

Friday Times

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Local



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The Conocarpus tree was brought to Kuwait in 1988 for greening the landscape and main roads. It spread easily because it is able to withstand harsh environmental factors such as high and low temperatures and can be easily trimmed and planted, especially on the streets. It is also known for not being affected by vehicle emissions and is used as fencing and windbreaks in open desert areas.

Recently, some people pointed fingers at this tree as a source of trouble after the heavy rain in Kuwait and the arrival of winter. Some people blamed the tree's roots for penetrating water and sewage networks and disrupting the flow of water. Some specialists advise not to plant this tree near buildings, because of its large consumption of water, which may cause damage to the infrastructure of water and drainage pipes.

Researcher at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research Dr. Hani Al-Zalzal advised not to plant the Conocarpus tree near houses and buildings "because of the thirst of its root system for water, which may damage water and sanitation networks, especially if they are dilapidated".

But Zalzal warned against uprooting any tree planted in a wrong location close to government buildings without coordination with specialists in the field of agriculture, in order not to damage service lines close to the roots. He said the Conocarpus is good for improving the properties of desert soil and turning it into agricultural soil.

Some people also accuse this tree of causing allergies, but there is no evidence or proof of this. I believe that we

Is Conocarpus dangerous?



Conocarpus tree

should not accept information without scientific evidence. For planting Conocarpus near houses, I think the approval of the environment authority must be made to ensure that all parties, whether official or homeowners, are committed to safe agriculture in a way that does not conflict with service lines.

I hope that the relevant government agencies will stop the cultivation of Conocarpus within urban areas and plant these trees outside cities as windbreaks and near coasts in order to increase the green area and provide aesthetic views, and stop soil erosion due to salinity and wind.



IN MY VIEW

By Nawara Fattahova

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Foreigners may be surprised to learn that there is a very common idea in Kuwait that certain cars are 'for men' and that women are discouraged and, in some families, even forbidden from owning or driving cars labeled 'for guys'. Typically these cars are sports cars, pick ups and certain types of SUVs.

Some parents, even in the West, would not buy their children a sports car, especially when they are very young, due to the fear that these fast vehicles are more likely to invite accidents, as all young people love to speed and show off, in addition to not having enough driving experience. This belief is somehow logical and acceptable.

But this does not apply to the warped notion mentioned above. The defenders of this concept claim that if a girl drives one of these so-called 'guy cars', people will see her as "loose", but none of them have yet shown me exactly how a car translates into moral integrity.

According to this mindset (as explained to me by several men) women can drive sports cars such as Porsches or BMWs, but can't drive a Mustang, Camaro, Corvette or any other American muscle car. A woman can drive an

Cars for girls and boys?

SUV such as a Range Rover, Lexus, Kia, Prado, Pajero and those of other brands, but she shouldn't drive pickups or a Jeep Wrangler.

Now to be fair, cars and especially sports cars and SUVs are often marketed at a certain demographic and in the West as well as the rest of the world, some cars tend to be considered more 'macho' than others. Most of us would agree that an American muscle car is proto-typically 'male' and that often men drive such vehicles. That does not, however, mean that women can't or shouldn't drive such cars. Nor would driving or owning such a car in any way, shape or form equal a lack of virtue or morality.

After four years of friendship and declaration of love, Ahmad told his beloved Bashayer that he couldn't marry her because she drives a sports car and his family will never allow this marriage. He offered her a solution - to sell her car and he will buy her a car of his choice, and she is only allowed to choose the color. She simply told him to forget about the marriage. The spread of this bizarre notion is dangerous and has even reached some conservative families of neighboring countries like Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Reem, an Iranian expat, studied hard to get good grades and got accepted at a university. Her dad bought her a car of his choice, which she didn't like much but had to accept it. When she got employed, she started saving to buy the car of her dreams - a Wrangler - but her father refused to



let her buy it, although it was from her savings. He told her this car is not suitable for you - it's a car for men.

The idea of a pink for girls and blue for boys has taken hold across the world (though this notion did not exist before the 20th century and in fact was the outcome of marketing campaigns.) Likewise, cars for boys and different ones for girls seems to have become internalized into a societal norm. The problem is not only the genderification of cars. Like toys and clothing, it can be limited in impact unless parents add real meaning to the idea and in yet another way, limit the ambitions of women across the globe.

Local



Illicit camps in north despite Municipality postponement

Dozens of illicit camps for the winter season have been set up in the northern desert areas despite a 'postponement' of the start of the camping season. An official manning the Municipality complaint hotline confirmed to Kuwait Times yesterday that camping licenses are still on hold and the season is not open until now. In mid-November, the Municipality announced that the official start of the camping season - and the allocation of licensed camping sites - is postponed "until further notice" due to the rainy weather conditions.

The civil defense committee, in partnership with the defense ministry, the Municipality and other government bodies, warned that the emergence of remnants of military hardware, including landmines and mortars, was the main reason for the delay, as well as the presence of large pools of water and the collapse of some roads leading to campsites.

Despite the declared postponement, dozens of seasonal camps can be found paralleling the highways heading to the Salmi border crossing. The official told Kuwait Times that the Municipality receives hundreds of calls daily asking when the camping season will open, adding that no date has been set till now and they are awaiting confirmation that the weather will remain stable.

Prior to the postponement, the Municipality had identified 18 campsites with an area of 616 sq km in the north, west and south for campers. The municipality requires all campers to register and obtain a camping license and pay a non-refundable fee of KD 50 as well as a deposit. It is prohibited to burn foliage, damage natural life, construct fences, excavate the land, hunt, kill or destroy shelters of species and graze livestock in camping areas.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat





‘Pearl of the West’ joint Kuwaiti-French military drill concludes

The 2018 ‘Pearl of the West’ military drills - held by the Kuwait army and national guard in cooperation with French armed forces - concluded yesterday in the presence of Kuwait Army’s Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Khalid Al-Khadher. The Chief of Staff heard a briefing from the final project manager Col Bandar Al-Shimmari, who explained the format of the drills and the capabilities of participating forces.



Local



Kuwait Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khadher (right) and Commander of the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean (ALINDIEN) and the United Arab Emirates (COMFOR EAU) Rear Admiral Didier Maletterre watch a joint military exercise in Kuwait yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Khadher said First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is keen on continuing the development of exercises in cooperation with various brotherly and friendly forces. He expressed his pleasure and pride in the Kuwaiti military personnel's readiness to execute missions. Khadher said it is the duty of all to work for Kuwait, and wished Kuwait continued security and stability under the leadership of the Supreme Leader of the Armed Forces, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister.

The Pearl of the West exercises that began on Nov 11, 2018 seek to achieve training goals and implement the principle of military cooperation to run joint operations according to a unified work system to reach a high degree of operational and training level for the participating military units. The exercise was attended by National Guard Secretary Lt Gen Hashim Al-Rifae, representative of the French Chief of Staff, Commander of the French Naval Forces in the Indian Ocean Rear Admiral Didier Malterre, French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy, members of the military defense council and other officials.



Local



A trip to **AL FORDA** Veggie Market



Now that cooler weather has hit the region and rains have come, fresh fruits and vegetables in abundance can be found at affordable prices from Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, India and other markets at the local Al Forda market. To give an example, onions 32kg were sold at KD 3.5; 30kg of cabbage for KD 2.5; one box of sweet corn fresh KD 1; pumpkin for 250 fils per kilo; white raddish 250 fils per kilo.

— Photos by Ben Garcia



Health Minister opens ENT conference



KUWAIT: President of the conference Dr Mutlaq Al-Sihan, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and CEO of Central Circle Co Dr Ziad Al-Alyan pose for a group photo with Central Circle Co staff. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and Dr Ziad Al-Alyan listen to a demonstration on the latest technologies at the conference.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The 41st Kuwait Otolaryngology Conference on 'Updates in Facial and Plastic Surgery, Rhinoplasty and Otoplasty' kicked off yesterday at the Regency Hotel in Bidaa. The two-day conference aims at discussing and researching the latest medical advancements in the fields of otolaryngology, commonly known as ENT (ear, nose and throat).

On the sidelines of the conference, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah announced the opening of the new Amiri Hospital in the near future with a capacity of 415 beds. The minister said the health ministry is working on completing the development of the hospital's facilities and sourcing all the required equipment. Sheikh Basel also noted that the ministry is working on developing a system that will link all health files of citizens between clinics and hospitals to provide more comprehensive care.

The new Jaber Hospital will start receiving patients on Sunday, part of the first phase of operations. Specialties that will be available in the hospital include abdominal, ENT, general surgery, nervous system, pediatrics, respiratory ailments and others. During phase two, outpatient surgeries will commence and in phase three, the hospital will begin accepting accident and emergency (ER) patients.

In his speech at the opening of the conference, Sheikh Basel said that the good organization of the conference and the accuracy of the selection of various topics for discussion reflect the vision of the organizing committee of the conference and their conscious awareness of various challenges facing the profession. The health minister added that the scientific program of the conference is rich in reviewing the latest developments in the world and is in line with the plans and programs of the ministry to con-



Dr Mutlaq Al-Sihan, Mishal Al-Enezi, CEO of Altcomed, the company representing Medtronic in Kuwait and Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah in a group picture with Altcomed staff.

continue progress towards achieving comprehensive health coverage within the framework of global sustainable development goals till 2030 related to healthcare.

Zain sponsors 41st Kuwaiti Otolaryngology Conference

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship of the 41st Kuwaiti Otolaryngology Conference: Updates in Facial and Plastic Surgery, Rhinoplasty, and Otoplasty organized by Zain Hospital. The conference, certified by The Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations (KIMS), came under the patronage and attendance of the Minister of Health Dr Basel Al-Sabah.

Zain's support to the conference came as part of the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the contribution of the development of the Kuwaiti healthcare sector, as well as in continuation of the company's support to Zain Hospital's social and medical programs all year round.

The conference aimed at discussing and researching the latest medical advancements in the fields of Otolaryngology, commonly known as ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat), which is Zain Hospital's field of specialty. The event featured a number of research papers, specialized workshops, and discussion panels, including



40 seminars and 9 workshops featuring 15 local and international Otolaryngology professionals, specialists, and experts from Kuwait, the United States, Canada, Germany, Italy, South Korea, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, and more.

Zain's support to this conference is an extension of a series of partnerships the company is continuously adopting to serve its strategic and sustainable goals, ultimately con-

tributing to the wellbeing and health of the community. Zain's contribution falls under the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy and shows its keenness in having a productive role in social and health activities.

Zain's solid Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy primarily focus on the wellbeing of the entire nation. For that reason, the company has maintained its support to all kinds of initiatives that spread

awareness and help make a difference. Zain partners with the Ministry of Health, Central Blood Bank of Kuwait, Al Salam Hospital, Dasman Diabetes Institute, and other leading health institutions for several awareness campaigns related to the health sector.

Zain Hospital, established by Zain, specializes in Otolaryngology (ENT), and was constructed and equipped by the company to address the needs of the patients in the country, giving them the opportunity to head to a state-of-the-art health institution that is fully equipped with the latest medical equipment to serve their health needs.

Since the inception of Zain Hospital, Zain has been firmly committed to providing the latest and most advanced medical equipment for the hospital; which has become one of Kuwait's most important landmarks for specialized Otolaryngology. The significance of this specialized health institution is in the delivery of the best patient care, as it serves a vast number of patients with a full range of state-of-the-art ENT medications.

Local

GCC railway project will bolster economic sector: Services Minister

27 million people transported in GCC region in 2017

KUWAIT: The continuation of the GCC railway project will lead to the bolstering of Gulf economic ties, said minister of State for Housing and Minister of State for Services Jenan Boushehri yesterday. At the opening of the 21st GCC transportation meeting, minister Boushehri said that Kuwait was keen on bolstering co-operation with other Gulf States, which in return would contribute to the success of Vision 2035 of her country.

Within the aviation domain, Kuwait Airways took a step in the right direction via the opening of the Terminal 4 (T4) building, said Minister Boushehri who indicated that this sector would help transform Kuwait into an regional and international hub for commerce and economy. There remain huge challenges ahead of the Kuwaiti ambition for progress and development,



Premier meets GCC ministers

said the minister, indicating that with a solemn effort and cooperation amongst Kuwaitis and Gulf brethren, advancement would reach every corner of the region.

Back to the joint GCC railway project, Minister Boushehri said that the meeting would focus on this integral project for the development of transportation in the region, affirming that the railway would be linked to other modes of transportation whether it was on land or sea. Meanwhile, Assistant at the GCC Secretariat Khalifa Al-Ebri said that solid data had shown that 27 million people were transported in the region back in 2017. He indicated that this huge number signified the importance of coming up with plans for developing transportation in the region and linking it to the world. Ebri hoped that the meeting today would



KUWAIT: Ministers participating in the 21st GCC transportation meeting pose for a group picture yesterday. — KUNA

come up with resolutions geared toward the benefit of the GCC countries.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad

Al-Sabah received the ministers and officials who took part in the 21st GCC transportation meeting in Kuwait, in the presence of Minister Boushehri. — KUNA

Defense Minister meets ambassadors



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Ukraine Volodymyr Tolkach.



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of India K Jeeva Sagar.



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Switzerland Benedict Gubler.



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Russia Nikolay Makarov.

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah separately received in his office at the Army Officers Club yesterday the ambassadors of Ukraine Volodymyr Tolkach, India K Jeeva Sagar,

Switzerland Benedict Gubler and Russia Nikolay Makarov. Discussions during the meetings focused on issues of mutual concern, the Defense Ministry's Moral Guidance Department said in a statement.

Kuwait's envoy submits credentials to Australia's governor

CANBERRA: Kuwaiti Ambassador in Canberra Monther Al-Isa has submitted his credentials to Australia's Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove. This came during a ceremony held at the governor-general's palace, the Kuwaiti Embassy said in a statement. During the event, the Kuwaiti ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the governor-general of Australia, wishing Australia more progress and prosperity, according to the statement. The ambassador spoke highly of the advanced level of Kuwaiti-Australian relations in various regional and international issues, together with trade, economic and investment cooperation, it added. He commended bilateral relations as "stable, friendly and cooperative" in all domains thanks to the mutual sponsorship of both countries' leaderships, it added. — KUNA



CANBERRA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Australia Monther Al-Isa (right) meets with Australia's Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove on the sidelines of delivering his credentials. — KUNA

Local

Works minister's resignation accepted; oil minister's yet to be discussed

Lawmaker urges services minister to follow suit and quit



Hussam Al-Roumi



Bakheet Al-Rasheed

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has accepted the resignation of Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Municipal Affairs Hussam Al-Roumi yesterday, an informed source said. Roumi had insisted on his resignation, said the government insider who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The minister had resigned due to the damage to the properties of citizens and expats during the heavy rains that hit Kuwait recently. Deputy National Assembly Speaker Essa Al-Kandari had also urged the housing and services minister Jenan Boushehri should follow Roumi and resign out of political responsibility following the floods that swamped the country.

Meanwhile, the source added that Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rasheed also submitted his resignation ahead of a grilling filed by MPs Faisal Al-Kandari, Khalil Abul and Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei, but his resignation was not discussed. "My resignation is in the hands of HH the Amir and HH the Prime Minister, and we are at the service of the country," he was reported as saying. MP Faisal Al-Kandari spoke meanwhile about many violations in the oil sector "under leaders who are squandering public funds." He said whoever reads the report by a committee formed to study the grilling's items will find negligence and misuse of public funds.

Banning books in Kuwait, an open debate

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Niqashna, a local community platform, organized a civilized debate this week on the controversial subject of censorship in Kuwait. The discussion opened with Nasser Al-Mujaibel, Ph. D in strategic communication and culture studies at Kuwait University, shedding light on the issue of banned books in Kuwait where Kuwaiti officials banned a total of 948 books from the county's international literary festival, which was held from November 14 to 24 in Mishref.

Mujaibel said that freedom is not against Kuwait's traditions and Islam. "Philosophers be-

lieve that freedom is equal to the soul of the human being," he said. "Freedom is to take actions without any limitations. Most people believe that freedom is nonreligious beliefs. But freedom is a huge part of Islam. We believe that God created us equal but also to express ourselves differently where freedom is all about the noble use of it. There's a misunderstanding of freedom and chaos." He added that people have given up on the freedom of expression that has existed since the birth of Islam where the Prophet Muhammad, may peace and blessings be upon him, did not force anyone to adopt his ideas but to have their own.

"Although we espouse ideas for Western freedom, I assure you that they do not contradict the principles of the Islamic religion. I think that if the Holy Quran has overseen by the country's censorship committee it will be banned from publishing, some verses in Quran accuse and admonish prophets; not that they are bad, but in a way to teach us and to see the wisdom

of the wrong situations," he said.

Mujaibel noted that no one has the right to control and decide what people want to think. "None of us is higher than the other. There is no clear mechanism for censorship, so my question is, why cannot we put the final decision in the hands of the judiciary, who decides what is right or wrong? There are some books that are not the specialty of the commissioners, and there are a large number of books and may reach thousands of books that is beyond the power of committee."

Meanwhile, Faisal Al-Mahmeed, a member of the oversight committee on books, said that the censorship board from the Ministry of Information examined all of the books set and some books are against a 2006 law that bans any book that could be detrimental in any way to Islam, justice or national security.

He affirmed that rules and systems are an obligation to control. "People always want to break rules but they don't think about the chaos. Young people don't feel of the power of the word that

Kuwaiti arrested at Islamabad airport on money laundering charges

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti passenger was held at Islamabad International Airport over suspicions of money laundering, Pakistan's The Express Tribune newspaper reported. Pakistani authorities did not allow the Kuwaiti man to leave the airport as he was found to be smuggling more than \$46,000. The citizen - who claimed to be a diplomat - could not present evidence with regards to the money he was carrying. — By A Saleh

Iraqi foodstuff

Director of the customs department Jamal Al-Jalawi said his department wrote to the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition asking for establishing an office in Abdaly to ease the process of releasing foodstuff arriving from Iraq, after Kuwait recently lifted a ban on importing food products from its northern neigh-

bor. Jalawi said the customs department is ready to extend all facilities for the authority to be present at the borders. He said produce will be sent to the vegetable market customs under guard to make it easy for importers and traders, until an office is opened in Abdaly. — By A Saleh

Health insurance

The health ministry opened bid envelopes for providing health insurance for expats, as 11 companies presented offers. The health ministry will select the offer that meets the conditions. The current contract with the company that presents health insurance services will expire on Jan 28, 2019. — By A Saleh

Kuwait Airways flights via T4

Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced yesterday that Terminal 4 (T4), completed at Kuwait International Airport, includes all Kuwait Airways (KA) stations except for New York as of Sunday. Director of Operations Department at Kuwait International Airport Saleh Al-Fadaghi said in a press statement that passengers going to New York should go to Terminal 1 (T1). Kuwait Airways was established in 1953 by a group of businessmen. Initially, the government took 50 percent of the airway's shares and in 1962, the government possessed full shares in the corporation. Today, it travels to 40 destinations. — KUNA

Water leak caused power cuts at airport customs

KUWAIT: A source at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) said power was cut at the airport customs for two days due to water leakage from the roof of the airport garage. The source said a team was sent to repair the problem, which took a long time. The ministry sent a diesel-powered generator to supply power to the customs area, but it was not sufficient to cover all sites of the garage. The source said that as for two stations that went out of commission, the ministry was not able to feed them by diesel-powered generators

because it is not possible to send in huge generators inside the customs building, along with a lack of extensions outside.

Policeman injured

A citizen with a criminal record ran over a sergeant in Salmiya with his motorcycle and broke his left leg and both ankles. The suspect was later arrested following stiff resistance. He was found wanted to serve a three-year jail sentence and over a KD 32,000 debt.

Driver beats sponsor

A citizen told Jahra police he wanted to lodge a complaint against his Bangladeshi driver, who beat him badly before escaping. A security source said the citizen returned to the police station in the evening in panic and said the driver returned and beat him again. The driver was arrested and jailed. — *Translated from the Arabic press*

could build or destroy their world. Adults with responsibilities know the huge impact of it. The committee knows the rules that suit the society where usually we read books that insult God, prophets or affect the behaviors of our community and traditions. We don't prevent all books. But we don't allow books against our religion and beliefs."

Mahmeed added that in social life, some people do not feel the damage of the power of words that may affect them in the long term. Sometimes it takes a long way to be influenced by words, he said. He pointed out that the publisher has the right to know the reasons for banning his book and if he is not satisfied, he can modify what has been published or complain about it at the committee. "The abolition of the censorship committee or the regulations that prevent some books may be chaotic without laws," he proclaimed. The debate, open to the public and held in Arabic, was held Wednesday night at the Promenade culture center in the Promenade Mall in Hawally.



Turkey changes the US embassy street name to Malcolm X

'What we're eating is killing us': Global nutrition report



MANILA: Supporters of Kian delos Santos protest outside the police station where three policemen involved in Kian's killing were assigned in Manila yesterday. — AFP

Three Philippine policemen jailed

First police conviction in Philippine drug war killing

MANILA: Three Philippine policemen were sentenced yesterday to decades in prison for murdering a teenager during an anti-narcotics sweep, a first conviction of officers carrying out President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs. Duterte has vowed to pardon authorities involved in his bloody crackdown, but even he refused to defend the 2017 killing of Kian delos Santos in a dank Manila alley—which helped spark rare protests against the campaign.

Police said the 17-year-old was a drug courier who fired at them while resisting arrest. However, CCTV footage showed two of the policemen dragging the unarmed boy moments before he was shot dead. In the teen's final moments, he was on the ground covering his head with his hands and pleading, "Sir, please don't do it", according to eyewitness testimony. Delos Santos' family

erupted in tears in the cramped northern Manila courtroom after the men were convicted of murder and sentenced to *reclusion perpetua*, which carries a minimum of 20 years behind bars. "I feel so happy because this proves that my son was innocent and was never involved in drugs," Delos Santos' mother, Lorenza, told reporters. "(Policemen) can be jailed for life if they do not stop their abusive practices," she added. Drug war critics hailed the conviction as an example of justice and accountability, which they said has been rare since Duterte unleashed the campaign to rid the Philippines of narcotics in 2016. Since then police say they have killed nearly 5,000 alleged drug users and pushers who fought against arrest, while rights groups say the true toll is at least triple that and may amount to crimes against humanity.

Carlos Conde, Philippines researcher for Human Rights Watch, told AFP: "This is a warning to the Philippine National Police that they better follow due process and respect the rights of suspects." However, Duterte's spokesman Salvador Panelo also welcomed the ruling as he gave assurances the president opposed "intentional killing". "It shows that this country has a robust judicial system," he added.

Duterte's government has argued a preliminary probe of the drug war killings launched by the International Criminal Court is unjustified because the nation's justice system is functioning. Rights advocates agreed the decision was important, but noted that it only involved low-ranking policemen. "Who gave the orders? Was this part of a policy? These questions remain unanswered," rights lawyer Romel Bagares said.

Duterte and his drug war are backed by many Filipinos fed up with high crime rates and a slow-moving judicial system.

But the death of Delos Santos, as well as of two other Manila teenagers accused of robbing a taxi driver, triggered rare street protests in 2017 and highlighted concerns about police abuse. Days after the killing Duterte said in a speech: "It was really bad. That was really not performance of duty. Do not commit a crime". It led to Duterte briefly suspending police participation in the drug crackdown for a second time. The first occasion was in January last year after narcotics police officers were arrested for the kidnapping and murder of a South Korean businessman in 2016. However, in both instances the police were reinstated in the campaign without major reforms.— AFP

International

Trump's support for Saudi prince leaves Turkey with tough choices

Turkish evidence fuels global outrage over Khashoggi killing

ISTANBUL: Eight weeks since the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, US President Donald Trump's unwavering support for the kingdom's powerful crown prince has left Turkey in a bind. The longer it confronts Saudi Arabia over who exactly ordered the operation, the more it risks looking isolated as other countries put aside their misgivings and return to business with the world's biggest oil exporter. A prolonged standoff with Riyadh could also jeopardize Turkey's own fragile rapprochement with Washington, if it forces Trump to choose sides between the rival regional powers.

Turkey's dilemma comes to a head this week at the G20 summit of the world's main economies, where President Tayyip Erdogan and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman could meet, according to Turkish officials. Without naming him, Erdogan has repeatedly sug-

gested the prince has questions to answer over the killing, while one of his advisers has said bluntly that Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler has Khashoggi's blood on his hands. But Erdogan has avoided talking about Khashoggi's death in recent speeches, raising questions about whether he may soften his stance towards the 33-year-old heir to the throne who could be running Saudi Arabia for several decades to come. "A meeting may take place. A final decision has not been made yet," senior political source said, shortly before



Standoff with Riyadh could hurt Turkey's ties with Trump

Erdogan's departure for the summit in Argentina. "Saudi Arabia is an important country for Turkey ... Nobody wants relations to sour because of the Khashoggi murder." Erdogan has good relations with the Saudi monarch, King Salman, but ties have been strained by recent Saudi moves including the blockade of Qatar, championed by Salman's son. Analysts say Erdogan sees Saudi assertiveness under the prince as challenging Turkey's influence in the Middle East.

It was the steady drip of evidence from Turkish officials - furious over what they said was a gruesome and carefully planned assassination in their country -

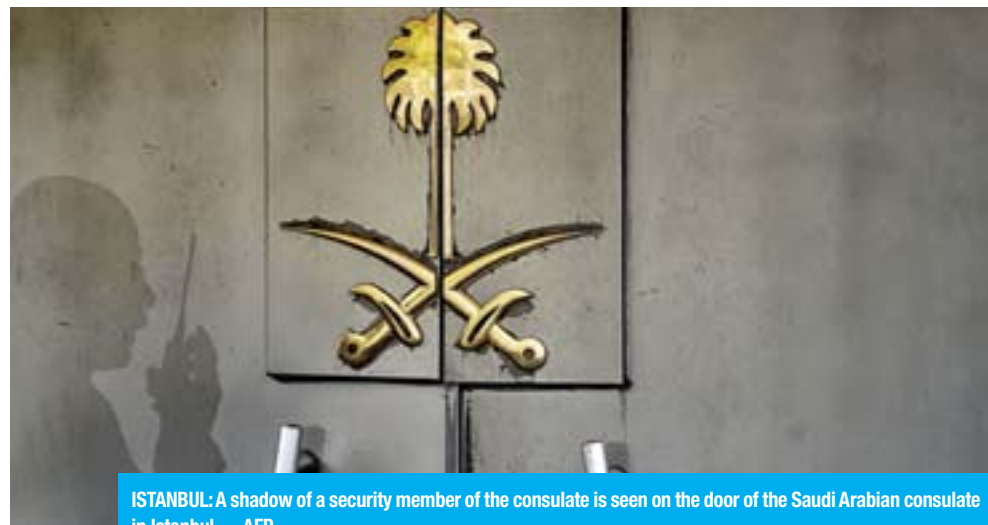
which fuelled global outrage at Saudi Arabia and Prince Mohammed. Erdogan said the hit was ordered at the highest levels of Saudi leadership, and the CIA assessed the prince was directly behind it, despite vehement Saudi denials. But nearly two months since Khashoggi was killed and his body dis-

membered by a team of 15 Saudi agents, Western powers have taken little action against Saudi Arabia, a big buyer of Western arms and a strategic ally of Washington. The most concrete US step so far was a decision in mid-November to impose economic sanctions on 17 Saudi officials, including the prince's senior aide, Saud Al-Qahtani. Meanwhile Trump has stood by the crown prince, saying he does not want to jeopardize US business and defying intense pressure from lawmakers to impose broader sanctions on Saudi Arabia.

to a request for comment. Bahrain, an oil-rich Sunni-led country home to the US fifth fleet, crushed Arab Spring protests by the Shiite majority. Alaraibi says he was beaten in custody and believes he was targeted because he is in the Shiite majority and due to his brother's political activism.

He also publically opposed the FIFA presidential candidacy for Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim al-Khalifa, a member of Bahrain's ruling monarchy and the president of the Asian Football Confederation. Thailand does not recognize refugees but with its lax visa rules, the country often finds itself at the centre geopolitical disputes over them. Thailand was thrust into the headlines in 2015 for deporting more than 100 Uighur back to China, where the Muslim minority face persecution. Additionally, dozens of Pakistani Christians have been rounded up in recent weeks as part of a visa overstay crackdown.

Sunai Phasuk, senior Thailand researcher for Human Rights Watch, told AFP that "under no circumstances" should Alaraibi be handed over to Bahrain. "Hakeem is a refugee accepted by Australia, so Thailand should do the right thing by sending him back to Australia on the next flight," he said, adding that he faces a prison term of up to 10 years in Bahrain. The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy said he also faces risks of torture. A spokesperson for Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said that embassy officials in Bangkok are in "direct contact with Thai authorities regarding this issue". —AFP



ISTANBUL: A shadow of a security member of the consulate is seen on the door of the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul. —AFP

Second thoughts?

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said there was no direct evidence connecting Prince Mohammed to Khashoggi's murder, and that any downgrading of US-Saudi ties in response would hurt US security. That clear message from the Trump administration may be forcing Turkey to think again. "Initially the objective was to pressure Trump to drop his relationship with MbS," said Sinan Ulgen, a former Turkish diplomat and analyst at the Carnegie Europe think tank, referring to

the crown prince. "On the contrary, Trump seems to have decided to consolidate that relationship, and that's why there had to be a reassessment in Ankara about how to manage this," he said. Ulgen said Erdogan's priority was to safeguard the modest recovery in relations with Washington since a Turkish court last month freed a US pastor who had been detained for two years on terrorism charges. "Turkey doesn't want to endanger the political capital that it earned in Washington by pushing too far (on Khashoggi). That's the main motivation," he said. —Reuters

Refugee footballer from Bahrain held at Bangkok airport

BANGKOK: A former Bahrain national team footballer who was given refugee status in Australia after fleeing political repression in the Gulf state has been detained in Bangkok, rights groups said yesterday. Hakeem Alaraibi was arrested in 2012 and convicted two years later in absentia on charges of vandalizing a police station as part of a government crackdown on Arab Spring-inspired protests.

The footballer, who said he was playing in a match during the alleged crime, was granted refugee status in Australia in 2017, where he has played for semi-professional club Pascoe Vale FC, according to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD). But he was detained at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport on Tuesday during a personal trip, rights groups said, fearing he will be sent back to Bahrain on an Interpol red notice, a non-binding request to comply with national arrest warrants.

AFP could not reach Alaraibi on his personal phone number but in a video interview from an airport detention room posted by Australian channel SBS he said he wanted to go back to Australia. "They want to kill me in Bahrain," he said. Thai immigration did not immediately reply

Despite sanctions South Sudan stays armed for war

NAIROBI: Despite long-standing restrictions, new weapons have continued to reach South Sudan's battlefields, often via neighboring countries, a detailed report by an arms monitoring group said yesterday. A four-year investigation, by London-based Conflict Armament Research (CAR), into the supply of weapons that have helped keep South Sudan's civil war alive since December 2013, has revealed the important role played by neighboring countries, particularly Uganda, in circumventing arms embargoes.

While the UN Security Council did not impose an arms embargo on South Sudan until July 2018, more than four years into a war that has killed an estimated 380,000 people, the EU has banned direct sales of weapons by member states to Sudan since 1994, amending the embargo to include newly-independent South Sudan in 2011. Nevertheless, the government army - known as the SPLA, or Sudan People's Liberation Army - has been kept well supplied with weaponry, often funneled through Uganda and sometimes originating from Europe or the US.

The rebel SPLA-IO (SPLA In Opposition) has

had less success in sourcing weapons, the researchers found, relying heavily on scavenging arms. CAR executive director James Bevan said his group's "comprehensive, on-the-ground survey of the weaponry used" included documenting hundreds of weapons and more than 200,000 bullets. "The result is a forensic picture of how prohibitions on arms transfers to the warring parties have failed," he said.

Weapons 'shopping list'

CAR found that, despite numerous allegations and rumors, no new Chinese weapons reached South Sudan after May 2014, six months into the war. Nevertheless, two large shipments of Chinese weapons to Juba, via Mombasa in Kenya, while legal due to the lack of any arms embargo, ensured the SPLA was well-supplied for the ongoing civil war: the shipments included more than 27 million rounds of small-calibre ammunition, as well as rockets, grenades, missiles, pistols assault rifles and machine guns.

CAR found that, while Chinese ammunition had previously accounted for "less than two percent" of bullets in circulation in South Sudan, once the shipments arrived over half the ammunition in use was Chinese. "The logical conclusion is that the 27 million rounds of small-calibre ammunition legally transferred to the SPLA from China in 2014 have sustained SPLA operations in the years since," CAR said. —AFP

International

Play depicts Lebanon as a building at risk of collapse

An allegory for Lebanon's political, religious divisions

BEIRUT: The squabbling residents of a dilapidated building at risk of collapse serve as an allegory for Lebanon's political and religious divisions in a new drama by satirical playwright Georges Khabbaz. The play "Only If" is intended to portray the country's problems while urging its people to love each other, said Khabbaz, who wrote and directed it as well as acting in it. "The play talks about a lot of contradictions and struggles in our Lebanese societies, about the

sectarian conflicts, the system's conflicts," he said. Lebanon's 1970-1990 civil war splintered the country along sectarian lines and opened fissures within its Christian and Muslim communities. It still shapes Lebanon's politics.

The play comes to the stage at a time when political parties have failed to agree on a new coalition government more than six months since an election despite pressing economic problems. "Lebanese people love life and place the will to

live above all consideration, but at the same time circumstances come against them - security, economical etcetera," Khabbaz said. The recent bout of political paralysis has prompted fears of economic crisis. Politicians have cited the urgent need for a government to be formed but have been unable to clinch a final deal.

In Khabbaz's play, the building's inhabitants cannot agree on how to save it. At one point, it satirises foreign influence in Lebanon with a man

trying to buy the building, his efforts supported or opposed in turn by shifting groups among the residents. "There is nothing else to talk about in Lebanon than these subjects. There is nothing that unites us other than we all love similar things, love to have fun, we love to progress," said Maria Jazra, a pharmacist who was in the audience for a recent performance. "But unfortunately, in our heads we are still not programmed for progress," she said. — Reuters

Turkey changes the US embassy street name to Malcolm X

ANKARA: Turkey yesterday changed the name of the street on which the new US embassy will be located after the American black Muslim civil rights campaigner Malcolm X, an AFP correspondent said. The new American embassy is still being built in Cukurambar district in Ankara on what was formerly called 1478 street. Construction contractors BL Harbert have said the new complex is expected to be finished by 2020. The renaming comes after the Ankara city council decision last month to change the name to Malcolm X Street.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan promised the late campaigner's daughters that

the name of Malcolm X would "live on" in the Turkish capital. Municipality workers changed the signs of the street yesterday morning, the correspondent said, as frenetic activity continued on the site. Malcolm X, one of the most influential African Americans in history, was an outspoken Muslim advocate of the rights of blacks and remains a hero today to many blacks and followers of Islam. Turkey has made similar changes to streets on which embassies are located in a bid to make a political point against a country.

When Washington expressed concern over Turkey's offensive in northern Syria against a US-backed Kurdish militia, Ankara in February renamed the road Olive Branch (Zeytin Dalı in Turkish) on which the current US embassy is located after the name of the offensive. In January, following a spat with the United Arab Emirates over the Ottoman Empire's actions in Medina, Ankara renamed the street where the UAE embassy is after the Ottoman governor of the time. Tempers flared after UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan retweeted a post on Twitter critical of the former Ottoman rulers of the region. — AFP



ANKARA: An Ankara metropolitan municipality worker hangs the road sign for the 'Malcolm X Avenue', named after the human rights activist, where the new US embassy is being built. — AFP

Lebanese businessman jailed in Paris drug trial

PARIS: A shadowy businessman from the Lebanese diaspora was sentenced in Paris on Wednesday to seven years in prison for being a lead member of a crime ring that laundered Colombian drug money through luxury jewelry. Mohamad Nouredine, a 44-year-old businessman with interests in real estate and jewelry, was convicted of laundering drug money and criminal conspiracy and fined 500,000 euros (\$568,000). He was arrested in France in January 2016 during police raids that also took place in Italy, Belgium and Germany, after an alert from the US Drug Enforcement Agency. US officials, who

have imposed sanctions on Nouredine over his supposed links to Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, suspect the network of operating between South America, Europe and the Middle East since 2012. They identified France, where several of the defendants reside, as being at the centre of the syndicate's operations in Europe. The proceeds of cocaine sales were allegedly collected in Europe, then channelled to Lebanon before being transferred to Colombian traffickers.

The funds were moved using a centuries-old system of payment dating from the spice trade called "hawala", passing through a tested network requiring ironclad trust. After the drugs were sold, the network used hawala operatives to gather the proceeds. The collected cash was then used to buy luxury jewelry, watches and cars which were resold in Lebanon or West Africa. Another key figure in the case, a man named Abbas Nasser, was sentenced to ten years in prison in absentia. He is subject to an arrest warrant. Twelve other defendants involved in the criminal network received various sentences, up to nine years in jail. — AFP

Facebook considered charging app makers for user data access

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook said it considered charging application makers to access data at the social network. Such a move would have been a major shift away from the policy of not selling Facebook members' information, which the social network has stressed in the face of criticism alleging it is more interested in making money than protecting privacy. "To be clear, Facebook has never sold anyone's data," director of developer platforms and programs Konstantinos Papamiltiadis said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"Our APIs have always been free of charge and we have never required developers to pay for using them, either directly or by buying advertising." The Wall Street Journal reported that internal emails indicating that Facebook mulled charging companies for access to user data were referred

to in a lawsuit filed against the social network in 2015 by Six4Three, creator of a failed app called "Pikinis." The application enabled users to find Facebook pictures of people in bathing suits, taking advantage of an API feature that let apps access the data of social network users as well as their friends.

The suit accuses Facebook of abusing its power over user data. Most of the documents filed in the case have been sealed by a California judge at Facebook's request. Some emails indicated Facebook employees discussed providing increased access of user information to advertisers in return for spending more money on the social network, according to the WSJ. "The documents Six4Three gathered for this baseless case are only part of the story and are presented in a way that is very misleading without additional context," Papamiltiadis said.

Facebook early on adopted a practice of letting developers use APIs (application programming interfaces) to plug into the social network for free and connect to user data to enhance the online gathering place with games, services and more. Facebook went public on the stock market in early 2012, and subsequently considered ways it might be able to increase revenue, opting not to charge developers for access to the social network. Facebook in August said it has suspended more than 400 out of thousands of applications it has investigated to determine whether people's personal information was being improperly shared. — AFP

International

After killing, defiant Syria town march on

Syrians in Kafranbel keep the revolutionary spirit alive

KAFRANBEL: Gunmen may have killed their most charismatic activist, but Syrians in Kafranbel are determined to keep the northwestern town's revolutionary spirit alive. The gunning down of Raed Fares on Friday was the latest blow to what remains of the dwindling civil society movement that rose up against President Bashar Al-Assad in 2011.

"We lost Raed Fares but he represented an idea that will not die," 26-year-old activist Abdallah Al-Dani said, standing in front of a wall of graffiti calling for freedom. Seven years into a brutal civil war, Kafranbel lies in the last major rebel bastion in the country, and is controlled by a powerful alliance led by former Al-Qaeda jihadists. But its walls are still daubed with brightly colored murals, reflecting the town's worldwide renown as a bastion of protest throughout the uprising. Kafranbel, up in the province of Idlib on the Turkish border, was one of the first to join in as revolutionary fervor spread across Syria in 2011. "It was the spark for the revolution in the north, a candle in oppressed northern Syria," said Dani, wearing a winter jacket to keep out the cold. A town of some 20,000 people, Kafranbel soon became known for the often humorous signs in English and Arabic that its residents held up at weekly demonstrations. "Down with the regime — and the opposition," a sign at one of the town's protests famously read in 2011. "Down with the Arab and the Islamic nation... Down with the (UN) Security Council... Down with the world... Down with everything."

bel was rocked by fighting between regime fighters and defectors from Assad's army, soon slipping out of the government's control. "I have a dream. Let freedom ring from Kafranbel," said one sign that year in English, playing on the town's name and echoing the words of Martin Luther King. Another poster the same year complained of congested skies. "We demand a policeman be appointed to regulate war plane traffic," it said in Arabic, signed "Liberated Kafranbel". At Christmas approached, Kafranbel sent a message to the pope. "Merry Christmas from Syria, the land where Assad killed Santa Claus," it said in bold black Roman letters. By 2015, Kafranbel was part of a large region under the control of opposition forces.

As the civil war became increasingly complex, involving world powers and jihadists, the clamour coming out of Kafranbel targeted all sides of the conflict. "Islamic State (group) in Syria and Iraq: We didn't liberate it so you could rule it," the town's people raged, referring to land beyond regime control. Activist Bilal Bayush says people may have started protesting the Damascus regime, but they were soon also challenging powerful jihadists. These include IS, but also the jihadist-led Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) alliance that rules more than half of Idlib, including Kafranbel. "Kafranbel has stood up against IS since 2013, and it also holds demonstrations in solidarity with activists being held by HTS," Bayush said.



KAFRANBEL, Syria: Mourners attend the funeral of Raed Fares and Hammoud Al-Jneid in the village of Kafranbel in the northwestern province of Idlib. — AFP

popular radio station named Fresh FM in 2013. When HTS tried to ban him from broadcasting music two years ago, he fought back with barnyard noises. "He decided to air the noises of animals such as birds or cockerels instead," says Bayush. IS fighters raided the office on several occasions, he wrote in the Washington Post in July, and the regime also bombarded it. Fares said he was shot at by armed men in 2014, and then abducted several times by the group now known as HTS. Often in creative ways, Kafranbel's people have stood up for what they believe

is right. In 2014, the town's women sewed together a 75-metre-long version of the three-star flag of the uprising, and paraded it down its streets.

Even following the killing of Fares with fellow activist Hamod Jnaid, which sparked a flurry of tributes on social media, the town's residents say they will keep up the fight. After almost eight years of war, "our determination has only increased," said Bayush, despite admitting he was a little fearful over a recent spate of killings and kidnappings in the province. — AFP

Barnyard noises

Fares, who died aged 46, was among those to have run-ins with the jihadists, after he set up a

'Assad killed Santa Claus'

As protests spiralled into war, in 2012 Kafran-

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International

Ex-diplomat Zurabishvili elected Georgia's first woman president

Caucasus nation seeks EU and NATO membership

TBILISI: Georgia has elected ruling party candidate Salome Zurabishvili as its first woman president, final results showed yesterday, but the opposition claimed fraud. With all votes counted, the French-born ex-diplomat had taken 59.52 percent of the vote in Wednesday's second round run-off, the election commission said. Her rival Grigol Vashadze, from an alliance of 11 opposition parties led by exiled ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM), won 40.48 percent.

The election was seen as a test of Georgia's democratic credentials as the Caucasus nation seeks European Union and NATO membership. It was also a trial run for more important parliamentary elections in 2020, when the ruling Georgian Dream party is set to face off against a range of opposition parties. Georgian Dream—the creation of billionaire tycoon Bidzina Ivanishvili who many see as the country's de facto ruler-backed Zurabishvili in the presidential vote.

Ivanishvili's great rival, the flamboyant ex-president Saakashvili, claimed "mass electoral fraud" even before official results were released. "The oligarch has stamped out Georgian democracy and the institutions of elections," he said on the pro-opposition Rustavi-2 television channel, referring to Ivanishvili. "I urge Georgians to defend our freedom, democracy and the law. I call on you to start mass peaceful rallies and demand

snap parliamentary polls." Saakashvili swept to power in 2004 in a mass protest movement known as the Rose Revolution but, after a disastrous 2008 war with Russia, fled the country in 2013 and has since been stripped of his citizenship.

He was sentenced in absentia to six years in prison for abuse of office, charges he rejects as politically motivated. He now lives in the Netherlands. Tensions increased ahead of the second round as the opposition accused the government of voter intimidation and claimed that ruling party activists had attacked Vashadze campaign staff. Zurabishvili in turn said she and her children had received death threats through text and voice messages from people affiliated with the UNM. Rights groups have accused government officials of vote-buying on a "widespread" and "unprecedented" scale and of election fraud, including through the alleged printing of fake ID cards.

Opposition supporters will be watching for reports from foreign election monitors, including from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to see if their claims of voter fraud are supported. OSCE observers were to hold a press conference in Tbilisi later. Street protests against the results could shake the small ex-Soviet republic, which has seen civil wars, mass demonstrations and unrest since gaining its independence in 1991 on the break-

Georgia's new leader: French diplomat who return to homeland

TBILISI: Salome Zurabishvili, who has been elected Georgia's first female president, is a former French diplomat who exchanged a secure career for the turbulent politics of her ancestral country. Zurabishvili was born in France to a Georgian family who fled to Paris in the 1921 to escape the Bolshevik regime. Her family kept up strong ties with Georgian life and culture. Her great-great-grandfather on her mother's side, Niko Nikoladze, was a prominent liberal writer and member of a liberation movement calling for Georgia's independence from the Russian Empire. She studied international relations at the prestigious Paris Institute of Political Sciences before launching a 30-year career as a diplomat, with postings to the United Nations and Washington as well as Chad.

"Decades ago, as a young French diplomat, I couldn't have imagined I would be running for the presidency of my ancestral homeland," she told AFP in an interview last month. Her diplomatic career came to an end after her posting as France's ambassador to Tbilisi in 2003, then led by President Eduard Shevardnadze. Following the bloodless Rose Revolution, the new president Mikheil Saakashvili appointed her foreign minister—after approving the move with then French leader Jacques Chirac. "She made a brilliant career in France but she stayed a Georgian at heart and a true patriot," Saakashvili said at the time.

Making enemies

But Zurabishvili quickly made enemies in the ranks

of the parliamentary majority, with MPs and a number of senior diplomats publicly accusing her of arrogance and impulsiveness.

She was sacked in 2005 after a year on the job, though thousands took to the streets of the capital to protest her dismissal. She then joined the opposition as a member of parliament and became one of Saakashvili's fiercest critics. In her book "A Woman for Two Countries", published in France after her firing, she wrote: "Now, I have to engage in a political battle, which has never attracted me, which I never practised, which is being imposed on me." She quit Georgian politics in 2010 to work for the United Nations' Iran Monitoring Expert Group for five years, saying that there "is not the minimum of democracy in Georgia required for the opposition to exist."

She won the election with the backing of billionaire businessman Bidzina Ivanishvili's ruling Georgian Dream party. Georgian voters backed her despite her outsider status and gaffes during her election campaign such as garbling Georgian words. "It is now important to show that this country has chosen Europe," she said after being elected. "For that purpose, Georgians have elected a European woman president." She speaks Georgian with a strong French accent and frequent grammatical mistakes. It is just one of her many languages: she also speaks French, English, Italian, German and Russian.

She writes infrequently on Twitter, where she has expressed support for French President Emmanuel Macron. Her late husband Janri Kashia, was a Georgian-born writer and journalist who died in 2012. During the Soviet era he was forced to leave Georgia as a dissident. He later hosted a popular talk show on Georgian television. Their daughter is a Paris-based sports journalist at France-24 television and their son is a diplomat now working at the French embassy in London. — AFP



TBILISI: Georgia's president-elect candidate Salome Zurabishvili addresses the media in Tbilisi. — AFP

up of the Soviet Union. A smooth presidential transition, however, would be welcomed by many as a sign of stability in Georgia, which is emerging as a tourism hotspot and hopes for more foreign investment.

Zurabishvili, a 66-year-old independent law-

maker, is the daughter of refugees who fled Georgia in 1921 for Paris after the country's annexation by the Red Army. Her career in France's foreign service culminated in a posting to Tbilisi, where then-president Saakashvili appointed her foreign minister. — AFP

Italy adopts tough anti-migrant law

ROME: Italy has adopted far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini's tough anti-migrant and security decree, despite fierce criticism from the left. The bill, which makes it easier to expel migrants and limits residency permits, was passed in the lower house of parliament with 396 in favor to 99 against. "I'm happy, it's a memorable day," Salvini told journalists, shrugging off criticism from "left-wingers who think illegal immigration is not a problem".

The bill's adoption followed Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's statement distancing Italy from the UN migration pact. Parliament would have the last word on it and Rome would not attend a conference to ratify it, he said. The Senate had already given its green light to Salvini's controversial decree, which the populist government of Salvini's League and Luigi Di Maio's anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) first put forward in September.

As well as loosening the criteria to expel migrants, the bill allows migrants to be stripped of Italian citizenship if convicted of terrorism. The government opted for confidence votes to get the bill through both chamber of parliament after M5S members tabled a slew of amendments. The decree also ends two-year "humanitarian protection" residency permits—a lower level of asylum status based on Italian rather than international law—that were awarded to 25 percent of asylum seekers last year.

Instead, residency permits will be awarded under stricter conditions such as a one-year "special protection" status or a six-month "natural disaster in country of origin" status. A new procedure to fast-track the expulsion of "dangerous" asylum seekers will also be implemented. The Italian Refugee Council has said it is "seriously concerned" by the new law. The United Nations refugee agency has said it does "not provide adequate guarantees, especially for the vulnerable or those with particular needs such as victims of abuse or torture".

Conte's statement on the UN pact was the latest sign that some countries who signed up to the agreement in July after 18 months of talks are now having second thoughts. — AFP

International

Democrats nominate Pelosi to reclaim US House speaker role

The highest-ranking woman in the history of US politics

WASHINGTON: Nancy Pelosi, the highest-ranking woman in the history of US politics, was re-elected Wednesday to lead congressional Democrats, a major step on her march toward once again becoming speaker of the House of Representatives. But despite the California lawmaker running unopposed to lead the House Democratic caucus, a show of strength and strategic skill, she faced a substantial pocket of opposition from rank-and-file members. At 78, Pelosi is seeking to reclaim the gavel that she first wielded a dozen years ago, when she became the first female speaker of the House. In a closed-door vote, Pelosi earned support from 203 members, while 32 critics voted against her and three members reportedly left their ballots blank.

Those voting including re-elected members, members-elect and delegates without floor voting privileges such as those from Guam or Puerto Rico. Facing the most serious challenge of her tenure as leader, Pelosi will have work to do to unify the party ahead of a House floor vote for speaker on January 3, the opening day of the new Congress. "I'm proud to be the nominee of the House Democratic caucus once again for speaker of the House," Pelosi told reporters as votes were being counted. "Are there dissenters? Yes," she acknowledged. "But I expect to have a powerful vote as we go forward."

Robust resistance

A robust resistance movement has demanded a new generation of leadership following a strong showing in this month's midterm elections, when Democrats snatched the House majority from President Donald Trump's Republicans. Pelosi needs a simple majority on the House floor - 218 votes in the

435-member chamber-to prevail in January. If Democrats win the handful of remaining undecided House races they will control 235 seats, meaning Pelosi can afford just 17 defectors. Sixteen Democrats signed a letter this month vowing to oppose Pelosi as speaker. No Republicans are expected to vote for Pelosi, who has been demonized for years by Trump and his party, in large part because she shepherded then-president Barack Obama's health law through the House to its contentious, historic passage in 2010.

Pelosi has negotiated with some of the rebels, placating them with plum committee assignments and pledging to address issues such as gun safety. She cut a deal with congresswoman Marcia Fudge, who was considering mounting a challenge but endorsed Pelosi after the leader offered her the chair of a subcommittee overseeing elections. But two critics who met with Pelosi Wednesday said they remained at odds, and that her speakership quest was in peril. "Right now, Leader Pelosi will not have the 218 votes necessary to become Speaker," congressman Seth Moulton said in a statement, adding that "no one wants to see this civil conversation spill into a floor fight."

Master legislator

Pelosi, a master legislator and political strategist, played a pivotal role in her party's winning midterm performance. She raised millions of dollars for candidates and kept Democrats focused like a laser on their main issue: health care. Should she take the gavel from outgoing Speaker Paul Ryan, Pelosi would become second in line to the president, after Vice President Mike Pence. She and the Democratic



WASHINGTON: House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) exits a Democratic Caucus meeting to elect new leadership on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. — AFP

leadership would have the power to block Republican legislation, hamstringing large parts of Trump's agenda ranging from proposed new tax cuts to construction of a wall on the border with Mexico. "We have been deputized to be a check and balance on the president," she said. Democrats, proud that the incoming Congress will be the most diverse

ever, made history Wednesday in other leadership elections.

Hakeem Jeffries, seen as a rising star in the party, was elected House Democratic caucus chairman. Congress now has two African Americans in the leadership hierarchy-number three Democrat James Clyburn is the other-for the first time ever. —AFP

'What we're eating is killing us' - global nutrition report

BANGKOK: Poor diets are among the top causes of ill health globally, accounting for nearly one in five deaths, according to a study published yesterday that called on governments and businesses to do more to improve eating habits. Eating unhealthy food, or not having enough food - including children unable to breastfeed - contribute to widespread malnutrition, said researchers behind the latest Global Nutrition Report. The report is an independently produced annual analysis of the state of the world's nutrition. "Diets are one of the top risk factors of morbidity and mortality in the world - more than air pollution, more than smoking," said Jessica Fanzo, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and a lead author.

"What we're eating is killing us. So something needs to get us back on track with our food sys-

tem," she said on the sidelines of a global food conference in Thailand's capital, Bangkok. She said a lack of knowledge and affordability of nutritious food, as well as ineffective supply chains, are among the factors that contribute to poor diets. The researchers analysed 194 countries and found that malnutrition could cost the world \$3.5 trillion per year, while overweight and obesity could cost US\$500 billion annually.

Every country is battling some form of malnutrition - be it children who are anemic or too short for their age, or women who are overweight but undernourished due to unhealthy diets - and adolescence obesity rates are rising, the report said. Most countries are unlikely to meet nine global targets on nutrition that they have signed up to achieve by 2025 including adult obesity and diabetes, anemia and child health. Progress has been "unacceptably slow", the authors warned. However, there is now better and more detailed data, which has created an unprecedented opportunity to craft effective responses, according to the report.

It cited Amsterdam, which faced a weight crisis among young people and set up programs in 2012 to prevent and treat obesity, as well as facilitate learning and research on the issue. Initiatives included public drinking fountains, restrictions on food advertising and guidance for healthy snacks in schools. —Reuters

US life expectancy drops again as overdoses climb

TAMPA: Life expectancy in the United States dropped yet again as drug overdose deaths continued to climb - taking more than 70,000 lives in 2017 - and suicides rose, a US government report said yesterday. The drug overdose rate rose 9.6 percent compared to 2016, while suicides climbed 3.7 percent, said the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics. As a result, the average life span in America dropped to "78.6 years, a decrease of 0.1 year from 2016," said the report.

The data comes as the United States grapples with a vast opioid epidemic, fueled by addiction to prescription painkillers as well as street drugs like heroin and synthetic opioids including fentanyl. "The latest CDC data show that the US life expectancy has declined over the past few years. Tragically, this troubling trend is largely driven by deaths from drug overdose and suicide," said CDC director Robert Redfield. "Life expectancy gives us a snapshot of the nation's overall health and these sobering statistics are a wakeup call that we

are losing too many Americans, too early and too often, to conditions that are preventable."

A 'very concerning' trend

Overdoses were a major factor when US life expectancy dropped slightly in 2015 for the first time in decades. Another downturn was reported by the CDC in 2016, though those data were later revised to show a flat year, said Robert Anderson, chief of the mortality statistics branch at the NCHS. Overall, the statistics show a "downward trend in life expectancy since 2014," a time period in which Americans have lost 0.3 years of life, he told AFP, describing the trend as "very concerning."

Anderson said declines like this haven't been seen since the great flu pandemic of 1918 and World War I - though those losses were steeper. The peak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s also saw a nationwide drop in life expectancy. "We're a developed country, we have a lot of resources, we should have increasing life expectancy, not decreasing life expectancy," he added. Canadians live on average three years longer than Americans. Japan has the longest life expectancy in the world, at almost 84. Drug overdose deaths from synthetic opioids like fentanyl - which killed the musicians Prince and Tom Petty - and tramadol increased by 45 percent between 2016 and 2017. The rate of heroin deaths was seven times higher than in 1999. CDC figures showed that a total of 70,237 people died of overdoses in 2017.—AFP

International

S Korean angers Japan with order to compensate wartime laborers

Mitsubishi ordered to pay 10 laborers or families

SEOUL: South Korea's top court ruled yesterday that Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd must compensate 10 South Koreans for their forced labor during World War Two, a ruling that drew an immediate rebuke from Tokyo. The decision echoed the Supreme Court's landmark verdict last month that ruled in favor of South Koreans seeking compensation from Japan's Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp for their wartime forced labor. It upheld a 2013 appeals court decision that Mitsubishi must pay 80 million won (\$71,000) to each of five laborers or their families in compensation. In a separate ruling, the court also ordered Mitsubishi to pay up to 150 million won to each of another five plaintiffs or their families.

Mitsubishi called the verdict "deeply regrettable", saying in a statement that it would discuss its response with the Japanese government. Japan and South Korea share a bitter history that includes Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean peninsula and the use of comfort women, Japan's euphemism for girls and women, many of them Korean, forced to work in its wartime brothels. The rows over wartime history have long been a stumbling block for relations between the East Asian neighbors, sparking concern that it could jeopardize joint efforts to rein in North Korea's nuclear program.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono issued a statement calling the court's decisions "totally unacceptable". The ministry summoned the South Korean ambassador to lodge a complaint. "The decisions completely overthrow the legal foundation of the friendly and cooperative relationship" between the two countries, Kono said. Kono urged Seoul to take immediate action to remedy "unjustifiable damages and costs"

inflicted on Japanese firms or Tokyo would consider its options, including referring the case to an international court. South Korea's Foreign Ministry expressed regret over what it called Japan's "extreme reaction", also calling in the Japanese ambassador and urging restraint.

"We will craft our response in a way that could heal the victims' pain and wounds, but at the same time foster a forward-looking relationship with Japan," ministry spokesman Roh Kyu-deok told a news briefing. "But the administration has to respect a judiciary decision under the principle of the separation of the powers." Previous cases the group of five former laborers had brought in Japan were dismissed on the grounds that their right to reparation was terminated by a 1965 treaty normalizing diplomatic ties between Seoul and Tokyo. However, the South Korean Supreme Court upheld last month's ruling that Japan's occupation of the peninsula was illegal.

"The treaty does not cover the right of the victims of forced labour to compensation for crimes against humanity committed by a Japanese company in direct connection with the Japanese government's illegal colonial rule and war of aggression against the Korean peninsula," the court said in a statement. Kim Seong-ju, a 90-year-old plaintiff in the second case, said she was sent to Japan when she was 15 with the recommendation of her teacher, who was a Japanese national. "I was told that I could go to middle and high school and study more, but it turned out I had to work at the factory all the time," Kim told a news conference after the ruling, showing her permanently injured hand. "Now I feel great." —Reuters



TOKYO: A general view shows the headquarters of Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd in Tokyo. —AFP

2018 temperatures set to be the fourth highest on record

GENEVA: Global temperatures in 2018 are set to be the fourth highest on record, the UN said yesterday, stressing the urgent need for action to rein in runaway warming of the planet. In a report released ahead of the COP 24 climate summit in Poland, the World Meteorological Organization pointed out that the 20 warmest years on record have been in the past 22 years, and that "2018 is on course to be the 4th warmest year on record."

"This would mean that the past four years - 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 - are also the four warmest years in the series," the UN agency said in its provisional report on the state of the climate this year. The "warming trend is obvious and continuing," WMO chief Petteri Taalas told reporters in Geneva. The report shows that the global average temperature for the first 10 months of the year was nearly 1.0-degree Celsius above the pre-industrial era (1850-1900).

'Last generation'

"It is worth repeating once again that we are the first generation to fully understand climate change and the last generation to be able to do

something about it," Taalas warned. With levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the main driver of climate change, at a record high, "we may see temperature increase of 3-5C by the end of the century," Taalas said. "If we exploit all known fossil fuel resources, the temperature rise will be considerably higher."

Delegations from nearly 200 countries are due in Poland next week for the latest COP24 climate summit, aimed at renewing and building on the Paris deal and limiting global warming. World leaders have been trying to breathe new life into the 195-nation agreement amid backsliding from several nations—most notably the United States—over commitments made when it was signed in December 2015. It is to take effect in 2020 and calls for limiting global warming to less than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

But experts warn that global warming is on track to surpass three degrees by 2100 and urge governments to do more than first planned to rein it in. "Every fraction of a degree of warming makes a difference to human health and access to food and fresh water, to the extinction of animals and plants, to the survival of coral reefs and marine life," WMO deputy chief Elena Manaenkova stressed in a statement. "It makes a difference to economic productivity, food security, and to the resilience of our infrastructure and cities," she said. "It makes a difference to the speed of glacier melt and water supplies, and the future of low-lying islands and coastal communities." —AFP

Putin defends 'lawful' seizure of Ukraine ships

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin has insisted that Russian forces were in the right to seize three Ukrainian ships last weekend, but President Donald Trump expressed "deep concern" at Moscow's actions against a US ally. In his first extensive remarks since the confrontation at sea on Sunday, Putin said it had been orchestrated by Kiev as a "provocation".

He said the Ukrainian ships had entered Russian territorial waters and refused to respond to requests to stop from Russian patrol boats. "What were they (Russian forces) supposed to do?" Putin said on Wednesday, when asked about the incident at an international investment forum in Moscow. "They were fulfilling their military duty. They were fulfilling their lawful functions in protecting Russia's borders. They would do the same in your country." Moscow and Kiev have traded angry accusations since Russian navy vessels fired on, boarded and captured the three Ukrainian ships off the coast of Crimea.

After warning of the threat of "full-scale war", Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on Wednesday signed an act imposing martial law for 30 days in regions bordering Russia, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. He also appealed to NATO members including Germany to send naval vessels to the region to back his country in the standoff. "Germany

is one of our closest allies, and we hope that states within NATO are now ready to relocate naval ships to the Sea of Azov in order to assist Ukraine and provide security," he said in comments published yesterday by Germany's Bild daily.

Western governments have rallied behind Kiev, accusing Russia of illegally blocking access to the Sea of Azov, used by both countries, and of using force without justification. Trump on Tuesday threatened to cancel planned talks with Putin at this week's G20 summit in Buenos Aires over the incident. The White House on Wednesday said Trump and Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed the Ukraine-Russia incident by telephone and "the two leaders expressed deep concern about the incident in the Kerch Strait and the continued detainment of Ukraine's vessels and crew members".

'Bring our boys home'

The Kremlin said it still expected the Putin-Trump meeting to take place and played down the threat of cancellation, with foreign policy advisor Yuri Ushakov saying: "The meeting is equally needed by both sides." The Ukrainian vessels—a tug and two gunboats—were trying to pass through the Kerch Strait from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov, but were refused access and chased into international waters by 10 Russian vessels. Kiev has demanded the return of its ships and the release of 24 sailors taken prisoner during the confrontation. The sailors have been put before a court in Simferopol, the main city in Russian-annexed Crimea, and ordered to be held in pre-trial detention for two months. —AFP

International

Fearing espionage, US weighing tighter rules on China students

Trump administration mulls new background checks

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration is considering new background checks and other restrictions on Chinese students in the United States over growing espionage concerns, US officials and congressional sources said. In June, the US State Department shortened the length of visas for Chinese graduate students studying aviation, robotics and advanced manufacturing to one year from five. US officials said the goal was to curb the risk of spying and theft of intellectual property in areas vital to national security.

But now the Trump administration is weighing whether to subject Chinese students to additional vetting before they attend a US school. The ideas under consideration, previously unreported, include checks of student phone records and scouring of personal accounts on Chinese and US social media platforms for anything that might raise concerns about students' intentions in the United States, including affiliations with government organizations, a US official and three congressional and university sources said.

US law enforcement is also expected to provide training to academic officials on how to detect spying and cyber theft that it provides to people in government, a senior US official said. "Every Chinese student who China sends here has to go through a party and government approval process," one senior US official said. "You may not be here for espionage purposes as traditionally defined, but no Chinese student who's coming here is untethered from the state."

The White House declined comment on the new

student restrictions under review. Asked what consideration was being given to additional vetting, a State Department official said: "The department helps to ensure that those who receive US visas are eligible and pose no risk to national interests." The Chinese government has repeatedly insisted that Washington has exaggerated the problem for political reasons. China's ambassador to the United States said the accusations were groundless and "very indecent."

"Why should anybody accuse them as spies? I think that this is extremely unfair for them," Ambassador Cui Tiankai said. Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are scheduled to meet at a G20 summit in Argentina this week. Greater scrutiny of Chinese students would be part of a broader effort to confront Beijing over what Washington sees as the use of sometimes illicit methods for acquiring rapid technological advances that China has made a national priority. The world's two biggest economies also are in a trade war and increasingly at odds over diplomatic and economic issues.

Any changes would seek to strike a balance between preventing possible espionage while not scaring away talented students in a way that would harm universities financially or undercut technological innovation, administration officials said. But that is exactly what universities - ranging from the Ivy League's Harvard, Yale and Princeton universities to state-funded schools such as University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - fear most. They have spent much of 2018 lobbying against what

they see as a broad effort by the administration to crack down on Chinese students with the change in visas this summer and a fear of more restrictions to come.

At stake is about \$14 billion of economic activity, most of it tuition and other fees generated annually from the 360,000 Chinese nationals who attend US schools, that could erode if these students look elsewhere for higher education abroad. Many Ivy League schools and other top research universities, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Stanford University, have become so alarmed that they regularly share strategies to thwart the effort, according to three people familiar with the discussions.

Stop short of a ban

US authorities see ample reason for closer scrutiny, pointing to recently publicized cases of espionage, or alleged espionage, linked to former students from Louisiana State University and Duke University and the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. FBI Director Christopher Wray told a Senate hearing this year that his agents across the country are seeing "non-traditional collectors (of intelligence), especially in the academic setting."

STOP SHORT OF A BAN White House adviser Stephen Miller proposed a ban early this year on student visas for all Chinese nationals, according to a report to the Financial Times, and confirmed by Reuters. But the new measures would stop well short of such a ban, according to multiple sources. Terry Branstad, a former Iowa governor who is now

ambassador to China, helped convince Trump to reject the Miller idea during a meeting in the Oval Office in the spring, one administration source said. Branstad argued that a ban would hurt schools across the United States, not just the elite universities many Republicans view as excessively liberal.

US Representative Judy Chu of California warned the administration was at risk of overreach. "Our national security concerns need to be taken seriously, but I am extremely concerned about the stereotyping and scapegoating of Chinese students and professors," Chu, a Democrat who chairs the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, said in a telephone interview.

Already worried about restrictions, universities have mounted a pressure campaign focused on the White House, State Department and Congress and held multiple meetings with the FBI, according to lobbyists, university officials and congressional aides. Terry Hartle, senior vice president at the American Council on Education, told Reuters that Chinese students risked becoming "pawns" in the US-China rivalry.

MIT president L. Rafael Reif, and Andrew Hamilton, the president of New York University, are among several top university officials who published opinion columns recently addressing the perceived growing threat to their Chinese students. Reif said that academic institutions recognize the threat of espionage, but any new policy needs to "protect the value of openness that has made American universities wellsprings of discovery and powerhouses of innovation." —Reuters

Conference slams 'deeply disturbing' baby gene-editing

HONG KONG: A scientist who upended a Hong Kong conference with his claim to have created the world's first genetically-edited babies cancelled a fresh talk and was heavily criticized by organizers yesterday, who labeled him as irresponsible. He Jiankui had told a packed biomedical conference Wednesday he was "proud" to have successfully altered the DNA of twin girls born to an HIV-positive father, an apparent medical breakthrough. But details of the experiment, which has not been independently verified, triggered an immediate backlash and He said the trial had been halted. The founder of an HIV support group reported to be based in Beijing said yesterday that he regretted introducing families to He for the trial, according to local media. Bai Hua, the group's head, said he had introduced 50 families to He's team.

"In the beginning we did not understand what it was they were really doing. Actually right now my personal feeling is that they are a bit crazy," he told RTHK. Bai added that he had spoken to two of the families involved in the trial and questioned whether the risks and ethical issues had been fully explained to them. "The team all along emphasized that the chance of success was high, and that there were risks, but they were low," he told RTHK. Professor



HONG KONG: Chinese scientist He Jiankui speaks at the Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing in Hong Kong. —AFP

He was supposed to speak at the summit again yesterday but disappeared from the schedule. David Baltimore, a Nobel laureate and chairman of the organizing committee, told reporters it was He's decision not to attend.

Organizers of the Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing denounced He's "unexpected and deeply disturbing" claim that human embryos had been edited and implanted, and called for closer supervision of the field at the conclusion of the conference yesterday. "Even if the modifications are verified, the procedure was irresponsible and failed to conform with international norms," they said in a statement. "Its flaws include an inadequate medical indication, a poorly designed study protocol, a failure to meet ethical standards for protecting the welfare of research subjects, and a lack of transparency in the development, review and conduct of clinical procedures," it added. —AFP

Villagers fear for survival on India's disappearing island

GHORAMARA ISLAND: Residents of India's Ghoramara Island want to leave their home as it shrinks each year due to rising seas, but many say they can't afford it. The 4.6 sq km (1.8 sq mile) island, part of the Sundarbans delta on the Bay of Bengal, has nearly halved in size over the past two decades, according to village elders. The tiny island is home to 4,800 people, down from 7,000 a decade ago. "If a tsunami or a big cyclone hits this island we will be finished," said Sanjib Sagar, village leader on the island 150 km (93 miles) south of the Indian city of Kolkata.

The Sundarbans, shared by India and Bangladesh, include the world's largest mangrove forest as well as rare or endangered tigers, dolphins, birds and reptiles. Ghoramara is among many islands in the delta affected by rising sea levels and soil erosion experts say is caused by climate change. Residents say the flood waters are getting worse, threatening their homes and livelihoods. "If government gives rehabilitation I will leave," said Sheikh Aftab Uddin, sitting outside his new mud house

with his wife, after his previous home was destroyed by flood waters.

Half of the villagers are ready to move if the government provided free land in a safer area, Sagar said, but there has been no response to their request for compensation or to move people off the island. Two people in the office of Javed Ahmed Khan, the minister in charge of disaster management in the state government of West Bengal, declined to comment on whether it had any plans to relocate inhabitants. Floods have churned the island's shoreline into mud fringed with broken coconut palms. Fishermen cast their nets to try to take advantage of the rising waters.

As well as damaging homes, floods destroy valuable betel leaf crops that many islanders have depended on for a living. "Every year, high-tide salt water enters my farm and destroys my cultivation, so I have to face a big loss," said Mihir Kumar Mondal, a betel leaf farmer. Climate change experts say the entire island population will have to be relocated one day. "There has to be some planning for those people, in terms of relocating them to other areas. Frankly speaking, this has to be in the plan of the government," said Suruchi Bhadwal, a researcher on climate change at the New Delhi-based Energy and Resources Institute. —Reuters

International

UK security firm G4S says 5 staff killed in Kabul attack

Taleban claims responsibility; at least 10 people die

KABUL: British security firm G4S said yesterday that five of its employees were killed and 32 wounded in a Taleban-claimed attack on one of its compounds in Kabul. A massive crater marked the spot where the militants detonated a vehicle bomb outside the compound late Wednesday before trying to fight their way inside in the latest violence to rock the Afghan capital.

G4S, which provides security for British diplomats, said one Briton and four Afghans were killed in the attack. Earlier, Afghan authorities had said at least 10 people had been killed in the attack, but it was not immediately clear if that toll included the G4S employees. "It is with great sadness that we can confirm that five of our employees were killed and 32 were injured, five of them seriously," managing director Charlie Burbridge said in a statement. "We are committed to our security role in support of the people of Afghanistan, and we are determined that incidents such as this will not prevent the vital work that the international community conducts from continuing," he said.

Afghan interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish told AFP earlier that 10 people were killed in the attack—all of them Afghan nationals. But police spokesman Abdul Basir Mujahid said authorities were still working to identify the nationalities of the victims. "Five attackers were involved, one detonated his vehicle at the gate, and

four others were on foot and they entered the building," Danish said. An AFP photographer yesterday could see the shattered remains of a small van lying in the middle of the debris. Parts of nearby buildings in the industrial area of eastern Kabul were twisted by the violence of the blast.

One survivor, Abdul Mohammad, told AFP he and his nephew had just passed the compound when the bomb detonated. "I lost consciousness but regained it in a few minutes," he told AFP from his hospital bed. "I felt a lot of debris hitting us. I tried to pick my nephew up but couldn't do it... I realised he was dead." Besmullah Taban, police chief for the district in which the attack happened, said that when security forces entered the compound they found 230 people hiding in its safe room, including 36 Afghans, adding they were all rescued.

'Impotent'

G4S, which according to its website provides security for British diplomats in Kabul, was also targeted in an attack in March, when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives before reaching the entrance of the complex. Two civilians were killed in that attack. Wednesday's assault came hours after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced the formation of a team for prospective peace talks with the Taleban, as the United Nations renewed calls for direct negotiations



KABUL: Afghan security forces gather at the site of a suicide bomb attack outside a British security firm's compound in Kabul, a day after the blast yesterday. — AFP

between Kabul and the insurgents. The Afghan government, Western diplomats and UN officials have in recent weeks raised hopes of finally reaching a deal to end the 17-year war. At an international conference on Afghanistan in Geneva, Ghani said the 12-person negotiating

team includes both men and women and will be led by his chief of staff Abdul Salam Rahimi. But the Taleban have once again rejected Ghani's overtures, saying in a statement Thursday that it considered the government in Kabul "impotent" and a "waste of time". — AFP

Breakfast at risk: Philippines tries to turn the tide on fish losses

MANILA: Dried fish for breakfast, fried to a crisp with a splash of spiced vinegar, garlic fried rice and a runny egg yolk, is the kind of breakfast that Filipinos who live abroad crave. The dish, often made with sardines, anchovies or round scad, uses dried seafood products that are a staple in the Philippines, where they are cheap, widely available and local. But a United Nations report released in March this year projected that in 30 years all commercial fishing could cease in the Asia-Pacific region if existing threats to the region's biodiversity aren't acted upon. From plastic pollution to climate change, over-fishing to damage to coral reefs, one of the country's most valuable resources is under threat — and a rising number of Filipinos are trying to address the growing damage.

"Many of the problems we have around food security and depleted marine resources are a matter of us not fulfilling our role as responsible stewards of our environment," said Rafael Dionisio, founder The Circle Hostel, a chain of eco-friendly hostels that is spearheading a drive to reduce plastic usage. According to the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the country produces more than 4.5 million tons of seafood and aquatic plants a year from its rivers, seas and lakes, making it the world's ninth largest producer. But the volume of fish harvested has been falling since

2010. "We need people to understand how our ecosystem works and how its health affects our fisheries," Dionisio said. "Once they do, then we've got a ball game."

Plastic pollution

One of the biggest threats to the sustainability of marine life is plastic pollution and the Philippines is now the third highest contributor to plastic pollution in the world's oceans, according to Greenpeace Philippines. Other waste is also a threat. Filipino officials in April ordered the closure of the resort island of Boracay — famed for its white sand beaches — after officials discovered most of island's sewage flowed directly into the sea. The rapid decline in Philippine marine resources has prompted concerns not only over future supplies of seafood and the nation's dried fish breakfast but about the communities that depend on fish to survive.

BFAR data shows there are more than 1.6 million fishing operators in the Philippines, which has a population of 105 million. About 85 percent are small-scale fishermen, with the rest commercial boats and aquaculture farms. Dhang Tecson, co-founder of social enterprise Fishers and Changemakers Inc. (FCI) that works with fishing families near Cebu island, said years of unauthorized fishing practices — such as dynamite and fine-net fishing — had combined with climate change to cut the catch of small-scale fishermen.

Large fishing companies exploiting fishing grounds close to shore also has reduced the seafood available for smaller-scale fishermen to catch, pushing them further out to sea and into greater peril from unpredictable weather. Tecson said as fishermen's incomes and food supplies became more insecure, more would resort to whatever means necessary to provide for their families. "Small-scale fishers currently work about 12 to 16 hours per day ... They have absolutely no safety net," she said in a phone interview. "As much as they don't want to fish illegally, many don't have a choice because of the current state of the country's waters." — Reuters

Australian spies eye license to use force

SYDNEY: Australian spies operating overseas will have more leeway to use force, including lethal force, under legal reforms put forward by the conservative government yesterday. Under the proposals, intelligence officers operating abroad for the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) would be able to "use reasonable force" well beyond situations of self-defense. The measures would allow spies to use firearms more readily, as well as restrain or detain anyone posing a risk to their operations.

Officers and agents—a tradecraft term for any informant or operative—will also be allowed to use force to protect bystanders or hostages. Justifying the reforms, Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne cited a "more complex" world and "new circumstances unforeseen" when current rules were forged a decade and a half ago.

Those rules allow intelligence officers to use force to defend only themselves, other staff, or agents. Leading Australian government lawyers had expressed concern that spies could break Australian law by defending bystanders in the course of operations.

The government tried to bat away allegations the reforms amounted to a licence for spies to begin to operate like paramilitary special forces. "ASIS does not have, nor is it seeking, an offensive armed capability," the government said in a statement to parliament yesterday. The law would still proscribe intelligence officers from "planning or undertaking paramilitary activities" and the foreign minister would have to authorize the deployment of weapons. Before that, the minister would also have to consult the attorney-general, the prime minister and any other relevant minister. The independent Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security would oversee compliance. — Agencies

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Dancers of the Shanghai Ballet show a choreography at the Bode museum in Berlin yesterday. The German premiere takes place on December 1, 2018. — AFP

**Chopra, Jonas set for India's
'wedding of the year'**

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Indian actress Priyanka Chopra (right) and US musician Nick Jonas (left) arrive in Jodhpur in the western Indian state of Rajasthan yesterday. — AFP

Chopra, Jonas set for India's 'wedding of the year'

Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra and American singer Nick Jonas landed in Jodhpur yesterday as excitement over their impending nuptials, dubbed India's "wedding of the year", reached fever pitch. The superstar couple waved and smiled at photographers as they left the airport in India's revered "Blue City" where they will tie the knot in a series of lavish ceremonies this weekend.

Chopra, 36, and Jonas, 26, are due to wed at the city's opulent Umaid Bhawan Palace hotel, in the western desert state of Rajasthan, on Saturday. They have been joined in India by their families, including Jonas's brother Joe Jonas and his fiancée, British actress and "Game of Thrones" star Sophie Turner. Indian media is abuzz with details and speculation about the big day, as Bollywood buffs count down to the wedding of the year. "She's one of the best actresses in India and she's beautiful. All of India is excited for her wed-

ding," said one fan, Prakash Pujari, outside a cinema in Mumbai, the home of Bollywood.

Chopra, who won the Miss World pageant in 2000, is one of Bollywood's most identifiable stars and one of the few to have achieved success in the West. She starred in the ABC thriller series "Quantico" and has released songs with US chart-toppers including Pitbull and The Chainsmokers. Jonas first found success as a child, as the frontman of The Jonas Brothers with his two siblings. The brothers hailed from a deeply devout Christian family and presented a wholesome image, including wearing purity rings to promote chastity. In more recent years, Jonas remodeled himself with a more mature and edgy image, and has also turned to acting. The couple got engaged in August, sharing photos on social media showing them performing a prayer ritual in traditional Indian garb. —AFP

UNESCO adds reggae music to global cultural heritage list

Reggae music, whose chill, lilting grooves found international fame thanks to artists like Bob Marley, yesterday won a spot on the United Nations' list of global cultural treasures. UNESCO, the world body's cultural and scientific agency, added the genre that originated in Jamaica to its collection of "intangible cultural heritage" deemed worthy of protection and promotion. Reggae music's "contribution to international discourse on issues of injustice, resistance, love and humanity underscores the dynamics of the element as being at once cerebral, socio-political, sensual and spiritual," UNESCO said.

"While in its embryonic state Reggae music was the voice of the marginalized, the music is now played and embraced by a wide cross-section of society, including various genders, ethnic and religious groups." The musical style joined a list of cultural traditions that includes the horsemanship of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, a Mongolian camel-coaxing ritual and Czech puppetry, and more than 300 other traditional practices spanning from boat-building and pilgrimages to cooking and dance.

Jamaica applied for reggae's inclusion on the list this year at a meeting of the UN agency on the island of Mauritius, where 40 proposals were under consideration. Reggae was competing for inclusion alongside Bahamian strawcraft, South Korean wrestling, Irish hurling and perfume making in the southern French city of Grasse.



In this file photo Rastafarian Reggae fans gather at the start of the Bob Marley Earthday Festival and Rasta Fair at the South Beach in Durban. — AFP photos



This file photo taken on January 1, 1976 shows Jamaican reggae star Bob Marley.

Hope to the oppressed

Reggae emerged in the late 1960s out of Jamaica's ska and rocksteady styles, also drawing influence from

American jazz and blues. It quickly became popular in the United States as well as in Britain, where many Jamaican immigrants had moved in the post-WWII years. The style is often championed as a music of the oppressed, with lyrics addressing sociopolitical issues, imprisonment and inequality.

Reggae also became associated with Rastafarianism, which deified the former Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie and promoted the sacramental use of ganja, or marijuana. The 1968 single "Do the Reggay" by Toots and the Maytals was the first popular song to use the name. Marley and his group the Wailers then soared to fame on classic hits like "No Woman, No Cry" and "Stir It Up." —AFP

Citing racial bias, Jay-Z seeks to halt arbitration against Iconix

Jay-Z on Wednesday sued to halt his private arbitration with clothing company Iconix Brand Group Inc, saying the company's inability to find an African-American arbitrator to hear the trademark dispute was unfair. The multimillionaire rapper said in a petition filed in Manhattan Supreme Court that the lack of racial diversity among arbitrators at the American Arbitration Association (AAA) was discriminatory under New York's state constitution and a New York City human rights law.

Iconix could not immediately be reached for comment, and a spokeswoman for the AAA declined to comment. The dispute is the latest in a series of legal wranglings arising from Jay-Z's 2007 sale of his Rocawear clothing brand to Iconix for about \$204 million. Iconix has since written off almost the entire value of the brand, and in 2017 sued Jay-Z in Manhattan federal court over trademark rights. That case remains pending. In 2015, Jay-Z, whose real name is Shawn Carter, and Iconix settled some disputes, and agreed to address future claims in private arbitration, according to Jay-Z's petition.

Last month, Iconix accused Jay-Z of breaching the 2015 settlement and demanded an AAA arbitration. But Jay-Z said the AAA found only three potential African-American arbitrators, out of the hundreds it uses, for his case, and one already represented Iconix in related litigation. He argued that the lack of "more than a token number of African-Americans" made the arbitration contract void.

"It would stand to reason that prospective litigants - which undoubtedly include minority owned and operated businesses - expect there to be the possibility that the person who stands in the shoes of both judge and jury reflects the diverse population," the petition said. Jay-Z, 48, is famous for songs including "Hard Knock Life," "99 Problems" and "Big Pimpin'." —Reuters



Danish actor Brigette Nielson poses upon arrival to attend the European Premiere of the film "Creed II" in London. — AFP photos



US film director Steven Caple jnr (left) poses upon arrival to attend the European Premiere of the film "Creed II".



US actor Michael B Jordan poses upon arrival to attend the European Premiere of the film "Creed II".



US actor Tessa Thompson poses upon arrival to attend the European Premiere of the film "Creed II".

Stallone says hanging up his Rocky gloves

After more than four decades and eight movies, actor Sylvester Stallone says he is finally hanging up his Rocky gloves. In a video he shared on Instagram Wednesday, the 72-year-old actor said he was ready to walk away from playing the iconic character, referring to his latest appearance in the recently released "Creed II" as his "last rodeo." "I thought Rocky was over in 2006 and I was very happy with that," he said in the video. "And then all of a sudden this young man presented himself and the whole story changed," he added, pointing to his "Creed" co-star Michael B. Jordan. "It went on to a new generation, new problems, new adventures."

The "Creed" films are a continuation of the Rocky story, following the retired champ as he faces up to middle age and trains a new protege. Stallone said he couldn't be happier for the way things turned out for the Rocky saga that began in 1976 and which chronicled the life of the heroic underdog boxer. "As I step back, as my story has been told, there is a whole new world that's

going to be opening up for the audience, for this generation," he said, adding that it was up to Jordan now to "carry the mantle."

Stallone said the video, which appears to have been filmed on a beach, next to a bonfire, was shot on his last day making "Creed II." In it, he addresses some of the cast and crew of the film. In a message on Instagram accompanying the video, Stallone said he was sad to abandon the role but that it was time to turn the page. "It's been my Ultimate privilege to have been able to create and play this meaningful character," he wrote. "Though it breaks my heart, Sadly all things must pass... and end." The first Rocky movie won three Academy Awards for best picture, best director and best film editing. Stallone has been nominated three times for an Oscar for his role in the Rocky series, but the prized statuette has always eluded him. — AFP



Swedish actor Dolph Lundgren poses upon arrival to attend the European Premiere of the film "Creed II".

French film star Depardieu questioned in rape probe

French police have questioned film star Gerard Depardieu over allegations that he raped a young actress, which he strongly denies, a police source said Wednesday. The source said the 69-year-old actor attended a police interview on Tuesday and is not being kept in custody. He was free to terminate the questioning at any time. "Gerard Depardieu absolutely denies any attack, any rape," his lawyer Herve Temime told AFP after the actress filed a complaint against him in late August. "I regret the public nature of this process which is doing major harm to Gerard Depardieu, whose innocence will certainly be proven," Temime said.

Depardieu is accused of raping and assaulting the actress at his mansion in the French capital's chic 6th district between August 7 and 13 this year. The Parisien newspaper previously reported that the alleged victim is an actress and dancer in her twenties who had sought career advice from Depardieu. The accusations are the latest in a string against prominent men worldwide in the wake of the rape and assault claims against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. French director and producer Luc Besson, most famous for international hits such as "The Fifth Element", was questioned last month over allegations that he also raped a young actress.

Depardieu, who has made more than 180 films, became the face of French cinema through films such as "Cyrano de Bergerac", for which he was nominated for an Oscar. He has rarely strayed far from the headlines in France. In 2013 he sparked a huge outcry by taking Russian nationality to protest a proposed tax hike on the rich in his homeland. His alleged victim filed her complaint in Provence, southern France, and local prosecutors immediately opened an investigation. The case was transferred to Paris prosecutors on Wednesday. — AFP



In this file photo French actor Gerard Depardieu waves as he arrives at the Town Hall in Brussels for a ceremony as part of the 'Brussels International Film Festival' (BRIFF). — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Five more women accuse film mogul Besson of sex assaults

Five more women have accused French movie mogul Luc Besson of sexual assault and harassment, according to reports Wednesday, six months after a young actress claimed he had raped her. The new allegations from students at his Paris film school, an ex-model and former employees bring to nine the number of women who have made complaints about the maker of "The Fifth Element". They include one of his former personal assistants who told the French investigative website Mediapart that she felt forced into having sex with him in luxury Paris hotels.

Besson's lawyer and his production company EuropaCorp declined to comment on the new claims when contacted by AFP. His former assistant said that he had invited her to dinner in his suite in the Meurice hotel when she was homeless and had put out an appeal to friends looking for a job. He said he would be her "protector" and asked her to sit on his lap and give him "a little kiss". "I don't know why I let it happen to me" she said of the non-consensual sex she claimed that followed.

'I was petrified'

"I was petrified," she told Mediapart. "I had such a positive idea of him at the time, for me he was a kind of living god." Besson is one of the most powerful players in the French film industry with a string of international hits to his name including "The Big Blue" and "Nikita" and has his own studio on the edge of Paris. His 2017

sci-fi epic "Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets" was the most expensive European film ever made with a 158-million-euro (\$180-million) budget.

But in May 27-year-old Belgian-Dutch actress Sand Van Roy told police that she was raped by Besson, 59, during an on-off relationship with the producer and director. Van Roy, who has only ever appeared in Besson films including "Valerian", said she felt pressured into sex to keep her roles. Besson has categorically denied the claims, which his lawyer Thierry Marembert has denounced as "fantasist accusations".

In July, a casting director who often worked with Besson told Mediapart that he assaulted her "every time I took the lift with him", and that he also demanded sexual favors from her on set. Two other women also said that Besson "behaved inappropriately" with them, with one actress claiming she had to escape from a casting in his Paris office on her hands and knees. Among the new allegations, theatre producer Karine Isambert said she was grabbed during a meeting in a London hotel room in 1995 when she was a model hoping to start an acting career. Two former students of Besson's Cite du Cinema film school also accused him of harassment and a former employee of his EuropaCorp company said he had kissed and acted inappropriately with her. — AFP



In this file photo French producer Luc Besson and French actress Sand Van Roy pose during the photocall for the premiere of the film "Taxi 5" by French director and actor Franck Gastambide at the Plan de Campagne commercial area in Les Pennes-Mirabeau, southern France. — AFP

Qatar's sixth edition of the Ajyal Film Festival



Turkish actor Bulent Inal poses on the red carpet during Qatar's sixth edition of the Ajyal Film Festival in Doha. — AFP photos



Turkish actor Engin Altan Duzyatan.



Canadian actress Evangeline Lilly.



Shuaib Rashed



Turkish designer Asli Filinta



Fatma Al-Ramaihi, chairwoman of Doha Film.



Qatari singer Ali Abdulstar



Turkish actress Tuba Unsal

Lifestyle | Features

Not enough ketchup: US woman attacks McDonald's manager

A California woman was behind bars on Wednesday for beating and choking a McDonald's manager after discovering there wasn't enough ketchup in her order, police said.

Mayra Berenice Gallo, 24, apparently went into a rage on October 27 after ordering food through the drive-through at the fast food outlet in the town of Santa Ana. Police spokesman Anthony Bertagna told AFP that an infuriated Gallo stormed into the restaurant through the employee back entrance and started pushing and choking the victim after being told she couldn't be in that area. "She was irate that she didn't get ketchup," Bertagna said.

The incident, which was caught on video, ended after a man accompanying Gallo pulled her away. She was arrested on Tuesday after police received tips from the public and was being held on assault charges. Bertagna said such incidents are sadly becoming all too common. "We're seeing more and more of this kind of stuff. Why? we don't know," he said. "We had one guy at a 7-Eleven (convenience store) who tried to buy a bag of almond M&M's and when his credit card didn't work, he basically trashed the store." — AFP

Bizarre News

A man dressed as a knight used his sword to defend his dad against a gang

A man dressed as a knight used his sword to defend his dad against a gang. Alun Powell, who dresses as a knight for battle re-enactments, drew his 3ft sword to scare off thugs who threatened him and his father outside his home in Newport, Wales. The 31-year-old was convicted of three counts of public possession of a bladed article in public, but was spared by a judge who was sympathetic the youths had threatened Alun's elderly father. Alun told law enforcement he is a 'medieval sports enthusiast' who wears armor for sword fights, and has represented Wales in the equivalent of the sport's World Cup. An onlooker said: "He was in a rage and wanted to put the fear of god into them and took up a fighting stance. They saw the weapons and got so frightened that they left as quickly as possible."



A burger chain has closed after a rat was cooked in the kitchen

A burger chain in Hawaii has closed a Honolulu restaurant for cleaning after a video showed a rat being cooked on the grill. Teddy's Bigger Burgers has closed the location and fired two employees who appeared on a Snapchat. The president of Teddy's Bigger Burgers - Richard Stula - said: "We are horrified that a former teenage employee would conduct themselves in that way and make such a video of which we are investigating its authenticity." He also declared: "We are horrified a former employee would create something like this trying to destroy our reputation." The restaurant immediately issued a "sanitization" and replaced utensils in the kitchen. Richard said: "We will then send a corporate team in to inspect and complete a thorough audit of the location before it is allowed to re-open. The state Department of Health is scheduled to inspect the restaurant this week."



Amount of women doing make-up on transport has increased

Over half of women (55%) admit to doing their make-up on public transport - showing a rising trend of 'consumers' across the country. Women aged 25-34 are the most likely age group to leave the house bare-faced according to a study from Cosmetify.com which looked to establish whether make-up is at the forefront of the morning mantra. Results showed that 90% of women believe it is a better use of their time to do make-up on the move. 34% of women claimed they put this down to not getting up early enough. Matt Davies, founder of Cosmetify said: "Our research shows that, on the whole, people are very accepting of it. Women have never been as time-poor as they are today, so by doing their make-up on the way into work they can save a few extra minutes in the morning."

A deer was killed with a dead head attached

Bob Long - a hunter from Kentucky - killed a buck that had another deer's decomposing head still attached to its antlers. The recently shot buck's head was still attached - but the decomposing head was without a body. The state Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources posted a photo on Facebook last week of Bob holding his prize. He told KFVS-TV: "I still can't believe it. I feel very humbled and blessed to be the hunter that shot the deer." Department Sgt Tony Bunker told the network that he suspected the bucks locked antlers in a fight over territory and after one died the body decayed for weeks to the point where the head separated. He said: "That buck was in a rut. He sees this deer and he doesn't know. He goes up to it. Tangles up with it and of course he gets hung up."



PRAGUE: A robotic bartender prepares drinks inside a space modul-like structure before its official opening in Prague. — Reuters

WELCOME TO PRAGUE'S WONDERFUL ROBOT SALOON

Forget the days of nursing a drink at the bar while pouring out your woes to the bartender. At least if a new establishment in Prague is a sign of the future. The Cyberdog in the Czech capital features a robotic bartender who serves drinks ordered through a phone app. Opened on Wednesday by real estate developer Trigema, its two-level steel structure looks rather like a space station, with 40 seats and small upper deck. And never mind George Orwell's sentiment in his essay "The Moon Under Water" that the perfect pub has "barmaids (who know most of their customers by name, and take a personal interest in everyone)".

In the Cyberdog, after the customers have ordered their tipple via an app, a red robotic arm picks among seven wines on offer in a cool box. It then opens the bottle and pours up to four glasses at a time. Next it lifts the glasses on a tray that travels overhead to the customers' table, then lowers the load so people

can pick up their glasses. Trigema owner Marcel Soural said he was sure the service sector would follow manufacturing in replacing expensive labor with machines. "I am deeply convinced that in some time, when you will be served in a restaurant by a real person, it will be a terribly expensive restaurant because it will be unique," he said.

Soural said there were already a few robotic bars around the world but the Cyberdog robot performed more complex tasks than the others - even doing little dances. "When he has no order, he is bored and he shows that by making moves according to what he has in his programming." The bar, created by artist David Cerny and architect Tomas Cisar, also serves food meant to resemble astronauts' diets. That is prepared by people, at least for now. — Reuters



This aerial view shows rows of Renault 4L lined up in Elyse Rakotondrakonona's workshop in Antananarivo's Antoamadinika neighborhood. — AFP photos



A panel beater works on a Renault 4L at Elyse Rakotondrakonona's workshop in Antananarivo's Antoamadinika neighborhood.

RUSTING ON THE ROADS, MADAGASCAR'S CLASSIC CARS TRUNDLE ON.. AND ON

Once a common sight across Europe, much-loved French cars from a bygone era rattle along the streets of Madagascar's capital Antananarivo, doing their duty as private vehicle, taxis or even police cars. The Renault 4L and the Citroen 2CV, which have made way for sleek younger models elsewhere, are still part of daily life on the Indian Ocean island, battling up its steep hills and wheezing towards top speed on its dusty main roads. "There's no question of a car chase," admitted one uniformed police officer sitting in his white 4L, complete with a rooftop beacon and police signage, parked on guard close to the presidential palace.

"But it does have the advantage of not consuming much petrol," he added. Nearby, in the shade of jacaranda trees, several other 4Ls and 2CVs serve as taxis waiting for customers. The two models are celebrated worldwide as masterpieces of design, representing Europe's post-war boom and the explosion of car ownership—but their heyday has long passed. Rijason Randrianantoanina, a 37-year-old taxi driver, is proud of his "magnificent" 2CV, which he has owned for 16 years. "It was made in 1978, but it's a solid car," he said. The body is suffering from some patches of deep rust and the fuel gauge does not work anymore. The 2CV tank contains only 28 litres, and its driver must be a good judge of petrol usage. "I have a gauge in my head, you just have to get used to it," he said.

The 'go-to' mechanic

Starting from the 1960s, 2CVs and 4Ls were imported into Madagascar from France and Belgium, while models were also assembled on the island until the 1980's. It was while working at the Somacoa plant that Elysee Rakotondrakolona learnt to dismantle and erect the quirky 4L. He is now the go-to 4L mechanic in Antananarivo, in the busy, working-class district of Antoamadinika. "The 4L can go where even modern 4x4s cannot go—because it takes only three people to lift it," he said dryly. In his open-air garage, squeezed between an "aesthetic hairstyle" salon and a donut stand, the chassis of old 4Ls are piled on top of each other.

Here, resourcefulness reigns supreme. "I take parts from Renault 5s for the front axle unit of the 4L," said Rakotondrakolona, wearing blue work overalls almost as old as some of his wrecks. "Our national specialty as Madagascans is that when you see two pieces that look alike, we know how to adapt them. It is the 'make-do-and-mend' system."

The only problem that is unsolvable is a broken gearbox. "Then, there is nothing to do," he said. Easy to repair, almost unbreakable and fuel efficient, the 2CV and 4L are well-adapted to survive in Madagascar. No official figures are available but thousands are still on the roads of the former French colony which is one of the world's poorest countries, with almost four in five people living in grinding poverty. Back in the garage, a worker patiently straightens the dented bodywork of a 4L using a small hammering tool, while others remove the engine from an orange model to modify its chassis.

'It goes everywhere'

One customer Bruno Rasolofomanantsoa, a rice farmer, had brought his 4L for a major operation by "doctor" Rakotondrakolona, who will transplant an engine into it from another car. Rasolofomanantsoa, in his 50s, uses his hard-working vehicle to carry fertilizer into his paddy fields, and he admires its simplicity. "If you have a problem in the middle of nowhere, to find out what is wrong, just open the hood," he said. "But it does have the advantage of not consuming much petrol," he added loyally.

Riri, a taxi driver, is also happy under the hood of his trusty old Renault. "I repair it myself, I learnt on the job," he explained, as he waited for customers near the palace. On his sign, one "N" in Antananarivo has fallen off. But his 4L, which dates from 1975, is always reliable. "It goes everywhere even when there is flooding because the ignition is high," he said. Original spare parts are however increasingly rare, he laments.

Traders have long imported parts from Europe, and Indo-Pakistanis settled in Madagascar have now got into the trade, said Riri. "We do not know if these are copies or not" he joked. —AFP



Renault 4L cars are stacked at Elyse Rakotondrakonona's workshop.



Young mechanics lift the engine of a Renault 4L at Elyse Rakotondrakonona's workshop in Antananarivo's Antoamadinika neighborhood.

'Divine punishment': Ancient Ninja oath unveiled in Japan

Japanese researchers have uncovered a rare, centuries-old, Ninja oath pledging never to divulge the secrets of their spying and sabotage skills-on pain of divine retribution for generations. Written in cursive calligraphy, the oath contains six promises and was signed some 300 years ago by "Inosuke Kizu". Kizu was a Ninja from a clan in Iga, a mountain-shrouded town near the ancient imperial capital of Kyoto. Expressing gratitude to his superior for passing on "ninjutsu" or "the art of the Ninja", Kizu pledged he would never pass the knowledge on-even to his children or brothers-and would never use it to steal unless so ordered.

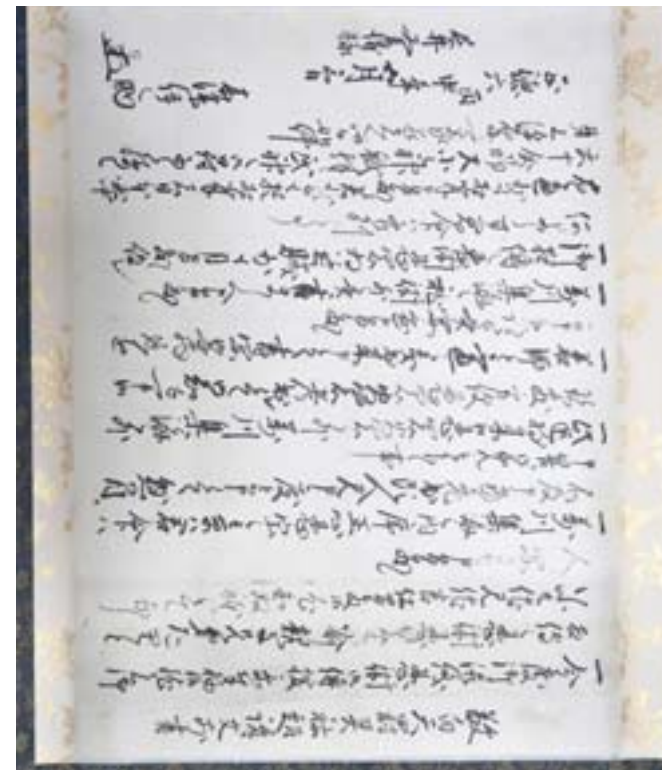
In his oath, the Ninja acknowledges that if he broke the promises even by a little, he'd be punished by "big and small gods in more than 60 provinces across Japan" for generations. The rare document shows how strict Ninjas were about keeping their skills and techniques secret, said Yoshiaki Takao, associate professor at the state-run Mie University's International Ninja Research Center. "Thieves and Ninjas did the same thing-sneaking into other people's houses-but Ninjas prized morality highly," Takao said. "Ninjas were 'public servants' in today's terms, providing security services and collecting information," added the expert.

Also of interest to scholars was a vow in the oath to report to his superiors any new skills, tools or firearms that were not

in the "Bansenshukai", a secretive 17th-century text considered to be somewhat of a Ninja encyclopedia. Kizu noted he could show only three chapters of the "Bansenshukai" to top-ranking samurais who employed ninjas and vowed not to disclose the book's contents in other writings.

This interests scholars because "it shows that Bansenshukai was actually becoming used as a textbook," Takao said, even though it left crucial points vague. The contents of the multi-volume book are now known to the public but many Ninja traditions remain hidden as important secrets were passed on by word of mouth. The oath was among some 130 ancient documents left to the university by the 16th head of the Kizu family. The existence of the oath was unveiled five decades ago in Japan but its whereabouts were unknown until now, according to Takao.

Inosuke, who submitted the oath, was the fifth head and last Ninja from the Kizu family. The oath document was believed to have been returned to his family after his death, Takao said. The research Centre is also based in Iga, some 350 kilometers (220 miles) southwest of Tokyo. Cooperating with engineering and science departments of Mie University, the institute has been trying to reproduce Ninjas' legacy including their food and tools. — AFP



This undated handout picture released by the International Ninja Research Center in Mie prefecture shows an ancient Ninja oath written in cursive calligraphy containing six promises and signed some 300 years ago by 'Inosuke Kizu'. —AFP

Louvre to open one Saturday night a month for free

The Louvre museum in Paris has announced it will open its doors for free one Saturday night a month to attract younger, less wealthy visitors. Home to the Mona Lisa and the Venus de Milo, the world's most-visited museum previously opened for six free Sundays a year, but a statement published Wednesday said this was failing to bring in visitors from a broad spectrum of society. The new nocturnal openings, set to begin on January 5, are to include activities such as a board game area and reading corner to attract families.

The Louvre is also hoping to appeal to more people living in poorer Paris suburbs as well as to young adults and families with older children with the initiative. The museum's statement said that the Saturday nights were a bid to underpin the "democratisation" of the Louvre, where a full-price ticket costs 17 euros (\$19). "The number of French visitors coming to the Louvre for the first time was dropping during these free Sundays, while the number of foreign visitors was going up considerably," it added.

The main people benefiting were tourism operators who cashed in by ferrying foreigners through the Louvre-an obligatory stop in any case-for free on the Sundays. "Working-class visits were not going up," it said. The monthly Saturday evening sessions will run between 6.00 pm and 8.45 pm. The Louvre saw a sharp rise in visitors in 2017 to 8.1 million, making it the most visited art gallery in the world according to a ranking from the Themed Entertainment Association, an industry body. Those figures mark a recovery since 2016, when visits to Paris dropped following a wave of deadly jihadist attacks in France the previous year. — AFP

Huge Tutankhamun show set to tour world

Four decades after the boy pharaoh caused a sensation in the US and Europe, treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamun are to tour the world again-many for the first time. More than 50 of the 150 artworks from his tomb in the show will only ever leave Cairo once, say the Egyptian authorities, who are organizing the tour in the run-up to the 2020 opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza. "Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh"-which opened in Los Angeles in March-will go on show in Paris next March at the giant la Villette arts complex. It is the show's only stop in continental Europe.

The organizers have yet to unveil the other eight cities on the world tour. Previous exhibitions about the boy pharaoh have been record-breaking blockbusters, setting off "Tut-mania" around the globe. More than eight million people attended a 1973 show, "The Treasures of Tutankhamun", at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Another 1.2 million people had queued to see a smaller exhibition six years earlier at the Petit Palais in Paris in what was called "the show of the century".

Mostafa Waziry of the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities said the tour was also to "celebrate the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the tomb of the boy king". "The discovery of Tutankhamun's unlooted tomb revived our fascination with Egypt and its buried treasure," said Vincent Rondot, head of the Egypt department at the Louvre museum. The Louvre is lending one of its masterpieces, a statue of the god Amun protecting Tutankhamun, to the show.



The sarcophagus of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun is pictured at Cairo's Egyptian Museum.



This file photo shows the golden sarcophagus of King Tutankhamun displayed in his burial chamber in the Valley of the Kings, close to Luxor, 500 kms south of the Egyptian capital Cairo. — AFP photos

John Norman, of exhibitions company IMG, who has previously staged shows about Cleopatra, said the "exhibition (is) like none before. Millions of people around the world will get the opportunity to see these ancient objects in an immersive and personal context. "Tutankhamun's place in people's imaginations will be secure for generations to come," he added. The Paris show will run from March 23 until September 15, 2019. The Los Angeles show at the California Science Center closes in January. — AFP



The Golden Mask of King Tutankhamun is displayed at Cairo's Egyptian Museum.



BRITs Critics' Choice nominees revealed

Lewis Capaldi has been nominated for Critics' Choice at the BRIT Awards 2019. The winner of the prestigious annual prize - which has previously been won by the likes of Adele, Sam Smith and Rag'n'Bone Man - will be announced on December 7, and the young singer-songwriter is on the shortlist alongside Mahalia and Sam Fender. Lewis - who will hit the road with Bastille in February - said: "Absolutely honored to have been shortlisted for this year's BRITs Critics' Choice award alongside two unreal artists." "Genuinely cannot believe I'm being included in something like this and do not think I've done enough to be deserving of it! "That being said, from here on in I will insist that those around me, including my mother and father, refer to me only as 'BRITs Critics' Choice Award Nominee, Lewis Capaldi.'" Mahalia - who has supported the likes of Ed Sheeran and last year's recipient Jorja Smith on tour - admitted it was the pinnacle of a whirlwind year. She

added: "I can't believe it. I'm truly honored to be nominated for the BRITs Critics' Choice Award. The last year has been surreal to say the least but this really is the cherry on top. Thank you so much to all those who voted for me." For fellow nominee Sam - who recently released his debut EP 'Dead Boys' - it marks a dream come true after growing up watching the BRITs each year as a child. He said: "I've been watching the BRITs since I was a child, and my brother would let me stay up and watch them live; so to be nominated for the Critics' Choice award is crazy. What an honor! A big thank you to anyone who has put their faith in my music."

The winner - who is chosen by an invited panel of music editors and critics of national press and online music editors, plus heads of music at major radio and music TV stations - will be unveiled next week, with the ceremony itself taking place on February 20.

Williams announces new album of rarities and demos

Robbie Williams has officially announced plans for a new collection of rare tracks chosen by fans. The 'Angels' hitmaker is set to release 'Under The Radar Volume 3' - the third installment of his special series for fans - which will feature a unique set of unreleased material and demos. The album will be released on Valentine's Day next year, and Robbie is excited to share it with his passionate fanbase. He said: "Announcing another 'Under The Radar' album for the fans makes me really happy. These are songs and versions of songs from the archives that people haven't heard before. "I'm proud of them, I'm really attached to them and I'm delighted to be sharing them in the third album of the series." The tracklisting will be chosen by his avid followers, with the final choices set to be revealed after the results of Robbie's Vloggie Williams song polls. The special record is available to pre-order now from robbiewilliams.com in standard, super deluxe and digital download formats. Anticipation is high for the LP, which is set to include a number of tracks which did not make it onto previous studio efforts, including his most recent LP 'The Heavy Entertainment Show'. Earlier this year, it was reported that one song set to be included is 'Disco Symphony', which Robbie - who will start his Las Vegas residency a month after the collection comes out - recorded with Kylie Minogue but didn't include on his latest album. The lyrics were written in an unlikely collaboration between Robbie, his long-time songwriting partner Guy Chambers and British comedian Jimmy Carr. Speaking previously about the song, the part-time Take That star said: "Me and Kylie have gotten together to do a song called 'Disco Symphony'. "It's a big disco extravaganza ... I have a cunning plan and that song is placed in my back pocket ready to be deployed at the right time - and it will see the light. It's a cracker and I get to sing with Kylie Minogue again."



Axl Rose: Queen are the greatest band of all time

Axl Rose has dubbed Queen as "the greatest band" of all time. The 56-year-old rocker may have countless young musicians looking up to him and his band Guns N' Roses, but for Axl himself, the title of all time greatest musicians would go to the 'Bohemian Rhapsody' hitmakers and their late frontman Freddie Mercury. Speaking to Abu Dhabi news outlet Atlas, he said: "For me, it's easy - Queen is the greatest band and Freddie [Mercury] is the greatest frontman of all time. The band are the greatest because they embraced so many different styles." In 1992, Axl performed 'Bohemian Rhapsody' with Queen and Sir Elton John, as he took part in the 'Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert', which was held the year after his death in November 1991. Axl's interview with Atlas was conducted ahead of Guns N' Roses' planned show in the United Arab Emirates capital on Sunday night which was cut short after Axl fell ill. The 'Welcome to the Jungle' hitmakers played for two hours before calling it a night, as Axl claimed he had been "throwing up" throughout the day. In fan-filmed footage, he can be heard saying on stage: "They've got me on IVs and a bunch of injections, 'cause I got sick today, I've been throwing up for about the last five hours. "So instead of cancelling, I'm gonna do the best show we can for you." Slash later tweeted: "Abu Dhabi, you guys were great tonight! "Axl was severely ill. But you all were hugely supportive. Thanks for that. We'll see again next time! Cheers! (sic)".

Metallica to release live album for charity

Metallica are releasing a live acoustic album for charity. The 'Enter Sandman' hitmakers - comprised of James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Rob Trujillo, and Kirk Hammett - are set to drop the LP, titled 'Helping Hands: Live & Acoustic at the Masonic', on February 1. The album consists of songs performed at their acoustic benefit concert in San Francisco earlier this month, which saw them perform versions of iconic tracks including 'Unforgiven' and 'Nothing Else Matters'. Both the benefit concert and the upcoming album are raising money for their nonprofit, All Within My Hands, and the San Francisco show even included a charity auction which raised \$1.3 million for the cause - which helps fight hunger and provide underprivileged communities with workforce education. Metallica's All Within My Hands Foundation also recently donated \$100,000 to those affected by California's devastating wildfires. 'Helping Hands: Live & Acoustic at the Masonic' will be released as a double-LP with two coloured vinyls, and will be available to purchase from record stores next year. All proceeds from sales will go directly to the All Within My Hands Foundation. Meanwhile, Metallica recently said they have no plans to retire, because they feel more "energized and rejuvenated" than ever before. Lars said: "A lot of people are retiring, and we feel very energized and rejuvenated. I mean, we wanna go [a] long [time]. "We hope we can get another 20, 25 years out of Metallica. I don't know what it's gonna look like, I don't know what it's gonna sound like, but that's in our heads. "We're not sitting there thinking retirement or this or that; we're sort of more the opposite. So I would say, for us, everything we do is kind of a long game. "And back



then, when you were 17, you only think of, like, the next five minutes. 'Where is the next beer? Wooh!' So that's kind of different mentality nowadays."

Rolling Stones give album update

The Rolling Stones won't release another album for at least 12 months. The 'Satisfaction' rockers have been working in the recording studio on their first record of original material since 2005's 'A Bigger Bang' but because they have an upcoming stadium tour in the US next year, it's unlikely the LP will be finished in the near future. Guitarist Keith Richards told Rolling Stone magazine: "Mick [Jagger] and I got together for a few days a month or so ago in the studio, just playing around. Apart from that, there might be a session sometime in December, but I'm not crossing my fingers on that. "It was [a] great [session], man. We knocked out a few songs together with [producer] Don Was. We're just working things through. We had a great time—got some nice stuff out of it." Asked if he knows when the album will be released, he added: "Oh man, no. Like I say, early stages. I would say if I'm looking at it, we're going to do this tour, so maybe this time next year, I would say. Maybe. That looks like a reasonable projection." Despite the band members' advancing years, the 74-year-old rocker insists they haven't thought about retirement but he's not sure if it's something many musicians plan. Discussing 'retirement tours', he said: "You can look at it either way. If you mean it, that's the way it is. I just haven't gotten around to thinking in that head yet. I don't know if you never know. Maybe this will be the last one, I don't know." But Keith also admitted he'd love to see the band perform in smaller venues again.



Kaluuya to chair jury at 2018 British Independent Film Awards



Daniel Kaluuya will chair the emerging talent jury at the 2018 British Independent Film Awards. The 29-year-old actor - who appeared in various television roles before he made his breakthrough in 2017 in horror film 'Get Out' - is delighted to be supporting the fresh new faces of independent film who have impressed him greatly this year. The 'Skins' and 'Black Mirror' actor said: "There's no better time than right now to support the fresh, immediate voices and perspectives that will grow and push the boundaries of independent film. "BIFA puts the spotlight on people brave enough to make their first steps and I and my fellow jurors have been blown away by the incredible talent of all of the nominees and their amazing work." Kaluuya will be joined by Chiwetel Ejiofor, Ashley Walters, Alice Birch and Saul Dibb among others on the 21st British Independent Film Awards jury. They will work under the direction of London-based filmmaker Yann Deming - who is known for 'Top Boy,' '71' and this year's 'White Boy Rick'. The 41-year-old is proud to be the Main Chair of this year's jury because he says winning a Best Director BIFA for '71' in 2014 was a "pivotal" moment in his career. He said: "BIFA shows just how much talent and skill is in the UK. "Winning a BIFA for '71' was a pivotal moment for me and it's been a pleasure and a real privilege to lead the jury this year, watching - and debating - such a fantastic crop of independent films."

Emily Blunt: Acting helped me with my childhood stutter

Emily Blunt says acting helped her overcome her childhood stutter. The 'Mary Poppins Returns' star - who has Hazel, four, and Violet, two, with her husband John Krasinski - had a speech impediment when she was growing up and she used to focus on "watching and listening" to people because she "couldn't speak fluently". She said: "Because I couldn't speak fluently, I watched and listened. I'd be on the Tube, and I'd wonder about people and invent back stories for everyone. There's always been a natural desire to walk in the shoes of others. It started quite young, because it was the only tool I had to speak properly. I was that kid, upstairs in my room, trying out stuff in the mirror. But I'd never tell anyone about it. It was always very private." And the 35-year-old actress admits she "didn't have a desire to pursue acting". She added to Harper's Bazaar magazine: "I didn't have a desire to pursue acting and I wouldn't have, if I hadn't fallen into it. Crazy, isn't it? But that's probably why I ended up booking jobs, because I didn't have any nerves. It was very charming - rather embarrassingly, in fact." Meanwhile, Emily previously revealed she thinks overcoming a childhood stutter has helped to shape her as an adult as the bullying she suffered taught her some important life lessons. She shared: "I think whatever you have to overcome in life ultimately paves the way [for whom you become as an adult]. I got teased a lot, and to this day, I hate unkindness in people and bullies."



Egerton never thought he'd be an action hero

Taron Egerton never thought he'd become an action hero. The 'Kingsman' star admits he would have never believed he would be doing action movies because they can be "quite grueling and physical". He said: "I don't think I scream action hero. I certainly enjoy it, but it's very hard work, and I often think it can be more fun to watch than it is to do, just in the sense that it can be quite grueling and physical. For me I have to alter my body shape because I don't keep myself in incredible shape all year round. Not that I'm in incredible shape now, but I'm okay." And the 29-year-old actor believes his role as Gary 'Eggsy' Unwin in 'Kingsman: The Secret Service' helped him land a part in 'Robin Hood'. He added: "When they were considering people, they needed someone who had some experience of being physical as it's a very physical role. I certainly felt that walking into this I had had some experience of action and stunt work, and it served me well ... I've done my thousand hours of that now." Whilst the movie looked fun to shoot, Taron admits it wasn't as easy as it looked. He told Sky News: "We were in Hungary in the middle of winter and it's tough."

Kevin Hart signs on for Sunny remake



Kevin Hart has signed on to produce a remake of South Korean movie 'Sunny'. The star's own HartBeat Productions have teamed with CJ Entertainment for the project - which will be renamed 'Bye Bye Bye' - as they look to bring the comedy drama to a new audience. As revealed by the Hollywood Reporter, Universal Pictures has acquired rights to the movie, which has landed Amy Aniobi - writer-producer for HBO's 'Insecure' - to pen the script. When the original 'Sunny' was released in 2011, it became one of the highest grossing movies in South Korea. It's a female-driven dramedy focusing on a group of adult friends as they reunite 20 years after leaving high school. It marks the second project the actor and Universal have set up in a month, following news in October that Chris Rock is in talks to direct him in comedy 'Co-Parenting'. — Bang Showbiz

Where to go in December?



As you begin to cross off the final 31 days on your calendar you may be tempted to put away the passport and swap those itchy-footed escapades for quiet nights in. But with nearly a year of adventures behind you, why stop now?

December is jam-packed with high-octane adventures on mountain peaks and coursing rivers; indulgent escapes with mulled wine, rum cocktails and spicy Malaysian street food galore; walks on the wild side with kaleidoscopic creatures and soaring giants; and countless seasonal celebrations whisking you from the sunny Caribbean to Santa's hometown.

...for wildlife and nature

Mother Nature is the gift that keeps on giving this December. In the snowy Swedish village of Jukkasjarvi day-long darkness provides the backdrop for the most magical light show on earth, the swirling aurora borealis, while opportunities to hang out with Rudolf and co. or try husky sledding, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing abound. Swap the blanket

of white for a kaleidoscope of color in the Amazon rainforest. Now is the ideal time to spot dazzling birdlife, especially the rainbow-feathered macaws that come to munch on the mineral-rich clay in Peru's Tambopata National Reserve.

To the life aquatic now and Micronesia's little-known islands scattered in the Pacific Ocean, which serve as the mating grounds for giant manta rays. With wingspans that can reach up to 5m, the chance to dive alongside these dancing behemoths shouldn't be missed. From colossal to downright cute, rare (and ridiculously adorable) pygmy hippos can be found in Sierra Leone, once you've had your fill of lounging on palm-fringed beaches.

...food and drink

Looking to shake up the traditional holiday season table? We've got just the foodie forays for you this festive month. Tuck into a spicy blend of fabulous flavors at Malaysia's hawker food stalls, where bright bowls of creamy laksa (noodle soup) and deliciously deep-fried lor bak (pork or prawn

wrapped in tofu skin, deep fried and served with dips) will soon do away with any cravings for Christmas pudding. With tourist numbers low, now is the ideal time to visit Spain's Basque Country, seeing out the year with a plate piled high with pintxos (tapas); or check out Cuba's capital, exploring the crumbling, colonial architecture with a rum-based cocktail in hand. We couldn't leave you entirely bereft of any festive fare, especially when the UK's pretty city of Bath is serving up such a magnificent selection of seasonal grub. With the aromas of sizzling sausage and spiced mulled wine wafting among the stalls, let your nose (and stomach) take the lead as you wander through the twinkling Christmas markets.

...for adventure

Lace up your boots for an end-of-year adventure at the wild ends of the Earth. December is the ideal time to explore Patagonia's mind-blowingly beautiful Torres del Paine National Park. Embark on an epic trek along the eight-day circuit, or take the four-day 'W' trek for Instagram-worthy views of Los



Cuernos (the ‘horns’), the region’s iconic jagged granite peaks. Similarly breathtaking experiences can be had diving the coral reefs around Thailand’s Similan Islands. Beneath the sparkling surface of the ocean you’ll find sharks, barracuda, rays and green and hawksbill turtles - it’s Finding Nemo brought to life.

Adrenaline junkies should make for Tasmania’s Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park for roaring waterways and world-class river rafting. Punctuate your trip by exploring the surrounding scenery, from rocky gorges and mountains to tangled emerald rainforests. In Alta the snow has arrived but the crowds haven’t, so get there quick to make your mark on some of the USA’s finest ski terrain

...for culture

As the year winds down the parties amp up, none more so than in Scotland’s capital, where Hogmanay celebrations see flaming torches, fireworks displays and night-long parties take over the usually quiet cobbled streets. Slightly more sedate, the Caribbean’s southernmost island Trinidad simmers with stirring Spanish-style musical performances as the locals usher in the start of the dry season. If you’re dreaming of a white Christmas, head to Tallinn to see the medieval city decked out in a blanket of snow, complete with flickering candles lining the streets and markets flogging quintessential Christmas curiosities and festive treats. And if that’s not enough seasonal charm for you, make for Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland, the ‘official home’ of Santa Claus. Once you’ve dropped your gift list off with the big man himself, treat yourself to a husky sledding excursion or reindeer safari to explore the region in full effect.—www.lonelyplanet.com





Comic

Word Search

More 70's Songs

Find and circle all of these songs from the 1970's that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters will spell the names of ten music groups from the 70's.

N A D M T H E G A M B L E R A T S R E P U S
E W Y R R N I A R D N A E R I F E M P L E H
R I O C E A M E R I C A N W O M A N A S B E
D R U D R A U E A H P A R G O T O H P T D S
S R R B N E M O N A M R D L T Z B A G H R G
E E E B R U V O Y O T E E E E O H N H G E O
G V S L A O S A N T L C E U H T I R T I B N
A E I B L L T A E T U R R E N C I S O N A E
R F X D N I I H A W T O M A N I U T D N R I
D T T I R P V D E S M I H A Z M T A B R R P
E H E S E I A A N R A A D T M Y N E A E A N
N G E T C W F I T N L W E E I N O N D H C A
D I N R N I A T R I O O R R I W O N E T U C
O N A U A M M H A D R N U E D R B O Y U D I
N S C H D S A A A W I A S I A T O N C O A R
T H M E T P N H G G A S G H E I C A G S U E
S O Y V S A S G H I O Y S R E D I R W O L M
T B B O A A O T I N N Y U B A D G I R L S A
O E D L L E S N G S M E K N A M C I G A M I
P Y S S E Y E Y N O B E W O O D S T O C K S
T H G I L E D N O O N R E T F A E V O L Y M

- | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| AFTERNOON DELIGHT | DREAM ON | MAGIC MAN | SHE'S GONE |
| AMERICAN PIE | DREAM WEAVER | MAJIN STREET | SGNS |
| AMERICAN WOMAN | DRIFT AWAY | MARGARITAVILLE | SOUTHERN NIGHTS |
| ANNIE'S SONG | EBONY EYES | MY LOVE | SUMMER NIGHTS |
| BAD GIRLS | FIRE AND RAIN | MY SHARONA | SUNDOWN |
| BARRACUDA | HELP ME | NIGHT FEVER | SUPERSTAR |
| BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY | IMAGINE | PHOTOGRAPH | THE GAMBLER |
| BROTHER LOUIE | LAST DANCE | PIANO MAN | WITHOUT YOU |
| CRAZY ON YOU | LET IT BE | REUNITED | WOODSTOCK |
| DELTA DAWN | LOVE HURTS | ROSE GARDEN | Y.M.C.A. |
| DON'T STOP | LOW RIDER | SHADOW DANCING | YOU'RE SIXTEEN |

Yesterday's Solution

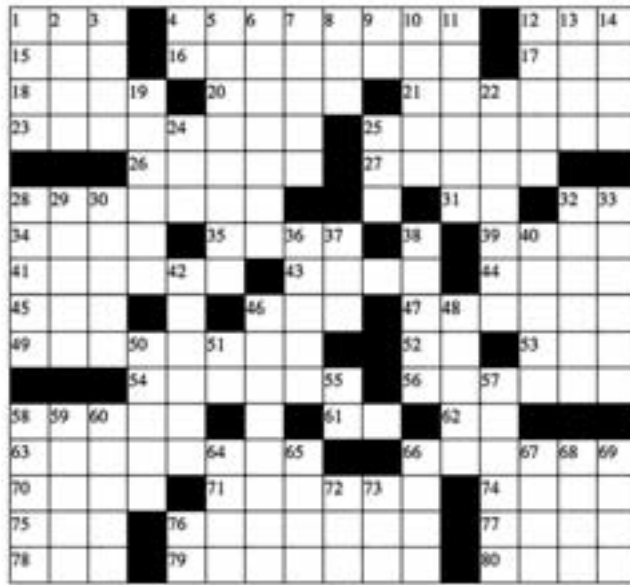
More 1950's Songs

I M W A L K I N R E B E L R O U S E R
P L N I L R A D E L T T I L E S A M Y
A Y E W S E E E Y B E H S I E S S Y L
L E L G H E U R R L L L E A M T N R E
L N P O D I C N L I L U C W A A M T R
S O A O A E T I E E F R E G I Y M E E
H H S D S L C E B V U N G M T N I A C
O Y O N Y U M E L I A E O I O U O H N
O E R I L E H O S I R Y L L O N A F I
K N O G E T L E S L G A L L U N D L S
U O L H U A A O E T N H E E T O S A O
P M L T R N T E O G I T I N O S M Y
G E I I C I T E S O U R L N W O E I D
O E N R E T H R B O M L O R I K L N N
D T S E B I E M L Y Y O A W U N E G A
D A T N T P H O N L A T T J N E G O D
R J O E N I O T A N A M D N A S R M
I O N O O T P C H A N C E S A R E L I
B B E O D V E D O O L B G N U O Y E

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| ALL SHOOK UP | FLAMINGO | LUCILLE | SOUL ON FIRE |
| ALMOST GROWN AT THE HOP | GET A JOB | MAYBE | STAGGER LEE |
| BIRD DOG | GOODNIGHT IRENE | MONEY HONEY | THE BELLS |
| BLUE MONDAY | I'M A MAN | MR SANDMAN | THE WIND |
| CHANCES ARE | I'M WALKIN' | PERSONALITY | TIPTINA |
| CHANTILLY LACE | JIM DANDY | REBEL ROUSER | TOM DOOLEY |
| CRY | JUKE | ROLLIN' STONE | TRY ME |
| DON'T BE CRUEL | LITTLE DARLIN' | SEA CRUISE | WHITE LIGHTNING |
| EL PASO | LONELY AVENUE | SINCERELY | YOUNG BLOOD |
| | LOUIE LOUIE | SO WHAT | |

The hidden sentence is: PLEASE SEND ME SOMEONE TO LOVE

Crossword 2072



ACROSS

- The compass point midway between south and southwest.
- Cut or impressed into a surface.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
- In an adroit manner.
- A boy or man.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- Close-fitting pants of heavy denim for casual wear (usually in the plural).
- Any disease of the throat or fauces marked by spasmodic attacks of intense suffocative pain.
- Open land usually with peaty soil covered with heather and bracken and moss.
- Any of several plants of the genus *Cassia*.
- Someone whose business is advertising.
- Harmed or injured or spoiled.
- In operation or operational.
- Extremely robust.
- Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
- An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
- Any plant of the genus *Reseda*.
- United States lawyer and politician who formulated a production code that prescribed the moral content of United States films from 1930 to 1966 (1879-1954).
- Containing or filled with salt.
- A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
- Medium-sized penguins occurring in large colonies on the Adelie coast of Antarctica.
- Relating to abdominal delivery.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- A label made of cardboard or plastic or metal.
- South Asian deer with three-tined antlers.
- An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
- Intentional deception resulting in injury to another person.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- A game invented by American Indians.
- A former copper coin of Pakistan.
- (criminal law) A pleading describing some wrong or offense.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
- Having leadership guidance.
- A resident of Idaho.
- An informal term for a father.

DOWN

- A fraudulent business scheme.
- A cylindrical tower used for storing silage.
- A city in east central Texas.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- The capital and largest city of Chad.
- An island state in the West Indies in the southeastern Caribbean Sea.
- A partly sheltered anchorage.
- Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
- A state in New England.
- Either of two large African antelopes of the genus *Taurotragus* having short spirally twisted horns in both sexes.
- Generator consisting of a coil (the armature) that rotates between the poles of an electromagnet (the field magnet) causing a current to flow in the armature.
- Not contained in or deriving from the essential nature of something.
- (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
- (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
- Requiring secret or mysterious knowledge.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Ghana or its people or language.
- The act of slowing down or falling behind.
- An associate degree in applied science.
- Large west African tree having large palmately lobed leaves and axillary cymose panicles of small white flowers and one-winged seeds.
- (Old Testament) The Hebrew prophet who led the Israelites from Egypt across the Red sea on a journey known as the Exodus.
- Of or relating to cilia projecting from the surface of a cell.
- Nicaraguan statesman (born in 1945).
- A republic in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
- A republic on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Reticulum and Pictor.
- A woman's headscarf folded into a triangle and tied under the chin.
- English aristocrat who was the first wife of Prince Charles.
- Earlier a god.
- The square of a body of any size of type.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- Capital and largest city of Iraq.
- An area in which something acts or operates or has power or control.
- (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
- Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
- (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
- One of a pair of long straps (usually connected to the bit or the headpiece) used to control a horse.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- In bed.
- Offering fun and gaiety.
- The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- A state of southwestern India.
- The ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle.

Yesterday's Solution

T D T A N I M A T O R A D E
W H Y R E N E G A D E U R L
B A R D E F O R M E D D A L
A W A K E L W E I B A B A
K A N N A D A E L I A D A S
N A E M U C B C
B A I C F E S C U E C A B
A R K I L D E E R M A F A
B E M A D I A M A R A B
A R A R A T B L A D D E R Y
R E N A M E L A S C A R
T B D N A K H A L K A
P R I A M M A T E S A E K
R A G T A G B E R R A M B A
A K U L O N D O N E R N A B
T E A S A M A N A L A A B A

Daily SuDoku

	4	2			9
				9	
	2		3		5 8
5	3		4	6	1
	8				3 6
		1	9		3 2
	2 3		9		7
		1			
7				4 9	

Yesterday's Solution

7	8	9	5	3	4	1	6	2
4	3	2	1	8	6	5	7	9
1	5	6	7	2	9	3	8	4
6	9	4	2	7	5	8	3	1
3	1	5	9	4	8	7	2	6
2	7	8	6	1	3	4	9	5
9	6	3	8	5	1	2	4	7
5	4	7	3	9	2	6	1	8
8	2	1	4	6	7	9	5	3

TV Listings



01:20 Check Point
03:10 Rogue One: A Star Wars Story
05:30 Beyond The Edge
07:25 X-Men
09:15 Rogue One: A Star Wars Story
11:35 The Mask Of Zorro
14:00 Star Trek Beyond
16:05 Beyond Skyline
18:00 Renegades
19:50 The Wolverine
22:00 Moonstrapped: Target Earth
23:30 Anti-Social



00:50 The Crocodile Hunter: Best Of Steve Irwin
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 I'm Alive
03:35 In Search Of The Giant Anaconda
04:25 Lone Star Law
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Wild Mexico
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Vet On The Loose
08:00 Vet On The Loose
08:25 Keeping Up With The Kruger
09:15 Animal Cops Houston
10:10 Lone Star Law
11:05 The Crocodile Hunter: Best Of Steve Irwin
12:00 Wild Mexico
12:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
13:50 In Search Of The Giant Anaconda
14:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
15:40 North Woods Law
16:35 I'm Alive
17:30 Africa's Super Seven
18:25 Animal Cops Houston
19:20 Air Jaws: Walking With Great Whites
20:15 Vet Gone Wild
21:10 Missouri Mountain Family
22:05 Wild Hawaii
23:00 I'm Alive
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees



00:10 Mum
00:40 Friday Night Dinner
01:05 Friday Night Dinner
01:30 Holby City
02:25 Doctors
02:55 Doctors
03:30 Father Brown
04:15 Death In Paradise
05:15 Stella
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Holby City
08:00 Casualty
08:50 Father Brown
09:40 Death In Paradise
10:40 Casualty
11:30 Casualty
12:25 Holby City
13:20 Father Brown
14:10 Death In Paradise
15:05 Casualty
16:00 Doctors
18:30 The Coroner
19:20 The Coroner
20:10 Line Of Duty
21:15 Maigret
22:55 Father Brown
23:45 Doctors



00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
02:00 American Murder
02:55 Ms. Murder
03:50 The First 48
04:45 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
05:30 Cold Case Files

06:15 Crimes That Shook Australia
07:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
08:00 It Takes A Killer
08:20 The First 48
09:05 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
09:50 Cold Case Files
10:35 Crimes That Shook Australia
11:30 Crimes That Shook Australia
12:25 Crimes That Shook Britain
13:20 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
14:16 Evil Up Close
15:10 It Takes A Killer
15:40 It Takes A Killer
16:05 The First 48
17:00 Cold Case Files
18:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
19:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
20:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
21:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
22:00 It Takes A Killer



00:05 Tosh.0
00:30 Another Period
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:20 South Park (Digital)
01:45 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
02:10 Tosh.0
02:35 Another Period
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.0
03:50 Tosh.0
04:15 Sweat Inc.
05:05 House Of Food
05:55 Ridiculousness
07:10 Friendszone
07:35 Friendszone
08:00 Lip Sync Battle
08:25 Lip Sync Battle
08:50 Sweat Inc.
09:40 Detroiters
10:05 Detroiters
10:30 Detroiters
10:55 Lip Sync Battle
11:20 Lip Sync Battle
11:45 Key And Peele
13:00 Ridiculousness
13:25 Ridiculousness
13:50 Workaholics
14:15 Workaholics
14:40 Detroiters
15:55 Impractical Jokers
16:20 Impractical Jokers
16:45 Impractical Jokers
17:10 Takeshis Castle Thailand
17:35 Takeshis Castle Thailand
18:25 Lip Sync Battle
18:47 Lip Sync Battle
19:10 Friends
19:40 Friends
20:10 Friends
20:35 Corporate
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Jo Koy: Don't Make Him Angry
22:25 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
22:50 Tosh.0
23:15 Tosh.0
23:40 Jo Koy: Don't Make Him Angry



00:30 Weather Top Tens
01:20 How It's Made
01:45 How It's Made
02:10 My Cat From Hell
03:00 Tanked
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Weather Top Tens
06:20 How It's Made
06:40 How It's Made
07:00 Destroyed In Seconds
07:25 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:50 My Cat From Hell
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Ultimate Survival
11:10 Destroyed In Seconds

11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Weather Top Tens
14:30 How It's Made
14:55 How It's Made
15:20 My Cat From Hell
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
16:35 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 My Cat From Hell
17:50 Tanked
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 How It's Made
21:35 How It's Made
22:00 Xtreme Waterparks
22:25 Xtreme Waterparks
22:50 Ultimate Survival
23:40 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie



00:50 Gucci Crimes Of Fashion: People Magazine...
01:45 Someone You Thought You Knew
02:40 American Monster
03:35 Broken Trust
04:30 The Perfect Murder
05:25 Grave Secrets
06:20 Blood Relatives
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 California Investigator
08:25 Reasonable Doubt
09:15 Disappeared
10:10 A Crime To Remember
11:05 Blood Relatives
12:00 Bride Killa
12:55 Reasonable Doubt
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Grave Secrets
15:40 Blood Relatives
16:35 The Perfect Murder
17:30 American Monster
18:25 Disappeared
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Grave Secrets
21:10 Blood Relatives
22:05 The 1980s: The Deadliest Decade
23:00 The Devil Speaks
23:55 American Monster



00:10 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:00 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
07:25 Raven's Home
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Stuck In The Middle
08:20 Bizaardvark
08:45 K.C. Undercover
09:10 Bunk'd
09:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:25 Tangled: The Series
10:50 Tangled: The Series
11:15 Bizaardvark

11:40 Bizaardvark
12:05 Liv And Maddie
12:30 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
12:45 Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse Special
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 K.C. Undercover
13:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
15:00 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
15:15 Bunk'd
15:40 K.C. Undercover
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:10 A.N.T. Farm
16:35 Bizaardvark
17:00 Tangled: The Series
17:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
17:50 Raven's Home
18:15 Stuck In The Middle
18:40 Bunk'd
19:05 K.C. Undercover
19:30 Bizaardvark
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Raven's Home
20:25 Liv And Maddie
20:50 K.C. Undercover
21:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:20 A.N.T. Farm
21:45 Bizaardvark
22:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:35 Stuck In The Middle
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:50 Lolirock



00:15 The Lion Guard
00:45 Elena Of Avalor
01:10 Minnie's Bow-Toons
01:15 Zou
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:00 P.J. Masks
02:25 P.J. Masks
02:50 The Hive
03:00 Zou
03:15 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 The Hive
04:30 The Hive
04:40 Zou
04:55 Zou
05:10 Zou
05:25 The Hive
05:35 The Hive
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
06:35 The Hive
06:45 P.J. Masks
08:00 Disney Muppet Babies
08:20 Puppy Dog Pals
08:35 P.J. Masks
08:55 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:10 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:29 Vampirina
09:45 Vampirina
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Elena Of Avalor
11:00 Puppy Dog Pals
12:00 Disney Muppet Babies
12:20 Paprika
12:30 Paprika
12:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:40 P.J. Masks
14:40 Paprika
14:50 Paprika
15:00 Claude
15:20 Claude
15:40 Trulli Tales
15:55 Trulli Tales
16:10 Paprika
16:20 Paprika
16:30 Vampirina
17:25 Disney Muppet Babies
17:40 Paprika
17:50 Paprika
18:00 Claude Shorts
18:25 Chip And Dale's Nutty Tales
18:30 Puppy Dog Pals

18:45 Puppy Dog Pals
19:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:30 Vampirina
19:45 Vampirina
20:00 P.J. Masks
20:15 P.J. Masks
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Elena Of Avalor
21:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
21:30 Sofia The First
22:00 Puppy Dog Pals
22:15 Puppy Dog Pals
22:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
23:01 Vampirina
23:20 Vampirina
23:40 P.J. Masks
23:55 P.J. Masks



00:15 Fast N' Loud
01:05 Cooper's Treasure
01:50 The Island With Bear Grylls
02:35 Man v Expert
03:20 Fast N' Loud
04:05 Alaskan Bush People
04:50 Deadliest Catch
05:35 Storage Hunters UK
06:00 The Caravan Show
06:23 Dallas Car Sharks
06:45 Storage Hunters UK
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaskan Bush People
08:20 The Caravan Show
08:45 Dallas Car Sharks
09:10 Deadliest Catch
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 Deadliest Catch
11:30 Fast N' Loud
12:20 The Caravan Show
12:43 Dallas Car Sharks
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Deadliest Catch
14:40 Fast N' Loud
15:30 Cooper's Treasure
16:15 The Island With Bear Grylls
17:05 Man v Expert
17:50 Abandoned Engineering
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Fast N' Loud
20:15 Fast N' Loud
21:00 Diesel Brothers
21:50 Trans Am
22:40 Bowman Gray
23:30 Gold Rush



00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Booster
01:00 Booster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Booster
03:20 Booster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:10 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
05:29 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
07:00 Milo Murphy's Law
07:14 Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse Special
07:29 Big City Greens
08:00 Furiki Wheels
08:29 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
09:00 Phineas And Ferb
09:29 Phineas And Ferb
10:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
11:00 Counterfeit Cat
11:29 Booster
12:00 Lab Rats
12:29 Lab Rats
13:00 Phineas And Ferb
13:29 Furiki Wheels

14:00 Lab Rats
14:29 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
15:00 Milo Murphy's Law
15:31 Furiki Wheels
16:00 DuckTales
16:31 Space Chickens In Space
16:45 Space Chickens In Space
17:00 Big City Greens
17:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
18:00 Disney 11
18:29 Lab Rats Elite Force
20:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
20:31 Space Chickens In Space
20:45 Space Chickens In Space
21:00 Furiki Wheels
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Phineas And Ferb
22:15 Furiki Wheels
22:30 Big City Greens
22:45 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:05 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
00:55 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
01:50 E! News
02:50 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Botched
12:00 E! News Middle East
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
19:00 E! News
20:00 Very Cavallari
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Model Squad



00:10 One Night With My Ex
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 This Time Next Year
04:20 Diana And The Paparazzi
05:15 One Night With My Ex
06:15 Guess This House
07:10 The Chase
08:05 This Time Next Year
09:00 Diana And The Paparazzi
09:55 One Night With My Ex
10:55 Guess This House
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Guess This House
15:10 The Chase
16:00 The Voice Kids 2018
18:50 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 The Voice Kids 2018
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Clash Of Warriors
01:00 United Stuff Of America
02:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
03:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 The Universe
05:30 Clash Of Warriors
06:20 United Stuff Of America
07:10 Decoding The Past
08:00 United Stuff Of America
09:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
10:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
11:00 Ancient Aliens
12:00 The Universe
13:00 Clash Of Warriors
14:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
15:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
16:00 Ancient Aliens

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Wisdom rather than knowledge is what counts most in your life to you now. You have been down troubled roads and turned each stumbling block into a stepping stone. You have lived and learned and may have an opportunity to share this wisdom with a troubled friend. Don't get discouraged if your advice is overlooked. Remember, no one could have changed your mind about some of the mistakes you made. Realize others too, may have to experience trouble to learn the lessons that are to be learned in their lives. You are a good friend and a good person. You may find today you are shown appreciation and gratitude for who you are to others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may encounter an unusual amount of stress today. Counter it by taking time for yourself to do what you enjoy most. Paint, write, or escape with a good book. Yoga or meditation may even be something you should consider making a part of your daily routine. Be careful not to shut yourself off from those who care about you. Their support is important. Do not try to conquer every problem on your own.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Teamwork is strongly indicated, but those you work with aren't fond of your day dreamy mood today. Your required tasks pull you into a most productive cycle and you overcome any obstacles you may encounter. You could have a secret you're having trouble keeping; consider the consequences of sharing this. Someone - a younger person - could demand that you decide today when you're just not ready; this could lead to some difficulties. You have an understanding heart when it comes to a friend in need. Sticking to your guns in a sticky situation could prove to be your best bet.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Are you getting mixed signals? That's not unusual. Feelings are complicated, and what one wants from you may change daily, or even hourly. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification. Feelings are abstract. Actions are concrete. Find out what you need to do. Take action and do not look back. Keep your eyes on the prize.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today is a day you have been longing for. You need an escape. Let your hair down and head for wide open spaces. Take a ride in a convertible. Just get outside and breathe in the fresh air. You crave a sense of freedom. Decide exactly what you want out of life and make it happen. This is a great time to make clear decisions about your future.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You will make a new acquaintance today. Don't assume the person is insignificant. There may be connections or influence here that will lead to opportunities for you. Or, it may be that this is the very person you need in your life right now. Be accessible. Make it clear that you are open to what the person has to offer. You may find sharing your feelings openly with others, helps them open up to you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You have a great desire for change. Your career or something concerning your profession seem to be preventing it. You have a deep desire for self-growth and change now. It seems if you continue on the same career path this will be a huge interference for you. You may find that your sensitivity is stifled by your job requirements. Too much work and no play is never a good thing. Find your balance.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Wisdom rather than knowledge is what counts most in your life to you now. You have been down troubled roads and turned each stumbling block into a stepping stone. You have lived and learned and may have an opportunity to share this wisdom with a troubled friend. Don't get discouraged if your advice is overlooked. Remember, no one could have changed your mind about some of the mistakes you made. Realize others too, may have to experience trouble to learn the lessons that are to be learned in their lives. You are a good friend and a good person. You may find today you are shown appreciation and gratitude for who you are to others.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today is a great day to just go with the flow. Go ahead and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves to you. Don't be surprised if taking a chance brings great reward. You may feel extra close to a loved one today. Aris, this may be the day you learn to truly learn to love and an appreciate yourself for who you have become and where you are in life. You have been feeling a that need to be needed and appreciated and today may just the day you receive that reward you have been longing for.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Let your hair down and take a drive. A horseback ride would be even better. Turn the music up loud and throw your cares out of the window. Find an escape and route to peace. Enjoy this day and all it brings. Spoil yourself. You may find you are more materialistic than usual. A shopping trip is in order to satisfy this need. Head to the mall and go for it! You work hard and deserve to be free from want.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Close relationships take on more emotional depth, power and importance in your world now. You feel as if you are needed and cared for. When these two feelings are missing you automatically have a feeling of uneasiness come over you. You were not made to be alone. Expressing your desires and vulnerability, helps draw your special someone closer to you. You may find the more you allow yourself to open up the closer you two become.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are being noticed in the workplace. It may become very obvious to your superiors at work that you are talented beyond the title you hold. You may find that you are in line for a promotion or you will be assigned a special project due to your leadership abilities. Everyone has their eye on you. From your personal life to your career, you are beginning to outshine those around you. You may find your analytical skills are in top shape and you are not only able to solve every problem you come across but may be finding satisfaction in spending your spare time solving puzzles or playing word games. You are in the mood to exercise your mind.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

Health

Kohli bats for rescue of Jaipur tourist elephant

NEW DELHI: India's cricket captain Virat Kohli called yesterday for a captive elephant being maltreated and used for tourist rides in a tourist hotspot to be relocated to a rehabilitation facility. Kohli's plea comes after a group of American tourists had witnessed eight men violently beating the elephant at the famous Amer Fort in Jaipur last year. Kohli on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India has written a letter to the state minister of Rajasthan to rescue the elephant, known as "Number 44".

"As a professional cricketer, I am proud to represent our country, but when I learned about the hateful attack on Number 44 last June, I felt so ashamed," wrote Kohli, currently on tour in Australia. "Violence against animals is completely unacceptable, not to mention illegal, and our nation cannot fail elephants this way. ...I beseech you to start helping them by transferring Number 44 to a reputable rehabilitation facility where she

can get the care she needs, socialize with others of her kind, and live free from chains, abuse, and fear."

Kohli's letter follows PETA India's complaint to the state's forest department, which resulted in a notice being issued to Number 44's custodian, Wasid Khan, holding him responsible for the abuse. Tens of thousands of tourists visit the Amer Fort, a medieval complex on a hilltop outside Jaipur also known as the Amber Fort, every year and many opt to enter its imposing gates on an elephant.

A report commissioned by the Animal Welfare Board of India early this year revealed that 19 elephants used to ferry visitors were blind or vision impaired while nine others had tuberculosis. The report also said that the captive elephants were unfit for safaris and that carrying people on their backs endangered both the elephants and tourists alike.—AFP



JAIPUR: In this file photo foreign tourists get off elephants after riding them into Amber Fort also known as Amer Fort near Jaipur. — AFP

CLINIC

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Consultant Pediatrician

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

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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMEED

Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates – Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

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Kuwait Times
248 33 199

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- ◆ Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- ◆ Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- ◆ Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- ◆ Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

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@Malhajry

DR. FAHAD S. BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:

- ◆ Dermatology board certified.
- ◆ Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- ◆ Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- ◆ Reference reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- ◆ Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- ◆ Laser Treatments.
- ◆ Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- ◆ Body & Face Contouring.
- ◆ Injectable Fillers & Botox.

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DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Specialized in:

- 1- Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

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- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society

Specialized in:

- ◆ Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- ◆ Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- ◆ Thyroid surgery.
- ◆ Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- ◆ Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- ◆ Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- ◆ Treatment of snoring.
- ◆ Treatment of vertigo.

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Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, Including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally Invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

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Classifieds



Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171	FlyDubai	22414400
Jazeera Airways	177	Qatar Airways	22423888
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536	KLM	22425747
American Airlines	22087425	Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
	22087426	British Airways	22425635
Jet Airways	22924455	Air France	22430224

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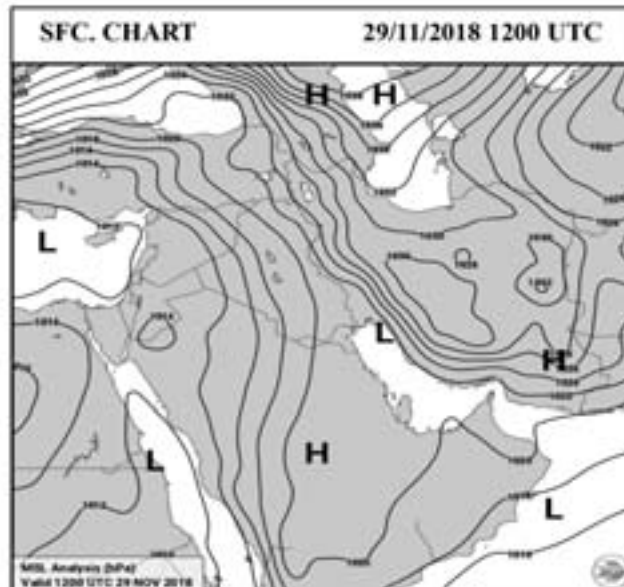
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate variable wind to southerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light to moderate southerly wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	17 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	13 °C
ABDALY	24 °C	12 °C
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C
JAHRA	25 °C	13 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	21 °C	15 °C
SALMIYAH	21 °C	17 °C
AHMADI	21 °C	17 °C
NUWAISIB	23 °C	15 °C
WAFRA	23 °C	11 °C
SALMY	23 °C	12 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	11/30	Partly cloudy	25 °C	13 °C	S-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Saturday	12/01	Partly cloudy	26 °C	15 °C	S-SE	12 - 35 km/h
Sunday	12/02	Mostly Sunny with a chance for light fog forming over some areas	26 °C	15 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 38 km/h
Monday	12/03	Mostly Sunny	24 °C	14 °C	NW-VRB	12 - 35 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:00
Sunrise	06:24
Zuhr	11:37
Asr	14:30
Sunset	16:49
Isha	18:11

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	13 °C
MAX. RH	99 %
MIN. RH	44 %
MAX. Wind	NW 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Business

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2018

38 Stocks, bonds rise as market prices in more dovish Fed



39 Sri Lanka parliament blocks cash flow to Rajapakse's office



40 Renault, Nissan, Mitsubishi reaffirm commitment to alliance



Trump heads to G20 summit

Saudi crown prince arrives in Argentina



BUENOS AIRES: Handout picture released by the G20 Press Office show Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman upon his arrival in Ezeiza International airport in Buenos Aires province. —AFP

BUENOS AIRES: US President Donald Trump jets to Argentina for a G20 summit, keen to do battle with China on trade and sharpening his rhetoric against Russia over Ukraine yesterday. The weekend summit is confronted with increasingly dire warnings, by the International Monetary Fund among others, of the potential harm faced by the world economy from Trump's trade wars. US President Donald Trump's trade war with China is a dominant theme at the weekend summit but one sideshow is how leaders deal with the presence of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The de facto Saudi ruler stepped onto Argentine soil bidding to shrug off international outrage over the murder last month of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Prince Mohammed appears to be enjoying a pass from Washington. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he had seen no "direct" evidence linking the prince to Khashoggi's murder at a Saudi consulate in Turkey.

G20 leaders, whose countries account for

four-fifths of the world's economic output, first met in November 2008 to forge a united front against the global financial crisis. A decade on, that unity has vanished as the "America First" Trump shreds the consensus underpinning international trade and other G20 countries such as Brazil, Italy and Mexico turn to populist leaders. Trump has already rattled global markets by enacting tariffs on the bulk of Chinese imports, and is threatening to go further in January.

He will press Chinese President Xi Jinping to avert the stepped-up tariffs by throwing open China's markets to US competition and protecting foreign companies' intellectual property. On Wednesday, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer slammed Beijing for failing to offer "meaningful reform" on aggressive trade policies, and threatened tariffs on Chinese autos. But how far can Xi go in overhauling the model that has powered China to second place in the world economic rankings?

He did vow on Wednesday that China would

boost protection of intellectual property. But foreign firms in China complain that such promises are all too routine and ring hollow. At best, analysts say, there will be a temporary truce at the G20 to give both Trump and Xi something to crow about. French President Emmanuel Macron warned against the risk of "a tete-a-tete between China and the United States and of a destructive trade war for all" ahead of the summit, in an interview with Argentine daily La Nacion.

"If we do not show concrete progress, our international meetings become useless and even counterproductive," he said. There is doubt that a separate planned encounter at the G20 between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin will even go ahead, after Russian security forces boarded and detained three Ukrainian vessels. Trump on Wednesday expressed "deep concern" over the weekend incident near Crimea, and has threatened to cancel the meeting. But the Kremlin said it remained on the calendar, as Putin defended the action.

Democracies and authoritarians

Meanwhile the US, Canada and Mexico are expected on Friday to sign a revamped version of the North American trade pact NAFTA, which Trump excoriated when running for president. If that negotiation has averted one trade war, others are brewing with Trump threatening to impose tariffs on foreign car imports, targeting Europe and Japan in particular. In a pre-G20 report, the IMF said the auto tariffs could cut three-fourths of a percent off the global economy.

Britain's "Brexit" separation from the European Union is another threat to global growth, IMF chief Christine Lagarde said. Like Trump and Xi, Prime Minister Theresa May will arrive in Buenos Aires late on Thursday to bring another intriguing subplot to the world's pre-eminent economic forum. Britain and Argentina went to war over the Falkland/Malvinas islands in 1982, and May will be the first British leader to visit the Argentine capital.—AFP

Business

Stocks, bonds rise as market prices in more dovish Fed

World stocks hit highest in two weeks

LONDON: A more dovish tone from Fed Chairman Jerome Powell helped to revive risk appetite yesterday, driving world stocks to their highest in more than two weeks, as European equities joined a global rally and core bond yields fell. European stocks rallied, with the leading euro zone index up 0.8 percent, and tech, mining and autos sectors - the worst hit by recent losses - scoring the biggest gains.

Yields on German bonds fell, tracking a decline in US Treasury yields, after Powell said on Wednesday that US interest rates were "just below" neutral, less than two months after saying rates were probably "a long way" from that point. "Given the volatility you've seen recently, it's probably quite reasonable to expect a little bit of a bounce. That being said, given the headwinds out there I can't see it being sustained," said Gary Waite, portfolio manager at Walker Crips in London.

Powell's comments triggered a rally in US stocks and pushed the US Treasury 10-year bond yield as low as 3.01 percent yesterday, its lowest level since mid-September and down from this month's high of 3.25 percent. The yield on two-year Treasury bonds fell for the third straight session. The dollar, which has outperformed bonds and the S&P 500 this year thanks to rising yields

and trade tariffs, fell back on Powell's comments. The dollar index inched down to 96.731 following an overnight loss of 0.6 percent.

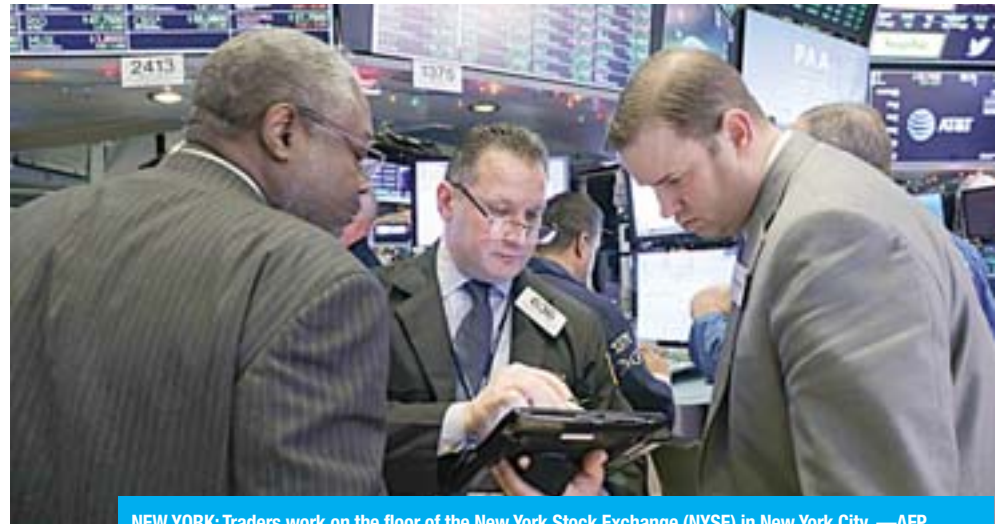
In Europe, Italy's government bond yields also dipped ahead of an auction of five- and 10-year bonds. Demand is expected to be much stronger than at last week's BTP Italia deal targeting retail investors. Italy's five-year bond yield dipped 4 bps to 2.36 percent and the closely-watched spread over Germany was at 294 bps. Italian debt has rallied this week as the government said it was ready to compromise with the European Union on its budget deficit target.

Brexit could trigger worse economic downturn



European stock gains came on the heels of a broadly positive session in Asia. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 0.6 percent, although the Shanghai Composite Index slipped 1 percent. Gains were tempered by investor jitters before trade talks between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday, during the G20 summit in Argentina. Analysts saw a chance of a knee-jerk rally in markets on any signs of progress, though substantive concessions would be needed for a more sustained recovery.

"Trade detente at the G20 is unlikely but it's not priced. Even with EM recouping relative performance since early October, a pretty severe



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. —AFP

trade downturn still looks priced in," said Citi analysts. Key to markets will be whether Xi can persuade Trump to postpone a sharp tariff hike on Chinese goods due to take effect Jan 1. In currencies, the euro edged 0.04 percent higher at \$1.1370 after advancing 0.7 percent the previous day.

Sterling lost 0.4 percent to \$1.2771 against the dollar after Bank of England Governor Mark Carney warned a disorderly Brexit could trigger a worse economic downturn for the UK than the financial crisis. In commodities, oil prices regained

some ground from losses in the previous session, but an increase in US crude inventories and uncertainty in the run to an OPEC meeting next week kept markets under pressure.

US crude futures were up 0.3 percent at \$50.41 per barrel after sliding 2.5 percent the previous day. Brent crude LCO; rose 0.2 percent to \$59.69 per barrel. It has slumped 21 percent this month, during which it fell to a 13-month trough of \$58.41. Emerging market stocks hit a three-week high, with the index up 0.7 percent as investors bought back into risky assets.—Reuters

Rio backs \$2.6 bln iron ore mine in West Australia

MELBOURNE: Global miner Rio Tinto yesterday formally pledged to plough billions of dollars into a futuristic iron ore mine in the red dirt of Western Australia, upping expected costs by nearly a fifth while lifting its projected output. Approval for the \$2.6 billion facility at Koodaideri, in the resource-rich Pilbara area, marks the biggest investment commitment by the world's No. 2 iron ore miner since 2016, when it signed off on a \$5.3 billion underground expansion of the Oyu Tolgoi copper mine in Mongolia.

Rio has previously called Koodaideri, 110 kilometers from the nearest township, its first "intelligent" mine. It will use systems that connect driverless trucks, trains and drills for the first time, using data analytics to optimize production, improve safety and cut downtime, using just a fraction of its Pilbara workforce. "It will be our most advanced mine," Chris Salisbury, Rio Tinto Iron Ore's chief executive told reporters on a conference call.

"There is no infrastructure at Koodaideri whatsoever, so that means we're having to put in power, water, access roads, a camp, a product stockyard, 166 kilometers of rail."

The mine is expected to underpin Rio's production of its flagship Pilbara Blend iron ore, sustaining its current output of more than 330 million tons a year which it draws from 16 mines in the region. Koodaideri will employ 600 permanent workers, the miner said. It has 12,000-strong work force in the iron-rich Pilbara, where rivals BHP Group and Fortescue Metals Group are also digging new mines. "It's going to be something out of 'Blade Runner'," independent Australian mining analyst Peter Strachan told Reuters on the phone, referring to the 1982 cult sci-fi film.

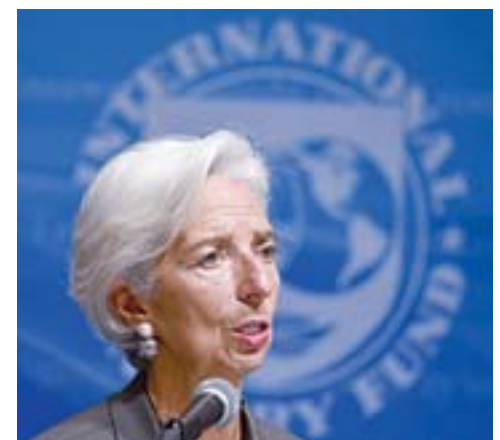
Strachan said it was difficult to quantify exactly how automation would shape the workforce, and the company declined to provide further details, but added the mine will likely require fewer unskilled workers. "Instead of a guy with a shovel, now you've got a guy with an iPad," Strachan said. "The cost of labor in the Pilbara compared to other parts of the world is dramatically higher and so companies have really been looking at any ways to do things automatically." —Reuters

IMF to approve Ukraine loan after Dec 10

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund board will meet to approve a new loan deal for Ukraine "promptly" after December 10, once the country implements key policy steps including raising gas and heating rates, IMF chief Christine Lagarde said Wednesday. Lagarde issued a statement following a telephone call with Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko, who earlier in the day imposed martial law for 30 days amid the escalating conflict with Russia.

The brief IMF statement made no mention of the conflict, which flared after Russia seized three Ukrainian ships on Sunday off the coast of Crimea. "We reaffirmed the positive and cooperative relationship between Ukraine and the IMF," Lagarde said following the call. The IMF last month reached an agreement with Kiev on economic policies that would unlock a new loan deal that will provide nearly \$4 billion over 14 months.

"All prior actions are expected to be completed by the Ukrainian authorities by December 10, 2018, and a meeting of the executive board to discuss the stand-by arrangement would be convened promptly after that," La-



TOKYO: In this file photo International Monetary Fund (IMF) managing director Christine Lagarde speaks during a press conference in Tokyo. —AFP

garde said. A key step was approval of the 2019 budget last week with a deficit of about 2.3 percent of GDP. A gas price hike is a sensitive issue for the cash-strapped country as its pro-Western leadership faces presidential and parliamentary elections in 2019.

But the IMF has stressed the need for continuing to protect low-income households. Ukraine has not received any money from the IMF since April 2017, when the fund released \$1 billion for the cash-strapped country to repay loans. It had received less than \$9 billion of the original \$17.5 billion package.—AFP

Business

Sri Lanka parliament blocks cash flow to Rajapakse's office

Rajapakse's govt unable to present 2019 budget

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's parliament voted yesterday to block any spending by the prime minister's office, further paralyzing a government adrift from weeks of conflict as two rivals claim to run the country. The island has been in crisis since October 26 when the president sacked prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and replaced him with Mahinda Rajapakse, a charismatic but divisive former leader. Wickremesinghe has refused to stand aside and commands a majority in parliament, which has twice voted against Rajapakse's leadership and demanded he vacate the top office.

The war-era strongman has doubled down and backed by President Maithripala Sirisena, has named a cabinet and assumed duties as head of a disputed government without parliamentary support. In a further effort to undercut his power, parliament moved a resolution cutting off funds to the prime min-

ister's office, depriving Rajapakse of the cash he needs to run government. "We propose to stop any spending because he is not holding the position of prime minister legally," said Ravi Karunanayake, a legislator from Wickremesinghe's party.

"This is a rogue government and parliament will take back control of finances through this motion." It worsens matters for the purported government headed by Rajapakse, which has been unable to present a budget for 2019 and risks entering the new year without parliamentary approval for any new spending. Moody's recently downgraded Sri Lanka's credit rating amid warnings the island could default on its considerable foreign debt. Meanwhile, two MPs defected from the Sirisena-Rajapakse faction yesterday to Wickremesinghe's camp, dealing a further blow to the ailing government unable to stamp its authority since last month. —AFP



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's former president and currently appointed Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, center, arrives at the parliament in Colombo. —AFP

US Fed chairman hints at higher rates following Trump attack

WASHINGTON: A day after President Donald Trump's latest attack on the US central bank, Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell hinted Wednesday the key lending rate would move higher but said there was no preset course. Powell said in a speech in New York that interest rates remained "low by historical standards" and still provided stimulus to the economy. And he said economists estimated the Fed's policy rate—at 2.25 percent—was "just below" the estimate of neutral, a rate that neither stimulates nor restrains the economy.

US stock markets jumped following the comments, as investors interpreted them to mean the central bank was close to the end of its tightening cycle, which has seen eight rate increases since December 2015 following the global financial crisis. The benchmark Dow Jones Industrial Average powered 2.5 percent higher, turning positive for the year after steep recent losses. "He said the magic words," Gregori Volokhine of Meeschaert Financial Services said. However, central bankers have never signaled they intend to stop raising rates once they hit neutral—which is a moving target and subject to debate.

Instead they will watch economic data, especially inflation. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said markets were reading too much into Powell's statement and with historically low unemployment the Fed may have no choice but to keep raising. With estimates of a "neutral" rate in the range of 2.5-3.5 percent, the Fed is "only one hike away

from the bottom end of the range but it remains three hikes from the middle of the range," Shepherdson said in a research note.

Democratic legitimacy

Trump on Tuesday again blasted his hand-picked chief of the US central bank, saying the Fed was "way off base" and the rate hikes undermined the work he was doing to juice the US economy. The Federal Reserve chairman has presided over three interest rate increases this year and is widely expected to hike again in December. "They're making a mistake because I have a gut and my gut tells me more sometimes than anybody else's brain can ever tell me," Trump said in an interview with The Washington Post.

In his speech to the New York Economic Club, Powell again stressed there was "no preset policy path" for interest rates and said the central bank had moved gradually, since "moving too fast would risk shortening the expansion." But keeping rates "too low for too long" could create other risks, including accelerating inflation, he said. "As always, our decisions on monetary policy will be designed to keep the economy on track," he said. But in response to questions he likened the policy process to walking through a dark room, forcing officials to slow down. "You feel your way more under uncertainty of this kind." Powell has dismissed the unprecedented political attacks from Trump, saying they have no influence on deliberations of the independent central bank.

But many economists warn that the attacks actually could pressure the central bank to raise rates to demonstrate its independence from political influence. Powell's speech was focused largely on a new Fed report on stability of the US financial system, but contained an unusual comment: "By clearly and transparently explaining our policies, we aim to strengthen the foundation of democratic legitimacy that enables the Fed to serve the needs of the American public." —AFP

Emerging cities could attract \$29 trillion in climate cash

KUALA LUMPUR: Cities in emerging markets could attract \$29 trillion in climate-related investments like green buildings and electric vehicles over the next decade, the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC) said yesterday. Researchers looked at climate action plans of cities with more than 500,000 people, focusing on six sectors: green buildings, public transport, electric vehicles, waste management, water treatment and renewable energy. "Getting the cities right is absolutely essential for climate," said Alzbeta Klein, the IFC's director for climate business. "They play a role in how climate looks and how it defines for the next generation ahead of us." More than half the global population lives in urban areas, according to the IFC. Cities consume over two-thirds of the world's energy, and account for more than 70 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions.

Green investments, targets and policies in cities will be crucial if countries are to meet the emissions reduction targets endorsed by governments for the 2015 Paris Agreement to curb climate change. Green building codes, which include reducing energy consumption, will account for \$24.7 trillion of climate investment opportunities in cities by 2030, the report said. Low-carbon transportation such

as energy-efficient public transport could attract \$1 trillion during the same period, while electric vehicles could see \$1.6 trillion in investments.

Clean energy could bring \$842 billion of investments, while water may attract \$1 trillion, and waste management \$200 billion. Over half of the total estimated investment potential will be needed in East Asian and Pacific cities as they grow and spend on real estate, infrastructure and transport, said Aditi Maheshwari, lead author of the study. "Cities are driving economic growth in East Asia and the Pacific - they account for over 80 percent of GDP in most countries," Maheshwari told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The scale of this economic opportunity is drawing people into the cities and we anticipate an additional 1.2 billion people will live in Asian cities in the next 35 years." The rate of change in China is likely to account for a significant portion of climate-related investments in the region, she added. For cities to attract investment and create a pipeline of bankable projects, they need the ability to borrow money and develop innovative methods like green bonds and public-private partnerships, Klein said.

On Wednesday, C40 Cities, a network of cities pushing climate action, announced that nine cities would be given specialist support to develop sustainable infrastructure projects over the next two years. The cities - which include Bogota in Colombia, South Africa's Tshwane, and Quezon City in the Philippines - will get help from national and international experts to prepare financially sound business proposals for projects. Projects will include bike-sharing, cycle lanes, waste water treatment and rooftop solar energy, the C40 statement said.—Reuters

Business

Renault, Nissan, Mitsubishi reaffirm commitment to alliance

Ghosn remains in custody on financial misconduct allegations

PARIS: Automakers Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi reaffirmed their commitment to their alliance yesterday as company leaders held their first meeting since the shock arrest of boss Carlos Ghosn. "We remain fully committed to the Alliance," the three firms said in a joint statement as Ghosn remains in custody in Japan on allegations of financial misconduct. The talismanic Ghosn was seen as the glue binding together a complex three-way structure which counts as the world's top-selling auto company, with some 10.6 million vehicles rolling off the production lines last year.

His arrest revealed brewing resentment and unrest within the Franco-Japanese partnership. Nissan chief executive Nissan Hiroto Saikawa, Renault's interim boss Thierry Bollere and Mitsubishi's Osamu Masuko conversed via video, sources and the Nikkei daily reported. Issues of governance were not meant to be raised in the meeting and no vote was planned, the sources told AFP. In their joint statement yesterday, the three firms said their "alliance has achieved unparalleled success in the past two decades". The leaders of the three companies also sent an internal message that reassures employees that the alliance remains on track.

"We owe you this expression of cohesion and commitment to the Alliance today more than ever"



Alliance remains on track

said the statement, according to a copy consulted by AFP. "We are in close touch with each other and with our key stakeholders. All have expressed strong support and a shared desire to maintain our winning combination," it added. Renault is the dominant member of the alliance, holding 43 percent of the shares in Nissan, but the Japanese firm now outsells its French counterpart—sparking frustration in Tokyo.

French Finance minister Bruno Le Maire on Tuesday warned that there was no question of a change in the balance of power between Renault, which is 15 percent owned by the French state, and its Japanese partners. "There is a partnership which seems good to me, there is a good balance. There are cross-shareholdings between Renault and Nissan which should not change," Le Maire said on France's LCI news channel.

The rules of the alliance, based in the Netherlands, state that Renault and Nissan appoint five board members each but it is the French company which names the CEO while Nissan chooses the deputy. The CEO holds a decisive vote in the case of a tie in board decisions. While Ghosn has been ousted from Mitsubishi and Nissan, he remains CEO and chairman of Renault, albeit "incapacitated" for the moment, according to the French manufacturer. Le Maire insisted Renault should re-



AMSTERDAM: Alliance Senior Vice President, Renault-Nissan BV and Alliance CEO Office, Arnaud Deboeuf (center), leaves the Renault Nissan Mitsubishi group car maker headquarters in Amsterdam. —AFP

tain the top position in the alliance: "This rule should not change".

The partnership uses shared factories and joint purchasing power to keep down costs. These arrangements are not under threat, according to statements from both the Japanese and French sides. Ghosn and close aide Greg Kelly were arrested last week for allegedly conspiring to under-report Ghosn's income by around \$44 million—about half of what should have been reported—over five fiscal years until March 2015. The 64-year-old ty-

coon denies the allegations but has not been able to defend himself publicly while he is in a Tokyo detention centre.

Renault shares were up 0.9 percent in late morning trading in Paris, slightly outpacing the CAC 40 index. The stock tumbled nearly 10 percent in the wake of Ghosn's arrest but has since recovered half of that drop. Nissan gained 1.4 percent in Tokyo yesterday. Nissan's shares have also recovered much of the ground lost following Ghosn's arrest.—AFP

Mexico cuts economic forecast for AMLO's first year

MEXICO CITY: Mexico's central bank cut its economic growth forecast for 2019 on Wednesday, citing uncertainty over the policies that leftist President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador will pursue. In its quarterly report on the state of Latin America's second-largest economy, after Brazil, the Bank of Mexico predicted growth of 1.7 to 2.7 percent next year, down from 1.8 to 2.8 percent in its previous forecast.

The bank cited concerns about "economic activity and the country's capacity to generate an environment of confidence and certainty that will promote investment." Lopez Obrador, widely known as AMLO, begins his six-year term on Saturday. The anti-establishment leftist has vowed sweeping change to fight poverty and corruption—though he has also sought to soothe markets by promising fiscal discipline and business-friendly policies. That message has failed to fully calm jitters.

The Mexican stock market and peso have plunged multiple times since his landslide elec-

tion win on July 1. On Monday, stocks lost 4.1 percent to close at their lowest level since 2014 after a lawmaker allied with Lopez Obrador proposed putting pension funds under state control. Stocks and the currency also tumbled after Lopez Obrador canceled construction of a new \$13-billion airport for Mexico City—a project strongly supported by the business community—following a referendum on the issue that was marred by irregularities.

After that market rout, the central bank raised its key interest rate by 0.25 point to eight percent, near its all-time high of 8.25 percent, also citing uncertainty over Lopez Obrador's policies. The president-elect and his pick for finance minister, respected economist Carlos Urzua, have both sought to calm fears of a radical turn.

"We're going to make investors trust us. Those who invest in companies, in stocks, in the financial market, will have their investments assured and obtain good returns," Lopez Obrador said Tuesday, promising to impose no new taxes and pursue fiscally conservative policies. Market attention is now focused on Lopez Obrador's first budget, which he must send to Congress by December 15. Mexico's economy grew 0.8 percent in the third quarter, and the central bank forecasts growth of two to 2.4 percent for 2018.—AFP

Ad buyers skeptical as Snap looks beyond teens for growth

NEW YORK: Snap Inc has pinned its hopes on the over-35 crowd to revive user growth for its photo messaging app, a shift ad buyers said could backfire. Wooing older people to Snapchat, known for disappearing messages and cartoon selfie photo filters, could alienate its cult following of youngsters, ad buyers and other executives warned. Companies hoping to target young users may in turn move their ad dollars elsewhere, denting money-losing Snap's primary revenue source.

Look no further than Facebook Inc, warns Jenny Lang, senior vice president of integrated investment at full-service ad agency UM Worldwide, which counts Coca-Cola and Sony as clients. The social media platform has lost younger users in recent years while gaining older fans. "I hope they don't change too many things around; that's a fear in your head," Lang said about Snap, adding that younger audiences are harder to reach for advertisers as more apps compete for their time.

In August, research firm eMarketer estimated Facebook will lose 2.2 million users between 12 and 17 by 2022, though Facebook's 1.49 billion daily active users dwarfs Snapchat's 186 million. Pressure has mounted on seven-year-old Snap. Two straight quarters of user losses sent shares down by two-thirds from a February high. Snap declined to comment on its growth plans and relationships with advertisers.

Evan Spiegel, Snap's 28-year-old chief executive,



NEW YORK: A man takes a photograph of the front of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) with a Snap Inc. logo hung on the front of it shortly before the company's IPO in New York.—Reuters

first discussed broadening Snapchat's appeal in late 2017, and called adding users older than 34 a "marketing and communications challenge" on an October earnings call. A redesign rolled out by February 2018, which made it harder to re-watch friends' stories and separated those stories from publisher content, drew condemnation from Snap's base.

Snap has still managed to boost revenue with an easy to use self-serve ad platform. It is also hoping to gain more younger users outside the United States by fixing its glitchy Android app. But several in the ad industry said it now risks losing millennials to upstarts like short-form video app TikTok, which does not have paid ad spots, or rivals like Facebook's Instagram. There are signs Snap is luring some older users.—Reuters

Business

Trade war refugees race to relocate to Vietnam, Thailand

Global companies shift supply chains out of China

HONG KONG: Fred Perrotta spent four years building a network of Chinese suppliers for his line of trendy backpacks, but as soon as the United States announced tariffs on almost half of its Chinese imports, he started looking for suppliers in other countries. That process is now so far advanced it would be too late to reverse it even if US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping call a truce in their growing trade war at this week's G20 summit, the 33-year-old said.

Perrotta's company, Tortuga, is joining what industry experts say is the biggest shift in cross-border supply chains since China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001. The shift is creating stiff competition to secure new facilities in neighboring countries and rebuild supply chains outside of China, home to a fifth of global manufacturing. "Everyone is nervous and scrambling around," Perrotta said by phone from Oakland, California, where he recently took delivery of the first samples from a potential new supplier in Vietnam.

"Long-term, we will probably shift everything." The scramble is driven by the risk of more, and higher, US tariffs on China, and fears that nearby emerging economies can only accommodate new businesses on a "first come, first served" basis. Vietnam and Thailand are emerging as preferred destinations, but they still face capacity constraints ranging from red-tape to skilled labor and limited infrastructure.

Frenzied activity

Reuters interviews with more than a dozen company executives, trade lawyers and lobby groups in various industries revealed a frenzy of activity across Asia in recent months: executives are requesting product samples, touring industrial parks, hiring lawyers and meeting with of-

US carmakers enter belt tightening mode

NEW YORK: Auto executives have spoken glowingly of a future with emissions-free vehicles, smart transportation systems and cars that drive themselves. But in the interim, companies like General Motors—which on Monday unveiled major job cuts—face decidedly more mundane questions: How to respond to slowing US demand as higher interest rates bite into new car sales while more used vehicles are also entering the market?

"It's going to be a smaller market," Cox Automotive economist Charlie Chesbrough said of GM and Ford, which is likewise ex-

pected to eliminate jobs and perhaps shutter factories. Both GM and Ford want to be major players in autonomous driving and other newer technologies, an objective that will demand billions of dollars in new investment and could ultimately lead to more industry consolidation, analysts say.

"The pie is starting to shrink a little bit, or at least that's their view and they're trying to get themselves right-sized before things get much worse," Chesbrough said. Cox Automotive projects new US car sales will slow to 16.6 million units in 2019 and 16.5 million units in 2020, a drop below the 17.0 million level that sales are expected to again eclipse in 2018.

The forecast includes the effect of higher interest rates and the drag from a trove of leased cars manufactured during the boom period. But it does not assume an all-out trade war, which would further dent sales, Chesbrough said.

Nowhere to go but down

On Wednesday, US President Donald

Trump on Twitter threatened new tariffs on car imports, amplifying his response against GM, whose job cuts affect the politically crucial states of Michigan and Ohio. Auto cycles typically end with a five or 10 percent drop, a relatively modest decline that automakers take as a signal "to get their production house in order," said Nicholas Colas, co-founder of DataTrek Research.

"You know that once you're passed the peak, you have nowhere to go but down and that's what scares auto executives," said Colas, adding that auto sales could go as low as 13.5 million in a recession. Adding to the dilemma is uncertainty about the outlook for new car sales in the medium term given potential technological disruption.

Will more drivers opt for ridesharing and against owning their own vehicle? How many consumers will opt for an electric car once more vehicles hit the market at lower price points? When will autonomous driving arrive in a meaningful way? "No one has any idea

company's majority owner and chief executive told Reuters. "There is no choice but to as rapidly as possible look to move production away from China."

Disruption

The re-sourcing and relocation efforts mark an acceleration of an already established trend as China's economy shifts towards services, consumption and high-tech production. "We are on the cusp of the biggest sourcing disruption that we have seen in a generation," said Stephen Lamar, executive vice-president of the American Apparel and Footwear Association, whose more than 1,000 members contribute over \$400 billion annually to US retail sales.

"The No. 1 thing I hear from companies is along the lines of: 'For years we have been talking about diversifying from China and now we have to actually do it.'" Shifting production can take years to complete: firms need to secure

funding, find the right suppliers, sort out new logistics - all while dealing with new legal and accounting issues in a country they may not know well. "Any relocation away from China is going to be very slow and very uncertain," said Aidan Yao, senior Asia EM economist at AXA Investment Managers.

Low tech goods and low value manufacturing would be the quickest to migrate while higher value-added exports in the machinery, transport and IT category would likely take decades to relocate due to high R&D costs and competitive Chinese labor costs, UBS said in a note earlier this month. Yet a regional client poll by Citi conducted in the last month showed more than half of them already adjusting their supply chain to limit upheaval to their business.

China's sophistication in areas such as automation means no one country can replace China, said trade lawyer Sally Peng of Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg.—Reuters

Consolidation ahead?

GM plans to shutter seven plants worldwide, including five in North America that build sedans that have not been selling well in the United States. The company did not release an estimate of the total potential employment hit but some news reports have put it at 14,000 workers or more. GM Chief Executive Mary Barra characterized the move, intended to save an estimated \$6 billion, as part of an effort "to be highly agile, resilient and profitable, while giving us the flexibility to invest in the future."

Many expect the GM downsizing to be followed by cuts at Ford, which has announced plans for an \$11 billion restructuring. "We know there's more to come," said Michigan-based Chesbrough, alluding to Ford. —AFP



VIETNAM: A truck driver runs past containers at a port in Hai Phong city.—Reuters

Sports

Sparks fly as Wilder, Fury face off ahead of title fight

Unbeaten heavyweights engaged in an angry face-off

LOS ANGELES: Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury needed to be separated here Wednesday as tempers boiled over in an explosive final press conference before their heavyweight title showdown. World Boxing Council heavyweight champion Wilder and Fury will collide in a high-stakes showdown at the Staples Center on Saturday which could see the winner advance to a money-spinning unification bout.

After trading verbal blows before reporters on Wednesday, the two unbeaten heavyweights engaged in an angry face-off that threatened to erupt into a full-scale brawl. British challenger Fury finished the press conference stripped to the waist and offering to engage with Wilder as the two men hurled insults.

Fury, the trash-talking "Gypsy King", appeared to have clearly rattled Wilder, who looked by far the angrier of the two fighters. The 30-year-old Fury, who has battled back from depression and drug abuse to land his shot against Wilder, opened by stating bluntly he expected to knock out the American champion (40-0, 39 knockouts).

"I'm telling you now, Wilder is getting knocked out by me on Saturday night," Fury said. "On Saturday night the whole world will know him as the person who Fury knocked out. 'This swagger is not genuine, it's fake - a snide and a fraud. I look at him and don't see a bad man, I see a pretender.'"

Wilder however angrily confronted Fury as the two men faced off on the dais, contrasting the two fighters' respective heritages in an expletive-laden rant. "You say your people having been fighting for 200 years? My people have been fighting for 400 years," Wilder remarked of Fury, who is of Irish traveller descent.

Fury, who laughed and joked throughout, later said he believed he had rattled Wilder. "He looks very nervous. I didn't initiate all that. His team are nervous and agitated because they know he's going to lose," Fury told reporters. "He knows he can't outbox me, so he's trying to get me all involved emotionally. He feels the need to shout and scream and all that, but it was what it was." Fury meanwhile distanced himself from suggestions that Saturday's clash could carry a racial dimension following Wilder's comments.



LOS ANGELES: File photo shows Tyson Fury meets with firefighters at the Los Angeles County Fire Department Headquarters on November 27, 2018 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

"I don't think we should bring this fight into a battle of races, or a battle of cultures or all that," Fury said. "This is above all that. We're fighting for the most gentlemanly, prized, heavyweight championship of the world. He instigated all that. I didn't get up there and start screaming and shouting in his face.

"He started with all the '400 years of pain' and all this. He must

think that's going to get in my mind. 'Oh he's had 400 years of pain, I won't fight him on Saturday night because he's had 400 years of pain.' Well, my people have been persecuted for thousands of years. Let's not go there. "This isn't a battle of who's been persecuted longest. This is a battle between Tyson Fury and Deontay Wilder. It's not a battle of races of cultures." — AFP

McLeod, Jager share lead at Australian PGA Championship

SYDNEY: Jake McLeod continued his strong home season with a six-under-par 66 to take a share of the lead alongside compatriot Matt Jager after the first round of the Australian PGA Championship on the Gold Coast yesterday.

Queenslander McLeod, who claimed his maiden professional title at the New South Wales Open earlier this month, rolled in six birdies in a bogey-free round to upstage a slew of bigger names at the European Tour co-sanctioned event.

He and Western Australian Jager ended the day one stroke ahead of South Korea's Eom Jae-wong and Dimitrios Papadatos, who came second at the Australian Open two

weeks ago, at the Royal Pines Resort.

Australian number two Marc Leishman was a stroke further adrift on four-under in a group five players that also featured Spain's Adrian Otaegui. McLeod finished third at the Australian Open at The Lakes course in Sydney and the 24-year-old credited his recent good form to the help of a new psychologist.

"I just need to stay really focused on the shot and have a bit of a laugh out there and just stay relaxed," said McLeod, who got off to a flying start with four birdies in six holes after teeing off from the 10th.

Jager also started brightly in brilliant sunshine from the 10th, grabbing eagles at the par-five 12th and 15th holes to make the turn at four-under before adding three birdies and a lone bogey to close out his round.

John Senden, twice a winner on the US PGA Tour, was left fuming with officials at the ninth when his driver's shaft snapped mid-swing at the tee and pinched his hand.

Although the big-hitting Australian had not made contact with the ball, it was ruled a stroke. Lacking another driver in his bag, the 47-year-old removed the tee and hit his second shot with an iron before going on to bogey the hole. — Reuters

Bach says IOC committed to aiding Korean peace efforts

TOKYO: The International Olympic Committee remains committed to helping the Korean Peninsula find lasting peace with its chief Thomas Bach praising the role his organisation and the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics had in easing tensions.

Held at the South Korean resort in February, the Winter Games were seen as a turning point in relations between the neighbours, who are still technically at war, after a unified Korean team competed in women's ice hockey.

As their relationship continues to thaw, the Koreans agreed in September to pursue a bid to co-host the 2032 Summer Games. Speaking at the General Assembly of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) in Tokyo yesterday, Bach said the IOC would be involved in further discussions to "strengthen peace efforts".

"We have committed ourselves to this," the German said. "At the very beginning of next year, there will be new talks to get together with the two NOCs of the Korean states and the two governments, to see what we can do there to strengthen these peace efforts that are underway on the political level now."

Relations between the nations have greatly improved this year, with South Korean President Moon Jae-in meeting his North Korean counterpart Kim Jong Un at three different summits.

"I refer to President Moon from the Republic of Korea, who has said that we have opened the door to peace talks with our initiatives on the Korean Peninsula and who has that there the IOC deserves a lot of credit for this," Bach added.

"His counterpart in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Chairman Kim Jong Un, has said that these Olympic Games shifted the momentum of the North-South Korean relations and that this was totally attributable to the efforts of the IOC."

North Korea has for years pursued nuclear and missile programs in defiance of U.N. sanctions but the neighbours moved to defrost relations this year. Kim and US President Donald Trump pledged to work toward denuclearization at their landmark June summit in Singapore, but the agreement was short on specifics. — Reuters

Sports

Avalanche top Penguins 6-3 despite Crosby's natural hat trick

Seguin, Stars salvage OT win over Flames

DENVER: Gabriel Landeskog broke a tie with a goal at 10:05 of the third period, and the Colorado Avalanche recovered from blowing a three-goal lead to beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 6-3 on Wednesday night in Denver. Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and three assists for his sixth straight multi-point game, and Mikko Rantanen had two assists to extend his NHL-high point total to 42. MacKinnon ranks second in the NHL with 41 points. Samuel Girard, Erik Johnson, Colin Wilson and Carl Soderberg scored goals for Colorado, which has won six in a row and eight of nine. Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby put on a show with his first hat trick of the season—a natural hat trick tallied in a span of just 5:35 — but it wasn't enough. He has 11 hat tricks in his career. Crosby's third goal came 4:43 into the third to wipe away Colorado's lead, but Landeskog got the winner when his shot went off the stick of defenseman Juuso Riihola and past goalie Tristan Jarry midway through the third period.

MAPLE LEAFS 5, SHARKS 3

Auston Matthews, playing for the first time since Oct. 27, had two goals and an assist and John Tavares also scored twice as Toronto defeated visiting San Jose. Matthews, returning from a shoulder injury that cost him 14 games, helped the Maple Leafs to their third straight win. Former Shark Patrick Marleau also scored for the Maple Leafs and Mitch Marner added three assists. Frederik Andersen stopped 38 shots in the Toronto goal. Tomas Hertl, Joe Pavel-

ski and Melker Karlsson scored for the Sharks, who have lost three in a row including an overtime game in Buffalo on Tuesday.

RED WINGS 4, BLUES 3

Tyler Bertuzzi scored two goals, including the game-winner with 6:53 remaining, and host Detroit earned a victory over St. Louis. Thomas Vanek had a goal and an assist and Andreas Athanasiou also scored a goal for Detroit, which snapped a three-game losing streak. Mike Green added a pair of assists, and Jimmy Howard finished with 33 saves. David Perron scored two goals and Vladimir Tarasenko also scored for St. Louis, which lost in regulation for just the second time in the past 13 meetings against Detroit (7-2-4). Jake Allen made 27 saves. The Blues took their fifth loss in their past six games overall.

STARS 4, FLAMES 3 (OT)

Tyler Seguin scored just 24 seconds into overtime as visiting Dallas blew a third-period lead before collecting a comeback win over Calgary. The winner was controversial, as Jamie Benn appeared to make contact with Flames goalie David Rittich just before, but the goal stood for a club that has just two wins in six outings. Dallas goalie Anton Khudobin made 30 saves in the win. Rittich made 24 saves for the Flames, who sit atop the Pacific Division despite having dropped two of three outings.

DUCKS 3, PANTHERS 2

Nick Ritchie scored two goals—including the



DENVER: Samuel Girard #49 of the Colorado Avalanche fights for control of the puck against Riley Sheahan #15 of the Pittsburgh Penguins at the Pepsi Center on Wednesday in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

game-winner with 1:28 left in the third period—as Anaheim defeated Florida in Sunrise, Fla. Ritchie has four goals this season, doubling his production in one night. Anaheim also got a goal from Josh Manson.

John Gibson made 42 saves to earn the win

for Anaheim while Florida goalie James Reimer took the loss, making 22 saves. Florida received goals from Aaron Ekblad and Evgenii Dadonov. The Panthers, counting Dadonov's goal, have scored on the power play in 13 of their past 14 games. — Reuters

Clarke slams 'headline-chasing coward' as war of words heats up

SYDNEY: Former Australian captain Michael Clarke has angrily rejected suggestions he helped create a culture that led to the ball-tampering scandal, slamming a leading broadcaster as a "headline-chasing coward".

The war-of-words stems from comments Clarke made on Wednesday criticising attempts to improve the cricket team's image in the wake of the cheating row in South Africa this year, insisting they "won't win a game" without their infamous abrasive attitude. "Australian cricket, I think, needs to stop worrying about being liked and start worrying about being respected," he told commercial radio. "Play tough Australian cricket. Whether we like it or not, that's in our blood."

Long-time Clarke rival Simon Katich blasted him for "once again ... missing the point", saying the team were caught "blatantly cheating" and that "our behaviour is a big part of that". Current skipper Tim Paine, who has advocated a more nice-guy approach, also weighed in, saying the team's friendlier way of playing was not so much about being liked, but knowing when to ease up on the aggression.

But it was the reaction from Melbourne-based sports broadcaster and writer Gerard Whateley that sparked a scathing Insta-



Michael Clarke

gram response from Clarke late Wednesday. "Clarke's interpretation of the predicament the Australian men's Test team finds itself in is breathtaking," said Whateley. "That he would continue to rely on the line—the fiction his and subsequent teams used to excuse all manner of boorish behaviour—might be the single greatest piece of nonsense over the past nine months."

Clarke said he would not stand by while "my leadership, my integrity" were attacked, insisting his conduct as an honest and rules-based captain had never been questioned. "For Gerard Whateley to insinuate that I am responsible for the ball-tampering issue makes him nothing more than a headline-chasing coward," Clarke wrote.

"If you think that the current No.1 team in the world in cricket right now puts being liked as of higher importance than being respected and playing to win inside the rules of our game than you're as delirious as you are ill-informed." The cheating scandal involved Australian players using sandpaper to alter the flight of the ball in a Test match against South Africa last March in Cape Town. Coach Darren Lehmann quit in the wake of the controversy and then-captain Steve Smith, deputy David Warner and batsman Cameron Bancroft received lengthy bans. The affair also claimed the scalps of Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland and chairman David Peever. The Australians have endured a dire run of form since losing 17 matches out of 24 in all formats, ahead of a home Test series against top-ranked India starting on December 6. — AFP

Australia to face Bosnians in Adelaide Davis Cup tie

SYDNEY: Australia will attempt to qualify for a revamped Davis Cup that they bitterly opposed against Bosnia and Herzegovina on hard courts in Adelaide in February, it was announced yesterday. Under a new format controversially adopted by the International Tennis Federation in association with an investment group headed by Barcelona footballer Gerard Pique, the competition will now be decided at a week-long season-ending 18-team event.

It will be held in Madrid in November. Six teams are already guaranteed a spot with Australia—the second most successful Davis Cup nation behind the United States—needing to qualify. The new format will see them play the Bosnians in best of three-set matches—as opposed to the previous five-set matches—over February 1 and 2, with two singles played on the first day and a doubles and the reverse singles on the second.

"It will be fantastic to return to my home city and see Adelaide host this event in February," said captain Lleyton Hewitt, who previously slammed the new-look Davis Cup as a "money-grab" that would ruin the historic event. He was among four generations of Australian Davis Cup captains and players, including Rod Laver and John Newcombe, who united this year to oppose the reforms. — AFP

Sports

Bangladesh to send cricketers to Pakistan after safety assurances

Bangladesh eye rare Test series win over West Indies

DHAKA: Bangladesh will send a cricket squad to Pakistan for the first time in three years, officials said yesterday after receiving assurances from their counterparts about security.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka are co-hosting an Asian Cricket Council tournament next month, with Bangladesh playing all their group matches in Karachi.

Most cricket nations have steered clear of Pakistan since gunmen attacked Sri Lanka's team bus in 2009, killing several people.

But international cricket is slowly returning, with Zimbabwe and the West Indies among countries to visit Pakistan in recent years.

The Bangladesh squad being sent for the Emerging Teams Asia Cup starting December 6 is the first since 2015 to visit Pakistan.

"We agreed to the tour following assurance of adequate security by the Pakistan Cricket Board," said Bangladesh Cricket Board boss Nizamuddin Chowdhury. The board would also send a security detail with the squad, he added.

Bangladesh are in Group B alongside hosts Pakistan, Hong Kong and the UAE.

Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, India and Oman in Group A will play their matches in Colombo, which will also host the semis and final.

Squad: Nurul Hasan (Capt), Mosaddek Hossain, Nazmul Hossain, Mizanur Rahman, Shafiul Islam, Zakir Hasan, Saif Hassan, Yasir Ali, Tanvir Islam, Afif Hossain, Nayeem Hasan, Shoriful Islam, Qazi Onik, Khaled Ahmed, Mohor Sheikh.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh will be looking for a

rare Test series win when they take on the West Indies in the second and final Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka today.

The home side lead the two-match series 1-0 thanks to their 64-run win the first Test in Chittagong when their spinners accounted for all 20 West Indies wickets.

A win in Dhaka will give Bangladesh only their fourth Test series win in history and first since 2014 when they triumphed over Zimbabwe 3-0 at home. Bangladesh came close to winning series twice in the past two years, respectively against Australia and Sri Lanka but on both occasions they stumbled at the final hurdle.

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan said his team has the ability to overcome the odds. "We have a challenge and we believe we can overcome this," Shakib said at the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"Naturally, West Indies will also go into the match more excited. They will give their best to win. We have to perform better than them, more than what we did in Chittagong," he said.

"It will be very special for us if we can win the series 2-0...whatever it requires we are preparing to do that," he said.

"If it is not possible to win, our target will be taking series 1-0, because the ultimate target is winning the series."

Shakib promised positive cricket.

"But we don't want to win series by playing defensive cricket. We will go into the match with a positive frame of mind," he said.



CHITTAGONG: File photo shows Bangladeshi cricketer Taijul Islam (L) celebrates with captain Shakib Al Hasan (C) after the dismissal of West Indies cricketer Devendra Bishoo during the third day of the first Test cricket match between Bangladesh and West Indies. —AFP

Bangladesh's chances, however, got a blow when wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim hurt his finger during a training session on Wednesday.

Though Sakib did not rule out Mushfiqur playing the game, the home side had recalled Liton Das as a back-up option.

West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite said he remained optimistic despite the challenge ahead.

"Staying positive on this type of wicket is key. The bounce varied a lot in the first Test,"

said Brathwaite.

"The onus is on ourselves to trust our defence and attacking methods. I think the key is to be light in your feet, and treat each ball as it comes."

The visitors will miss pace bowler Shannon Gabriel, who was banned from the second Test after being handed two demerit points in the first.

Gabriel was the pick of the West Indies bowlers in a spin-oriented pitch, claiming four wickets in a short spell in the first innings that had nearly swung the game to their way. —AFP

Teen Aussie giantkiller strikes again

SYDNEY: Australian teenager Aaron Hardie snared the wicket of India captain Virat Kohli yesterday, his latest high-profile victim after dismissing England skipper Joe Root in a similar warm-up match last year.

The 19-year-old paceman had Kohli caught and bowled for 64 as the tourists prepared for next week's opening Test by scoring 358 all out against a Cricket Australia XI on day two of the four-day match. Kohli had smashed seven fours and a six against an inexperienced attack before English-born Hardie dismissed him, nonchalantly tossing the ball in the air in celebration. Hardie, who ended with 4-50 off 13 overs, is one of Western Australia's most exciting prospects, having captained the state at under-17 and under-19 level, and earned a rookie contract for 2018-19.

After torrential rain scuppered the opening day of play at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday, India were keen to get in the middle for some batting practice in their only game ahead of the four-Test series.

Impressive young opener Prithvi Shaw, Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane all also managed half-centuries, with KL Rahul the only one of India's main batsmen to fail, scoring three. The CA XI were on 24 without loss at stumps. —AFP

India's Mithali Raj 'saddened' as World T20 row escalates

NEW DELHI: India cricket star Mithali Raj said yesterday she was "deeply saddened" by accusations that she threw tantrums and threatened to quit before being controversially dropped during the Twenty20 World Cup.

Raj, the highest run scorer in the women's international game and still India's one-day captain, was left out of the squad for last week's semi-final loss to England, triggering a high-profile row with team staff.

Coach Ramesh Powar blasted the veteran batswoman for "blackmailing" officials, amid reports she had demanded to choose her own batting position earlier in the tournament. "I'm deeply saddened and hurt by the aspersions cast on me. My commitment to the game and 20 years of playing for my country," Raj tweeted yesterday.

"The hard work, sweat, in vain. Today, my patriotism doubted, my skill set questioned and all the mud slinging—it's the darkest day of my life."

Raj hit two straight half-centuries at the tournament in the West Indies before missing India's last group game against Australia due to a knee injury. She was declared fit on the eve of the England semi-final but selectors declined to bring her back. T20 captain, Harmanpreet Kaur, said selectors opted to stay with the "winning combination".

Raj, 35, sent a fiery letter to India's cricket board singling



MUMBAI: In this file photo taken on March 20, 2018 Indian cricket captain Mithali Raj speaks during a press conference. —AFP

out Powar and other officials, accusing them of bias and claiming they were trying to destroy her career. Powar briefed the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Wednesday about the behind-the-scenes tumult at the T20 tournament.

"I hope Mithali stops blackmailing, pressurising coaches and putting her interest first than the team," Powar wrote in a 10-page post-tournament brief for the BCCI, seen by AFP. "I was saddened by her attitude and it gave me an impression that Mithali Raj comes first and then India. She threw a lot of tantrums and created a lot of chaos." The BCCI is yet to comment on the issue. —AFP

Sports

Thunder's Westbrook a triple threat in win over Cavaliers

Barea, Harris propel Mavericks past Rockets

OKLAHOMA: Russell Westbrook had his 107th career triple-double, leading the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 100-83 victory over the visiting Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday night. Westbrook had 23 points, 19 rebounds and 15 assists. Jerami Grant added 21 points—one off a career high—for the Thunder while Paul George added 18. Westbrook had the triple-double wrapped up in the third quarter. The career feat tied Jason Kidd for third in NBA history in the category behind Oscar Robertson (181) and Magic Johnson (138). Oklahoma City locked in on defense in the third quarter, holding Cleveland to just 15 points while taking command. The Thunder have won 13 of their last 16 games. Cleveland used just eight players in the game after reportedly guard Kyle Korver to Utah earlier Wednesday.

TRAIL BLAZERS 115, MAGIC 112

Damian Lillard scored 41 points and set a franchise record for 3-point shots made in a game as Portland held off visiting Orlando. Lillard was 10-for-15 from 3-point range and also grabbed eight rebounds as the Trail Blazers snapped a three-game losing streak. Lillard broke the team record of nine 3-pointers made. He had shared the mark with Nicolas Batum. Nik Stauskas scored 18 points off the bench and Jusuf Nurkic finished with 16 points and 13 rebounds for Portland. Nikola Vucevic tallied 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Magic, while Evan Fournier added 17 points in the loss.

CLIPPERS 115, SUNS 99

Danilo Gallinari scored 28 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, and Lou Williams added 20 points as Los Angeles delivered a strong third quarter and cruised to a victory over visiting Phoenix. The Clippers, who are now tied for first place in the Western Conference, looked sluggish while struggling to a 49-49 halftime tie against the last-place Suns. Los Angeles outscored Phoenix 40-25 in the third quarter, behind 12 points from Gallinari. The Clippers won their third consecutive game, earned their eighth victory in the past nine games and improved to 9-1 at home. Devin Booker scored 23 points and Elie Okobo added 19 for the Suns, who lost their third consecutive game and fell for the sixth time in their last seven games.

MAVERICKS 128, ROCKETS 108

Reserves J.J. Barea and Devin Harris supported a balanced attack as visiting Dallas won for just the second time on the road by throttling short-handed Houston. Harris scored 15 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter while Barea posted a double-double of 13 points and 12 assists in just 17 minutes. The Rockets trailed by as many as 26 points before cutting the deficit to five points late in the third quarter, only for Barea and Harris to apply the knockout blow. Houston dropped its fourth consecutive game following a five-game win streak. Dallas won for the seventh time in eight games.

TIMBERWOLVES 128, SPURS 89

Robert Covington scored 21 points in three quarters of action to lead a balanced offense that saw seven players score in double figures as Minnesota routed San Antonio in Minneapolis. Minnesota took charge of the game in the second period when it outscored the Spurs 29-9 and turned a three-point lead after the first quarter into a 23-point advantage at halftime. The Timberwolves kept rolling in the third quarter, after which they led 92-58. The Timberwolves are 7-2 in their past nine games since Jimmy Butler was traded to the 76ers for Covington and Dario Saric. Meanwhile, the Spurs continue to struggle. They are 4-9 in their past 13 games and are below .500 for the third time this season.

BUCKS 116, BULLS 113

Khris Middleton's 3-point shot from the top of the key with 5.2 seconds left lifted Milwaukee past visiting Chicago. Giannis Antetokounmpo had put the Bucks up 113-111 with a pair of free throws with 36 seconds left, but Zach LaVine's layup set the stage for Middleton's heroics. Antetokounmpo finished with a season-high 36 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists. Zach LaVine and Jabari Parker led the Bulls with 24 points each. LaVine also contributed nine rebounds and seven assists while Parker, a former first-round pick of the Bucks, added eight rebounds and five assists.

JAZZ 101, NETS 91

Donovan Mitchell scored 14 of his 29 points in the fourth quarter, including the go-ahead layup with 3:43 remaining, and road-weary Utah overcame early sluggishness to beat Brooklyn in New York. Playing in a different time zone for the third time in four games, the Jazz won for the third time in their past nine games thanks to Mitchell. He returned from missing two games with a rib contusion and made 12 of 24 shots. Rudy Gobert posted his 19th double-double by adding 23 and 16 rebounds for Utah, which outscored the Nets 31-13 in the final 12 minutes. The Nets blew a fourth-quarter lead for the second straight game, absorbing their fifth consecutive home loss and fourth straight defeat overall.

76ERS 117, KNICKS 91

Joel Embiid had 26 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists to lift Philadelphia past visiting New York. Embiid secured his league-best 21st double-double. In addition, he put together his 18th game with at least 20 points and 10 rebounds. The Sixers also improved to 11-1 at home while posting their sixth victory in seven games. JJ Redick added 24 points on 10-of-14 shooting while Ben Simmons contributed 14 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for Philadelphia. Enes Kanter produced 17 points and six rebounds for the Knicks, and Mario Hezonja also had 17 points.

PELICANS 125, WIZARDS 104

Jrue Holiday had 29 points to lead six



OKLAHOMA: Andrew Harrison #55 of the Cleveland Cavaliers shoots the ball against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Wednesday at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. — AFP

scorers in double figures as host New Orleans ended a four-game losing streak by beating Washington. Anthony Davis added 28 points and 15 rebounds, and point guard Tim Frazier, whose insertion into the starting lineup allowed Holiday to return to his natural shooting guard position, also had a double-double, finishing with 12 points and 12 assists. Kelly Oubre Jr. and Markieff Morris scored 22 each, and John Wall added 17 for Washington, which had won three of its previous four games. Bradley Beal contributed 16 points and 11 assists.

HORNETS 108, HAWKS 94

Jeremy Lamb scored 22 points, and Charlotte turned up the defense to roll to an easy victory over visiting Atlanta. The Hornets gained a bit of revenge after losing to the Hawks 124-123 in Atlanta on Sunday night. Charlotte held the Hawks, who were playing on the second night of a back-to-back after winning in Miami on Tuesday, to just 34.4 percent from the field. The Hornets got 19 points each from Kemba Walker and Cody Zeller, despite losing Malik Monk to a quad injury in the second quarter. Trae Young paced the Hawks with 18 points. — Reuters

NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 115, Phoenix 99; Brooklyn 91, Utah 101; Portland 115, Orlando 112; Houston 108, Dallas 128; Milwaukee 116, Chicago 113; Minnesota 128, San Antonio 89; New Orleans 125, Washington 104; Oklahoma City 100, Cleveland 83; Charlotte 108, Atlanta 94; Philadelphia 117, New York 91.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference					
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	18	4	0.818	—	LA Clippers	14	6	0.700	—
Milwaukee	15	6	0.714	2.5	Golden State	15	7	0.682	1
Philadelphia	15	8	0.652	3.5	Denver	14	7	0.667	0.5
Indiana	13	8	0.619	4.5	Oklahoma City	13	7	0.650	1
Detroit	11	7	0.611	5	Portland	13	8	0.619	1.5
Charlotte	11	10	0.524	6.5	Memphis	12	8	0.600	2
Boston	11	10	0.524	6.5	LA Lakers	11	9	0.550	3
Orlando	10	12	0.455	8	Dallas	10	9	0.526	3.5
Washington	8	13	0.381	9.5	New Orleans	11	11	0.500	4
Brooklyn	8	14	0.364	10	Minnesota	11	11	0.500	4
Miami	7	13	0.350	10	Sacramento	10	10	0.500	4
New York	7	16	0.304	11.5	San Antonio	10	11	0.476	4.5
Chicago	5	17	0.227	13	Utah	10	12	0.455	5
Atlanta	5	17	0.227	13	Houston	9	11	0.450	5
Cleveland	4	16	0.200	13	Phoenix	4	17	0.190	10.5

Sports

Mertens, Hamsik lift Napoli but battle for knock-out round goes down to the wire

The Italians are unbeaten in this year's competition

NAPLES: Dries Mertens bagged a brace to add to Marek Hamsik's early goal as Napoli beat Red Star Belgrade 3-1 on Wednesday to go top of their Champions League Group C but the battle for a place in the knock-out rounds will go down to the wire in the final round of games mid-December.

Carlo Ancelotti's Serie A club have to wait to advance to the knock-out rounds after French champions Paris Saint-Germain beat Liverpool 2-1 in France. Hamsik got the hosts off the mark after 11 minutes in Naples with Mertens adding two more either side of half-time to lift the Italians before the final game at Anfield.

"I said it wasn't going to be a decisive match," said Ancelotti. "We've done what we needed to. We're top of the group so you have to be positive." Napoli now have nine points, one more than PSG with Liverpool back on six.

That means a point at Anfield would be enough for Napoli to reach the round of 16 at the expense of Liverpool. Red Star are fourth on four points, but they will finish third if they win at home to PSG in their final fixture and Liverpool lose at home to Napoli.

The Italians are unbeaten in this year's competition and welcomed Red

Star Belgrade after playing a 0-0 draw in Belgrade. Ancelotti's side were reeling after being held 0-0 by bottom Serie A club Chievo at the weekend to fall eight points behind Juventus.

And three-time Champions League winning coach Ancelotti had warned his team they would be "proper idiots" not to qualify for the last 16 of this year's competition.

Mertens century

They came out firing with Mertens almost scoring the opener after five minutes at the Stadio San Paolo, with a clever back-heel flick from a Jose Callejon assist denied by Red Star goalkeeper Milan Borjan.

But minutes later captain Hamsik broke through with a close range volley as the club's record all-time goal scorer finding the net for the first time this season. Veljko Simic had a chance for Red Star but was denied by Napoli goalkeeper David Ospina with one hand. And Senegalese centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly almost grabbed the hosts' second after 28 minutes racing to pick up a Jose Callejon cross but his header was tipped over by Milan Borjan.

Fabian Ruiz sent in a cross for



NAPLES: Napoli's Slovak midfielder Marek Hamsik goes for the ball during the UEFA Champions League group C football match Napoli vs Red Star Belgrade on Wednesday at the San Paolo stadium in Naples. — AFP

Mertens with the Belgian tapping in his first after 33 minutes, completing his brace six minutes after the break to bring his tally to 100 goals in the Napoli jersey. Red Star were not bowled with Camorian forward Ben

Nabouhane pulling a goal back for the visitors after 57 minutes. The goal could have an impact on the standings with all still up for grabs between Napoli, PSG and Liverpool.

"Liverpool are tough, but we've

proved we can beat them and I think it'll be a spectacular game at Anfield," Hamsik told Sky Sport Italia. Napoli beat Liverpool 1-0 in their home leg, thanks to a 90th-minute Lorenzo Insigne goal. — AFP

Messi guides Barca to top Champions League group

EINDHOVEN: Barcelona overcame PSV Eindhoven 2-1 on Wednesday to finish top of their Champions League group with one round remaining thanks to a Lionel Messi goal and assist.

Messi and Gerard Pique scored to claim the La Liga outfit's first win since November 3 across all competitions. Captain Luuk de Jong netted for the Mark van Bommel's team who are top and unbeaten of the Dutch league.

The home side had the best chances of the first half as de Jong's shot hit the cross bar and defender Denzel Dumfries' follow-up re-bounded off the post moments before the break.

Messi tested Jeroen Zoet with a curling effort but the goalkeeper parried it away to safety five minutes after the restart.

On the hour mark Messi picked the ball up on the half way line, laid it off to Ousmane Dembele then received it back from the Frenchman inside the penalty area before beating a stunned Zoet at his front post.

With 20 minutes to play Messi crossed a short free-kick to unmarked Pique in the PSV box and finished easily past Zoet. De Jong made amends from his earlier miss lobbing Ter Stegen from six yards with a header in the closing stages.

PSV went searching for only their second point of the European campaign but unbeaten Barca held on to claim the win and top spot before welcoming Tottenham to the Camp Nou in two weeks' time. — AFP

Atletico seal qualification with comfortable Monaco win

MADRID: Atletico Madrid moved one step closer to their dream Champions League final on home turf by beating Thierry Henry's Monaco 2-0 on Wednesday to secure their place in the last 16.

Atletico could hardly have imagined a more straight-forward passage into the knock-out stages as a struggling Monaco side, ridden with injuries and focused on avoiding relegation from Ligue 1, offered precious little resistance at the Wanda Metropolitano.

A rout looked possible when Koke and Antoine Griezmann put Atleti two up within half an hour but they eased off and Monaco could have pulled a goal back, only for Radamel Falcao to miss a penalty against his former club.

Stefan Savic was sent off after receiving a second yellow card for the handball. It was a disappointing end for Falcao, who had been presented with a plaque before kick-off and cheered by the home fans when introduced as a substitute in the second half.

"I will hold onto this memory, of the fans always showing me affection, I am happy and grateful to all of them," Falcao said afterwards. To return here for the final on June 1,

Atletico will have to beat better opponents than this but, after a slow start, their season appears to be taking shape. They have now lost only once, albeit a thumping by Borussia Dortmund, in 16 matches.

"We needed to take this step forward," coach Diego Simeone said. "Apart from the game in Dortmund, where we were a mess at the end, we've had a really good tournament so far." Dortmund could yet snatch top spot in Group A, particularly given they face Monaco last, with Atletico owning the slightly tougher final assignment away to Club Brugge. Monaco, meanwhile, cannot even trump Brugge to third and a place in the Europa League, even if they, and Henry, have more serious concerns domestically. "Going out of Europe is neither a source of regret nor relief," Henry said. "Our real battles will come now against Montpellier and Amiens in the league."

At times, this match resembled a cup tie between a giant and an opponent two or three tiers below, but Henry must have expected as much when he rested key players, including Falcao, and fielded four teenagers in his starting lineup. "They saw Griezmann lift the World Cup and now they're going to play against him," Henry had said on Tuesday. After beating Caen for their first win in his seven games, any momentum Monaco had, took a knock. Twelve injuries and 10 points from 14 league games perhaps gave Henry little choice.

The last thing a youthful team needs away from home, against one of Europe's toughest opponents, is to concede early, not least due to a heavy dose of misfortune.

Koke was given too much time to line up his shot but the deflection off 17-year-old Benoit Badiashile was cruel, and left goalkeeper Diego Benaglio stranded. — AFP

Neymar steps up as Tuchel gets it right with PSG

PSG are now above Liverpool in Group C

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain had been waiting for such a performance from Neymar, and the Brazilian more than delivered in Wednesday's Champions League victory over Liverpool. The world's most expensive player scored what proved to be the winning goal as PSG beat last season's runners-up 2-1 to step back from the brink of an unthinkable group-stage exit.

His 14th goal of the season came at the end of a move he had initiated with his blinding pace. Neymar celebrated by performing a dance by the corner flag with Kylian Mbappe and posing for the cameras.

But Neymar's evening was about so much more than that. Shortly after Juan Bernat's opening goal, Neymar rushed across to the touchline in front of the dugout to make a challenge and then waved his arms in a frenzy to whip up the crowd.

He spent much of the second half running his socks off to help PSG defend their lead, and he also upset Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp for being supposedly "clever" in winning fouls and buying time.

"For us it was all or nothing. We suffered quite a bit but we are relieved that we won, played well and showed the strength of our squad," Neymar said. "We need to celebrate that. After the game we were shouting, jumping around, dancing, so we are happy."

PSG could have been eliminated with a defeat, but are now above Liverpool in Group C

and head to Red Star Belgrade in their final game in a fortnight with qualification for the last 16 in their hands.

It was a big night personally for Neymar, in PSG's most important Champions League game since the last 16, second leg against Real Madrid last season, which the Brazilian missed due to injury. This was probably the French club's most significant result in the competition since they beat Barcelona 4-0 in the last 16 two seasons ago. Neymar was far from the only man responsible.

There were big performances throughout, with Marco Verratti impressive in midfield, even if he was lucky not to be sent off for a dangerous tackle on Joe Gomez in the first half.

Thiago Silva towered over everyone in central defence, the 34-year-old Brazilian living up to his nickname of "The Monster" by helping shut out Liverpool's front three of Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane.

Yet it was telling that Silva was so keen to praise his coach at the end of the game, as he described Thomas Tuchel as "fantastic".

The German has won all 14 games in Ligue 1 this season since being appointed, but he desperately needed a signature European performance. Tuchel made some big decisions, none more so than selecting defender Marquinhos in midfield rather than Adrien Rabiot.

Marquinhos was particularly impressive, playing in a holding midfield role without the ball and dropping into a three-man defence in pos-



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (C) vies for the ball with Liverpool's Swiss midfielder Xherdan Shaqiri during the UEFA Champions League Group C football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Liverpool, — AFP

session. Tuchel therefore won the tactical battle against his compatriot Klopp and crucially seems to have won over his players.

"The attitude was extraordinary. I am very proud that all the supporters in the ground saw the efforts of a team," said Tuchel.

The question now is whether this result can act as a trigger for PSG to go on to the latter stages of the competition. "I hope so. It is very important to go through this experience together to create a special atmosphere for the weeks ahead," Tuchel added. —AFP

Eriksen's late show keeps Spurs in hunt for last 16 berth

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino backed Tottenham to complete their Champions League escape act in Barcelona after Christian Eriksen's late strike kept alive their last 16 hopes with a 1-0 win over Inter Milan.

Pochettino's side were 10 minutes away from being eliminated at the group stage as they laboured to break down the massed Inter defence at Wembley. But Eriksen, surprisingly dropped to the bench by Pochettino, came to Tottenham's rescue when the substitute fired home to take their Group B qualification bid down to the final game.

It was a dramatic end to a hard-fought clash that Tottenham had to win to avoid bowing out at the group stage for the second time in three seasons. After taking one point from their opening three matches, Tottenham had scored twice in the last 12 minutes to avoid an early exit against PSV Eindhoven earlier this month.

And this latest act of European escapology means second placed Tottenham are now level on points with third placed Inter. They head to Barcelona to face the group leaders on December 11 knowing they will reach the last 16 as long as they match Inter's result against PSV on the same night.

That won't be easy against Lionel Messi and company, but Pochettino has faith. "All is possible in football. We have big respect to Barcelona, they are one of the best teams in Europe, it will be so tough. But we have belief and faith that we can win," Pochettino said. "We need fresh legs, fresh mind and no injuries. We need to arrive that way in Barcelona." Barca may rest players given they are already through, but Pochettino is not expecting any favours. — AFP

Schalke fans boo and jeer their team into last 16 in Europe

BERLIN: Schalke have reached the last 16 of the Champions League, but their progress to the knock-out stages did not stop travelling fans booing their team's dismal 3-1 defeat at Porto. German fans celebrated before kick-off in the Portuguese city on Wednesday when Lokomotiv Moscow's 2-0 win over Galatasary meant both Schalke and Porto were through to the last 16 from Group D.

However, the mood soured after Schalke were well beaten by Porto as the Germans only had a late Nabil Bentaleb penalty to show and their fans voiced their disappointment over a dismal away display.

"It's hard for us when the fans are upset, but we need to understand their reasons," said defensive midfielder Omar Mascarell. Schalke were floored as Porto netted two second-half goals in quick succession, as Brazilian defender Eder Militao struck in the 52nd minute and Jesus Corona three minutes later. Moussa Marega hit a third late for the hosts in added time.

The German fans whistled and booed their team off the pitch and sports director Christian Heidel was surprised given their passage into the last 16. "You always have the right to express resentment, but we have quali-

fied for the last 16 - I just don't get it," he said.

The mood of the disgruntled fans was made worse as the team did not acknowledge the travelling support after the final whistle. "They came a long way to get here," said midfielder Alessandro Schoepf. "One could have gone to thank them in the stands, that is all about respect."

Schalke's injury-hit attack failed to manage a single shot on goal in the opening 45 minutes while Porto ripped the Royal Blues defence apart after the break. Only good saves by Schalke goalkeeper Ralf Faehrmann kept the visitors in the game. — AFP



MATCHES ON TV
LOCAL TIMING

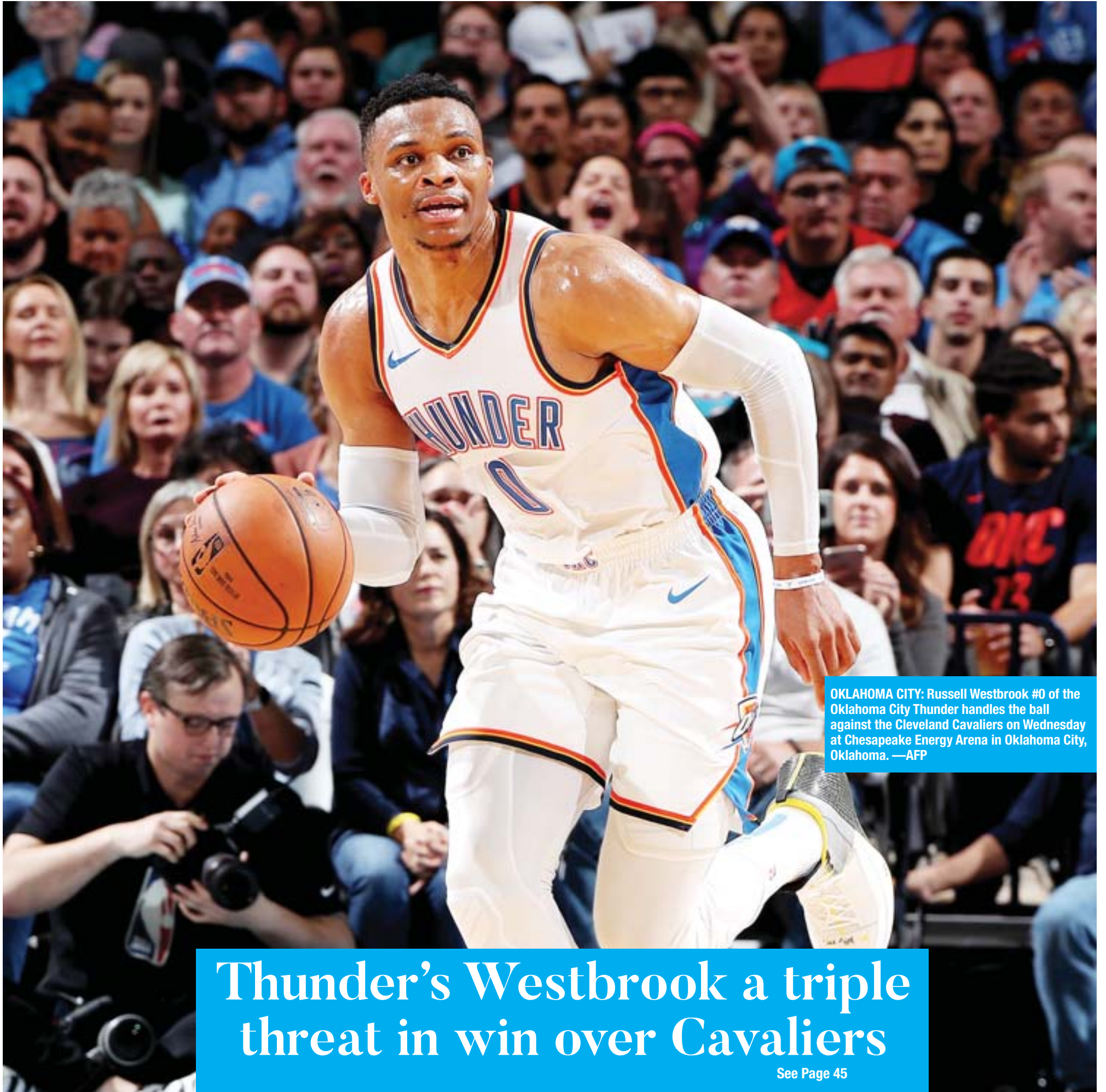
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Cardiff City v Wolverhampton Wanderers 23:00
beIN SPORTS

SPANISH LEAGUE
Rayo Vallecano v SD Eibar 23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA
Fortuna D, sseldorf v FSV Mainz 05 22:30
beIN SPORTS

FRENCH LEAGUE
Saint Etienne v FC Nantes 22:45
beIN SPORTS



OKLAHOMA CITY: Russell Westbrook #0 of the Oklahoma City Thunder handles the ball against the Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. —AFP

Thunder's Westbrook a triple threat in win over Cavaliers

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