. Hariri said Syrian government forces and Iranian forces are trying to "exploit the (US withdrawal) to achieve greater gains".

His fears are fuelled by a possible rapprochement between Damascus and Syrian Kurds, threatened by a new Turkish-backed military offensive and desperate to maintain some of the autonomy they have staked out over the course of Syria's seven-year war. Hariri said the US administration had informed the Syrian opposition of its plans for a "total and rapid withdrawal". Long marginalized, Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of the conflict between rebels and the regime as they focused on building an autonomous region in parts of north and northeast Syria. — Agencies

Macron calls for order after 'yellow vest' attack on cops

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron called for "order" yesterday after a sixth weekend of "yellow vest" anti-government protests marked by dwindling participation and a violent attack on police in Paris. Speaking during a visit to the central African state of Chad where he was visiting French troops serving in a counter-terrorism force, Macron said: "There must be order now, calm and harmony. Our country needs it."

"It needs harmony, unity, sincere commitment to strong collective causes and we must heal the divisions," said the 41-year-old centrist, who has struggled to tamp down the anger of the working poor in small-town and rural France over falling spending power and policies seen as tilted towards the rich. A total of 38,600 people took part in a sixth round of nationwide protests on Saturday, according to the interior ministry - around half the number that demonstrated a week earlier.

In Paris, the scene of fierce clashes and widespread destruction in previous weeks, the protests were mainly peaceful. But as evening fell, violence broke out again on the iconic Champs-Elysees avenue. In one incident that caused widespread outrage, a group of three police officers on motorbike were forced to make a hasty escape after coming under attack near the Champs-Elysees from a group of demonstrators, who threw electric scooters, paving stones and other objects at them.

A video of the incident, which was widely shared on

social media, showed one officer pulling his gun and pointing it at the advancing protesters. He and his two colleagues - one of whom had his motorbike knocked to the ground - then made their getaway. The video showed that, seconds before the attack, the police had lobbed stun grenades at a group of protesters, who were some distance away.

'Incredible violence towards police'

Speaking to BFMTV channel Macron said those responsible for the violence would face "the most severe" legal punishment. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe for his part denounced the "incredible violence towards the police". He also took aim at protesters who sang a song by controversial comedian Dieudonne M'Bala M'Bala, a convicted anti-Semite, outside Sacre-Coeur church in Paris as well as those who decapitated an effigy of Macron in the western Charente region - two other incidents seen as evidence of growing radicalization and the presence of extremists within the movement. "There can be no trivializing of such gestures which must draw unanimous condemnation and be punished by the law," Philippe tweeted.

The number of demonstrators has been trending downwards since 282,000 people turned out for the first Saturday protest against planned anti-pollution fuel tax hikes on Nov 17. From there the protests quickly morphed into a full-scale revolt against Macron's policies, aloof, top-down governing style, and the political class as a whole. Last week, Macron sought to defuse the crisis by announcing a 10-billion-euro (\$11.4 billion) package of measures to help pensioners and low-paid workers. Since then the "yellow vests" have been split between moderates willing to engage in dialogue with the government and radicals intent on remaining at the barricades.

Around 2,000 people demonstrated in Paris on Saturday, compared to 4,000 a week previously, police

vide strange interpretations of the ruling and called for applying it quickly.

MP Saleh Ashour meanwhile threatened yesterday to grill Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh over not receiving proper answers to his questions from her and other ministers. Ashour said he grilled Sabeeh in May over her decision to dissolve a Shiite society of which he is the chairman. After the grilling, which the minister survived, Ashour said he sent questions on the issue to Sabeeh and several other ministers. He said he did not receive answers from other ministers and an incomplete reply from Sabeeh. He said he will grill Sabeeh if he does not get the answers.

"Tsunami warning buoys are positioned to warn of tsunamis originated by earthquakes at underwater tectonic plate boundaries. Even if there had been such a buoy right next to Anak Krakatau, this is so close to the affected shorelines that warning time would have been minimal given the high speeds at which tsunami waves travel," he said.

Indonesian authorities initially said the wave was not a tsunami, but instead a tidal surge and urged the public not to panic. Nugroho later apologized, saying because there was no earthquake it had been difficult to ascertain the cause of the incident early on. "If there is an initial error we're sorry," he wrote on Twitter. The wave swamped parts of the coast around the Sunda Strait, leaving at least 164 people dead in worst-affected Pandeglang district on Java's western tip. Large numbers of casualties were recorded at two hotels in the area, Nugroho said, without elaborating.

Eleven people died further north in Serang, while 48 were killed in South Lampung, on Sumatra island. Heavy equipment was being transported to badly hit areas to help search for victims and evacuation posts and public kitchens were being set up for evacuees, he added. According to Indonesia's geological agency, Anak Krakatau had been showing signs of heightened activity for days, spewing plumes of ash thousands of meters into the air.

Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone nations on Earth due to its position straddling the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide. Most recently in the city of Palu on Sulawesi island a quake and tsunami in September killed thousands of people. On Dec 26, 2004 a tsunami triggered by a magnitude 9.3 undersea earthquake off the coast of Sumatra in western Indonesia killed 220,000 people in countries around the Indian Ocean, including 168,000 in Indonesia. — Agencies



PARIS: This video grab taken on Saturday on the Champs-Elysees shows a police biker (left) drawing his firearm as he and other police bikers are assaulted by protesters. — AFP

said. A total of 142 people were detained and 19 taken into police custody in the capital, including one of leaders of the movement, Eric Drouot. Macron's concessions, which were fast-tracked through parliament in 12 days, marked a stunning climbdown for a leader who staked his reputation on not being swayed by protesters.

Leader faces charges

Yesterday, he told a press conference with his Chadian counterpart Idriss Deby that the measures were a response to the "righteous anger of the French people". During an earlier meeting with a group of

Chadian women he said he had "sometimes been mistaken" in trying to implement a one-size-fits-all approach to greening the economy and said it was "more intelligent to draw on local initiatives".

The protests have dealt a blow to the French economy, particularly the retail trade, ahead of Christmas. Junior economy minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher said French stores reported an average drop-off of 25 percent in sales compared with the same period a year earlier. Ten people have died in incidents linked to the demonstrations, mostly in accidents at roadblocks set up by the protesters. — AFP

MPs to debate court verdict...

Continued from Page 1

Dallal said that based on the ruling, the Assembly is obliged to consider the membership of any MP as illegal if they receive any ruling in a criminal case. But MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl charged that some quarters are taking the Assembly into uncharted waters by trying to pro-

Tsunami kills at least 222 in Indonesia as...

Continued from Page 1

Asep Perangkat said he was with his family when the wave surged through Carita, carving a swathe of destruction, dragging cars and shipping containers. "Buildings on the edge of the beach were destroyed. Trees and electric poles fell to the ground," he told AFP. In Lampung province, on the other side of the strait, Lutfi Al Rasyid fled the beach in Kalianda city, fearing for his life. "I could not start my motorbike so I left it and I ran... I just prayed and ran as far as I could," the 23-year-old told AFP.

Kathy Mueller from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said the toll was likely to rise as the conditions on the ground became clearer. "The situation, and the death toll, will remain fluid over the next days and even weeks," she told AFP. Aid workers were helping to evacuate the injured and bring in clean water, tarpaulins and provide shelter, she added, saying the group was preparing for the possibility of diseases breaking out in the tsunami zone.

Anak Krakatoa, which forms a small island in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra, emerged around 1928 in the crater left by Krakatoa, which erupted in 1883 killing at least 36,000 people. "The cause of the undersea landslide was due to volcanic activity of Anak Krakatoa, which coincided with a high tide due to the full moon," Nugroho told reporters in Yogyakarta.

Professor David Rothery from The Open University said that the proximity of the volcano to the coast gave authorities very little time to act.

Hundreds take to Beirut streets...

Continued from Page 1

"We are governed by a political class of corrupt thieves who rule with sectarian fanaticism," she said. Parliamentary polls in May gave Saad Hariri a new term as prime minister, but seven months on, debate still drags on over ministerial portfolios. Demonstrators demanded what

they called their "most basic rights", including a reintroduction of housing loans stalled for nearly a year and more access to healthcare, water and electricity. They were met by security forces who erected a cordon in the city center.

Dozens also demonstrated in the northern city of Tripoli and in Nabatieh in the south. The protests came after hundreds took part in demonstrations led by Lebanon's Communist Party last Sunday. Lebanon's economy is on the brink of collapse and France warned this month that the country could soon miss out on a much-needed aid program agreed in Paris earlier this year if the political deadlock continues. — AFP

Turkey, Israel in new war of words...

Continued from Page 1

Turkey-Israel ties have been strained since Ankara

ordered the Israeli ambassador to leave Turkey in May over the killing of protesters along the border with the Gaza Strip. Erdogan, who regards himself as a champion of the Palestinians, has bitterly criticized Israel previously, calling it in July "the world's most fascist and racist state". However despite the heated rhetoric, experts point to strong economic ties and robust trade between the two countries. — AFP

Producers to cut oil output...

Continued from Page 1

and expected it to vanish in one or two months. "Based on available figures, we have around 26 million barrels of surplus ... compared to 340 million barrels in early 2017," Mazrouei told a press conference in Kuwait. "I think that we can easily do with this surplus and reach market rebalance in one or two months... in the first quarter of next year," he said. OPEC - a cartel of producer countries that has long manipulated output of the commodity, to influence global prices in members' favor - and non-OPEC members agreed in early December to trim production by 1.2 million barrels a day from Jan 1, in a bid to shore up sagging prices.

Mazrouei said oil output by OPEC producers will be cut by three percent, and two percent by non-OPEC countries. He said that there has been higher than anticipated supply on the market in recent months, as US sanctions on Iran have had a less pronounced effect on the country's oil exports than had been expected. On US President Donald Trump's call on the producers to slash crude output, Mazrouei said: "We solely consider the facts and market balance... we are committed to serve our states' interests."

Iraq's Oil Minister Thamer Al-Ghadhban said that

there is a consensus among OPEC and non-OPEC producers to comply with the new agreement to trim output in a bid to stabilize the market. He said the new agreement is valid for six months and the ministers will meet in April to assess the impact of the cuts. Ghadban said he believes that the new measures taken by producers will "stop the slide in oil prices."

Ghadban also said that his country is expected to put its final touches on the agreement of exporting gas to Kuwait. He said that the agreement was made during mandate of the previous Iraqi government, and "we will consider the agreement and make our decision based on positive data". "I cannot say that I have any remarks on the agreement because we have exported gas to Kuwait in the '80s, but we all know that Iraq has a big need for gas, especially in generating electric power," Ghadban said. "The two sides negotiated several days ago on the borderlines between Kuwait and Iraq and studies have been made with engineers and technicians to make the area beneficial for both sides," he added.

Mazrouei said that producers are ready to renew the agreement or increase cuts in case the market does not balance. "If the production cuts of 1.2 million barrels a day is not enough, we will meet again to see what is enough and apply it," he said. During their meeting next April, the producers are also expected to sign a long-term agreement to formalize cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC members over oil output. OPEC has lately been cooperating closely with Russia and other non-cartel producers, in a bid to impose greater control over global output and prices. — Agencies

Sports

Maple Leafs slam Rangers with four goals in third period

Stars' Radulov scores to beat Wild with seconds left in OT

TORONTO: Mitch Mamer had two goals and an assist in the third period and the Toronto Maple Leafs held on to defeat the visiting New York Rangers 5-3 Saturday night. Patrick Marleau, Morgan Rielly and Andreas Johnsson also scored for the Maple Leafs, who scored four times in the third period en route to their third win in a row. John Tavares and Johnsson each added two assists. Kevin Hayes and Neal Pionk each had a goal and an assist for the Rangers, and Chris Kreider added a goal. Maple Leafs goaltender Frederik Andersen made 25 saves. Alexander Georgiev stopped 31 shots for New York.

JETS 1, CANUCKS 0

Mark Scheifele's goal with 1:32 left in the third period gave visiting Winnipeg the victory over Vancouver as goaltender Laurent Brossoit made 40 saves for the first shutout of his career. He has won eight of the nine games that he has started this season. The Jets swept their three-game season series with the Canucks and have now won 11 of their past 13 games overall. Vancouver goaltender Jacob Markstrom posted 23 saves on 24 shots. He suffered his first loss in seven games.

STARS 2, WILD 1 (OT)

Alexander Radulov scored the game-winning goal with 10 seconds remaining in overtime and Ben Bishop turned away 30 shots as visiting Dallas won a thriller over Minnesota in St Paul, Minn. Radulov's shot, off a pass from John Klingberg and an assist from Mattias Janmark, found a hole under the glove of Minnesota goalkeeper Devan Dubnyk on the short side near the post to allow the Stars just their second win in their past seven games. Jamie Benn broke open a scoreless tie just 1:58 into the third period when he camped in the crease and poked home a Radulov pass from behind the net past Dubnyk.

LIGHTNING 6, OILERS 3

Steven Stamkos and Tyler Johnson each scored twice as Tampa Bay extended its points streak with a win against host Edmonton. Nikita Kucherov added a goal and four assists and J.T. Miller also scored for the Lightning, who are 11-0-1 in their past 12 games, the longest points streak in the NHL this season. Tampa Bay wrapped up its four-game Western Canada trip by going 3-0-1. Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy made 25 saves.

SABRES 3, DUCKS 0

Linus Ullmark made 40 saves for his second NHL shutout and host Buffalo shut out Anaheim as Rasmus Dahlin, Jeff Skinner and Conor Sheary scored for the Sabres. Buffalo ended a two-game losing streak and swept the season series against the Ducks for the first time since the 2011-12 season. Jack Eichel had two assists to give him 18 multi-point games this season, moving into a tie for the league lead with Mikko Rantanen and Nathan MacKinnon of the Colorado Avalanche.

KINGS 3, SHARKS 2 (OT)

Ilya Kovalchuk scored two goals in his return from an ankle injury, including the game-winner 2:29 into overtime, as visiting Los Angeles pulled off a second consecutive surprise victory by topping San Jose. Alex Iafallo also scored a goal for the Kings, who defeated a Sharks team that entered as the fifth best in the Western Conference. The victory came four days after a strong 4-1 victory over the Western Conference-leading Winnipeg Jets. The Kings entered last in the conference and their minus-28 goal differential was second worst.

CANADIENS 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3 (OT)

Paul Byron scored at the 1:59 mark of overtime for his second consecutive game-winning goal and Phillip Danault scored his first career hat trick to lead Montreal over Vegas in Las Vegas. Byron took a pass from Max Domi while cutting in front of the net and beat Marc-Andre Fleury with a backhand shot through his pads to give Montreal its first overtime win in six tries this season. Domi, Brendan Gallagher and Tomas Tatar each had two assists for the Canadiens while Carey Price finished with 23 saves. Fleury finished with a season-high 43 saves.

COYOTES 6, AVALANCHE 4

Brad Richardson scored two third-period goals, including the game-winner with 3:39 remaining, as Arizona snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory over Colorado in Glendale, Ariz. Richard Panik and Derek Stepan each had a goal and an assist and Conor Garland and Christian Fischer also scored for Arizona. Adin Hill finished with 24 saves. Alexander Kerfoot scored two goals, and Gabriel Landeskog and Nathan MacKinnon also scored for Colorado, which rallied from a 4-1 third-period deficit to tie it. J.T. Compher and Matt Nieto each finished with two assists.

PENGUINS 3, HURRICANES 0

Jake Guentzel scored twice and goalie Matt Murray supplied a shutout as visiting Pittsburgh socked struggling Carolina in Raleigh, N.C. Kris Letang also scored for Pittsburgh, while Sidney Crosby assisted on all three goals and Bryan Rust provided two assists. The Penguins have secured team points in nine of their last 11 games. Murray stopped 39 shots, including 20 in the third period.

CAPITALS 4, SENATORS 0

Brett Connolly finished with a goal and an assist, and goalie Pheonix Copley made 35 saves as visiting Washington defeated Ottawa on Copley's first career shutout. It was Washington's second win in two nights. The Capitals edged Buffalo 2-1 on Friday in a home game and now have won seven of their last eight games while remaining atop the Metropolitan Division. For Copley, it was another strong performance. The rookie goalie improved to 8-2-1 on the season and has looked better each time he plays.



TORONTO: Kasper Kapanen #24 of the Toronto Maple Leafs turns with the puck against the New York Rangers during an NHL game at Scotiabank Arena on Saturday in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Maple Leafs defeated the Rangers 5-3. — AFP

BRUINS 5, PREDATORS 2

Boston scored four times in a decisive third period and Patrice Bergeron made a spectacular return after a 16-game absence in a victory over visiting Nashville as Bergeron, Brad Marchand, David Pastrnak and Sean Kuraly all scored in the final period. Marchand had the go-ahead goal when he finished a clever tic-tac-toe passing play from Bergeron and Pastrnak that gave Boston a 3-2 lead and its second power-play tally of the period. Bergeron enjoyed a four-point performance with two goals and two assists, Marchand and Pastrnak each had a goal and two assists, and Kuraly posted an empty-net goal. Charlie McAvoy had two assists.

BLUE JACKETS 4, FLYERS 3

The line of Pierre-Luc Dubois, Cam Atkinson and Artemi Panarin combined for eight points to lead visiting Columbus over Philadelphia with a big second period. After Phil Varone scored 7:40 into the second period to give Philadelphia the lead, the Blue Jackets responded with three goals before the period was out. Two of those came from Atkinson, who now has a team-leading 22 goals this season. Panarin recorded a goal and two assists, with his score wrapping up the Blue Jackets' second-period flurry at 19:24. Dubois won a faceoff in Philadelphia's end and immediately

passed to Panarin, who snapped a quick shot past Carter Hart.

PANTHERS 2, RED WINGS 1

Roberto Luongo made 33 saves and Florida scored two first-period goals and held on over host Detroit after Mike Hoffman scored a power-play goal and Evgenii Dadonov tallied his 17th goal of the season. Thomas Vanek scored an unassisted goal for the Wings, while Jimmy Howard made 21 saves. The Panthers have won three of their last four games following a four-game slide. The Wings have lost five of their last six. Detroit ranks last on the penalty kill at home, and that issue cropped up again in the early going. With rookie Dennis Cholowski in the box for holding, Hoffman scored his 16th goal of the season.

BLUES 3, FLAMES 1

St. Louis winger David Perron had a goal and an assist, Jake Allen was stellar in net, and St. Louis cruised to a win over host Calgary. Tyler Bozak and Oskar Sundqvist also scored for the Blues, who have won four of their last six games and avenged a 7-2 drubbing by Calgary in St. Louis last Sunday. Allen, who made his ninth straight start for St. Louis, posted 28 saves and frustrated Calgary's high-octane offense led by Johnny Gaudreau and Matthew Tkachuk for almost the entire 60 minutes. — Reuters

'Abu Dhabi Storms' beat 'Kuwait Stars' to win GCC Hockey Championship

KUWAIT: The Emirati Abu Dhabi Storms crowned champions of the first professional GCC ice hockey team's championship on Saturday after beating the

runners-up team Kuwait Stars (11-7) in the final hosted by the Kuwait Winter Games Club. The Jeddah team from Saudi Arabia was placed third after defeating the Oman Rockers (11-3) in the last game of the tournament.

In the closing ceremony, the Deputy Director-General of the Public Authority for Sports Dr Saqr Al-Mulla said that hosting such an event that brings the GCC sportsmen is an excellent achievement for the Kuwaiti sport. On a similar note, the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Championship and President of the Kuwait Winter Games Club Fheid Al-Ajmi hailed the success of the tournament and the high level of performance presented by a number of pro-players. — KUNA



Kuwaiti shooters bag more medals as Mustafa Karam tourney concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait shooters won first places and most of second and third place in the trap and skeet events during the Mustafa Karam Shooting tournament which ended Saturday with a closing ceremony attended by Chairman of Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Eng Duajj Al-Otaibi, Deputy Chairman and tournament sponsor Mohammad Mustafa Karam. The ceremony was also attended by Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi, Assistant Secretary Mohammad Al-Ghurba, Assistant Treasurer Adnan Al-Ibrahim, Board members Eng. Hussam Al-Roumi and Dr Nedal Al-Asem.

Shooters from the club, national guard, Qatari and UAE Federations participated. In his speech, Al-Osaimi thanked the company for sponsoring such events for many years as support and encouragement of Kuwait shooters, out of its belief in the importance of sports and to motivate shooters to make more achievements in the name of Kuwait. Al-Osaimi said that 120 shooters of both genders participated. Eng Duajj Al-Otaibi said the tournament was a success and competition was very strong. He said that KSSC board is looking forward to have second and third lines of promising shooters who may have a bright future ahead.

- Results of the tournament are as follows:
Skeet men: Abdallah Al-Rashidi, Mansour Al-Rashidi, Abdelaziz Al-Faihan
Trap men: Nasser Al-Miqlid, Abdallah Al-Hamly, Marzouq Al-Waalan
Trap women: Shahad Al-Hawal, Sarah Al-Hawal, Asmaa Al-Qatami
Skeet women: Iman Al-Shamma, Sheikha Al-Rashidi, Fatima Al-Zaabi
Trap juniors: Bader Al-Adwani, Yousuf Al-Rashidi, Yousuf Al-Mutairi Skeet
Juniors: Ahmad Al-Awad, Hamad Al-Ablani, Saud Al-Hamly.



Sports

Beal's triple-double lifts Wizards in triple overtime

Harden drops 39, Rockets fend off Spurs without Paul

WASHINGTON: Bradley Beal earned his first career triple-double and scored the go-ahead basket with 40 seconds left as the Washington Wizards defeated the visiting Phoenix Suns 149-146 in triple overtime on Saturday. Beal, who scored 10 points in the third overtime, finished with 40 points, 11 rebounds and a career-high 15 assists. His layup made it 146-144 Wizards. Devin Booker's layup with 11 seconds left pulled Phoenix within 147-146 but Washington's Jeff Green (20 points) hit two free throws and T.J. Warren's 3-point attempt for Phoenix was short and appeared to be released after the horn sounded. Washington's Thomas Bryant had 31 points and 13 rebounds. He tied a Wizards record (set by Bailey Howell in 1965) by finishing 14-for-14 from the field.

WARRIORS 120, MAVERICKS 116

Jonas Jerebko scored 16 of his 23 points in a 34-12 run that bridged the third and fourth quarters, rallying Golden State to a victory over Dallas in Oakland, Calif. Attempting to avoid a fifth straight loss, the Mavericks outplayed the Warriors for more than 2 1/2 quarters and led 81-77 after a three-point play by J.J. Barea with 3:54 remaining in the third period. But Jerebko and Kevin Durant had seven points apiece in a 17-6 burst to finish the third quarter, giving the Warriors a 94-87 lead. Durant finished with 29 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists.

THUNDER 107, JAZZ 106

Paul George's 43 points on 15-of-25 shooting gave Oklahoma City enough of a lift to edge Utah in Salt Lake City. Jerami Grant added 15 points for the Thunder. Steven Adams chipped in 15 points and 10 rebounds, while Russell Westbrook tallied eight points, 12 rebounds, and nine assists. Oklahoma City won its fourth straight game. Ricky Rubio had 12 points and 14 assists, and all five Jazz starters scored in double figures. Utah finished with 35 assists on 42 baskets.

76ERS 126, RAPTORS 101

Joel Embiid had 27 points and 11 rebounds, and Ben

Simmons added 26 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists as host Philadelphia defeated Kawhi Leonard-less Toronto. JJ Redick scored 22. Furkan Korkmaz added 16 and Jimmy Butler had 12 for the 76ers, who won their second in a row, improved to 16-3 at home and pulled within 2 1/2 games of the Atlantic Division-leading Raptors. Embiid shot 10-of-15 from the field and Simmons was 11-of-13 as the 76ers shot 54.1 percent (46 of 85) while holding Toronto to 38.9 percent (37 of 95). Pascal Siakam had 26 points and six rebounds for the Raptors, who had a two-game winning streak snapped.

ROCKETS 108, SPURS 101

James Harden recorded his sixth consecutive 30-point effort, and host Houston won for the first time without Chris Paul in the lineup, defeating San Antonio. Behind a stellar 28-point performance from DeMar DeRozan, the Spurs erased a 17-point, fourth-quarter deficit and led 97-96 on consecutive 3-pointers from Derrick White and Rudy Gay, the latter coming with 3:03 to play. But Harden answered with a 3-pointer 24 seconds later and, after DeRozan countered with a driving layup, Eric Gordon sank a three following critical offensive rebounds from Clint Capela and P.J. Tucker.

CLIPPERS 132, NUGGETS 111

Danilo Gallinari and Tobias Harris scored 21 points apiece, helping host Los Angeles gradually pull away from Denver en route to a victory. Montrezl Harrell added 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers, who avenged a 107-98 opening-night loss to the Nuggets on the same floor. Nikola Jokic had 19 points before getting ejected, and Jamal Murray 18 for the Nuggets, who had a four-game winning streak snapped.

HEAT 94, BUCKS 87

Dwyane Wade came up clutch to help Miami win its fourth straight game, using solid defense and a bal-



WASHINGTON: Thomas Bryant #13 of the Washington Wizards goes to the basket against the Phoenix Suns on Saturday at Capital One Arena in Washington. — AFP

anced attack to defeat visiting Milwaukee. Wade poured in six points in the final two minutes to help close out the win. The Heat forced the Bucks into 16 turnovers and held them to 9-of-43 shooting from long range, limiting the league's highest-scoring offense to

a season low in points. Wade totaled 13 points, eight rebounds, three assists and one steal in 26 minutes off the bench, while Josh Richardson finished with a team-high 16 points to go with five rebounds, three assists and two steals. — Reuters

NBA results/standings

Miami 94, Milwaukee 87; Philadelphia 126, Toronto 101; Utah 106, Oklahoma City 107; Houston 108, San Antonio 101; Washington 149, Phoenix 146 (OT); Golden State 120, Dallas 116; LA Clippers 132, Denver 111.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	25	10	0.714	-	Denver	21	10	0.677	-
Milwaukee	22	10	0.688	1.5	Oklahoma	21	10	0.677	0
Philadelphia	22	12	0.647	2.5	Golden State	22	11	0.667	1
Indiana	21	12	0.636	3	LA Lakers	19	13	0.594	2.5
Boston	18	13	0.581	5	LA Clippers	19	13	0.594	2.5
Charlotte	16	15	0.516	7	Portland	18	14	0.563	3.5
Detroit	15	15	0.500	7.5	Houston	17	15	0.531	4.5
Miami	15	16	0.484	8	Sacramento	17	15	0.531	4.5
Orlando	14	17	0.452	9	San Antonio	18	16	0.529	4.5
Brooklyn	15	19	0.441	9.5	Memphis	16	16	0.500	5.5
Washington	13	20	0.394	11	Dallas	15	16	0.484	6
New York	9	25	0.265	15.5	Utah	16	18	0.471	6.5
Atlanta	8	23	0.258	15	New Orleans	15	18	0.455	7
Chicago	8	25	0.242	16	Minnesota	14	18	0.438	7.5
Cleveland	8	25	0.242	16	Phoenix	8	25	0.242	14

Saudi crowned champions of 9th Gulf Wheelchair Basketball tournament

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Saudi Arabia's wheelchair basketball team was crowned champion of the 9th Gulf Basketball Tournament for the first time in its history after defeating Kuwait by the score of 56-51.

The final match, held at the Kuwait Disabled Sports Club was very exciting with fierce competition between the two sides, as three points shots by the Saudis gave them an advantage and maintained their advantage towards the end of the match.

Meanwhile, Kuwait team gave a very good performance, but was affected by the exit of its star player Yousuf Khalaf in the fourth quarter for committing five fouls, as Kuwait ended in second place for the first time as it was champion in all

previous eight tournaments. UAE team ended in third place after defeating Bahrain by the score of 58-35.

Chairman of the organizing committee, chairman of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Shafi Al-Hajiri said the tournament was a success both in technical and organizational aspects, which is the supreme goal of such Gulf events, as he congratulated the Saudi team for becoming champion.

Al-Hajiri said Kuwait players gave very good performance in all matches including the final. He said the club continues its preparations for upcoming tournaments abroad. Saudi Arabia's team leader Abdelilah Al-Miqren said he was happy with winning the title as his players gave good performance, the strongest of which was the final, and considered Kuwait a winner with its organization.



KUWAIT: The winning Saudi wheelchair basketball team with the cup.

Ashwin doubt as Shastri demands openers step up

MELBOURNE: Ace spinner Ravichandran Ashwin remains an injury doubt for the third Test against Australia, India coach Ravi Shastri said yesterday as he demanded his opening batsmen step up to ease pressure on Virat Kohli.

Ashwin was sidelined with an abdominal strain for the second Test in Perth and was sorely missed as Australia, led by off-spinner Nathan Lyon, won by 146 runs to level the series 1-1. Shastri revealed Ashwin is racing the clock to be ready for the crunch Boxing Day Test in Melbourne, where the stakes are high in the four-Test series.

"As far as Ashwin is concerned, we are going to take a look and evaluate over the next 48 hours," Shastri said. Left-arm off-spinning all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is also carrying a niggle, but experienced batsman Rohit Sharma, who also missed Perth after hurting his lower back, is fit again.

"He has made a very good improvement but then again we have got to see how he pulls up tomorrow. But he looks good as of today," said Shastri. India go into the Melbourne showdown with Kohli and number three Cheteshwar Pujara in fine form, effectively carrying their team during the Adelaide and Perth games.

But the opening pair of KL Rahul and Murali Vijay have struggled for runs and Shastri said that needed to change. "It's a big concern," he said when asked about the failure of the openers to get a big score.

"It's obvious and that responsibility and accountability has to be taken by the top order. They've got the experience, they've got the exposure over these last few years to get out there and deliver. It's about how strong you are in the mind."

There is no guarantee that Rahul and Vijay will retain their places with

Steyn has Pakistan in his sights as he guns for record

PRETORIA: Firebrand fast bowler Dale Steyn will seek to become South Africa's greatest wicket-taker in tests when they take on Pakistan in the first match of a three-game series at Centurion Park in Pretoria on Wednesday.

Steyn is level with former all-rounder Shaun Pollock on 421 Test wickets and, having played only six Tests in the last three years due to injury, has been left tantalisingly close to capturing the outright top spot on the list for some time.

With injuries to seamers Vernon Philander and Lungi Ngidi, Steyn is likely to be given the new ball against Pakistan along with Kagiso Rabada on what is expected to be a lively wicket in Pretoria.

He will test the visiting batsman having returned to his express pace of old in recent limited-overs contests, where he impressed against Australia last month. Captain Faf du Plessis told reporters this week that Steyn was the country's greatest fast bowler and suggested that while the 2019 Cricket World Cup might be his limited-overs swansong, he still had a good few years of test cricket in him.

"Test matches are what really drive me to perform," Steyn recently told South African online publication Sport24. "If I can carry on playing test cricket for as long as possible that will be great."

"There is a plenty of T20 cricket going on at the moment because that is where the money is at but I think that people will

always know that test cricket is the real deal. I love the red-ball game."

The loss of Philander in particular will add extra workload for Steyn, who is by far the most experienced seamer in the team, though the world's leading test bowler, Rabada, could be the main threat.

Coach Ottis Gibson and Du Plessis will have to decide whether to play three seamers, with Duanne Olivier in line for a sixth test appearance, and spinner Keshav Maharaj, allowing them to field an extra batsman, or hand a first cap to Dane Paterson.

The latter option would give the team a long tail with Rabada having to bat at number seven, a role he has never played before.

There was a welcome return to form for stalwart stroke-maker Hashim Amla in domestic four-day cricket this week, with just a single half-century in his last 12 test innings having raised some questions about the future of the 35-year-old.

His excellent record against Pakistan, with two hundreds and eight half-centuries in 21 innings, should give him confidence, as will his runs in Pretoria where he averages 75.58 after 18 visits to the crease.

Pakistan, who have won only one test series out of 10 at home and away against South Africa, will have been buoyed up by their three-day run-out against an Invitational XI in the build-up to the first test, where Azhar Ali and Babar Azam made hundreds.

They have been well beaten on their previous two visits to Pretoria though, losing by seven wickets in 2007 and an innings and 18 runs five years ago. Leading fast bowler Mohammad Abbas has also been rated as having only a 50 percent chance of playing in the test as he recovers from a shoulder injury picked up in October. — Reuters



MELBOURNE: India's spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (L) smiles beside his Australian counterpart Nathan Lyon (C) during a meet the fans event in Melbourne yesterday, ahead of their third cricket Test match. — AFP

in-form Mayank Agarwal called up to the squad as a replacement for injured young opener Prithvi Shaw, who has been ruled out of the series.

Superstar captain Kohli scored a battling century in Perth but he came under criticism for his sledging and heated exchanges with Australian counterpart Tim Paine. His animated wicket celebrations were also frowned upon, but Shastri said he didn't have a problem with his skipper.

"What's wrong with his behaviour? As far as we are concerned, he is an absolute gentleman," he said. Shastri also denied India's morale had taken a hit by losing in Perth after their tense victory in Adelaide—their first Test win on Australian soil in a decade.

"Absolutely not. 1-1 in a series in Australia and we know we had our chances in Perth as well. They're ready," he said. "It's not often that we've been in a position where we've won one (on an overseas tour). It's 1-1. The boys know what they can do, what they're capable of and the potential that lies ahead." — AFP

WI captain rails at Bangladesh umpires

DHAKA: West Indies Twenty20 skipper Carlos Brathwaite blasted the match umpires for giving "50-50 decisions" to Bangladesh even though his side won the third Twenty20 international to wrap up the series.

West Indies, who won Saturday's match by 50 runs, were victims of an erroneous no-ball call that could not be overturned by review and Brathwaite was critical of the umpiring throughout the tour though he insisted he was not alleging "cheating".

In the fourth over of the Bangladesh innings, Bangladesh umpire Tanvir Ahmed called a no-ball against West Indies paceman Oshane Thomas when batsman Liton Das spooned a catch to Shimron Hetmyer at mid-off. A television replay showed the delivery had been legal, and Brathwaite and his teammates were furious after seeing the big screen images in the Dhaka stadium. Brathwaite asked for a review and ran to the boundary for talks with match referee Jeff Crowe, halting the game for around 10 minutes.

The match officials had to uphold the decision despite a clear mistake as the rules do not allow a review against an on-field no-ball call.

West Indies, who made 190, were charged up after the incident and bowled out Bangladesh for 140 in 17 overs with medium-pace Keemo Paul picking up 5-15. "The rule is that if a no-ball is called it cannot be reviewed or reversed. But if it isn't called, it can be reversed checking the video."

"Everyone saw that it was not a no-ball," Brathwaite said after the game. Brathwaite went to the match referee after Thursday's 36-run defeat in the second match as he felt close decisions throughout the series went against his side. "I didn't think the 50/50 decisions were going in our favour. Those decisions went for Bangladesh," he said. "I never ever want to accuse someone of cheating. I will stop short of that. They are professionals as well." — AFP

Sports

Messi, Dembele keep Barca three points clear in La Liga

Griezmann penalty gives Atletico three points from a hard-fought match

MADRID: Barcelona held off Atletico Madrid to ensure they will be three points clear at the top of La Liga going into the winter break after beating a spirited Espanyol 2-0 at the Camp Nou on Saturday. First-half goals from Ousmane Dembele and Lionel Messi were enough to move Ernesto Valverde's side up to 37 points and keep them one step ahead of Atletico, who earlier drew level with Barca with a 1-0 win over Espanyol thanks to an Antoine Griezmann penalty.

"In the first half we got behind their defence well, we saw that with any play, playing with the space (left behind) we could score," said Valverde. Dembele put the hosts into the lead after just nine minutes when he lashed home on the rebound after Messi's first-time shot was pushed into his path by Celta keeper Ruben Blanco.

Messi doubled his side's advantage just before half-time, bursting through completely unmarked to meet the excellent Jordi Alba's through ball and wrong-foot Blanco as he slotted in his 15th league goal of the season.

The Argentine and Alba linked up nicely throughout, with the left-back providing the pass for the Messi shot that led to Dembele's opener. "They (Messi and Alba) are a duo that have been working together for some time, they understand each other perfectly," added Valverde.

"Let's hope they carry on working well." Luis Suarez missed a great opportunity to put the result

beyond any doubt on the hour mark when he flashed wide after being found by Alba with another fine pass, but despite frequently testing Barca keeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, Celta could not find the goal that would have put the Catalans under real pressure.

GRIEZMANN ON TARGET

Earlier, Griezmann smashed home from the spot 10 minutes after the break to give Diego Simeone's side three points from a hard-fought match with mid-table Espanyol that extended Atletico's unbeaten league run to 14 matches.

"It was important to win regardless of how we did it," said Atletico captain Diego Godin. "We go into the (two-week) winter break happy with the three points." The 27-year-old Griezmann, who missed out on a Ballon d'Or despite winning the Europa League with Atletico last season and the World Cup with France in the summer, is on a fine run of form after having saved his side with a late winner at Real Valladolid last week.

His winner on Saturday was his fourth in three games after bagging a brace last week and scoring in Atletico's 3-0 hammering of Alaves a fortnight ago. "Antoine is an excellent goalscorer," added Godin. "He works for the team brilliantly and helps with his goals." Sevilla can join Atletico on 34 points with a win at struggling Leganes later. —AFP



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's French forward Antoine Griezmann (L) vies with Espanyol's defender Maldo during the Spanish League football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and RCD Espanyol at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid on Saturday. —AFP

Mbappe fires PSG past Nantes as Monaco lose again

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe grabbed the winner as Paris Saint-Germain beat Nantes 1-0 to go into the winter break unbeaten in Ligue 1, as Thierry Henry's Monaco suffered defeat by rock-bottom Guingamp on Saturday.

World Cup star Mbappe stole in at the far post in the 67th minute for his 13th league goal of the season, making him France's top scorer with Neymar away on holidays in Brazil. PSG coach Thomas Tuchel can also go on holiday relaxed with his club on 47 points, as second-placed Lille, 13 points adrift, lost 2-1 at home to Toulouse.

"I'm very happy because we can see the progress of the team," said Tuchel. "You can feel the energy, it's a good thing to build on next year." With Neymar away, Angel Di Maria was in the line-up and came closest to making it 2-0, forcing a fine save from Nantes goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu, who then watched the Argentine hit the crossbar from the rebound.

Meanwhile, third-placed Lyon drew 1-1 at fourth-placed Montpellier after opening the scoring thanks to their captain Nabil Fekir before a great header from Ruben Aguilar gave the surprise-package southerners a share of the spoils.

Henry's Monaco were dreadful and the former Arsenal striker spat on the ground after Nolan Roux of Guingamp made fools of the Monaco defence to make it 2-0. "I'm not going to have a good holiday," bemoaned Henry. "Now you have to work and make do with what you have."

"It's necessary to work and work. There are still a lot of points to play for and that's the only positive thing about this evening." Monaco were champions in 2017



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (R) vies with Nantes' French midfielder Valentin Rongier during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Nantes (FCN) at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris yesterday. —AFP

but now have 13 points from 18 matches, just two more than Guingamp, and vice-president Vadim Vasilyev said the club needs to dip into the January transfer market.

"Until tonight, I thought we didn't need new players, but we do," Vasilyev told Canal+. "It's difficult to analyse right now as I'm upset like the supporters. I understand the disappointment, it's up to us to act and

draw the right conclusions."

Strasbourg paid homage to the victims of a terror attack that killed five people on December 11 in their first home game since as they won 2-0 against Nice. Meanwhile, Marseille, in sixth, drew 1-1 at Angers and fifth-placed Saint-Etienne beat Dijon 3-0. —AFP

Ravens stun Chargers, Titans rip Redskins to boost NFL playoff hopes

LOS ANGELES: Baltimore's NFL-best defensive unit sparked an upset of the Los Angeles Chargers on Saturday but the Tennessee Titans stayed level with the Ravens in the playoff chase by beating Washington.

Baltimore's Tavon Young returned a fumble 62 yards for a clinching touchdown to spark the Ravens over the host Chargers 22-10 while Tennessee's Blaine Gabbert, replacing injured starter Marcus Mariota, threw a touchdown pass to power the host Titans

over the Washington Redskins 25-16. Baltimore and Tennessee each improved to 9-6, the Ravens clinging to the last American Conference playoff spot thanks to a tie-breaker edge. "We had to get this win. It's a huge win to keep our playoff hopes alive," said Ravens safety Eric Weddle, who likes Baltimore's chances as a Super Bowl threat. "Why not? If we get in the tournament we have as good a shot as anybody. I know nobody wants to see us."

Justin Tucker's third field goal, a 56-yarder, boosted Baltimore's lead to 16-10 but the Chargers were driving for a go-ahead touchdown late in the fourth quarter only to be undone by Baltimore's defenders, who have allowed the fewest yards and points in the NFL this season. Ravens linebacker Patrick Onwuasor knocked the ball from the grasp of Chargers tight end Antonio Gates and Baltimore cornerback Young grabbed the loose ball and returned it to create the final victory margin.

Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers, whose 27-game streak with a touchdown pass ended, threw a

final interception to end LA's last hope.

At 11-4, the Chargers have already clinched a playoff spot but with the LA loss, Kansas City needs only a win Sunday at Seattle to claim the AFC West division crown.

Tucker field goals from 24 and 35 yards against a 38-yarder by LA's Mike Badgley gave the Ravens a 6-3 halftime lead. In the third quarter, the Chargers scored on Melvin Gordon's 1-yard touchdown run but Baltimore reclaimed the lead 13-10 on Lamar Jackson's 68-yard touchdown pass to Mark Andrews.

At Nashville, the Titans forced two Washington turnovers in the closing minutes, the last a 56-yard interception return by Malcolm Butler on the game's final play. Washington fell to 7-8 and must beat reigning Super Bowl champion Philadelphia next week to have any playoff hopes. The Titans lost Mariota to a right shoulder injury after he was sacked in the closing seconds of the first half, the dynamic mobile run-pass threat sidelined after being slammed to the turf, forcing Gabbert to take charge. —AFP

Warrington outlasts Frampton to keep featherweight crown

LONDON: England's Josh Warrington upset the odds to retain his IBF featherweight title after getting the better of Carl Frampton in a bruising 12-round battle in Manchester on Saturday.

Warrington won a unanimous decision by two scores of 116-112 and one of 116-113 in the first defence of his world title as he extended his unbeaten professional record to 27-0. Former two-weight world champion Frampton, meanwhile, slipped to 26-2, the Northern Irishman simply overwhelmed by Warrington's speed and sheer volume of punches throughout.

"Carl Frampton will go down as one of the best champions in history and it was an honour to share the ring with him," said a delighted Warrington. "He's

a two-weight world champion and you've got to be clever with a thinking fighter like Carl.

"I kept coming at him and I hit him with some corker shots and he took them well. He's a tough man." A former world featherweight and super-bantamweight world champion, Frampton hinted that he could retire after just the second defeat of his career.

"I will have to sit down with my team," he said. "I've got a young family at home and I've been in this game a long time. I have to sit down with my team and figure out the next move."

However, Frampton had no complaints over the outcome. "He won the fight fair and square. I came here, had trained hard and was sharp but the better man won and I hope he goes on to unify the division," he added.

"It was just not my night, I was fit and strong but Josh was fitter and stronger. I was hurt a number of times. "When people say Josh cannot punch, I don't know what they are talking about. I didn't estimate but he was even better than I thought-he can punch hard."

Earlier, France's Hassan N'Dam beat Martin Murray on points by a majority decision to set up



LONDON: Josh Warrington celebrates winning the World Featherweight Championship against Carl Frampton at Manchester Arena. —AFP

a potential showdown with Mexican superstar Saul "Canelo" Alvarez for the WBC middleweight world title. —AFP

Mandzukic on target as Juventus pile misery on Roma

MILAN: Mario Mandzukic scored the only goal for Juventus to dump further hurt on crisis club Roma and keep the champions unbeaten and on track for an eighth straight Italian league title. The Croatian World Cup runner-up headed in the winner 34 minutes into the match in Turin to put Juventus back eight points clear of Napoli.

The defeat could have been harsher but for Roma goalkeeper Robin Olsen denying Cristiano Ronaldo, with Douglas Costa having a late goal ruled out following a video assistant referee check because of a foul in the build-up.

"We are doing good things, we have reached the Champions League last sixteen and we're winter champions," said coach Massimiliano Allegri, referring to the name given to teams top before Christmas. Serie A is however holding a round of fixtures on December 26 and 29, before pausing for three weeks.

"We haven't won anything yet," added Allegri. "The important thing is to be a few points ahead of Napoli on the 29th of December." Juve—who have only dropped points against Genoa-travel to Atalanta and host Sampdoria in their final two matches before the end of the year.

Roma, after finishing third last season, are now 25 points behind Juventus and drop to 10th after their eighth defeat in as many trips to the Allianz Stadium. They have won just twice in the league since the end of September.

Napoli are way behind Juve but consolidated second place when Raul Albiol headed his first goal of the season from a Dries Mertens corner against to beat struggling SPAL. "Thinking of Juventus is likely to demotivate us," said coach Carlo 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."

Inter Milan were held 1-1 at bottom club Chievo to fall eight points behind Napoli, with the two clubs going head-to-head in the San Siro on December 26. Inter looked set for victory when Ivan Perisic scored the opener six minutes before the break, but the evergreen Sergio Pellissier, 39, gave his side an early Christmas present when he lobbed Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic a minute into injury time.

The pressure is on Milan coach Gennaro Gattuso after Federico Chiesa's second-half scorcher pushed AC Milan out of the Champions League places at the expense of Lazio.

"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. Gattuso's side are a point behind Simone Inzaghi's outfit, who ended their five-match winless league run with a 3-1 success over Cagliari in Rome that saw Sergej Milinkovic-Savic score his first goal in three months.

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. 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.

City rival Sampdoria's fellow on-fire striker Fabio Quagliarella scored his eighth goal in seven league games as the Genoa club beat Empoli 4-2, taking his tally for this season to 10. —AFP

25 Maple Leafs slam Rangers with four goals in third period



26 Ashwin doubt as Shastri demands openers step up



27 Warrington outlasts Frampton to keep featherweight crown



LIVERPOOL: Tottenham Hotspur's South Korean striker Son Heung-Min (C) scores their fifth goal during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Tottenham Hotspur at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. —AFP

Spurs shine to hit Everton for six

Kane just one goal behind Pierre Emerick-Aubameyang for the golden boot

LIVERPOOL: Tottenham Hotspur showed why manager Mauricio Pochettino is a wanted man by thrashing Everton 6-2 at Goodison Park yesterday to close to within six points of Premier League leaders Liverpool.

Spurs have had to cope with the unwanted attention of Pochettino being linked with the Manchester United job following Jose Mourinho's sacking this week. But they showed no signs of being distracted as they roared back from a goal down thanks to doubles from Son Heung-min and Harry Kane with Dele Alli and Christian Eriksen also on target.

Everton led against the run of play through Theo Walcott and even former Tottenham midfielder Gylfi Sigurdsson's strike to reduce the hosts' deficit to 4-2 early in the second half couldn't spark a revival.

Fatigue may yet still derail Tottenham's bid to win a first

trophy under Pochettino with Spurs still involved in four competitions. But with Liverpool facing Arsenal and Manchester City in a top of the table clash in their next three games over the festive period, Tottenham have the opportunity to haul themselves into a three-way title race if they maintain the standards set at Goodison.

Kane had chipped into the side-netting and Jordan Pickford produced a fine save to deny England team-mate Kieran Trippier in the early stages. But it was Everton who struck first in a wildly open contest when Walcott stabbed home at the near post from Dominic Calvert-Lewin's cross.

Marco Silva's men could even have been 2-0 up had Calvert-Lewin not been penalised for a push on Davinson Sanchez when heading home moments later. But Spurs looked as if they could score with almost every attack and were soon on level terms with the aid of a Pickford error.

The England number one rushed from his goal but only succeeded in getting in the way of his own defender Kurt Zouma and Son took advantage with a wonderful finish from a narrow angle.

Once back on level terms, Spurs were relentless as Pickford denied Son a second but Alli charged into the box to sweep home the rebound to turn the game around.

Kane is now just one goal behind Pierre Emerick-Aubameyang in the race for the Premier League golden boot and showed his predatory instincts to side-foot into an empty net after Trippier's fine free-kick came back off the post three minutes before half-time.

Both teams face the least rest time of any Premier League side over the festive period with another three games to come between now and New Year's Day. However, there was no let up in the pace of the game

after the break as Eriksen produced a technically perfect controlled volley from the edge of the box to make it 4-1.

Three minutes later Everton's deficit was back to two as Sigurdsson dribbled across the whole Tottenham defence before firing back across Hugo Lloris.

Yet, any hope of a fightback was extinguished just after the hour mark when Son's fine control cushioned Erik Lamela's pass before he finished through the legs of Pickford. It was announced this week that the South Korean will go to the Asian Cup in January despite already representing his country at the World Cup and Asian Games this year.

And Son showed why he will be missed by his club in January once more with an inch-perfect cross for Kane to slide in for his second of the afternoon 16 minutes from time. —AFP

Pogba thanks Mourinho for improving him as a person

LONDON: Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba has thanked Jose Mourinho for helping him "improve as a person" despite the breakdown of their relationship in the last few months leading up to the former manager's sacking on Tuesday. Mourinho, who replaced Dutchman Louis van Gaal in 2016, won the Europa League and League Cup in his first campaign but his third season was dominated by media reports of a rift with Pogba while United laboured on the pitch playing dull soccer.

Pogba was stripped of vice-captaincy earlier this season and dropped for the final three league games of Mourinho's

tenure, but the France international said that he had no hard feelings towards the Portuguese.

"We won trophies with Jose and I want to thank him for that. Not everything worked well, but (some) things went well," Pogba told the British media. "He makes me improve, as a person as well, and that's it. That's the past, I want to thank him for that. I'm sure that is the same for all the players."

Pogba was immediately restored to the starting line-up under caretaker boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and produced two assists in Saturday's 5-1 Premier League thrashing of Cardiff City. "The performance of the team was great and we are happy that the first game of the manager starts like this," Pogba added. "It's important now to carry on like that. We cannot play like this and win with five goals and then the next game lose." United, who are sixth in the standings with 29 points after 18 matches, host Huddersfield Town on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Manchester United captain Ashley Young admitted the mood around Old Trafford has been instantly lifted by caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's smile, but denied there were any celebrations in the dressing room at news of Jose Mourinho's sacking.

Solskjaer was put in charge until the end of the season

after Mourinho was dismissed on Tuesday with United 19 points off the top of the table. That change paid instant dividends as United scored five goals in a Premier League match for the first time since Alex Ferguson's last game in charge back in May 2013, thrashing Cardiff 5-1 on Saturday.

"I don't think he (Solskjaer) has stopped smiling," Young said after victory in the Welsh capital. "He was like that as a player. He always has a smile on his face and I think that can reflect down on to the team, which is a good thing. "Ole has come in and we were preparing in the right way for a game, even though it's been a crazy week."

Mourinho clashed with a number of senior figures in the United dressing room over his two-and-a-half seasons in charge. Paul Pogba quickly deleted a controversial social media post of him smiling with the message "caption this" in the hours after Mourinho's departure. Restored to the starting line-up for the first time in four league games, Pogba was instrumental in setting up four of United's five goals on Saturday. "No celebration at all. Absolute lies," Young said at the suggestion players were delighted to see the back of Mourinho.

"Obviously it was disappointing for the manager to get sacked. "In his two-and-a-half years he won trophies. We



Paul Pogba

have to take some responsibility for that as we are on the pitch. "But we have to move on from that. As professional players we have to get on with the job in hand, and that is what we did here." —AFP