



6 Sri Lanka showdown looms as new PM loses confidence vote



6 Pence issues sharp rebuke to Suu Kyi over persecution of Rohingya



24 NASA wants people on Mars within 25 years

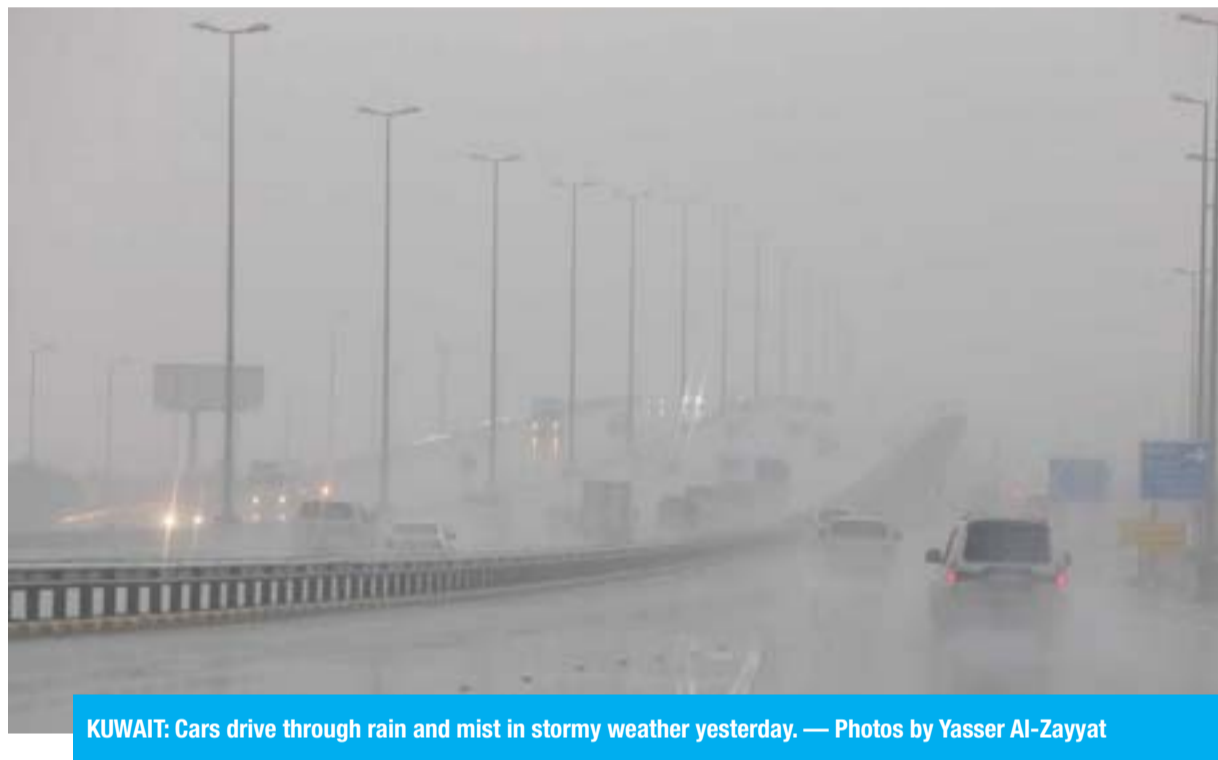


25 Badminton's big earner Sindhu sets her sights on number one



Iqama expiry fines waived for 4 days as public holiday declared

Govt moves to avoid rain chaos • Assembly forms probe panel



KUWAIT: Cars drive through rain and mist in stormy weather yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Men cover their heads with plastic sheets as they stand on the pavement in Kuwait City amid heavy rainfall.

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: As torrential rains and thunderstorms continued yesterday, the government declared today a public holiday for schools and government departments after it had given a similar holiday yesterday. Government agencies this time looked much more prepared as the government utilized all the capabilities of the civil defense, municipality and the public works ministry, in addition to the police force and the fire department, which stood ready to deal with any flooding.

A police source yesterday said residency fines will

not be collected from citizens whose helpers' residences - as well as expats whose residencies and that of their dependents - expired yesterday or will expire today, because these days were declared holidays due to weather conditions. The source added fines will not be collected for the four days from Wednesday through Saturday, and renewals will be made on Sunday. The interior ministry also decided not to renew residency permits of Bangladeshi and Nepalese workers without fingerprinting regardless of their residency type in the private sector.

SEE PAGES 2 & 3

The National Assembly yesterday formed a three-member committee to investigate allegations of government mismanagement and failure to deal with heavy rains that lashed the country in the past two weeks. The committee was assigned to investigate those responsible for the flooding of main roads and submit its report to the house within one month. The Assembly elected MPs Adel Al-Damkhi, Khaled Al-Otaibi and Dumaitheer Al-Enezi, who later resigned, and was replaced by MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei.

The formation of the committee came following a

heated debate in the Assembly over what lawmakers claimed was a government failure and lack of preparedness to deal with the rains. MPs then approved a number of recommendations that included the formation of the committee and asking the government to provide the Assembly within one month of the results of its investigations into the disaster.

The lawmakers also approved a recommendation calling on the government to provide fair and urgent compensation for all those who suffered losses and damages because of the rain. They also called on the

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News in brief

Trump names envoy to Saudi Arabia

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday tapped John Abizaid, a top US general from the Iraq war who has studied the Middle East for years, as ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Abizaid is a fluent Arabic speaker of Lebanese Christian descent who headed US Central Command - which covers the Middle East - during the Iraq war from shortly after the US invasion in 2003 through 2007. The 67-year-old wrote his master's thesis at Harvard University about Saudi Arabia, studying how the kingdom makes its decisions on defense spending. A California native, Abizaid graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point and later won a scholarship to study in Jordan, where he honed his Arabic. — AFP

Iran executes 'sultan of coins'

GENEVA: Iran executed two men accused of economic crimes yesterday, part of an effort to stem financial misconduct as the country faces an economic crisis and new US sanctions targeting its oil sector. One of the two executed men was Vahid Mazlounin, dubbed the "sultan of coins" by media, a trader accused of manipulating the currency market, according to Mizan, the news site of the Iranian judiciary. Mazlounin was allegedly caught with two tons of gold coins. The second man was part of Mazlounin's network and had been involved in the sale of gold coins, Mizan reported. Both of them were convicted of "spreading corruption on earth", a capital offence under Iran's Islamic laws. — Reuters

Assad urges Druze to join military

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad has called on the country's Druze community to do military service, days after members of the minority were released following a mass abduction in July by the Islamic State group. Since the conflict erupted in 2011, thousands of Druze, especially those in Sweida province, have refused to be conscripted, instead joining local militias promising to protect the region. Speaking to a group of former hostages and their families on Tuesday, Assad thanked the army, saying that without them "the abducted people would not have been freed". — AFP



GAZA CITY: Palestinian demonstrators chant slogans yesterday before burning pictures of Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman in front of the house of Ismail Haniya, the head of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas. — AFP

Hamas hails 'victory' after Israel defense minister quits

JERUSALEM: Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman announced his resignation yesterday and called for early elections after a sharp disagreement over a Gaza ceasefire deal, throwing the government into turmoil. Hamas called the minister's resignation a "victory for Gaza". Lieberman also said his party was quitting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, leaving the premier with only a one-seat majority in parliament. Elections are not due until Nov 2019, but Lieberman's resignation increases the likelihood of an earlier vote.

"What happened yesterday - the truce combined with the process with Hamas - is capitulating to terror," Lieberman told journalists in explaining his reasons for resigning. "What we're

doing now as a state is buying short-term quiet, with the price being severe long-term damage to national security." He added later: "We should agree on a date for elections as early as possible."

Netanyahu has defended Tuesday's ceasefire deal that ended the worst escalation between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza since a 2014 war. An official from Netanyahu's Likud party hit back at speculation that early elections would be called and said the prime minister would take charge of Lieberman's portfolio at least temporarily. "There's no obligation to go to an election in this time of security sensitivity," the official said on condition of anonymity. A Likud spokesman said later in the day that Netanyahu had begun consultations with heads of parties in his coalition to stabilize it. The party of far-right Education Minister Naftali Bennett, a Netanyahu rival, was threatening to withdraw from the coalition if he was not given the defense portfolio.

Lieberman, a security hardliner, heads the rightwing Yisrael Beitenu party, which holds five seats in the 120-seat parliament, the Knesset. Before taking over as defense minister, he said he

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After Gabo book purge, Kuwait bans Dostoyevsky

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti authorities have banned a book by Russian literary giant Fyodor Dostoyevsky, one of nearly 1,000 titles blacklisted at a festival which opened yesterday in the state. Saad Al-Anzi, who heads the Kuwait International Literary Festival, told AFP the information ministry had banned 948 books including Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, a novel set in 19th century Russia that explores morality, free will and the existence of God.

Dostoyevsky joins a growing list of

writers banned in the state, where a conservative trend in politics and society is rising. More than 4,000 books have been blacklisted by the information ministry over the past five years, including Victor Hugo's "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame" and "One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez - Gabo to his fans.

All titles on show at the 43rd edition of Kuwait's book fair, which runs through Nov 24, were screened in

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CIA sought 'truth serum' for prisoners

WASHINGTON: CIA interrogators sought a truth serum to use on Al-Qaeda prisoners in addition to waterboarding and other torture techniques after the Sept 11, 2001 attacks, according to formerly top secret documents released Tuesday. Desperate to get information about possible future attacks from Abu Zubaydah, who was believed to have helped plot the 9/11 attacks, interrogators reached back decades to the agency's 1950s experiments with mind-altering drugs like LSD and also to Russian testing of alleged truth serums in the 1980s.

In "Project Medication," the CIA doctors weighed barbiturates like sodium amylal and psychotomimetics, which create symptoms of psychosis. They were particularly interested in a drug trade-named Versed, or midazolam, a sedative that can cause loss of memory

while in effect. The idea came to officials of the CIA's Office of Medical Services (OMS) amid frustration that Abu Zubaydah "showed remarkable resilience" despite being put through vicious treatment, including stress positions and sleep deprivation.

"The intensity and duration of AZ's interrogation came as a surprise to OMS and prompted further study of the seemingly more benign alternative of drug-based interviews," said the report. But they found an absolute lack of historical evidence that drugs could induce a subject to give up information. "No such magic brew as the popular notion of truth serum exists," said a 1961 intelligence review. "It seems likely that any individual who can withstand ordinary intensive interrogation can hold out in narcosis," it said.

Still, the interrogators considered the drugs could trick a prisoner into thinking that he had done so. "Such drugs, although widely regarded as unreliable sources of 'truth,' were believed potentially useful as an 'excuse' that would allow the subject to be more forthcoming while still saving face," the interrogators reasoned.

Continued on Page 24

Local

State departments mobilize equipment across Kuwait to address emergencies

KNPC: Emergency plan ongoing, situation under control



Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah is seen while touring a hospital yesterday.



Public Works Ministry workers drain rainwater.

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works reiterated yesterday that all its equipment are spread around the country as a precautionary measure for any emergency. Minister of Public Works and State Minister of Municipality Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi personally followed up on work developments in presence of the ministry's personnel, the ministry said in a statement. It added that all ministry's and Public Authority for Roads and Transportation's equipment as well as those of the ministry of defense and the National Guard are put on full alert in anticipation of any emergency that may arise due to the potential downpour.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Municipality said it deployed 6,000 workers and 1,100 pieces of machinery to the six governorates to address any emergency that could emerge from the rainy weather. The machinery include vehicles, bulldozers and tank trucks that were made available for government bodies, general coordinator of the municipality Adel Al-Nassar said late Tuesday night. "The staffers of the municipality are on alert for dealing with the weather emergency and protecting the safety of citizens and expatriate residents as well as public and private property," he affirmed. "At the behest of Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, we are working with other state bodies, including the Ministry of Public Works, to remove mud and sand from the watercourses swiftly," Nassar added.

Emergency plan

In the meantime, official spokesman of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and executive vice president of administrative and commercial affairs Basem Al-Issa confirmed yesterday that the company is continuing to work on the emergency plan, which was announced a few days ago following the country's exposure to weather fluctuations. Issa said that the plan includes opening of emergency rooms in the company's main building and the ports of Mina Abdulla and Mina Al-Ahmadi, and also monitoring work of the refineries and ensure that the refining and production processes are not affected by weather fluctuations and possible heavy rain.

Issa pointed out that the company's officials are present around the clock in the crisis management room to directly supervise the work in the refineries, stressing that the situation is under full control thanks to God Almighty and efforts of Kuwaiti nationals working in different locations of the company. He assured the public that matters are normal in all fuel stations in the country, both the stations of the KNPC or others, stressing that all their needs were secured and there is no need to jostle at the fuel stations.

Hospitals' tour

Kuwaiti Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, accompanied by the ministry's Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Reda paid tour visits yesterday to the Amiri hospital and Sabah Al-Ahmad's emergency center to make sure they

are ready for any emergency. The ministry said in a press statement that Sheikh Basel toured the Amiri hospital and the emergency center in the city of Sabah Al-Ahmad to assess the progress of work and readiness and preparedness in anticipation of the potential heavy rains in the country. It added that Sheikh Basel was briefed on the activation of the emergency plan in all sections of the hospital and the center and the medical services provided to



Ministry denies 'bridge crack' reports

those in need during this unstable weather condition that may result in injuries or increase in the number of those seeking medical attention. It pointed out that a team of the Kuwaiti army is currently present in Amiri hospital to support efforts of health officials.

The Ministry of Health had announced on Tuesday allocating 29 medical centers to provide round-the-clock services across the country. The move is meant to deal with any emergency caused by volatile weather conditions. In a press statement, the ministry identified the allocated centers in Al-Asimah Governorate as: Ali Thanyan Al-Ghanim in Sulaibikhat, Al-Ehqaqi in Daiya and Al-Saqr in Adiliya. The centers allocated in Hawally Governorate are West Salmiya, Salwa, Rumaitiya, Al-Salam and South Sabah Al-Salem, it added. The statement noted that the centers in Farwaniya Governorate are: Abdullah Al-Mubarak, South Al-Ferdaws, Al-Rabiya, Al-Andalus and South Farwaniya. It went to say that the centers in Jahra Governorate are Saad Al-Abdullah Block 2, Jahra, Al-Qasr and Abdaly. It named that the centers operating in Al-Ahmadi Governorate as Al-Rigga, Bnaider, Eastern Al-Sabahiya, Fahaheel, Ali Sabah Al-Salem, Wafrah, Sabah Al-Ahmad and Khiran.

No bridge crack

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry yesterday denied social media reports claiming there was a crack in the control bridge linking King Fahd highway on the Fifth Ring Road towards Surra, saying such news were 'baseless and lack credibility.' The ministry said in a press statement by the General Department of Relations and Security Media that traffic on the bridge was sound and there was no traffic congestion. It called on all citizens and residents to



KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and State Minister of Municipality Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi is seen following up on work developments yesterday. — KUNA photos

check accuracy of what is published or broadcast on social networking sites and to receive news only from their official sources.

Stay indoors

The Civil Defense Committee in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense had yesterday urged citizens and residents to stay indoor except for urgent matters due to the ongoing unstable weather conditions and the heavy downpour in the country.

The Kuwait National Guard (KNG) had stated on Tuesday that huge efforts were being exerted to deal with any emergency related the volatile weather in coordination with other state bodies. KNG's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hashem Al-Refaie inspected latest preparations of KNG's technical emergency unit and the unit commissioned to deal with the rainwaters, it added. Refaie also conveyed greetings of KNG Chief His Highness Sheikh

Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and KNG Deputy Chief Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Guard's officers and personnel.

Meanwhile, Interior Ministry's Civil Defense Committee launched three emergency centers in various areas of the country's northern, southern, and central parts to deal with fallouts of the downpour. The three centers comprises representatives of security bodies and other ministries, Spokesman for Civil Defense Committee Major Jamal Al-Fodari said, urging the public to follow official warning messages by the Ministry of Interior and the Meteorological Department and refrain from going out or driving unless it was necessary. Moreover, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's (KFSD) Director General Lieutenant-General Khaled Al-Mekrad met yesterday with KFSD's directors and heads of departments to discuss their preparations for the consequences and impacts of the heavy rains. — KUNA

Ahmadi Governor supervises operations



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah personally supervises operations of the governorate's emergency committee team which comprises of members from specialized bodies in the governorate. The governor conducted a field tour in several areas to oversee operations dealing with the weather conditions. The governor urged the public to ignore rumors, especially those circulated on social media, and obtain correct information from trusted sources.



KUWAIT: Defense Ministry personnel yesterday provided assistance to the Interior Ministry, Kuwait National Guard and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate in their efforts to address cases of emergency during the rain.

Heavy rains hit Kuwait, force road closures



KUWAIT: As predicted, heavy rains hit Kuwait yesterday, flooding several areas and forcing a number of streets closed - including main roads such as the Seventh Ring Road. The rains were associated with fresh south easterly winds with velocity reaching up to 60 km/h. Kuwait Meteorological Department had released a 'severe' weather warning yesterday for heavy rains that are likely to last through Friday morning.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Local

Deputy Foreign Minister stresses strong bond between Kuwait, Iraq

Kuwait stands by Iraq in fight against terrorism: UN representative

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah said on Tuesday that the Iraqi President Barham Saleh visit to Kuwait embodied the strong bond that brings both nations together. Jarallah added in a statement to the press that the results of the discussions made were very positive, which reflected the depth of bilateral relation, in addition to the keenness of both nations to enhance them. The Iraqi delegation have listened to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision regarding the region, in addition to ways to enhance the bilateral relation, he added.

Jarallah pointed out that this visit will have a great impact in the near future, stating that it will open various opportunities to cooperate in all fields, and it will establish a joint vision toward issues in the region. Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister wished Iraq more stability and prosperity, congratulating the Iraqi people in completing the political process by electing a President, who has appointed a Prime Minister to form a new Government.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Representative to the United Nations on Tuesday renewed his country's commitment to supporting the Iraqi people and government in their efforts to combat terrorism, and consolidate their national unity and territorial integrity. "Kuwait, a robust partner of Iraq, stands with the country in its efforts to ensure its sovereignty and stamp out terrorism," Mansour Al-Otaibi said at the UN Security Council session on the situation in Iraq. He welcomed the recent visit to Kuwait by Iraqi President Barham Saleh, saying it reflected the growing improvement of the neighborly ties and the shared desire to

take the relationship to a new height. Ambassador Otaibi welcomed the successful elections in Iraq in May as well as the subsequent peaceful transfer of power. However, he cautioned that the post-election phase could be a sensitive one. Noting that peace, security and stability cannot be achieved without sustainable development, he urged the international community to support the outcome of the international conference on the coun-



Khaled Al-Jarallah

commitment to help speed up that process.

Ambassador Otaibi asked the new government of Iraq to advance its investigation into the fate of Kuwait's missing national archives, which represent a crucial part of his country's heritage. He spoke highly of the efforts, being made by Jan Kubis, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), to iron out the problems relating to Iraq, including the retrieval of Kuwait's missing persons and property.

Meanwhile, Kubis stressed, in a briefing to the Council on Iraqi progress in fighting terrorism, reducing sectarianism and peacefully transferring power, the critical importance of international support to the new government for its efforts to deliver basic services as well as to improve security. "Iraqis will require and count on the continued support of the international community. We must not let them down," he said. The UN official welcomed "the exemplary peaceful transfer of power" in which the political blocs had demonstrated a willingness to act in support of Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, with differences largely political and non-sectarian. He said that Iraqis deserve acknowledgement for defeating the ISIL, uniting the country during deteriorating economic conditions, improving relations with neighbors and reducing sectarian rhetoric. He welcomed Government plans to build on those foundations, reporting that it intends to immediately begin creating services and jobs, reforming and energizing the economy and fighting corruption and red-tape.



Iraqi President's visit will have great impact

try's reconstruction held recently in Kuwait.

Warning that terrorist groups continue to pose a threat to Iraq's stability even in places where the so-called Islamic State (ISIL or Da'esh) has been conquered he said partners must take all necessary steps to end those activities and ensure that the perpetrators are arrested and prosecuted. Turning to the fate of Kuwaiti and third country nationals, who went missing during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, as well as missing property and assets, he welcomed efforts by Iraq to recover them and reiterated Kuwait's



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Representative to the United Nations Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during a UN Security Council session on the situation in Iraq. — KUNA

Reporting on political developments in the Kurdistan region, demining efforts, women's empowerment, and the fight against impunity for international crimes in the country, Kubis noted the recent discovery of mass graves and welcomed the arrival of the Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by ISIL in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). On outstanding issues from the invasion of Kuwait, Kubis said that in November numerous items of property were returned and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs assured him of attention to clearing up remaining issues.

Noting that this is his last report to the Security Council in his current capacity, he affirmed that "The United Nations in Iraq has

shown its relevance and will continue to build on the firm foundations of its ongoing partnership with Iraq and its people." Following the briefing, Council members took the floor, with most paying tribute to the work of UNAMI and Kubis, and welcoming the formation of the new Government and its reported intentions to improve the daily lives of Iraqis.

Some delegates, beginning with the representative of France, described the country as being at a turning point. In that vein, speakers urged the new Government to work without delay to provide services without sectarian discrimination, and to make necessary reforms in governance, economics and security that prevent the resurgence of the ISIL and impunity for past crimes. — KUNA

Zain sponsors TAKREEM to highlight Arab achievers

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship of the annual TAKREEM awards ceremony in its 9th edition held under the umbrella of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS). The event, hosted by the State of Kuwait from 17 - 18 November, will be held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Zain's support to TAKREEM comes in line with the company's strong belief in the importance of supporting and encouraging initiatives that highlight Arab achievers and innovators in all areas. Such events will contribute to reflect a positive image of the Arab world, and help recognize the distinguished role of the Arab figure in the further progress of civilizations and nations.

TAKREEM has selected the State of Kuwait to host its 9th annual awards ceremony at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC). During the ceremony, the event will highlight a number of Arab success stories through the recognition and honoring of Arab achievers, both individuals and institutes, from many categories. The categories include: Humanitarian and Civic Services, Outstanding Arab Woman, Excellence in Education, Young Entrepreneur, Environmental Development and Sustainability, Scientific and Technological Achievement, Cultural Excellence, Corporate Leadership, and International Contribution to Arab Society.

TAKREEM's 9th annual awards ceremony will also witness the recognition of the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah the Humanitarian



Leader, for the plethora of humanitarian and charitable initiatives they adopted and launched throughout the years and all around the world. This year's event will also feature the new TAKMinds forum, which will include many panel discussions about Arab-related matters.

Zain has always been a main supporter of such initiatives that cater to highlighting distinguished achievements of Kuwaiti and Arab figures. The company is keen on enriching its partnerships with various entities and organizations that exert efforts into developing the Arab role within all areas to contribute to the progress of nations.

Each year, TAKREEM is held in a different city, with previous editions respectively held in Beirut, Doha, Manama, Paris, Marrakesh, Dubai, Cairo, and Amman. Candidates are chosen by a Selection Board that consists of highly qualified experts. Laureates are objectively selected regardless of age, gender, nationality, religion or political affiliation. Candidates must be of Arab origin for all categories except for: The award of International Contribution to Arab Society.

the field of genetic research - Regional. Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, Director-General of Dasman Diabetes Institute, was in attendance to receive this important award. This award was part of the 7th International Genetics Disorders Conference which was held in Dubai on November 10, 2018 under the patronage of Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Cabinet Member and Minister of State for Tolerance of UAE and President of UAE Genetic Diseases Association. In addition, the award ceremony was attended by Her Excellency Mariam Al-Mehairi, Minister of State for Food Security in the UAE, who praised the research efforts taking place at Dasman Diabetes Institute.

Dasman Diabetes Institute wins Int'l award

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute, founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, has won recently the International Genetic Disorders Prevention Award for the year 2018, under the award category: Most Innovative Research Institution in



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait Dr Hong Youngki visited Kuwait Times yesterday and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait Alvaro Rodriguez Alvarez visited Kuwait Times and held discussions with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan that focused on issues of common interest. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait hopes Congo elections held as scheduled

NEW YORK: Kuwait has expressed hope that presidential and legislative elections at the national and provincial level in the Democratic Republic of the Congo be held as scheduled in order to witness the first democratic process and the peaceful transfer of power in its history. This came in Kuwait's speech at the Security Council session on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative of Kuwait's Mission to the United Nations Advisor Bader Al-Munikh.

"The commitment of the Congolese government to the timetable of the elections and the announcement by the majority of political parties and national bodies of their participation in the electoral process are all positive and optimistic for the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese people," he said. "We discussed during the previous session held last October start of the countdown to

the most important event of the Congolese people. We hope that these positive indicators will culminate in the holding of the elections in a safe, transparent and credible manner to realize the aspirations of the Congolese people who seek security, stability and reconstruction," he said.

"Despite the lack of time until the date of the presidential elections, we continue to emphasize the importance of using the next few days to make concrete progress in the implementation of the confidence-building measures stipulated in the political agreement of December 31, 2016, so that the political process be comprehensive and to cover all segments of the Congolese people including political prisoners and Prisoners of conscience," he noted.

Munikh said that the publication of the electoral lists on September 19, 2018 and the efforts of the Independent National Electoral Commission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including holding a meeting with presidential candidates or their representatives, to exchange information and views on the electoral process are all positive measures for the conduct of the electoral process. The use of voting machines remained an important challenge to the electoral process, he said, adding that he hoped that the Congolese Government would succeed in overcoming it by consensus by all the political parties over the short period of time that "separates us from the date of the elections." — KUNA

Local

Kuwait keen on replacing expats with national manpower: Minister

Ministries given 15 days to hand over employees' percentages lists

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Development Hind Al-Sabeeh stressed Kuwait's keenness on replacing expatriates with national manpower in various sectors in order to resolve the demographic imbalance. Speaking on the sidelines of a ceremony held to honor the participants of the 4th meeting of the GCC labor and social affairs committees, Sabeeh said that GCC states exchange experiences in replacing expats with citizens and noted that the door was open for GCC labor to move around GCC states according to their qualifications. Responding to a question about the joint GCC market, Sabeeh stressed that it is a GCC demand and is still subject to studies. Besides labor ministries, the proposal also involves other ministries. The GCC Secretariat's assistant secretary for economic affairs Khalifa Al-Ebri hailed Kuwait's efforts in hosting the 4th meeting of the GCC social affairs and labor ministers. Also speaking on the occasion, Omniya Company CEO Sana Al-Qimlas thanked the companies that provided job opportunities for citizens.



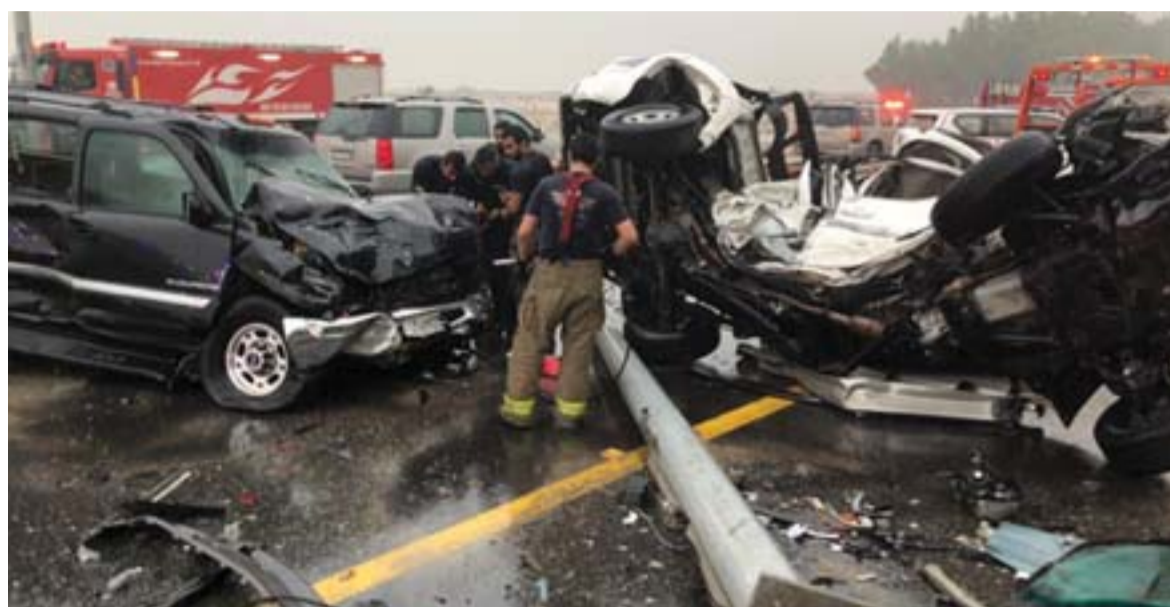
Hind Al-Sabeeh

Separately, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) gave some ministries 15 days to hand over lists of employees' percentages that were prepared for 2019/2020. Informed sources said the lists sent by the CSC shows the number of expats allowed to work in each state department. The sources said the commission will take the necessary action to cancel contracts of non-Kuwaiti employees as part of the 'Kuwaitization' policy if the ministries do not send their comments on the lists within this period.

Two injured in Waha accident

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Two people were injured in an accident reported yesterday in Waha. Firefighters arrived to the scene shortly after an accident between two cars was reported, and they used special equipment to free the two persons who became trapped inside their wrecked vehicles. Paramedics rushed the two to hospital afterwards. Meanwhile, an investigation was opened to determine the cause of the accident.



KUWAIT: Firefighters inspected damages following an accident reported yesterday in Waha.

Liquor shipment busted

Customs officers busted a large shipment of alcoholic drinks which were kept inside a water bottles' cargo. Director General of Customs Department Jamal Al-Jalawi said a large quantity of imported liquor from a Gulf country was registered as mineral water. He said the shipment was busted as a result of cooperation between the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD) and customs detectives. He said that DCGD learned about three containers arriving from a Gulf country that might contain imported liquor, adding that precautions were made to prevent

the shipment from entering Kuwait. As soon as it arrived, the DCGD director general went to Shuwaikh Port and supervised the unloading of the three containers. A customs source said there were 2,973 cartons of 12 bottles each, with an estimated market value of KD 2.14 million.

Drunk singer arrested

Capital detectives arrested a popular Kuwaiti singer wanted to serve three months in jail for DUI. A police source said the singer had a concert and as soon as he finished, he was arrested and sent to the sentences implementation department.

Coordination to resume Ethiopian maids' recruitment

KUWAIT: A security source said recruitment of Ethiopian domestic help is suspended until further notice, adding this action follows the killing of an Ethiopian helper by her sponsor in Firdous. He said coordination is being carried out between

authorities in Kuwait and Ethiopia before resuming the recruitment. The Ethiopian government banned the travel of its domestic helpers except to Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, because it has an agreement with these countries.

Deportation

Hours after Farwaniya detectives arrested 16 Egyptians and Syrians following a fight, during which they threw stones at each other, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Naham ordered the deportation of all those involved and placed them on the black list. A minor dispute took place between an Egyptian and a Syrian in Jleeb after the Syrian's car hit the Egyptian's car after he drove into a puddle. The Egyptian became angry and threw stones at the Syrian's car, and a fight followed, during

which friends of both motorists got involved and the fight became heated, so deterrent action was taken by authorities.

Landmine explosion

An Indian shepherd was rushed to Adan Hospital's ICU after he was injured in a landmine explosion in Arifjan. Police and paramedics responded to a call and found the Indian badly injured. A security source said the mine is a leftover from the 1990-91 Iraqi Invasion.

Accident

A citizen was rushed to Adan Hospital for treatment of injuries he suffered when his vehicle flipped over on Fahaheel Expressway. - Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Anbaa

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International

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2018



'Brave' black security guard shot dead in US

China's Peking University tightens party control, curbs activism

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COLOMBO: Loyalists MPs for Sri Lanka's ousted Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe attend the parliament session in Colombo yesterday. Sri Lanka's parliament passed a motion of no-confidence in the controversially appointed government of Mahinda Rajapakse yesterday, a day after the Supreme Court overturned a presidential decree dissolving the legislature. — AFP

Sri Lanka parliament sacks Rajapakse

Sri Lanka showdown looms as new PM loses confidence vote

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's parliament yesterday voted out the bitterly disputed government of former strongman Mahinda Rajapakse, removing one controversial figure but leaving the country in a power vacuum. The island nation has been in crisis since the president sacked prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on October 26 and replaced him with Rajapakse, who served as president until being voted out three years ago.

On Tuesday the Supreme Court overruled the president's dissolution of parliament and halted preparations for a snap election, in a major boost for the ousted prime minister. In stormy scenes yesterday, legislators gave their verdict on the two rivals—with a majority in the 225-member assembly supporting a no-confidence motion against Rajapakse. Parliament also passed motions declaring illegal the November 9 proclamations made by President Maithripala Sirisena to enshrine the power shift.

The result however does not automatically mean that Wickremesinghe, who has refused to leave the prime minister's residence, has won the constitutional showdown. An aide of Sirisena told AFP that he was most likely to hand over power to Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP) after Rajapakse failed to defeat the no-trust move. A cabinet member loyal to Sirisena, Media Minister Dayasiri Jayasekara said yesterday's vote was "unethical" as it was rushed despite their protests. However, he said the president would resolve the power vacuum "in a very short time".

Day-to-day administration remains paralyzed as the crisis drags on and there are growing fears for the economy and Sri Lanka's ability to repay its huge foreign debts. Though Wickremesinghe's UNP is the biggest in parliament, Sirisena retains the power to choose the next prime minister. The UNP leader, who left his bunker at the Temple Trees official residence for the first time in nearly three weeks to go to parliament, still hailed the vote. "This is a victory for the people," Wickremesinghe told reporters, condemning the president's actions as "illegal". He said officials should no longer take orders from the Rajapakse-led "purported government".

Loyalists flee

The UNP said that Sirisena must now call on Wickremesinghe to form a new government. UNP deputy leader Sajith Premadasa said: "For me, he is still the prime minister. Today, democracy prevailed." In a chaotic session, 72-year-old Rajapakse and his legislator son Namal walked out of the red-carpeted chamber just before the speaker Karu Jayasuriya called for a vote. Lawmakers loyal to Rajapakse attempted to grab the mace, the assembly's symbol of authority, to disrupt the vote, but the speaker pressed ahead. "The ayes have it," the speaker announced. "I rule that this House does not have confidence in the government (of Rajapakse)." Several Rajapakse ministers came out of parliament accusing the speaker of violating parliamentary norms by holding the crucial vote.

"He has no bloody business calling a vote," Leader of the House Dinesh Gunawardena told reporters. However, shortly after the collapse of Rajapakse's administration, three of his ministers switched to Wickremesinghe's side. A

total of 122 legislators in the 225-member assembly supported the no-confidence move against Rajapakse. It was nine more than the mandatorily required 113. Sirisena sacked the legislature on Friday shortly after an admission that Rajapakse did not have a majority. Several UNP legislators said they were offered up to \$2.8 million to defect.

Sirisena ordered a snap election on January 5, a move even the independent Elections Commission announced was unconstitutional and illegal. A dozen petitions were filed in the Supreme Court which on Tuesday restored parliament and suspended the January 5 vote. Parliament held its first session following the court ruling under tight security. Thousands of armed police, including commandos, deployed along the key approach roads to parliament, which is located on a man-made lake island, with several anti-riot units on standby. Parliament officials had feared that supporters of Rajapakse's party might try to stop legislators from getting to parliament, but those concerns proved unfounded. — AFP

Pence rebukes Suu Kyi over 'persecution' of Rohingyas

SINGAPORE: US Vice President Mike Pence expressed the Trump administration's strongest condemnation yet of Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya Muslims yesterday, telling leader Aung San Suu Kyi that "persecution" by her country's army was "without excuse". Pence also pressed Suu Kyi to pardon two Reuters journalists who were arrested nearly a year ago and sentenced in September to seven years in prison for breaching the Official Secrets Act.

"The violence and persecution by military and vigilantes that resulted in driving 700,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh is without excuse," Pence told Suu Kyi in remarks open to the media before they went into private talks on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific summit in Singapore. "I am anxious to hear the progress that you are making of holding those accountable who are responsible for the violence that displaced so many hundreds of thousands and created such suffering, including the loss of life," he added.

Leaders of Southeast Asian nations, who will meet Pence on Thursday, are also

expected to call for those responsible for atrocities in Rakhine state to be held "fully accountable", according to a statement the Asian countries prepared for a summit, reflecting a stronger line being taken within the group. Suu Kyi, seated next to Pence, was stony-faced as he spoke. The Myanmar army launched a sweeping offensive in the north of Rakhine state in late August last year, in response to Rohingya militant attacks. Myanmar denies persecuting members of the Muslim minority, saying its forces have carried out legitimate counterinsurgency operations.

Suu Kyi, responding to Pence, said: "Of course people have different points of view but the point is that you should exchange these views and try to understand each other better." "In a way we can say that we understand our country better than any other country does and I'm sure you will say the same of yours, that you understand your country better than anybody else," she added. The United States has accused the military of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya, who are widely reviled in Buddhist-majority Myanmar. UN-mandated investigators have accused the military of unleashing a campaign of killings, rape and arson with "genocidal intent".

Arrest of journalists

Amnesty International this week withdrew its most prestigious human rights prize from Suu Kyi, accusing her of perpetuating human rights abuses by not speaking out about violence against the



SINGAPORE: US Vice President Mike Pence (right) listens to Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 33rd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

Rohingya. Once hailed as a champion in the fight for democracy, the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner has been stripped of a series of international honors over the Rohingya exodus. Neither Suu Kyi nor her office have commented publicly about the decision by Amnesty International.

Myanmar government spokesman Zaw Htay did not answer calls seeking comment on Pence's comments yesterday. Pence also said that Washington wanted

to see a free and democratic press in Myanmar, commenting: "In America, we believe in our democratic institutions and ideals, including a free and independent press," Pence said. White House officials told reporters after their closed-door talks that he had pressed her "multiple times" to pardon the two convicted Reuters journalists. "They had a very candid exchange of views on that," a senior White House official said. — Reuters

As 'El Chapo' faces court, Sinaloa cartel advances its pawns

MEXICO CITY: Far from the media frenzy around Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's trial in New York, a chess match is playing out between his Sinaloa cartel and its brutal rival, Jalisco New Generation, to decide the future of Mexico's multibillion-dollar narcotics industry. Even as Guzman went on trial Tuesday on charges of shipping 155 tons of cocaine to the United States, the cartel he co-founded was thriving back in Mexico. After surviving an internal power struggle in the wake of Guzman's extradition to the US last year, the Sinaloa cartel is now fighting back with a vengeance against its upstart rival from Jalisco—and could even put it in checkmate if it plays its pieces right.

"Guzman's capture and extradition was good for the Mexican justice system and the United States, but it was largely symbolic. The Sinaloa cartel is still the most powerful in the world," said Mike Vigil, former head of international operations for the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The Sinaloa cartel is now led by Guzman's co-founder Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, a veteran capo who managed to stamp out a bloody power grab by his extradited partner's sons.

According to Vigil, Zambada is an "extremely intelligent man, very capable, who has been in the drug trafficking business his entire life and never spent a single day in prison," thanks to the fact that—unlike the flashy Guzman—he keeps a low profile and never leaves his base in Mexico's western mountains. El Chapo's sons, on the other hand, "are spoiled rich kids who never worked a day in their lives and don't know how this business works," said Raul Benitez Manaut, of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). — AFP

International

China's Peking University tightens party control and curbs activism

At least 12 labor activists 'missing'

BEIJING: China's prestigious Peking University, historically a bastion of student activism, has moved to quash dissent and strengthen Communist Party control after a spate of protests across China on issues ranging from labor rights to #MeToo. The clampdown comes amid an ongoing tightening of control over various aspects of Chinese society since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, a period that has seen increasing censorship and shrinking space for protests, including on campuses.

Yesterday, the university, informally known as Beida, warned all students against taking part in demonstrations of support for recent labor-rights activism involving former students and said they would be held responsible if they "challenged the law". "The school believes that the majority of students are sensible, but if there are those near you who are spreading rumors or reactionary sentiments, regardless if they are your teacher or your friend or your schoolmate, please keep a firm stance," students were told over instant messaging platforms.

On Tuesday, the Communist Party committee at Beida set up new bodies responsible for disciplinary inspection tours and campus "control and management", according to a document released by the committee and seen by Reuters, moves that tighten enforcement of party discipline. The committee also held a meeting for all

campus members and told them that a recent graduate who was among those missing following weekend labor protests was working with an illegal organization, a source briefed on the meeting told Reuters.

A spokesman for Peking University contacted by Reuters yesterday said that they were not able to immediately comment on the meeting or warnings to students. The campus attendees were told that the group in question, which was not identified, had a charter and "passwords" and the government had sanctioned the arrest of Zhang Shengye, the former student, the source said, declining to be named due to the sensitivity of the situation. Beijing-based political commentator Zhang Lifan said the measures were likely in response to student activism. "The Communist Party is highly sensitive to any kind of organized movement on university campuses," he said.

Activist history

Students at Peking University, set on a sprawling, leafy campus in northwestern Beijing, played a central role in

launching the anti-imperialist May Fourth Movement in 1919 and the pro-democracy Tiananmen protests in 1989. But campus activism has been increasingly marginalized in the Xi era, and a movement that saw students and recent graduates of universities including Beida team up with labor activists to support factory workers fighting the right to set up their



University strengthens Communist Party control

own union has been dealt with harshly by authorities, attracting international media coverage. Last month, the party announced that Qiu Shuiping, an official with little experience of running a school who has spent years in China's legal system, including as head of the Beijing state security bureau, had been made party secretary of the university, an appointment seen by experts on Chinese politics as heralding a tougher disciplinary line.

Activist disappearances

Over the weekend, at least 12 labor activists, mostly students and recent graduates, went missing in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Wuhan in what a source close to them believed was a coordinated effort

to silence them. Five of those were recent graduates of Peking. One of them, Zhang, was grabbed by unidentified men and bundled into a car on the campus. The university told Reuters that the incident was a lawful seizure by police of a suspect and did not involve students.

The incident sparked a flurry of activity from a group of students, who call themselves a "concern group for missing Peking university graduates", and handed out information about the abduction and other missing students in a university cafeteria on Sunday. On Monday and Tuesday, students who had spoken out or supported the labour rights movement were warned by teachers, their parents and what appeared to be plainclothes policemen, according to one of the students, who declined to be named.

In the meetings, students were told that the university had previously protected them because they were "bewitched" by the group, but from now on anyone who demonstrated on behalf of those missing or handed out leaflets would not be protected, the student said. "They did not say specifically which law had been broken or how, and they did not give an explanation of why they had unscrupulously seized people on campus," the student said. "Zhang Shengye was someone who was concerned about society, cared about the lower-classes and was close to workers. Why would someone like that be treated like this?" —Reuters

Tackle poverty and birth rate to end Boko Haram: Emir

KANO: One of Nigeria's leading and respected Islamic figures on Tuesday renewed calls to tackle endemic poverty and rapid population growth to help end deadly Boko Haram violence. More than 27,000 people have been killed since the start of the insurgency in the country's remote northeast in 2009 and 1.8 million are still homeless. Nigeria's government and military maintains it has severely weakened the jihadists to the point of defeat but attacks remain a constant threat to civilians and soldiers.

The Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II, said the Islamist militants would always find willing recruits unless the root causes of radicalisation were addressed. "We cannot divorce insecurity from the discourse on development and discourse on poverty," he told academics and clerics at a conference on Boko Haram in Kano city. Sanusi, a former governor of the Central Bank of

Nigeria, said climate change, particularly the shrinking of Lake Chad, has had a devastating effect on local livelihoods.

Northeast Nigeria is largely dependent on fishing and agriculture but nine years of fighting has blighted both industries. The semi-desert region was impoverished even before the start of the violence and ranked consistently low on human development indices compared to the more prosperous south. "We cannot divorce... horizontal inequalities from some of the tendencies of violence," he said. "Therefore regenerating the lives... and bringing peace to the northeast has to be accompanied by regenerating that economy and recharging the Chad basin."

Nigeria, almost evenly split between a mainly Muslim north and largely Christian south, is currently Africa's most populous nation. Some 60 percent of its more than 180 million people are aged under 30. By 2050, the West African giant is expected to be the third most populous country after China and India. The emir said such demographic change would create huge social upheaval that would potentially make the effects of the Boko Haram conflict "child's play" in the north. Nigeria needed to build a strong economy and slow population growth to avoid poverty worsening, he added. Currently, some 86 million people live in extreme poverty in Nigeria—the most in the world—despite billions of dollars earned from oil over five decades. Kano, northern Nigeria's largest city and its commercial hub, suffered Boko Haram's worst attacks between 2012 and 2014. —AFP



BOL, Chad: Nigerian refugee Alcha Younoussa poses with a smartphone in front of her tent in Bol. Due to Boko Haram's threat Alcha and her family left Nigeria four years ago finding a shelter in the refugee camp of Baga Sola in Southern Chad. —AFP

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International

'Brave' black security guard shot dead by US policeman

Illinois state police launch investigation

CHICAGO: Illinois state police on Tuesday were investigating a white officer over the fatal shooting of a "brave" black security guard who had apprehended a suspected gunman at a bar outside Chicago, officials said. The officer was placed on administrative leave after the incident, which took place in the early hours of Sunday at Manny's Blue Room Lounge in the town of Robbins, 20 miles (32 kilometers) south of the Midwestern city.

The security guard, 26-year-old Jemel Roberson, was working at the bar, and intervened when an argument erupted and someone started shooting. Several local police forces responded to the incident, in which four

people were wounded, including the gunman. None had life-threatening injuries. A police officer from the nearby village of Midlothian arrived at the scene and shot Roberson, despite the guard wearing a uniform with "security" emblazoned on it, according to witnesses.

Roberson "had somebody on the ground with his knee in back, with his gun in his back, like, 'Don't move,'" witness Adam Harris told Chicago television station WGN. "Everybody was screaming out, 'Security!' He was a security guard," Harris said, but police "saw a black man with a gun, and basically killed him." Roberson died of his injuries at a hospital. The officer under investigation has not been formally

identified, but a clerk at the department confirmed the officer was white, and was placed on administrative leave pending the inquiry.

"Jemel Roberson was a brave man who was doing his best to end an active shooter situation," Midlothian Police Chief Daniel Delaney said in a statement Tuesday. Delaney, who supervises a force of 34 officers, said state police were investigating the shooting in order to "ensure transparency and maintain public trust." "The Midlothian Police Department is completely saddened by this tragic incident and we give our heartfelt condolences to Jemel, his family and his friends," Delaney said. The Illinois State Police has

not formally commented on the incident.

Roberson's family has sued the village of Midlothian and the unnamed officer over his death, alleging that the shooting was "excessive and unreasonable." Roberson reportedly was an aspiring police officer. An online GoFundMe campaign raised more than \$90,000 to pay for Roberson's funeral expenses - almost doubling the total amount of donations in less than a day, as news spread on social media. The shooting was the latest in a long line of deadly encounters between police and African Americans that have sparked the Black Lives Matter movement. —AFP

Top aid agency to promote resilience with a new body

NEW ORLEANS: The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is to set up a new body to promote resilience, a senior official said, amid growing pressure on the world's top foreign aid donor to do more with less. Creating resilience - the ability to withstand broad disasters ranging from climate change-induced floods and droughts to economic shocks and health epidemics - is seen as increasingly important if international aid is to work.

"The extraordinary cost of going back to the same places every three to five years with the humanitarian convoys is simply unsustainable," said Greg Collins, USAID's resilience coordinator, at a conference in New Orleans on Tuesday. USAID had spent about \$5 billion in Ethiopia, among the poorest nations in Africa, over the last 15 years, he told the Resilience Measurement, Evidence and Learning Conference. The move comes amid talk of budget cuts to foreign aid in the United States and pressure from President Donald Trump to do more with less.

Experts said the creation of a new Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, which still has to be approved by Congress, would cement momentum behind the global poverty-reduction approach. The proposed Bureau for Resilience and Food Security would have about 180 staff, Collins said. Lindsey Jones, a researcher at the Overseas Development Institute, expressed hope the new bureau would "open the door to have longer-term finance" for resilience programs. He said other countries such as Britain and Sweden had tried to promote resilience in countries that received aid, but the fixed-term nature of their programs was a weakness. —Reuters

Change minds of slaveholders to end slavery

LONDON: The global anti-slavery movement must go beyond just freeing victims and convince millions of slaveholders worldwide that they can make a good living without relying on exploitation, a leading anti-slavery expert said yesterday. Modern slavery will not end unless the traffickers and slavemasters who enslave about 40 million people worldwide are compelled to change their attitudes and habits, said Kevin Bales, co-founder of Washington-based charity Free the Slaves. As countries strive to meet a United Nations global goal to end the \$150 billion a year crime by 2030, working with slaveholders is a vital step, Bales told the Thomson Reuters Foundation's annual two-day Trust Conference.

"If we have 40 million people in slavery worldwide ... we have at least 5 or 6 million slaveholders," added Bales, who is a professor of contemporary slavery at the University of Nottingham in Britain. "We have to reach slaveholders as well if we are going to reach ... global liberation," he told the conference, which focuses on women's empowerment and modern-day slavery. "We need to take them to a point where they can make a decent life without being an oppressor." An estimated 40 million people are trapped as slaves - mostly women and girls - in forced labor, sexual exploitation and forced marriages, according to the United Nations.

Many victims are enslaved and exploited by people who have had slaves with their families or on their land for generations and do not consider themselves to be slaveholders, Bales said. Some slavemasters see their bonded laborers as part of the family and are shocked if they take legal action, he added. "Most slaveholders today are not beings of pure evil ... they have lived in a culture of pure privilege," Bales said. As well as analyzing the lives of slaveholders, Nottingham University's Rights Lab, the world's first large-scale research platform on slavery, is using satellites to locate brick kilns in India - sites infamous for using slaves, according to Bales.

Its "Slavery from Space" project, which relies on crowdsourcing, involves online volunteers who sift through satellite images to identify possible hives of slavery, which can also help to improve artificial intelligence, the anti-slavery expert said. Such advances in technology and innovative new solutions are enhancing the world's understanding of modern slavery and ability to spot patterns as the crime evolves, Bales added. "We are sharing new ideas ... bringing new information to the fore ... and exploring the frontiers of slavery," he said. —Reuters

Sights still on US, migrant caravan marks a month

MEXICO CITY: The caravan of Central American migrants trekking across Mexico toward the United States marked one month on the road Tuesday with a full day of walking and hitch-hiking and no celebrations. The caravan, which currently has around 5,000 migrants, set out from the city of San Pedro Sula in Honduras on October 13, fleeing poverty and violence - and finding itself on the receiving end of a flood of anti-immigrant attacks from US President Donald Trump. The migrants, who have traveled more than 2,000 kilometers so far, were planning to cover another 400 kilometers and spend the night in the Pacific coast state of Sinaloa - still some 1,800 kilometers from the border city of Tijuana, their destination.

Many said they saw little cause for celebration in reaching the one-month mark in their exhausting journey. "We're celebrating absolutely nothing. How could we have a party when we don't have houses or jobs, when we're tired and sick and worried about our future?" said Wilson Ramirez, a 60-year-old Honduran man. On the other side of the border, US authorities closed down several lanes of traffic at two border crossings from Tijuana into California so military personnel could install cement barriers and barbed-wire fencing.

Trump has ordered the deployment of up to 9,000 troops to the border, calling the caravan an "invasion" and warning it was full of "gang members" and "hardened criminals." US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis announced he would pay a visit Wednesday to the border city of McAllen, Texas. Small groups of migrants that split off from the main caravan have already begun arriving in Tijuana, which sits across the border from San Diego, California. A group of 350 arrived Tuesday morning, many with small children.

Melania Trump calls for firing security aide

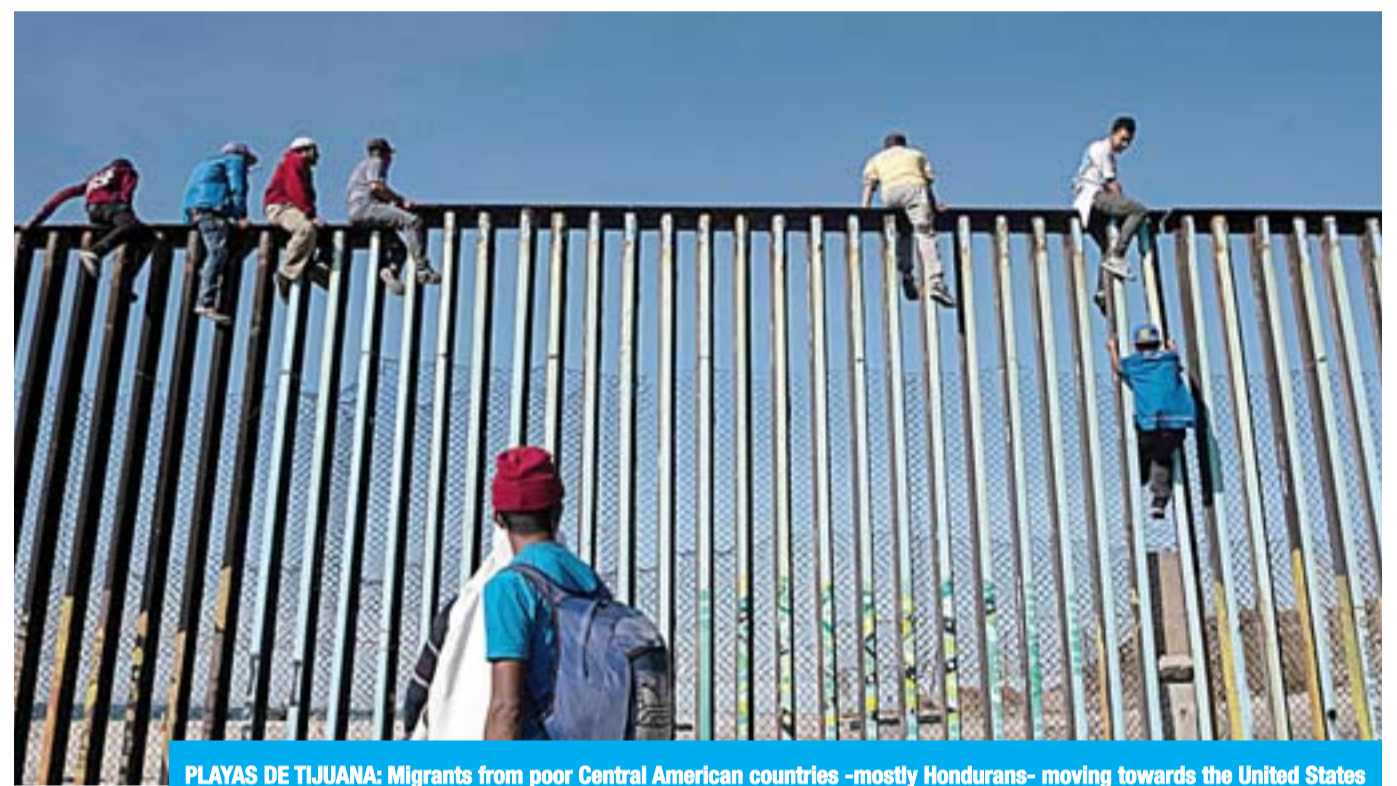
WASHINGTON: US First Lady Melania Trump on Tuesday publicly pushed for the dismissal of deputy national security advisor Mira Ricardel - a rare criticism of a senior administration official by the president's wife. The rebuke - via a brief statement from the first lady's spokeswoman - came amid swirling speculation about a possible shake-up of President Donald Trump's cabinet following last week's midterm elections. "It is the position of the Office of the First Lady that she no longer deserves the honor of serving in this White House," Melania Trump's spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham said in a statement.

The Wall Street Journal claimed Ricardel had been fired and escorted out of the White House, but an administration official denied that to reporters. Ricardel reportedly battled with the first lady's staff during her trip to Africa last month, and was believed to be the source of negative stories about Melania Trump, according to the Journal, which cited unnamed sources. After last week's midterm elections, the Republican president was expected to make some changes as he prepares for the second half of his term in office.

Among those on the possible chopping block: Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, a close ally of Trump's chief of staff John Kelly. Trump is reportedly unhappy with

Iraq recovers property worth millions after illegal sale

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi government said yesterday it had retaken ownership of a piece of property in Baghdad worth millions of dollars after it was unlawfully sold to a government official's wife. In a statement to journalists, the Integrity



PLAYAS DE TIJUANA: Migrants from poor Central American countries - mostly Hondurans - moving towards the United States in hopes of a better life, are seen near the US border in Playas de Tijuana, Mexico. —AFP

Pressing on

Trump turned the migrant caravan into a hot-button issue ahead of last week's US midterm elections, claiming - without providing evidence - it included "thugs" and "unknown Middle Easterners" who were about to "assault" the United States. The migrants insist they are simply seeking a better future away from Central America's "Northern Triangle" - El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, poor countries where gang violence has fueled some of the highest murder rates in the world. They have decided to take the longer but safer west-coast route, rather than travel the dangerous east-coast route, where Mexican gangs regularly extort, kidnap and kill Central Americans. In 2010, 72 migrants were massacred by suspected drug traffickers in the violent state of

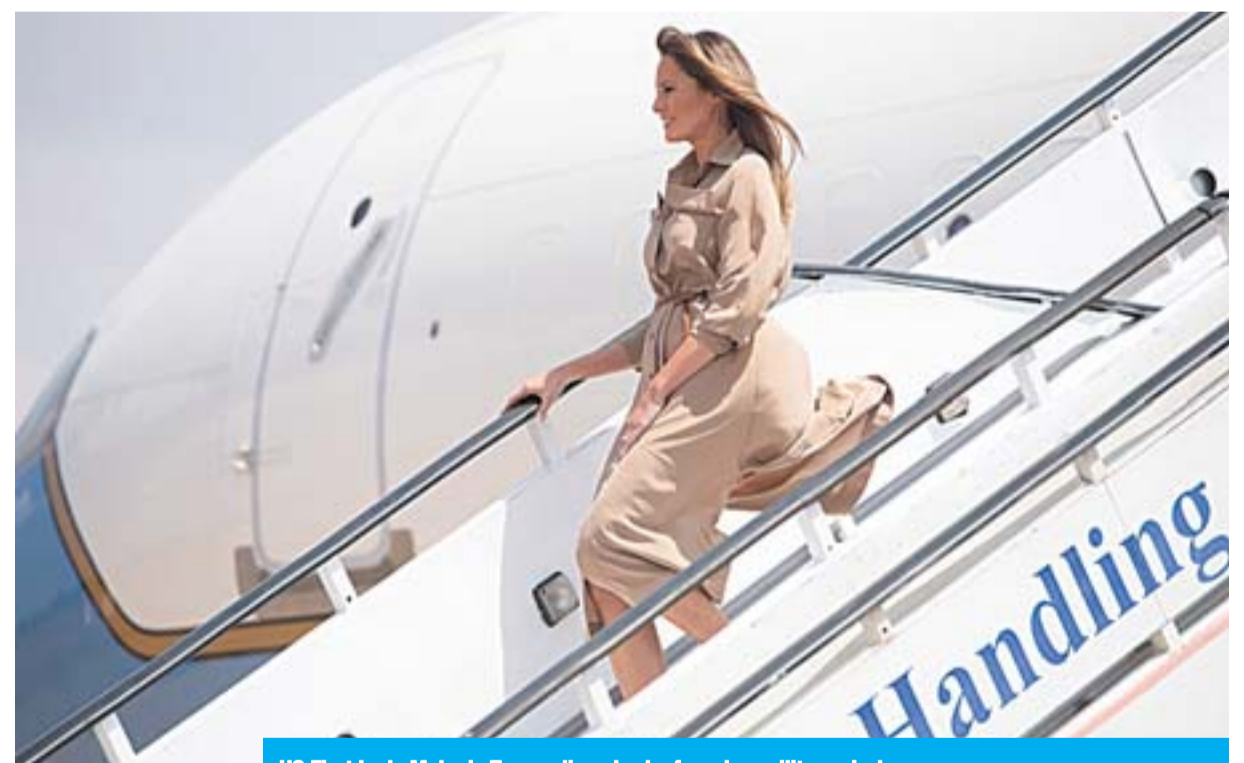
Tamaulipas, on the border with Texas.

Two more caravans with about 2,000 migrants each are currently working their way up through Mexico behind the first. More than 3,000 migrants who were traveling in caravans have meanwhile decided to seek asylum in Mexico, according to the authorities. The remainder, however, say they are determined to press on, despite Trump's measures to stop them - including an executive order last week to stop accepting asylum requests from immigrants who enter the country illegally. That means migrants seeking asylum will have to line up at official border crossings - potentially leaving thousands of people waiting on the Mexican side for weeks or longer.

Stranded by the road

Facing Trump's wrath themselves,

Mexican authorities have alternately hindered and helped the migrants, deploying riot police to block them at the southern border but providing food and shelter at the local level, for example. On Tuesday, the state of Jalisco, where the migrants spent the night, provided buses to take them to their next destination. But the migrants said they were forced to get out and walk as soon as the buses were outside Guadalajara, Mexico's second city. "They tricked us!" furious migrants shouted on the sweltering stretch of remote highway where they had to resume their journey on foot or by hitching rides on passing trucks. "Now we're stuck here suffering. My boy's thirsty and there's not even water out here," said Jose Rubio, 23, a Honduran man traveling with his wife and three young children. —AFP



US First Lady Melania Trump disembarks from her military airplane

how Nielsen is handling the situation at the US-Mexico border. When asked Tuesday about possible staff changes, Trump declined to comment on specifics, only telling reporters: "We'll be talking about it." It was however

unclear if he was responding to that question, or a question about a lawsuit filed by CNN against his administration over the stripping of CNN reporter Jim Acosta's White House credentials. —AFP

Commission said it had worked with Baghdad authorities to recover the land in Kadhimiyah district. "The Baghdad-Karakh appeals court issued a decision to seize the property, which amounts to 12,642 square meters, from the wife of a leading official in the previous government and re-register it in the name of the Mayorality," the statement said. "The land registration in the name of the official's wife has been nullified, as well as all subsequent registrations," it added.

The northern neighborhood of Kadhimiyah is home to a revered Shiite shrine, as well as some of the city's

most luxurious properties-priced at up to \$10,000 per square metre. The Integrity Commission said its investigation had revealed the official had sold the property to his wife in violation of laws regulating the lease or sale of state-owned property. It did not reveal the official's identity, but a parliamentary source told AFP the accused had briefly served as a deputy to Iraq's former prime minister, Haider al-Abadi. In Baghdad, abandoned homes once belonging to Saddam Hussein-era officials or to minorities who have fled abroad are regularly occupied by powerful political parties.

Iraq, according to Transparency International, is the 12th most corrupt country in the world. The embezzlement of public goods-from land to government funds-is a deeply rooted problem in a country with such a large public sector. Corruption, shell companies and "phantom" public employees who receive salaries but do not work have cost Iraq the equivalent of \$228 billion dollars since 2003, according to Iraq's parliament. That figure is more than the country's gross domestic product and nearly three times the annual budget. —AFP

International

Making waves in West, China lures Pacific islands with Belt and Road

President Xi to showcase China's initiative

WELLINGTON: President Xi Jinping will showcase China's Belt and Road initiative to Pacific leaders at a regional summit today, diplomats say, with Western countries watching warily for signs of Beijing's growing clout. The competition for influence between China and Western allies Australia, New Zealand and the United States, is likely to provide a strong undercurrent at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea.

"China is showing a desire for a bigger role in the region, and that is out in the open like it has never been before," said a senior British diplomat who declined to be named as she is not authorized to talk to the media. China has said it will announce "important measures for further cooperation" at the summit. Western diplomats believe that probably means formally extending its Belt and Road plans into the Pacific. First proposed by Xi in 2013, the initiative promotes expanding land and sea links between Asia, Africa and Europe, with billions of dollars pledged for infrastructure development.

Western governments harbor suspicions that Beijing's professed desire to spread prosperity masks an underlying intention to become a more dominant power. Tongan Prime Minister 'Akilisi Pōhiva is one of several island nation leaders who will meet collectively with Xi, having already been asked by Beijing to sign up to the Belt and Road. "We're discussing that right now," Lopeti Senituli, a political advisor to the Tongan premier, told Reuters. For Pacific nations, China may offer support for much needed infrastructure and development. Xi's vision to provide links to a bigger marketplace could also prove hard to resist for leaders of the remote, fledgling economies.



Beijing eye bigger role in the region

Whose patch?
For China, extending its influence into the Pacific would lessen the sense of maritime containment, and also potentially secure support from grateful, indebted governments at international forums, where numbers can count. Three sources familiar with the matter, including the British official, said that Western nations had been informed that Vanuatu, the Cook Islands and Niue have agreed sign onto Belt and Road. Niue and the Cook Islands did not respond to an emailed request for comment, but the Cook Islands' Finance Minister Mark Brown told Radio New Zealand last week that his government would be signing.

Vanuatu's Prime Minister did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Foreign Minister Ralph Regenvanu said in a message on Twitter that he "did not believe" Vanuatu had committed to Belt and Road but he would check. China's official Belt and Road website reported that Fiji had made a commitment on Monday, joining the likes of Samoa and Papua New Guinea.

China's footprint in the region has been growing in the past decade. Pacific governments now owe about \$1.3 billion in concessional debt to China, raising fears in the West, that the region was becoming more susceptible to Beijing's diplomatic pressure. A senior Chinese diplomat said on Tuesday no country can block Beijing's cooperation with Pacific Island nations. Xi's meeting with the island nation leaders, which a US diplomatic source said will be held without observers from the West, comes after a series of Western initiatives to shore up ties in the Pacific. Australia last week declared the Pacific "our patch" as it offered A\$3 billion (\$2.18 billion) in cheap infrastructure loans and grants. —Reuters

Bangladeshi police fire rubber bullets, teargas to disperse opposition protest

DHAKA: Bangladesh police fired rubber bullets and teargas at a group of opposition party supporters in the capital, Dhaka yesterday as tension soared weeks before a general election. Activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) responded to the police action by setting fire to police vans and cars, as well as several motor-bikes, according to police and media.

"Our force was attacked without any reason. They were only trying to ease the traffic flow but suddenly they were targeted," said Masudur Rahman, a spokesman for the Dhaka Metropolitan Police. The BNP supporters were accompanying an election candidate who was picking up election nomination papers from the party's offices in the city. Police initially asked the group numbering more than 500 to disperse because they were creating a traffic jam but an altercation ensued and fist-fights broke out between the BNP supporters and police.

The BNP said that at least 12 of its supporters were injured. Police said at least 20 officers were hurt. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir denounced the police action as an "injustice", and part of a government plot to exclude the party from the Dec 30 election. General elections are invariably volatile in Bangladesh where politics has for more than two decades been dominated by rivalry between two women leaders - Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia - both of whom have been prime minister.

Hasina, who is prime minister now, and Khaleda, leader of the BNP, are both related to former national leaders. The BNP says a caretaker government is essential for free and fair elections as otherwise it says Hasina's ruling Awami League will use the machinery of government to support its campaign. The BNP is in disarray following the jailing early this year on corruption charges of Khaleda, on what the party says were trumped-up charges to keep her out of politics. —Reuters

APEC summit: The Xi show by the sea shore

PORT MORESBY: Hundreds of fluttering red flags, buses emblazoned with "China Aid" logos and even a purpose-built pagoda: driving around Port Moresby, you could be forgiven for thinking that Xi Jinping is hosting this week's APEC summit of Asia-Pacific leaders. US President Donald Trump's decision to skip the summit in Papua New Guinea has allowed the Chinese leader to take centre stage, an opportunity that Beijing is seizing with relish. Xi will embark on a state visit a day before the rest of the delegates descend on this dusty sun-baked city and host a meeting with Pacific leaders—a schedule designed to emphasise growing Chinese influence in the region.

Tomorrow, he is expected to open a new road and be treated to a traditional "sing sing"—a tribal welcome complete with Birds of Paradise-feathered headdresses and grass skirts, underscoring his status as the man of the moment. In front of the plush Stanley Hotel where Xi and the Chinese delegation will stay, dozens of red flags surround a pagoda, every bit as ostentatious as Xi's diplomatic gambit. Beijing has been working hard to expand its influence across the Pacific, securing new markets for Chinese firms, snapping up rights to mine, cut and harvest raw materials and developing a deep network of political influence.

Poor countries like Papua New Guinea—craving investment and much-needed capital—have welcomed the Chinese government with open arms. Total trade between China and the Pacific islands reached \$7.25 billion in 2017, plus another \$3 billion in investment, according to official data from Beijing. "Relations between the two sides have entered a new stage of rapid development," said Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Zheng Zeguangu of China's ties with the Pacific. Port Moresby is replete with evidence of that investment, from Chinese-built dual carriage-ways, Chinese-built convention centers and even a Chinese-built supreme court.

Turning up

Increasingly, Beijing appears to be rivaling Washington as the region's pre-eminent economic



PORT MORESBY: Papuan villagers in traditional costume and headdress perform outside the international convention centre in Port Moresby yesterday, ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. —AFP

power, even if it is still eclipsed militarily. Trump's decision not to attend the summit, and to send Vice President Mike Pence in his stead, has left Washington scrambling to convince allies that it has not conceded the battle for influence in the Pacific.

The president pulling out of a US-led Asia-Pacific trade pact days after entering office and his willingness to question decades-old treaty obligations to defend Asian allies had already soured the mood. Instead of deepening ties, Pence's first task at the APEC summit will be to "try to reassure people about the continued US commitment to the region" said William Alan Reinsch, a former US trade official.

On Saturday, Pence and Xi will give back-to-back speeches at the Asia-Pacific CEO summit aboard the Pacific Explorer, a cruise ship docked in Port Moresby's harbor. The rivalry between Beijing and Washington has only deepened as the two countries exchange tit-for-tat trade sanctions and barbs, with Pacific islands caught in the crossfire.

"Tensions between the US and China are making it increasingly difficult for Asia-Pacific countries to maintain what has always been a delicate diplomatic balancing act" of maintaining good ties with both capitals, said Merriden Varrall of Australia's Lowy Institute.

Senior White House officials speak darkly about Chinese financing coming with strings attached and of "protecting the sovereignty and independence of countries" so they can have "the freedom to be themselves without political and other forms of interference from abroad, from other powers". In Beijing, the tone is equally combative: "No country should try to obstruct the friendship and cooperation and exchanges between China and the island countries," said Zheng. But as Matthew Goodman, an expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, put it: "in Asia, 80 percent of life is showing up." If that is true, it may be advantage Beijing at this week's summit. —AFP

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Labor woes force Japan to prase open door to migrants

Ageing Japan is reluctantly attempting to prase open its doors to migrant workers as it battles serious labour shortages, raising the hackles of conservatives worried about mass immigration. Although Japan has long acknowledged the need to bolster its shrinking workforce, it has so far made only grudging efforts to open up its labour market which have failed to meet its needs. Now premier Shinzo Abe's government wants to open the door to foreign blue-collar workers as early as next April, granting visas for up to five years to those employed in industries facing chronic shortages such as agriculture, nursing and construction.

Workers armed with more advanced skills and Japanese language proficiency would be able to extend their visas and bring over family members - an unprecedented relaxation of immigration rules that has sparked alarm among conservatives, including some within Abe's own party. But the Japanese business community says the reforms are essential, with an unemployment rate hovering around 2.5 percent and 164 jobs going for every 100 jobseekers in October.

At Nakamoto Mfg's factory in Oizumi, northwest of Tokyo, some 30 percent of the workforce are foreigners, mostly Indonesians and Brazilians of Japanese origin. "We can't get along without them," acknowledges Takemichi Tsukada, a senior official at the company, which makes parts for electronic giants like Hitachi and Panasonic. "The government says highly skilled workers can stay longer in Japan, but accepting low skilled workers as well is probably better."

'Crime rate may rise'

The presence of the foreign workers at the Oizumi factory reflects the piecemeal efforts taken by Tokyo to import migrant labour without loosening historically rigid immigration policies. In 1990 it opened the door to Brazilians and other South Americans of Japanese descent. When that proved insufficient, it allowed businesses to hire foreign workers on a training program which was part of a development aid package for poorer countries. That scheme, which also failed to meet demand, was criticized as a stealth migrant labor program and accused of exploiting workers and providing them with few skills. Abe's government insists the new reforms will not lead to mass immigration, adding that most workers would not seek to settle down in Japan. But his opponents - ranging from conservatives who worry foreigners will upset the social order to activists who fear worker exploitation - are unconvinced, with a heated debate underway in parliament this week.

"There are concerns that the crime rate may rise, and jobs may be taken (from Japanese workers)," said Tomomi Inada, a member of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party, during the debate. Despite its reputation as closed, in 2016 Japan ranked fourth among OECD countries on the inflow of foreign residents, behind only Germany, the United States and Britain. This year, the number of foreign residents hit 2.63 million, two percent of the population, and nearly double the figure a decade ago. But immigration remains a worry for many Japanese - recent polls show that slightly more than 50 percent of voters support the new visa scheme, but support falls below 45 percent when they are asked about allowing migrant workers to settle in Japan long-term.

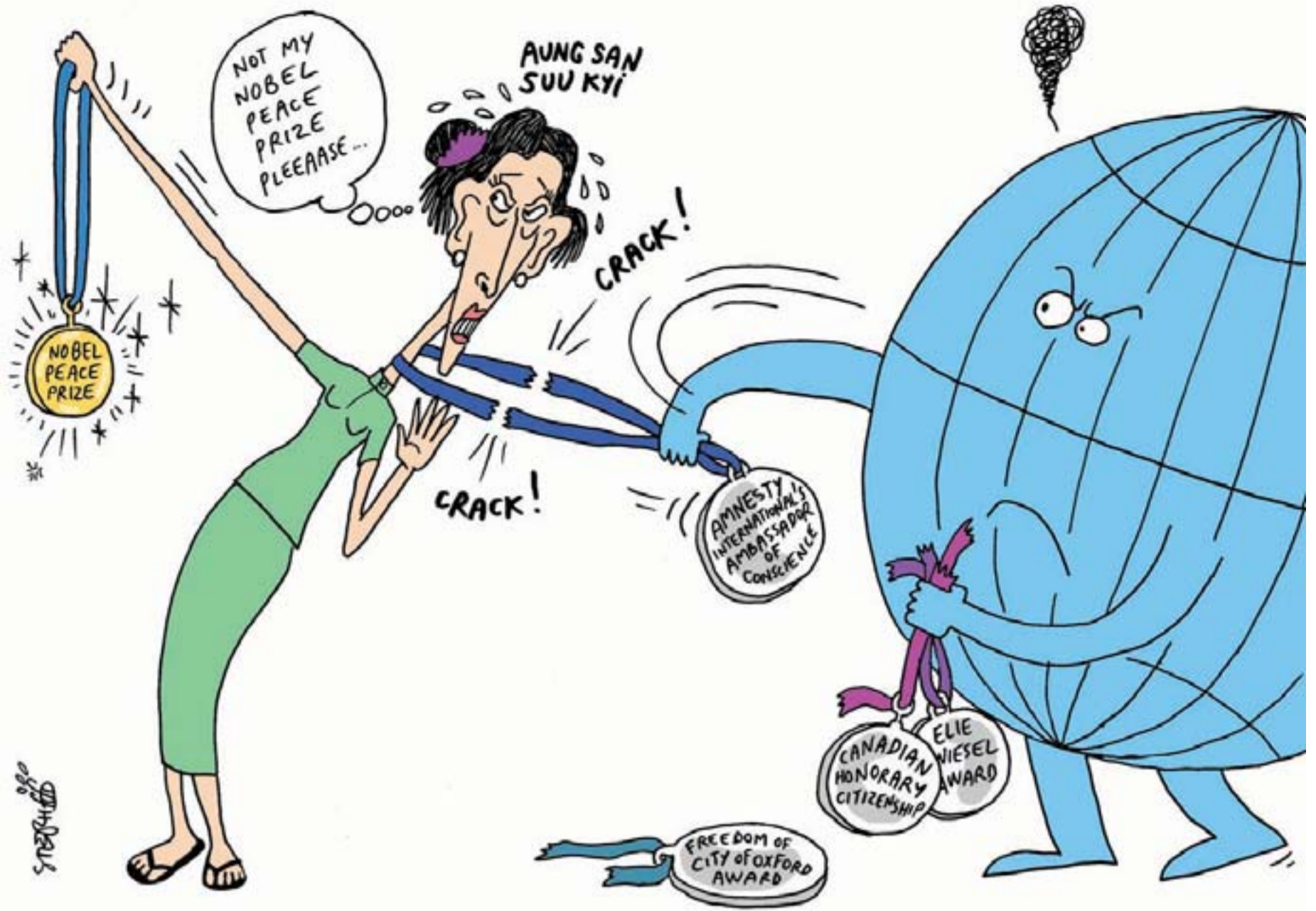
'Teach them Japanese rules'

Even in Oizumi, where foreign workers are common, there are concerns about integration. Shoko Takano, 73, runs a Portuguese school for the children of Brazilians, who are not obliged to attend Japanese schools. She worries the government has no plans to integrate new foreign workers, and points to frictions in Oizumi with Brazilian residents, including over the sorting of litter and noise pollution. "These (problems) are created by newcomers, and they can learn if we teach them Japanese rules," she said. "I hope the government will take responsibility and give them proper Japanese education," she added.

Others want the visa rules to be relaxed further, making it easier for workers - including those lacking Japanese language skills - to bring their families over. Japan should treat foreigners "not just as workers but humans, who are already playing important roles in industries and local communities," said Ipeei Torii, an activist working for the rights of foreign residents. Kiyoto Tanno, an immigration specialist at Tokyo Metropolitan University, said any restriction on bringing family members was "inhumane". "The new measures are still treating foreigners only as laborers but not as residents," he said. — AFP



This picture taken on Oct 16, 2018 shows Indonesian workers processing copper pipes at a Nakamoto Mfg factory in Oizumi, Gumma prefecture. — AFP



Is migrant caravan a security threat?

Since the US midterm elections, President Donald Trump has barely mentioned the "hardened criminals" he warned were about to "assault" the United States from a Central American migrant caravan. But the caravan is still trekking toward the US-Mexican border - some 1,800 km from where it was Tuesday - and campaign-trail vitriol aside, the question lingers: Is it a possible security threat? When he hears the American president talk about all the "gang members" in the caravan, Bayron Salinas, a 24-year-old mechanic from Honduras, shakes his head: "The gangs are what we're running from," he says.

Sniffing and coughing in the chill of a winter evening in central Mexico, his one-year-old son in his arms, the slightly-built Salinas does not look much like Trump's image of an "invasion" by "thugs" and "very bad people". Like most of the 5,000 migrants walking and hitch-hiking across Mexico, many of them in families, Salinas says he and his wife, Isamar, just want to raise their baby out of poverty and away from the street gangs that rule their turf with brutal violence in his home country.

"For the most part these are asylum-seeking families and adults, fleeing violence and threats and tough conditions and are simply seeking a place of safety," says Royce Bernstein Murray of the American Immigration Council, a Washington think tank.

'Unknown Middle Easterners'

Yet it is hard to completely dismiss security fears about masses of people crossing international borders. One row wound highlights the stakes in the migration debate: The Nov 2015 Paris attacks. Three years ago, Islamic State militants killed 130 people in a series of coordinated suicide bombings and mass shootings in the French capital. Most of the attackers had snuck into Europe in the flow of migrants and refugees fleeing Syria. Trump's rhetoric on the migrant caravan has echoed the language of European

anti-immigration hardliners who raged against the Syrian exodus. But there is zero evidence that Islamist terrorists are traveling in the migrant caravan. And even Trump admitted there was "no proof" for one of his most alarmist tweets, in which he said "unknown Middle Easterners" were mixed in with the group.

... and MS-13

More frequently, Trump has asserted that the caravan

“The gangs are what we're running from”

contains members of gangs such as MS-13, whose violence has fueled some of the world's highest murder rates in Central America's "Northern Triangle": El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Migration experts, security analysts and even migrants themselves say it is possible a small number of gang members or other criminals are in the caravan.

Some migrants told AFP they were aware of small groups of young men in the caravan who took drugs and stole things - but not the large-scale criminal presence Trump decries. "If we realize there's a thief in the group, we hit him - hard. No thief who's smart would hang around here," says Denis Alberto de la Cruz, 31, a fisherman from

Guatemala. "Any group that large, you're probably going to have some people in there that have criminal records, or ties to gangs," says Richard Miles, a security expert and Americas specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "But if there were a large presence of MS-13, they almost certainly would have been outed by the group itself. Because most of these people, that's exactly what they're fleeing."

Any gang members in the caravan would be detected relatively easily in the United States, which has secure borders and "extensive processes" for vetting all arrivals with fingerprinting, biometric data and background checks, says Bernstein Murray.

Safety in numbers

The migrants, who set out from Honduras on Oct 13, only fueled the fire of Trump's tweets when they stormed Mexico's southern border six days later, overwhelming riot police. Trump referred to the episode in deploying thousands of troops to the US-Mexican border. But it is unlikely the caravan - which has begun to fragment as it crosses central Mexico - would try to force its way into the US, experts say. "The one sure way to not get into the United States is to commit an assault against a border patrol officer or US law enforcement official," says Miles.

The migrants are not traveling together to invade the US, but rather to protect themselves from the dangers of the journey across Mexico, where criminal gangs regularly extort, kidnap and kill people like them. And the size of the group should not cloud the fact that the migrants' arrival at the border will be "business as usual" for the US, says Bernstein Murray. "The border is more secure than ever," she says. "And while in any group of human beings, you have a risk that there may be bad actors, the vast majority, nearly all of these individuals, are exactly what they say they are." — AFP

'Working poor' abound in Spain despite recovery

Spain may be the EU's poster child for economic recovery, but impressive growth rates have failed to make a dent in the number of people struggling to make ends meet despite having jobs, the "working poor". A combination of low wages and reliance on temporary contracts is keeping millions of workers stuck below the poverty line - nearly one in six, according to labor ministry figures. The country has the European Union's highest proportion of workers at risk of poverty, 13.1 percent, after Greece and Romania, according to 2016 Eurostat figures.

Spain's economy shrank during the financial crisis from 2009 to 2013 but rebounded in 2014. Its rate of expansion has since outstripped much of the EU with growth of more than 3 percent. But the recovery has bypassed many workers like Elisabet, a 44-year-old Madrid waitress who is employed on a three-month contract. She earns just Å950 (\$1,100) per month. Nearly half of her salary, 400 euros, goes on renting a room she shares with her eight-year-old daughter.

Another Å130 is swallowed up by school canteen fees, Å100 goes to childcare, leaving just over Å300 for food, transportation and other expenses. "I can't save, it's a bit complicated," Elisabet, who asked that her last name not be published, told AFP, adding she has not been able to go on holiday with her daughter for two years.

'Freeze on wages'

Spain's economic downturn sparked a "freeze on wages" and salaries did not recover when the economy returned to growth because unemployment has remained high, said Florentino Felgueroso of Madrid-based think tank Fedea. While Spain's jobless rate is down from a peak of nearly 27 percent in 2013 to 14.5 percent in September, it is still the second-highest in the eurozone after Greece. Real wages actually declined in the last two years, the OECD said in a report published in July.

This contrasts with the jump in salaries before the cri-



Workers harvest chestnuts in a forest in Parauta near Malaga on Oct 26, 2018. — AFP

sis, especially in the construction sector, said Felgueroso. Part of the problem is that many of the newly created jobs are temporary rather than permanent, and their duration has been reduced considerably, with some lasting just "a week, sometimes less", he added. Spain is more reliant on temporary contracts than any other EU nation. More than one in four workers, 26.9 percent, was employed on a temporary contract in the second quarter, according to Eurostat.

The percentage of workers in Spain employed part-time when they would rather work full-time accounted for 8 percent of the total labour force in 2016, compared to 6 percent in the entire eurozone, according to the Bank of Spain.

'Difficult to correct'

Elisabet is a good example. Despite her 15 years' experience, since the end of the crisis she had only one permanent contract - and was fired after just one year. She said she feels lucky to have a temporary contract, instead of working under-the-table as in the past. Felgueroso said

"job precarity has become generalised" and especially affects women. Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who took office in June, has vowed to fight for change.

Under Spanish law temporary workers have to be considered permanent after a period of two years, except in the case of short-term projects or seasonal jobs. But loopholes in Spain's complex labor framework, which comprises dozens of different contract types, allow many firms to circumvent the rules. The labor ministry in August contacted nearly 80,000 firms it suspects of abusing short-term contracts. Some 47,000 of these contracts were converted to permanent ones the following month.

The government also wants to increase the number of labor inspectors to crack down on abuse. "It's very difficult to correct, it is part of regular practice," said Felgueroso. Sanchez's minority government has also proposed in its draft 2019 budget - which faces an uphill battle to be approved in parliament - raising the minimum age from Å858 a month to Å1,050. This would bring it a step closer to Britain's minimum wage of Å1,401, or Germany of Å1,498. — AFP

Business

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WASHINGTON, DC: (From left) Yahoo Finance's Adam Shapiro speaks with Neil Bradley, Chief Policy officer for the US Chamber of Commerce, during the Yahoo Finance All Markets Summit: America's Financial Future at the Newseum in Washington D.C. on Tuesday. —AFP

Oil market will face surplus in 2019: IEA

EU plan to enable non-dollar Iran trade, oil sales unraveling

LONDON: Global oil supply will outpace demand throughout 2019, as a relentless rise in output swamps growth in consumption that is at risk from a slowing economy, the International Energy Agency said yesterday.

In its monthly report the Paris-based IEA left its forecast for global demand growth for 2018 and 2019 unchanged from last month at 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd) and 1.4 million bpd, respectively, but cut its forecast for non-OECD demand growth, the engine of expansion in world oil consumption. For the first half of 2019, based on its outlook for non-OPEC production and global demand, and assuming flat OPEC production, the IEA said the implied stock build is 2 million bpd.

Output around the world has swelled since the middle of the year, while an escalating trade dispute between the United States and China threatens global economic growth. Yesterday, three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters that OPEC and its partners are discussing a proposal to cut oil output by up to 1.4 million bpd for 2019 to avert an oversupply that would weaken prices.

Since early October, the oil price has fallen by a quarter to below \$70 a barrel, its lowest in eight months, which may protect demand to an extent, the IEA said. "While slower economic growth in some countries reduces the outlook for oil demand, a significant downward revision to our price assumption is supportive," it added.

The agency raised its forecast for oil output growth from countries outside the Organization of the Petroleum

Exporting Countries to 2.4 million bpd this year and 1.9 million bpd next year, versus its previous estimate of 2.2 million bpd and 1.8 million bpd, respectively.

The United States will lead output growth. The IEA estimates total US oil supply will rise by 2.1 million bpd this year and another 1.3 million bpd in 2019, from a current record of more than 11 million bpd.

OPEC crude output rose by 200,000 bpd in October to 32.99 million bpd, up 240,000 bpd on a year ago, as losses of 400,000 bpd from Iran and 600,000 bpd from Venezuela were easily offset by increases from others, such as Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates. "Next year, there is expected to be even less need for OPEC oil due to relentless growth in non-OPEC supply," the IEA said, adding that it had cut its forecast for demand for OPEC crude by 300,000 bpd to 31.3 million bpd in 2019. Inventories of oil in OECD countries rose by 12.1 million barrels in September to 2.875 billion barrels, the IEA said, adding that for the third quarter as a whole, stocks rose 58.1 million barrels, or at a rate of 630,000 bpd, the biggest increase since 2015.

Non-dollar oil trade?

A special European Union initiative to protect trade with Iran against newly reimposed US sanctions faces possible collapse with no EU country willing to host the operation for fear of provoking US punishment. EU diplomats said the main European powers - Germany, France and Britain - would raise pressure on tiny Luxembourg to host the so-

called Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) after Austria refused to manage the plan and left it on the brink of collapse.

The stakes are high, for Iran has warned it could scrap a 2015 accord on curbing its nuclear program reached with world powers, including the big EU trio, if the bloc fails to preserve the deal's economic benefits against US pressure.

The SPV is a kind of clearing house that could be used to help match Iranian oil and gas exports against purchases of EU goods in an effective barter arrangement circumventing US sanctions, based on global use of the dollar for oil sales.

The goal was to have the SPV legally in place by this month though not operational until next year, but no country has offered to host it, six diplomats told Reuters. The SPV is seen as the lynchpin of European efforts to salvage the nuclear accord, from which US President Donald Trump - who took office after the pact was clinched - withdrew in May, calling it flawed in Iran's favor.

Austria has declined a request to play host for the SPV. Belgium and Luxembourg are two other possibilities, but both have expressed strong reservations, diplomats said, although they have not commented publicly. Their reluctance arises from fears that SPV reliance on local banks to smooth trade with Iran may incur US penalties, severing the lenders' access to US markets, diplomats said.

"Austria has indeed refused. It's not dead, but it's not going in the right direction. We are going to try again with Luxembourg, but we're under no illusions," a European diplomat said yesterday. Luxembourg is seen as a good can-

didate to manage the Iran SPV given its experience setting up a similar mechanism during the 2009-12 euro zone financial crisis. Under the 2015 deal, Iran restricted its disputed nuclear program, widely seen in the West as a disguised effort to develop the means to make atomic bombs, in exchange for an end to international sanctions against it.

Implications

A European failure to salvage the economic spin-offs from the deal could strengthen anti-Western hardliners in Iran and spur more aggressive Iranian moves around the Middle East, where the Islamic Republic is involved in protracted proxy wars with its main regional rival Saudi Arabia.

Austrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Peter Guschelbauer confirmed Vienna would not host the entity after studying the impact with ministries and the central bank. "At the government level the decision was reached that there are simply still too many open questions and imponderables with this SPV," Guschelbauer said. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini asked several states to consider being the headquarters, but diplomats said that as the SPV would need to work with local banks, they could become vulnerable to US punishment for sidestepping sanctions.

"No one has come forward at this stage. If we don't have a host country, we have a very big problem. So much is riding on this that some way will need for someone to host this. There is a lot of nervousness about what hosting an SPV means," another diplomat told Reuters. —Reuters

Modi govt, RBI set for uneasy truce

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: India's government and its central bank are getting close to ironing out some of their policy differences, said two sources familiar with the discussions, as they seek to defuse worsening tensions that had threatened to unsettle investors.

While the rift is far from healed, the sources said enough progress had been made to avoid acrimony at a board meeting of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) next Monday. The threat that RBI Governor Urjit Patel would quit, as reported by some Indian newspapers last week,

is also thought to be off the table for now, they said. The uneasy truce is likely to see the RBI ease up on some lending restrictions to help the government stimulate the economy, said the sources. One source said the central bank could agree to tweak restrictions on lending to improve credit flows for smaller companies with a borrowing limit of 250 million rupees (\$3.4 million).

Neither the RBI nor the finance ministry responded to requests for comment for this article. The prime minister's office declined to comment.

It is unclear how much of a role Prime Minister Narendra Modi played in defusing the tension. Local media reported that Modi met Patel last week in an attempt to sort out the contentious issues but officials in the prime minister's office and the RBI said they did not know of such a meeting.

Modi had appointed Patel as the RBI governor in 2016 for a three-year term that ends in September next year. For weeks, government officials in New Delhi have been pressuring the Mumbai-based RBI to accede to a range of demands, from easing lending curbs to handing over surplus reserves to the government. This prompted RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya to warn late last month that undermining a central bank's independence could be "catastrophic," bringing the feud into the open.

Tensions were expected to come to a head at Monday's meeting as government representatives on the board appeared to be ready to turn up the heat on Patel and accuse the RBI of being intransigent in the face of government demands.

Now, it seems likely there will be a more constructive atmosphere with agreement on some issues, and disputed questions shelved for another day, the sources said.

Can't agree to everything

The government is keen to provide more stimulus to the economy heading into next year's election, especially as the incomes of many farmers have been hit by low crop prices. At the same time it doesn't want a bust-up with the central bank, which could badly affect investor sentiment and provide political fodder to the opposition Congress party.

"The government understands the regulator will remain a regulator and can't agree to all demands," said a government official, who declined to be named, referring to the RBI.

While the official did not give any details of the solutions being worked out with the RBI, he acknowledged that the government did not want to trigger Patel's departure at such a sensitive time. There are five key state elections in the next few weeks and a general election due by May. The Congress party has already been har-

rying the government over allegations of corruption in a military jet deal with France and infighting between the top officials of India's equivalent of the FBI.

A RBI board member said that helping to ease tensions was the idea that both sides wanted a healthy economy. It was just a question of how to get there. The main issue is how to boost credit growth," the member said referring to the credit crunch facing small companies.

Economics Affairs Secretary S.C. Garg is expected to make a presentation in the board meeting to outline the concerns of the finance ministry and could bring up the question about the transfer of surplus cash reserves held by the RBI, the sources said.

The board member said that an expert panel may be set up to work out the appropriate level of contingency reserves for the RBI, effectively kicking that question down the road. —Reuters

Business

UBC signs KD 75m contract for suburb of Sabah Al-Ahmed City

Project includes 40 residential buildings and infrastructure works

KUWAIT: United Building Company K.S.C.C (UBC), a subsidiary of United Real Estate Company K.S.C.P (URC), one of the leading real estate development company in the Middle East and North Africa, has announced signing a contract for KD75 million for the construction, completion and maintenance of 40 residential buildings (720 apartments) and infrastructure works for the investment suburb of Sabah Al-Ahmed City.

The contract signing announcement was held at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) on Sunday 11th November 2018 and attended by Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Dr Janan Bushehri, the Director General of Public Authority for Housing Welfare Eng. Bader Ahmed Al-Waqayan, and the Chief Executive Officer of United Building Company (UBC) Eng. Mohammad Salem Al-Wetayan alongside the senior officials in relevance to the announced contract project.

The forty residential buildings stand at different heights ranging between six, seven and eight floors to be located over plot areas ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 square meters to accommodate 720 apartment units. The contract timeline is scheduled for completion within (30) months.

Commenting on this announcement, Eng Mohammad Salem Al-Wetayan, CEO of United Building Company (UBC) said "The total value of our completed projects to date is approximately KD 235 Million. As part of our Company strategy is to

expand UBC contracting activities and operations in line with Kuwait's Vision 2035 towards a prosperous and sustainable future."

United Real Estate Co K.S.C.P (URC) is one of the Middle East and North Africa's leading real estate developers, with consolidated assets of KD 622 million (\$2 billion as of 30 September 2018). Headquartered in Kuwait, URC was founded in 1973 and was listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange in 1984.

URC primarily operates through a number of operating subsidiaries and investment arms across the MENA region. The company's core business is real estate development and operations and enjoys a diversified portfolio of assets that include retail complexes, hotels, residential properties, and high-rise office buildings.

URC's operations extend to construction and contracting, facility management, and project management through its several subsidiaries. The company's portfolio of assets and businesses are geographically spread across a number of countries through several assets such as Marina World, Marina Hotel, and KIPCO Tower in Kuwait, Salalah Gardens Mall & Residences in Oman, Abdali Mall in Jordan, Raouche View 1090 in Lebanon, Aswar Residences in Egypt, and Assoufid in Morocco.

URC's majority shareholder is KIPCO Group, one of the biggest holding companies in the Middle East and North Africa, with consolidated assets of \$32.7 billion as at 30 June 2018. The Group has significant



ownership interests in over 60 companies operating across 24 countries. The Group's main business sectors are financial services, media, real estate, and

manufacturing. Through its core companies, subsidiaries, and affiliates, KIPCO also has interests in the education and medical sectors.

Red flags over Italy's refusal to budge on budget

ROME: Italy's populist government was defiant yesterday over its refusal to revise its big-spending budget for Brussels, despite warnings from analysts, the market and the International Monetary Fund. "The budgets Brussels has applauded... have not helped Italy. We're doing the opposite," insisted Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini after Rome told the European Commission it would not give an inch. The Milan stock exchange slumped 1.42 percent mid-morning as the familiar fear that stress in Italy could spread to other European countries returned to haunt the markets.

The "spread"—the difference between yields on 10-year Italian government debt compared with those in Germany—reached 312 basis points Wednesday, up from 304 at the close on Tuesday.

It has more than doubled since May, when negotiations to form the coalition government in Rome began. "Investors are right to be worried," said Maartje Wiffelaars, Rabobank economist on Italy.

"Given Italy's high debt level and weak growth potential, it cannot afford the current expensive budget with limited (long-term) economic gains," she said.

"Another reason to be worried is that the deteriorating relationship between the EC and Rome will likely make other Eurozone Member States less willing to help Italy out (financially) if at some point (it is) necessary. "And at the same time, it makes it less likely that Italy will cave in or maybe even ask for such support in time, i.e. before the situation spirals out of control," she told AFP.

'Poor, weak will suffer'

Dutch Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra said Rome's refusal to revise the budget was "not really surprising, but very disappointing". "The budget does not respect the agreements we drew up together in Europe. That worries me a lot. It's now up to the European Commission to decide the next steps to take," he said in a tweet from the ministry. Italy intends to run a public deficit of 2.4 percent of gross domestic product in 2019 — three times the target of the government's centre-left predecessor—and one of 2.1 percent in 2020.

Brussels forecasts Italy's deficit will reach 2.9 percent of GDP in 2019 and hit 3.1 percent in 2020 — breaching the EU's 3.0 percent limit. Rome called late Tuesday for the EU to show "flexibility" because Italy has had to cope with a series of costly natural disasters, including floods and a deadly bridge collapse in Genoa. Economy Minister Giovanni Tria told Brussels that, over the next three years, making good the damage caused would cost the government about 0.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The coalition government, made up of the far-right League and anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S), insisted the budget will help kickstart growth in the eurozone's third largest economy and reduce the public debt and deficit. But Rishi Goyal, who was mission chief on the International Monetary Fund's recent visit to Italy, warned Wednesday that Rome was asking for trouble.

"Growth is slowing. Whether or not a recession is coming remains to be seen, but the risks are increasing," he said in an interview with the Repubblica and Corriere della Sera dailies.

Big spending now "means greater vulnerability when a negative shock happens, such as a recession or global slowdown. "Italy could be forced to cut its spending or raise taxes precisely when the economy is weak. That could transform a modest slowdown into a recession and it would be the poor and weak who would pay the price," he said. —AFP

US farmers scramble to contain trade war damage, find new markets

ADDIEVILLE, Ill.: Clouds crowded the Illinois sky as Nick Harre walked away from his combine at the peak of harvest to join four fellow farmers in greeting some unlikely visitors. Inside a nearby seed barn, they made their pitch to eight Sri Lankan government officials: Please buy our soybeans. The wooing of such a tiny market underscores the depth of US farmers' problems after losing their biggest customer, China, to a global trade war. Sri Lanka bought about 3,000 metric tons of US soybeans last year. China bought about 32 million tons — but now buys almost none after Beijing slapped a 25 percent tariff on US imports in July. The move came in retaliation for US duties on Chinese goods imposed by US President Donald Trump.

US farmers would need about 11,000 markets the size of Sri Lanka to replace Chinese soybean purchases, but these days many growers will take any shred of new business they can get. A small but growing number of farmers have all but given up waiting for diplomatic solutions and started scrambling themselves to help open new markets and salvage existing ones disrupted by tariffs, according to dozens of interviews with producers, industry officials and trade lobbying groups.

They are lobbying lawmakers, joining overseas trade trips, and hosting prospective buyers — often while neglecting or passing off farm duties during harvest.

Some tried jumping into politics as Democratic candidates this year, but had little success: Fifth-generation Pennsylvania dairy farmer Denny Wolff lost his fight for a Congressional seat, as did Mississippi poultry farmer

SIA finds premium economy a tougher sell on non-stop US flights

SINGAPORE: Singapore Airlines Ltd is facing no problem selling business class tickets on its ultra-long non-stop flights to the United States but is having to price premium economy seats very attractively, a senior executive said yesterday.

The carrier last month resumed after five years the world's longest commercial flight, a near-19 hour non-stop journey from Singapore to New York. The airline ordered seven new ultra-long range twin-engine Airbus SE A350-900ULRs fitted with just 67 business class and 94 premium economy seats for those flights and for non-stop services to Los Angeles and San Francisco. These flights have no economy class seats. It represents a major expansion in the US market for Singapore Airlines and a test of whether the carrier can charge the 20 percent price premium that travel industry data shows is typical for ultra-long non-stop services due to their popularity with time-sensitive business travellers.

EON confident for 2018 after Q3 in the black

FRANKFURT: German energy giant EON said yesterday it was confident of hitting its full-year targets after a strong set of third-quarter results and as it pushes on with a complex restructuring.

The Essen-based group—which in recent years has suffered massive losses linked to the restructuring and



US farmers scramble to contain trade war damage, find new markets. —Reuters

Michael Evans — who is pro-life, pro-gun and anti-tariffs.

Harre, 29, a third-generation dairy and grain farmer, said he'd rather talk directly to importers than trust the task to Washington. "I could care less about the politics, to be honest," he said. "We're lacking people advocating for us. If someone's going to be telling our story, I'd rather it be myself."

The grassroots movement comes as the agrarian economy is in its fifth year of financial woe, with oversupply undermining revenues. Corn and soybean prices are hovering near decade lows, and this year's bumper harvest is fur-

ther swelling US farmers' massive stocks of unsold grain.

US net farm income will fall to \$65.7 billion this year, down 47 percent from just five years ago, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecasts. These activist farmers know they face overwhelming odds: China had traditionally purchased 60 percent of US soybean exports, and building new trade relationships can take years. "If we can get buyers to step away from the politics and see us as people, we can get them to trust us — even if they can't trust Washington," said Doug Schroeder, a fifth-generation farmer in Bellflower, Illinois. —Reuters

Singapore Airlines Executive Vice President Commercial Mak Swee Wah said there was existing demand for business class which he expected would continue to pick up.

For premium economy, however, he said some markets were not "entirely familiar" with the product, which offers more leg room and other amenities than economy class.

"I think we need to continue to stimulate and encourage the market to consider this product, initially with very attractive pricing, but eventually I think people will see that even at prices which we offer it is a good product to purchase because it is a very long flight," he said at an analyst and media briefing.

His comments came after Singapore Airlines reported on Tuesday an 81 percent plunge in second-quarter net profit, hurt by higher fuel prices, lower airfares and non-cash losses at its part-owned Virgin Australia Holdings Ltd. Yields, a proxy for ticket prices, fell 2.2 percent in the second quarter compared with a year earlier, failing to help offset the impact of a 24 percent rise in fuel prices.

Singapore Airlines is offering premium economy fares as low as S\$1,698 (\$1,230.17) return from Singapore to New York for weekday travel over part of the



peak Christmas travel period, according to its website. That is in line with economy class fares from premium rivals like Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd and Dubai-based Emirates that require a stop and a longer travel time, according to a Reuters search on Expedia.

Mak declined to comment on whether Singapore Airlines could consider changing the configuration of the plane to include

more business class seats.

When it previously flew to New York and Los Angeles non-stop on four-engine A340-500 jets that used more fuel, it had initially offered both "executive economy" and business class but later switched to an all-business class configuration. Those flights were abandoned in 2013 when high fuel prices made them uneconomic. —Reuters

to Germany's retreat from nuclear power—reported a net profit of 247 million euros (\$279 million) between July and September, compared with a loss in the same quarter last year.

Adjusted operating, or underlying profit grew 17 percent year-on-year, to 410 million euros, although revenues fell 13 percent to 7.3 billion. Over the first nine months to September, adjusted operating profit rose 11 percent to 2.4 billion euros as EON booked higher sales and brought new wind farms online.

The group also managed to shrink its debt mountain by 3.9 billion euros, to 15.4 billion, after selling its

stake in former fossil fuels subsidiary Uniper to Finland's Fortum.

EON is changing drastically as it prepares to integrate renewable energy firm Innogy. The purchase is part of a complex transaction with its biggest home-grown rival RWE announced in March, which still needs a green light from German competition authorities. If the takeover goes through, the energy map of Europe and Germany will be redrawn as RWE focuses on energy production from both traditional and renewable sources, while EON's strength lies in distribution and sales. —AFP

Business

Angst for German economy as car woes slam on brakes

Bundesbank asks firms to reinforce their capital buffers

BERLIN: Germany's years-long run of steady growth came to a screeching halt in the third quarter, official data showed yesterday, with an expected bottleneck in the vital car industry matched by broader structural concerns.

Federal statistics authority Destatis reported a 0.2-percent slump in gross domestic product (GDP) between July and September—the first fall in the measure since early 2015 and worse than forecast by analysts after months of troubling economic indicators.

"The reputation of the invincible strong man (or woman) of Europe has received some scratches," commented ING Diba bank economist Carsten Brzeski.

A single fall in GDP does not point to a recession, which only becomes official if there are two successive quarters of shrinkage. But the figure represents a marked slowdown from the fast-paced growth of 0.4 percent in the first quarter of the year and 0.5 percent in the second. Economists still predict Germany will book its 10th consecutive year of expansion in 2019, although the pace this year and next will likely be slower than the 2.2 percent recorded in 2017.

'No panic'

"The slight fall in GDP was above all down to external trade developments," Destatis said, pointing to lower exports and higher imports than in the second quarter. In Berlin, the economy ministry highlighted the introduction of the so-called WLTP exhaust testing cycle in response to the "dieselgate" emissions cheating scandal as the main brake on growth.

New car registrations plunged more than 30 percent year-on-year in September as the new regulations hit and buyers at home and abroad held off purchases. The auto industry, Germany's largest, employs around 800,000 people in firms ranging from giants like Volkswagen or BMW to tiny components suppliers.

Economic think-tank IWF recently calculated that the

third quarter saw the worst performance for the sector since 1997. "Once this one-off effect has dissipated, the German economy's upswing will continue," the economy ministry predicted.

"There is no reason to become panicky," agreed Unicredit economist Andreas Rees. "A strong rebound (in GDP) of close to 1.0 percent quarter-on-quarter at year-end is likely."

Drying up

Another temporary factor weighing on the German economy was the unusually hot and dry summer. Starved of rainfall, the vital economic artery of the Rhine ebbed to record lows, throttling river shipments, especially for firms in the massive chemical industry like BASF.

Longer-term structural developments may offer more for economists looking to Germany's long-term prospects to worry over. As well as the export slowdown, Destatis highlighted "mixed signals" domestically.

"While more was invested in equipment and construction than in the previous quarter, private consumer spending fell," the statisticians found. In recent years strong consumer spending supported by rising wages has proved a bulwark of German growth. ING's Brzeski pointed to inflation in energy prices that "completely erased" pay increases in recent months.

What's more, Germany's aging population and low unemployment rate are proving a drag on growth, as companies struggle to find new skilled workers to hire in sectors ranging from construction to the digital economy. Internationally, the export-oriented economy is suffering from rising protectionist threats, the prospect of lower trade with Britain after it leaves the EU next year and intra-EU tensions over heavily-indebted Italy's budget. Earlier this month Germany's council of economic advisors—the so-called "wise men"—urged the government to invest more in infrastructure and education.

The Bundesbank (central bank yesterday advised



WOLFSBURG: In this file photo, German carmaker Volkswagen's cars are seen at the storage facility auto tower at the company headquarters in Wolfsburg, northern Germany. — AFP

financial firms to reinforce their capital buffers, saying weaknesses in the financial system built up during good times could amplify the effects of a downturn. "Today's disappointing growth data is yet another wake-up call

that political stability and strong growth are by no means a given," ING's Brzeski said, following moves by Chancellor Angela Merkel that point to the end of her long spell at the country's helm. — AFP

US consumer prices post largest rise in 9 months

WASHINGTON: US consumer prices increased by the most in nine months in October amid gains in the cost of gasoline and rents, pointing to steadily rising inflation that likely will keep the Federal Reserve on track to raise interest rates again next month.

The Labor Department said yesterday its Consumer Price Index rose 0.3 percent last month after edging up 0.1 percent in September. In the 12 months through October, the CPI increased 2.5 percent, picking up from September's 2.3 percent rise.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI climbed 0.2 percent. The so-called core CPI had gained 0.1 percent for two straight months.

In the 12 months through October, the core CPI increased 2.1 percent after advancing 2.2 percent in September. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the CPI climbing 0.3 percent and the core CPI gaining 0.2 percent in October.

US Treasury yields briefly declined before turning higher after the data while the dollar held its losses against a basket of currencies. US stock index futures were trading higher.

Inflation pressures are building, partly driven by the lowest unemployment rate in nearly 49 years and strong domestic demand. Annual wage growth recorded its largest increase in 9-1/2 years in October.

Cheaper food

The Fed, which has a 2 percent inflation target, tracks a different measure, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index excluding food and energy, for monetary policy. The core PCE price index has increased 2.0 percent for five straight months. The US central bank left interest rates unchanged last Thursday, but is expected to increase borrowing costs in December for a fourth time this year. In its statement after last week's policy meeting, the Fed noted that annual inflation measures "remain near 2 percent." Last month, gasoline prices rebounded 3.0 percent, accounting for more than one-third of the increase in the CPI, after slipping 0.2 percent in September.

Food prices fell 0.1 percent after being unchanged in September. Food consumed at home declined for a second straight month in October. Food prices were held down by cheaper bread, cereals, pork, dairy products, fruits and vegetables.

Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence, which is what a homeowner would pay to rent or receive from renting a home, rose 0.3 percent in October after advancing 0.2 percent in the prior month. The rent index gained 0.2 percent. Healthcare costs increased 0.2 percent last month after a similar gain in September. Apparel prices edged up 0.1 percent after jumping 0.9 percent in September. There were also increases in the costs of household furnishings and used motor vehicle and trucks as well as motor vehicle insurance and tobacco.

But prices for new motor vehicles dropped 0.2 percent last month. Communications costs fell as did prices for recreation and personal care products. — Reuters

Tencent logs big profit rise despite China game crackdown

SHANGHAI: Chinese internet giant Tencent said yesterday it posted a nearly 30 percent profit rise in the latest quarter, handily beating expectations as new video games already in the pipeline mitigated any impact from a government crackdown on the lucrative game sector.

Shenzhen-based Tencent said net profit came in at 23.33 billion yuan (\$3.39 billion) in the three months ending September 30, surpassing a Bloomberg average analyst estimate of 18.39 billion yuan.

Tencent's earnings were hotly anticipated after the company posted a two percent year-on-year fall in profit in the preceding quarter, which Bloomberg data indicated was the first such decline in at least a decade. Known for its ubiquitous WeChat social media and messaging program, Tencent had ridden revenues from gamers to surpass even Facebook last year and vault into the ranks of the world's most valuable companies. But it has suffered a dramatic reversal this year after China's government effectively froze approvals of new game titles earlier this year, officially due to youth gaming addiction concerns.

The freeze, and tighter restrictions on game-playing, has seen a stunning amount lopped off of Tencent's total market value this year—around a quarter of a trillion dollars—as its Hong Kong-listed shares have sagged nearly 33 percent. But there was little hint of trouble in Tencent's third-quarter results. Tencent said smart-phone game revenue grew seven percent in the quarter to 19.50 billion yuan, though PC game rev-



ZHEJIANG: Ma Huateng, CEO of China Internet giant Tencent, delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of the 5th World Internet Conference in Wuzhen in China's eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

enues fell 15 percent to 12.4 billion yuan "due to user migration to mobile games and the high base in the same quarter last year." Overall revenues grew 24 percent, including a 47 percent jump in online advertising, thanks in part to the release of 10 new titles during the quarter, Tencent said, adding that it had 15 more games ready for release. Analysts said China's gaming industry—the world's largest, and dominated by Tencent—could feel a squeeze soon due to the cut-off in title approvals.

Game on

But they added that licensing was expected to resume possibly as early as year-end after the government finishes

implementing a tightened regime of restrictions—now being rolled out—aimed at curbing playing time among minors. "Small players (game companies) are facing a threat, but Tencent is doing pretty well," said Charlie Chai, an analyst with 86Research in Shanghai.

"It has a deep pipeline of games which already have licences, so for the moment those games can tide them over for at least another quarter."

Tencent is generally viewed as a proxy for China's gaming market, which is estimated to be worth nearly \$40 billion according to industry trackers Newzoo. Gaming industry analysts Niko Partners said in a recent report that

Chinese demand remained strong. "Chinese gamers are still enthusiastically gaming and spending money on and in games. The market revenue continues to grow," it said.

The exact reasons for the crackdown on games remain unclear, but analysts believe an internal restructuring in the agency that approves games is also partly to blame. Tencent still has a powerful asset in WeChat, which has more than a billion users and underpins its gaming and ads business.

"Tencent still has a great portfolio, so we're still confident on the company's outlook," said Norman Hui of Zhongtai International Securities. — Reuters

Growth angst and oil slide take European shares to two-week low

LONDON: European shares hit their lowest in two weeks yesterday as data showing the German and Japanese economies contracting in the third quarter fuelled worries about global growth amid a plunge in oil prices.

The pan-European STOXX 600 lost 0.5 percent by 0900 GMT as commodities sectors weighed and Italian stocks sold off. The STOXX and leading euro zone stock indexes hit their lowest since Oct 31 in early deals, recovering some ground later.

Italy's decision to stick to its growth and deficit plans in its re-submitted draft budget set the stage for a showdown with the European Union over breaking structural deficit limits. It drove government bond yields up and sent Italy's FTSE MIB down 1.8 percent, set for its worst fall in a month, as bank stocks fell 1.5 percent. The oil and gas sector sank 2.3 percent, causing it to cede its position as top-gaining sector year-to-date to healthcare.

Energy stocks have been one of the biggest contributors to the region's earnings growth this quarter, making the slide a significant concern for investors.

Crude prices were struggling to find a footing after a 7 percent plunge the previous day on surging supply. In London, the FTSE 100 fell as Prime Minister Theresa May

sought to convince her government to accept a draft European Union divorce deal that opponents say threatens the independence and unity of the United Kingdom.

Mining stocks fell 2.7 percent as copper prices slid after weak China retail sales data reignited fears of a slowdown in the world's biggest metals consumer.

Dutch payments firm Adyen's shares lost 9.5 percent as traders said the stock had been left out of an MSCI index re-weighting, and was also being dragged down by Wirecard which fell after results. "Adyen didn't get included into the MSCI re-weights, which a lot of people were thinking they might, so there's some technical selling driving it," said Mark Taylor, sales trader at the Mirabaud Securities Global Thematic Group.

Wirecard shares fell after the firm hiked its profit target and reported a jump in third-quarter net earnings. Traders said the market was honing in on details in its free cash flow, and signs of slowing inorganic growth. Iliad shares were among top gainers, up 7.1 percent after results showed good performance in the company's Italian unit, though overall it lost subscribers.

Overall European earnings have been underwhelming this season, revealing growing margin pressure and concerns about growth and a slowdown in China.

"For 2019, we forecast low-single-digit and below-consensus EPS growth in Europe," wrote Barclays analysts. They see earnings per share growing at 4 percent in the euro zone and 2 percent in the UK next year - significantly lower than the aggregate IBES Refinitiv estimates for around 10 and 8 percent respectively.

Mediaset shares fell 7.6 percent, the heaviest fallers on the Italian index, after third-quarter earnings delivered a small beat, but Deutsche Bank analysts said consensus estimates were more likely to fall than rise. — Reuters

China industrial output, investment beat forecasts

BEIJING: China's industrial output grew 5.9 percent in October from a year earlier and fixed-asset investment rose 5.7 percent in the first 10 months, both above forecasts, but retail sales rose less than expected last month, data showed yesterday.

Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted industrial output growth would dip to 5.7 percent from 5.8 percent in September. Investment growth had been expected to pick up slightly to 5.5 percent in the first 10 months of the year, from 5.4 percent in January-September. Private-sector fixed-asset investment rose 8.8 percent in January-October, compared with an increase of 8.7 percent in the first three quarters, according to official data. Private investment accounts for about 60 percent of overall investment in China.

Retail sales rose 8.6 percent in October from a year earlier. Analysts had expected them to rise 9.1 percent, slowing from 9.2 percent in September.

With US trade duties threatening to ratchet up pressure on China's already slowing economy, its policymakers have shifted focus in recent months to growth-boosting measures, from ramping up infrastructure spending to cutting taxes and fees.

But analysts say it will take some time before the economy begins to steady. — Reuters

Business

NBK wins 'The Social Work Pioneer Project Award'

Recognition from GCC Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labor



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) received "The Social Work Pioneer Project Award" from the GCC Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labor for its first of a kind initiative, the Stem Cell Therapy Unit at NBK Children's Hospital.

Manal Faisal Al-Mattar, NBK Assistant General Manager of Public Relations and Communications and Dr. Maitham Hussein, Director of NBK Children's Hospital received the award from the Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh during the GCC ministers' annual meeting that was held in Sheraton-Kuwait.

NBK and the Ministry of Public Health inaugurated the "Stem Cell Therapy Unit" at NBK's Children's Hospital in Al-Sabah Medical District, the first of its kind in Kuwait, specialized in providing medical and rehabilitative care for children under the age of 16 years with hematology, oncology and stem cell therapy for free, and the largest amongst the local private medical sectors. NBK's Stem Cell Therapy Unit is the first children's bone marrow transplant center in Kuwait. The new center is the largest corporate social responsibility donation in Kuwait and will expand the

hospital's ability to treat children with cancer and blood diseases. "It is indeed a source of immense honor and pride for NBK to win this prestigious award," said Al-Mattar. "The award is a testament of NBK's commitment to social corporate responsibility. It is a well rooted tradition that has been carried out by NBK in its efforts to continuously have an active role in Kuwait's society."

Al-Mattar added: "NBK is committed to support its Specialty Hospital Project by promoting initiatives and events all the year round. This is part of the

bank's social responsibility to fulfill the children's time and entertain them while undergoing treatment."

In his turn, Dr Husain said: "The image of NBK Children's hospital is making its way to the regional and international standards. The award is a distinction that emphasizes the hospital's success in stepping forward towards excellence in service."

"We are proud to see our project having this recognition that reflects its accomplishment to the international standards regarding strategies, policies, processes and day-to-day practices," he noted.



Jazeera Airways offers free inflight entertainment service

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, yesterday launched Jazeera Screens, its wireless inflight entertainment service on all flights, enabling passengers to enjoy watching movies and TV shows as well as play games, read about local destinations and track their route, all for free.

Jazeera Screens is an innovative service available on iOS and Android devices. Passengers can simply connect to the on-board wireless network to start enjoying the content during their flight using their smartphone or tablet. Passengers are also invited to download the Jazeera Screens app before boarding to stream at their convenience during their flight.

Jazeera Airways CEO, Rohit Ramchandran, said: "Jazeera Airways continues to roll out new services to enhance our customers' experience every time they fly with us. The new system has been deployed with leading service providers in the field to cater to our wide customer base and provide them with a rich content in English, Arabic and Indian languages."

On November 21 during its flight J9 253 to Amman,

passengers will enjoy an exclusive movie night with free popcorn for all passengers. Developed in partnership with Bluebox Aviation Systems, Aeroplay Entertainment and Global Onboard Partners, Jazeera Screens will evolve to include on-board shopping in the coming year.

Kevin Clark, Bluebox CEO, said: "We are delighted to have Jazeera Airways as our first commercial airline customer for Bluebox Wow in the Middle East region. The selection of Bluebox is recognition of the flexibility and ongoing development of Bluebox Wow and the credibility of our technical team in supporting customer growth."

On his part, Prakash Johari, Aeroplay Entertainment MD & CEO, said: "We are excited to be on-board Jazeera Airways to support and enhance the passenger experience with the latest inflight entertainment content, including movies, TV shows, Audio, destination videos and guides. We would like to thank Jazeera Airways for this opportunity and recognizing our shared vision, commitment and joint growth in the aviation industry." Kirk Adams, CEO of Global Onboard Partners, commented: "We are pleased to be partnering with Jazeera Airways to implement this new and innovative inflight entertainment system as their advertising sales partner. The system allows for a variety of excellent ad and sponsor placements."

Jazeera Airways flies to 26 popular destinations across the Middle East, India and Europe comprising high-demand business, leisure, family and weekend destinations such as Dubai, Bahrain, Beirut, Alexandria, Amman, Istanbul, Sharm El Sheikh, Assiut, Luxor, Mashhad, Sohag, Jeddah, Riyadh, Madinah, Cairo, Al



Najaf, Taif, Doha, Kochi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Lahore, Baku and Tbilisi.

The airline operates a fleet of Airbus A320s and an Airbus A320neo, the first to be owned and operated in the Middle East.

Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya salary account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Mubarak Mansour Nadehan Aldhafeeri as the lucky winner of the Al-Thuraya Salary Account monthly draw.

The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win a Nissan Patrol SUV every month. With every KD 10 available in the account, the customer receives one chance to enter the draw.

The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti Dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year.

NREC reports KD18.42 million operating revenue for 9M in 2018

KUWAIT: National Real Estate Company (NREC), which is developing properties valued at over \$2 billion in the Middle East and North Africa region, yesterday announced its financial and operational earnings for the first nine months of 2018, announcing an operating revenue of KD 18.42 million, and an EBITDA of KD 17.82 million, up 16.54 percent from the first nine months of 2017.

The Company's net profit stood at KD 10.41 million in the nine-month period of 2018 and EPS was 9.10 fils for the same period. NREC Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Faisal Jamil Sultan Al-Essa, said: "NREC has sustained its financial position supported by rental income from properties owned in Kuwait, Jordan and Libya, sale of units in the developing mixed-use project in Egypt, and positive earnings announced from our associate."

By September 30, 2018, the Company's total assets reached KD 482.06 million and shareholder's equity attributable to the Parent Company stood at KD 223.21 million.

Sultan added: "The Company continues to focus on decreasing its debt below KD 100 million and has last week received shareholders' approval to convert a KD 31 million debt into shares owned by Agility Investment Holding Limited Company in the Company's capital, enabling it to work closely with a leading group such as Agility to support our strategy for growth. In addition to strengthening its financial position, the Company is focused on initiatives to both grow and diversify sources of operating cash flow through the development of two landmark projects in Abu Dhabi and Egypt." NREC launched at the beginning of 2018 its restructure plan to significantly reduce debt, improve efficiency and subsequently grab new opportunities on the long term. This is achieved by selling certain assets, improving the performance of others and developing large projects that will become new sources of revenue. These projects comprise the Reem Mall development in Abu Dhabi and the Grand Heights project in Egypt. Established in 1973 and listed on Boursa Kuwait, National Real Estate Company (NREC) is a real estate investment, development and property manager based in the Middle East and North Africa, developing assets exceeding \$2 billion. The Company's portfolio comprises a mix of retail, commercial and residential properties in the region. In addition to its core real estate business, NREC is the largest shareholder with a 22.3 percent share in Agility Public Warehousing Company K.S.C.P. which is one of the top ten logistics companies in the world.

Tamdeen Group wins gold award from ME Council of Shopping Centers

KUWAIT: Tamdeen Group, Kuwait's leading mixed-use property developer, won the "Design and Development" gold award for the innovation in "Al-Kout Mall" in the "New Development" category in shopping malls. Al-Kout Mall, one of Al-Kout Project's six bespoke experiences, was awarded during the Middle East and North Africa Retail and Shopping Center Awards 2018. An international jury of leading industry experts assessed participations to select the winners in accordance with best international standards. It aims to recognize distinguished malls with excellence and innovation in services, marketing, design, operational income and development categories.

Held late October at the Ritz-Carlton, Dubai International Financial Center, the Awards recognized Al Kout Mall for the Design and Development Excellence category for the mall's creative and innovative design, as well integrating traditional and modern design elements, in line with the identity of Al-Kout Project, Kuwait's Largest Waterfront Retail and Leisure Destination.

Muath B. Al-Roumi, General Manager, Tamdeen Group Marketing, said: "We are honored to receive this award, which recognizes our group's efforts in creating new benchmarks in Kuwait's shopping mall industry. We are continuously striving to achieve the group's vision of innovation and excellence, cementing our leadership in mixed-use development projects." Then he added: "Al-Kout Mall competed with 8 other malls from the Middle East for this category and won due to being an integrated shopping and entertainment destination, providing only the best of services to the residents and visitors of Kuwait."

Al-Kout Mall is the latest addition to the large-scale Al-Kout project which offers six diverse experiences reflecting the unique architectural heritage of Kuwait. Visitors can enjoy a seamless journey through the different experiences from



the mall. Al-Kout Rotana hotel is directly connected to the mall while the beautiful pedestrian bridge connects Al-Kout Mall with the modern Arabic-style Souq Al-Kout with its iconic musical fountains. From Souq Al-Kout visitors can then enjoy Nag'at Al-Kout, the fishermen's wharf, Marsa Al-Kout, a 150-berth marina designed to accommodate leisure boats and yachts, and Sahel Al-Kout, a wide beachfront and promenade offering uninterrupted views of the Arabian Gulf.



Muath B. Al-Roumi



Faisal Jamil Sultan Al-Essa

Technology



Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East, receives the award



Huawei wins first prize of King Khalid Responsible Competitiveness Award

Annual Award Gala held at Al-Faisaliah Hotel in Riyadh

KUWAIT: Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices, won the first place prize of the prestigious King Khalid Responsible Competitiveness Award. This announcement was made during the illustrious annual Award Gala which took place Monday, 12th of November at Al-Faisaliah Hotel in Riyadh.

Huawei was honored for its excellent sustainability practices and responsible competitiveness leadership, as well as its exceptional management capabilities and innovative social and environmental initiatives. Launched in 2008, the King Khalid Responsible Competitiveness Award is the first and only award focused on responsible competitiveness and corporate responsibility in the

Kingdom, and Huawei is the first ICT company to win first place in the award's history. As digital transformation sweeps across the globe, ICT technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, Cloud and more will unlock new values of growth and innovation and uplift societies and organizations to great heights of prosperity. In this context, the King Khalid Responsible Competitiveness Award recognized Huawei for its transformative impact in driving forward the Kingdom's ICT sector as a whole in line with the government's digitization goals, National Transformation Program and Vision 2030. In particular, Huawei was celebrated for deploying their most advanced technologies, high quality product and secured networks in the Kingdom, empowering local

partners, taking the ICT talent pool to the next stage of creativity and innovation, and building the ICT ecosystem to achieve the digital kingdom economy targets.

Accepting the award, Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East, stated: "We are deeply humbled to receive such recognition from Saudi Arabia's leadership. In the Kingdom, Huawei is determined to bring digital to every person, home and organization for a fully connected, intelligent world. The improvement is endless on the road to providing customers with high quality products and services. Today's award is a milestone for us to continue to surpass ourselves. We will continue to play an active role in driving Saudi Arabia's ICT sector development and grow together with our local partners,

openly collaborating to build an ever deeper pool of ICT talent empowered to enable the industry digital transformation."

Huawei established its subsidiary in the Kingdom in 2002. In the past 17 years, under the core values of customer-centricity, Huawei has maintained the quality goal of "becoming a high-quality synonym for ICT industry" and continues to bring innovative information and communication technology (ICT) solutions and products to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, actively promote the development of the Saudi ICT industry and the national digital transformation, develop Saudi ICT talents, and support the goals of Saudi National Transformation Plan 2020 and 2030 vision.

Microsoft unveils 'hyper-portable, ultra-affordable' Surface Go in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Microsoft yesterday announced the general availability of the Surface Go - the smallest, lightest, most affordable Surface device to date - in Kuwait.

Weighing only 1.15 pounds and carrying a vibrant 10-inch display, the Surface Go delivers the versatility and portability of a tablet together with the performance of a laptop, all in a single, compact device. It empowers people to stay connected, pursue their passions and tackle their side projects, without compromising on the performance or quality they have come to expect from the award-winning Surface family.

The Surface Go is a new entry point for users - a pro-

ductivity powerhouse, driven by the might of a 7th-generation Intel Pentium Gold Processor 4415Y, in a fan-less design, and capable of delivering up to nine hours of battery life.

For the family at home or on the move; the expert interacting with customers on the front line of business; or the school that wants to provide teachers and students with the most versatile classroom tools - the Surface Go offers a premium experience at unprecedented value.

The dazzling, custom-built, high-resolution PixelSense display supports Surface Pen, with 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity, low pen parallax, low latency, and all the precision needed for the greatest of accuracy in note-taking, drawing and computer-aided design. And the custom-calibrated 3:2 display is easy on the eyes while working, and offers vibrantly high contrast when watching videos, creating art, or editing photos.

Surface Go also comes with all the ports needed for a user on the go, including Surface Connect for charging and docking; USB-C 3.1 for data and charging a headphone jack; and a MicroSD card reader for storage expansion - all designed for maximum productivity, whether studying in a library, working on a plane, or sharing content in a boardroom on a 4K monitor.

"We must all play our part in realizing the dream of a New Kuwait, as envisaged under the National Development Plan and Vision 2035," said Denis Klimashev, Senior Director, Business Group for Microsoft Middle East and Africa. "The right productivity tools are vital, moving forward. Fortunately, Microsoft's award-winning Surface family has built its reputation on versatility and performance, and the Surface Go retains all the premium qualities that have come to define the range. Having productivity apps like Office 365 at your fingertips at work or at school, with the flexibility to create or just relax and read or watch videos - this was the experience we had in mind when designing it. Whether you are a consumer or business user, student or teacher, artist or engineer - the Surface Go is your ideal digital companion. Hyper-portable, ultra-affordable and as versatile as ever - empowering you to achieve more." The Microsoft Surface Go is available now from all major retail outlets and commercial partners in Kuwait, starting at KD 141.



Cheers, fears as Amazon unveils HQ plan

ARLINGTON: It's exciting for some, worrisome for others: The arrival of a massive headquarters of technology giant Amazon in two East Coast communities is certain to bring huge changes.

Amazon announced Tuesday after a yearlong search that it would split its "HQ2" between Arlington, Virginia, outside the US capital, and the Long Island City neighborhood in the New York borough of Queens. The \$5 billion investment will mean thousands of high-paying jobs in the two locations, but could also strain services and housing in areas with already high living costs.

Some residents were ready to protest the development, but others welcomed Amazon with open arms.

"I'm really glad it's coming," said Karla Massey, who works in the Pentagon City neighborhood of Arlington that is part of the new Amazon headquarters area. "It's not just the Amazon jobs. It's jobs for bartenders, for dry cleaners, all kinds of people, that's the awesome part," Massey told AFP outside the Pentagon City shopping mall.

Massey said Amazon's will bring "alive" the area, a collection of office and apartment buildings with scattered shopping and cultural activities. Jennah Goldman, an Arlington resident who designs custom clothing, was especially pleased to hear the news of her new neighbor.

"It's exciting because it will bring more people to fill all those highrises they are building," she said while walking her dog. Goldman said she has a lot of admiration for the company and its new services.

But Barbara Vetter, a longtime Virginia resident and government employee, was skeptical. "I know it's got a lot of positives, but with the increased traffic and already high cost of living, it's hard to be optimistic," she said outside a local Starbucks.

"The cost of living jump is going to be a huge detriment for those not working for Amazon."

Ready for New York?

In New York, a similar storyline was playing out in a section of the city in the midst of transformation from its industrial past. "The place changed so much in the last 10 years, it's just going to be some part of the neighborhood," said Mike Barratt, a store manager at Spokesman Cycles in Long Island City who fretted over families' ability to deal with higher housing costs.

"A lot of people don't own but they've been living here renting for 15, 20 years, and they're getting priced out," said Barratt. "They're upset."

Dozens of luxury high-rise buildings, suitable for senior Amazon executives, had been in the planning well before the company came on the scene, said Jonathan Miller, CEO of the real-estate firm Miller Samuel. Amazon's arrival could end up "essentially bailing out developers that went ahead despite the excess supply," he said.

Rallying the opposition

New York City Council member Jimmy Van Bramer, who represents parts of Queens, was rallying opponents to the Amazon deal, claiming city and state officials offered too much in tax incentives. "Our subways are crumbling, our children lack school seats, and too many of our neighbors lack adequate health care," Van Bramer and state Senator Michael Gianaris said in a statement.

"We are witness to a cynical game in which Amazon duped New York into offering unprecedented amounts of tax dollars to one of the wealthiest companies on Earth."

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, elected to Congress from a district that includes part of Queens, also voiced concern about offering big tax breaks to Amazon. "We need to focus on good healthcare, living wages, affordable rent. Corporations that offer none of those things should be met w/ skepticism," she said on Twitter. Officials in both Virginia and New York sought to point out that the tax benefits for Amazon were tied to job creation, and that they expected government coffers to see a positive return from Amazon's investments. Amazon will get "performance-based direct incentives of \$1.525 billion" over the next decade based on creating 25,000 jobs in Long Island City, according to the company. —AFP

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What's On

Modern heritage Festival by LAPA



A concert was recently held for the Kuwaiti singer Metrif Al-Metrif at Al Shaheed Park on the second evening of the Modern heritage Festival organized by LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA). It was sponsored by NBK. Despite the cold weather and the forecasted rain, a large audience attended and enjoyed the concert that started at 8:30 pm. Al-Metrif sang a number of traditional as well as modern Kuwaiti songs that highly appealed to the audience. Speaking on the occasion, Al-Metrif expressed his joy to take part in the third modern heritage festival noting that this was his second concert with LOYAC.



Farwanliya governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Malek Al-Sabah recently received a group from Kuwait Equestrian Academy who wished to sponsor the first Cross Country horse race in Kuwait. Al-Sabah stressed that horsemanship was one of the most noble sports known by mankind adding that Islam has also urged parents to teach their kids swimming, archery and horsemanship.



Ahmadi governor Sheikh Fawwaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah recently received the mayor of Urfa, Turkey at his office. Both sides discussed bilateral issues and a mutual cooperation between both governorates.

KFSAC Year 5 & 6 Benchball competition

The KNES girls' team had an apprehensive start to the tournament - the fears were setting in and anxiety levels were high. Having seen the first game of the tournament being played between BSK and KAS, this highlighted their fears. However, when KNES faced BSK, these fears were put behind them and they secured a 2-5 defeat.

The next game was more competitive with a 3-3 draw against NIS with great defending from Laila and Yasmina. Settled in their ways, the team fired 9 goals against KAS, with 4 coming from Bana alone. Needless to say, the whole team managed to secure a goal in this match. Rimas took centre stage in this game with her amazing defending and winning possession allowing the girls to score.

Following on from the huge success, they went from strength to strength beating TEA 4-1 with goals from Ghazaleh (2), Yasmin and Farah. Unfortunately, their stamina was wearing out by the last game and lost 8-2. However, only losing to BSK and ABS, this secured them a 3rd place overall in the competition. A great achievement for the girls. Player of the tournament goes to Farah Bassal. Team - Retaj Khaled -6B, Fatma Hassanein - 6B, Bana Ramzi - 5A, Ghazala Bebbhani -5A, Laila Marouf 6C, Yasmina Ibrahim 6C, Farah Bassal -6A, Rima Tamer El Shikh 6B.



Palestinian Cultural Center exhibition

Calls Us" and the exhibition will lovingly display Palestinian embroidery, art, and crafts expressing the Palestinian national identity as well as containing an array of books, ceramics and Palestinian culinary dishes. On the final day, Thursday at 6:00 pm, the Coral Zaman Band will perform a Palestinian Dabkeh. All are welcome to join us in solidarity with Palestine and its righteous cause.

The Palestinian Cultural Center, in cooperation with the Embassy of the State of Palestine in Kuwait, is pleased to invite you to attend our second exhibition of 2018. The motto is "Jerusalem

Date: Monday 19th, Thursday November 22nd
Time: 10:00 am - 13:30 pm & 16:30 pm - 20:30 pm
Place: Women's Cultural and Social Society Khaldiya Block 2, Al-Orouba Street



Stars

CROSSWORD 2061



ACROSS

1. An ester of adenosine that is converted to ATP for energy storage.
4. Any of various plants of the genus *Sabbatia* having usually pink cymose flowers.
12. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
15. The cry made by sheep.
16. Exist beforehand or prior to a certain point in time.
17. A rapid bustling commotion.
18. Arranged without spaces between.
20. A drug (trade names Atarax and Vistaril) used as a tranquilizer to treat anxiety and motion sickness.
22. Providing protective supervision.
24. Informal terms for a mother.
25. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
28. A doctor's degree in religion.
30. A monocotyledonous genus of the family Iridaceae.
32. A palace and fortress built in Granada by the Moslems in the Middle Ages.
35. (computer science) A kind of computer architecture that has a relatively small set of computer instructions that it can perform.
37. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
38. The ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle.
39. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
40. Beautiful daughter of Minos and Pasiphae.
45. Found along western Atlantic coast.
46. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
49. The upper angle between an axis and an offshoot such as a branch or leaf-stalk.
50. (informal) Of the highest quality.
51. In or relating to or obtained from urine.
52. A lyric poem with complex stanza forms.
55. A river in Germany.
58. Marked by artful prudence, expedience, and shrewdness.
62. Marked by or showing unaffected simplicity and lack of guile or worldly experience.
65. An organic compound that contains a hydroxyl group bonded to a carbon atom which in turn is doubly bonded to another carbon atom.
66. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
69. An African river.
71. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
72. A mark used by an author or editor to indicate where something is to be inserted into a text.
74. Earn on some commercial or business transaction.
75. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
76. Being ten more than one hundred forty.
77. The sediment from fermentation of an alcoholic beverage.
78. (used with singular count nouns) Colloquial for 'not a' or 'not one' or 'never a'.
79. Filled with a great quantity.
80. A small narrow pointed missile that is thrown or shot.

DOWN

1. Lie adjacent to another.
- (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
- Shaped and dried dough made from flour and water and sometimes egg.
- Type genus of the Spalacidae.
- Used of idealized country life.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage brewed from malt and hops.
- A piece of furniture that provides a place to sleep.
- An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
- A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
- (Old Testament) The first of the major Hebrew prophets (8th century BC).
- A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
- The month following February and preceding April.
- (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
- The ball-and-socket joint between the head of the femur and the acetabulum.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Any of various forms of aluminum oxide occurring naturally as corundum.
- (British colloquialism) An excavation.
- A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
- A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
- English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
- A poplar that is widely cultivated in the United States.
- A title of address formerly used for a man of rank and authority.
- Formerly a gold coin of various European countries.
- Acquire or gain knowledge or skills.
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- (legal terminology) The Latin word for wife.
- A rare polyvalent metallic element of the platinum group.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Vienna or its inhabitants.
- (biology) Covered with hairs especially fine soft ones.
- An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
- Related by blood.
- Far away from home or one's usual surroundings.
- Lake in northwestern Russia near the border with Finland.
- Of or relating to or affecting a lobe.
- Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
- A West African language closely related to Fula.
- Painter (born in Germany, resident of France and the United States) who was a cofounder of Dadaism.
- Avatar of Vishnu.
- Toward the mouth or oral region.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- A doctor's degree in theology.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may be enjoying great pleasure in your life today. It seems as if you will find you have a very special connection with a close friend today. You could also find yourself receiving compliments from someone concerning your taste or your belongings. Enjoy the little ego boost this gives you. This is a great day for you to express your feelings to others. You may find yourself in a deep and meaningful conversation this evening with someone you are close to. It seems like your words flow with ease and you receive great understanding and sympathy when you open up and share your feelings.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may have discovered you are giving more than you are receiving. You have a tendency to give too much of yourself to others. This is a time you may need to turn your focus on you. Get serious about your health and mental well-being. Remember taking care of you is a necessity. You tend to see this as being selfish. Remember if you do not take care of you, you will not be able to continue the constant care you give to others. Feed your soul, spoil yourself, but most of all, learn to relax. Today is the day to take a deep breath, grab a quick nap, and face the world with a new refreshed attitude, Taurus. Learn to put yourself first.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today you may feel led by your heart maybe even more loving and emotional than usual. Today is a great day to spend time with someone you love. This closeness is something you long for. Intimacy and love are driving factors for you today. You could be extremely sensitive and emotionally unable to express your feelings to someone very close to you. This is something unfamiliar to you as your words usually flow with grace and style, Gemini. This may leave you feeling somewhat vulnerable.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are fiercely independent, especially today. You know exactly what you want and you are determined to make it happen. You may be focused on a goal but may be drawn to accomplish it in a less conventional manner than you normally would. You are bored with your usual routine and seeking a bit of change. Thinking outside the box may lead to some exciting new experiences. This may also lead to recognition for your creative thinking from those around you. The choices you make today will be clear and concise.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You feel great about your accomplishments and position in life. You may feel as if you need to put forth as much hard work on your physical well-being as you put in other areas of your life. This may be a great time to join the gym, take the walk, or start the meal planning you have been thinking about. If you do not care for yourself physically you may not be able to continue the hard work. This a great time to take this seriously and set your goals. You should have much success in this area of your life. You are devoted and determined, and this should work out for you as well.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may find yourself realizing how special you are today. Appreciating all your gifts and talents and feeling a sense of pride. This is a great time of communication with those around you as you are able to express your emotions clearly to others. Dedication and devotion have gotten you to this point in life and you in a position you can provide much help to others. You are in touch with not only your emotions but also very in touch with the needs and emotions of those close to you. This is a very nice time in your life. You may find someone close shows great support and sympathy to you today when a situation you encounter puts you in need of a listening ear.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your mood is one of sensuality and pleasure. Be careful as you may come across as being overbearing or controlling. The outdoors is where you spend time recharging and letting your mind wander. You understand that life can be everything you want but you may have to do things differently. A new project looks like it can provide some income. Shopping for someone else is a priority right now. An assertive energy is strongly felt. You may feel as if you are on top of the world. Enjoy an evening out with friends. Let your hair down and enjoy.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may feel a need for seclusion today. Family is where you will find your comfort. Career decisions should be left for another time as you are just not feeling it. A great evening for game night or to spend just curled up watching movies with those you love. Grab a pizza and hide from the world. You need to relax and rid your mind of stress.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Romance is in the air and what your heart desires today. An emotional release is on the horizon. This is one of those days your heart is full. There is no more room inside and these emotions have to be shared with someone who is very special to you. A candlelit meal, a long talk, or cuddling on the couch with that special someone is in order. You may find you develop and even stronger bond this evening with someone close to you. Focus on the future and the one you want to spend it with Sagittarius. It is a time of nurturing and love for you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You will tell on yourself by the company you keep. If all your friends look, talk, and think like you, you may want to seek out some new relationships. You can learn from children as well as elderly, and everyone in between. Cultivate people of different races and cultures, from different social and economic backgrounds. Don't avoid those whose religion is different from yours. When you feel secure about yourself, you can enjoy diversity, and your life will be enriched by each relationship.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may have been so focused lately you have been missing out on a social life. Today is a great day to get out and about. Hit the town but choose your company wisely as not to experience any conflict while doing so. Surround yourself with like-minded friends. Choose friends who are positive and share your love of life. You may find yourself experiencing a real spiritual awakening and the desire to share this with others. You should be pleasantly pleased at how receptive your friends are. A great day for you where the lines of communication open in all aspects of your world.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Imaging can be a powerful tool for attaining your goal. Remember when you were a child and could be anybody you wanted to be just by pretending? Some athletes have found that imagining themselves shooting long shots or hitting the baseball out of the park is a good substitute when they can't physically practice. Find a quiet place and image yourself being the person you wish you were. Pretend you are being assertive when someone takes advantage of you. Image yourself telling a coworker what you need from her. With a little practice, you will find yourself doing those things naturally.

Wordsearch Puzzle

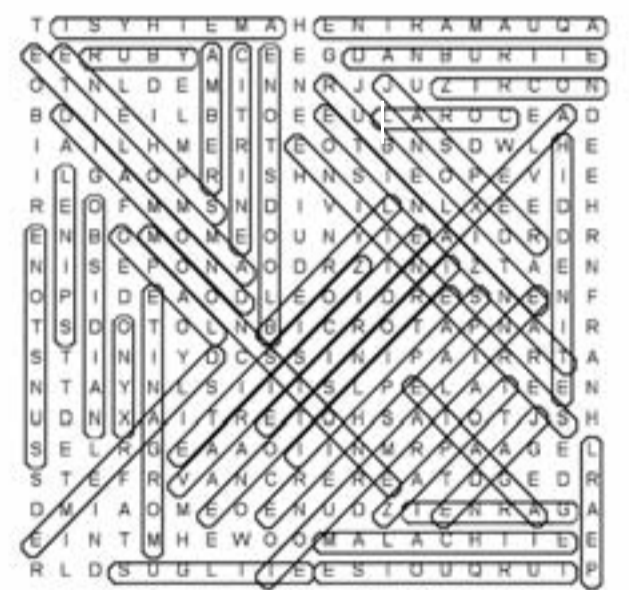
John Wayne Movies

Find and circle all of the John Wayne movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a John Wayne quotation.



- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| ALAMO, The | COWBOYS, The | JET PILOT | RIO LOBO |
| ARIZONA | DAKOTA | LONGEST TRAIL, The | SEA CHASE, The |
| BABY FACE | DAWN RIDER, The | MCQ | SEARCHERS, The |
| BIG JAKE | DECEIVER, The | NEW FRONTIER | SHOOTIST, The |
| BIG TRAIL, The | DESERT TRAIL, The | NIGHT RIDERS, The | SPOILERS, The |
| BLOOD ALLEY | EL DORADO | PITTSBURGH | STAGSBOACH |
| BLUE STEEL | FLYING TIGERS | QUICK MAN, The | STAR PACKER, The |
| BRANNIGAN | FORT APACHE | RANGE FEUD | TRUE GRIT |
| CHISUM | GREEN BERETS, The | RED RIVER | TYCOON |
| CIRCUS WORLD | HATARI | RIO BRAVO | UNDEFEATED, The |
| COMANCHEROS, The | HELL FIGHTERS | HONDO | WAR WAGON, The |
| CONFLICT | IN HARMS WAY | RIO GRANDE | WESTWARD HO |
| CONQUEROR, The | | | |

Jewels and Gemstones



- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| AGATE | DIAMOND | MORGANITE | SPINEL |
| ALEXANDRITE | EMERALD | OBSSIDIAN | SUGLITE |
| AMBER | GARNET | ONYX | SUNSTONE |
| AMETHYST | HIDDENITE | OPAL | TANZANITE |
| AMMOLITE | ISOLITE | PEARL | TOPAZ |
| AQUAMARINE | IRONSTONE | RUBELITE | TOURMALINE |
| BERYL | JADE | RUBY | TURQUOISE |
| BLOODSTONE | JASPER | SAPPHIRE | VARSUCITE |
| CITRINE | MALACHITE | SERPENTINE | ZIRCON |
| CORDAL | MOONSTONE | SPHERE | ZOISITE |
| DANBURITE | | | |

The hidden message is: THE GOLDEN JUBILEE DIAMOND WEIGHS OVER FIVE HUNDRED AND FORTY CARATS AND IS THE LARGEST FACETED DIAMOND IN THE WORLD.

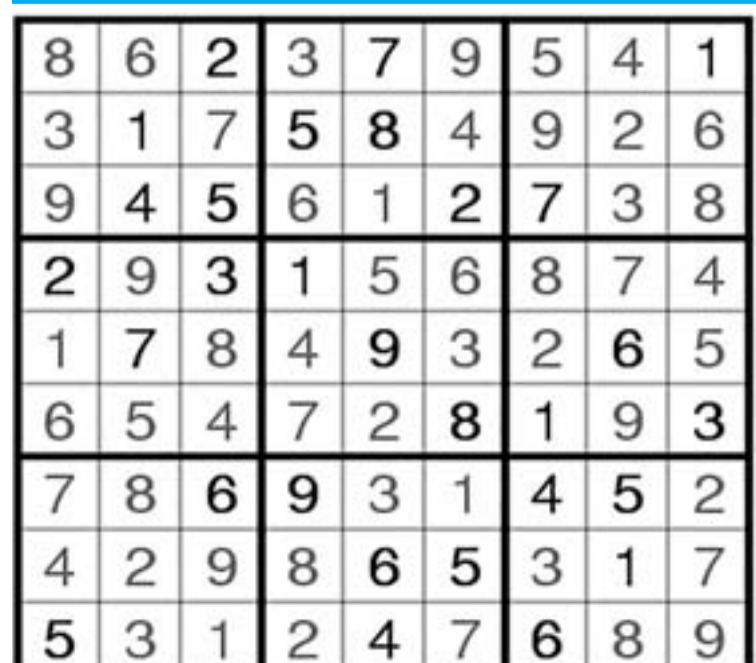
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2018



French shepherd Gaetan Meme, 24-years-old, herds a flock of sheep on Oct 13, 2018 in the mountains near the Col du Glandon, in the French Alps. Gaetan shepherds a flock of 1,300 sheep in the Alpine pastures from June to October. — AFP photos



Meme prepares to inject a sheep with a broken leg on Aug 20, 2018.



Meme cuts wood for his wood-burning oven at his altitude hut on Aug 20, 2018.



Meme looks over a flock of sheep on June 21, 2018 in the French Alps.

Wolves at the door, shepherd can't imagine any other life

He sleeps fully dressed, dreading a midnight wolf attack on the flock of sheep penned in close by his hut, high up in the French Alps. "The fears of last year came back," says Gaetan Meme, after his third season of transhumance, the timeless tradition of guiding livestock up into the rich alpine pastures to graze and staying with them. The green velvet mountains dotted with rocky outcrops between the Belledonne massif and the Maurienne valley, an idyllic playground for hikers, are his kingdom from June to October.

It's a magnificent backdrop that can quickly reveal a dark side when you have to look after 1,300 vulnerable animals. "When my first sheep was killed I immediately felt that I had failed, that I had not carried out my duty," Meme says gravely of the 2016 attack, which has haunted him ever since. "I quickly found the body, there was a huge red stain. Bite marks on the neck, the rib cage ripped open... the heart, lungs and liver had been eaten."

From the start of his first season, the 24-year-old shepherd found himself face to face with the wolf, trying to fight it off. "He was there on the end of my staff every evening for a week," he recalls. "The sheep were so disturbed they broke out of the pen in panic." Sleepless nights took a toll and fatigue convinced him another sheep had been savaged. In the end, he's not sure if barking dogs woke him or a nightmare.



Meme instructs his dogs to gather his flock of sheep as the weather turns stormy on Aug 21, 2018.

and green eyes, dressed in thick corduroy trousers, a sleeveless jacket and lumberjack shirt, he looks every inch a shepherd.

Every other morning, before releasing the sheep, he spreads salt over the rocks. The ewes love it, "like we do crisps with a drink, it makes them thirsty and hungry," he says. The flock charges after the salt, making a thunderous noise full of bells and bleating. The shepherd answers with a very good imitation. He looks for limps, pulls up a hind leg and trims a damaged hoof.

'A nomad who goes nowhere'

The flock grazes all day. The ewes are either pregnant or have lambed recently. Up at 2,000 m above the little village of Saint-Colomban-des-Villards in the Savoy region, the shepherd's biggest concern is fog when "the ewes spread out" and become lost. And they do not like rain. They get cold and their fleece soaks up the water. If there's no shelter, they halt and "stand with their rear facing the wind" until it's over. The days are long as the clouds float over the peaks. "You should not worry about doing nothing for hours," smiles the young man, who listens to a small transistor radio all the time. He follows the sheep where they like to graze, helped by three dogs.

It involves a lot of walking without really going anywhere. "I'm a nomad who goes nowhere," he laughs. "I know only the pasture. Not what lies above or round the side." When he was 15 and at agricultural college, Meme followed a shepherd in the Pyrenees for work experience. "I did not want to go back down the mountain," he says. Today, it takes him a month to re-adjust to city life when he moves back to Angers, in western France, in October. But he admits it only takes a couple of days to acclimatize when he climbs the meadows in spring. "Being with yourself, which many people run from, is exactly what I look for," says Meme.

Cruel fairy tale

He uses different whistle sounds for left and right. And talks to the sheep which have names. "Leica, oh go behind. Left I told you, go. "Rey...", he shouts at a young sheep

dog still in training. It's short for 'reste', meaning remain or stay. "We don't use 'sss' sounds, it excites the dogs," he adds. Prudence, a big white bitch needs plenty of patting, but she is very smart, working only at night, on instinct. Born on a sheep farm, "she thinks she's one of the flock and protects it".

Suddenly something startles the shepherd. He spots a ewe, her leg caught between two rocks and badly fractured. She is too heavy to be carried back and too injured to keep up with the flock, so spends the night alone. And as in a cruel fairy tale ending, the big bad wolf passes by several days later and gobbles up the stricken sheep. — AFP



Meme lays salt along a route to guide sheep towards a precise area for grazing on June 21, 2018.

To beat the wolves, you have to throw them off the track, he says. Move the penned area, make plenty of noise, light a fire, make scarecrows - all can help. "I put some fur from the female dog on that one (a nearby scarecrow), to give it a smell," he explains, standing outside the picturesque wooden hut, white curtains on the windows. There are about 1,000 shepherds left in France today. The solitary life still attracts plenty of youngsters seeking a change, but few stay on beyond a couple of seasons. "Everywhere you go, you are an outsider. You are a curiosity, often attracting a mixture of fear and fascination," Meme, who is single, says.

Waking up to Jimi Hendrix

For him, the job is a lifetime vocation. "I can't remember ever wanting to do anything else," he says. As a young boy he would spend "hours looking out of the window" but was afraid of animals, until he got a cat. "Today I have more contact with animals than humans," he admits. At 6:30 am, Jimi Hendrix guitar riffs wake Meme. Black hair



A flock of sheep are gathered in a park for the night on Oct 13, 2018.

Lifestyle | Features

'Like nothing on Earth': APEC cruise ship summit



A couple watches the sunset from the deck of a cruise ship in Port Moresby.

Quits deck, plunge pools and sunset yoga: for security and logistical reasons, thousands of delegates and journalists attending this year's APEC summit have very unusual quarters-on hulking cruise ships moored offshore. "Like nothing on Earth" screams the slogan in huge dark lettering against their gleaming white hulls, off Papua New Guinea's crime-ridden capital of Port Moresby. And indeed few attendees can have experienced summit accommodation like it.

The 245-m Pacific Jewel, where mainly journalists are housed, has 14 decks and berths for nearly 1,700 people ranging from small interior cabins to spacious suites with an ocean view. It boasts an array of restaurants and bars - from the Mix Cocktail bar to the darker and jazz-filled Orient. Other entertainment includes the Marquee theatre for shows and on-board "Gatsby" or "Back to School" parties.

Those who have not had their fill of high-wire sumnity can try "walking the plank" - being suspended by

a rope 14 floors over the sea - or "rock climbing" up the ship's funnel. Others unlucky in summit negotiations can try their luck at the casino, with plush blue-baized blackjack tables and dozens of blinking slot machines. Sporting memorabilia adorns the walls, from "Magic" Johnson's famous 32 LA Lakers shirt to stamps featuring legendary Australian cricketer Donald Bradman.

Summit organizers turned to the cruise ships amid a lack of sufficient facilities in the Papua New Guinean capital, where this year's summit is taking place. "We simply do not have enough hotel rooms in Port Moresby to accommodate all delegations," admitted Justin Tkatchenko, minister in charge of APEC in a recent parliamentary speech.

Flotels

The other concern was security - how to keep officials from around the world safe in Port Moresby, rated one of the most dangerous cities on Earth. Carjackings have become commonplace, often carried out by the notorious

female recruitment, lowering women's test and interview scores and raising men's to hit the target.

A total of 18 executives have been charged or convicted, including the chairman of Shinhan Financial Group, the country's second-biggest lender. And last week the Supreme Court upheld a four-year jail sentence given to the former CEO of state-run Korea Gas Safety Corp (KGS) for offences including bribery and violating equal opportunities laws. Despite its economic and technological advances the South remains a patriarchal society, and has one of the world's thickest glass ceilings for women.

'Undermining social trust'

Only 2.7 percent of the 15,000 top executives at the country's 500 biggest firms are female, a government survey showed last year. At 36.7 percent, the South also has the widest gender pay gap among the OECD club of advanced economies. Jobs at state-run firms such as KGS are in high demand as they offer lifetime employment, but on former CEO Park Ki-dong's instructions seven qualified women applicants were eliminated - including the top scorer among the 31 finalists - and replaced by poorer-performing men.

Park "excluded women without legitimate reason by ordering his subordinates to manipulate test scores... seriously undermining social trust", the Supreme Court said in its ruling. Park claimed women would disrupt the firm's operations by taking maternity leave. In the conservative South, many married women - whether working or not - are expected to take sole responsibility for household chores and childcare, with the double burden seen as a major cause of the country's paltry birthrate, the lowest in the world. With daycare centers lacking and the country's working hours notoriously long, many women quit their jobs after becoming mothers.

Cashing in

Recruitment is highly competitive at the best of times in the South, and doubly so in potentially lucrative banking. Cho Yong-Byoung, chairman of Shinhan Financial Group - the South's second-largest finance house - was charged two weeks ago with violating equal opportunities laws for ordering subordinates to maintain a 3:1 ratio between male and female recruits. According to state regulators, number four KEB Hana Bank set a 4:1 target for new hires in 2013 and ended up taking on 5.5 men for each woman. Without discrimination the ratio would have been almost equal, officials said.

Seven of its managers are on trial, one telling the court that the company's clients were mostly men and "feel more comfortable" with male staff who can "smoke or drink more freely". But sentences can be taken. Three senior managers of KB Kookmin Bank - the country's top lender - were convicted last month of lowering test scores for 112 female applicants and raising those of 113 men. "The accused deserved criticism for changing the fate of many job applicants and causing so great a sense of betrayal and despair in their hearts," the court said.

But the offenders' personal responsibility was limited, it went on, as they were simply "following social customs". The trio were given suspended jail terms and the bank fined a meager five million won (\$4,500). "South Korean women are fighting on an extremely unequal playing field that doesn't seem to have changed for decades," Bae Jinkyung, head of the Korea Women Workers' Association, told reporters. "In such an unfair world as this, how hard should women try to climb the ladder-if we can get our hands on the ladder at all?" - AFP

'Robocop' on patrol at Singapore summit

Hi-tech Singapore has deployed an autonomous robot with a swivelling camera for a head and flashing lights to patrol a summit venue - arresting the attention of amused passers-by who stopped to snap selfies. The white, four-wheeled buggy, measuring about five-feet (1.5 m), trundled around the perimeter of a convention center in the city-state, providing additional security at a meeting of world leaders.

The so far unnamed robot, decked out with flashing blue and red lights, is a prototype reportedly developed by the police, which can transmit a 360-degree picture of the area it is patrolling. It navigates independently on a pre-mapped route and can avoid obstacles, local media reported, citing police. But rather than fearing the long



The cruise ship Pacific Jewel.

"raskols" street gangs, and petty crime is rife. The Economist Intelligence Unit this year ranked the city 136th out of 140 on its list of most livable places, above only Karachi, Lagos, Dhaka and war-torn Damascus.

Unsurprisingly, security is tight both onboard and onshore, with world leaders like China's President Xi Jinping and US Vice-President Mike Pence attending the summit - although the latter is overnighing in the northern Australian city of Cairns. Moored just a kilometre from the Pacific Jewel lurk two menacing warships. Small police inflatables and jet skis patrol nearby waters constantly.

Sharon Fernandes, assistant night manager aboard the Pacific Jewel, said the 650 staff from 40 countries had to adjust from a cruise-ship mentality to essentially running a "Flotel" for delegates. "For the first time, we are a hotel, not a ship. We need to be more broad-minded and adjust to different mentalities," the 31-year-old from Mumbai told AFP.

Guests said they were happy to be offshore given the logistical difficulties and safety reputation of Port

Moresby. "I'm really pleased I'm on a cruise ship because it's safer and more convenient. It's better to stick with everyone else because the logistics are so difficult," said one 26-year-old Hong Kong-based reporter. One delegate, who declined to be named, also cited convenience as a key factor compared to staying in a hotel with security restrictions. "As a delegate, it's not a bad thing being on a cruise ship because everything is laid on here. In a hotel, you are much more restricted."

David Jones, spokesman for Carnival Australia, which provided the ships, said the company has been running cruise ships to Papua New Guinea for several years and was an obvious choice for authorities. "There is no way you could have this extent of accommodation shoreside and we see this as a natural extension of our relationship with Papua New Guinea," Jones said. - AFP

Jobs for the boys under fire in South Korea

In her year-long quest for a job, South Korean college graduate Casey Lee has faced a barrage of personal and contradictory questions. "One company asked if I had a boyfriend and when I'd get married," she told AFP. "Another asked why I didn't have a boyfriend and wondered if someone like me who had no plan to get married soon was trustworthy enough or had a personality issue." Women often struggle to find a foothold in South Korea's male-dominated corporate culture and a series of firms have now been caught allegedly using sexist recruitment targets to keep it that way.



This picture taken on Nov 12, 2018 shows jobseekers looking at their smartphones while searching for employment during a jobs fair in Seoul. - AFP photos



Jobseekers look at notices while searching for employment.

Lee's first interviewer complained that women tended to quit their positions once they had a child, while the other launched a tirade against "irresponsible young women" like her - she is 25 and single - for abandoning their responsibility to have children "for the country's future". "I wanted to scream out loud, I'm only here to get a job!" she told AFP, adding male applicants in the same group-interview sessions were rarely asked similar questions.

Lee is still looking for work, despite a degree from Seokyeong university in Seoul. She is not an isolated case, and evidence points to some firms in the world's 11th-largest economy systematically discriminating against women. Three of South Korea's top four banks have been embroiled in accusations they set ratios for male and



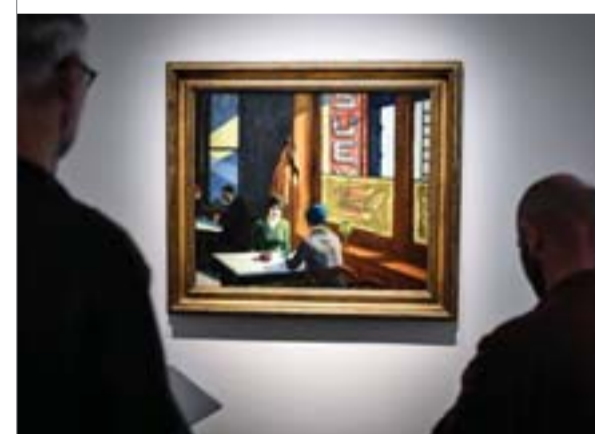
A 'police robot' patrols at the Suntec City convention and exhibition center during the 33rd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Singapore on Nov 12, 2018. - AFP

Hopper, de Kooning hit new auction records in New York

Paintings by Edward Hopper and Willem de Kooning sold for nearly \$92 million and \$69 million respectively in New York on Tuesday, setting new world record auction prices for each artist, Christie's said. The 1929 canvas "Chop Suey" by Hopper, America's most popular modernist, went for \$91.875 million after being valued pre-sale at an estimated \$70-100 million. It was the jewel in the crown of a remarkable collection of 20th century American art amassed by US entrepreneur Barney Ebsworth, who made his fortune in travel and cruises, and who died in April.

The painting easily set a new auction record for the artist - previously \$40.4 million paid in 2013 for "East Wind Over Weehawken." Christie's had marketed "Chop Suey" as "the most iconic painting by Hopper left in private hands" and the price tag chalked up a whopping profit on the \$180,000 Ebsworth paid for the work in 1973. De Kooning's 1955 "Woman as Landscape" sold for \$68.9 million, having been valued pre-sale at \$60-90 million, and also set a new record at auction for the Dutch-born abstract expressionist, Christie's said. It eclipsed the \$66.3 million paid for his 1977 "Untitled XXV" in November 2016.

The auction house had valued the entire Ebsworth collection, which is being offered for sale this week, at around \$350 million. The single most expensive piece of art ever sold at auction was the eye-watering \$450.3 million paid for Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi" last year at Christie's in New York. - AFP



In this photo taken on Sept 5, 2018, people look at "Chop Suey" by US artist Edward Hopper, part of the Barney A Ebsworth Collection, during a presentation at Christie's auction house in Paris. - AFP



The Pink Legacy, a 18.96 carat fancy vivid pink diamond once owned by the Oppenheimer family, is seen after its sale at Christie's auction house on Tuesday in Geneva. - AFP

'Incomparable' \$50m pink diamond smashes record at Geneva auction

An exceptionally rare pink diamond of nearly 19 carats fetched 50.3 million Swiss francs (\$50 million) at auction in Geneva Tuesday, Christie's said, setting a new per-carat record for a stone of its kind. The Pink Legacy, which once belonged to the Oppenheimer family who for decades ran the De Beers diamond-mining company, was snapped up by American luxury brand Harry Winston, part of the Swiss Swatch group. "\$2.6 million per carat. That is a world record per carat for a pink diamond," said Francois Curiel, head of Christie's in Europe, of the price that included all fees and commissions. "This stone is for me the Leonardo da Vinci of diamonds."

The 18.96-carat diamond was discovered in a South African mine around a century ago, Christie's said. It was probably cut in the 1920s and has not been altered since. The stone was immediately rechristened the "Winston Pink Legacy" by its buyers. Christie's international head of jewellery, Rahul Kadakia, described it as "one of the world's greatest diamonds".

The rectangular-cut stone has been graded "fancy vivid" - the highest possible grade of color intensity - as it has no trace of another hue like purple, orange or brown. Most pink diamonds weigh less than one carat and those in the top color category with more than 10 carats are virtually unheard of at auction houses. The Pink Legacy is classed as Type IIA, meaning it is extremely chemically pure, a category only two percent of diamonds fall into. "These are stones that have little if any trace of nitrogen," said Kadakia, adding that this often gives Type IIA diamonds "exceptional transparency and brilliance".

Emerald cut

"Imagine a domino that you have cut the corners off of," Jean-Marc Lunel, an international jewellery specialist at Christie's, recently told AFP, describing the stone's unusual shape. He pointed out that the diamond has a "classical so-called emerald cut" - standing out from the typical cuts used today, which are more rounded and multi-faceted. The classic rectangular cut is traditionally used for white stones, but is rare for pink diamonds.

Christie's said the Pink Legacy is "the largest and finest Fancy Vivid Pink diamond ever offered at auction by the company", calling the stone "incomparable". "It is probably the most beautiful (specimen) ever presented at public auction," Lunel said. Christie's said only four vivid pink diamonds of over 10 carats have ever been offered at auction. One of them, the nearly 15-carat Pink Promise, was sold last November at a Christie's auction in Hong Kong for \$32.5 million.

That amounts to \$2.176 million per carat, which was previously the world auction record price per carat for any pink diamond. The Pink Legacy's record-smashing price accounted for nearly half the takings at Tuesday's auction, which saw total sales of more than \$110 million, according to Christie's spokeswoman Alexandra Kindermann. While 86 percent of the lots found a buyer, a big heart-shaped white diamond of 53 carats, expected to fetch around \$3 to 5 million, went unsold. - AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Britain's Prince Charles celebrates 70th birthday

Britain's Prince Charles, who has been heir to the throne for more than six decades, celebrated his 70th birthday with a tea party and a banquet in Buckingham Palace yesterday. In two official photographs released to mark the Prince of Wales's milestone, Charles is shown surrounded by his wife Camilla, two sons William and Harry and three grandchildren. A fourth grandchild is on the way after Prince Harry's wife Meghan, an American former TV actress, announced her pregnancy following the couple's Windsor Castle wedding this year.

Charles was to attend a tea party later yesterday with "inspirational people" who are also turning 70 this year. In the evening, Queen Elizabeth II was holding a banquet which friends, family and European royals were expected to attend. There were gun salutes in London and lawmakers voiced their congratulations for the king-in-waiting in parliament.

The Twitter account for Clarence House, Charles's official residence, featured flying balloons and a slideshow of pictures from throughout the prince's life to mark the occasion. Charles also edited an edition of Country Life to

mark his birthday. The prince told the magazine about his fondness for red pheasant crumble pie and "groussaka" - a version of the Greek dish moussaka but with grouse instead of lamb. He also said he allowed red squirrels, which are being pushed out by American grey squirrels in Britain, to run around his home on the Queen's Balmoral estate in Scotland.

The prince has spent a lifetime forging his own path during a record wait for the throne, overshadowed by public adulation for his mother. He has battled a string of public relations headaches and accusations of being cold towards his first wife Diana as well as of interfering in political affairs. Charles sees himself as a "dissident" working against the prevailing political consensus, according to his former spin doctor Mark Bolland.

The prince has been plagued by low self-esteem but has felt driven to do the right thing, Bolland said. "The trouble is, there isn't a job description so you have to rather make it up as you go along," he said. Charles has been outspoken on issues close to his heart, notably architecture, the environment, farming, faith and

alternative medicine. He has faced accusations that his "meddling" in public affairs would breach the political impartiality of a constitutional monarch.

But he told a BBC documentary marking his 70th birthday: "The idea, somehow, that I'm going to go on in exactly the same way, if I have to succeed, is complete nonsense. 'I'm not that stupid,' he said. "You operate within the constitutional parameters." — AFP

A handout picture taken on Sept 5, 2018 and released by Clarence House on Tuesday shows Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales holding (bottom left) Prince George posing for an official portrait to mark his 70th birthday with (top left to right) Prince Louis of Cambridge, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex with (bottom right) Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall and Princess Charlotte. — AFP



Comic book creator Stan Lee (center) poses with famous comic book heroes for the launch party of the new PlayStation 3, hosted by the Best Buy store, in Los Angeles on Nov 16, 2006. — AFP photos

Marvel: The multibillion-dollar empire Stan Lee brought to life

In a little more than 20 years, Marvel has gone from a company that declared bankruptcy (1996) as the comic book industry waned to a global empire generating billions of dollars a year. The following is a look at the wide-ranging activities of the group, which for decades was led by Stan Lee, who died on Monday at age 95. It is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Disney, which bought it for \$4 billion in 2009.

Films

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is a lucrative one: over the past decade, from "Iron Man" in 2008 through this year's "Ant-Man and the Wasp," 20 Marvel films have hit the big screen. In total, the Marvel Studios productions have raked in a whopping \$6.8 billion in North America alone, according to industry tracker Box Office Mojo. According to AFP calculations based on figures from Box Office Mojo, Variety, The Hollywood Reporter and Forbes, the films have earned \$17.5 billion, against \$3.59 billion in production costs (excluding marketing).



A Stan Lee-signed copy of "Fantastic Four #555" (Marvel Comics Group, May 2008) is displayed at Julien's Auctions.

Three new titles are in the works so far for 2019: "Captain Marvel," starring Oscar winner Brie Larson, in March; the latest chapter in the "Avengers" saga in May; and "Spider-Man: Far from Home" in July. These totals do not include other films based on Marvel heroes that were produced under licensing deals ("Spider-Man" at Sony or the "X-Men" series and "Deadpool" at 20th Century Fox).

Television

For decades, Marvel has produced animated television series featuring its cast of characters, but changed tack in 2012 after a deal with streaming giant Netflix, shifting to live-action dramas. "Daredevil," "Jessica Jones," "Luke Cage" and "Iron Fist" have all aired on the platform. Marvel's current deal with Netflix reportedly stipulates that the streaming giant pays Disney \$300 million a year for the right to produce exclusive TV series, as well as films. The deal will come to an end in 2019 when Disney launches its own dedicated Marvel platform. Another TV highlight is "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.," which has aired for five seasons on broadcast network ABC and will return next year.

Video games

Marvel has produced its own licensed video games for more than 35 years but in 2017, it reached a partnership deal with Japanese game maker Square Enix. "Spider-Man" - a game produced by Insomniac Games in concert with Sony Entertainment (that licensing deal again) - ranks second in sales for the Sony PlayStation 4 console in 2018, according to specialized website VGChartz, with 4.6 million copies sold. The going US price is \$60.

Comic books

Though they are no longer the core of Marvel's business as they were in the early 1960s, the actual comic books remain an essential part of the group's DNA. Each month, a plethora of new titles are published, exploring new adventures for iconic characters or creating universes with new heroes.

Toys and other licensed products

Marvel's heroes are featured on everything from action figures and board games to t-shirts, Halloween costumes, shoes and watches. Suitcases, backpacks and cell phone cases are also part of the empire.

Live shows

Since July 2014, Feld Entertainment has been licensed to produce "Marvel Universe Live!" - a live-action show featuring superheroes and villains played by actors, performing stunts in a scripted extravaganza. More than 40 dates are set for the show's 2019 tour.

Amusement parks

In May 2017, Disney opened the stomach-churning "Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: Breakout!" ride at its campus of amusement parks in Anaheim, California. In March 2018, Marvel announced that other dedicated theme areas would be created at Disney World in Florida, Disneyland Paris, and Hong Kong Disneyland in the coming years. — AFP

Stan Lee's legacy: Ubiquity of superheroes in pop culture

The face of superhero culture may be gone with the passing of Marvel legend Stan Lee, but there is no risk of his work fading into the pop culture background. Instead, the indelible characters he created such as Spider-Man, The Hulk or the X-Men are essentially modern mythological heroes, whose place on the big screen is immutable. "Graphically and culturally, these characters have influenced fashion, street art, pop art, design, television and cinema: their importance is significant," said Jean-Jacques Launier, the founder of the Art Ludique museum in Paris.

The museum - dedicated to the "art of entertainment," according to its website - staged an exhibit on Marvel superheroes in 2014 and then a similar one for DC Comics last year. Superheroes first entered the wider public consciousness in 1938 with the arrival of Superman in Action Comics #1. The following year, he was joined by the Caped Crusader, Batman. The genre lost popularity in the post-war period but rebounded in the late 1950s and early 1960s - notably thanks to Lee, who created The Fantastic Four in 1961 for Marvel Comics.

In quick succession, The Hulk, Thor, Spider-Man, the X-Men and Black Panther followed. Today, those characters have become ubiquitous in pop culture - regulars on the world's movie screens, stars of video games, the most-wanted toys on children's Christmas lists. After a series of animated specials and early films, superheroes returned to the silver screen with a vengeance in the 2000s.

In 2008, Marvel launched its linked Cinematic Universe with "Iron Man." The following year, the company was acquired by Disney. Twenty films have come out in a decade, with three more already scheduled for release. DC Comics, which belongs to Warner Bros, is now expanding its own cinematic Justice League universe - starring Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and Aquaman.

Today, it seems like hardly a month goes by without a hero's name on the multiplex marquee. "Superheroes are a sure thing in terms of Hollywood blockbusters," says Jessica Assayag, who runs programming at Comic Con Paris, the French edition of the mega pop culture festival based in San Diego. "The world of superheroes has allowed major studios to keep planning ever more ambitious films that audiences love."

'Evolve with the times'

There is a winning formula: emphasize the very human problems and conflicts of those gifted with superpowers, which allows the public to identify with them. "Marvel's superheroes, and those who have since been inspired by them, sort of represent the old phrase 'Money can't buy



you happiness," according to Xavier Fournier, an expert on the genre. "It's moving to see a guy with Spider-Man's powers but who, when he removes his mask, can't pay his rent and worries about his elderly, sick aunt."

Another reason for superhero staying power? Their ability to adapt to the times. When Lee first created his emblematic heroes, "the Cold War was raging, and fear of nuclear bombs along with it. Spider-Man gets bitten by a radioactive spider, The Hulk is exposed to gamma rays, the X-Men are called the 'children of the atom,'" explains Launier. "Avengers: Infinity War," which came out earlier this year, is currently ranked number four on the all-time worldwide box office champions' list. One of its main themes? Overpopulation.

"Black Panther," the most successful movie ever with a primarily non-white cast, looked at issues of heritage and nationality, noted Launier. For comics expert Jean Depelley, "comic books have always known how to evolve with the times and take on the issues of the day." "There were comics that talked about Watergate, the Vietnam war. Today, comics touch on racism, and transgender issues," he told AFP. For Assayag, superhero films are here to stay for a long while, especially because their protagonists are household names. "As long as the creativity and inventiveness are there, they will not run out of steam," she said. — AFP

Fans leave tributes on Lee's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame shortly after the news that the Marvel founder died aged 95 was made public in Hollywood on Tuesday.



A selection of 20 works associated with the late Lee's comics universe, including rare copies of comic books he wrote and signed, are displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California on Tuesday. The collection, which features Spiderman and Lee's other iconic superheroes, will be sold in an online auction Nov 16-17, 2018.



A custom bound one-of-a-kind hardcover book that includes the first 10 issues of The Amazing Spider-Man, "Strange Tales Annual #2," and "Amazing Fantasy #15" (1962-1964) comics is displayed at Julien's Auctions.



A Stan Lee-signed copy of the 1979 "X-Men Annual #3" is displayed at Julien's Auctions.

Lifestyle | Features



Talha (third right) poses for a picture with other students from the association for the blind on Nov 10, 2018 in Anjara. — AFP



Talha speaks to his friend in Anjara.

Blinded in war, former Syrian fighter guides others with app



Ahmad Talha, a former Syrian rebel fighter who lost his sight as a result of a gunshot wound, sits with his first wife Samia and son in the rebel-controlled town of Anjara in the western Aleppo countryside on Nov 10, 2018. — AFP photos

Years after losing his eyesight in battle, former Syrian rebel fighter Ahmad Talha hunches over his mobile phone in a bare classroom, listening to the robotic voice he helped translate. At a rare association for the blind in the northern province of Aleppo, Talha is helping a dozen others like him to better navigate their smartphones using a screen reader app. "My wish for all blind people is for them to have the best device, the best tools," says 24-year-old Talha, whose eyes are permanently closed, a purple scar under his right eye.

Heads lowered in concentration at the center in the rebel-controlled town of Anjara, men of all ages and a teenager clutch their phones and listen for instructions. "Alright guys, everybody open up Whatsapp," says instructor Mohammad Ramadan, dressed in a brown leather jacket, aviator sunglasses concealing his eyes. As the students scroll around to find the messaging service, the classroom erupts into a low cacophony of artificial voices guiding them across the invisible icons. The voices are male and female, some sped up to three times the normal pace. Talha says he found the screen reader application online in English, and translated it to Arabic with help from friends.

'A little romance'

The application tells the user what page they are looking at, what they can do with it, and reads out text it encounters. A student in computer sciences, Talha joined the fight against President Bashar al-Assad's regime one year into Syria's civil war in 2012. But two years later, a gunshot wound to the head saw him lose his eyesight. "I didn't give up. I continued living," says the young man with a short black beard.

Talha married his first wife, then a second, and returned to his studies. And he recently became engaged to a third woman, who is also blind. "I still see a little light in my right eye," he says, gazing out the window into the sunlight outside. "It's all mostly dark, but with a little romance - like a lit candle in a large room," says that father-of-three. At home, Talha helps his one-year-old daughter Aisha walk by holding her little arms, and crouches by his three-year-old son Hassan to talk him through opening up YouTube on his phone. Three months ago, his first wife gave birth to another daughter.

Football

"We're not missing anything in life," says his first wife

Samia, her eyes made up beneath her black face veil. "Nothing stops him," she says of her husband. "He may have lost his eyesight, but he has vision." This year, Talha helped set up the area's first association for the visually impaired, whose name in Arabic translates to "Seeing Hearts". "It's a home for the blind. We gather, get active, ask for our rights," he says.

Largely self-funded with a few donations, the center stands in a one-floor stone building, its facade freshly painted. Around a dozen people arrive for the day's lesson on foot, aided by friends, or on a dilapidated grey minibus. Director Ahmed Khalil says the new center seeks to help those who have lost their eyesight in the seven-year war, including in air strikes. "The association aims to draw the blind out of their isolation," he says, seated inside his office, wearing a brown jacket. Since October, eight volunteers have offered psychological support, as well as training to use mobile phones and the center's single computer, he says. But they also have more fun activities, says Talha, including chess and football - using a special ball with an inbuilt bell. — AFP

The man who battled flames to save his corner of Paradise

By all accounts, retired carpenter Brad Weldon should have evacuated his home in Paradise as the flames approached. Surrounded by pine trees and other greenery, with a pile of dry logs at the ready for the winter months, it was a tinderbox. But Weldon, egged on by his 90-year-old mother who refused to budge, fought back, with only his mother's 26-year-old health care aide to help him.

And against all odds, he won - while his hometown was largely destroyed by the Camp Fire, the deadliest and most destructive in state history, his house remains. "We had a choice, we could have left," Weldon, 63, told AFP in front of his home, its trees nearly intact - but surrounded by the smoldering ashes of his neighbors' homes on all sides.

"We were prepared when we heard the fire was coming, but I couldn't leave my mom," said Weldon, his goatee gray and an American flag bandana on his head. "She's blind and 90 years old, and pretty much invalid, and she didn't want to go anywhere... So we stayed and fought the fire - thank God we did." Weldon and his housemate battled the flames all day Thursday and into the night - with garden hoses, and then buckets of water they filled from the above-ground swimming pool. "Scoop and run! We fought with garden hoses for six or seven hours before we had to turn the buckets - maybe eight hours, I don't know," he explained. "Not bad for two boys!"

'Angels everywhere'

This was not Weldon's first wildfire. He said the family lost their homes more than once to similar infernos during his childhood. But the Camp Fire ravaging northern California is more intense than most. So far, at least 48 people have died in the blaze, most of them in Paradise - population 26,000 - in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Two more have been killed in a wildfire burning outside Los Angeles. This time, "we were prepared, but not for this," Weldon said.

"The fire was just coming down as fast as it could. All of these houses caught on fire at one time - it was just a wall of fire all the way around," he explained. "God helped us - we had angels everywhere." Firefighter Norm Kent, who came through the neighborhood to check that all fires were doused, could hardly believe what he was seeing on Weldon's property. "It's amazing - it's very brave in a way but at the same time, I'm sure he went through a high level of risk, trying to save" his house, Kent said. "I'm glad to see they made it everyone's OK." Even the trees on Weldon's property and the wood pile survived the fire.

'We should be good'

Now that the worst seemed to have passed, what will Weldon, his elderly mother and the young man who takes care of her do? "I don't know where we are going to go from here - we'll be here though," Weldon admits. "I've built hundreds of houses but I wouldn't have the heart to start over." "It isn't called Paradise for no reason," he says. "I call it home." Weldon says he will need more food and gasoline soon, adding that local authorities have advised the family to leave, and warned them that if they do, they might be not allowed back in. "They can't prevent you from staying, but they can stop you from going back!" Weldon says.

For now, he figures they have a week's worth of supplies and can make it through the emergency. But he is concerned about living in the burnt-out hellscape of Paradise, which is located about 130 km north of the state capital Sacramento, with no other living souls around. "Scary, this is a ghost town," he said. —AFP

Black Tunisians push for equality in face of racism

Tunisian Nadia Borji says she wants to be considered as equal but fears she will end up buried in her town's so-called "slaves" cemetery - because she is black. Black Tunisians, including some descended from slaves, make up a minority that is barely visible in the north African country. Many hope for greater equality after a law was passed last month criminalizing all forms of racism. "This term 'slave' disturbs me enormously. It shouldn't still exist!" protested Borji, who came to her mother's grave to read a prayer.

Black residents still bury their dead in a poorly maintained piece of land, full of earthen tombs covered with parched plants near Houmt Souk, on the island of Djerba. Two other cemeteries lie a stone's throw away - reserved for people with light skin. "We are accustomed to knowing that it is abnormal to suffer such discrimination," said 46-year-old Borji. Her cousin Dorra Douiri directed her anger towards a "racist and very painful" societal schism. "The worst thing is, it's a cemetery next to a mosque where the imams call for equality and respect," Douiri said. The head of a municipal district in Houmt Souk acknowledged that cemeteries should not be separated. "Cemeteries for slaves and cemeteries for free people - it is a phenomenon that exists and must be addressed," said Mourad Missaoui. Unlike the major cities of Tunis and Sfax, Djerba residents bury their dead without requiring permission from the council. This means their burial place can still be decided by social status and even their skin color, he told AFP.

Historic law

Slavery was formally abolished in Tunis and in part of what forms modern day Tunisia in 1846. On Oct 9, Tunisia's parliament adopted a landmark law penalizing the use of racist words, the incitement of hatred and discrimination. These crimes are now punishable by three years in prison and a \$5,000 (\$5,600 fine). Racism remains "well anchored in the minds of many Tunisians", said Saadia Mosbah, president of M'nemty, an association that defends minorities. Last month's law is an acknowledgement by the state that racism persists - but the law must now be applied, he added. "The real work starts now," he said.

But there could be a long battle ahead. "There is no harmony between legal texts and what happens" in reality, said municipal leader Missaoui. Town halls on Djerba even



Nadia Borji recites the Holy Quran in a cemetery in the town of Sedghiane on the resort island of Djerba on Oct 22, 2018.

use a designation widely perceived as being highly racist on slave descendants' birth certificates.

The word in question is "atig" - a prefix followed by the name of the master who granted freedom to the ancestors of the certificate holder. In the absence of popular pressure to withdraw the designation - or a directive from the government - the word and "its racist connotations" will continue to be applied by town halls, said Missaoui.

'Second class Tunisians'

In the city of Medenine and the large village of Gosba, around 80 km from Djerba, most people are black and many of them complain of racism. "Our village is extremely marginalized, because of the colour of our

skin," decried 27-year-old Mohamed, as he played cards on the floor of shop. "We have no cafes, no cultural houses, no proper buildings - absolutely nothing," he complained. "There is only contempt. It is not this law that will protect the region. It requires above all investment... for residents, who are considered second class Tunisians," he said.

In Gosba, marriage between a black and white Tunisian is socially rejected. "You can be the most handsome and rich man, (but) you'll always be black and they will never accept you marrying a white woman," said 61-year-old grocer Ali Kouidi. — AFP



Tunisian men play dominoes in Gosba, near the southeastern town of Medenine, on Oct 23, 2018. — AFP photos



Tunisian men walk past shops on Djerba on Oct 22, 2018.

Midwest Senate Democrat considering presidential run

WASHINGTON: Sherrod Brown doesn't have national recognition, and is hardly Washington's flashiest lawmaker. But the US Senate Democrat is riding high after winning reelection in swing-state Ohio, and said he might parlay that into a 2020 presidential run. "I'm considering it," he told reporters Tuesday, as lawmakers returned to Congress following recent midterm elections. "Connie and I are pretty overwhelmed by how many people we've heard from, and (said) I should think about doing this."

The next presidential election is still two years away, and Brown said he had "no timetable" for announcing a decision. But the week after the midterms is the unceremonial starting shot for the next presidential race, which in 2020 is likely to feature multiple Democrats seeking to challenge Donald Trump's White House reelection bid. There are far more recognizable Democrats in the mix, including former vice president Joe Biden, 2016 challenger Bernie Sanders, and fellow Senators Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris.

But the unassuming Brown, 66, could emerge in large part because he is a popular politician from the Midwest, a working-class region considered critical political territory. Of the Midwest's 12 states, Trump won 10 of them, including Ohio. But Brown's resounding six-point reelection victory in a closely-watched swing state that Trump won by eight points did not go unnoticed. "My first goal is that people see what we did in Ohio and that a progressive can win in Ohio without compromising on civil rights and worker rights and gay rights and women's rights, and can win convincingly in a state Trump won," Brown said.

Brown does not fit the mold of the typical American presidential contender. He has a gravelly voice, and his suits and hair are more often than not rumpled. But he has connected with voters, particularly with his left-leaning policies on workers' rights and international trade. He led a pocket of Democratic resistance against president Barack Obama's Trans-Pacific Partnership, the massive trade pact that Trump ditched when he took office. TPP was "a sellout for workers", Brown warned in 2016 as he



COLUMBUS, Ohio: US Sen Sherrod Brown celebrates his campaign victory at the Hyatt Regency on Nov 6, 2018. — AFP

noted the anger and dissatisfaction of working-class voters, including millions in Ohio which has shed manufacturing jobs.

Brown acknowledged that the presidency has not

been a lifelong dream. "I didn't grow up thinking I wanted to be president. I wanted to play center field for the Cleveland Indians, and apparently that window has closed," he quipped. In a Politico poll conducted immedi-

ately after the midterms, Biden and Sanders were easily the top choice to be 2020's Democratic nominee, with 26 percent and 19 percent respectively. Brown was near the bottom, with one percent. — AFP

US takes aim at Hezbollah role, sanctions son

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday branded the son of Hezbollah's leader a "terrorist" subject to sanctions as it offered rewards to capture three militants in Lebanon with close ties to Iran. In a series of back-to-back actions, the US vowed to aggressively counter the regional ambitions of Iran a week after imposing sweeping measures intended to cripple the cleric-led country's economy. It also marked a new US pressure tactic inside Lebanon, whose prime minister-designate, Saad Hariri, has been at a political crossroads with Hezbollah - considered a terrorist group by Washington but also a major political faction among the communally sensitive state's Shiite Muslims.

The State Department declared Jawad Nasrallah, the son of Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah, to be a "global terrorist", meaning any US-based assets will be blocked and Americans will be forbidden from any transactions with him. "Hezbollah's destructive actions have endangered the Lebanese people," Nathan Sales, the US ambassador-at-large and coordinator for counterterrorism, told reporters. He accused Hezbollah - the only of Lebanon's political parties

that did not disarm after the 1975-1990 civil war - of "effectively using civilians as human shields" by hiding missiles in population centers. "Hezbollah's ability to destabilize is not confined to the Middle East, however. It is able to destabilize inside Lebanon itself," he said.

Sales also held up "Wanted" posters for three men in Lebanon for which the United States will offer \$5 million for information leading to their location. They included Hamas deputy leader Saleh Al-Aruri, who is seen as the key liaison between the Palestinian Islamist movement and Iran and who lives in Lebanon. The United States linked Aruri in particular to the 2014 murder of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank including one, Naftali Fraenkel, who was a dual US-Israeli citizen.

Also on the posters were Khalil Yousif Harb and Haytham Tabatabai, both accused of commanding Hezbollah's growing military operations around the Middle East. Iran's rival Saudi Arabia in 2015 imposed its own sanctions on Harb over Hezbollah's role in Yemen, where Saudi-led coalition has been pounding Houthi rebels and infrastructure in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The United States cited the Saudi designation in its own action, despite Washington's recent criticism of the kingdom over the killing of dissident writer Jamal Khashoggi in its Istanbul consulate.

Hezbollah - founded during the civil war by supporters of Iran's revolutionary government with a goal of ending Israel's occupation of south Lebanon - has increasingly become a force around the region. — AFP

CIA sought 'truth serum'...

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But they faced a prohibition on agency medical research on prisoners that came after the agency's 1950s MKULTRA program in which mind-altering drugs were tested on humans. One man who was secretly given LSD in that program subsequently

committed suicide. After having stretched legal limits to get permission to use torture techniques on prisoners, the CIA's legal office "did not want to raise another issue with the Department of Justice", the report said.

The 90 page report on the OMS record in post 9/11 interrogations was released after a court battle led by the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU said the entire report showed how medical doctors were critical to the torture program and helped legitimize it. "One of the most important lessons of the CIA's torture program is the way it corrupted virtually every individual and institution associated with it," said ACLU attorney Dror Ladin. — AFP

After Gabo book purge, Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

advance by a censorship committee as per Kuwaiti regulations. The committee works under a 2006 law on "press and publications", which outlines a string of punishable offences for publishers of both literature

and journalism. Offences include insulting Islam or Kuwait's judiciary, threatening national security, "inciting unrest" and committing "immoral" acts. Activists took to the streets of the capital twice in September to protest against rising censorship. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Kuwait was a regional publishing hub, home to the highbrow, pan-Arab cultural journal "Al-Arabi" and a string of popular scientific and literary books. But in recent years, religious conservatives and tribal leaders have gained ground in parliament, paralleled by changing societal trends. Kuwait is the only Gulf state with elected lawmakers. — AFP

Iqama expiry fines waived for 4...

Continued from Page 1

government to treat Ahmad Al-Fadhli, a stateless man who died because of the rains, as a martyr and to compensate his family.

At the start of the session, Public Works Minister Hussam Al-Roumi told the Assembly that government agencies are well prepared and ready to deal with the new wave of thunderstorms and possible flooding. He said the Mangaf underpass is currently operational but will be closed as a precautionary measure. He said the tunnel will be treated as a reservoir in the event of heavy rain reaching more than 30 mm to prevent rainwater from reaching surrounding houses.

"We now have large pumping machines and we can drain the tunnel. In case of heavy rains where there is no discharge of rainwater despite the presence of strong water drainage by the pumps, drainage systems may not

be able to absorb the amount of rainwater, and God forbid, nearby homes may get flooded," Roumi said. "So the tunnel will be transformed into a reservoir to protect the lives of citizens and residents, who are the most valuable and most important of all," he added.

But MPs blasted the government during the debate, accusing it of failure to deal with the crisis, which led to severe damages. Opposition MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain called on Roumi to insist on his resignation and to reject calls to withdraw it. He said if the minister withdraws the resignation, "why did the government sack two senior public works ministry officials, holding them responsible for the failure?"

MP Faisal Al-Kandari said that the public works minister should have said from the very beginning that the government agencies were not ready instead of searching for excuses. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said that the Assembly will be committing another catastrophe if it allows this government to continue, calling for its resignation. MP Riyadh Al-Sane said what happened in Sabah Al-Ahmad area was a disaster and vowed to take action over it, adding that all those responsible must be held to account and said he will support the grilling against the prime minister.

NASA wants people on Mars within 25 years

WASHINGTON: Deadly radiation from the cosmos, potential vision loss, and atrophying bones are just some of the challenges scientists must overcome before any future astronaut can set foot on Mars, experts and top NASA officials said Tuesday. The US space agency believes it can put humans on the Red Planet within 25 years, but the technological and medical hurdles are immense. "The cost of solving those means that under current budgets, or slightly expanded budgets, it's going to take about 25 years to solve those," said former NASA astronaut Tom Jones, who flew on four space shuttle missions before retiring in 2001. "We need to get started now on certain key technologies," he told reporters in Washington.

At an average distance of about 225 million km, Mars poses scientific problems an order of magnitude greater than anything encountered by the Apollo lunar missions. With today's rocket technology, it would take an astronaut up to nine months to reach Mars - the physical toll of floating that long in zero gravity would be huge. For instance, scientists think prolonged weightlessness can cause irreversible changes to blood vessels in the retina, leading to vision degradation. And after a while in zero G, the skeleton starts to leach calcium and bone mass. With gravity only one-third of Earth's, scientists don't yet know the effects of a presumed one-year mission to the surface of Mars.

One way to reduce wear and tear on the human body is to dramatically cut down on travel time to Mars. Jones called for nuclear propulsion systems that would have the added benefit of producing electricity on flights. "If we start now, in 25 years we might have these technologies available to help us and protect us from these long transit times," he said. Under current conditions, just an outbound trip to Mars would take so long that any astronaut would receive the same amount of radiation than ordinarily would be deemed safe over the course of an entire career.

"We don't have the solution yet in terms of shielding,



WASHINGTON: Former NASA astronaut Tom Jones speaks during a news conference on NASA's 25-year plan for humans to inhabit Mars at the National Press Club on Tuesday. — AFP

in terms of protecting you from cosmic rays and solar flares that you experience during this transit time," Jones said. Aerospace experts have identified several technologies that need rapid development, including spacecraft that can survive the harsh entry into Mars and land softly enough, as well as the ability to lift people off the surface and head back to Earth.

NASA currently has a new robotic lander called InSight zooming towards Mars, due to land on November 26 after taking off from California on May 5. The \$993 million project aims to expand human knowledge of interior conditions on Mars, inform efforts to send explorers there, and reveal how rocky planets like the Earth formed billions of years ago. Jim Garvin, chief scientist at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, said InSight would fill in "critical unknowns" and help build a key understanding of Mars.

In 2020, another mission will see NASA send a rover to Mars that aims to determine the habitability of the Martian environment, search for signs of ancient life, and assess natural resources and hazards for future human explorers. Additionally, private firms like SpaceX and a host of other nations are building technologies that could be used on future Mars missions. Some experts see new exploration of the Moon as key to a future mission to Mars, as astronauts there could learn about extracting water or using technology and apply those lessons to future Mars missions. — AFP

Hamas hails 'victory' after...

Continued from Page 1

would give Hamas leader Ismail Haniya 48 hours to hand over two detained Israeli civilians and the bodies of soldiers killed in the 2014 war "or you're dead". He later backed off and said he was committed to "responsible, reasonable policy".

The ceasefire held yesterday, but Netanyahu was seeking to combat criticism of the decision. Beyond Lieberman's resignation, several hundred Israelis living near the border with Gaza protested on Tuesday night to call for further action against its Islamist rulers Hamas. Netanyahu defended his strategy. "Our enemies begged for a ceasefire. In times of emergency, when making decisions crucial to security, the public can't always be privy to the considerations that must be hidden from the enemy," he said at a ceremony yesterday.

Hamas portrayed the ceasefire as a victory and thousands of residents of the blockaded enclave took to the streets late Tuesday to celebrate. Yesterday, Gazan demonstrators burned pictures of Lieberman and sweets were handed out in the streets, while Hamas called his resignation a "victory". The Egyptian-brokered truce was announced by Gaza militant groups, including Hamas, on Tuesday. A diplomatic source familiar with the agreement said it involved returning to arrangements put in place fol-

lowing the 2014 war, but warned: "The situation remains very precarious and can blow up again. "What we have seen in the past 48 hours was very dangerous and no efforts should be spared to avoid similar flare-ups."

The violence saw seven Gazans killed in 24 hours as Israeli strikes targeted militants and flattened buildings, sending fireballs and plumes of smoke into the sky. Sirens wailed in southern Israel as militants unleashed barrages of rocket and mortar fire, sending residents rushing to shelters. Around 460 rockets and mortar rounds were fired at Israel, the most ever in such a brief time period, the army said. An anti-tank missile hit a bus near the Gaza border that Hamas says was being used by Israel's army. An Israeli soldier was severely wounded.

In all, some 27 Israelis were wounded, three of them severely. A Palestinian laborer from the occupied West Bank was killed when a rocket hit a building in the Israeli city of Ashkelon. The violence had begun on Sunday with a botched Israeli special forces operation inside the Gaza Strip that turned deadly and prompted Hamas to vow revenge. The clash that resulted from the blown operation killed seven Palestinian militants, including a local Hamas military commander, as well as an Israeli army officer.

This week's escalation came despite Netanyahu's decision to allow Qatar to transfer millions of dollars in aid to Gaza for salaries as well as fuel to ease a chronic electricity shortage. The agreements had led to calmer protests along the border after months of deadly unrest. But those cash transfers also drew criticism from Netanyahu's own government, and Lieberman slammed them in announcing his resignation. — Agencies

Sports

Sindhu, badminton's big earner, sets her sights on number one

'Definitely one day I will be world number one, that's what I feel'

HONG KONG: Indian badminton star PV Sindhu set her sights on reaching world number one after she shook off opening-match nerves to reach the last 16 at the Hong Kong Open yesterday. Last year's runner-up and current world number three needed a mid-match pep talk from her coaches before beating Thailand's Nitchanon Jindapol 21-15, 13-21, 21-17. Afterwards Sindhu, who has become one of the world's highest paid female athletes since winning Olympic silver in 2016, told AFP she had her eye on the number one spot.

"It's not going to be easy because there are some players who are coming up. But definitely one day I will be world number one, that's what I feel," said Sindhu, who was briefly ranked second last month. "The top 10 to 15 players of the world are in the same standard, so it's just on the day who plays well and gives their best is the number one." Sindhu, 23, narrowly lost the 2017 Hong Kong final to Taiwan's world number one Tai Tzu-ying, who has dominated the rankings over the past two seasons.

The Indian player has had a string of disappointments since, losing five straight finals including at the Asian Games against Tai. Sindhu's last victory against Tai was at the Rio Olympics, en route to the silver medal which brought a flood of endorsements. In August, Forbes magazine rated her as the world's seventh highest paid sportswoman.

'Not up to the mark'

She said her elevation and high profile had inspired other players in India, and had also raised expectations about her performances. "A lot of them have been taking me for inspiration, and there are also a lot of expecta-

tations now after this year especially. So to meet their expectations I need to be there and and I need to keep working hard," she said.

"Definitely I think Indian badminton as a sport is growing up and you see a lot of people are picking up badminton so it's a good sign for Indian badminton I can say, because in a couple of years you will definitely see a lot more players coming up." Sindhu looked set to make quick work of her opening match Wednesday, breaking away from Nitchanon in the first game. But she began to falter soon afterwards as Nitchanon's powerful smashes battered her into submission in the second game.

However, a pep talk in the last interval saw Sindhu claw back the decider, after the Thai fired long on several crucial points. "I think I was not up to the mark," Sindhu said. "I was very nervous. In the second set I gave a lot of lead and started playing negative, and in the third set it was like I was leading and then she came back closer. I could have just played freely... Overall it was very tactical and we had to be very focused and keep the shuttle in the court."

Meanwhile, fourth seed Chen Yufei crashed out of the tournament 21-14, 10-21, 20-22 after surrendering her early advantage against 24th-ranked Pornpawee Chochuwong. Chen's first loss to the Thai in six encounters was overshadowed by a vocal match on the next court, where men's double sixth seeds Kim Astrup and Anders Rasmussen fought off a spirited challenge from Lu Ching Yao and Yang Po Han. The energetic Taiwanese duo earned the crowd's favor against the Danes, who recovered from a drawn out first game loss to triumph 28-30, 21-19, 21-16 in 76 minutes. — AFP



FUZHOU: Sindhu Puserla of India hits a return against He Bingjiao of China during their women's singles quarter-final match at the China Open 2018 Badminton Championships. —AFP

Hamilton cool on F1 expansion to new countries

LONDON: World champion Lewis Hamilton has questioned Formula One's policy of organizing races in new countries after this month's announcement of the Vietnam Grand Prix. Hamilton told the BBC that he would prefer to see more stops in countries with a genuine racing tradition, rather than expanding to new markets.

"On the racing side, I don't know how important it is to go to new countries as such," said Hamilton who sealed his fifth world title last month. "If you had the Silverstone Grand Prix and a London Grand Prix, it would be pretty cool." The Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, will hold a Formula One street race from 2020 after signing a 10-year deal. Formula One has steadily expanded beyond its traditional heartlands, adding races in China, India, South Korea, Singapore, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, with mixed results.

At the same time, historic European races in England, Germany and Italy have come under threat, while France dropped off the circuit for 10 years before returning this season. "We've got a lot of real racing history in England, Germany, Italy and now in the States it is starting to grow," said Hamilton. "But you only have one event per year in those places. If it was my business, I'd be trying to do more events in those countries."

He added: "I've been to Vietnam before and it is



SAO PAULO: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates with his trophy on the podium after winning the F1 Brazil Grand Prix at the Interlagos racetrack. —AFP

beautiful. I've been to India before to a race which was strange because India was such a poor place yet we had this massive, beautiful grand prix track made in the middle of nowhere. I felt very conflicted when I went to that grand prix. "We had a grand prix in Turkey and hardly anyone came. Cool track, cool weekend but poor audience." Formula One has thrived in Singapore, but it

didn't last long in India and South Korea. Vietnam also has scant racing tradition. Hamilton said: "If you have the German Grand Prix and you've got a Grand Prix in Berlin, I think connecting to cities where a lot of people are is probably a good thing, not necessarily going to countries where they don't know so much about Formula One." — AFP

Thais mourn child boxer as funeral held

SAMUT PRAKAN: A child boxer who died after being hit repeatedly in the head during a Muay Thai bout was mourned yesterday, alongside wreaths and his fighting shorts, as calls mount for a ban on children entering the ring. Thirteen-year-old Anucha Tasako collapsed after his opponent, who is about the same age, delivered the blows at a charity fight in Samut Prakan province, near Bangkok, on Saturday.

He died later of a brain hemorrhage, according to police, and relatives were grieving beside his coffin at a temple pavilion yesterday before his body is cremated. His portrait was perched in the middle of one of many pink and white wreaths. Those who knew him were sombre but did not seek to cast blame for his death. "I'm not mad at the referee or the other boy," his uncle Aphichati Wannaphakdi, 59, told AFP on the second day of the funeral. "It happens in sports."

Coach Somsak Deerujijaroen described him as a "clever" boxer with good technique who inspired others. "Other small boxers look up to him as an idol," he added. Thai boxing is hugely popular in the country and many fighters enter the sport at a young age in search of fame and fortune. But the involvement of Thai youngsters — who sometimes start under 10 years of age in bouts that see kicks and elbows to the head with no protective gear — has stirred frequent criticism.

Frenzied gambling

More so as the young fighters are often family breadwinners from poor families and matches are subject to frenzied ringside gambling. Smartphone footage shown by local media captured the grim moment Anucha hit the canvas as assistants quickly rushed into the ring to help the motionless boy, who fought under the alias Phetmongkol Sor Wilaitong. Domestic media



SAMUT PRAKAN: A mourner prays in front of a portrait of 13-year-old Muay Thai boxer Anucha Tasako next to his coffin during a funeral at a Buddhist temple. —AFP

said he had been fighting since he was eight and had competed in more than 150 bouts. His opponent, Nitikron Sonde, took to Facebook to express his sorrow at the death. "I regret it," he posted on Tuesday, "but I have to do my duty to win so I can make enough money to sponsor my education."

Neither fighter was wearing protective headgear. A bill to prevent minors below the age of 12 from taking part is under consideration, and has already received fresh momentum in the aftermath of the death. The number two in Thailand's junta, Defense Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, expressed condolences and instructed the sports ministry "to consider the suitability" of the draft bill, a defense ministry spokesperson said in a statement on Wednesday. Outrage and anger poured in as

footage of the young fighter's death spread online, with some arguing the referee could have stepped in to end it sooner. "He could barely stand. Why didn't the referee stop the fight but let him continue to be hit until he was knocked down," one Thai Facebook user said. Others defended the practice of starting fighters young.

"I don't agree with the draft law to totally ban boxers who are under 12 years old because 99 percent of the famous Thai boxers and Olympic winners began fighting when they were young," Thai Olympic medalist Tawee Umpornmah, 59, told AFP, describing the boy's death as an accident. "I began at 12 with more than 200 fights. The question is do we have proper safety measures? We must give importance to safety measures including field doctors," he said. — AFP

Jones mulls boycott of 'waste of time' referee meetings

LONDON: England coach Eddie Jones has said meetings with World Rugby referees are "a waste of time" following the controversy over Sam Underhill's disallowed try against New Zealand. England thought they had achieved a rare victory over the world champion All Blacks at Twickenham on Saturday when flanker Underhill crossed following a Courtney Lawes charge-down of TJ Perenara's kick.

Experienced referee Jerome Garces awarded the try but, after consulting Marius Jonker, the television match official, the Frenchman changed his decision after the South African highlighted an offside. It remains a subject of debate whether Lawes was in fact offside. But either way, Jonker's ruling was a marginal call and appeared to go against a World Rugby directive requiring "compelling evidence" for a TMO to overturn an onfield ruling.

England's frustration in a match they eventually lost 16-15 was compounded by the knowledge the decision to disallow Underhill's try came just days after a World Rugby meeting of leading coaches and referees in London had seemingly clarified the position regarding the TMO's involvement. "I don't think I'll go to another referees' meeting in my life. It's a waste of time," said Jones. "The referees have a tough job, tough decisions to make, and all we want in rugby is consistency in decision-making," the Australian added. "We are happy to take every decision they make. But if we have policies then we have to follow them. "If we don't follow them, then what is the point in being involved in those policies and decision making?"

Jones, whose England side face Japan — whom he coached before taking over as Red Rose boss — at Twickenham this coming Saturday, added: "I would rather just accept it and get on with it. "That's the way it goes, you either get the rub of the green or you don't. I don't have any sour grapes at all about the game," insisted Jones. "You win some, you lose some, and get on with it. But there is something wrong, somewhere." — AFP

Trip to Seattle brings bad memories for Packers' Rodgers

SEATTLE: For Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, CenturyLink Field in Seattle is akin to a big stadium of horrors. Remember the "Fail Mary" play in 2012, when replacement officials awarded the Seahawks' Golden Tate a last-second touchdown even though it appeared Tate committed offensive pass interference and a Green Bay Packers defensive back intercepted the ball?

Or the NFC Championship Game in January 2015, when the Packers blew a 12-point lead in the final 2:13 of regulation and then lost in overtime? "That one," Rodgers told reporters Tuesday, "the sting's probably never going to go away." Rodgers and the Packers (4-4-1) will get another chance Thursday night when they travel to Seattle to play the Seahawks (4-5) in a game that could have NFC wild-card implications. The Packers snapped a two-game losing streak with a 31-12 victory Sunday against the visiting Miami Dolphins as Aaron Jones rushed for a career-high 145 yards and two touchdowns, Rodgers connected twice with Davante Adams for scores and the defense had six sacks. "Full speed ahead. Some guys might try to click through the film last night," Packers coach Mike McCarthy said. "A number of coaches just went right upstairs after the (Miami) game ... but as far as the team, we don't have any time to spend on, we have to get right into Seattle." —Reuters

Sports

Calgary '26 Olympic bid in peril after public says 'No'

City voted overwhelmingly against hosting the games

OTTAWA: Calgary's bid to stage the 2026 Winter Olympics suffered a crushing blow on Tuesday as residents of the Canadian city voted overwhelmingly against hosting the games, early results showed. In what is almost certain to represent the death knell for Calgary's bid, voters in a referendum came out 56.4 percent to 43.6 percent against bringing the games back to the city, which staged the 1988 Winter Olympics. An unofficial tally of 304,774 ballots released by the City of Calgary showed 171,750 voting against staging the Games, with 132,832 in favor. The referendum result came after frenzied campaigning which saw pro-bid campaigners fail to convince Calgary residents that the city should foot a Can\$390 million (\$295 million US) chunk of the bill for hosting the event. Provincial chiefs in Alberta had already warned they would withdraw a Can\$700 million funding commitment if Calgary residents voted against the Olympics.

Bid officials said bringing the Olympics back to Calgary would provide an economic boost to the city while giving it a chance to shine under a global spotlight. But opponents cast doubt on the projected revenues from the Games, fearing massive cost overruns, higher property taxes and less funding for other municipal projects.

Global trend

Calgary, heavily reliant on the oil sector, has faced difficult economic times recently, with low prices for Canadian oil and delays in constructing pipelines to get it to new markets overseas. The issue of whether to host the Games has gripped the city for the past two

years. The rejection of the Olympics by Calgary's public also reflects a global trend against staging the games in recent years.

In the race for the 2026 Olympics, the Swiss city of Sion and an Austrian bid based at Graz have already withdrawn, citing lack of either public or political support. Several other cities also walked away from the race for the 2022 Winter Olympics amid public opposition. An eventual Calgary withdrawal will leave only Milan and Stockholm in the running when the host city is announced in June in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The International Olympic Committee said Calgary's rejection "comes as no surprise following the political discussions and uncertainties right up until the last few days". "It is disappointing that the arguments about the sporting, social and long-term benefits of hosting the Olympic Games did not sway the vote," an IOC spokesperson added. Ahead of the vote, Mayor Naheed Nenshi urged locals to support the bid, saying Calgary would get back 10 times more in investment or about Can\$4 billion, than it puts into the bid.

"I'm voting yes because I believe Calgary can host the cleanest, most cost effective games in history. Let's dream big and vote yes," he said in a Twitter message. In an interview with The Globe and Mail newspaper, Nenshi downplayed concerns of possible cost overruns, saying the city's proposal could be scaled back easily to reduce costs if needed, as it is planning to build only two new venues while upgrading 11 existing sites.

However supporters of the bid had met with a wall of resistance from well-organised "No" campaigners. Local media had also voiced opposition, with the



CALGARY: In this file photo taken on February 13, 1988 fans cheer and wave flags as the Canadian delegation (lower right) parades during the opening ceremony of the XVth Winter Olympic Games. — AFP

Calgary Sun newspaper rejecting the bid as a misguided attempt to recreate the feelgood factor from the city's successful 1988 Olympics. "We remember 1988 fondly

but understand that was a special moment in time that will never be recaptured," the paper argued. "Trying to recreate magical memories is a mug's game." — AFP

Top-ranked Ariya chases \$1m at LPGA Championship

MIAMI: World number one Ariya Jutanugarn of Thailand has captured almost every major LPGA award this season but still chases a \$1 million bonus prize starting Thursday at the Tour Championship. The 22-year-old defending champion from Bangkok has won three titles this year, including her second major at the US Women's Open plus the Ladies Scottish Open and her second Kingsmill Championship crown in three years.

Ariya has already clinched the LPGA Player of the Year Award, the season money title, the Annika Award for best results in the majors and the Top 10 prize with 16 top-10 showings. She leads the tour in birdies, under-par rounds, rounds in the 60s and scoring average. The Vare Trophy for low scoring average is likely Ariya's as well, needing only to finish within 15 strokes of South Korea's Ko Jin-young to hoist the hardware. And she leads the season points chase for the CME Globe season bonus prize of \$1 million entering the season finale at Tiburon Golf Club in Naples, Florida.

"It means so much to me this year because I felt like I work so hard," Ariya said Tuesday. "My only goal, I just want to improve myself every day because I know I have so much room to improve. This year I feel like (I was) growing up a lot. I feel a lot better. It's not because I won three tournament this year already but because I feel like I improve a lot." Ariya, who could become the first LPGA player to sweep all the major tour awards, says she has learned how to better cope with the pressure of final rounds against intense LPGA rivals.

"It's not easy at all," Ariya said. "I mean, I know when I nervous, when I scared, I worry because I think about the outcome, because I want to play well, I want to hit this shot good because I care about other people, what they're going to think about me. But then I have to come back to myself and know that other people expectation is not my expectation. I expect to have a good commitment with every shot. I expect myself to have fun, enjoy, and feel free on the course. So I have to come back and work on that stuff."

Second Top Player award better

Ariya said winning her second Player of the Year award was better than taking her first because it was so unexpected. "When I got my first time like Player of the Year I feel like one award in my life I really want to get is Player of the Year. After that I didn't expect to be able to win it twice because to me I feel it's so tough," she said. "So when I play this year I never focus about that and I actually win, so it's feel even better."

Ariya has two wins, two runner-up finishes, a third and a fourth in 14 events starting with the US Women's Open to hold off South Korea's second-ranked Park Sung-hyun for the ranking lead. The Thai star's nearest rival for the \$1 million bonus is Australia's fifth-ranked Minjee Lee, who is trying to set aside thoughts of the bonus prize. "This is no different to any other tournament," she said. "I'm always going to try my best and do my best. I'll put my 100 percent in each shot. So I haven't really thought about the CME at the end of the week." — AFP

Curran, Buttler save England against Sri Lanka spin

KANDY: Sri Lanka's spinners claimed some big-name England wickets on the first day of the second Test yesterday before Jos Buttler and Sam Curran rescued the innings. Buttler's 63 and a crucial 64 from Curran at the end lifted England to 285 all out after they had been struggling on 89-4 on the turning Pallekelle stadium pitch. Curran, fast becoming an England hero, said reaching near 300 was a "massive" achievement.

England spinner Jack Leach then strengthened England's position, dismissing opener Kaushal Silva in the 12 overs Sri Lanka faced as the home side reached 26 for one at the close. A day that saw Ben Stokes, batting at the key number three position, become the latest to fail also reinforced Buttler and Curran's standing lower down the order. England were in trouble against spinners Dilruwan Perera who took four wickets, Malinda Pushpakumara (three) and Akila Dananjaya (two) when Buttler came in to counter-attack with five boundaries and a crucial 45-run stand with Adil Rashid who made 31.

Crucial innings

Buttler's 63 off 67 deliveries ensured Sri Lanka did not convert a good position into a dominant one, as he swept and reverse swept furiously and effectively. He was eventually out top-edging a reverse sweep off left-arm spinner Pushpakumara, playing his first Test for more than a year. Curran was even more important, taking 50 balls to reach double figures before he tore into the Sri Lankan bowling. He hit six sixes and a four off the spinners and his last wicket partnership of 60 with Jimmy Anderson was the best of the innings.

"It was crucial. You saw in the evening how much it spun. Getting close to 300 was massive for us," said

Mahmudullah, spinners give Bangladesh an edge

DHAKA: Mahmudullah Riyad scored his first Test century in more than eight years as Bangladesh set Zimbabwe a towering 443-run target to win the second Test in Dhaka yesterday. The hosts began their victory push, reducing Zimbabwe to 76-2 at stumps on the fourth day after Mahmudullah's unbeaten 101 off 122 balls helped the side declare the second innings on 224-6. Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan broke a 68-run opening stand by removing Hamilton Masakadza for 25 after he dropped the Zimbabwe captain on five off debutant pacer Khaled Ahmed. Mehidy also dropped Brian Chari on naught but fellow spinner Taijul Islam dismissed the opener for 43 soon after Bangladesh got their first breakthrough. Brendon Taylor and Sean Williams remained at the crease on four and two respectively, facing a monumental task to win or avoid a loss as Zimbabwe still trailed the hosts by 367 runs.

Zimbabwe lead the two-match series 1-0 after last week's victory in Sylhet — their first away Test win in 17 years. A draw in the game would give them their first Test series win in seven years. Bangladesh, who must win to square the series, declared their innings at the tea break after Mahmudullah completed his century by pushing leg-spinner Brandon Mavuta towards cover for two runs.

Mahmudullah, whose only other Test ton came against New Zealand at Hamilton in 2010, lifted Bangladesh from a precarious 25-4 after Zimbabwe seamers rattled the home side early on day four. The right-hander shared an 118-run stand for the sixth wicket with debutant Mohammad Mithun, who made



KANDY: England's Sam Curran (L) plays a shot as Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella (C) looks on during the first day of the second Test match between Sri Lanka and England at the Pallekelle International Cricket Stadium. — AFP

Curran. "Me and Jimmy had quite a bit of fun out there. He was probably the one telling me to calm down and trust him." Stokes, who batted at number five in his team's opening win last week, was boosted by the order in the latest bid to find a solid number three. Off-spinner Perera successfully reviewed an lbw decision against Stokes after the on-field umpire had turned down an appeal. He was out for 19. England captain Joe Root, who scored 35 and three in the first Test, was bowled by Pushpakumara in the 18th over for 14 and opener Rory Burns (43) soon followed as England lost regular wickets on the dry, crumbling surface.

Curran said the wicket was fast breaking up and the cracks growing so England spinners must be looking forward to the second day. Ten of the 11 wickets to fall Wednesday went to spinners. There were several near misses during the 12 overs Sri Lanka faced, with Karunaratne edging a ball just low and wide of slip off the bowling of Ali when he was on 12. Leach then made the breakthrough at the other end, getting a ball to break sharply off the surface and beat Kaushal Silva's forward defence, to rattle off stump — the batsman dismissed for 6. Nightwatchman Pushpakumara then survived the 15 balls he faced before stumps. — AFP



DHAKA: Bangladesh cricket captain Mohammad Mahmudullah (L) plays a shot as the Zimbabwe cricketer Regis Chakabva (R) looks on during the fourth day of the second Test cricket match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. — AFP

amends for his first innings duck to score 67 off 110 balls. Mahmudullah hit four fours and a six in an impressive innings, with his last 51 runs coming off only 52 balls.

Zimbabwe had successes against Bangladesh early in their second innings, after the hosts decided against enforcing the follow-on despite their 218-run first innings lead. Kyle Jarvis removed openers Imrul Kayes and Liton Das in the space of three balls in the fifth over for three and six runs respectively. First-innings

centurion Mominul Haque quickly followed the openers, edging Donald Tiripano to wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva for one in the next over. The slump continued as Mushfiqur Rahim, who scored 219 in the first innings, pulled a straight catch to square leg fielder Mavuta to depart for just seven. But Mithun and Mahmudullah stemmed the bleeding, slowly building their partnership. Zimbabwe were all out for 304 earlier on the third day, replying to Bangladesh's mammoth first innings total of 522-7 declared. — AFP

Sports

Nations League gets to the business end of the tables

Group winners will play in Euro 2020 qualification playoffs

PARIS: World Cup winners France, Eden Hazard's Belgium and a fast-improving Netherlands under Ronald Koeman could all book places in the finals of the Nations League in matches between Thursday and Tuesday. The competition, UEFA's bid to move away from meaningless friendly matches, has divided opinion in its inaugural season. The strongest sides will qualify for the finals next June, but all 16 group winners will get a place in the Euro 2020 qualification playoffs. However, if those nations have already qualified for Euro 2020 through normal qualifying, the best-ranked team from a lower group will be drafted in. Qualifying for Euro 2020 does not begin until next March.

France on brink of qualification

Kylian Mbappe can carry world champions France into the finals on Friday with a draw against the resurgent Netherlands in Rotterdam. "We are going there for the win," coach Didier Deschamps warned. "We are the world champions and we will behave like it." France beat the Dutch 2-1 in September after PSG star Mbappe scored the opener and Chelsea target man Olivier Giroud clinched the three points after Ryan Babel had equalized. Since then the Netherlands have thrashed Germany 3-0 and drew 1-1 in Belgium. Koeman is rebuilding the Dutch squad that failed to reach this year's World Cup with rookie striker Armut Groenveeld, a 21-year-old Nigerian-born winger, and Justin Kluivert, son of Patrick, two exciting new faces.

Two of the world's best defenders also go head-to-head as Real Madrid's Ballon d'Or contender Rafael Varane will line up for France and Liverpool's blockbuster signing, Dutch captain Virgil van Dijk, will marshal his backline. Deschamps will be missing stars Paul Pogba and Benjamin Mendy but has recalled Moussa

Sissoko, the versatile Tottenham man who was one of their stars in their run to the Euro 2016 final.

Not the Germany of old

Germany have struggled to put a disastrous World Cup behind them and face the prospect of relegation from Group A1 having taken a solitary point so far. They have to beat the Netherlands in Gelsenkirchen on Monday to avoid dropping down a division. Few observers expect Germany to fail to book their ticket to Euro 2020 through the normal qualifying process, but their form has done nothing to boost their flagging morale. Coach Joachim Loew, who retained his job despite the first-round World Cup exit, has begun to dispense with the 2014 World Cup-winning players including Jerome Boateng and bring in fresh blood like Manchester City's Leroy Sane. The incentive for the Dutch is clear: two wins will see them into next year's finals.

Belgium keeping form

Hazard's Belgium, the side that were only stopped at the World Cup by France, will reach the finals with a Group A2 win against Switzerland in Lucerne on Sunday. In fact, a draw would be enough if the Belgians avoid defeat against Iceland on Thursday.

Croatia seek revenge on Spain

World Cup finalists Croatia are hunting a first Nations League win when they host Spain, with revenge foremost in their minds after losing 6-0 to them in September. "We are in much better shape than then. It was a debacle and we need to look for revenge... with three points," their coach Zlatko Dalic said. The goalless Group A4 draw against England was played behind closed doors, so the game in Zagreb will

Rooney excited to see what 'fearless' England is capable of

BURTON-ON-TRENT: Wayne Rooney will make his final farewell as England's greatest ever goalscorer in a friendly against the United States today, but is excited at what a young squad can achieve under "fearless" coach Gareth Southgate in the years to come. Rooney, 33, made the last of his 119 international appearances midway through England's World Cup qualifying campaign two years ago.

In contrast to his prime when a "golden generation" disappointed at major tournaments and never made it beyond the quarter-finals, Southgate's charges surpassed expectations by making it to the semi-finals of a World Cup for the first time in 28 years in Russia. "Fearless," said Rooney when asked what set Southgate apart from the other five England managers he played under. "Because a lot of the other managers didn't really give the youth the opportunity to express themselves and come into the team and have an impact."

Rooney insisted he has no regrets on retiring from international football a year before the World Cup, but admitted even he was surprised at how quickly Southgate's squad matured into contenders to be world champions. "I saw over two years ago the talent we had with the young players," he added. "I believed those players, maybe not in the World Cup but the one after

Players union says survival of small clubs, leagues at risk

ZURICH: Global footballers' union FIFPro has warned that the survival of smaller clubs and leagues is at risk, potentially affecting thousands of jobs, due to the increased concentration of wealth in the sport.

The union's comments followed reports on the 'Football Leaks' documents obtained by German publication Der Spiegel and reviewed by Reuters in partnership with European Investigative Collaborations, a network of international media, earlier this month that plans for a Super League were back on the agenda. Der Spiegel said a fresh plan had recently been drafted by Spanish company Key Capital Partners for Real Madrid which foresees 11 top European clubs creating a Super League in 2021. Key Capital Partners has not commented on the report.

"It is important that the top clubs and competitions recognize they have a responsibility towards the entire industry," FIFPro said in a statement on Tuesday. "It is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to protect the integrity and values of football." FIFPro said the current system, which gives all clubs the possibility to take part in European competition through sporting merit, needed to be maintained. "The sustainability of the professional football pyramid needs to be safeguarded," it said.

"The economic survival of smaller clubs and leagues is at risk and competitiveness within championships is vanishing. This affects millions of fans, thousands of jobs for players and raises serious questions about the viability of the industry. "FIFPro supports a united football industry and the benefits of connected competitions." FIEA president Gianni Infantino said last week that any players involved in a breakaway league would be barred from playing for their national teams, including at the World Cup. "We will... defend the ability of players to represent their country and their right to offer their services to any club," said FIFPro. "We are strongly opposed to the prospect of these freedoms being limited as a consequence of a fight between competition organizers." — Reuters

that, would be good enough to have a go at it. They proved me wrong by doing so well in this World Cup."

England carried on the momentum from their World Cup campaign by inflicting Spain's first competitive defeat on home soil for 15 years in a thrilling 3-2 victory in Seville last month. Should Luis Enrique's men fail to bounce back with victory in Croatia on Thursday, England will have the chance to progress to the inaugural Nations League semi-finals by beating the Croats at Wembley on Sunday.

'I'm excited'

However, the long-term target remains success at Euro 2020 with the extra incentive of the semi-finals and final to be played at Wembley. "Myself along with all you guys (media) are of the opinion the squad is growing, getting better. I'm excited to see them in the next tournament," added Rooney.

While the former Everton and Manchester United striker brings down the curtain on his England career, Southgate has the chance to test some of those at the end other end of their international career against the States. Jadon Sancho, 18, is in line for his first start after starring in Borussia Dortmund's 3-2 win over Bayern Munich on Saturday.

Rooney himself burst onto the international scene as an 18-year-old at Euro 2004, but admitted he didn't always enjoy his England career as he should have after that tournament given the burden of expectation to perform he shouldered. "When you're in that mode you don't want to admit there is pressure to perform. I've stepped back from that now and can analyse that there was that pressure," he added.

"Having that makes you try too hard and makes you

Ranieri to the rescue as Fulham sack Jokanovic

LONDON: Fulham appointed Italian veteran Claudio Ranieri as manager yesterday after sacking Slavisa Jokanovic in a bid to beat the drop from the Premier League. Jokanovic led Fulham back into England's top flight in May 2018 but the 50-year-old Serbian has struggled to adapt to life in the Premier League. After 12 games, Fulham sit bottom of the pile with just five points and one win from 12 games.

Ranieri, who famously led Leicester to a fairytale Premier League title in 2016, was a free agent after being sacked by French Ligue 1 club Nantes one game before the end of last season. He has been given a "multi-year" contract by Fulham chairman Shahid Khan. "It is an honor to accept Mr Khan's invitation and opportunity to lead Fulham, a fantastic club with tradition and history," Ranieri told the club's official website. "The objective at Fulham should never be to merely survive in the Premier League. We must at all times be a difficult opponent and should expect to succeed."

Khan thanked Jokanovic, the first managerial casualty of the season in the Premier League, for his work at the club. "I wasn't anticipating having to make this announcement related to Slavisa and wish the circumstances were such that I didn't have to, but our path this season has led me to make what I know is the correct decision, at the right time, for our players, the club and our supporters," said the Fulham chairman. "Slavisa will always have my appreciation and respect for everything he did to return Fulham to top-flight football."

'Capable of better'

Ranieri's appointment comes only weeks after his former boss at Leicester, club owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, died with four others when his helicopter plummeted into a car park outside the King Power stadium shortly after a match against West Ham. "I was terribly shaken by the news," Ranieri told Sky Sport Italia two weeks ago. "He was a good man and always had a positive word for everyone."

Italian journeyman Ranieri has previously coached



CLAIREFONTAINE-EN-YVELINES: France's head coach Didier Deschamps (C) arrives for a training session with his players in Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines on November 12, 2018, as the team prepares for the upcoming UEFA Nations League football match against the Netherlands and a friendly football match against Uruguay.—AFP

be the first time Luka Modric has run out in front of a home crowd since inspiring Croatia to the World Cup final, a feat that makes him favorite to win the Ballon d'Or next month. After a superb year that also landed him the FIFA player of the year award, the Real Madrid midfielder is nearing full fitness, Dalic said. "He is the leader and he will be at a high level," the coach said.

Love it or loathe it

Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp calls the Nations League a "senseless" competition comparable to making a prize heavyweight box every night. But Germany's Loew likes it, saying: "Competition is preferable to playing against small nations." — AFP

Croatia keen to avoid another 'slap' from Spain

ZAGREB: Having finally shaken off their World Cup hangover, finalists Croatia are aiming for their first Nations League victory when they face Spain on Thursday, the side who inflicted a 6-0 drubbing in September.

Coach Zlatko Dalic has named a 25-man squad, including three new faces, to face Spain at Zagreb's Maksimir stadium and England on November 18 at Wembley. "I'm focused on the match against 'La Furia (Roja)', we need that victory," Dalic said earlier this month. "I know that many people do not believe that our team is capable of winning both games but I reply — we will do now as we did in Russia, step by step." "First, Spain," he told the Jutarnji List newspaper.

Croatia, a country of 4.2 million people, reached the World Cup final for the first time, inspired by playmaker Luka Modric, and despite losing 4-2 to France Dalic and his players were welcomed home as heroes. But only two months later "Vatreni" — Croatian for "Fiery Ones" — suffered the humiliation of the thrashing by Spain in their first Nations League match.

They improved to draw 0-0 with England in a rematch of the World Cup semi-final, but the game was played in eerie silence at an empty stadium in Rijeka. UEFA banned fans from the game over the carving of a swastika into a pitch during a Euro 2016 qualifier against Italy. That was just the latest in a litany of offences for racism that has seen Croatia consistently punished.

'Fresh blood'

Because of the lockout against England, Thursday's match will be Modric's first in front of his home fans since the World Cup. After a superb year that landed him the FIFA player of the year award, the Real Madrid player was nearing full fitness, Dalic said. "After a year of excellent games he cannot be constantly in good shape. I never had doubts about Luka... he is the leader and he will be at a high level."

Dalic, who repeatedly stressed that his main goal was to qualify for the Euro 2020, said the team was motivated by a wish for revenge. "The match, our approach and our fitness will be completely different" compared to the demolition by Spain, he told a press conference Monday. "We are in much better shape than then. It was a debacle and we need to look for revenge... with three points."

Dalic has rejuvenated the squad with three young players — forwards Josip Brekalo and Nikola Vlacic and defender Duje Caleta-Car. Brekalo, who plays for Bundesliga side VfL Wolfsburg, is set to make his debut against Spain. "I'm always saying we need fresh blood," Dalic said. Cheering from the stands will be striker Mario Mandzukic, defender Vedran Corluka and goalkeeper Danijel Subasic, who all retired from international football after Russia. It will be an opportunity for the trio to bid a symbolic farewell in front of their home fans. "They are part of our family, we should not forget the moments from Russia... We want unity as it was this summer," Dalic said. — AFP



BURTON-ON-TRENT: England's striker Wayne Rooney attends a press conference during a media day at St George's Park in Burton-on-Trent, central England on November 13, 2018, ahead of their international friendly football match against the USA today. — AFP

a bit too anxious, so you don't enjoy it as much as you should. You play your best football and best performances when you're enjoying playing and winning." And Rooney is confident this generation can succeed where his failed in winning England's first major trophy since 1966 if they maintain the free spirit they showed in the summer.

"Enjoy it. It's a huge honor in your career. Probably the best honor you can have," said when asked to give advice to the current squad. "It won't always be good, every tournament or every game, but as long as you keep trying to learn and make sure you're one of the players who can try and bring a trophy back to England, which is long overdue." — AFP



NANTES: In this file photo taken on April 01, 2018 Nantes' Italian head coach Claudio Ranieri attends the French L1 football match between Nantes and Saint-Etienne at The La Beaujoire Stadium. — AFP

Napoli, Fiorentina, Atletico Madrid, Chelsea, Valencia, Juventus, Roma, Inter Milan and the Greek national team. But winning the title with Leicester two years ago remains the affable 67-year-old's biggest career achievement. Leicester started that 2015-2016 league campaign on odds of 5000-1 to win the Premier League crown. Ranieri faces a similarly formidable challenge if he is to lift Fulham out of the doldrums.

But he believes the Londoners can be competitive again. He will take charge of his first game in 10 days' time when Fulham welcome fellow strugglers Southampton to Craven Cottage. "This Fulham squad has exceptional talent that is contrary to its position in the table. I know this team is very capable of better performances, which we will work on straight away as we prepare for Southampton at the Cottage," added Ranieri. Ranieri will then face former clubs Chelsea and Leicester in successive games. — AFP

25 Sindhu, badminton's big earner, sets her sights on number one



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Durant stars as Warriors bounce back

Cavaliers bag only their second win of the season



OAKLAND: Kevin Durant #35 of the Golden State Warriors hits Andre Iguodala #9 of the Golden State Warriors on November 13, 2018 at ORACLE Arena. — AFP

OAKLAND: Kevin Durant scored 29 points as the Golden State Warriors set aside their off-court discord to post a 110-103 win over the Atlanta Hawks on Tuesday. The NBA champions went into the game at the Oracle Arena against a backdrop of controversy, with power forward Draymond Green suspended following his bust-up with Durant 24 hours earlier.

Durant and Green had a heated off-court exchange during Monday's 121-116 overtime defeat to the Clippers in Los Angeles. That spat prompted Warriors management to take the unusual step of imposing a one-game suspension on Green for "conduct detrimental to the team." The Warriors looked to be suffering a hangover from the row in the early stages against Atlanta, trailing 52-49 at halftime against the Hawks, who are 3-10.

The Warriors raised their game in the second half

however, taking charge after outscoring the Hawks by 33-24 in the third quarter before closing out the win. Durant was given offensive support from Klay Thompson, who had 24 points while Quinn Cook had 18 and Jonas Jerebko 14. The Warriors remain on top of the Western Conference standings with 11 wins and only three defeats. Six Atlanta players reached double figures, with Taurean Prince leading with 22 points and Kent Bazemore 18.

Rockets finding 'swagger'

In Denver, James Harden had 22 points and 11 assists as the misfiring Houston Rockets knocked off the Nuggets in a 109-99 victory. Houston, who have been slow to start this season with only six wins against seven defeats, relied on a strong all-round offensive display to polish off Denver, third in the

Western Conference on 9-5.

Six Houston players cracked double figures with Clint Capela leading the scoring with 24 points and nine rebounds. Chris Paul had 21 points while James Ennis III finished with 16. Denver's scoring was led by Monte Morris, who had 19 off the bench while Nikola Jokic had 14. Harden said the Rockets were slowly rediscovering their "swagger" after a sluggish start to the campaign.

"It's going to take time but we're getting there," Harden told reporters. "If we keep defending at a high level like we've been doing, then the offense is going to come around. The games that we lost, we guarded really well, we just didn't make shots. Once we put both of those things together we're going to be pretty scary. Tonight was a complete game."

In Cleveland, meanwhile, the struggling Cavaliers

bagged only their second win of the season with a 113-89 victory over the Charlotte Hornets. Jordan Clarkson led the scoring for the Cavs while Tristan Thompson had 11 points and 21 rebounds to give last year's NBA Finals runners-up a much-needed morale boost.

Cavs coach Larry Drew, who replaced sacked predecessor Tyrone Lue last month after the team's calamitous 0-6 start, expressed relief after claiming the win. "We've been working hard for the past few weeks but we've been coming away empty-handed," Drew said. "Tonight we were able to sustain from start to finish. All the hard work that the guys have been putting in, tonight's win kind of pays that off. We've been playing well, we just haven't been able to finish them out. It feels good getting that monkey off your back with the losing streak." — AFP

'The facts are not right': Federer fumes over favorable scheduling

LONDON: Roger Federer has hit back at claims he gets preferential treatment from tennis tournaments due to his status as one of the sport's all-time greats. Federer was responding to controversial comments from French veteran Julien Benneteau, who said the 20-Grand Slam champion was able to use his reputation to secure favorable scheduling.

Benneteau offered Federer's matches at the last two Australian Opens as evidence, suggesting the Swiss star was granted his preference to play in the evening session to avoid the blistering Melbourne heat. "Over the last two Australian Opens, he played 14 matches, because he was champion and finalist. And he played 12 or 13 of them in the night session," Benneteau told France's RMC Sport recently. "On the same day Federer played Jan-Lennard Struff, Novak Djokovic played Gael Monfils. Any tournament director would put Djokovic-Monfils on the night session

at 7:30pm, right? But no. They played at 2:30pm, in 104 degrees. And Federer-Struff played at night. It's normal that he gets preferential treatment, with everything he's done. But, in some tournaments, there are big differences in the conditions. He has no idea what that's like."

But Federer was supported by world number one Novak Djokovic on Monday, with his rival suggesting the six-time Australian Open winner had actually earned the right to "special treatment" for all the good he has done for the sport. Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley also released a statement saying the scheduling of Federer's matches for the evening was a response to fan demand to watch a "once-in-a-generation athlete", rather than any desire to cater to tennis's biggest star. Tiley is an investor in the Laver Cup, a Ryder Cup-style annual tournament promoted by Federer and his management group Team8, but denies a conflict of interest.

Asked about the controversy, former world number one Federer said that while he does speak to tournament chiefs about scheduling, he doesn't believe he gets special favors. "I get asked 'would you like to play Monday or Tuesday' sometimes. Sometimes I get asked, 'Do you want to play day or night?' Sometimes they go ask my agent," Federer told reporters after his win over Dominic Thiem at the ATP Finals on Tuesday.

"Sometimes they ask me, you know, Asia wants you to play at night. Yes, sometimes we have our say. But I asked to play Monday at the US Open and I played Tuesday night. It's all good, you know. I've had that problem for 20 years in the good way. Sometimes I get help, sometimes I



LONDON: Switzerland's Roger Federer returns against Austria's Dominic Thiem during their men's singles round-robin match on day three of the ATP World Tour Finals tennis tournament at the O2 Arena. — AFP

don't. I think there you have it. "Yeah, sometimes they come ask, sometimes they don't. But a lot of the facts are not right, just to be clear there, from what I heard." Federer is bidding to win his 100th career singles title at the ATP Finals and he made it clear he wanted to draw a line under the favoritism issue. "I don't really in feel the mood during a World Tour Finals to discuss that topic, to be honest," he said. "The radio interview that happened over a week ago that surfaces now in French, Julien, who is a nice guy, I know him since the junior times, I think all of this has been totally taken out of context." — AFP

Zlatan's debut strike voted MLS Goal of the Year

NEW YORK: Swedish icon Zlatan Ibrahimovic's first goal for the Los Angeles Galaxy, a 77th-minute equalizer from 40 yards last March, was named Major League Soccer's Goal of the Year on Tuesday. In fan voting from among 16 finalists, the spectacular scoring prize went to the 37-year-old striker whose European stops included Manchester United, Paris Saint-Germain, AC and Inter Milan, Juventus and Barcelona.

Also winning in fan voting was Seattle Sounders goalkeeper Stefan Frei with the MLS Save of the Year, a quick reflex stop by the Swiss against Colorado's Shkelzen Gashi in the 82nd minute on July 4. That kept Seattle's lead at 2-1 and the Sounders won by that margin. Zlatan's first MLS goal was a memorable one against Los Angeles FC on March 31, a right-footed blast from long range over LAFC goalkeeper Tyler Miller into the back of the net to ignite cheers at StubHub Center. Zlatan later nodded in the winning goal in stoppage time for a 4-3 victory. Also among the nominees for top tally was Zlatan's 500th career goal, a sweeping leg kick blast against Toronto on September 15. He became the third Galaxy player with a year's top MLS goal, joining Landon Donovan from 2009 and Carlos Ruiz in 2002. — AFP