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MPs call for resolving bedoon issue, demographic imbalance

Lawmakers slam constitutional court ruling, corruption, foreign aid

New KPC CEO hopeful for oil market recovery

KUWAIT: The CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashem Sayyed Hashem said yesterday that he expected the local oil industry to reach new heights in the foreseeable future. In a statement to KUNA shortly after being assigned to his post, Hashem thanked Kuwait's political leaders for their tremendous confidence in him, saying he hoped to live up to their expectations. He promised to "have the oil industry's best interests at heart", which in turn would put the economy on the path towards development.



Hashem Hashem

"We are confident in the capabilities of the nation's youth to face the biggest challenges," he said, citing a "positive atmosphere" as a necessity for optimal performance. Hashem spoke of his "unyielding conviction" that all of the oil sector's goals will ultimately come to fruition, highlighting the industry as among the pillars of the national economy. He thanked KPC's workforce for their sheer diligence and commitment to develop the oil industry.

Earlier yesterday, a decree was issued appointing Hashem as deputy Chairman and CEO of KPC. Decree number 374/2018 stated that a board has also been formed comprising Khaled Saleh Bohamra, Sami Fahd Al-Reshaid, Dr Fadhel Ali Safar, Jamal Abdulkhaled Al-Nouri and Dr Mohammad Abdullatif Mohammad Al-Faris. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs yesterday urged the government to swiftly find a solution to the decades-old problem of bedoons or stateless people and warned against the demographic imbalance that has made the Indian and Egyptian communities as large as that of Kuwaitis. Debating HH the Amir's speech that he delivered at the start of the current term, lawmakers also continued to threaten to grill ministers, mainly the new Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel if he fails to take measures to rectify violations committed by the former administration.

MP Hamdan Al-Azemi blamed lawmakers and the Assembly speaker for making the Assembly weaker, "because 30 out of 50 MPs want to become ministers and try to appease the speaker, because he has reserved seats in the Cabinet". MP Mohammad Hayef threatened to use constitutional tools because of the bedoon issue, which has remained unresolved for a very long time. He said that Kuwait must retain its Islamic identity, adding this issue must remain Kuwait's top priority.

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: (From left) MP Safa Al-Hashem, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Jenan Boushehri and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel attend a parliament session at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Outrage over hazmat dumped in Khaitan yard

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Environmental activists found abandoned containers containing hazardous material in South Khaitan yesterday, dumped on empty land that was recently distributed by the housing ministry for citizens to build houses on. According to Khalid Al-Hajeri, Chairman of Green Line Environmental Group, this is a disaster that will negatively affect

humans, plants and the environment.

"We found some of the chemical is leaking into the soil, which will affect this land on which people will start building soon. These abandoned tanks contain toxic liquids including combustible materials, engine oils and other dangerous chemical waste," he told Kuwait Times.

The containers were discovered by activists based on their environmental investigations yesterday, but they have been there for over a year. "When we contacted the environmental police, they informed us that this waste has been there for over a year, as there was a case in court against the company that dumped it in this location. The case is over and the owner was arrested," explained Hajeri.

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: Tanks of chemical waste are seen dumped in a yard in South Khaitan yesterday.

Mubarak seeks permission to testify in trial

CAIRO: Egypt's deposed president Hosni Mubarak yesterday asked current President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi for "permission" to disclose sensitive information in the retrial of ousted Islamist leader Mohamed Morsi. Toppled in 2011 after mass protests against his nearly 30-year-rule, Mubarak took the witness stand in a Cairo court to testify about jailbreaks allegedly orchestrated by Morsi and other members of his Muslim Brotherhood group during the uprising. Prosecutors

say they were sprung from prison with the help of the Palestinian group Hamas and operatives from Lebanon's Hezbollah movement.

In sworn testimony, Mubarak declined to answer all of the judge's questions until the presidency granted him "permission" to reveal "sensitive" information related to national security. "If I talk, I will open many subjects that I am barred from discussing without permission," he said. The former president acknowledged that at the time, he had received information from his intelligence chief on the infiltration of militants from the Gaza Strip to the country's east during the uprising.

"General Omar Suleiman informed me on January 29 (2011) that 800 armed militants infiltrated through the border," he

Continued on Page 24



CAIRO: Former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak arrives with his sons Gamal (center) and Alaa (right) to testify at a makeshift courthouse yesterday. —AFP

Second child migrant dies in US custody

WASHINGTON: America's border security head warned yesterday officials were overwhelmed by the "enormous flow" of families crossing from Mexico, appealing to Congress for healthcare funding after a second child died in custody. US Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said the agency was unable to cope with the

thousands of arrivals, as most facilities were built decades ago for men arriving alone.

"We need help from Congress. We need to budget for medical care and mental healthcare for children in our facilities," McAleenan told CBS News. The official said he expected almost 25,000 migrant children to be in US custody by the end of the year - a greater number than ever before. "That's an enormous flow, that's very different from what we've seen before," he said, adding that the onset of the flu season was taxing the ability of staff to properly care for every child.

Continued on Page 24



RAXRUHA, Guatemala: A boy carries a picture of Guatemalan seven-year-old Jakelin Caal as her coffin is taken from Raxruha to the cemetery in San Antonio Secortez, both villages in the Alta Verapaz department, on Tuesday. — AFP

As TikTok videos take hold, parents scramble to keep up

PARIS: Millions of teenagers seeking their 15 seconds of fame are flocking to TikTok, but many of their parents are only now learning about the express-yourself video app - often to their dismay. The social network became the most downloaded on Apple's App Store in the first half of this year according to market analysis firm Sensor Tower, beating out titans like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

The site, owned by China's ByteDance, boasted 500 million users as of June following its purchase last year of Musical.ly, which greatly expanded its reach in the US. Analysts say it filled the void left by Vine, which introduced countless numbers of teens to the creative possibilities of ultrashort videos but failed to find a sustainable business model.

"TikTok capitalizes on short-term creative content that other platforms don't encourage, by their design and community," said Brian Solis at the US tech advisory firm Altimeter. "If there is one thing Silicon Valley can learn from Chinese app development, it's that it is tuned in to viral-as-a-service, meaning that their most popular apps have really been about making content and personas viral and also hyper-engaged," he said.

Yet critics say its surging popularity among young girls in particular exposes them to caustic comments and other potential abuse by their peers, while offering a choice hunting ground for sexual predators. The app itself promises a video-sharing community that's "raw, real and without boundaries" and claims to be appropriate for children aged 12 and older. Parents aren't always convinced, given the numbers of young girls

Continued on Page 24

Local

Public Works Minister underlines commitment to infrastructure plans

Necessary measures to reclaim retained earnings: Finance Minister

KUWAIT: Making sure that proper infrastructure is in place for key residential projects is among the government's chief priorities, Minister of Public Works Dr Jenan Boushehri said yesterday. The minister's remarks came in response to a question by a lawmaker, during yesterday's parliament session, over a residential project planned for Kuwait's southern suburb of Khaitan. Boushehri, who also serves as minister of state for housing, underlined that "responsibility for infrastructure is primarily held by the ministry of public works."

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf said that the government is taking the necessary measures to reclaim retained earnings found in a number of state bodies including Kuwait Port Authority, in addition to the oil sector. "We have taken back \$12 billion worth of retained earnings from the oil sector," the minister revealed.



Manpower to fall under economic affairs minister

cabinet reshuffle. "I have been placed in front of a great challenge; a challenge that spurs me to work more diligently and serve Kuwait continuously at any position I am assigned to," minister Afasi added.

Afasi said that during his service as minister of awqaf he had made several accomplishments: such as a new administrative structure separating divisions' jurisdictions and creating new posts. Elaborating, Afasi said he was co-architect of the "new mosque covenant" for regulating activities at the mosques, enactment of waqf funds laws, regulations for research and manuscripts' authentication.

Manpower authority

Meanwhile, a daily reported yesterday that a resolution is expected to be made soon to put the Public Authority for Manpower under the jurisdiction of the newly-appointed Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel.

The fact that the Public Authority for Manpower was not subjected to the newly-appointed Minister of Social Affairs Saad Al-Karraz or the newly-appointed Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel was cause for surprise, as the three bodies - the ministry of social affairs and labor, ministry of state for economic affairs and the manpower authority - had all been within former minister Hind Al-Sabeeh's jurisdiction, Al-Rai reported yesterday.



KUWAIT: (From left) MP Safaa Al-Hashem, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel and Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Dr Jenan Boushehri share a conversation as MP Hamdan Al-Azmi (top left) and Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf (top right) are seen in the background, during yesterday's parliament session. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Official sources quoted in the report noted that the manpower authority is presumed to be under Aqeel's jurisdiction along with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the Manpower and Government

Restructuring Program (MGRP). The sources added that over her years in office, Sabeeh worked on gathering all labor market and demography-related bodies under the umbrella of the ministry of state for economic affairs.

Six labor city projects to be offered to private sector for investment

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality is currently working in collaboration with the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) on offering six labor city projects to the private sector for investment, Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi said. The labor cities will have buildings with spacious accommodation areas for laborers, including all health, security, recreational and commercial facilities for limited-income expats residing in Kuwait without their families, Manfouhi added.

According to Manfouhi, the new labor cities include a 100,000 sq m meter township to the west of the pilgrims gathering area, another of the same size to south of the municipality's scrap yard, a third of the same size near Shadadiya industrial area, labor accommodations in block five in Subhan, labor accommodations in block 11 in Subhan and a 100,000 sq m labor city to the west of Mina Abdullah.

In another concern, Manfouhi announced that the municipality will start receiving applications for camp licenses from Monday on its website. He added that an agreement was made with the defense ministry to have campers sign affidavits to pitch their camps at least two kilometers away from military camps and to keep away from and report sighting any strange objects immediately.

Employee performance assessment

Senior sources at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) stressed that the new employee performance assessment method is the responsibility of each respective state department, and that the CSC does not interfere in the process, be that in the 70 percent allocated for individual and group performance and personal skills or in the 30 percent concerning punctuality, attendance and commitment to punching in and out. The CSC official added that assessment is the full responsibility of the administrative department in each respective body and that the CSC supervises the process.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Kuwait Nursing Society Bandar Nashmi Al-Enezi expressed satisfaction with the meeting he and his colleagues had with CSC Director Ahmed Al-Jassar to discuss nurses' problems and demand more privileges for Kuwaiti nurses. Enezi added that Jassar fully understood the demands and said Kuwaiti nurses will get new financial and academic privileges soon. "We discussed a new salary framework, paying nurses full salary while pursuing further studies and considering nursing as an arduous profession," he explained.

Kuwait medical institute affirms commitment to professional norms

KUWAIT: Secretary General of Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations (KIMS) Dr Ibrahim Hadi has affirmed that the institute functions

according to full transparency and continuing communications with stakeholders in specialized medical training. The institute is utterly keen on securing adequate atmospheres for specialized medical training, compatible with international criteria, academic, administrative and legal norms and according to ministerial resolutions as well as relevant regulations, said Dr Hadi, in a statement yesterday. He was alluding to inaccurate social media reports regarding KIMS' training program for urinary tract surgeries.

KIMS possesses all necessary documents and papers concerning the training program and reserves its right for legal action against anyone

who tries to tarnish its reputation, the secretary general has warned. Urinary tract operations' program was launched in 2011 and the first batch of graduates was in 2016. Dr Hadi spoke at length about "some divergent opinions" among the institute decision-makers, stressing that the institute would remain adherent to professional norms. KIMS was established in 1984 by order of an Amiri Decree. Since then, KIMS has been responsible for the education and training of physicians and dentists alike. Under the authority of the Ministry of Health, KIMS is the leading educational institution in medical training of various specialties. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) organized a successful fire drill at Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) building yesterday. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun

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Amir praises former ministers' performance, devotion, sincerity

Amir, Crown Prince receive senior state officials



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 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 former minister of Social Affairs, Economic Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with former Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheed.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with former Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hussam Al-Roumi.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with former State Minister of National Assembly Affairs Adel Al-Kharafi.



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.



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.

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 and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness then received the former minister of Social Affairs, Economic Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh, former Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheed, former Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hussam Al-Roumi and former State Minister of National Assembly Affairs Adel Al-Kharafi. His Highness praised the ministers' performance with all devotion

and sincerity, wishing them success in their future life. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received 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 later received Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and Kuwait's ambassador to the Netherlands Abdurrahman Al-Otaibi. In the meantime, His Highness the Prime Minister received Al-Mawashi Company's Chairman of the board Bader Al-Subaiee and CEO Osama Boodai. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Al-Mawashi Company's Chairman of the Board Bader Al-Subaiee and CEO Osama Boodai.

Martyr Lieutenant Abulrahman Al-Enezi laid to rest



KUWAIT: Martyr Lieutenant Abulrahman Al-Enezi is laid to rest. — KUNA photos



Military personnel offer condolences to the martyr's family.

KUWAIT: The General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army announced that martyr Lieutenant Abdulrahman Al-Enezi was laid to rest at Al-Sulaibikhat's cemetery Tuesday. The burial ceremony was attended by Assistant Commander of the Army's ground forces Major General Meshaal Al-Mutairi, fellow officers and a large number of citizens, the General Staff said in a press statement. The deceased was serving at the ground forces, it

added, noting that he has passed away in an accident on Monday. Al-Mutairi conveyed condolences and sympathy of Chief of the General Staff of the Army Lieutenant-General Mohammad Al-Khodr, in his name and on behalf of the Army's personnel, to the martyr's family. Khodr prayed to Allah the Almighty to bless the soul of Al-Enzi with mercy in Paradise and bring solace to his family, the General Staff concluded. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A Moroccan style fountain at Bab Dikkalah farm in Abdaly. — Photo by Mariam Al-Bahar (KUNA)

Zain holds smartphone photography workshops in collaboration with H&S

Held at Zain Innovation Center (ZINC)

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, organized two specialized workshops that covered the fundamentals of smartphone photography in collaboration with H&S Store. The workshops, held at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, were presented by professional photographers Musaad Al-Obaid and Zainab Abdal.



Featuring
over 60
participants



KUWAIT: Zain's team with some workshop participants at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC).

Zain organized the workshops in line with its continuous keenness to offer world-class specialized programs for those who are interested in developing their talents within all areas. Zain, being a leader in the Kuwaiti private sector, believes in the importance of enriching the talents of the community in which it operates by adopting such initiatives.

The specialized workshops, held at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, were organized in collaboration with H&S Store, and witnessed the participation of over

60 participants from enthusiastic Kuwaiti youth who are passionate about photography. The workshops were presented by professional Kuwaiti photographers Musaad Al-Obaid and Zainab Abdal, and covered the fundamentals of smartphone photography. Smartphones have become the most-used platform for photography, as the cameras of today's smart devices feature huge technological capabilities. In addition, H&S Store's team provided

attendees with a number of special photography accessories that they used as part of the workshops program.

The Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) is a hub for entrepreneurs and digital investments launched as a platform for the innovations of students, youth, and entrepreneurs. ZINC encourages young minds to think and act creatively outside of the norm in an open, supportive environment for entrepreneurs to generate new ideas

and develop them into viable opportunities. Zain affirms that it is committed to exerting more efforts into offering similar programs that enrich human resources development in all areas. The company will spare no efforts in making its capabilities and resources available as well as reinforce its collaboration with entities and organizations that provide such initiatives and actively develop Kuwaiti talents.

Kuwait has fastest food consumption growth rate in GCC

KUWAIT: Kuwait has witnessed the fastest growth in food consumption rates amongst other GCC states with a rate of 5.5 percent, a food industry specialist said, adding that this rate is expected to grow even more in view of the growing GDP and the expected



Marwan Fares

praised the Horeca Kuwait exhibition and its ability to attract companies specializing in hospitality, catering

growth over the next four years as well as prediction of economic growth until 2022 by 3 percent.

CEO Food Choice Company Marwan Fares made those remarks in a statement to the press in which he announced that his company will participate in the 2019 Horeca exhibition as a golden sponsor. Fares strongly

and hotel requirements, in addition to travel, transport, oil and construction. "The exhibition will display the latest in food products and food services according to hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) food safety standards," he underlined.

Further, Fares stressed that following the success it has been achieving ever since establishment in 2005, Food Choice plans further growth and international expansion using various unique and creative ideas, while at the same time being very keen on supporting new creations and observing healthy quality standards in catering and retail services needed for hotels, restaurants and department stores.

He added that Food Choice offers exclusive high quality international meat brands, basic patisserie

ingredients, cheese, seafood and beverages. Fares added that Horeca's expansion and yearly progress makes it a perfect annual forum where Kuwait's most effective hospitality and food industry experts meet.

Meanwhile Leaders Group reminded of the success achieved in Horeca 2018 in terms of the growth in the number of visitors. It also hailed the outstanding participation of Food Choice during the past cycles, noting that its section had always attracted large numbers of visitors. The 2019 Horeca exhibition is due to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref in the period of January 14-16, 2019.

Local

Ten truckloads of waste removed from Capital beaches: Municipality

Yarmouk homes' thieves arrested



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality workers clean a beach in Kuwait City yesterday. — Municipality photos



Waste is loaded in a dump truck's bed.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Ten truckloads of debris were removed from Capital Governorate beaches yesterday, Kuwait Municipality announced, noting that the Capital municipality branch cleans beaches and markets daily. Department Director Meshaal Al-Azmi said the capital's beaches are cleaned twice daily from 4 am to noon and from 2 pm to 10 pm.

Meanwhile, acting Kuwait Municipality Director General Faisal Al-Jumaa said since the start of the imple-



11 industrial land lots relocated



Municipality workers remove waste from a beach.

mentation of the decision to relocate 22 industrial land lots, 11 have been moved over 10 consecutive days. Jumaa said the lots are licensed but were given the license in a vital area near the sea and bay, but are being relocated following an environmental study to transfer the industrial lots to another area.

Gang of thieves busted

Capital governorate detectives arrested a gang that burgled homes in Yarmouk. A team was formed as soon as complaints were received from citizens, and investigations led to the identification of the first accused, who was arrested in his Jleeb house, where they found a quantity of stolen jewelry and money. He confessed to the thefts, adding that he got rid of the clothes he used during the burglaries. He then told police about the second accused,

Attacked caught

The relations and security information department gave more information over a video clip circulating on social media in which unidentified assailants attacked two citizens with sharp objects in Messila. It said Mubarak Al-Kabeer detectives arrested one suspect and are looking for the second one, while the third is out of the country. A warrant is being prepared for his arrest.



This picture released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows valuables and cash caught with thieves who stole them from Yarmouk homes.



A Kuwait Municipality bulldozer removes debris from the site of an industrial facility that was relocated recently.

Man reports 'sleepy' drunk neighbor to police

KUWAIT: A drunken man went into his neighbor's diwaniya saying "I want to sleep". The neighbor turned him over to police, who charged him with entering a home and drunkenness. The suspect parked his car in the middle of the street and entered the diwaniya. The shocked neighbor called police and told them his neighbor disturbs him continuously because of his drinking.

Fight

Two citizens exchanged blows in Hawally due to a traffic dispute. Pedestrians broke up the fight, then both went to the police station and lodged complaints. Investigations are underway.

Smuggling foiled

Salmi customs officers discovered an attempt by a citizen to smuggle hashish hidden in oranges as he arrived from Saudi Arabia. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department. Officers found one kilogram of hashish, 54 Captagon tablets, 29 banned tablets and suspected shabu.

Sheep theft

A police night patrol in Salmi led to the arrest of a sheep thief, who was sent to concerned authorities with his stolen animals. The suspect was driving a pick-up truck with nine sheep. He was stopped and confessed to stealing them from a farm at knifepoint.

Kidnap

Police arrested a drunken citizen accused by a Syrian of attempting to kidnap his son. Police asked detectives to bring in the suspect who was at his house, so a warrant was obtained. He resisted arrest and exchanged blows with officers. A source said detectives were not able to question him because he was extremely drunk. He was detained to face legal action after he sobers up.

Insult

An Egyptian accused her neighbor, a citizen, of insulting and threatening her due to a dispute over a car parking spot. The Egyptian said all building residents know that the spot is hers, but she was surprised to find her neighbor's car parked there. When she asked her to move it, she verbally insulted and threatened her.

Swindling

Ahmedi police arrested a citizen wanted on swindling cases following resistance and failed attempts to escape. Ahmedi patrols in Fintas stopped the suspect at night and found him wanted on fraud cases. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

KFAED okays \$98.4m funding of Tunisian roads repair

TUNIS: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed a funding agreement worth KD 30 million (\$98.4 million) for the rehabilitation of hundreds of kilometers of roads in Tunisia's countryside linking some 22 provinces. The deal comes as part of a \$500 million support and assistance package Kuwait

pledged at a Tunis-held conference back in late 2016.

After a signing ceremony, KFAED Director-General Abdulwahab Al-Bader revealed that the project would have a positive impact on the economic and social levels for many Tunisians. Farmers in particular will benefit from the easing which would provide for the transport of their produce, said Zied Laadhari, Tunisia's Minister of Development, Investment and International Cooperation.

The minister also praised the Kuwaiti government fund's contributions to Tunisia over the three past decades, including some 36 projects in vital sectors such as drinking water, irrigation, dams, rural and industrial land development, healthcare and education. — KUNA



TUNIS: KFAED Director-General Abdulwahab Al-Bader signs the agreement with Tunisia's Minister of Development Zied Laadhari. — KUNA

Kuwait denounces Tripoli bomb attack

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait strongly condemns the deadly terrorist attack that targeted the premises

of the Foreign Ministry of sisterly Libya in Tripoli on Tuesday, an official of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The despicable suicide attack resulted in many casualties among innocent people, the source said, reaffirming Kuwait's support to the brothers in Libya in their efforts to restore security and stability in the sisterly country. The source expressed sincere condolences to the families of the victims and wished those injured a quick recovery. — KUNA

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Campaign attacks heighten fears for Bangladesh election

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The Koreans have pledged to restore road and rail links



A man walks past debris in Teluk village in Labuan subdistrict in Banten province on December 26, 2018, after a tsunami - caused by activity at a volcano known as the "child" of Krakatoa - hit the west coast of Indonesia's Java island on December 22. — AFP

Scramble to reach tsunami-struck areas

Isolated towns in remote islands are desperate for aid

CARITA: Indonesian search and rescue teams yesterday plucked stranded residents from remote islands and pushed into isolated communities desperate for aid in the aftermath of a volcano-triggered tsunami that killed over 400. But torrential rains hampered the effort and heaped more misery on the region, as officials warned another killer wave could hit the stricken area.

The disaster agency cautioned residents to stay clear of the coast, as fresh activity at the Anak Krakatoa volcano, which sits in the middle of the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra islands, threatened to spark another tsunami. The agency also said that wind was blowing "ash and sand" from Anak Krakatoa to the nearby towns of Cilegon and Serang on Java, and advised residents to wear masks and glasses if they had to venture outdoors.

A section of the crater — which emerged at the site of the legendary Krakatoa volcano, whose massive 1883 eruption killed at least 36,000 people — col-

lapsed after an eruption and slid into the ocean, triggering Saturday night's killer wave. It struck without warning, washing over popular beaches and inundating tourist hotels and coastal communities, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake. The disaster agency slightly raised the death toll yesterday to 430, with 1,495 people injured and another 159 missing. Nearly 22,000 people have been evacuated and are living in shelters.

"There's a chance the number of fatalities will rise," agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho told a press briefing. Medical workers have warned that clean water and medicine supplies were running low — stoking fears of a public health crisis — as thousands of displaced survivors cram shelters and hospitals. Many have been left homeless by the killer wave, and fear going back to their communities. "I'm here because people said there could another tsunami," Elin Supriatni said from an evacuation centre in shattered Labuan.

'No reason to stay'
The disaster agency dispatched helicopters to drop supplies into hard-to-reach communities, while hundreds of residents on tiny islands in the Sunda Strait were airlifted or taken by boat to shelters. "We tried to stay because it's our island, but after a while we got scared," said Sariyah, a 45-year-old resident of tiny Sebesi island, who evacuated to the mainland on a boat. "My house has been destroyed so there's no more reason to stay."

Sniffer dogs are being used to find those still missing as grief-stricken relatives line up at identification centers. But hopes of finding any survivors beneath the rubble have dwindled. Tubagus Cecep, 63, waited nervously at the area's main identification centre to see if a body was that of his missing son. "I'm scared my son is dead, but if I keep my faith in God maybe he could have been swept away somewhere and is still alive," he said.

At the Tanjung Lesung resort, cars and minibuses had been thrown against buildings, concrete walls

cracked into small pieces and trees uprooted. A wooden sign that read "Good Times" lay on the ground. The tsunami struck the resort as more than 200 workers from the state electricity company were watching pop band "Seventeen" perform. The four-member group was hurled from the stage as the water slammed into the audience — only the band's lead vocalist survived.

The tsunami was Indonesia's third major natural disaster in six months, following a series of powerful earthquakes on the island of Lombok in July and August and a quake-tsunami in September that killed around 2,200 people in Palu on Sulawesi island, with thousands more missing and presumed dead. Yesterday, thousands prayed for loved ones at mass graves and mosques to mark the 14th anniversary of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, which killed some 220,000 people in countries around the Indian Ocean. Indonesia, a vast Southeast Asian archipelago, is one of the most disaster-hit nations on Earth due to its position straddling the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide. — AFP

Syrian defenses shoot down Israeli missiles

BEIRUT: Syrian air defenses shot down Israeli missiles near the capital Damascus on Tuesday, local state media reported, while Israel said it was protecting itself from anti-aircraft fire. The official Syrian news agency SANA said air defenses "intercepted hostile missiles launched by the Israeli warplanes" from over Lebanese territories, citing a military source.

It added that the majority of them were downed before reaching their targets near the capital Damascus. Three soldiers were injured and an ammunition depot damaged. Israel has previously carried out several bombings in Syria against what it says are Iranian military targets and advanced arms deliveries to Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Lebanese group, both enemies of the Jewish state. Many of them have been in the area south of Damascus.

An Israeli military spokeswoman declined to comment on reports of a strike in Syria when contacted by AFP. But it added in a statement: "An aerial defense system went off against an anti-aircraft missile launched from Syria. No damage or injuries were reported." The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor also reported "an Israeli raid".

"Missiles fired from Israeli planes targeted... arms depots southwest and south of Damascus that belong to Hezbollah or Iranian forces," said Rami Abdel Rahman. Israeli



DAMASCUS: A handout picture released by the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) on December 25, 2018, shows a streak of light in the sky of the Syrian capital Damascus. — AFP

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed not to let Tehran — a supporter of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad — from entrenching itself militarily in the war-torn country. Experts say Israel is to be greatly affected by US President Donald Trump's announcement of a withdrawal of American forces from Syria, as it would leave the area open to Iran and its partners to develop their military capacity.

There have been warnings from Israel and others that Iran is seeking to form a "land

bridge" across to the Mediterranean, and some analysts have said that the US withdrawal could help that effort. Yet Israeli officials, who have previously applauded Trump's policy in the Middle East, have stressed that it has long managed that front alone. If confirmed, Tuesday's reported strike would be the first by Israel since the US withdrawal was announced. At the end of November Syria said its air defenses had targeted and downed a number of "hostile targets" over the Kisweh area south of Damascus. — AFP

IS attack on Libya foreign ministry kills at least three

TRIPOLI: Suicide attackers stormed the Libyan foreign ministry in the capital Tripoli on Tuesday, killing at least three people including a senior civil servant in an attack claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group. Twenty-one other people were wounded in the attack, authorities said. A car bomb exploded near the ministry, prompting security forces to rush to the scene, said Special Forces spokesman Tarak Al-Dawass.

A suicide bomber then blew himself up on the second floor of the building while a second attacker died when a suitcase he was carrying exploded, he said. A third assailant, who was unarmed and wearing a bulletproof vest, was killed by security forces outside, Dawass added. At least three people were killed and 21 wounded, according to the health ministry. Foreign Minister Tahar Siala said one of the dead was senior diplomat Ibrahim Al-Shaibi who headed a department in his ministry.

Plumes of smoke were seen rising from the building as ambulances, paramedics and security forces gathered outside. IS claimed the attack in a statement distributed on social media, saying that it was carried out by three "soldiers of the caliphate" who were armed with suicide belts and automatic weapons. Interior Minister Fathi Bash Agha admitted during a news conference that "security chaos" reigned in Libya and was "out of our control". He said this was creating a "fertile ground" for IS to operate in the North African country. Torn apart by power struggles and undermined by chronic insecurity, Libya has become a haven for jihadists since the ouster and killing of Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

Jihadist foothold

Two competing administrations, rival militias, tribes and jihadists have been vying for control of territory and the country's vast oil wealth. IS took advantage of the chaos to gain a foothold in the coastal city of Sirte in 2015. Forces loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) regained control of Sirte in December 2016 after eight months of deadly fighting. Since then, some jihadists have returned to the desert in an attempt to regroup and reorganize. The interior minister said his department lacked the equipment necessary to restore law and order in Libya. — AFP

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International

The two Koreas have pledged to restore road and rail links

Push through joint projects despite sanctions on Pyongyang

SEOUL: The two Koreas yesterday held a symbolic groundbreaking ceremony for reconnecting and repairing roads and railways across the divided peninsula, with the North calling on the South to push through joint projects despite sanctions on Pyongyang. The connection of railways and roads is among a series of measures aimed at improving bilateral ties agreed upon in September by liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the North's leader Kim Jong Un.

Seoul stressed that the ceremony would not herald the start of actual work on reconnecting and modernizing links between the two Koreas — which remain technically at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended without a peace treaty. A South Korean Unification Ministry spokesman described it as a mere “expression of a commitment”, adding that construction would depend on “progress on the North’s denuclearization and circumstances concerning sanctions”. But the North’s top railway official Kim Yun Hyok reiterated Pyongyang’s stance that the South stop toeing the US line on maintaining sanctions on the North until it gives up its nuclear weapons.

“If (the South) keeps looking around to check someone’s mood and continues wavering, reunification would never be achieved,” Kim said at the ceremony at the Panmun railway station in the North’s border city of Kaesong. Moments later, some 10 delegates from both the South and the North lined up along the railroad and pulled yellow levers to link up the railway

tracks in a symbolic gesture.

Exempt from sanctions

There were concerns that the train and other materials brought into the North for the ceremony could breach various sanctions imposed on the isolated regime over its nuclear weapons, but the UN Security Council reportedly granted a waiver for the event. The two sides wrapped up their joint railway and road inspections for the projects this month. South Korea has set aside some \$620,000 for the endeavor.

The ceremony comes as the United States ramps up efforts to convince Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons. Following a rapid rapprochement earlier this year that culminated in a historic summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, progress has stalled with both sides accusing each other of dragging their feet and acting in bad faith. Critics say North Korea has made no concrete commitments and is unlikely to surrender its nuclear arsenal, while Washington’s policy of maintaining pressure through isolation and sanctions has left Pyongyang seething.

Second summit

Trump said Monday that he was “looking forward” to his second summit with Kim, which Washington says may take place early next year. He tweeted the statement after he was briefed by Stephen Biegun, the US special representative on North Korea, who wrapped



KAESONG: South and North Korean officials unveil a direction signboard for Seoul and Pyongyang during a groundbreaking ceremony for reconnecting and repairing roads and railways across the divided Korean peninsula at Panmun Station in North Korea’s border city of Kaesong. — AFP

up a three-day trip to Seoul on Saturday.

Senior transport officials from Russia, China and Mongolia attended the ceremony on Wednesday in the hope that the Korean peninsula could one day link up with Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railway and

through China and Mongolia. But experts say the North’s transport infrastructure is so dilapidated that it could take decades and absorb billions of dollars to modernize and connect roads and railways across its borders. — AFP

News in brief

13 Nigerian troops killed

KANO: Boko Haram jihadists ambushed a military convoy in northeastern Nigeria, killing 13 soldiers and a policeman, the army said yesterday. But an officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the militants had overrun an army base, and put the death toll at 18. An army statement said the attackers ambushed a military convoy late Monday on a highway linking Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, with Damaturu in neighboring Yobe state. “Sadly, 13 military and a police personnel... paid the supreme price while extricating themselves from the ambush,” said the statement, signed by local military spokesman Colonel Onyema Nwachukwu. The attack followed an attempted raid on a nearby military base along the highway in Kukareta village. — AFP

China arrests Marxist student leader

BEIJING: Chinese police detained a well-known Marxist student activist at a top university yesterday, a witness said, for attempting to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Mao Zedong, whose legacy in China remains controversial. A student eyewitness told AFP that Qiu Zhanxuan, the head of Peking University’s Marxist society, was forced into a black car by seven or eight plain-clothes officers near the subway station outside the university’s east gate. Qiu was “screaming and resisting arrest”, the student said, declining to be named due to the sensitive nature of the issue. “I heard him say I am Qiu Zhanxuan... I did not break the law. Why are you taking me away? What are you doing?” The eyewitness said police showed their “public security department documents”, when questioned by onlookers. Peking University and the Ministry of Public Security did not respond to requests for comment. — AFP

Quake hits Sicily’s Mount Etna

ROME: 4.8-magnitude earthquake hit the area around Europe’s most active volcano Mount Etna early yesterday, injuring several people, damaging old buildings and forcing the partial closure of a highway, Italian civil protection authorities said. Two people had to be rescued from a collapsed building and around 10 people were taken to hospital suffering from light injuries from falling debris. Another 18 people made their way to hospital on their own to be treated for light injuries. The quake was the strongest in the region after Mount Etna erupted on Monday, spewing ash and forcing the temporary closure of Sicilian airspace. Despite the closure of a part of the highway running along the coast, the airport at the eastern city of Catania, the capital of the province, was open. The epicenter was located north of Catania and several families had to spend the night in the streets. — AFP

Golfer arrested for poaching

NEW DELHI: Top Indian golfer Jyoti Randhawa was arrested yesterday for poaching at a forest reserve, an official said. Randhawa, who was ranked in the world top 100 between 2004 and 2009, was taken into detention at the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh state. The 46-year-old and a companion killed a red junglefowl, Ramesh Pandey, the reserve’s field director, told AFP. “Jyoti Singh Randhawa and Mahesh Virajdar have been arrested for poaching and unauthorized entry in a forest area,” Pandey said. “A vehicle, weapon and other equipment have been seized with the skin of... (an) animal and a dead junglefowl. “They have been sent to jail and further legal action is being taken.” Randhawa took up shooting as his golfing career faded after winning the last of his eight Asian Tour titles, the Thailand Open, in 2009. Media reports last month said Randhawa has a pack of hunting dogs that were used during the search for a man-eating tigress who was shot dead in the western state of Maharashtra. — AFP

DR Congo further delays Dec 30 poll in two conflict zones

KINSHASA: DR Congo yesterday announced that key elections due to take place nationwide on December 30 would be postponed to March in two regions troubled by violence. But those delays will not affect the timetable for the presidential ballot, which is being held alongside legislative and provincial elections, the national election commission CENI said.

Already postponed three times, the elections are due to bring the curtain down on the era of President Joseph Kabila, in charge of the vast mineral-rich country for nearly 18 turbulent years. “The elections in the Beni region and the cities of Beni and Butembo in North Kivu province as well as Yumbi in the (southwest) Mai-Ndombe province initially scheduled for December 30 will now be held in March,” CENI said.

The final results of the presidential vote will be published on January 15, and the next president will be sworn in on January 18, CENI said. It did not explain how this outcome would dovetail with the vote in the troubled regions, which presumably would take place around two months after the presidential inauguration. A total of 1,256,117 registered voters in the troubled regions, out of a nationwide electoral roll of 44 million, are affected by the delay. The elections were due to have been held on December 23, climaxing a long period of blood-stained turbulence. But CENI ordered a week-long postponement, blaming a warehouse fire that destroyed voting machines and ballot papers earmarked for Kinshasa.

Unstable

The Democratic Republic of Congo, the second biggest country in Africa, has a long history of political turmoil and violence. It has never had a peaceful transfer of power since it gained independence from Belgium in 1960. In 1996-1997 and 1998-2003 it became the theatre of two wars that left millions of dead and homeless and sucked in countries from around central and southern Africa. Smaller conflicts are unfolding in the

Tension in Bosnia after arrest of leader of Banja Luka protests

SARAJEVO: Tensions rose on Tuesday in a stand-off between Bosnian police and protesters after the arrest of the leader of a movement demonstrating over the unresolved death of his student son in the city of Banja Luka. Hundreds of people gathered to protest against the arrest of their leader Davor Dragicevic, defying police forces deployed around central square in Banja Luka, the capital of Serb-run Bosnian entity Republika Srpska (RS).

Dragicevic, 49, whose son David died in March, “was arrested after having failed to respond to a police summons,” police spokeswoman Marija Markanovic told reporters. For months, Dragicevic and his ex-wife have accused the authorities in the Bosnian Serb-run region of “killing” their son, a charge officials have denied. The body of the 21-year-old technology student was found in a stream in March. Police called his death an accident, but his family suspected foul play, sparking a wave of protests not seen in Bosnia since 2014. A prosecutor later qualified the death as murder.

Nightly meetings

The group “Justice for David”, which has been meeting every evening in Banja Luka’s central square for nine months now, last week gathered outside the parliament of Republika Srpska without approval by the authorities. Some 20 protesters, including Dragicevic, were accused by a prosecutor of “threatening the security” of political officials.

Dragicevic was summoned for questioning but



BENI: People in the morgue of Beni hospital look at the bodies of the civilians killed in an attack in Masiani district. — AFP

east, where swathes of the countryside are in the grip of brutal militias. The CENI statement pointed in particular to parts of North Kivu province, affected by “a terrorist threat” and “a dangerous, ongoing epidemic of Ebola virus” in the areas of Beni and Butembo. Since 2014, hundreds of civilians have been killed in attacks attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a shadowy Islamist-rooted group that arose in western Uganda in 1995.

Ebola fears

Since August 1, 354 people have died in an outbreak of Ebola, whose epicentre is the Beni region, according to official figures. “Elections cause major movements of voters to polling sites, causing the people to gather and mix, which increases the risk of spreading the disease and

providing an opportunity for terrorist attacks,” CENI said. At the other end of the country, in the southwestern province of Mai-Ndombe province, “deadly incidents” occurred in the territory of Yumbi on the night of December 14-15, it disclosed. The violence “led to massive displacement of people, the destruction of all electoral equipment and document, (and) the ransacking of CENI warehouses and sites,” it said.

Kabila took office in 2001 at the age of just 29 after succeeding his assassinated father, Laurent-Desire. His long spell has been sharply criticized by rights and anti-corruption watchdogs, and his final years marked by protests that were bloodily quelled. He was due to step down at the end of 2016 after reaching the end of his constitution-limited two terms in office. — AFP



SARAJEVO Several hundred Sarajevo residents gather in the centre of Sarajevo late on December 25, 2018, in a show a solidarity with protesters in the northwestern city of Banja Luka. — AFP

refused to report to the police station, the police spokeswoman said. His ex-wife, David’s mother Suzana Radanovic, and several other group members were also arrested, including opposition party leader Branislav Borenovic and his party’s MP Drasko Stanivukovic. They were all accused of “violating public order,” police said. Radanovic was released later on Tuesday and joined the protesters.

According to local media, the demonstrators opposed police removing a “sanctuary” at what has become known as “David’s Square” where they have been gathering, bringing flowers and lighting candles every evening. Police then forced several hundred protesters from the place as well as from a park where they had moved. The European Union delegation in

Bosnia in a statement expressed “deep concern” and “asked the RS Ministry of Interior for an immediate explanation of the ongoing arrests of different persons associated with the ‘Justice for David’ movement.”

Hundreds of protesters rallied in the evening in Bosnian capital Sarajevo and blocked main boulevard in support of the group in Banja Luka, an AFP journalist reported. Protests “for David” have gradually turned into demonstrations against the rule of Milorad Dodik, a Bosnian Serb strongman whose party won an October election in Republika Srpska. Since the end of the 1992-1995 war, Bosnia has been composed of two entities — Serb-run Republika Srpska and the Muslim-Croat Federation — united by a loose central government. — AFP

International

Campaign attacks heighten fears for Bangladesh election

Campaign for Sunday's vote has seen daily confrontations

DHAKA: New clashes marred the deadly Bangladesh election campaign yesterday as opposition leaders stepped up complaints over the organization of what they consider a one-sided vote. Youths on motorbikes carrying a banner of the ruling Awami League attacked an opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party candidate with knives, hours after a BNP leader was wounded in clashes between rival party activists, police said.

Habibur Rahman Habib, a BNP candidate for parliament, was attacked by 15 men on motorbikes in the northern town of Ishwardi yesterday, according to police. "He was hacked three times on his thigh. He was grievously injured but is out of danger," local police chief Bahauddin Faruqi told AFP. Late Tuesday, senior BNP leader Goyeshwar Roy was injured as BNP and Awami League activists clashed in Dhaka district, police superintendent SM Shafiur Rahman told AFP. Media images showed blood pouring down Roy's face.

The campaign for Sunday's vote has seen daily confrontations between supporters of the two main parties, which has further soured their bitter constitutional showdown. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is seeking a record fourth term, but her party has been accused of organizing the arrest and intimidation of opposition candidates to boost her chances. The government denies any wrongdoing. The BNP, whose leader Khaleida Zia is in jail, and its main Islamist ally claim more than 11,500 of their supporters have been detained since the election was called on November 8. Hundreds of their supporters have been injured in fighting, they say.

Thousands arrested

Six people — four BNP supporters and two from the Awami League — have been killed in the campaign violence. The BNP-led opposition coalition demanded the resignation of the chief election commissioner Nurul Huda, accusing him of supporting ruling party followers in the unrest. "It is not possible to get a non-partisan and neutral election from him and there is no possibility of fair treatment from him," opposition spokesman Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said.

Opposition parties walked out of a meeting with Huda late Tuesday, and have demanded a neutral election commissioner take over for Sunday's vote. They say the mass arrest of their followers — 8,243 from the BNP and 3,600 from the Jamaat-e-Islami — was intended to create a "climate of fear". Police have not confirmed the number of arrests during the campaign but insist all those detained had warrants against them.

"We never target any individual unless they break the law," said police spokesman Sohail Rana. There was no comment from Chief Election Commissioner on the violence, but another election commissioner urged police "act neutrally and without discrimination to all." "Don't take any undesirable action by being too enthusiastic," commissioner Mahub Talukder said in a statement. "Refrain from acting in a partisan manner in the polls. Uphold the dignity and righteousness of your uniform... I am worried over the growing number of incidents of clashes and violence ahead of the national election."

Hasina and Zia have been political foes since the introduction of democracy in 1991. They have tradition-



DHAKA: Supporters of Bangladesh Awami League march in the street as they take part in a general election campaign procession. — AFP

ally alternated in power but Hasina's current rule has lasted since 2009 and Zia's jail term this year prevented her from taking part in the election. The ruling party has emphasized the economic growth in Hasina's last 10

years in power to justify her reelection. The BNP had hoped the deployment of 30,000 troops on Monday would improve security across the Muslim-majority country of 165 million. — AFP

Three students killed in China university lab explosion

BEIJING: Three students were killed in a laboratory blast at a Beijing university yesterday, the city's fire department said, in an accident that blew out windows and left the building a blackened shell. "There was an explosion at the experimental site during a scientific research experiment" on wastewater treatment in the Environmental Engineering Laboratory, the Beijing Fire Department said.

"The accident caused the death of three students," it added in a statement posted on its social media account. The incident happened just after 9:30am (0130 GMT) at the Beijing Jiaotong University in the western part of the city. Some 30 fire engines were sent to the scene, and it took nearly an hour to get the blaze under control. Local authorities have launched an investigation into the cause of the incident. A video posted by the state-run People's Daily newspaper showed blown-out windows and blackened buildings around a courtyard, with trees and ground covered in firefighting foam.

Images on social media showed plumes of dark smoke billowing from low-rise buildings as firefighters fought to contain the blaze.



BEIJING: Firemen work at the site of an explosion at Beijing Jiaotong University. — AFP

Students could be seen wearing face masks and complaining of an acrid smell. Industrial accidents are common in China, where safety regulations are often poorly enforced. Last month, a gas leak caused the explosion of a truck carrying combustible chemicals near the entrance of a chemical factory in the northern Chinese of Zhangjiakou, killing 23 and injuring 22 others.

In July, a blast at a chemical plant in southwest Sichuan province left 19 dead and 12 injured. The company had undertaken illegal construction that had not passed safety

checks, according to local authorities. But one of the nation's worst accidents happened in 2015, when giant chemical blasts in a container storage facility killed at least 165 people in the northern port city of Tianjin. It caused more than \$1 billion in damage and sparked widespread anger at a perceived lack of transparency over the accident's causes and its environmental impact. A government inquiry eventually recommended 123 people be punished. Tianjin's mayor at the time of the accident was sentenced to 12 years in prison for graft in September. — AFP

China rights lawyer trial held behind closed doors

TIANJIN: The trial of a prominent Chinese human rights lawyer took place yesterday but was closed to the public because of "state secrets", a northern Chinese court said. Wang Quanzhang, 42, who defended political activists and victims of land seizures, disappeared in a 2015 sweep — known as the "709" crackdown — aimed at courtroom critics of Communist authorities.

Charged in January 2016 with alleged "subversion of state power", Wang had been in legal limbo — detained without a trial date — until Monday, when his government-appointed lawyer finally contacted his wife with the court date. "The defendant... was tried in the first instance of the Tianjin Second Intermediate People's Court today," the court said in a statement. "Due to the state secrets involved, the court decided not to open

the trial to the public. The verdict in this case will be pronounced at a later date."

The closed-door proceedings were conducted in a heavily-guarded courthouse in the northern city of Tianjin, with Wang's wife prevented from attending the session and at least two activists detained for protesting outside the building. Wang's wife, Li Wenzu, was on Tuesday placed under de facto house arrest with "more than 20" security personnel outside her apartment. In an account posted on Twitter early yesterday morning, a supporter Wang Qiaoling detailed how she and Li were barred from leaving a Beijing housing compound by groups of police officers for over an hour.

"The authorities in cases like these see the defendant as their enemy and anyone close to them as either a potential tool to be manipulated... or as another potential enemy to be controlled," Eva Pils, a professor specializing in human rights law at King's College London, told AFP. "Placing Li Wenzu under house arrest would fall in that category." Just before 10:00 am (0200 GMT), AFP journalists witnessed Heilongjiang activist Yang Chunlin getting arrested after he protested outside the court in Tianjin, describing the situation as "fascist rule" and "absurd". — AFP

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
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cast watchful eye
on upcoming polls

From small-scale diggers eking out their existence to corporations exposed to the market fluctuations of cobalt and legal reforms, DR Congo's massively important mining sector has a keen eye on the country's troubled election process. Subsistence diggers scraping a living outside the mining capital of Lubumbashi said they hoped Sunday's long-delayed poll will bring political change and a better life. "We have pinned our hopes on Martin Fayulu," said Prince, a 32-year-old miner referring to a candidate running against President Joseph Kabila's handpicked champion, Emmanuel Ramazan Shadary.

Prince and colleague Kalumba, 24, hammered at the rock, seeking to tease out enough cobalt to earn a few dollars off intermediaries. Both are among the roughly two in three Congolese who live below the poverty line, seeing almost nothing of their country's vast natural riches - a wealth that includes gold, uranium, diamonds and copper. The big star at the moment is cobalt, the vital ingredient in batteries for electric cars, mobile phones and other glitzy devices, and the DRC is the world's biggest exporter of the stuff. Cobalt soared to \$94,800 per tonne in May. It has since slumped to \$57,000 per tonne, although this is still more than twice the price level seen in mid-2016.

Strategic mineral

The current level is "not too bad," said Ghislain Yumba, head of business development at Chemaf, a cobalt miner in Lubumbashi. "We think cobalt can stay at this level for the coming two to three years - it's not so alarming," he said. The government classified cobalt as a "strategic" mineral under mining code reforms passed in early 2018, one of outgoing President Joseph Kabila's final economic projects. The reforms will beef up the state's take on the coveted mineral, hiking taxes on production to 10 percent from 2.5 percent. "That will have a knock-on effect," says Yumba. "But the current price level still allows us to face up to that."

But foreign firms operating in the DRC, including Anglo-Swiss behemoth Glencore, are less happy. Furious at the tax hike, foreign firms have also slammed the end of a 10-year stability clause for royalty taxes. "Relations between the miners and the government are not at all good," a sector expert told AFP. "Most mining companies concerned by this change in the regulatory framework want to go to arbitration. But then they get threatened with having their operating licence taken away," the source added.

Before junking the stability clause, Kabila "used to want to defend the mining sector," the source lamented. The industry now hopes a new political regime will be more sympathetic to its worries about profitability, the source said.

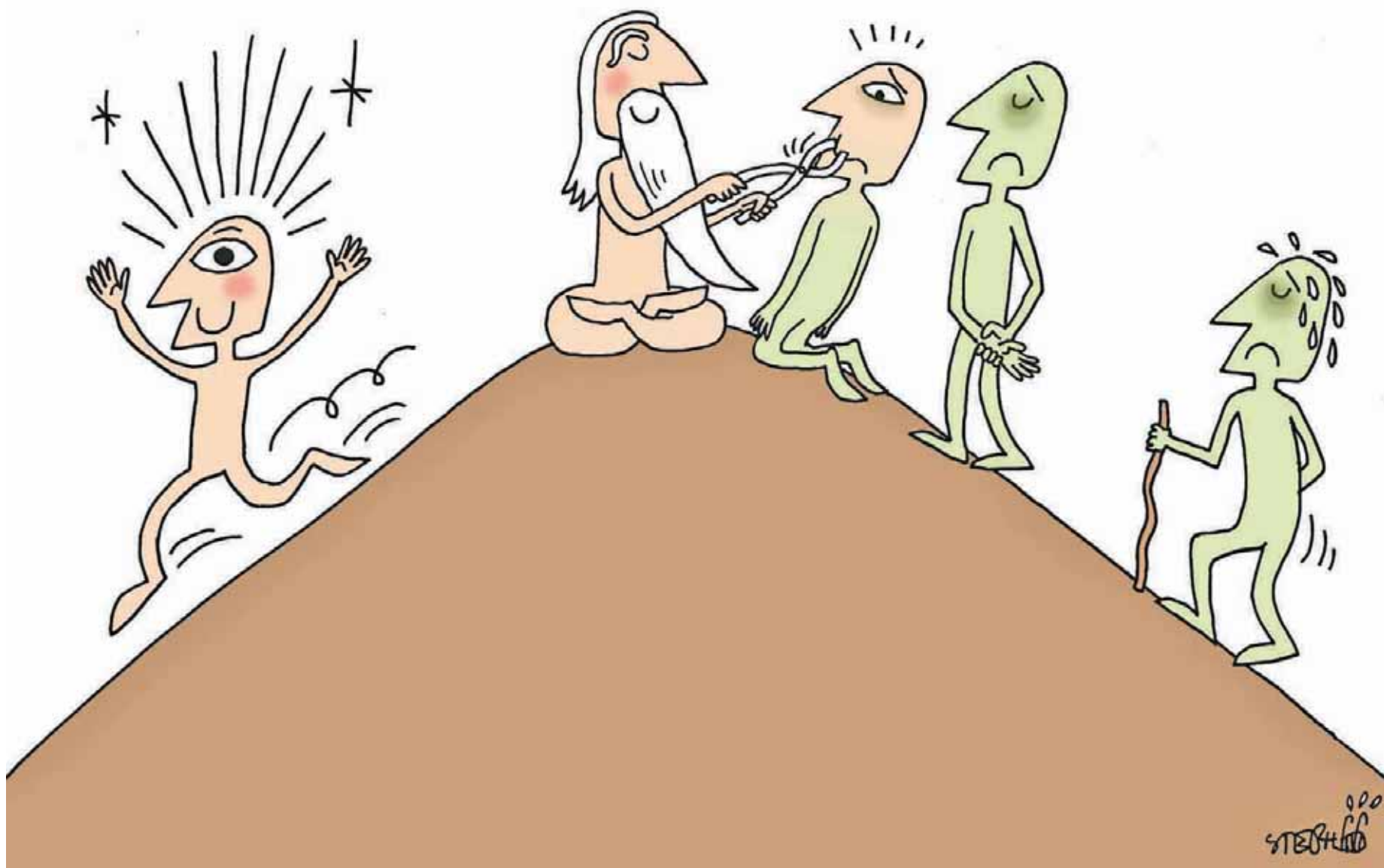
Farm potential

Another sector with its eyes on post-electoral change is agriculture. Barely 10 percent of some 80 million hectares (198 million acres) of arable land is cultivated. "Our land is among the most fertile in the world," the governor of Tanganyika boasted to journalists visiting his southeastern region last March. Yet humanitarian groups say some seven million people lack sufficient food in a country where subsistence farming is the norm and which is a net importer of foodstuffs.

Shadary has promised to make the sector a pillar of the economy while Fayulu has promised an "agricultural state of emergency" to ensure that "in a year no Congolese dies of hunger". But such promises are viewed sceptically in a country where corruption and government inertia are rife. Four years ago, Kabila inaugurated a 75,000-hectare agro-industrial park in a South African partnership at Bukanga Lonzo, 220 km east of Kinshasa.

But production ground to a halt earlier this year after the South African contractor pulled out and launched a \$20 million legal claim in Paris against the government. Sector workers cite a chronic lack of farm equipment as an additional problem, as well as violence. In Beni, in northeastern North Kivu province, "hundreds of agricultural workers are paralyzed by fear of getting killed by armed groups to the extent they refuse to go and cultivate their fields," the DR Congo office of the Norwegian Refugee Council said after a recent spate of attacks targeting workers. — AFP

Cartoon for the Soul



Doubts over ability to 'eradicate' IS

A withdrawal of American ground forces in Syria will give Turkey freer rein to target Washington's Kurdish partners in the fight against militants but analysts doubt Ankara's capacity to "eradicate" the Islamic State extremist group. Turkish officials have said that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan heavily weighed in the decision by his US counterpart Donald Trump to pull all 2,000 American troops from Syria.

Trump's shock order came after Erdogan convinced him that Turkey could eliminate the last remaining pockets of IS after the jihadists suffered a series of military defeats. "We have the strength to neutralise (IS) by ourselves," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu insisted on Tuesday. But Erdogan's main objective in Syria is actually to target the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, which the US has trained to spearhead the fight against IS.

Turkey is vehemently opposed to a Kurdish entity on its border, fearing it will strengthen the separatist ambitions of the Kurdish minority inside the country, and says the YPG is a Syrian "terrorist" offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK, which has waged an insurgency against Turkey since 1984, is blacklisted as a terrorist organization by Ankara and its Western allies.

'Victim of own success'

Trump said on Sunday after a telephone conversation with Erdogan that he counted on him to "eradicate" IS which he said was now "largely defeated". Turkey has repeatedly called on the US to stop training and providing armed weapons to the YPG in the fight against IS, claiming that Turkish military forces would be more effective in eliminating the militant threat.

"Erdogan is a victim of his own success in selling Trump on the idea that Turkey is ready to assume control over the counter-IS mission in Syria indefinitely," Nicholas Heras, an analyst at the Center for a New American Security, said. "Turkey does not currently have a Syrian rebel force that is large enough, experienced enough, or legitimate enough to hold eastern Syria, and it would take many months, even with US support, for Turkey to amass such a force," he added.

The last pockets of IS are in fact in eastern and central Syria, hundreds of kilometers away from the northern areas of the country which the Turkish military and Syrian rebels are accustomed to and where they led two offensives in 2016 and 2018. "IS is close to Boukamal, more than 400 km from Turkey, impossible for Turkey to go so far.

The Syrian army and Iraqi Shiite militias will handle it after the US withdrawal," said Syria expert Fabrice Balanche.

"Turkey is not even able to eliminate Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), ie Al-Qaeda, from its border in Idlib. I cannot see how it can eliminate IS with the help of Arab militia," he said. Idlib is Syria's last major rebel and jihadist stronghold in the country's north.

'Real problem: logistics'

According to Balanche, Turkey could at most "prevent" an IS resurgence by closing its border with Syria to the militants and carrying out targeted operations like in the Al-Bab region of northern Syria in 2016. Between August 2016 and March 2017, Turkish troops supported Syrian opposition fighters capture territory from IS in northern Syria. Sinan Ülgen, chairman of the Istanbul-based Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, said that the distance between the last IS pockets and the Turkish border posed a "real problem" of logistics. "So it is not clear how Turkey would orchestrate a military campaign at such

long distances from its border in hostile territory," he told AFP. Lina Khatib, director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at London-based Chatham House, said Erdogan gave assurances to Trump about his ability to eradicate IS without having a "plan" for doing so. She said that Turkey's real aim was to "use this opportunity (US withdrawal) to crack down on the YPG". "Eradicating IS can only happen through a comprehensive strategy that even the current international anti-IS coalition - which is limited to military action without adequate attention to the needed socioeconomic and political aspects of fighting IS - does not possess," she added.

If Turkey were to fight IS alone and then left the battles to Syrian Arab proxies, "militarily weaker" than the extremists, it would not be very effective, Khatib said. "This would also make Turkey vulnerable to revenge attacks by IS," Turkey was hit by a series of terror attacks blamed on IS in recent years including the last in January 2017 when a gunman killed 39 people in an Istanbul nightclub. — AFP



Mario Collino, aka "Prezzemolo" ("Parsley" in English) poses in a cornfield on Dec 13, 2018 in Busca, near Cuneo in northern Italy. — AFP

Photos and DNA
tests as Indonesians
search for relatives

Grief-stricken Indonesians queued with photos or waited on DNA tests yesterday, to find out if their missing loved ones were among bodies being held in a hospital morgue after a devastating tsunami tore families apart. "I'm scared," said Tubagus Cecep, 63, as he waited nervously at a hospital in devastated Carita for test results on a body he fears could be that of his son. "But if I keep my faith in God maybe he could have been swept away somewhere and is still alive."

His son, a university student due to graduate in five months, hasn't been seen since the day of the disaster, when he was on a day trip to an island off the coast of Java. Four of his friends are also missing. "They found a body, a pile of bags and my son's shoes," the father of 10 told AFP. "I'm still waiting for the body to be identified. We don't know yet if it was him."

Others queued up showing photos of their loved ones on mobile phones, with officials carrying out the grisly task of checking them against bodies in the morgue. "We've been asking them about when was the last time they saw their relative, what they were wearing, if they have any identifying marks on their body," said Nariyana, head of the local police forensics and medical services unit, who goes by one name. The task has been made more difficult by multiple relatives making duplicate reports of missing loved ones, Nariyana said. Also waiting was Nur Masa, who was at a Java beach with his older brother on Saturday evening when the powerful waves struck. His brother - who was fixing a

fishing net into the sea when the wave crashed in - has not been seen since. "I still hope he can be found," the 33-year-old Masa quietly told AFP. "But it's been four days and four nights and he still hasn't been located." An eruption at the Anak Krakatoa volcano, which sits in the middle of the

Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra islands, caused a section of the crater to collapse and slide into the ocean, triggering the killer tsunami, officials have said. The disaster agency slightly raised the death toll yesterday to 430, with 1,495 people injured and another 159 missing. — AFP



Indonesian emergency personnel carry the body of a victim at Berkah hospital in Pandeglang in Banten province yesterday. — AFP

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Business

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14 The new Mercedes-Benz CLS: Striking design and a style icon



WASHINGTON, DC: Traders work on the floor at the closing bell of the Dow Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange. President Trump on Tuesday expressed confidence in Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin amid worries over a weakening economy and a stock market slump, but repeated his criticism of the US Federal Reserve, saying it has raised interest rates too quickly. — AFP

Trump downbeat on Fed as markets sink

President praises Mnuchin, slams Powell for rate hike

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday marked Christmas with a renewed attack on the central bank over plunging stocks, as he aired a catalogue of grievances in a downbeat gathering at the Oval Office. High on the laundry list was the Democrats, whom he blamed for a partial government shutdown which dragged into its fourth day-paralyzing key federal services such as national parks-with no end in sight.

Trump on Tuesday expressed confidence in Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin amid worries over a weakening economy and a stock market slump, but repeated his criticism of the US Federal Reserve, saying it has raised interest rates too quickly.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office after a Christmas video conference with US troops deployed abroad, Trump also said US companies were "the greatest in the world" and presented a "tremendous" buying opportunity. Asked if he has confidence in Mnuchin, Trump said: "Yes, I do. Very talented guy,

Very smart person," he said. His comments came after Mnuchin on Monday held a conference call with US regulators to discuss plunging US stock markets.

The call did more to rattle markets than to assure them. All three major US stock indexes ended down more than 2 percent on the day before the Christmas holiday. The S&P 500 has lost about 19.8 percent from its Sept. 20 closing high, just shy of the 20 percent threshold that commonly defines a bear market.

Trump denounced opposition lawmakers for denying him funding for his southern border wall and denounced them as hypocrites for criticizing his firing of FBI chief James Comey.

"It's a disgrace what's happening in our country. But other than that, I wish everybody a very Merry Christmas," the president said as he fielded reporters' questions after talking with members of the armed forces. With the stock market on track for its worst December since the Great Depression, Trump berated

the Federal Reserve for its stewardship of the economy, a regular recent complaint.

"They're raising interest rates too fast because they think the economy is so good but I think that they will get it pretty soon, I really do," Trump said.

His comments came after Asian markets suffered a holiday rout, with Tokyo suffering its worst finish since April 2017 after a brutal run on Wall Street that saw US stocks sink for a fourth straight session.

No foreseeable end

Markets have been roiled by ongoing uncertainty in the US, with Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin berated for holding a call with the six biggest US banks and then reporting on Twitter that the six CEOs have "ample liquidity" available.

Investors were also unnerved by weekend news reports that Trump had asked about the possibility of firing Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell,

accounts that Mnuchin said Trump has denied.

Asked by reporters whether he had confidence in Mnuchin, Trump answered "yes I do," calling the treasury chief a "very talented, very smart person."

The stock market malaise comes with Trump refusing to sign a budget bill to keep the government funded as he demands \$5 billion for a US-Mexico border wall-a pillar of his election platform.

Trump acknowledged the impasse has no foreseeable end date, telling reporters he couldn't say when the government would fully reopen.

"I can tell you it's not going to be open until we have a wall, a fence, whatever they'd like to call it," he said. Trump reaffirmed his claim on Twitter Monday that he had approved a contract for the construction of 115 miles (185 kilometers) of wall in Texas, although the White House has not offered any details on the project.

He said he would visit that stretch of the border "at the end of January for the start of construction." —AFP

Dollar totters as US politics, Fed worries weigh

SINGAPORE: The dollar was down against most of its peers yesterday, pressured by a cocktail of negative factors including heightened concerns over a partial US government shutdown and tension between the White House and the Federal Reserve.

Fears of a US and global economic slowdown have sent US 10-year yields tumbling by around 25 basis points in December, adding to the increasing strain on the dollar and further darkening its outlook. "Moderating US growth and political tensions are negative for the dollar and we expect continued weakness," said Sim Moh Siong, currency strategist at Bank of Singapore.

"I expect the biggest winner of global risk-aversion to be the yen." The dollar has struggled particularly against the yen, losing ground for eight straight sessions as a broad risk-off move in financial markets benefited the safe-haven Japanese currency. It tried to steady in early Asian trade yesterday, edging up 0.1 percent on the yen to 110.43. Analysts at Mizuho Bank said the sharp decline in US 10-year treasury yields has dented the dollar's performance versus its peers. US 10-year paper is currently yielding 2.73 percent, having fallen from 3 percent in early December.

The euro and the British pound tacked on 0.2 percent each, changing hands at \$1.1415 and \$1.2705, respectively. The Australian dollar added 0.1 percent to fetch \$0.7043. Over recent months the dollar has



struggled to shake off a growing list of bearish factors, led most recently by speculation over the outlook for US interest rates, falling bond yields and the plunge in oil prices.

Last week, the Federal Reserve raised rates for the fourth time this year, and largely kept to its plans to hike rates next year despite heightened economic risks. The partial US government shutdown has also added to investor worries about the growth outlook. The US Senate has been unable to break an impasse over Trump's demand for more funds for a wall on the border with Mexico, and a senior official said the shutdown could continue until Jan. 3.

Elsewhere, commodity currencies such as the Canadian dollar traded at C\$1.3609 in Asian trade, close to its lowest level in more than a year. The New Zealand dollar was at \$0.6729, up 0.06 percent on the dollar. — Reuters

Emerging nations will take longer to outpace developed economies: CEBR

LONDON: In the race to outpace developed economies, emerging countries such as China, India, and Brazil suffered a setback this year and will outgrow them later than previously expected, the Centre for Economics and Business Research said.

The Cebr consultancy's 2019 World Economic League Table was more downbeat on the global economy than last year's outlook. "For the medium term, we are roughly as optimistic as we were a year ago, but suspect the route to growth will be more bumpy than we had assumed 12 months ago," said the report, which forecast the fortunes of 193 countries to 2033.

China is likely to overtake the United States as the world's No 1 economy in 2032, two years later than previously expected, due to a more lax monetary policy and lower exchange rate, the Cebr said. It expects Brazil to overtake Italy in 2020, not

2018. India would overtake Britain and France, probably in 2019, but possibly 2020, rather than in 2018 as it predicted a year ago. Britain would likely lose its place as then the sixth biggest economy to France next year due to Brexit-related disruption, but should regain that position by 2023.

The Cebr also projected Ireland to be among the fastest growing economies in the euro zone next year, but said Brexit posed a big downside risk to that forecast.

The effects of a trade war between the world's two biggest economies have made themselves felt across global markets this year, and dented world trade growth. The volume of world trade growth is likely to be up 2.99 percent this year, less than two-thirds of the increase in 2017, the Cebr estimates.

The report's forecasts chimed with a deepening sense that optimism about synchronised global growth was overcooked, and that markets got ahead of themselves. A Reuters poll of economists in late October signalled the outlook for global growth in 2019 dimmed for the first time.

Markets have suffered this year as investors fled risky assets, afraid monetary tightening from the world's central banks is removing too much support from the economy as a trade war weighs on growth. "With debt high and many of the structural problems that caused the great recession still in existence, a global recession could be more difficult to resolve than its predecessors," the Cebr said. — Reuters

Business

Libya's 'green gold' olive industry hit by export ban

Workers at olive presses cynical about govt promises

TARHUNA, Libya: Stretching as far as the eye can see, groves of gnarled olive trees in northwest Libya have proudly withstood the country's devastating conflicts.

But the industry of extracting olive oil, often dubbed "green gold", is now under threat after Libyan authorities halted exports in a bid to "protect" local produce. Libya has depended heavily on exports of its ample crude oil reserves since the 2011 fall of longtime ruler Muammar Gadhafi.

The North African nation, mired in bitter internal conflicts after Gadhafi's ouster, has failed to diversify its economy despite the enormous potential of its tourism and fisheries industries. Authorities repeatedly express their desire to develop the promising olive oil industry.

But in Tarhuna, farmers and workers at olive presses view such pledges with skepticism. "We constantly have problems getting spare parts, which are getting expensive because of the collapse of the dinar against the dollar, but also because of the cost of the oil extraction process," said Zahri Al-Bahri, owner of a press in Tarhuna.

On his farm, olives heavy with oil are harvested by hand in order not to damage the trees. Laid out on huge sheets, the ripened crop is transported in flour sacks to the presses where their rich, redolent oil is carefully extracted. "There is enough production in Libya," said Bahri. "I don't understand why we can't export anymore."

Exports of Libya's most emblematic products—namely dates, honey and olive oil—have been halted since 2017. A decree at the time said the suspension would be "temporary" to meet domestic market needs. But no date has yet been set to resume exports.

Justifying the ban, an official in the agriculture ministry said produce had been "exported in bulk at low prices and without adding value for the Libyan economy", leaving domestic demand for oil to be met by expensive imports.

'Nourishing mother'

Frustrated farmers continue to grapple with a dearth of specialised bottling and packaging plants, leaving them unable to climb the value chain.

Although olive trees have grown on the Libyan coast



Libyan children help harvesting olives in the town of Tarhuna (80 km) south of Tripoli.

for centuries, most of the current groves were planted by Italian settlers in the 1930s. "My farm has existed for almost 90 years when Italians occupied Libya and brought the land back to life," Ali Al-Nuri, a farm owner in Tarhuna, told AFP, posing proudly in a grove, Libya, the 11th largest olive producer in the world, grows around 150,000 tons of the crop annually. But only 20 percent is turned into oil, well behind neighbors Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. Nuri emphasizes the industry requires more attention and resources to prosper, beginning with better irrigation in



TRIPOLI: Libyans inspect the production of olive oil in the Libyan town of Tarhuna (80 km) south of Tripoli. —AFP photos

this desert region, as well as state help to ensure quality control and set up bottling factories.

And while cheaper, imported alternatives to olive oil—such as corn oil—have become part of Libyan cuisine, "olive oil remains (the) paramount" choice among householders, Nuri said.

Olive trees, he recalled, had "saved" Libyans during lean periods before the discovery of crude oil in the late 1950s. The olive tree was a "nourishing mother," he maintained.

Among the hundreds of olive trees on Nuri's vast farm, there is a particularly rare variety—white olives.

Originating in Tuscany in northern Italy, the tree—known as *olea leucocarpa*—grows olives that keep their light color even when ripe. But Tarhuna only has five or six specimens, planted by the Italians. In the absence of scalable production, the white olives—sweet, with a low acidic content and a distinct scent—are mixed with their bog-standard cousins to produce oil.

Only two percent of Libya's 1.7 million square kilometers (650,000 square miles) is arable land, in a country famed for vast swathes of desert. It boasts more than eight million olive trees, according to the agriculture ministry. —AFP

Meysan Partners advises shareholders of 4Sale

KUWAIT: Meysan Partners, one of the region's leading law firms, announced yesterday that it acted as the exclusive legal advisor to the shareholders of Falcon Group (the "Group"), with respect to the Raptor Equity Ventures Limited investment in the Group as advised by NBB Capital Partners. Falcon Group has various interests in tech ventures in the region the biggest of which is in Kuwait where it owns the 4Sale and Q8Car online and app based classifieds businesses.

Bader El-Jean, Senior Partner at Meysan Partners commented: "It was a pleasure to work alongside the shareholders of Falcon Group, and their financial advisors at Arqam Capital, in closing this exciting transaction. This transaction marks yet another milestone for Kuwait's technology space, and builds on Meysan's expertise in this sector which began with our representation of the selling shareholders of Talabat.com almost four years ago."



Bader El-Jean

Al-Babtain Group trains Nissan employees on N-Step 3 program

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Nissan vehicles in the State of Kuwait, recently conducted an internal training program designed for technicians to upgrade their skills and familiarize themselves with the latest service techniques. 'NISSAN Service Technician Education Program', or N-STEP, is driven to manage customer's current demands and support overall satisfaction and retention.

With the onset of innovation, advanced mechanisms and electronic systems, technicians are increasingly required to raise the level of excellence with modernized repair work and tasks.



Hence, armed with the aim of imparting systematic training to NISSAN technicians, Al-Babtain Group's Learning & Development center launched an educational program that hones and delivers the highest form of skill set that will allow them to 'Fix it right the first time' at the service shop.

Al-Babtain Group's Learning and Development center is among the few Nissan Service Centers in the GCC certified to execute a training of this quality and caliber. It ran the N-STEP 3 Engine master and Chassis master training followed by the N step 3 Master level training which is considered one of the most progressive exercises presently available. During the course, qualified technical staff were taught updated diagnostic skills including real test drives.

Dr Meyyappan Mahendhran inaugurated the four week program and stressed on the importance of being adequately equipped to handle evolving needs in a fast pace technological world. In total, 28 technical staff were trained during the months of October and



November where in Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company's (AABC), Senior Trainer, Jeevan A Pais delivered the program at the Al-Babtain Technical Training center in Shuwaikh.

In line with its mission to maintain superior quality of work, higher productivity, and increased customer satisfaction, Al-Babtain believes in overcoming

new challenges with state of the art resources and tools. The authorized dealer of Nissan Motor Co Ltd in Kuwait focuses on the strategic growth of its core areas such as its offerings, processes, and people ranging from technical, frontline staff and operational management to sustain the overall performance of the brand and business.



Russia expands economic sanctions on Ukraine

MOSCOW: Russia on Tuesday expanded its economic sanctions on Ukraine, adding more than 250 people and businesses to a blacklist first announced at the start of November. According to a decree by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, 245 individuals and seven companies, mostly in the energy and defence sectors, were sanctioned by Moscow. Relations between Moscow and Kiev have deteriorated since a pro-Western government came to power after the 2014 revolt against a pro-Russian leader. Moscow's annexation of the Crimea and the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine. A total of 567 individuals and 75 Ukrainian companies now face Russian economic sanctions, which put a freeze on any assets they have in Russia.

On his Twitter account, Medvedev said the sanctions were "to defend the interests of the Russian government, businesses and people." Tensions between the two neighbors have worsened since November when Russia's coast-guard captured three Ukrainian naval vessels and their crews off the Crimean coast. Among those sanctioned on Tuesday were Ukrainian defense, energy, insurance and logistics companies as well as Odessa's mayor and other high-ranking Ukraine officials. Since the outbreak of the Ukraine war, Kiev has taken a series of measures against Russian interests, including blocking Russian internet services and social media. The conflict pitting pro-Russian separatists against Ukrainian government forces is estimated to have claimed more than 10,000 lives—one third of them civilian—since it broke out four years ago. —AFP

Tokyo stocks rebound after Christmas slump

HONG KONG: Japanese stocks recovered slightly yesterday after suffering their worst finish in almost two years, but other Asian markets were mixed after President Donald Trump marked Christmas with a renewed attack on the Federal Reserve. Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 index plummeted to a 20-month low on Tuesday on fears over the US economy and a government shutdown. That came after a brutal run on Wall Street that saw US stocks sink for a fourth straight session. As the US stock market looked on track for its worst December since the Great Depression, Trump on Tuesday berated the Fed for its stewardship of the economy, a regular recent complaint against the US central bank.

However, Tokyo closed higher on Wednesday, logging its first positive finish in

six sessions. Chinese stocks closed slightly lower, while Seoul also dropped. Financial markets in Australia, Hong Kong and New Zealand are closed for a public holiday. Markets have been roiled by ongoing uncertainty in the US, with Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin berated for holding a call with the six biggest US banks and then reporting on Twitter that the six CEOs have "ample liquidity" available.

Investors were also unnerved by weekend news reports that Trump had asked about the possibility of firing Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, accounts that Mnuchin said Trump had denied. Analysts said investors had been spooked by Trump's unpredictable behavior. "The markets are in panic mode that the US economy is tanking, expecting the benefit of Trump's fiscal stimulus will falter in 2019," said Stephen Innes, head of Asia-Pacific trade at OANDA.

"After all, it was the US market that was carrying the weight of global risk sentiment on its shoulder. If the US economy turns south, global capital markets are in for a world of hurt." However, Norio Miyagawa, senior econ-



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk past a stock indicator board showing the share price of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

omist at Mizuho Securities, said that despite the recent market rout, there has been no clear sign of a recession in the US. "Our judgement is that the US economy remains solid at the

moment", though investors need pay attention to the possible impact of US trade rows with other countries on financial markets and business outlooks, he said in a note. —AFP

Business

NBK launches ‘NBK Direct Remit’ for cross-border live transactions

Bank uses RippleNet international network

KUWAIT: Upholding its leadership position in Kuwait, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to offer the latest technological solutions in the sector of money transfers and has become the first financial institution in the country to launch the “NBK Direct Remit” for cross-border live payments which uses RippleNet’s enterprise blockchain technology solution to provide customers with a frictionless remittance experience and fast cross-border money transfer solutions.

The “NBK Direct Remit” is a fast remittance service available online 24/7 for all customers. NBK aims to continue launching innovative solutions for the growing needs of customers by adopting RippleNet’s network globally.

Commenting on the new milestone, Dimitrios Kokosioulis, Deputy CEO- Group operations & Technology Said: “This service is a significant achievement as it enables our customers to make money transfers within seconds, easily and at their convenience any-

time of the day. The launch comes as part of our commitment to responding to the needs of our customers where



First bank in Kuwait to start live payments across borders

ever they are around the world, providing them with safe solutions and a global presence in 15 countries.”

Kokosioulis added, “Focused on digital transformation,



Dimitrios Kokosioulis

NBK has previously launched successful and innovative products that serve different segments, including the NBK Tap & Pay, QuickPay,

NBK SelfiePay, cardless cash withdrawal, Biometric Cards, in addition to the continuous enhancements to the NBK Mobile Banking App and other services that make our customer’s banking experience an enjoyable one.”

He also said that the new service will be available for customers to make live payments to Jordan, and soon to other countries. “The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is an important partner

in the region, and we’re excited that they have begun moving live payments across our blockchain network on behalf of their customers,” said Marcus Treacher, SVP of Customer Success, Ripple. “We will continue to work with NBK to connect them to more RippleNet partners so their customers can make quicker, cheaper payments to anywhere in the world.”

NBK is the largest financial institution in Kuwait and enjoys a significant market share in the local commercial banking sector. NBK also maintains the highest credit ratings among banks in the region and from the world’s leading credit rating agencies: Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s and Fitch.

NBK has a wide presence locally and internationally through its branches, subsidiaries and representative offices internationally in China, Geneva, London, Paris, New York and Singapore, as well as regionally in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey and UAE.

Starbucks’ expansion runs out of steam in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG: High operating costs and tight customer budgets have left US coffee giant Starbucks needing a caffeine hit after it abandoned ambitious expansion plans in South Africa—seen as a foothold for the continent. Starbucks looked set to take the country by storm when the opening of its first store in the Rosebank district of Johannesburg in April 2016 attracted big crowds who queued for hours to taste their famous coffee and enjoy the cafe experience.

“We thought they were going to run out of coffee before we could get a chance to taste it,” Irshaan Mohammed, who is still a loyal customer at the flagship store, told AFP.

“We couldn’t believe how many people had actually come here.”

Mohammed, 23, said he loved “choosing ingredients and hanging out” at Starbucks, but “when it comes to my bill I always worry that I am paying too much.”

Local licensee Taste Holdings has opened 12 Starbucks cafes across Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban. It had hoped to have 45 stores open by 2020 — with a peak target of 150 countrywide.

But further openings have now been ruled out as the company struggles to control operational costs and debt. Taste last month announced it would “pause the expansion”, saying “whilst the Starbucks’ store network is profitable (before debt interest and tax), it is not producing the required return on the store investments.”

In its latest financial report, Taste said its food divisions operating costs increased by seven percent in the six months to August, “largely as a result of the operating costs of Starbucks doubling since the comparative period due to the addition of eight stores”.

A tough challenge

Michael Trehene, market analyst at Vestact, told AFP that the Starbucks name was strong in South Africa but “the current model is simple too expensive to operate.”

It costs an estimated \$350,000 to \$550,000 to open each new store. There is no Starbucks in the country’s fashionable tourist hub of Cape Town, despite Taste announcing plans to open there as far back as November 2017. “Places like Cape Town are affluent enough to sustain a few stores... (but) the coffee is expensive, which makes it unaffordable for a large part of our population,” Trehene added.

Another market watcher, Casparus Treunicht, an equity analyst at Gryphon asset managers, said Starbucks was a tough challenge to make profitable in South Africa.



JOHANNESBURG: In this file photo, employees of American coffee company and coffeehouse chain Starbucks coffee prepare coffee on the eve of the official opening of the first Starbucks shop in South Africa and Sub Saharian Africa in Johannesburg. — AFP

“Sure, it is a big brand, but what does it cost to give that product to your consumer?” he said. “You have to import all your ingredients and materials.”

The company sources coffee from nine countries in Africa along with small-batch reserve coffees from around the world. “For Starbucks to really make a profit they have to bring the costs down significantly but at the same time you need scale and selling more units,” said Treunicht.

But cost-cutting is tricky at Starbucks where prime store locations, branded products and fast wi-fi are internationally standardized—as well as having your name scribbled on your takeaway cup.

The South African coffee market is also competitive with the likes of Bean There, Father Coffee and many independent outfits targeting middle-class consumers in cities. A small cup of Starbucks flat white costs 30 rand (\$2), while a similar order at Father coffee costs 22 rand and 26 rand at the Vida e Caffè chain.

Weak economy

South Africa’s middle-class has been under pressure

from slow economic growth, while the country is one of the most economically unequal in the world with 27 percent of the population jobless.

Starbucks, which operates more than 22,000 cafes worldwide, has a presence in only two other African countries—Egypt and Morocco. Taste’s entire food division, which includes brands like Domino’s Pizza, has failed to make profit since 2015. It had to be refinanced by shareholders last February to the tune of \$27 million to pay off its debt.

It has also secured a \$14 million loan from its now majority shareholder, the Riskowitz Value Fund, and may seek fresh refinancing in the near future.

But Taste is optimistic and says that after securing long-term funding it hopes to reconsider its Starbucks plans. Now they need to convince consumers.

“I only come here when me and my mom meet once a month, she loves it,” said 25-year-old administration clerk Lerato Sedibeng. “I personally can’t afford this coffee on my budget.” — AFP

Ooredoo partners with AeroMobile for inflight roaming

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced its partnership with AeroMobile, a subsidiary of Panasonic Avionics, which is a mobile network operator for the aviation industry based in the United Kingdom and provides technology and services that allow the safe use of passengers’ own mobile phones while inflight. AeroMobile’s inflight

mobile phone service is now available as part of Ooredoo Passport’s roaming packages. As a result, Ooredoo customers will now be able to surf the internet, check emails and stay social at the same cost as all other Passport destinations when flying on any airline and aircraft connected by AeroMobile’s network.

The Ooredoo Passport packages give customers options to choose from Ooredoo Passport Weekly for KD 10 per week with 100 minutes and 1GB, Ooredoo Passport Weekly with unlimited roaming internet for KD 12 per week, and Ooredoo Monthly Unlimited for KD 39 per month with unlimited roaming internet to keep up with the customers’ mode of usage for mobile internet, as it is the main tool for sharing videos, pictures and audio clips with loved ones on various social media channels such as Instagram and Snapchat. Ooredoo customers will now have full access to unlimited inflight data to surf the internet, check emails, and stay social during the flight. It is worth mentioning that AeroMobile inflight mobile services are available on more than 22 airlines worldwide including Kuwait Airways, Lufthansa, Turkish Airlines, Virgin Atlantic, and Cathay Pacific.

Mijbil Al-Ayoub, Corporate Communications Senior Director at Ooredoo Kuwait said: “This innovative partnership with AeroMobile means we are the first Operator in Kuwait to offer customers unlimited data roaming while inflight, as part of our Passport roaming package.” Kevin Rogers, CEO of AeroMobile, says: “We’re extremely excited to sign this new roaming deal with one of the Middle East’s leading Operators. It shows the continued commitment to inflight connectivity from both the airline and telco industries.”



Mijbil Al-Ayoub

SPECIAL REPORT

Oil output goes AWOL in Venezuela as soldiers run PDVSA

CARACAS: Major General Manuel Quevedo joined his wife, a Catholic priest and a gathering of oil workers in prayer in a conference room at the headquarters of Petroleos de Venezuela SA, or PDVSA.

The career military officer, who for the past year has been boss at the troubled state-owned oil company, was at no ordinary mass. The gathering, rather, was a ceremony at which he and other senior oil ministry officials asked God to boost oil output.

“This place of peace and spirituality,” read a release by the Oil Ministry that was later scrubbed from its web site, “was the site of prayer by workers for the recovery of production of the industry.”

President Nicolas Maduro turned heads in November 2017 when he named a National Guard general with no oil experience to lead PDVSA. Quevedo’s actions since have raised even more doubts that he and the other military brass now running the company have a viable plan to rescue it from crushing debt, an exodus of workers and withering production now at its lowest in almost seven decades.

Aside from beseeching heaven, Quevedo in recent months has enacted a series of controversial measures that oil industry experts, PDVSA employees and contractors, and even everyday citizens say are pushing the once-profitable and respected company toward ruin. Soldiers with AK-47s, under orders to prevent cheating on manifests, now board tankers to accompany cargo inspectors, rattling foreign captains and crews.

Workers who make mistakes operating increasingly dilapidated PDVSA equipment now face the risk of arrest and charges of sabotage or corruption. Military chiefs, moonlighting in the private sector, are elbowing

past other contractors for lucrative service and supply business with PDVSA. In a little-noted reversal of the Socialist government’s two-decade drive to nationalize the industry, the lack of expertise among military managers is leading PDVSA to hire outsiders to keep afloat even basic operations, like drilling and pumping oil. To the dismay of many familiar with Venezuela’s oil industry, some of the contracts are going to small, little-known firms with no experience in the sector.

Combined, industry veterans say, the steps leave Venezuela’s most important company — which accounts for over 90 percent of export revenue — with even fewer means to rebuild the nation’s coffers, pay its many creditors and regain self-sufficiency as an oil producer. “What we are witnessing is a policy of destroying the oil industry,” said Jose Bodas, general secretary of the Oil Workers Federation, a national labor union. “The military officials don’t listen to workers. They want to give orders, but they don’t understand this complicated work.”

Maduro defends the military managers, arguing they are more in synch with his Socialist worldview than capitalist industry professionals who exploit the country for personal profit. “I want a Socialist PDVSA,” the president told allied legislators earlier this year. “An ethical, sovereign and productive PDVSA. We must break this model of the rentier oil company.”

Quevedo, who holds the title of oil minister as well as president of PDVSA, didn’t respond to requests for comment for this story. Neither Venezuela’s Information Ministry, responsible for communications for the government and senior officials, nor PDVSA’s press office returned phone calls or emails from Reuters.

PDVSA and the Oil Ministry disclose scant information about Quevedo, who is 51, according to his social security registration. He seldom makes public speeches. But at an industry event in Vienna last June, Quevedo told journalists PDVSA is aware of its challenges and hoped within months to make up for plummeting output.

“We hope by year end to recover the lost production,” he said in a forecast that has been missed. “We have the capacity and we have summoned the strength of the workers.” Nearly 20 years after the late Hugo Chavez launched his “Bolivarian revolution,” much of Venezuela is in tatters. Food and medicines are scarce, hyperinflation has gutted purchasing power for increasingly desperate

citizens and roughly three million Venezuelans have fled the country in search of a better life. At PDVSA, managers long sought to keep the company running, even if the economic meltdown and falling oil prices meant they had fewer resources to invest in exploration, growth and basic maintenance. Despite their efforts, decay led to dwindling production, deteriorating facilities and a progressive loss of skilled workers. Now, critics say, military officials atop PDVSA have put aside any pretense of running it like a proper business, doing little to stem the fall in production or improve the company’s financial, operational and staffing problems.

A purge

No matter the dysfunction, PDVSA remains a rare and crucial source of foreign currency in the enfeebled Andean country. For Maduro, who became president after Chavez died in 2013, handing the company over to the military is seen by many as a calculated move to buy loyalty from officers.

“No one will be able to remove the military from PDVSA now,” said Rafael Ramirez, a former oil minister. Ramirez ran the company for a decade under Chavez before clashing with Maduro, who accuses him and many other former executives of corruption. “PDVSA is a bar-rack.” PDVSA is struggling to fulfill supply contracts with buyers, including major creditors from China and Russia who have already advanced billions of dollars in payments in exchange for oil. Last month, the head of Rosneft, the Russian oil company, flew to Venezuela and complained to Maduro about the delays, Reuters reported.

Demand remains healthy for Venezuelan oil. Operational problems under Quevedo, however, have caused production to drop 20 percent to 1.46 million barrels per day, according to the latest figures Caracas reported to OPEC, the oil cartel, of which it is a member.

Quevedo in January will assume OPEC’s rotating presidency for one year. PDVSA’s financial problems are likely to demand much of his attention.

The gross value of PDVSA’s oil exports is expected to fall to \$20.9 billion this year compared with \$24.9 billion last year, according to a calculation provided to Reuters by the International Energy Center at IESA, a Venezuelan business school. Exports a decade ago were over four times as much, reaching \$89 billion,

according to PDVSA’s accounts for 2008. PDVSA didn’t publish a 2017 report and hasn’t released financial results in 2018.

Little has been publicly disclosed by PDVSA or Maduro’s government about the military transformation within its ranks. A Reuters examination based on confidential PDVSA documents — as well as interviews with dozens of current and former employees, shippers, traders, foreign oil executives and others who do business with the company — shows how Quevedo’s National Guard is seeping into every facet of its operations. The documents include employment records, agreements with contractors and internal staff memos.

Quevedo has appointed more than 100 aides and advisors from the military and from a previous post as a government minister to senior positions, according to a person familiar with PDVSA’s human resource records.

At its shabby concrete Caracas headquarters, once brimming with suited executives, military officers are now in charge of operations. Workers say offices in Quevedo’s penthouse sanctum remain luxurious. But in the run-down halls below, socialist propaganda, including portraits of Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara, is among the scant decor left on the walls.

The shift toward military management was the result of a purge of PDVSA leadership.

Allegations of corruption have been rife across the Venezuelan government in recent years; Maduro himself is the target of US sanctions for graft and human rights violations, which he denies.

In 2017, the president leveled his own accusations against PDVSA, describing it as a den of “thieves.” He accused many former executives of skimming from contracts and laundering money and argued that their graft worsened the country’s crisis.

He ordered the arrest of dozens of top managers, including PDVSA’s two previous presidents, chemist Nelson Martinez and engineer Eulogio Del Pino. Martinez died at a military hospital earlier this month, suffering a heart attack while undergoing kidney dialysis, two people familiar with the circumstances said.

Del Pino remains detained, awaiting trial. Reuters was unable to reach his lawyers for comment. A person familiar with Del Pino’s defense said he has yet, after a year in jail, to have an initial court hearing. — Reuters

Business

The new Mercedes-Benz CLS

The 3rd generation; striking design and a style icon



KUWAIT: The new CLS pioneers the new design idiom of Mercedes-Benz, which is recognizable by its clear contours and reduced lines. The four-door coupe launched in the GCC in November with the CLS 350 and CLS 53 4MATIC+. The CLS 450 4MATIC will follow in February 2019. In the Levant, the CLS 350, CLS 350 4MATIC and CLS 53 4MATIC+ launched in November 2018, followed by the CLS 450 4MATIC in December 2018.

Its character is marked by a defined grille that widens towards the base and a forward-slanting front section and other features include wide, low-set headlamps and two-section tail lights. The design is also a reflection of the timeless aura of the first CLS, which founded a new segment of the brand and quickly became a design icon. All CLS models are equipped with new in-line six-cylinder and in-line four-cylinder engines. Like its predecessors, the new CLS exudes self-assured sportiness in exemplary style making it a highly emotive vehicle offering impressive long-distance and acoustic comfort coupled with thrilling, unrivalled technology.

In 2003, Mercedes-Benz created a new vehicle segment with the CLS which for the first time combined the elegance and dynamism of a coupe, with the comfort and functionality of a sedan. With the third generation of the CLS, Mercedes-Benz is now building more strongly than ever on the aura and unique character of this trendsetting model. The new model has pure CLS genes with its arching waistline, flat side window lines and low greenhouse. At the same time, it is another example of the logical evolution of the Sensual Purity design idiom: sharp edges and lines have been significantly reduced. It blends seamlessly into the current Mercedes-Benz coupE family with numerous design features. Its cd value of 0.26 is positive proof of its outstanding aerodynamics.

The AIR BODY CONTROL suspension, ENERGIZING comfort controls and the very latest infotainment generation, smartphone integration and wireless charging accentuate absolute comfort in the car. The touchpad in the center console gives haptic and acoustic feedback when operating the numerous convenience functions and settings.

Exterior: Self-assured sportiness in the style of Mercedes-Benz coupes

"The new CLS is a design icon as the archetype of the four-door coupe. In line with our design philosophy of sensual purity, we have reduced its DNA in an extremely puristic way and at the same time emotionally charged it with elegant beauty", says Gorden Wagener, Chief Design Officer Daimler AG.

Striking front-end features include the diamond grille typical of Mercedes-Benz coupes, with a single louvre, and the silhouette of the radiator grille widens towards the base, resembling the contours of the grille on the

Mercedes-AMG GT. The side design is characterized by the high, arching waistline and the sporty, low greenhouse with frameless side windows. The forward-slanting front end is reminiscent of a shark's nose, and appears longer thanks to the fully inset bonnet. The contours follow the design philosophy of sensual purity: lines and edges are greatly reduced, and the surfaces are generously arched.

Also typical of the CLS is the muscular rear shoulder line which blends smoothly into the flat rear end. It also has two-section tail lights, reflectors positioned in the rear bumper, location of the registration plate in the bumper and the Mercedes-Benz star at the center of the boot lid. Depending on specification, this houses an extendable camera.

Like the headlamps, the LED tail lights with edgelight backlighting have a crystalline appearance and create a three-dimensional effect. Their low positioning accentuates the width of the vehicle.

Interior consistent color scheme

The luxurious interior of the CLS Coupe impresses with its clear basic lines, and echoes the sensual, flowing contours of the exterior. The high-grade choice of materials shows a very high level of finish.

The sporty, width-accentuated cockpit and color combination creates an impression of particularly generous spaciousness. For a flowing overall impression, the wave-like course of the interior design extends from the front to the rear doors, opening up at the B-pillars. As a new highlight of the ambience lighting, the illuminated air vents are reminiscent of jet aircraft turbines. The sporty impression is also reinforced by the hand-finished appearance of the seats. A high-resolution Widescreen cockpit is available with two 12.3-inch displays arranged beneath a shared, continuous glass cover (standard in the GCC and optional in the Levant). The center console with open-pored or high-gloss wood appears to be free-floating thanks to its surface trim.

In the fully digital cockpit, the driver is able to feely configure the information content according to need and the driving situation. Three different styles can be selected depending on preference, mood or to suit the interior appointments. The Classic and Sport styles have a basic structure with two tubes, while the Progressive style surprises and polarizes with a structure having a central, tube-shaped instrument.

The ambience lighting is individually adjustable in 64 colors, and also includes the air vents. When the temperature setting of the air conditioning system is changed, it briefly changes color to show whether the temperature is being made warmer (red) or cooler (blue).



The seats were designed exclusively for this model series. Depending on the interior, they feature high-quality piping or transverse seams. The outer seats in the rear have the same appearance as the front seats, creating a sporty single-seat impression, although the CLS coupE is in fact a five-seater for

the first time. When required, the backrests can be folded down in a 40/20/40 ratio, expanding the generous 520-litre luggage compartment.

Wellness on long-distance journeys

ENERGIZING comfort control (optional) links various comfort systems in the vehicle. It systematically uses the functions of the climate control system (including fragrance) and the seats (heater, ventilation, massage), the surface and steering wheel heating as well as lighting and musical atmospheres, and allows a specific wellness set-up tailored to the mood and need of the customer. As a result, well-being and performance levels are enhanced.

These six programs can be selected:

- Freshness
- Warmth
- Vitality
- Joy
- Comfort
- Training (three training modes - muscle relaxation, muscle activation and balance - each with several exercises).

Intelligent Drive: Technology from the S-Class

The new CLS generation has many things in common with the new S-Class, the automotive flagship of the entire industry. Similar to the S-Class, the CLS is equipped with the latest generation of driving assistance systems, including the optional Driving Assistance Package.

The optional Driving Assistance Package consists of Active Distance Control DISTRONIC, Active Steering Assist, Active Speed Limit Assist, Active Brake Assist with cross-traffic function, Evasive Steering Assist, Active Blind Spot Assist, Active Lane Keeping Assist and PRE-SAFE(r) PLUS. Active Distance Control DISTRONIC and Active Steering Assist now provide even more comfortable support for the driver to keep a safe distance and steer and the speed is now adjusted automatically ahead of bends or junctions. The Active Lane Change Assist has also been significantly improved (country-specific differences are possible for individual functions). In addition, the Driving Assistance Plus package includes PRE-SAFE(r) Impulse Side which can prepare the front occupants for a side impact by giving them a sideways impulse, reducing the risk of injury.

Thanks to improved camera and radar systems, the new CLS has an even better view of the surrounding traffic and

for the first time, it also makes use of map and navigation data to calculate driving behavior.

The "Assistance Graphics" menu of the instrument cluster shows the driver at a glance which assistance functions have been selected, and to what situations the systems are currently responding. Unmistakable icons provide the driver with information on-screen as well as in the head-up display. All functions are now controlled from the steering wheel.

The ULTRA RANGE high beam of the MULTIBEAM LED headlamps (standard in the GCC and optional in the Levant) produces the maximum light intensity permitted by law, which results in the brightness of the main beam headlamps remaining above the reference value of 1 lux over a distance of more than 650 meters.

Suspension: There is a choice of three variants.

The new CLS has a four-link front suspension and a five-link rear suspension as well as a dynamically set-up steel comfort suspension is standard equipment. The optionally available DYNAMIC BODY CONTROL suspension has a sporty basic setup and includes continuously adjustable damping at the front and rear axle, the selectable driving modes are Comfort, Sport and Sport+. Also available on request is the AIR BODY CONTROL air suspension with an improved, adjustable and adaptive damping system. The driver is able to choose vehicle characteristics from comfortable to sporty using the driving mode switch.

New range of engines: With EQ Boost and 48 volt onboard electrical system

The third generation of the Mercedes-Benz CLS is powered by completely new engines, initially in-line four and six-cylinder petrol units. Another key characteristic of the four-door coupe is the extensive range of 4MATIC models. The new, systematically electrified in-line six-cylinder with EQ Boost (integrated starter/generator) and a 48 volt onboard electrical system powers the CLS 450 4MATIC. Its performance data: 270 kW/367 hp and 500 Nm plus a further 250 Nm of torque and 16 kW/22 hp available via EQ Boost over short periods. The integrated electric motor known as EQ Boost assists the combustion engine e.g. when accelerating, makes driving without the combustion engine possible ("sailing") and supplies the battery with power by means of high-efficiency recuperation. By doing so it makes fuel savings possible that were previously the exclusive domain of high-voltage hybrid technology. All in all, the new in-line six-cylinder engine delivers the performance of an eight-cylinder engine with significantly lower consumption.

Mutawa Alkazi Company gives buyers opportunity to win 2018 GS8

KUWAIT: With 2018 coming to an end, the Mutawa Alkazi Company is rewarding its customers by giving them the opportunity to enter a draw on the GS8 2019 or winning valuable prizes including iPhone devices, comprehensive gold insurance and 5 years free maintenance. The company announced to the press that the new campaign which started on December 15th, 2018 runs until March 15th, 2019.

The company grants all GAC customers in Kuwait with an 11 year warranty, 3 years third party insurance, thermal shading and financing facilities in cooperation with several banks and finance companies in the local market. These elements contribute to enhancing the presence of GAC Motor in Kuwait.

GAC Motor cars are manufactured by a team of highly experienced and capable engineers in the automotive sector, that are subject to many trials around the world in order to ensure that they are adapted to all climatic conditions throughout the year.

Furthermore, GAC Motor has recently won the JD Power Quality Award for the sixth consecutive year. This achievement reflects the high quality that the Chinese brand has become. GAC Motor has maintained its strength and performance by providing quality products in compliance with the highest standards of the automotive industry. The elements of luxury, safety, durability, and high performance fit harmoniously to create the perfect car, and can only be experienced when driving and getting a closer look in person. Mutawa Alkazi strives to constantly provide high quality in order to reciprocate customers trust and satisfaction. With a history of over 60 years, the company has confirmed that it is always ready to greet customers and provide them with the best service and offers at all times.

GS4 - Advanced Technologies

The GS4 2019 is characterized by the best performance achieved due its powerful engine with advanced technology, which is produced under strict quality control systems based on the strategy of GAC Motors Group, which puts consumers and customers at the top on its list of priorities.

The vehicle is designed for consumers looking for

an advanced driving experience, with strong procedures to ensure a distinctive driving with the most advanced and efficient power system in the world.

The car is characterized by a sophisticated and secure system of self-locking and self-brakes in emergency situations, multi-level strategies and a warm-out warning system, which automatically detects the vehicle's deviation from the path through sound warning.

When the vehicle exceeds 30 km / h, the front impact system is activated automatically, depending on the different severity levels, provided with a speed-stabilizer system to maintain a safe distance between the vehicles at all times.

The vehicle also has a strong feature, a new design, remote operation and monitoring experience, intelligent security service, and a new and unique rescue and emergency service, providing high-speed remote operation that allows one-button car control.

The GS4 meets all needs. Its luxurious cabin comes with fine Napa leather seats, cooling and heating features, a multifunctional screen, three-dimensional sound & navigation system, and a multi-functional steering wheel among other great technological features that cater to the driver's needs. With its sporty appearance, strong performance, spacious and comfortable cabin, and splendid modern design it has seized the admiration and appraisal of all with its various technological merits and power.

GS8 - A luxury car

The design of the new GAC Motor GS8 2019 three-piece headrest is butterfly-shaped giving a great sense of head cover, effectively reducing fatigue, and natural Napa chairs with specific and exclusive lining technology to show elegance, distinctive refinement, brilliance and luxury.

The GS8 is equipped with intelligent identification technology with welcoming lights, automatic driver identification, and multiple functions such as automatic lighting, remote control with welcoming lights and various functions such as automatic lighting, wireless mobile charging with an electro-magnetic charging function. The GS8 can quickly interconnect with all smart phones (Apple and Android). The vehicle also possesses as 10-inch full color LCD central control screen enabling smooth switch of vehicle information. GAC Motor's GS8 reflects world-class luxury and robustness in the world market with a unique style, with powerful measures to ensure superior driving with the most advanced and efficient power system in the world.

GA8 - luxury & comfort

GAC Motor is always keen on the comfort of its

users, the design of GA8 car seats came with many features and specifications that make it more than a car, it is a strategic choice for those looking for a car that combines strength, comfort and luxury.

The GA8 expresses power as a high-end commercial car that has reached the peak with a world-class luxury and a 200 horsepower turbo motor and 2000 CC engine.

The GA8 is considered the car of businessmen and those who search for comfort and luxury at one go. Due to a powerful launch, GAC Motor keeps up with the highest quality standards. The car has a fine and luxurious appearance, with an independent 4-wheel suspension system with censored steering which can effectively isolate vibrations from the road. In addition to a top engineered chassis platform technology, giving the driver a first class comfortable driving experience.

The power system in the GA8 is considered the most advanced and sufficient worldwide. Ensuring powerful energy, low fuel consumption, high safety and quality. Furthermore, its 6-speed transmission achieves smoothness in transition of gears making the energy group system ideal

The GA8 provides an ample luxurious area. Made with the finest natural Nappa leather. Its interior is made of high quality and environment-friendly materials. It also has a power curtain of the rear window operated by one touch to efficiently prevent UV rays from entering, to maintain an ideal temperature inside the vehicle. Moreover, it has a special refrigerator with an independent high quality compressor, and it lies in the rear central hand cushion. The GA8 is sure to grant one comfort, elegance, and a first class driving experience.

GS7 - The best performance

The GS7 is a mid-size 4x4 SUV filled with options and features with an embodiment of redefined prestige and aesthetic design. The GS7 is a 5-seater with a wide body structure making it spacious and comfortable for all passengers. Similar to the GS8, it has the feature of smart wireless charging for smartphones, and a smart 7 inch color LCD central control screen. The central control screen displays real-time images of blind spots on the rear side while lane changing and doubling during high speed driving.

GAC has maintained its strength and performance by providing quality products in compliance with the highest standards of the automotive industry. As they are committed to ensure the safety of drivers and passengers. Furthermore, Mutawa Alkazi invites all to visit the showrooms in Tilal and Al Rai to seize the opportunity in owning their dream car for the best deals.



Health

Thailand's farmers giddy over new medical marijuana law

The Asian first could promise an economic bonanza

BANGKOK: Thai farmers welcomed a new law allowing cultivation and use of marijuana for medical purposes yesterday, in an Asian first that promises an economic bonanza but also fears that foreign companies could reap the rewards. Thailand's National Assembly passed a bill Tuesday legalizing the use of marijuana and kratom—a traditional herb—for research and medical use.

The move is a significant step for a region that levies harsh sentences for drug violations. It would also allow for the production, import and export of marijuana. The bill, which still outlaws recreational use and has strict limits on the amount an individual can carry, requires royal assent to come into law, said National Assembly member Jet Sirathronont.

The National Farmers Council of Thailand praised the law as providing a "new economic crop" to help farmers diversify their production. "I expect Thailand can make 100 billion

baht a year (US\$3.07 billion) from growing cannabis and selling the raw material and cannabis oil," chairman Prapat Panyachatrak told AFP. But some fear foreign companies and pharmaceutical giants are in pole position to scoop up valuable patents to produce the medical cannabis and extracts.

Those holding the patents could stop Thai universities and government agencies from conducting research, warned Witoon Liamchamroon, director of BioThai, a network of agricultural activists, farmers and academics.

The Commerce Ministry had promised to "revoke" the petitions of foreign companies, he said, "but so far, we checked and there is no revocation." Long time cannabis activist Buntoon Niyamabhra called on the government to cancel patent applications from foreign multinationals.

"Otherwise Thai people will not get any benefits... as the patent law is retroactive once

the new law takes effect," he told AFP. Thailand has a long history with cannabis. Marijuana was once classified as a traditional herb before it was re-categorized as a narcotic in the 1970s—which prohibited its production, consumption, sale and possession. It remains readily available despite high penalties for those caught smoking it.

But Buntoon, who founded the Network of Cannabis Users in Thailand in 2013, said marijuana was once used in more than 100 formulas of Thai traditional medicine. "I have used cannabis for more than 50 years," he told AFP. "Cigarettes and whisky are more harmful to your health." Several nations have embraced the use of medicinal cannabis, including Canada, Australia, Israel, and more than half the states in the US.

US-based Grand View Research has estimated the global market for medical marijuana could reach \$55.8 billion by 2025. — AFP



Madrid bans 'oldest, most polluting' vehicles

MADRID: Madrid yesterday temporarily banned the oldest, most polluting vehicles from driving its streets, two weeks after new driving restrictions were introduced to fight air pollution in the centre of the Spanish capital.

The latest bid to reduce emissions comes as the city battles acutely high pollution levels, partly due to little wind.

Under the ban, gas vehicles made before 2000 and diesel vehicles manufactured before 2006 were prohibited from the city center and surrounding M-30 ring road until today day-time, the city hall said. Cars meeting these criteria account for 17 percent of Madrid's vehicles. It is the first time that the city's authorities have activated stage two of its new anti-pollution protocol which came into effect in October.

In addition to this protocol, Madrid's left-wing city hall last month launched a separate traffic restriction scheme in the historic city center, which aims to reduce gas emissions by 40 percent. The move by Madrid follows other European cities like London, Stockholm and Milan that have taken steps to restrict traffic in



SKOPJE: A man walks over a bridge through dense fog and smog in Skopje. Skopje was named Europe's most polluted capital in 2018 by the World Health Organization, partly because two-thirds of households use firewood as their primary source of heating. —AFP

their centers — although they have charged drivers to enter. In the Spanish capital, on the other hand, drivers of the oldest and most polluting vehicles have been banned from accessing the center altogether and will face fines in the future if they do so. With 3.2 million residents and some 1.8 million cars, Madrid often suffers from high pollution levels. Located on a high plateau where atmospheric conditions rou-

tinely trap dirty air close to the ground level when there is little wind, Madrid's smog is such a fixture that it has been given a nickname — "la boina" or "the beret".

The city has attempted a number of initiatives in recent years, including in December 2016 when half of most private cars were ordered off the roads to fight a particularly bad bout of pollution. — AFP

Delhi residents spend Christmas indoors amid smog emergency

NEW DELHI: Many Delhi residents were forced to spend Christmas indoors this year as air quality remained at "severe to emergency" levels for a fourth day, in the Indian capital's worst smog crisis this year. Senior officials predicted the severe pollution would last another three days due to unusually stagnant and cold air. They issued a three-day emergency response on Monday that included closing area factories and banning construction works.

"We are preferring to stay at home due to pollution despite Christmas celebrations and a public holiday," said Amit Azad, a financial consultant. He bought an air purifier this week after developing a cough because of the smog.

A Delhi government official blamed the pollution for lighter-than-usual traffic on already holiday-thinned streets, while a Delhi airport official said some domes-

tic and international flights were delayed for up to two hours due to poor visibility. Delhi's air quality index, which measures the concentration of poisonous particulate matter, averaged 420 on Tuesday morning, slightly better than 449-450 the previous two days — the worst this year — data from the government's Central Pollution Control Board showed. A reading above 100 is considered unhealthy.

Delhi is ranked among the world's worst cities in air quality, after years of breakneck growth in auto sales and coal-fired power generation. Environmentalists say the federal and city governments, while focusing on temporary responses, are side-stepping more effective, long-term measures that would hit at the sources of pollution and promote cleaner fuels.

"There is a lack of political will to take required measures on a sustained basis to contain pollution levels," said Sunil Dahiya, a senior campaigner with Greenpeace India. He called for higher car parking fees and reduced dependence on coal-fired power plants.

Dahiya also said the government should immediately close down schools and urge people to curtail outdoor activities given the serious health effects of the current pollution levels. — Reuters

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What's On

LOYAC concludes its Bridgework Program sponsored by KIB



LOYAC recently concluded its Bridgeworks program held within its training program for the second year and sponsored by KIB. The program designed for age category 16-27 started at the beginning of September till mid December and was held at the Marina Hotel. In this regard, LOYAC board member, Fetouh Al-Dalali hailed

KIB's sponsorship of the program and stressed that KIB fully believes in investing in youth potentials. On his part, KIB's corporate communication manager, Nawaf Najia said that 170 trainees took part in the program and stressed that KIB's sponsorship comes within its social responsibility activities.



Greetings



Happy birthday to Shaurya, best wishes from father, mother, relatives, and friends.

DWC, NCCAL discuss cultural programs for 2019

In the presence of the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic Samargiul Adamkulova and second secretary of the embassy of Kyrgyz

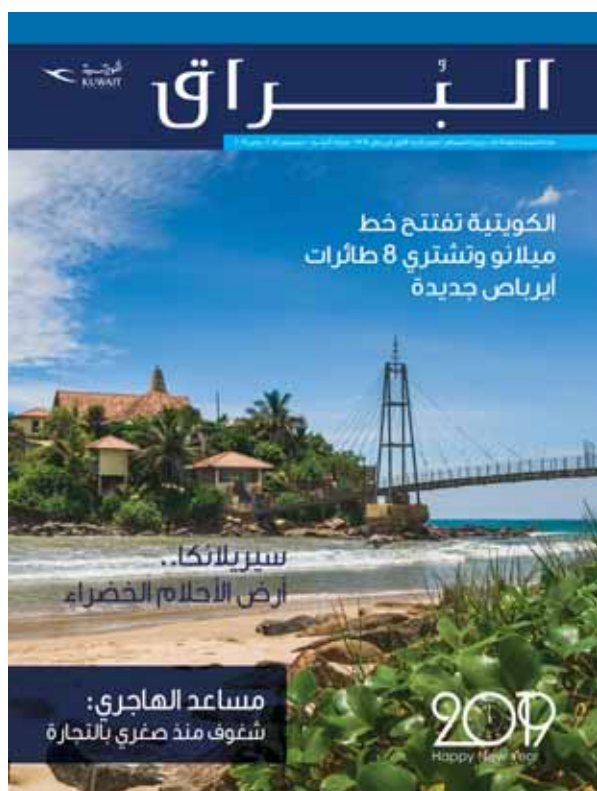
Republic Anara Musuralieva along with Narjis Alshati Counselor of the Diplomatic Women's Committee (DWC) a meeting was held with the Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) Ali Al-Yawha, to discuss and present some proposals for activities and cultural programs for the cultural season of the year 2019, including national celebrations of the state of Kuwait, in addition to the establishment of some specialized workshops throughout the year, folklore performances and lectures on the history of Kuwait through the Silk Road.

Assistant Foreign Minister for the protocol Affairs-Counselor of the DWC Majda Alzhr, Spouse of Algerian Ambassador Leila Abdaoui, Spouse of Honduras Ambassador Mirely Valencia, Fouzia Abdul Basit and Melissa Valencia were among those present at the meeting. The secretary-general was impressed by the proposal submitted by the committee, which includes many ideas of distinct cultural vitality and praised the role of the committee in serving the diplomatic women in Kuwait, headed by female ambassadors from some missions who work in order to highlight the role of their culture and community.



KAC publishes new issue of Al-Boraq magazine

Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) recently published its new issue of Al-Boraq magazine (December 2018-January 2019). In this regard, KAC's PR and media manager and the magazine's editor in chief, Fayeze Al-Enezi said that the new issue includes various tourism-related topics in addition to an interview with Kuwaiti businessman, Musaed Al-Hajri and former KAC pilot Soud Al-Hazza. Al-Enezi added that the new issue highlights KAC's latest news, planes, new destinations, its regional and international reach in addition to a tour at Jaber Al-Ahmed Cultural Center and the activities it will present in the near future. Notably, Al-Boraq was first issued in January 1964 and is available on all KAC flights.



ICSK Junior celebrate Christmas

With warmth and love blooming in each heart, ICSK Junior celebrated Christmas with pomp and glory. On December 23, 2018 the campus witnessed a colossal celebration staged for its students and teachers. It's the time when family and friends come together and celebrate this festival with immense enthusiasm. Children were dressed in festive colours for the occasion. The entire school was beautifully decked up with colourful decorations of Christmas.

The program commenced with the melodious carols and the enactment of the nativity scene which was interspersed with fun filled dance performances staged by the cute little ones dressed up as angels. Much to the delight of the audience, Santa appeared with a big bag full of toys and sweets. The program emphasized on the real meaning of Christmas, a season of great joy, love and peace.

The special assembly ended with a message by the Principal Sherly Dennis in which she stated that apart from fun and frolic, Christmas brings messages of love, peace and shining hope for humanity. She also acknowledged the hard work and efforts made by the students under the guidance of the teachers to portray the essence of Christmas with simplicity, love and the joy of giving.



Celebrate, welcome 2019 at Marina Hotel

From a New Year's Eve reception and dinner to a rejuvenating accommodation package, Marina Hotel Kuwait is offering unique experiences for guests to welcome 2019. When guests choose to ring in the New Year at Marina Hotel, they will have more to celebrate than the passing of another year. The Hotel offers the perfect venue for New Year's Eve and New Year celebratory fun with your family, friends and loved ones under the twinkling lights and the cool breeze of the Arabian coast.

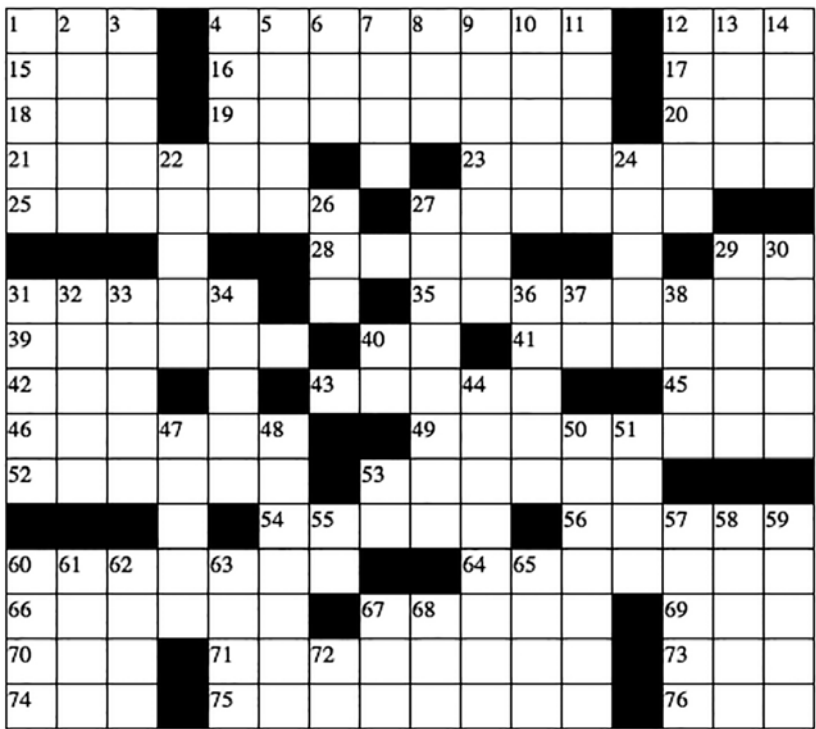
Both restaurants at the hotel, Six Palms and Atlantis will be featuring seasonal décor, cotillion and musical countdown to make sure you have a charming never-ending night with your family and friends. At Marina Hotel, you can never go wrong in your choice. The specially prepared buffet menus this season has something for everyone and features a good selection of holiday specialties apart from host of other delicious and mouth-watering choices.

To make this night even more exciting, the hotel invites its guests to spend the night with their loved ones with a fascinating New Year room package of one-night stay inclusive of buffet breakfast and buffet dinner at the Six Palms restaurant or Atlantis restaurant for two persons.

Delight yourself in a lavish experience and visit Marina Hotel Kuwait for the fun and festivities.



CROSSWORD 2095



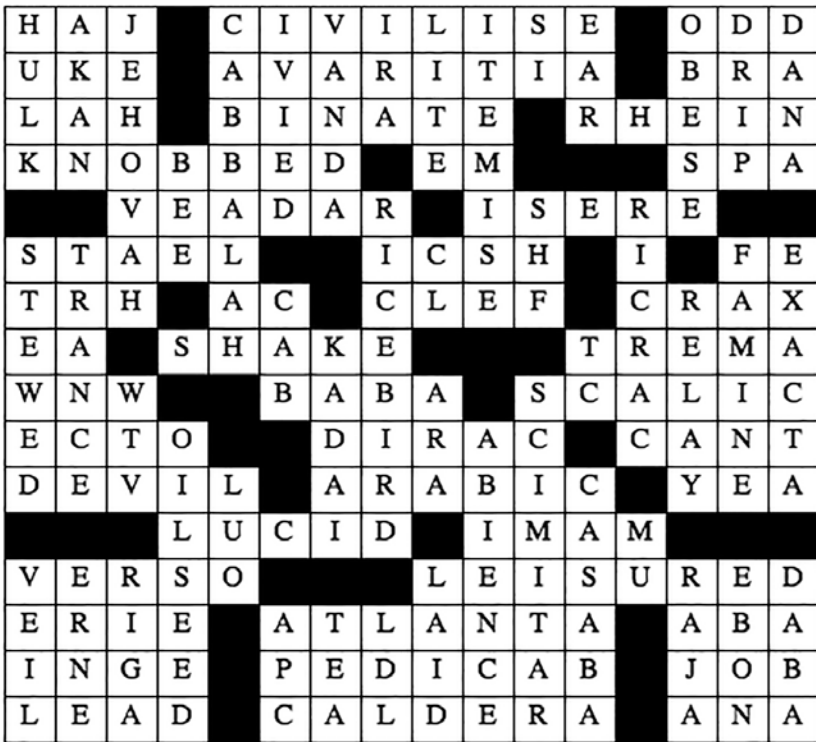
ACROSS

1. United States liquid unit equal to 4 quarts or 3.785 liters.
4. And edge tool having two crossed pivoting blades.
12. Cleaning implement consisting of absorbent material fastened to a handle.
15. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
16. Flesh of very important usually small (to 18 in) fatty Atlantic fish.
17. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
18. A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
19. More of the same adv.
20. Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
21. Able to be put to use.
23. A small shallow-draft boat carrying mounted guns.
25. A drink credited with magical power.
28. (Norse mythology) Ruler of the Aesir.
31. Any broad thin expanse or surface.
35. English chemist noted for his studies of molecular structures in plants (1886-1975).
39. (British) Inferior (especially of a country's leadership).
41. An atom or molecule or radical or ion that forms a complex around a central atom.
42. Select as an alternative.
43. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.
45. (meaning literally 'born') Used to indicate the maiden or family name of a married woman.
46. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
49. (religion) Of or pertaining to or characteristic of Judaism.
52. Any of several tropical American palms bearing corozo nuts.
54. English architect (1746-1813).
56. A dialect of Chinese spoken in southeastern China.
60. Tropical Asian tree with hard white wood and bark formerly used as a remedy for dysentery and diarrhea.
64. Dyed with henna.
66. A nitrogen-containing base found in RNA (but not in DNA) and derived from pyrimidine.
69. A master's degree in business.
70. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
71. French revolutionary who was prominent in the early days of the French Revolution (1749-1791).
73. A decree that prohibits something.
74. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
75. Perennial herbs with small pink or white flowers.
76. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
6. A federal agency that supervises carriers that transport goods and people between states.
7. A brace that extends from the rear of the keel to support the rudderpost.
8. (usually followed by 'to' or 'for') On the point of or strongly disposed.
9. Aromatic Eurasian perennial.
10. A program that is broadcast again.
11. Informal language consisting of words and expressions that are not considered appropriate for formal occasions.
12. French biochemist who (with Francois Jacob) explained how genes are activated and suggested the existence of messenger RNA (1910-1976).
13. Long green edible beaked pods of the okra plant.
14. A written agreement between two states or sovereigns.
22. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
24. The state or fact of existing.
26. The longest division of geological time.
27. A boat equipped to fight fires on ships or along a waterfront.
29. A rotary duplicator that uses a stencil through which ink is pressed (trade mark Roneo).
30. A numerical scale used to compare variables with one another or with some reference number.
32. Massive thick-skinned herbivorous animal living in or around rivers of tropical Africa.
33. To come or go into.
34. A yellow quartz.
36. A bachelor's degree in literature.
37. Being one more than one.
38. A loose material consisting of grains of rock or coral.
40. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
44. The members of a male religious order.
47. Ratio of the hypotenuse to the opposite side.
48. Early spring flower common in British isles having fragrant yellow or sometimes purple flowers.
50. A transuranic element that has not been found in nature.
51. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
53. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
55. A Loloish language.
57. A Bantu language spoken by the Kamba people in Kenya.
58. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
59. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
61. Toward the mouth or oral region.
62. An aromatic ointment used in antiquity.
63. Rock that form the continuous lower layer of the earth's crust.
65. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
67. Committee formed by a special-interest group to raise money for their favorite political candidates.
68. Make amends for.
72. An artificial language for international use that rejects rejects all existing words and is based instead on an abstract analysis of ideas.

DOWN

1. A set of clothing (with accessories).
2. Being or given to serve imitation.
3. An island of central Hawaii.
4. Small cold-water silvery fish.
5. Provide what is desired or needed, esp. support, food or sustenance.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

If you take care of your body, your body will take care of you. This applies to your mental well-being also. Once your mind is set to becoming a better you, things will seem to fall into place in your world. You will have a greater appreciation for life and a renewed love of self. Happiness begins at home and your health is the root of this happiness. If you will stick to a new lifestyle you will find great reward will come to you from choices you make today. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. You will be a new confident you and find that you can truly love who you are. Take the leap.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may have heard, "You can't have it all." This is not true for you, Taurus. You can "bring home the bacon and cook it up in the pan" and still feel like enjoying a night on the town. Keep your work day stress-free by handling crises with humor. Be sure to take a break today and step out for a breath of fresh air. Save your energy to enjoy time with your friends and family this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Get out and be heard. This is a wonderful time in your life and what you have to say will be heard. This is a great day for public speaking. You seem to have a knack for knowing what people want and being able to provide it. It seems your popularity may be at an all time high now. You are charming and pay close attention to the needs of others. Who could ask for a better friend? You may find a profitable deal come your way concerning real estate. Playing the middle man may be the way to go.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may make mistakes today. Fortunately, you learn from your mistakes. A small setback will not diminish what you accomplish. You will dwell on the slip-ups just long enough to make sure they don't happen again. Then you will focus on the good you have done. You will be applauded for your work. Others will notice and appreciate your efforts.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Close relationships are where your focus is placed now. As independent as you seem to appear, you need to feel the love and support of those closest to you. This alone makes your life feel complete. You are beginning to truly feel needed and cared for. You may feel as if a fresh start is what you need. You are beginning to develop new habit patterns. Out with the old and in with the new. Make sure new habits are good ones. These will set the tone for years to come. The new you is the best you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There is a problem out there that can be solved with a simple new product. And you are capable of creating that product. Put your inventive mind to work. Look around and see what is needed. Then set about to provide it. The solution will bring you more than financial success. It will provide the satisfaction of knowing you made someone's life easier. You are a kind friend and a good person.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old West 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 30 letters spell a Will Rogers quotation.



ASSAY OFFICE	DOCTOR	MINE SHAFT	SCOUTS
BANK ROBBER	DRESSMAKER	OUTLAWS	SHOOTOUT
BARN	FENCE	PELTS	SHOTGUN
BLACKSMITH	GENERAL STORE	PIGS	SPURS
BOOTS	GOLD NUGGET	PIONEERS	STIRRUP
BUCKBOARD	GUNSLINGER	POST OFFICE	TOWN HALL
BUNKHOUSE	HATS	RANCH HAND	TRADING POST
CALAMITY JANE	HIRED HAND	REVOLVER	TUMBLEWEED
CHAPS	HORSES	RUSTLER	WAGON
COAL OIL	ICE HOUSE	SADDLER	WANTED POSTER
COWPOKE	LASO	SALOON GIRL	WHISKEY
DAVY CROCKETT	MARSHALL	SCHOOLHOUSE	WILD BILL HICKOK



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may feel a bit pushed to your limits today. This could make it difficult for you to stay calm and in control. Enjoy the beauty around you today. Take a moment to stop and take it all in. Resist the urge to overspend or indulge. Today is about finding beauty in the smallest of things. Keep today full of appreciation and simplicity. Aries, you will find great pleasure in having deep conversations with those you love. Be more practical today and don't be afraid to let your creativity flow. Libra, be sure and avoid confrontation today, sit back and relax without reaction. Take a nap or spend some time alone in reflection of all you have accomplished in this life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

If you take care of your body, your body will take care of you. This applies to your mental well-being also. Once your mind is set to becoming a better you, things will seem to fall into place in your world. You will have a greater appreciation for life and a renewed love of self. Happiness begins at home and your health is the root of this happiness. If you will stick to a new lifestyle you will find great reward will come to you from choices you make today. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. You will be a new confident you and find that you can truly love who you are. Take the leap.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have begun to search for beauty in all that surrounds you. Life takes on a different meaning to you. You seem to see a new depth to the meaning of life. Your ability to analyze your situation and the situations of others are at high point. You are able to really get to the root of all problems that preset themselves and provide those around you with solutions. You are able to express yourself and communicate with ease. A long deep conversation with someone may be just what you need to stay grounded and focused. This may be a great time to refrain from spending and beginning focusing your goals on a budget and organizing your finances.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Reach for the stars. You feel as though you are invincible. Today that may be true. If it can go your way, it does. What a wonderful feeling! Your are full of optimism and faith. Your self-confidence is at an all-time high. You may desire to make a change in your living situation. Leave this decision for a later date when your head comes down from the clouds.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may be faced with a difficult decision this week. You may feel led to pass up a very profitable career opportunity because it truly conflicts with your morals and values. This is a road to success you may choose to take a detour around. The easy way is not always the right way. You may find in the long run you will reap great reward from doing the right thing.

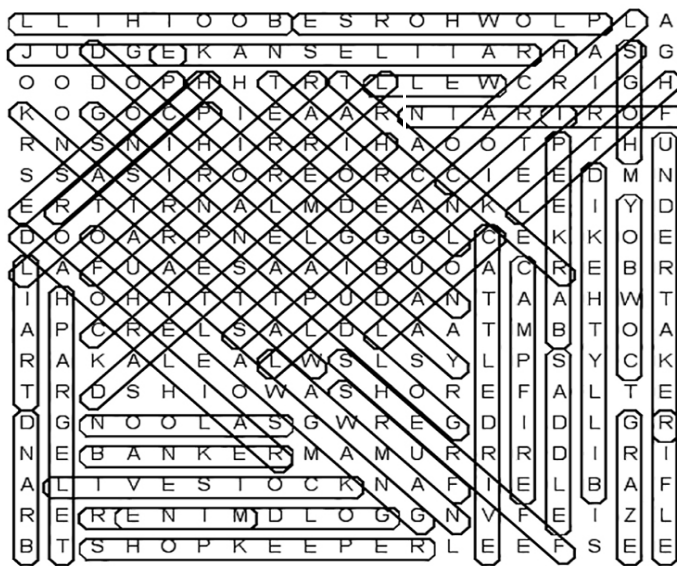


Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Expect to feel much admiration and recognition from those close to you today. You may feel support and able to relate to anyone and any situation. You may find yourself to be the center of attention in a social setting today. It seems everyone is able to relate to you and you may find that someone turns to you for help today. Feel flattered that you are trusted with such a delicate situation that your peer is experiencing. Through sharing life experiences of your own you may be able to assist this person and appreciated your own hardships as lessons learned. This is a great time of reflection in your life, Pisces, live, learn, and love.

Yesterday's Solution

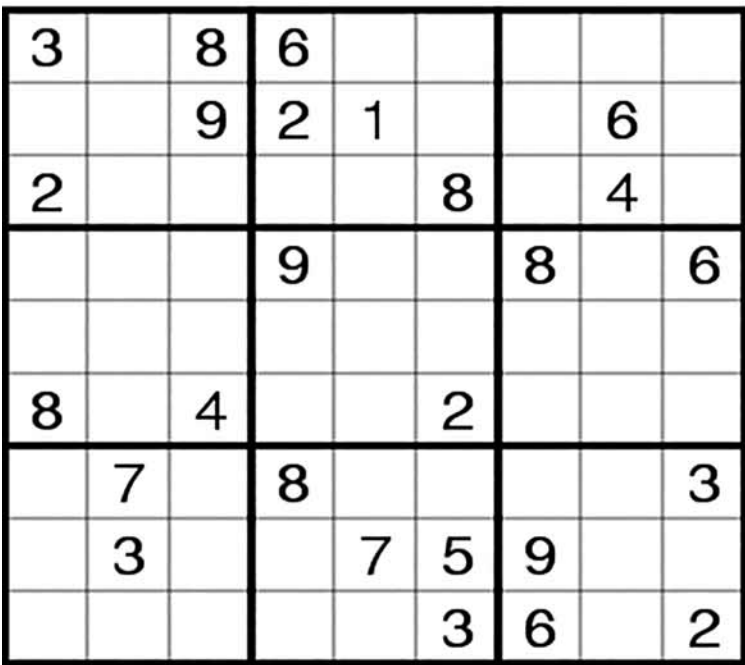
Old West 1



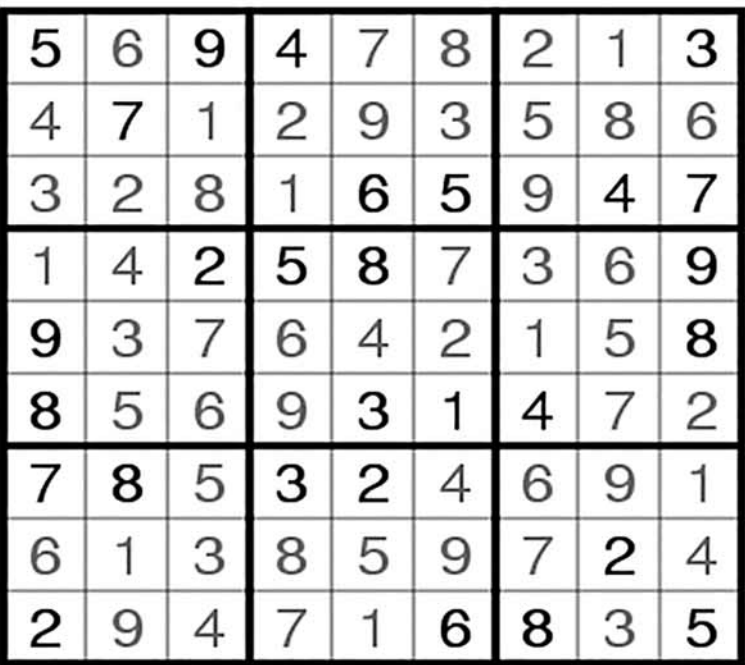
BANKER	FARRIER	LAWMAN	SALOON
BARKEEP	FORT	LIVESTOCK	SHERIFF
BILLY THE KID	FURS	MINER	SHOPKEEPER
BOOT HILL	GOLD MINE	OUTLAW GANG	SITTING BULL
BRAND	GOLD PANNING	PISTOL	STAGECOACH
CAMPFIRE	GRAZE	FLOW HORSE	TELEGRAPH
CATTLE DRIVE	HIRED GUN	POSSE	TRACKER
CHAPARRAL	HOGS	RAILROAD	TRAIL
COAL	HOMESTEAD	RANCH	TRAIN
CORRAL	HOTEL	RATTLESNAKE	UNDERTAKER
COWBOY	JUDGE	RIFLE	WATER TANK
DOC HOLLIDAY	LARIAT	SADDLE	WELL

The hidden message is: A GOOD HORSE MAKES SHORT MILES

Daily SuDoku

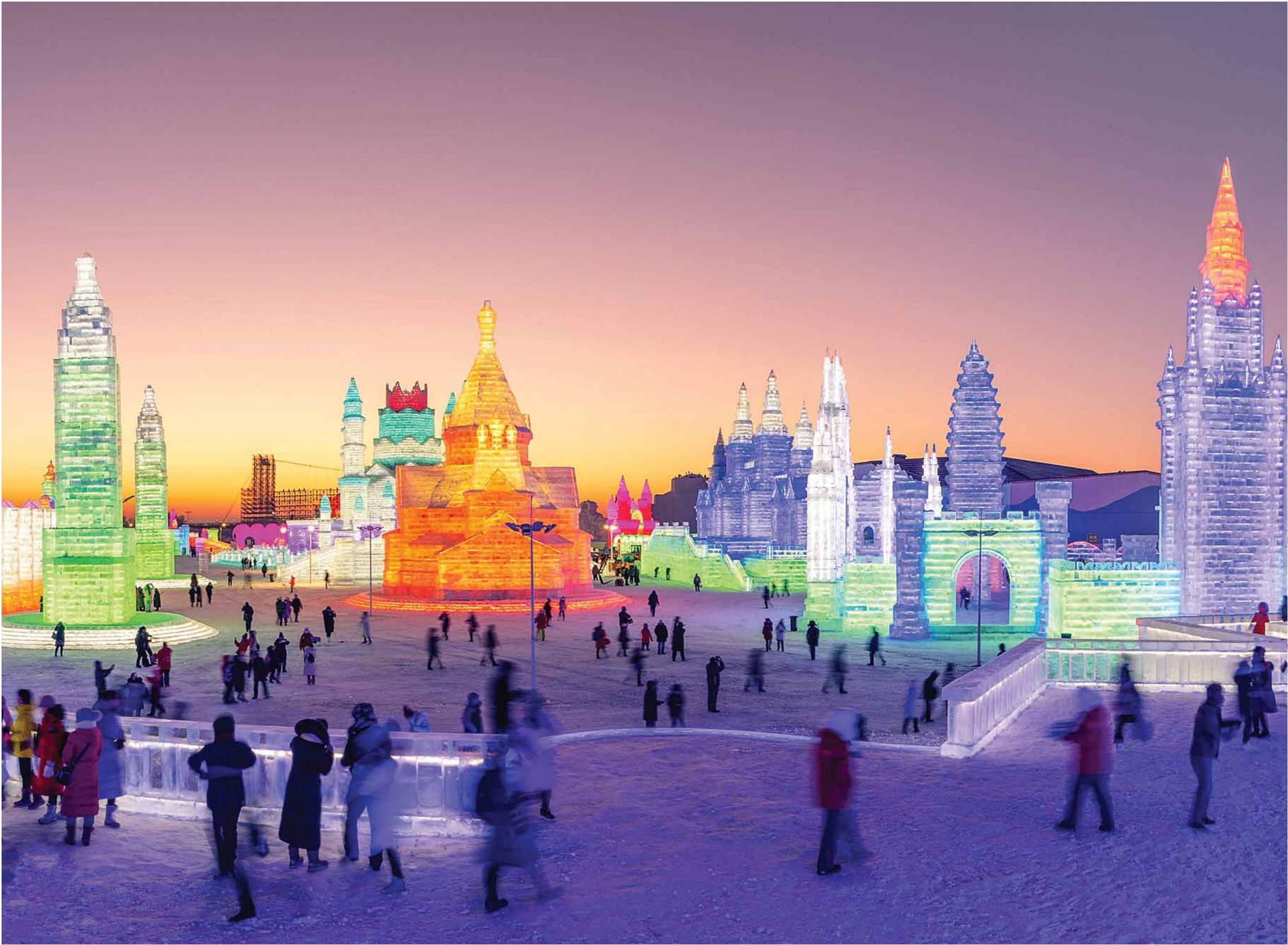


Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2018



This photo shows people visiting the Harbin Ice-Snow World in Harbin, China's northeastern Heilongjiang province. — AFP

‘Stan & Ollie,’ an intimate portrait of comedic genius

“Director Baird introduces two worn-out heroes”

They hung up their bowler hats decades ago, but Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy remain cinema’s most iconic comic duo, with a unique chemistry explored in a new feature centered on their careers’ tricky end. “Stan and Ollie,” released in the US this Friday, marks the first time a feature filmmaker has tackled the slapstick comedy geniuses, known for films including “Sons of the Desert” (1933) and “Way Out West” (1937). Along with Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy embodied the late 1920s golden years of silent film.

The emergence of “talkies”—films with sound—then propelled them to world stardom by the mid-1930s. But instead of documenting the stratospheric heights of their success, in “Stan and Ollie,” director Jon S Baird introduces two worn-out heroes clambering for one last hurrah. From 1944, Hollywood had turned the page on Laurel and Hardy—but they clung on, even starting a tour of English theaters in 1953, both aged over 60 by that point.

But audiences two-thirds empty sparked disillusionment and tension between “El Gordo” and “El Flaco”—the fat one and the skinny one—as they are known in the

Spanish-speaking world. Exploring Laurel and Hardy’s one-of-a-kind partnership took some imagination: even if there is evidence scribbled down somewhere, neither ever publicly spoke of their closeness. “It wasn’t replicating their movies because those exist,” John C. Reilly, who portrays Hardy, told a New York panel discussion in early December.

Chemistry

“It wasn’t telling anything you can find out on Wikipedia right now on your phone in ten seconds about their lives. It was going to be about something that no one would know except them.” With a highly convincing performance, Reilly and Steve Coogan bring new life to the duo: the British Stan Laurel, a workaholic, and American Oliver Hardy, a hedonist frustrated by his husky physique. The pair were united by their unrestrained taste for comedy, and also for women—with seven marriages between them.

“Chemistry is one of these things people talk about like this mysterious rain that falls on some people. But in fact you can earn it with each other,” Reilly said. “Steve and I earned (it) the way that Laurel and Hardy earned it with each other, by trusting each other, learning who the person was, being there for them, picking them when they’re down. “I don’t want this to be a liability for the legacy of Laurel and Hardy. These people are so important to me and so formative at every stage in my life,” he added.

Reilly also explained that his work on “Stan and Ollie” served a deeper purpose than simply producing a quality performance. “It was for this man who I really want to honor,” he said. “That’s a big part of why we made this film, both of us. To honor these guys who didn’t quite get their due when they were alive.”—AFP



US actor John C Reilly, British actor Steve Coogan, Scottish director Jon S Baird and moderator US historian/author Annette Insdorf confer at the 92nd Street Y in New York during a screening of the movie ‘Stan & Ollie’ to be released tomorrow. — AFP



Pete Davidson watches Machine Gun Kelly live over the weekend

The 25-year-old comedian had sparked widespread concern for his well-being after he admitted he didn't "want to be on this earth anymore", but he has been seen out and about as 'Saturday Night Live' takes a break over the festive season. As reported by TMZ, concert goers spotted Pete - who suffers from bipolar disorder and has previously battled suicidal thoughts - at the show in Cleveland over the weekend as he sat on an elevated stage platform, dressed in a dark hoodie. He looked to be rapping along

to MGK's hit 'Rap Devil', and seemed to be enjoying himself as he threw his hands in the air. Pete's candid Instagram post caused fans to voice concerns about his mental health. He wrote: "I really don't want to be on this earth anymore. I'm doing my best to stay here for you but I actually don't know how much longer I can last. All I've ever tried to do was help people. Just remember I told you so. (sic)" Pete - who split from Ariana Grande earlier this year following a whirlwind romance with the pop star - has also admitted to having suicidal thoughts.

He confessed: "I've been getting online bullied and in public by people for 9 months. I've spoken about BPD and being suicidal publicly only in the hopes that it will help bring awareness and help kids like myself who don't want to be on this earth. No matter how hard the internet or anyone tries to make me kill myself. I won't. I'm upset I even have to say this. (sic)"



Misty Copeland excited for her 2019 Pirelli Calendar shoot

The 36-year-old ballet dancer played an exotic dance in this year's re-imagined calendar by Albert Watson, and admitted she was able to easily channel her character by "using her body" to tell a story - although she refused to "practice stripping". When asked by People magazine whether she'd done anything specific to prepare for the job, she said: "No, I feel like I adjust well when I'm in a certain environment. "I feel like I can take on the character that I'm supposed to be because of the surroundings that I'm in. I definitely wasn't practicing stripping. "I think it's about, again, me using my body and telling a story and, a very human story, and getting to see all these different sides of the character I was playing." Albert confessed

that this year he wanted to create something "more interesting" than models "taking their tops off" for the iconic calendar - and he decided to take a cinematic approach to the images. The photographer said he hoped to explore femininity in the post-McToo era and Misty insisted that as a classical dancer, working with a storyline made it easier to "relate" to than an ordinary photo-shoot. She said: "It was insanely exciting and to hear Albert's vision, I definitely connect and relate more to having a storyline. That's what we do as classical dancers, we tell stories through our movement, so I just loved that concept that I wasn't just standing in front of the camera posing to make shots for a calendar."



Jennifer Lopez thinks men are more fragile, sensitive than women

The 'Shades of Blue' actress believes that as a whole, men are more sensitive than women, and that "strong, assertive" females have to "tiptoe" around their male counterparts. She told Vanity Fair magazine: "I think as women, we have to do that all the time. We're said to be the more fragile, sensitive gender, but I think the truth is that men are much more fragile and sensitive. And we have to be stronger and more conscious of not hurting fragile egos at times. So it's a line you do have to tiptoe on all the time - especially as a strong, assertive woman, which can be off-putting to men who are not confident and secure on their own." Meanwhile, Jennifer previously admitted it took a "long time" to believe in herself. She said: "You know, I've really become - and I think from being in this business, I don't let the opinion of others really influence how I think about myself. And that took a long time. Because in the early part of my career, I did, and it made me feel really bad about myself." And the 49-year-old singer and actress felt it was important to keep persevering with her talents despite the continued criticism.



Meghan Trainor has married Daryl Sabara



The 'All About That Bass' hitmaker tied the knot with the 'Spy Kids' actor in an intimate wedding in their back garden in Los Angeles on Saturday, Meghan's 25th birthday. She said: "It's the beginning of an awesome, whole new life. I got way more than I ever wished for." Whilst Daryl added: "I'm the luckiest guy in the world." The couple is looking forward to being able to call each other husband and wife as they start their life together. Asked what they're most excited about, Meghan shared: "Just rockin' them rings! I'm really excited to say 'hubby' and 'husband.'" Whilst Daryl added to People magazine: "I'm no longer the 'future hubby' - I get to just be the hubby, which I'm excited about!" Meghan and Daryl first met in 2014 but it wasn't until 2016 when they started dating, set up by actress Chloë Grace Moretz. A year after they got together, Daryl proposed to Meghan in Palm Springs. For her big day, the 25-year-old singer walked down the aisle in a stunning Berta gown, complete with high-heeled shoes from Badgley Mischka and jewels by Norman Silverman. The 100 or so guests at the ceremony dined on comfort food, whilst Meghan partied the night away in a lace suit by Rita Vinieris.

Mollie King wears a lot of sequins, sparkles over the festive season

The former Saturdays singer loves getting dressed up for Christmas parties and likes to mix glamour with feeling comfortable. She said: "For this time of year, I love to wear sequins and sparkles, it's the only time you can get away with wearing as much of it as possible... "I have a few parties to look forward to this year and I'll always go with what I feel most comfortable in, either a beautiful statement piece or a matching set." This Christmas, the 31-year-old beauty - who is currently single - will be spending December 25 with her family and is looking forward to a fun-packed day. She said: "The festive season is the perfect time to treat yourself. "This year, all the family are spending Christmas at my mum's. My four nephews will be there, running riot. So there will be lots going on." In 2017, Mollie took part in 'Strictly Come Dancing' and she embraced the sparkly costumes on the show. She said: "I absolutely loved doing 'Strictly' and wearing the costumes was a dream. "It gave you the opportunity to wear sequins and outfits that you'd never wear in day-to-day life." These days, the 'Issues' hitmaker is co-hosting the BBC Radio 1 weekend breakfast show three days a week with Matt Edmondson and still hasn't got used to the early starts. She admitted: "I set about three alarms - with one of them outside my bedroom, so I have to get out of bed to turn it off."



Khloe Kardashian hits back at fan accusing her of "forgetting" Rob

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star has fumed at a Instagram follower who criticized the family for "never mentioning" the 31-year-old sock designer. Underneath a picture of herself and her mother Kris Jenner, where she thanked her for raising "multiple mini queens", one wrote: "It's a shame Rob Kardashian is a member of the family and he is NEVER mentioned (sic)" And Khloe quickly fired back: "My brother is my entire world! He is definitely a king. It is a shame that you can't respect us for respecting his privacy. You should not comment if you truly aren't informed on our family." Rob has largely remained out of the spotlight in the recent years and had spoken out how he even shunned his family's E! reality show. In a court declaration, he shared: "I have not participated in the filming of any episodes since this summer when [Chyna] filed a request for a restraining order against me. Her request was widely publicized and I was scrutinized by the media. It has been an extraordinarily difficult time for me emotionally and I have no desire to continue participating in the reality show. I would like to maintain my privacy, try to recover from the emotional damage of the past several months, and explore other business ventures."

Kalyan Jewelers announces 'One Plus Three' festive initiative

Kalyan Jewelers, one of the most trusted and leading jewelry brands in the GCC and India is celebrating this festive season with a first of its kind offer announcement - One Plus Three. The initiative offers three diamond/uncut jewelry on purchase of one of the same. Gold coins and Scratch and Win coupons are also on offer. This initiative will run across all Kalyan Jewelers showrooms in Kuwait, from December 15, 2018 to February 9, 2019.

Customers buying one diamond or uncut jewelry worth KD 300 will get three pieces of diamond or uncut jewelry for free. Assured gold coins will also be given on every purchase of uncut or diamond jewelry worth KD 500. In addition to the above, for any jewelry purchase worth KWD250,

Scratch and Win coupons will be given to redeem kitchenware, electronic appliances and branded watches.

Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director of Kalyan Jewelers says, "The One Plus Three offer is sure to delight even the most discerning customers. In addition to the exceptional quality and jewelry designs offered in store, all our patrons will be getting assured diamond or uncut jewelry and gold coins on their purchases." "We wanted to make it more special this festive season for our customers. Since our motto at Kalyan Jewellers while developing campaigns is to create unmatched shopping experiences, it was perfect timing to launch such an initiative where gifting to loved ones also becomes easier."

Kalyan Jewelers recently relocated a showroom in Kuwait at Al Khayatane Complex, Makah Street, Fahaheel. Besides the popular house brands, this showroom has an exclusive section displaying Kalyan's new brand Muhurat which is the wedding collection spanning a wide range of exquisite bridal jewelry including stunning polki pieces.

The jewelry collections under Mahurat brand are for every bride, covering all the wedding related occasions and traditions. At present, Kalyan Jewelers has a network of 102 exclusive showrooms in India and 32 exclusive outlets in the Kuwait, UAE, Qatar and Oman. It employs over 8,000 people and has a focused approach on employee engagement and satisfaction.



Add the Kalyan Sparkle to your celebrations!



This picture shows the Mohammed Ali house, build around 1900 as the headquarters of the trading firm GM Mohammad Ali, designed by Armenian architect and urban engineer Minas Kherbekian who worked with Ethiopia's Emperor Menelik to design the capital, in Addis Ababa.



A picture shows building under construction.

In Ethiopia, as a capital rises, history rots



People walk past the Sheikh Ojele palace, which was built in 1890 and influenced by Indo-Islamic architectural design.



Berhanu Mengistu's family house.



A picture shows the stained glass windows of Berhanu Mengistu's family house.

From its hillside overlooking the Ethiopian capital, Berhanu Mengistu's century-old, gabled family home has seen emperors and governments rise and fall. It has withstood economic stagnation and the rapid population growth that replaced its once-patrician neighbors with a rabble of shacks. But it now stands lonely in a field of weeds, the house's corrugated roof and red plaster walls stark against a fast-changing cityscape of cleared slums, tower cranes and glinting high rises.

Palatial homes like Berhanu's are scattered throughout Addis Ababa, built for imperial-era courtiers and foreign business moguls, but most have slid into dire neglect as the government focuses on an aspirational building boom. "Nowadays, most of the buildings you see are more of the European architecture," said Berhanu, a supply chain manager whose house has been in his family for seven generations.

Across the capital, older, poorer neighborhoods-like the one that once surrounded Berhanu's home-have been leveled to make way for glass-and-concrete towers, lauded by the government as a symbol of the rapid economic expansion transforming one of Africa's poorest countries. But preservationists worry that the breakneck development comes at the cost of the capital's architectural heritage. "There are isolated efforts of protecting, saving historic buildings, but it's really very limited," said Fasil Giorgis, a well-known architect. "It is not even a given that you should protect a historic building."

A young city

Addis Ababa was founded in the late 19th century by Emperor Menelik II as he expanded the Ethiopian empire from the country's northern highlands to its modern boundaries. The young city soon filled with houses belonging to members of Menelik's government, among them Berhanu's ancestor Yemtu Beznash, the family matriarch and administrator of a powerful law court. Menelik, who died in 1913, also hired Armenians as city engineers, while merchants came from India and Yemen.

That cosmopolitanism was upended in 1974 with the arrival of the Derg military junta, which dismantled the Ethiopian empire. Fasil recounted how, as foreign traders fled, the communist-leaning Derg handed their former mansions to poor tenants, who could not afford to main-

tain the earthen walls and wooden floors.

Ideological shift

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which evicted the Derg in 1991 and continues to rule today, has presided over an economic boom. This has seen contractors from China and elsewhere set to work on half-built skyscrapers that give the capital's skyline a jagged, unfinished feel. Maheder Gebremedhin, an architect who hosts a radio show discussing the trade, says the neglect of the old buildings is due to the cost and complexity of renovation, as well as a lingering ambivalence towards the imperial past. "Because of the ideological shift, there is not a real interest to keep these buildings," Maheder said.



A picture shows the decorated doors of Berhanu Mengistu's family house which has been protected as a historic house by the tourism bureau in Addis Ababa.

Heritage, abandoned

Government and private donors have successfully restored a handful of buildings, including one of Menelik's palaces and the mansion of a former defense minister that's been converted into a museum. But city authorities acknowledge that most of the 440 buildings that have been designated heritage sites are rundown. "Because of our capacity as a developing country, they can't be repaired all the time," said Worku Mengesha, a

spokesman for Addis Ababa's tourism office.

A decade ago, foreign embassies and Ethiopian preservationists tried to restore the Mohammadali house, once the property of a wealthy Indian businessman featuring prominent Indian and Arabian architectural elements in addition to its imperial-era Ethiopian style. However, bureaucracy and shoddy construction scuppered the effort, Fasil said. As a result, it is padlocked and abandoned, with parked cars sheltering beneath its Indian-inspired arches and a pair of discarded trousers draped across its faded cream staircase.

Other historic buildings continue in their Derg-era role of housing for the poor, or in their slow decrepitude. The expansive former palace of Hojele Al-Hassen, a wealthy traditional ruler during the Menelik era, still houses people from his western region, who spend after-work hours socialising on the wraparound veranda. But it's increasingly dilapidated, with an entire decaying wing that once served as a school classroom sealed off for safety.

Family history, city history

Three years ago, as city authorities leveled the homes that had mushroomed around Berhanu's house, he kept the bulldozers at bay by having his home designated an historic building. Berhanu now hopes to turn his family history into national history. Standing near a large portrait of the matriarch Yemtu, he spoke of his dream to make a museum of the house whose rooms are filled with family photographs and heirlooms, including a wall-spanning snake skin. "This is not only our property. It belongs to all Ethiopians and people of Addis Ababa," he said.

He hopes the city will agree. Across the street in the slum area the government wants cleared, his neighbor Solomon Damana had recently resolved a dispute with city authorities and was following orders to demolish the small family home in which he was born and raised and move to a one-bedroom apartment on the outskirts of town. "I'm happy that one isn't demolished," he said, gesturing at Berhanu's place. "It's an historic house." —AFP

Goldeneye introduces micro pigmentation concept in Kuwait



Goldeneye which was founded 20 years ago became a leading micro pigmentation company in Germany. The concept is to combine the newest, innovative technology and products with the highest level of education. Abdulmajid Madi (Founder and CEO of Al-Jothan Cosmetics) and Katrin Prutz (Master trainer and micro pigmentation expert) are introducing this concept to Kuwait and the Middle East. Goldeneye Middle East will provide everything you need for pigmentation. International masters will come to Kuwait to hold master classes.



Head of Rothschild in Russia pens fairy tales between flights

Giovanni Salvetti, the head of Rothschild in Russia and CIS, takes five flights a week in his job managing the bank's operations from Kazakhstan to Ukraine. In-between time, he has written a book of fairy tales for his children. "I did not decide to create a book - it was a request of my children. Every night I am with them they want me to tell a story. They don't want me to read a story," Salvetti, 47, said after receiving the first printed edition of his book.

He has three children: two boys aged 12 and 10 and a girl of eight. "Once they told me: We like very much your stories. Why don't you write one?" The book, "Arturo and the Unicorn", is available in Russian, English and Italian. It tells the story of a poor man from the Italian town of Bergamo working for a local nobleman. The book's hero is blackmailed and jailed but he manages to escape thanks to his paintings.

"The message is that life sometimes can be unjust, but that art can help you even in the darkest moments of your life," says Salvetti, whose bank advises companies and government bodies in ex-Soviet countries. Salvetti did the drawings for the book himself, and

published it with his own funds. It can be bought online or in book stores in Russia and Ukraine for about 3 euros and proceeds from sales will go to a charity to help children in Russia and Ukraine who are suffering from cancer.

Asked if anything about his business could be learned from the fairy tale book, Salvetti said none of the characters were based on people in real life. "I think I can write something more interesting not about children but about my... experiences in my business," he said, joking that that might carry risks. "But then I'll have to move to Argentina or Sri Lanka." —Reuters



Giovanni Salvetti, head of Rothschild in Russia and CIS, poses for a picture during an interview in Moscow, Russia. —Reuters



In this file photo an Indian tea-tribe vendor holds up uncooked rats at a weekly market in Kumarikata village along the Indo-Bhutan border, some 90km from Guwahati. — AFP photos

The Indian market where rat earns top price

Freshly-caught rat is at the top of the holiday menu for crowds flocking to a market in northeastern India that specializes in rodents from local fields. Destined to be boiled, skinned and then cooked in a spicy gravy, rat is more popular than chicken and pork with customers at the Sunday market in the village of Kumarikata in Assam state. Shoppers buy hundreds of freshly caught and skinned rats that local farmers say are hunted to

avoid damage to their fields in the state which borders Bhutan. The ready-roasted kind also goes down well. Rat has become a valuable source of income for the poor "Adivasi" tribal people who struggle to make ends meet working in Assam's famed tea gardens. In the winter months when tea picking slumbers, the Adivasis go to rice paddies to trap rats for the market. A kilogram of rat meat, which is considered a delicacy, sells for about 200

rupees — as much as for chicken and pork. Farmers say the region has seen growing numbers of rats in recent years. "We put traps in the fields as the rats eat people's paddy," Samba Soren, a rat vendor at Kumarikata, told AFP. The rodents are hunted at night during the harvesting season with traps made from bamboo. The traps are placed at the entrance of the rat-holes in the evening and

the rodents are caught as they come out to scavenge. The vendors have to work at night to make sure other predators do not get to the dead rats first. Some of the rats weigh more than a kilogram and the market traders say they get between 10 and 20 kilograms a night.—AFP

Strangers turned saviors: The unsung heroes we met on the road

Friendly fire starters. Impromptu translators. Spontaneous hosts. They're all examples of the unsung heroes we've met during our travels; strangers, who stepped in to smooth a passage, solve a problem or just spread a little love. And they did it all without even being asked. Here's to the friends you never knew you had.

Help from a pro in California, USA

After pitching a flimsy tent next to the hulking RVs of pro campers in the Inyo National Forest in California, my friend and I were determined to cook up a campfire feast. Mildly delirious with hunger and woefully under-prepared for the task at hand, we began feebly rubbing sticks together a la Bear Grylls.

After 30 spark-free minutes, a rotund, red-faced American (who had, presumably, been watching this pathetic display for some time) burst out of his RV, marched over with a gas can in hand, wordlessly doused our fire pit with whatever was in it and threw down a lit match before turning and walking away as the flames burst up from the ground behind him. Heroes don't always wear capes, but they do sometimes wear khaki shorts and baseball caps.

Found in translation in Okinawa, Japan

After a long drive, we reached our guesthouse in a small village in the north of Okinawa, Japan. We were ravenous, and after check-in, I asked the receptionist to book a table at the adjoining restaurant, the only place to eat for miles. Half an hour later, we arrived to find it full. None of the staff spoke English, and my Japanese was very poor. I tried to explain that we had a booking, but the waitress did not understand me.

After some time, a woman who had been watching from a nearby table approached and offered to translate. We were sorted in minutes, and as we ate, the friendly woman, Yayoi, invited us to her home the following night. She cooked an amazing dinner, I joked with her husband, and she showed me her incredible ceramic art and introduced me to her cats. It was one of my favorite nights from my trip across Japan. We are still in contact, and I am thankful that her simple act of kindness allowed me to make a life-long friend.

She called various guest houses, chatting jovially and picking up clues as to where my three mates might be (it helped that two of them had red hair). Through some miracle she found them and ushered me on to the next available boat, assuring me (quite rightly) that my small stash of US dollars would see me through two weeks in paradise.



A small gesture in Mozambique

The day had started with a mishap of nightmarish proportions: being on the wrong end of a dodgy currency exchange was one thing, but seeing my backpack containing a year's supply of medicine disappear over the horizon on the back of a truck was quite another. Thankfully, the truck returned to pick me up and I piled on to the flatbed, the lone traveler among dozens of Mozambicans.

With my heart rate back to normal, and legs dangling over the side, the man next to me offered me some of his sugar cane. A small gesture, but as we all chewed away I felt at one with everyone. Many hours later, when a roadside stall wouldn't accept my large denomination notes, this same man put his money down and said it was his pleasure as I was a guest in his country.

Bamboozling the bandits in Nepal

Some years ago, I got lost trekking in Western Nepal and ended up sheltering by a small lake in the middle of nowhere as darkness fell. Halfway through the night, I was woken by men in dhotis with torches and drawn khukri knives. They gestured for me to go with them and, as I was already lost, I didn't want to run off and get even more lost, so chose to wait for a better chance to escape if things went sour.

Before long we ended up in a small village, where they woke up a tailor who spoke English. 'You are very lucky, sir!' he explained, 'Last night bandits came through the village and killed a man. These men are vigilantes hunting the bandits!' He then made up a bed for me on his terrace. Early the next morning the monsoon broke, turning the whole valley into a mud bath, so I spent the day there and he fed and watered me without asking for anything back.

Getting hands-on guidance in Railay, Thailand

Sunburnt, possibly alcohol-poisoned and down a phone (which had been stolen moments before I boarded the ferry), I arrived in Railay, Thailand, sick, exhausted and shaken only to find out I had boarded the wrong taxi-boat inland. Thanks to a rising tide, my hostel, located on the adjacent beach, was now only accessible via a dangerous scramble over slippery rocks. I contemplated throwing in the towel.

Thankfully, just at that moment, I met a kind German traveler who was also lost, but guided me fearlessly over the rocky path and allowed me to use her phone to contact home and book onward flights. Our friendship solidified further one night when she helped me through a sleep-walking nightmare and I held her hair back during a nasty bout of food poisoning. I wouldn't have made it through those last few days without her!

A show of pride in Jackson, USA

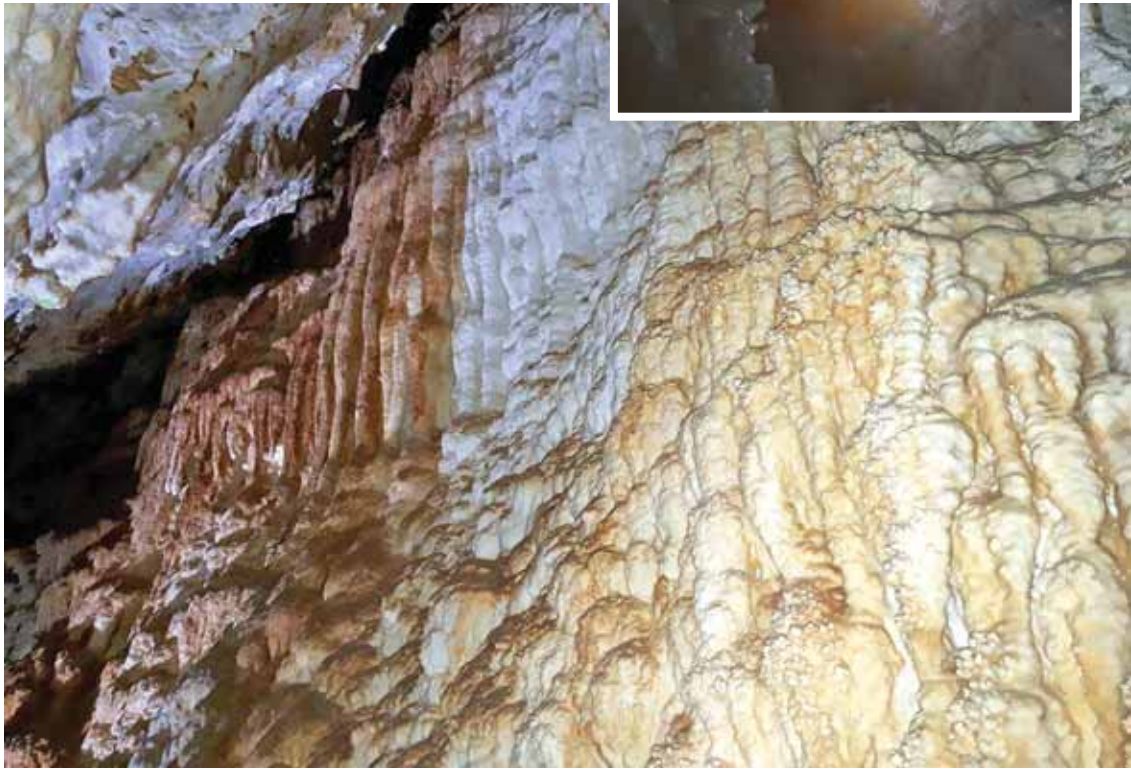
During a shoestring crossing of the Southern USA, a friend and I met an unassuming gent in the smoking area of a bar in Jackson, Mississippi. He was partly bemused, partly impressed by our low-budget odyssey (during most of which we slept in our car), but more interested that our next stop was New Orleans, his hometown. He talked passionately about the city until his cigarette burnt away, finishing his soliloquy by recommending his favorite hotel overlooking the city's main strip, Bourbon Street.

We told him it looked lovely, but we could never afford it. 'You know what, guys,' he said, 'this one is on me.' It was a bizarre, remarkable act, typical of the countless genial locals we met on that trip. — www.lonelyplanet.com

Chal-Nakhjir:

A wondrous cave in the heart of Iran

The Chal-Nakhjir cave in the central Markazi Province, Iran, is known to contain precious crystals and calcareous deposits worthy of admiration and wonder. Discovered in 1989, geologists estimate that the cave belonged to the third geological period known as the cretaceous period.—KUNA



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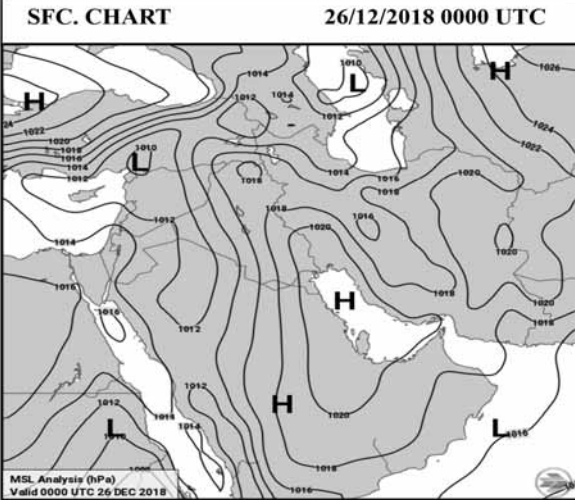
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 26 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	<div>SFC. CHART 26/12/2018 0000 UTC</div> 
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	13 °C	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	08 °C	
ABDALY	23 °C	07 °C	
BUBYAN	*** °C	*** °C	
JAHRA	22 °C	10 °C	
FAILAKA ISLAND	21 °C	12 °C	
SALMIYAH	21 °C	15 °C	
AHMADI	20 °C	15 °C	
NUWAISIB	21 °C	11 °C	
WAFRA	22 °C	07 °C	
SALMY	23 °C	08 °C	

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	12/27	Partly cloudy with a chance for blowing dust over open areas	24 °C	11 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Friday	12/28	Partly cloudy causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for scattered rain	23 °C	15 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Saturday	12/29	Sunny	20 °C	11 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Sunday	12/30	Mostly Sunny	19 °C	09 °C	VRB	08 - 22 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:15
Sunrise	06:40
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	14:38
Sunset	16:57
Isha	18:19

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	100 %
MIN. RH	41 %
MAX. Wind	N 39 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
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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
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9



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DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 27/12/2018					Departure Flights on Thursday 27/12/2018				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KNE 231	Riyadh	14:10			
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	IRA 667	Esfahan	14:10			
KAC	503	Beirut	00:45	JZR 602	Baku	14:10			
KAC	102	London	00:50	SVB 500	Jeddah	14:15			
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	FDB 059	Dubai	14:20			
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	KAC 672	Dubai	14:25			
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	FDB 618	Doha	14:40			
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	GFA 221	Dubai	14:40			
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	KAC 412	Bahrain	14:40			
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	KNE 529	Bangkok	15:00			
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC 788	Jeddah	15:05			
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	ETD 303	Jeddah	15:10			
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	OMA 645	Abu Dhabi	15:15			
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC 562	Muscat	15:35			
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	KAC 304	Amman	15:35			
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	UAE 857	Mumbai	15:40			
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	JZR 732	Dubai	15:45			
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	SAW 705	Cairo	15:50			
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	KNE 531	Damascus	16:00			
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC 118	Jeddah	16:05			
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ABY 127	New York	16:05			
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR 212	Sharjah	16:05			
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC 542	Jeddah	16:25			
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC 502	Cairo	16:30			
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	QTR 1072	Beirut	16:30			
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	FDB 051	Doha	16:35			
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	FEG 341	Sohag	16:55			
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	JZR 114	Doha	17:10			
SGL	9053	Tbilisi	04:40	SVB 510	Riyadh	17:15			
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	GFA 215	Bahrain	17:30			
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	JZR 104	Bahrain	17:45			
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR 214	Jeddah	17:45			
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	UAE 875	Dubai	18:00			
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	FDB 063	Dubai	18:15			
JZR	112	Doha	05:10	JZR 124	Dubai	18:20			
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:25	QTR 1080	Doha	18:30			
KAC	344	Chennai	05:40	MSR 620	Cairo	18:30			
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:50	RJA 640	Amman	19:00			
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:05	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:25			
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	RBG 555	Alexandria	19:25			
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	JZR 217	Bahrain	19:30			
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	NIA 161	Cairo	19:30			
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC 616	Bahrain	19:30			
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	KAC 156	Istanbul	19:30			
QTR	8511	Doha	07:35	KAC 662	Abu Dhabi	19:35			
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:35	FDB 057	Dubai	19:50			
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC 776	Riyadh	19:50			
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR 126	Dubai	19:55			
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KNE 381	Taif	20:00			
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC 620	Doha	20:15			
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	DHX 172	Bahrain	20:20			
MSC	411	Asyut	09:00	OMA 647	Muscat	20:20			
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	QTR 1088	Doha	20:35			
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC 674	Dubai	20:35			
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:45			
FDB	055	Dubai	09:30	KAC 174	Munich	21:15			
IAW	157	Al Najaf	09:40	ETD 307	Abu Dhabi	21:15			
SAW	703	Damascus	09:55	ALK 229	Colombo	21:20			
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:30	MEA 402	Beirut	21:20			
IRA	675	Lar	10:40	KAC 164	MXP	21:25			
SYR	341	Damascus	10:50	KAC 168	Paris	21:30			
JZR	122	Dubai	11:00	UAE 859	Dubai	21:35			
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	GFA 219	Bahrain	21:45			
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:35	KAC 676	Dubai	21:45			
MEA	404	Beirut	11:45	KLM 445	Amsterdam	21:50			
KAC	614	Bahrain	11:55	KAC 564	Amman	21:55			
JZR	252	Amman	12:25	JAI 574	Mumbai	22:00			
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	MSC 405	Sohag	22:00			
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	QTR 1082	Doha	22:05			
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	ETD 309	Abu Dhabi	22:15			
ABY	121	Sharjah	12:55	AIC 981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25			
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	RBG 213	Sohag	22:30			
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	KAC 622	Doha	22:30			
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	KAC 786	Jeddah	22:45			
IAW	157B	Al Najaf	13:55	KAC 692	Muscat	22:55			
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	13:55	BBC 043	Dhaka	23:00			
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	MSC 501	Alexandria	23:05			
KAC	792	Madinah	14:05	GEC 8456	Frankfurt	23:10			
				FDB 071	Dubai	23:45			
				JZR 262	Beirut	23:55			

Iran held talks with Afghan Taliban amid peace push

TEHRAN: Iran has met with the Afghan Taliban, a top Iranian security official said yesterday according to the Tasnim news agency, just days after the militants attended reconciliation talks in the UAE. Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, made the announcement while on a visit to the Afghan capital Kabul, several Iranian agencies reported. "The Afghan government has been informed of the communications and talks carried out with the Taliban, and this process will continue," he said, quoted by Tasnim.

No details on where the talks took place were given by the news agency, which is considered close to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. "The Islamic Republic has always been one of the primary pillars of stability in the region and cooperation between the two countries will certainly

help in fixing Afghanistan's security issues of today," Shamkhani said. Abbas Aslani, a reporter for Tasnim, tweeted that it was the first time talks had been confirmed between Iran and the Taliban.

The announcement follows reconciliation talks last week between the United States and Taliban officials in the United Arab Emirates. The Taliban said they also held meetings with officials from the UAE, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but the militants refused to meet a delegation from Afghanistan. The renewed diplomatic efforts come as Washington seeks a way out of the 17-year conflict. An American official told AFP last week that President Donald Trump had decided to pull out "roughly half" of the 14,000 US forces, but the White House has yet to confirm the widely-publicized move.

Iran and Afghanistan share a nearly 600-mile border, and have had a complex relationship in recent years. Tehran has long supported its co-religionists in Afghanistan, the Shiite Hazara minority, who were violently persecuted by the Taliban during its rule in the 1990s. Iran worked alongside the United States and Western powers to help drive out the Taliban after the US-led invasion in 2001. But there have been allegations, from Western and Afghan sources, that Iran's Revolutionary Guards have in recent years established ties with the Taliban aimed at driving out US forces from Afghanistan.

Iran hosted Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Monday in Tehran. No details were given of the discussions. Tehran welcomed Trump's announcement that he was withdrawing all US forces

from Syria last week, but has not commented on the reduction in Afghanistan. "The presence of American forces was from the very start, in principle, a wrong and illogical move and a primary cause of instability and insecurity in the region," foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said on Saturday.

Hawks in Washington have criticized Trump's move, saying it will cede significant influence in the region to Iran. The Taliban, meanwhile, has made significant territorial gains this year as its fighters inflict record casualties on government forces. Afghanistan's largest militant group carried out an hours-long gun and bomb attack on a Kabul government compound on Monday that killed at least 43 people, one of the deadliest assaults on the capital this year. — AFP

'I'll drink your blood': French rappers take feud to ring

PARIS: Two feuding French rappers have sparked hilarity on social media by vowing to settle their differences in the ring with a no-rules cage fight. Bitter rivals Booba and Kaaris ended up behind bars in August after a running battle between their entourages shut down part of a Paris airport. Yet a month in solitary confinement, heavy fines and the threat of 18 more months behind bars has done nothing to cool their animosity.

After an exchange of blood-curdling Christmas greetings on social media, the pair say they will "bury the hatchet" in a no-rules cage fight in a New Mexico medical center showing signs of sickness on Monday, the agency said. Staff diagnosed him with a cold but later discovered a fever. He was discharged midday, with prescriptions for ibuprofen and the antibiotic amoxicillin.

The boy was later sent back to the hospital suffering from nausea and vomiting. He died shortly before midnight on Dec 24. The CBP said it had not established an official cause of death but would "ensure an independent and thorough review of the circumstances". Late Tuesday McAleenan announced the agency was "conducting secondary medical checks upon all children in CBP care and custody" with particular focus on children under 10.

The child's death came with US President Donald Trump locked in a battle with Congress over funding for a border wall he says will stem migration from Latin American countries plagued by gang violence and poverty. The sparring among lawmakers triggered a lapse in funding that has partially shut down the federal government, with the president showing no appetite for a compromise. Asked if he thought the shutdown was



Booba - who is in Florida - wanted to put off the showdown until April. "Get the plane and come and fight me in private without the cops and your bodyguards on December 30. In April we can do it in an arena and in June in the French national stadium and that way I can hammer you three times," he boasted on Instagram.

The two rappers have waged a feud over social media for years. Airport bosses said the August brawl "endangered the lives of others" and lodged a public order complaint against the singers after the ruckus forced officials to temporarily shut down the departures hall. Prosecutors later said that Booba, 42, had kicked Kaaris after his rival has squared up to him, before their entourages piled in. Both were fined and given 18-month suspended prison sentences in October, which Kaaris is appealing. — AFP

Tunisia clashes spread over tough living conditions

KASSERINE, Tunisia: Clashes between Tunisian protesters and security forces spread from an impoverished western city overnight, authorities said yesterday, as anger grew over the death of a journalist who set himself on fire over economic conditions. In the western city of Kasserine, police fired tear gas at stone-throwing youths in a second night of unrest, an AFP journalist said.

Clashes also broke out in the eastern town of Jbeniana, where a policeman was injured, and in Tebourba in the north where at least five people were arrested, national security spokesman Walid Hkima said. The unrest follows the death of 32-year-old journalist Abderrazk Zorgui on Monday after setting himself ablaze in Kasserine.

The interior ministry said one person had been arrested for alleged involvement in the desperate act of protest, which triggered an outpouring of anger in the city with protesters setting tyres on fire and blocking roads. Thirteen people were arrested in Kasserine for "acts of destruction" during the unrest, interior ministry spokesman Hichem Fourati said. In a video before his death, Zorgui said "for the sons of Kasserine who have no means of subsistence, today I start a revolution".

It was the self-immolation of a street vendor in Tunisia in late 2010 in protest at police harassment that sparked Tunisia's revolution and the Arab Spring uprisings across the rest of the region the next year. Kasserine was one of the first cities to rise up after the vendor's death, in protests that saw police kill demonstrators. The unrest spread across the country and led to the overthrow of long-time dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Despite the country's democratic transition since



then, authorities are still struggling to improve poor living conditions in the face of rampant inflation and persistent unemployment. "There's a rupture between the political class and young people especially those living in insecurity in Tunisia's interior who see their future as uncertain," said the president of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, Messaoud Romdhani.

He expects the protest movement to spread to other regions because of "the lack of a real political will to address the real problems of Tunisians". In recent months, political life in Tunisia has been paralyzed by power struggles ahead of presidential elections set for 2019. Tunisia's national union of journalists called for a general strike on January 14 to mark the eight anniversary of the revolution.

Zorgui's self-immolation "is a sign of rejection of a catastrophic situation, regional imbalances, high unemployment among young people and the misery in which our fellow citizens live in the interior regions," the Tunisian newspaper Le Quotidien said. "No one can deny today that all the leaders of this country are responsible, responsible for the distress of our youth, their despair and their frustration," added the French-language daily. — AFP

Second child migrant dies...

Continued from Page 1

Guatemala has called for an investigation into the eight-year-old boy's death, which came just three weeks after a seven-year-old Guatemalan girl died in similar circumstances. The boy was detained with his father at a crossing in El Paso, Texas on Dec 18 and had been transferred to a New Mexico medical center showing signs of sickness on Monday, the agency said. Staff diagnosed him with a cold but later discovered a fever. He was discharged midday, with prescriptions for ibuprofen and the antibiotic amoxicillin.

The boy was later sent back to the hospital suffering from nausea and vomiting. He died shortly before midnight on Dec 24. The CBP said it had not established an official cause of death but would "ensure an independent and thorough review of the circumstances". Late Tuesday McAleenan announced the agency was "conducting secondary medical checks upon all children in CBP care and custody" with particular focus on children under 10.

The child's death came with US President Donald Trump locked in a battle with Congress over funding for a border wall he says will stem migration from Latin American countries plagued by gang violence and poverty. The sparring among lawmakers triggered a lapse in funding that has partially shut down the federal government, with the president showing no appetite for a compromise. Asked if he thought the shutdown was

worth it, McAleenan replied that "we need border security investments, absolutely".

"I'm committed to improving our conditions, even as we work on the broader problems - border security and of course solving the issues in our legal framework that are inviting these families and children to make this dangerous journey," he said. McAleenan said the CBP was considering seeking medical support from other government agencies, among them the US Coast Guard and the Department of Defense.

Opposition Democrats reacted to the boy's death by accusing Trump - who has made hardline immigration policies a central plank of his presidency - of demonizing migrants for political gain. "Heartbroken and sickened by this news," Senator Martin Heinrich of New Mexico tweeted. "The Trump administration must be held accountable for this child's death and all the lives they have put in danger with their intentional chaos and disregard for human life." Nydia Velazquez, a Democratic congresswoman from New York, demanded "accountability" and an end to the White House's "hateful, dangerous anti-immigrant policies."

The boy's death came on the same day that Jakelin Caal, the Guatemalan girl who died in US custody, was buried. Her body arrived on Sunday in San Antonio Secortez, the remote village where her family - members of the indigenous Q'eqchi' Maya people - live without electricity and other basic services. "This girl left home happy searching for a dream, but unfortunately died on the way," community leader Alberto Pop told AFP in the cemetery. "You hear that in the United States they pay well, not like the companies here in Guatemala - that's why people leave," said Pop, whose 22-year-old son Joaquin left in November in search of a better life. "I don't know if he is alive or dead." — AFP

Mubarak seeks permission to...

Continued from Page 1

said, adding that militants from Hamas group, assisted by North Sinai residents, used underground tunnels to cross. The judge also asked Mubarak questions about the involvement of Hezbollah operatives. On the

"This crime was committed by a company that instead of taking these tanks to the waste treatment plant in Shuaiba, simply got rid of it in this area as it didn't want to pay the fees for waste disposal," he added.

Hajeri blamed the Environmental Public Authority for not taking action in this case. "EPA is responsible for removing this dangerous waste. Various authorities

border with Gaza, North Sinai is the epicenter of an Islamist insurgency that erupted following Morsi's military ouster in 2013.

Egypt in recent years has built a buffer zone along the border to stem the flow of militants. Mubarak said the militants had attacked police stations, killed security personnel and helped spring Morsi and other senior Brotherhood members from detention. In 2015, a court sentenced Morsi to death over the case but Egypt's top appeals court overturned the verdict and ordered a retrial. Morsi ruled Egypt for just a year before mass protests spurred then army chief and now President Sisi to overthrow him in July 2013. — AFP

Outrage over hazmat dumped...

Continued from Page 1

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Hajeri blamed the Environmental Public Authority for not taking action in this case. "EPA is responsible for removing this dangerous waste. Various authorities

came to the location, including the environmental police, hazardous material department of the fire department and others, but they all agreed that EPA is in charge of transporting dangerous materials. Unfortunately EPA officials are not responding although they know about this case for more than a year," he pointed out.

The waste presents a great danger. "These chemical materials are near the Canadian school and it is really dangerous for the children if they come to this area. Furthermore, the tanks are under an air corridor and may cause danger to navigation if they combust. We are now following the case with the prime minister's office to make sure this dangerous waste is removed," concluded Hajeri.

As TikTok videos take hold, parents...

Continued from Page 1

suggestively singing along to sexually explicit lyrics which are often degrading to women. Such videos are the stock in trade of Halia Beamer, an American 13-year-old who has emerged as one of TikTok's stars, chalking up more than five million followers.

Media reports have documented cases of users being bombarded with disturbing comments, while others have been asked for private contact details or to post provocative images. Last summer the Indonesian government banned the app after more than 170,000 people signed a petition saying that lip-synching in revealing outfits was not suitable for children. It was lifted only after TikTok representatives from China flew to Jakarta and promised to hire more people to weed out inappropriate content.

The US internet watchdog Common Sense says the combination of mature content and privacy risks means users should be at least 16. "Because the age limit is so low, you attract a greater assortment of dangerous characters, and users lying about their age," Solis said. But raising the age limit would remove millions of people from the platform, and curb TikTok's exponential growth.

In France for example, 38 percent of youths aged 11

to 14 have a TikTok account according to Generation Numerique, which tracks internet usage. Girls are by far the majority among French preteens, with 58 percent saying they have an account compared with just 15 percent for boys. French police warned parents last month about the dangers, saying their teens "may be targeted by indecent sexual proposals". "TikTok promotes dancing and singing in particular, things which are still pretty feminine that boys don't always dare to do," said Cyril di Palma, Generation Numerique's president.

ByteDance, whose app is called Douyin in China, says it works extensively to protect its users, with software that monitors content and "a continually growing team of moderators". But Di Palma says many parents are still unaware of the risks, "and are astonished to see their little angels in poses inappropriate for their age". The effects of early exposure to social media are so new that "parents, educators, even doctors... are either under-qualified or completely ignorant in the face of the need to guide a young generation in the dangers and possibilities of these new technologies," Solis said.

William Soally, a French father whose 12-year-old daughter is a dance fan, took action after seeing alerts about TikTok among YouTube users. "I talked about it with my daughter and we decided to remove the app from her phone," Soally, 35, told AFP, acknowledging the move had initially provoked tears and worries about "a loss of social status". "The solution has to come from parents, who need to understand that the Internet is not a world of Care Bears," he added, referring to the 1980s cartoon characters. — AFP

MPs call for resolving bedoon...

Continued from Page 1

Hayef complained that his colleagues in the opposition have been sentenced to 42 months in jail for entering the National Assembly building, in reference to MPs Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei. The lawmaker also warned that the government will be held to account for rampant corruption and criticized the government for not returning the citizenship revoked from several opposition figures.

MP Saleh Ashour criticized the government's foreign aid policy, saying that it has donated \$1.2 billion to Jordan and \$2 billion to Bahrain and several millions to many countries, while Kuwaiti citizens are suffering from huge loans and a bad standard of living, claiming that the government has not submitted any law that serves citizens. He criticized the demographic policy, saying that the size of the Indian and Egyptian communities has become equal to that of Kuwaitis.

Sports

Kohli, Pujara make Australia toil after impressive Agarwal debut

Pat Cummins was the pick of the attack, taking two for 40

MELBOURNE: Powerhouse Indian pair Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli built on an impressive 76 from debutant Mayank Agarwal to pile pain on Australia in the crunch third Test yesterday. On a docile, batsman-friendly Melbourne Cricket Ground wicket, India ground their way to 215 for two at stumps on day one with the rock-like Pujara not out 68 and superstar Kohli unbeaten on 47 as the bowlers toiled in hot conditions for little reward.

Pat Cummins was the pick of the attack, taking two for 40. India came into the Boxing Day clash with a new pair of inexperienced openers after the misfiring Murali Vijay and KL Rahul were axed, suggesting a hint of panic as Kohli's men look to win their first-ever series in Australia.

But the exciting Agarwal rose to the challenge in front of 73,500 fans after India won an important toss and opted to bat on a pitch that is expected to deteriorate as the match wears on. He stroked 76 — the high-

SCOREBOARD

MEBOURNE: Scorecard at stumps on day one of the third Test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday:

India first innings	
M. Agarwal c Paine b Cummins	76
H.Vihari c Finch b Cummins	8
C.Pujara not out	68
V. Kohli not out	47
Extras (lb6, b10)	16
Total (two wickets, 89 overs)	215
To bat: Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah	
Fall of wickets: 1-40 (Vihari), 2-123 (Agarwal)	
Bowling: Starc 16-6-32-0, Hazlewood 18-6-45-0, Cummins 19-6-40-2, Lyon 21-4-59-0, Marsh 15-3-23-0.	
Australia: Marcus Harris, Aaron Finch, Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Tim Paine, Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Starc.	

est score by an Indian on debut in Australia-and was looking impregnable before Cummins had him caught behind by Tim Paine as he gloved the last ball before tea down the legside.

It brought Kohli to the crease to a huge roar from the large Indian contingent at the MCG, and he set about building an unbroken 92-run partnership with the ever-reliable Pujara. "I'm happy, I would definitely take a 76 rather than something less than that. Saying that, I would have liked to have gone on and be there at the end of the day," said Agarwal.

"Honestly, I thought they bowled extremely well and didn't give us many loose balls. They kept it tight and they were attacking," he added. "We need to now try and post up a big score. The bigger the score the more pressure we can put on them."

The four-Test series is tied 1-1 after India won the opening clash in Adelaide by 31 runs and Australia drew level with a 146-run victory in Perth, making Melbourne a crunch encounter.

Australia's Travis Head said today morning would be critical. "It was a tough day at the office, grinding Test cricket. They batted well and we created pressure," he said. "We need to make sure we come back tomorrow morning and bowl the way we did today."

"Things can change, momentum can change and I don't think we're far away," he added. Agarwal, who has been in fine domestic form, scored his first Test runs with a three through the covers off Josh Hazlewood and had plundered 17 before the more cagey Hanuma Vihari, promoted to open from number six in Perth, troubled the scorers.



MELBOURNE: India's batsman Mayank Agarwal (R) plays a shot as Australia's wicketkeeper Tim Paine looks on during day one of the third cricket Test match between Australia and India in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

in the 12th over, with the physio needed to check he was okay. The right-hander continued but when he tried to avoid another brutal Cummins bouncer the ball pinged off his glove. Aaron Finch took an easy catch in the slips and he was gone for eight.

All-rounder Mitch Marsh was then brought into the attack only to be met with boos from a section of the crowd, having been recalled in place of local boy Peter Handscomb. But Agarwal was unflappable and glided to his maiden Test 50 off 95 balls by effortlessly drilling a Lyon delivery past the non-striker for four.

At the other end, the patient Pujara deployed his usual blocking technique, picking off runs from loose balls. He rarely looked threatened although he got an inside edge on 33 that just failed to carry to Usman Khawaja at gully before bringing up his 21st Test 50 from 152 balls.

Kohli quickly got into a rhythm when he arrived at the crease, accelerating the run rate as he rattled off a string of boundaries, with the signs ominous for Australia going into day two. Pujara scored a century in Adelaide and Kohli matched the feat in Perth. —AFP

Steyn claims outright SA wicket taking record

CENTURION: Shaun Pollock yesterday described Dale Steyn as "the best fast bowler that South Africa has produced" after Steyn beat his record for the most Test wickets for the country.

Steyn broke the record he shared with Pollock when Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman became his 422nd victim on the first day of the first Test at SuperSport Park. Zaman's dismissal brought to an end more than three years of frustration during which the fast bowler missed no fewer than 27 Test matches because of injury. Steyn, 35, was mobbed by his teammates and hoisted on the shoulders of new-ball partner Kagiso Rabada after Zaman (12) edged the ball to Dean Elgar at third slip, reducing Pakistan to 17 for two after winning the toss and batting first.

"His performances both home and away have been remarkable," said Pollock in a statement issued by Cricket South Africa. "His injuries of late have

been in stark contrast to how well he has managed his body and fitness throughout his career." Pollock said Steyn's record stamped him as South Africa's all-time best fast bowler.

"I have enjoyed so many attributes of Dale's bowling, the ability to swing the ball at high speed upfront, reverse-swing the ball with devastating effect and bowl with great control, as well as being able to crank it up with high-speed, hostile bowling on very flat surfaces at times," said Pollock.

REMARKABLY DURABLE

Ironically, before a groin strain ruled him out of action midway through a Test in India, Steyn had been remarkably durable for a fast bowler, playing in 48 consecutive Tests from December 2009 to November 2015, during which he took 232 wickets at an average of 21.72 and dominated the International Cricket Council Test rankings for bowlers. He spent a record 263 weeks in the top spot.

Steyn took his 400th Test wicket in his 80th Test in July 2015 — the second-fastest in the world to reach the milestone-and it seemed Pollock's record was about to fall. But four serious injuries delayed what had seemed imminently inevitable.

The groin injury in India was followed by a shoulder injury during the first Test against England in December 2015 and,



PRETORIA: South Africa's Dale Steyn celebrates after getting Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman wicket during day one of the 1st cricket test match between South Africa and Pakistan at SuperSport Park cricket stadium yesterday in Pretoria. —AFP

after a brief comeback, a more serious shoulder injury against Australia in November 2016 which caused him to miss 15 Tests.

Just when it seemed he had made a full recovery, he suffered a freak heel injury in the first Test against India in January this year, which caused him to miss the remaining Tests against India and a series against Australia.

After a slow recovery, Steyn spent time with English county Hampshire and

SCOREBOARD

CENTURIAON Scoreboard at the end of Pakistan's first innings on the first day of the first Test between South Africa and Pakistan at SuperSport Park yesterday:

Pakistan first innings	
Imam-ul-Haq lbw b Rabada	0
Fakhar Zaman c Elgar b Steyn	12
Shan Masood b Olivier	19
Azhar Ali c De Bruyn b Olivier	36
Asad Shafiq lbw b Olivier	7
Babar Azam c Du Plessis b Rabada	71
Sarfraz Ahmed b Olivier	0
Mohammad Amir b Olivier	1
Yasir Shah lbw b Rabada	4
Hasan Ali not out	21
Shaheen Afridi c De Kock b Olivier	0
Extras (b7, lb2, w1)	10
Total (47 overs)	181
Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Imam), 2-17 (Zaman), 3-54 (Masood), 4-62 (Shafiq), 5-86 (Azhar), 6-86 (Sarfraz), 7-96 (Amir), 8-111 (Yasir), 9-178 (Azam)	
Bowling: Steyn 13-1-66-1, Rabada 17-4-59-3 (1w), Olivier 14-3-37-3, Maharaj 3-1-10-0.	
South Africa: F. du Plessis, D. Elgar, A. Markram, H. Amla, T. Bavuma, T. de Bruyn, Q. de Kock, K. Maharaj, K. Rabada, D. Steyn, D Olivier	

Match situation: Pakistan are all out for 181 in the first innings

Southee, Lakmal heroics leave N Zealand-S Lanka Test evenly poised

CHRISTCHURCH: Suranga Lakmal and Tim Southee vied for early honours as 14 wickets fell to leave the deciding second Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka evenly poised on day one in Christchurch yesterday.

"The first session (on Thursday) will be important for both teams," Southee said at the end of a day in which he top-scored for New Zealand with 68 and then took three quick Sri Lankan wickets.

After Sri Lanka won the toss and opted to bowl, Lakmal produced a career-best five for 54 as New Zealand crumbled and were all out for 178 in 50 overs.

At stumps, Sri Lanka were 88 for four in reply with Angelo Mathews not out 27 and Roshen Silva on 15 while Southee had three for 29. "I'd say it's evenly poised," Sri Lankan bowling coach Rumesh Ratnayake said, as he praised Lakmal's vital contribution.

The 31-year-old right-arm quick rarely gets a chance to shine in the sub-continent where spinners dominate, but the green Hagley Oval wicket and heavy cloud cover were ripe to be exploited.

"In the fourth over, he got the line

and length spot on and from there he was exceptional," the coach said. "The wicket was conducive enough for him to do with the ball what he wanted to."

New Zealand knew they were in for a tough time when they lost the toss, with Southee feeling their fortunes improved after he took 14 off one Lakmal over to put the star Sri Lankan performer out of the attack.

"They then changed the length that had worked so well for them and it worked in our favour," he said. In a marathon opening session, Lakmal bowled unchanged for 16 overs as he tore New Zealand apart with figures at one stage of four for 11.

He returned late in the innings to remove Neil Wagner to eclipse his previous best of five for 63 against South Africa two years ago. Southee and BJ Watling (46) offered spirited resistance for New Zealand with a 108-run stand for the seventh wicket while Ross Taylor (27) was the only other home batsman to score more than 10.

Southee, batting at better than a run a ball, hit three sixes and six fours in his innings and brought up the New Zealand hundred with a thunderous stroke which Silva managed to get a hand to but both ball and fielder ended up over the rope. After the drawn first Test in Wellington, New Zealand need to win in Christchurch to secure a fourth consecutive series win for the first time.

Sri Lanka are pushing to end a run



CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand's paceman Trent Boult bowls during day one of the second cricket Test match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Hagley Park Oval in Christchurch yesterday. —AFP

of six consecutive Tests against New Zealand without a win. They drew first blood by winning the toss and predictably bowled first, giving Lakmal the opportunity to put his full repertoire on display as he moved the ball both ways.

There were catches by the wicket-keeper, second slip and mid-off as well as a bowled as he sent Jeet Raval (six), Tom Latham (10), Kane Williamson (two) and Henry Nicholls back to the pavilion in his opening spell.

Lahiru Kumara joined the wicket

spree with two dismissals, including the fortunate run out of Taylor. An attempt to stop a straight drive from Watling saw the ball crash through Kumara's fingers and on to the stumps with Taylor backing up out of his crease.

With the ball, Southee removed Dimuth Karunaratne (seven), Dinesh Chandimal (six) and Danushka Gunathilaka (eight) to move to 235 career Test wickets and become the third most successful New Zealand bowler behind Richard Hadlee (431) and Daniel Vettori (361). —AFP

SCOREBOARD

CHRISTCHURCH: Scoreboard at the end of day one in the second Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in Christchurch yesterday:

New Zealand first innings	
J. Raval c Chandimal b Lakmal	6
T. Latham c Mendis b Lakmal	10
K. Williamson c Dickwella b Lakmal	2
R. Taylor run out (Kumara)	27
H. Nicholls b Lakmal	1
B. Watling c Perera b Kumara	46
C. de Grandhomme c Chameera b Kumara	1
T. Southee c Gunathilaka b Perera	68
N. Wagner c Mendis b Lakmal	0
A. Patel c Lakmal b Kumara	2
T. Boult not out	1
Extras: (b6, lb7, nb1)	14
Total: (all out, 50 overs)	178
Fall of wickets: 1-16 (Raval), 2-17 (Latham), 3-22 (Williamson), 4-36 (Nicholls), 5-57 (Taylor), 6-64 (de Grandhomme), 7-172 (Southee), 8-175 (Wagner), 9-177 (Watling), 10-178 (Patel)	
Bowling: Lakmal 19-5-54-5, Kumara 14-4-49-3 (1nb), Mathews 4-1-6-0, Chameera 8-1-43-0, Perera 5-1-13-1.	

Sri Lanka first innings

D. Karunaratne c Williamson b Southee	7
D. Gunathilaka c Raval b Southee	8
D Chandimal c Watling b Southee	6
K. Mendis c Watling b de Grandhomme	15
A. Mathews not out	27
R. Silva not out	15
Extras: (b 5, lb 5)	10
Total: (for 4 wickets; 32 overs)	88
Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Karunaratne), 2-20 (Chandimal), 3-21 (Gunathilaka), 4-51 (Mendis)	
Bowling: Boult 10-5-20-0, Southee 11-3-29-3, de Grandhomme 6-0-19-1, Wagner 5-0-10-0.	

Irving shoots Celtics past Philadelphia 76ers in OT

Jazz hammer Blazers for second time in four days

BOSTON: Kyrie Irving scored 40 points, including two 3-pointers in the final two minutes of overtime, and the Boston Celtics overcame a five-point deficit in the extra session to defeat the visiting Philadelphia 76ers 121-114 on Tuesday. Irving, who added 10 rebounds, sent the game into OT by sinking a difficult jumper with 20.9 seconds left in the fourth quarter. The guard's performance helped overcome 34 points and 16 rebounds by Philadelphia's Joel Embiid. Jayson Tatum added 23 points and 10 rebounds for Boston. Marcus Morris also scored 23. Jimmy Butler added 24 points for Philadelphia. JJ Redick had 17 points, and Ben Simmons contributed 11 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists. Redick missed a shot that would have won the game at the end of regulation.

LAKERS 127, WARRIORS 101

Kyle Kuzma scored 19 points and visiting Los Angeles ended a seven-game losing streak against Golden State. Ivica Zubac had 18 points and 11 rebounds and LeBron James had 17 points and 13 rebounds before leaving with a groin injury in the third

quarter. Reports afterward indicated that James avoided serious injury. Rajon Rondo had 15 points and 10 assists off the bench, Brandon Ingram scored 14 points, Josh Hart had 12 points and fellow reserve Lance Stephenson finished with 11 points for the Lakers. Andre Iguodala scored a season-high 23 points for Golden State.

ROCKETS 113, THUNDER 109

James Harden recorded his seventh consecutive 30-plus-point game, but when he needed scoring help down the stretch, he got it as Houston rallied for a win over visiting Oklahoma City. However, a crucial stretch came with Harden either on the bench or facilitating, as the Rockets flipped an 88-86 deficit entering the fourth quarter into a 102-95 lead before Harden scored more than halfway through the final period. Clint Capela (16 points, 23 rebounds) threw down a pair of dunks before Eric Gordon (17 points) converted a driving layup that extended the Houston lead to seven points. Austin Rivers, one day after signing with the Rockets, subsequently drilled a pair of 3-pointers to keep the Thunder at bay. Oklahoma City got 28 points and 14 rebounds



BOSTON: Kyrie Irving #11 of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers on Tuesday at the TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. —AFP

from Paul George plus 21 points, nine rebounds and nine assists from Russell Westbrook.

JAZZ 117, TRAIL BLAZERS 96

Donovan Mitchell scored 19 points to lead seven players in double figures as Utah breezed to victory over visiting Portland for the second time in four days. Rudy Gobert collected 18 points, 14 rebounds and seven blocked shots as Joe Ingles and Dante Exum scored 15 points apiece for Utah, who went 13 of 29 from 3-point range. Damian Lillard scored 20 points for the Blazers, who shot 39.3 percent from the field. Lillard scored only four points after intermission. Portland's next-highest scorer was Evan Turner, who came off the bench for 12 points.

BUCKS 109, KNICKS 95

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 11 of his 30 points in the third quarter as Milwaukee seized control and recorded a victory at New York. Antetokounmpo recorded his 13th 30-point game of the season and added 14 rebounds for his 22nd double-double, but it was his performance in the third that helped the Bucks get a win in their first appearance on Christmas since facing the Kansas City Kings in 1977. He also became the first Milwaukee player to score 30 on Christmas Day since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in 1972. Milwaukee, which got 20 points from Brook Lopez, won for the fifth time in six games overall. Rookie Kevin Knox scored 21 points for the Knicks. —Reuters

Cardinals claim Swearinger from Redskins

WASHINGTON: D.J. Swearinger is heading back to Arizona after being claimed off waivers from the Washington Redskins, the Cardinals announced Tuesday. Swearinger broke the news earlier Monday on social media, posting a photo on Instagram of himself in a Cardinals uniform from when he played for the team in 2015 and 2016.

He added a caption referencing his split with Washington, reading, in part: "I Gave That Organization My Heart And Soul And They Spit In My Face For Giving My Opinion Only To Better The Team!! Right Wrong Or Indifferent I've Found My Peace And Learned From It And I Am So Excited To Go Back To The Sunny Desert Arizona Like I Never Left!! I'm Baaaaacckkkkk!!!!" Swearinger, 27, had three interceptions, nine passes defended and 73 tackles in 20 games (13 starts) over parts of two seasons with the Cardinals. He left as a free agent in March 2017, signing a three-year, \$13.5 million deal with Washington. Arizona owes Swearinger-a Pro Bowl alternate in the midst of a career season-less than \$200,000 for the rest of this year's salary and has him under contract for \$4.25 million in 2019.

With the NFL's worst record (3-12), the Cardinals have the league's top waiver priority. It was unclear if other teams also put in a claim on the safety. Washington released Swearinger on Monday, two days after he bashed defensive coordinator Greg Manusky following the team's loss to the Tennessee Titans. Among other things, Swearinger called one of Manusky's play-calling "horrible" and said the team should have been more aggressive, adding Manusky made it too easy on Titans backup quarterback Blaine Gabbert. Redskins head coach Jay Gruden told reporters Sunday he was disappointed in Swearinger's comments-after the two had talked previously about keeping team issues in-house-and planned to meet with the safety on Monday to discuss punishment. Swearinger revealed Monday on 106.7 The Fan that Gruden called him into his office and informed him of his release. "I'm peaceful about it," Swearinger told the radio station. "I don't regret nothing, because I know I gave 100 percent from my heart."

Swearinger has played for four NFL teams in six career seasons despite earning a starting role in five of those campaigns. Known for his outspokenness, he offered more veiled criticism of Manusky at times earlier this season. Swearinger had four interceptions and 10 passes defended for the Redskins this season, both team highs, while starting all 15 games. He also forced three fumbles. With Giants Pro Bowl safety Landon Collins injured, Swearinger could wind up being named to the Pro Bowl as a replacement.

To make room on the roster for Swearinger, the Cardinals placed rookie tackle Korey Cunningham (foot) on injured reserve. Cunningham, a seventh-round pick, started six games at left tackle for Arizona before going down late on Sunday against the Los Angeles Rams. He drew praise during the season from head coach Steve Wilks for his play, as he held up well after being thrust in for injured starter D.J. Humphries. —Reuters

Warner asked me to tamper with ball: Bancroft

MELBOURNE: Banned Australian player Cameron Bancroft yesterday confirmed David Warner asked him to alter the ball during the tampering scandal in South Africa and said he went along with it "to fit in".

Bancroft was seen using sandpaper to try to rough up the ball in the Cape Town Test in March, receiving a nine-month ban from international and domestic cricket for his part in an incident that rocked the sport.

Warner and then captain Steve Smith were exiled for a year after all three were found to be involved. A Cricket Australia investigation pointed to Warner as the mastermind and Bancroft revealed more details in an interview with former Australia wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist on Fox Sports.

"Dave suggested to me to carry the action out on the ball given the situation we were in the game and I didn't know any better," said Bancroft, whose ban runs out this weekend.

"I didn't know any better because I just wanted to fit in and feel valued really. As simple as that.

"The decision was based around my values, what I valued at the time, and I valued fitting in ... you hope that fitting in earns you respect and with that, I guess, there came a pretty big cost for the mistake." At the time, Bancroft had been forging a new Australian Test opening partnership with the more experienced Warner. But he made clear he did not consider himself a victim.

"I had a choice and I made a massive mistake and that is what is in my control," said Bancroft, who admitted he often pondered what would have happened if he had said no, and concluded it was a no-win situation.

"I would have gone to bed and I would have felt like I had let everybody down. I would have felt like I had let the team down. I would have left like I had hurt our chances to win the game of cricket." Last week Smith also opened up as he begins to re-emerge into public life, distancing himself from the

Clan Des Obeaux wins thrilling King George VI Chase

LONDON: Clan Des Obeaux powered to a surprise victory in the King George VI Chase yesterday under Harry Cobden after a dramatic race at Kempton to give trainer Paul Nicholls his 10th win in the Boxing Day showpiece.

The six-year-old, partly owned by legendary former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, defied odds of 12/1 to beat 2016 winner Thistlecrack into second place, with Cheltenham Gold Cup hero Native River in third.

The three miles were run at a fast

pace thanks to 2015 Gold Cup winner Coneygree at the front, but Clan Des Obeaux eased through the field, cruising alongside 15-2 shot Thistlecrack before storming clear up the home straight.

Second-favourite Waiting Patiently suffered a terrible stroke of luck when brought down by the falling Bristol De Mai, whose Triple Crown hopes went up in smoke after his impressive second straight Belfair Chase triumph last month.

Reigning champion Might Bite led the betting at 10-3 but, much like at Haydock in the Belfair, Nicky Henderson's charge faded badly after travelling strongly for much of the race.

Native River stayed on in his trademark game fashion for third ahead of Politologue, but never looked a serious threat to the first two home. — AFP



Cameron Bancroft and David Warner (right).

plot while admitting he failed as a captain by turning a blind eye.

Asked what happened in the changing rooms at Cape Town before Bancroft attempted to cheat, he said: "For me in the room, I walked past something and had the opportunity to stop it and I didn't do it and that was my leadership failure. "It was the potential for something to happen and it went on and happened out in the field," he added.

"I had the opportunity to stop it at that point rather than say, 'I don't want to know anything about it.'" A scathing independent review into the incident blamed Cricket Australia's "arrogant and controlling" culture as partly contributing to players bending the rules.

In an interview with Gilchrist on Wednesday, Smith pinpointed a downward slide in the team's culture to a defeat against South Africa in Hobart in

2016 — their fifth loss in a row. "I remember James Sutherland and Pat Howard coming into the (changing) rooms there and saying 'we don't pay you to play, we pay you to win'," he said, referring to the former CA chief executive and high performance manager.

"For me that was a little bit disappointing, we don't go out there to try lose games of cricket, we go out there to try and win and play the best way we can." Current CA chief Kevin Roberts said Wednesday it was time to move on.

"The events of Cape Town were investigated and dealt with some nine months ago now so there's no new news there," he told reporters ahead of the third Test against India in Melbourne. Bancroft is expected to make his return for the Perth Scorchers in the Big Bash League on Sunday, with Smith and Warner available from late March. —AFP



Clan Des Obeaux

Sports

Pogba strikes twice as Man Utd win on Solskjaer home debut

Solskjaer's team make it six points in five days

MANCHESTER: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's instant impact as Manchester United interim manager continued in his first home game in charge as two goals from Paul Pogba helped his team secure a 3-1 win over Huddersfield.

After a resounding 5-1 victory at Cardiff, in his first game since replacing Jose Mourinho at the weekend, Solskjaer saw his team make it six points in five days over the Christmas period. More significantly, the win and performance also maintained the positive atmosphere generated by the arrival of the popular Norwegian, who spent nearly 15 years with the club as player and coach before moving to his current club Molde.

The first Old Trafford goal of the Solskjaer era came after 28 minutes after a Pogba free-kick had deflected off Philip Billing and behind for a corner. Marcus Rashford swung over a cross which was met by Victor Lindelof with a goalbound flick that Christopher Schindler cleared off the line, only as far as Nemanja Matic, unmarked at the far post, who steered in his first goal of the season.

United had dominated possession to the point, without unduly troubling Jonas Lossl in the visitors' goal, and Solskjaer's animated reaction on the touchline during that period showed his passion for the task.

It was a point not lost on the United supporters who had given their new caretaker manager a heartfelt welcome on his return to the club where his playing career ended in 2007. Solskjaer could not conceal the delight on his face as he strode down the touchline before kick-off, dressed in club blazer and tie, waving to supporters as he made his way to the dugout.

A banner proclaiming "20-Legend" - Solskjaer's shirt number in his United playing days - also made a return to the stands at Old Trafford, another reminder of the hero status the Norwegian holds at the club following his match-winning goal in the 1999 Champions League final.

But Solskjaer was not in for an easy afternoon. Huddersfield, who had moved bottom in the Premier League before kick-off, wasted a glorious chance after just 10 minutes, Terence Kongolo clearing the bar from six yards after a long throw-in by Billing.

And, when the visitors started the second half comfortably the more threatening of the two teams Solskjaer responded with an important double substitution that saw Ander Herrera and Ashley Young brought on.

Briefly, Huddersfield maintained their threat and a brilliantly-worked Alex Pritchard corner allowed Laurent Depoitre a 15-yard shot which David de Gea kept out with a magnificent, diving, one-handed stop.

That made the timing of Pogba's first goal all the more significant as he doubled United's lead just seconds later. Rashford started the move with a darting 63rd minute run and pass to Juan Mata who reached the byline before pulling the ball back to Herrera whose square pass allowed Pogba to convert an accurate finish from 16 yards.

Pogba had only scored two Premier League goals in the same game on one other occasion - the derby victory at Manchester City in April that ranked as one of the highlights of Mourinho's time in charge.

But he would repeat the trick in Solskjaer's second game in charge, exchanging passes with Jesse Lingard after 77 minutes before beating Lossl with a spectacular right-foot finish from 25 yards.

Huddersfield at least claimed a late consolation as substitute Steve Mouinie outjumped Pogba to head on an 88th minute Pritchard free-kick, setting up Mathias Jorgensen who slotted in from close range. —AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's English striker Marcus Rashford (L) battles with Huddersfield Town's German defender Christopher Schindler (R) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Huddersfield Town at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. —AFP

Spurs thrash Bournemouth to leapfrog City into second

LONDON: Tottenham's claim to be genuine contenders for the Premier League title was reinforced by a 5-0 thrashing of Bournemouth yesterday that saw them climb above champions Manchester City and into second place.

Mauricio Pochettino's side did not put in a particularly scintillating display as speculation continues to swirl around the Argentinian and the Manchester United job that becomes vacant at the end of the season.

But it was more than enough to swat aside opponents who last beat them back in 1957 and keep a squad that also has an eye on Champions League glory believing that anything is possible.

Christian Eriksen's opening goal required a hefty deflection but Bournemouth crumbled as Son Heung-min and Lucas Moura added to the tally before the break, and Harry Kane and Son bolstered the scoreline further afterwards. The win was also followed Sunday's 6-2 demolition of Everton — 11 goals scored and just two conceded is any side's vision of a Merry Christmas.

Pochettino made four changes from the Everton game, which saw Dele Alli

hurt by a challenge from England teammate Jordan Pickford. In came Moura to replace him but the majority of the tinkering was at the back, with Kyle Walker-Peters, Juan Foyth and Danny Rose drafted in alongside Toby Alderweireld.

Bournemouth beat Brighton 2-0 on Saturday for only their second win since October but quickly knew this would not be their day, although the first chances were theirs.

Junior Stanislas and Ryan Fraser got in each other's way for the first and David Brooks could not get quite enough elevation on his attempt to beat Hugo Lloris with a chip after Jefferson Lerma had played him in.

SPURS' STROKE OF LUCK

Tottenham looked lethargic until a sizable slice of luck put them ahead in the 16th minute. Eriksen, set up by Walker-Peters, fired a speculative shot from distance that Bournemouth goalkeeper Asmir Begovic had covered until it took a deflection off Lerma's leg.

Goal number two arrived in the 23rd minute thanks to Walker-Peters disposing Charlie Daniels in the Bournemouth box to set Son up for a well-taken finish.

Rookie right-back Walker-Peters completed a hat-trick of assists 10 minutes before half-time by setting Lucas up to sweep first time beyond Begovic. There was still time for more Bournemouth misfortune before the break however as Simon Francis, utterly bamboozled by a dragback and flick



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's South Korean striker Son Heung-Min (C) scores their fifth goal during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Bournemouth at Wembley Stadium in London, yesterday. —AFP

from Son, had to be stretchered off and the half ended with Daniels seeing his goalbound header clawed off the line by Lloris on his 32nd birthday.

Bournemouth's woes continued in the second period with no penalty awarded when Foyth bundled Callum Wilson over, and a raised flag ruling out Stanislas' smart finish after Diego Rico, on for the stricken Francis, had picked him out in front of goal.

Kane had been quiet apart from the occasional deft touch but fired a free-kick straight at Begovic before netting number four just after the hour mark.

Eriksen was the provider on this occasion as the Dane spotted Kane's run and the England captain did the rest with a left-footed volley on the turn that was worthy of a better contest than this one.

Kane created Tottenham's fifth in odd fashion 20 minutes from time by getting the better of Nathan Ake in the box, falling over but still setting up Danny Rose, who also tumbled to the ground, and then getting up to set up Lucas for a shot that Begovic could only parry for Son to slot home. Bournemouth continued attacking until the end but no consolation came their way. —AFP

Ronaldo rescues point for 10-man Juventus at Atalanta

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo came off the bench to score a late equaliser as 10-man Juventus salvaged a 2-2 draw at Atalanta yesterday to move nine points clear of Napoli at the top of Serie A.

Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli visit third-placed Inter Milan later in the day, though, with the chance to cut the gap to the reigning champions. Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri decided to rest Ronaldo as the former Real Madrid man did not start a league game for the first time since moving to Italy, but the 33-year-old was needed to level in the 78th minute after Duvan Zapata's double had put the hosts in front following Berat Djimsiti's own goal.

Ronaldo's efforts keep Juventus unbeaten in Serie A, ahead of the final game before the winter break against Sampdoria on Saturday. Everything appeared to be going to plan for Juve when they grabbed the lead in only the second minute when Atalanta centre-back Djimsiti completely miskicked Alex Sandro's deflected cross into his own net.

But Zapata put a spanner in the Juve works with a fantastic individual goal midway through the first half, spinning centre-back Leonardo Bonucci with ease before drilling a left-footed strike into the far corner.

Douglas Costa fired wide just after

the half-hour mark as the visitors looked to restore their advantage, but the Turin giants were reduced to 10 men eight minutes after half-time when Rodrigo Bentancur was shown a second yellow card for a poor tackle on Timothy Castagne.

Colombian striker Zapata wasted little time in making Bentancur pay, bundling in from almost on the goalline to put Atalanta ahead and score his ninth league goal of the season. Allegri sent on Ronaldo with 25 minutes remaining, and less than 60 seconds after Robin Gosens wasted a golden opportunity to seal victory for Atalanta, the Portuguese star pounced to nod home from close range.

Earlier yesterday, AC Milan's push for a top-four finish in Serie A took a hit as Gennaro Gattuso's side were held to an uneventful 0-0 draw at struggling Frosinone.

The seven-time European champions have now failed to score in four consecutive league games for the first time since 1984, managing three goalless stalemates in the process.

"To reach our objective of Champions League qualification we can't play the way we did in the first half," Gattuso told DAZN. "I'm the captain of this ship, so it's only right that I take all the responsibility. It's important for me to understand how to make my players play their best, because right now they're performing below their ability."

"There's no calmness and they look nervous, that's what I need to think about. As for the rest, anything can happen." Milan slipped to sixth,



BERGAMO: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (2ndL) eyes the ball being centred during the Italian Serie A football Match Atalanta Bergamo vs Juventus yesterday at the Atleti Azzurri d'Italia stadium in Bergamo. —AFP

behind fourth-placed Lazio by three points in the race for Champions League qualification.

Capital club Lazio won 2-0 at Bologna, while Sampdoria leapfrogged Milan into fifth by seeing off rock-bottom Chievo 2-0. Milan have said they will appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport after UEFA threatened to ban them from European competition for a season if they do not break even by June 2021.

The club won a previous appeal to CAS earlier this year, following a Europa League ban for breaching

Financial Fair Play regulations. But their efforts to secure European football for next season suffered a setback against a resolute Frosinone outfit who almost snatched a dramatic 93rd-minute winner when Camillo Ciano was denied by visiting goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Ciano had already seen a goal ruled out by VAR for a foul eight minutes before half-time. Frosinone remain second-bottom above only winless Chievo, having managed just one victory all season. —AFP

Wolves strike late to deny Fulham rare win

FULHAM: Romain Saiss bundled home from close range to earn Wolverhampton Wanderers a 1-1 draw at Fulham yesterday and deny Claudio Ranieri's side their first win in six Premier League matches.

Substitute Ryan Sessegnon struck to give the London side hope of three points as they fought to move off the bottom of the table, but Saiss's 85th-minute equaliser left Fulham 19th before Huddersfield's trip to Manchester United.

Claudio Ranieri's side showed defensive steel as they battled for a second consecutive clean sheet after achieving their first in a goal-less draw at Newcastle United on Saturday, but eventually caved in.

"When a team is bottom, everything goes against this team. We are stronger than this, we want to react in every circumstance," Ranieri told reporters. "If you continue to fight you can change (the situation), if you lose hope, you lose everything. I believe in my players and I believe we can make something good this season."

Fulham came closer in a tight first half with Aleksandar Mitrovic a constant thorn in Wolves's side, but Rui Patricio was alert to beat away the Serbian's strike after he wormed free in the area.

Sessegnon made the breakthrough for Fulham seven minutes after being introduced as a substitute, volleying in after Rui Patricio tried to punch the ball away. With five at the back Fulham looked more able to withstand pressure than earlier in the season but Saiss levelled after Ivan Cavaleiro's cross sat up for him at the back post with Joe Bryan unable to clear the ball.

Fulham nearly snatched a late victory but Wolves captain Conor Coady hacked a late Mitrovic effort off the line to leave his side in mid-table. "We're adult enough to know that today was not our best performance, everybody has to realise that," Wolves coach Nuno Espirito Santo said.

"I felt in the first half we didn't perform, we were surprised that Fulham dropped so deep and were so organised. The line-up was not the best choice for the game. "In the second half we played better, we controlled the ball, we made chances." —Reuters

Live			Matches on TV
			(Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Southampton FC v West Ham United			22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 2			

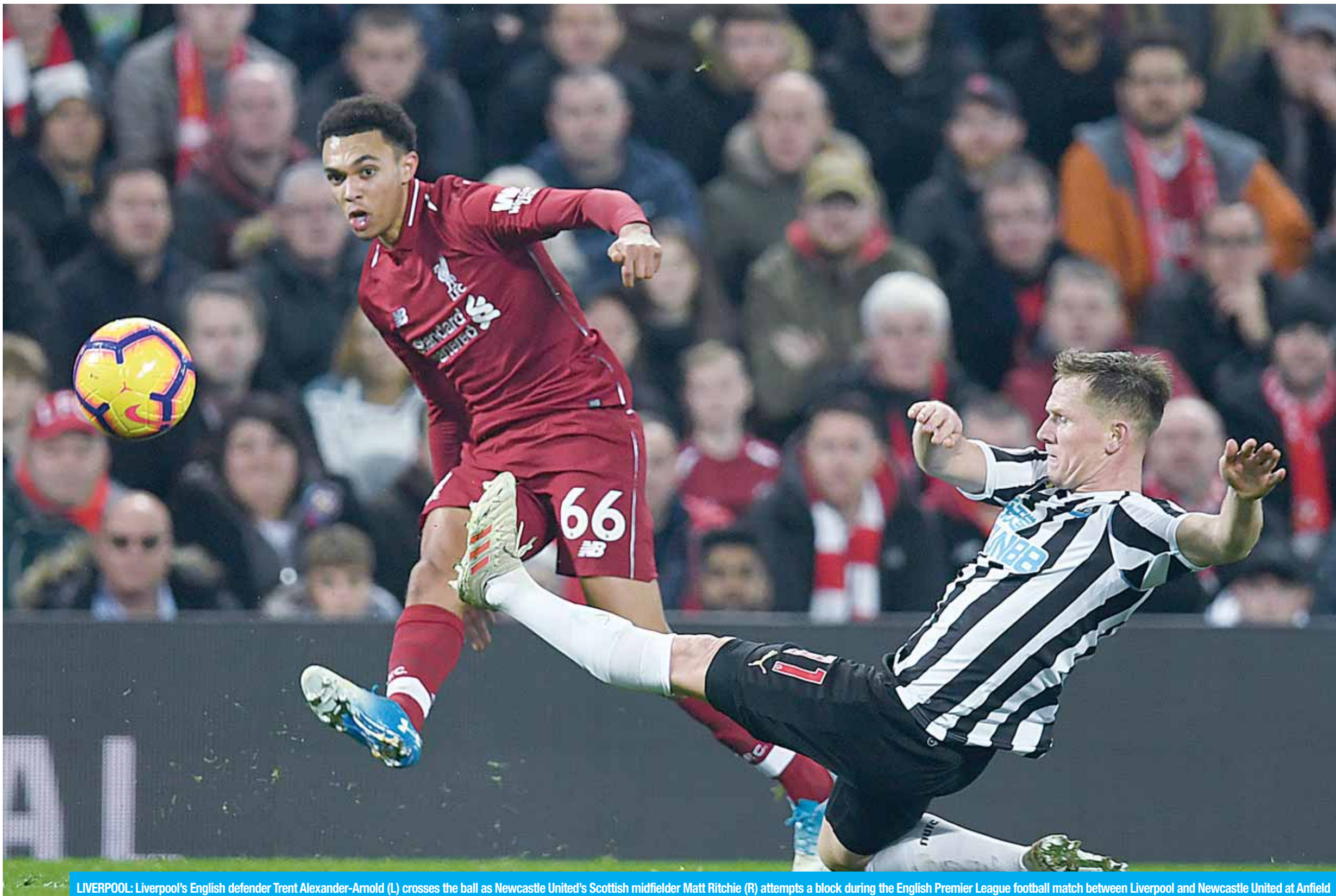
25 Kohli, Pujara make Australia toil after impressive Agarwal debut



26 Irving shoots Celtics past Philadelphia 76ers in OT



27 Ronaldo rescues point for 10-man Juventus at Atalanta



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's English defender Trent Alexander-Arnold (L) crosses the ball as Newcastle United's Scottish midfielder Matt Ritchie (R) attempts a block during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Newcastle United at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. —AFP

Liverpool thrash Newcastle 4-0

Extend lead at the top of the table

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool treated their fans to some Christmas cheer with a 4-0 thrashing of Newcastle United at Anfield yesterday, extending their lead at the top of the table.

The win put Liverpool on 51 points at the halfway point in the season, six ahead of Tottenham Hotspur who hammered Bournemouth 5-0, and seven clear of champions Manchester City who lost 2-1 at Leicester City.

Returning to the club he led to the Champions League title in 2005, Newcastle manager Rafael Benitez picked his team with defence in mind, stringing

five players across the back.

But defender Jamaal Lascelles inadvertently teed Dejan Lovren up for the opening goal, carelessly heading an attempted clearance into the path of the Liverpool centre back, who cracked home a fine half-volley in the 11th minute.

Newcastle managed to hold firm until halftime but within minutes of the restart they were two down as Mohamed Salah scored his 13th league goal of the season from the penalty spot following an innocuous foul on him by Paul Dummett.

Liverpool's enormous pressure threatened to give

them a third goal at any moment, and it came when Xherdan Shaqiri stabbed home Trent Alexander-Arnold's low cross from close range in the 79th minute. Fabinho made it 4-0 by heading home Salah's corner.

Liverpool's fans burst into song as news reached the Anfield stands that Manchester City had lost at Leicester, giving the Merseysiders the Christmas gift they wanted as they chase a first league title since 1990. "We just focused on ourselves and it's game by game for us. Every game is a final for us," Lovren said.

"We need to keep this momentum and after the next couple of games we will see where we are. Every game

now matters," he added. With little money available to spend in the upcoming transfer window, Benitez seemed barely able to conceal his frustration at Newcastle's situation.

"Obviously, we play against a very good team but there are two key moments in the game," the Spanish coach said. "The first goal we made a mistake, and the second goal (was) a soft penalty that gave them control. For us, it was very difficult to react," he added.

Benitez must lift his side ahead of their visit to Watford on Saturday while Liverpool host Arsenal later on the same day. —Reuters

Man City's title bid hit by shock defeat at Leicester

LEICESTER: Manchester City's bid to retain the Premier League title suffered a major blow as the champions crashed to a shock 2-1 defeat at Leicester yesterday. Just days after their surprise home loss to Crystal Palace, Pep Guardiola's side took the lead through Bernardo Silva's early goal.

But Marc Albrighton equalised for Leicester and Ricardo Pereira's 81st-minute rocket handed City a third loss in their last four league games. City are now seven points behind leaders Liverpool and drop to third place below Tottenham.

The problems are mounting up for Guardiola as Liverpool extended their lead at the top to leave City ruing a week either side of Christmas that threatens to see

the trophy prised from their grasp. In a rarity for Guardiola's impressive team, Leicester had them rattled on occasions, especially in a 10-minute spell at the end of the first half in which Claude Puel's side threatened to seize the initiative completely.

Leicester failed to make the most of that period but claimed victory with eight minutes remaining as Pereira pounced with a 20-yard blast to give a fine Leicester performance its deserved reward. City dominated much of the second half but failed to significantly trouble Kasper Schmeichel in the Leicester goal to lay bare one of the issues facing Guardiola—an uncharacteristic lack of attacking cohesion.

Sergio Aguero, made captain for the day, played a key hand in Silva's goal yet struggled on the whole to make any impression on a solid Leicester defence led superbly by the impressive Harry Maguire. With Raheem Sterling also kept quiet by Leicester's disciplined display, only Leroy Sane of City's attacking trio made any real inroads into the home side's defences.

With Kevin De Bruyne, the creative lynchpin of last season's title success, struggling to recapture his best form

after injury setbacks and withdrawn in the second half, City lacked a spark.

It looked set to matter little on 14 minutes, where Leicester were caught square at the back for Bernardo Silva's opener. Ben Chilwell played the goalscorer onside as Aymeric Laporte and Aguero combined to tee him up for a crisp finish past Schmeichel.

But the lead lasted for just five minutes before a lethargic City were hit with an equaliser on the counter-attack. They claimed a foul for Chilwell's challenge on Bernardo Silva but referee Dean waved play on and Leicester were ruthless. James Maddison found Jamie Vardy out wide and the striker hung a dangerous cross to the far post, where Albrighton arrived to head home.

City pressed for much of the second half but Schmeichel was rarely troubled and he saw Pereira score a spectacular winner on 81 minutes. A corner by Albrighton was cleared poorly by Sane and Ricardo drilled the ball inside the far post.

When Delph was dismissed for a high challenge on Pereira in the dying moments, Guardiola's misery was complete. —AFP



LEICESTER: Leicester City's English striker Jamie Vardy (R) vies with Manchester City's English defender John Stones (L) during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Manchester City at King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England yesterday. —AFP